

Content Determination for the
2010 Decennial Census Program

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U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

CONTENT DETERMINATION FOR THE 2010 DECENNIAL CENSUS PROGRAM

As one part of the 2010 Decennial Census Program, the Census Bureau must make its final content determinations for the 100-percent population and housing short-form questions by January 2007. This date is earlier than in prior decennial cycles for several reasons. Most importantly, in order to achieve comparability, the Census Bureau must use the same 100-percent questions in the American Community Survey (ACS), beginning with its 2008 data collection year, as will be used in the 2010 Census. Also, in keeping with the practice of good software development, the electronic instruments for both the 2010 Census and the ACS require earlier development. The Census Bureau accords strong importance to using the same questions in the 2010 Census as are tested in the 2008 Dress Rehearsal.

2010 CENSUS DECISION FACTORS

The Census Bureau used the following factors in making its content proposals for the 2010 Census. These factors are not ranked in order of importance, nor are they absolute. For most of the data items, this decision was not easy, but rather involved weighing competing decision factors.

The proposed content that follows is not the result of a mechanistic application of rigid factors, but rather reflects the Census Bureau's best judgment as a professional statistical agency. Distributions are discussed only to provide broad information about how the alternatives performed, as the test was not designed to allow inferences about the number or percentage of any population group. Additionally, the 2005 National Census Test (NCT) was a national mail test only and did not contain a content reinterview, so we were unable to validate responses. One must be careful in drawing conclusions about the total universe and about which distribution is superior.

Improvement, Not Just Change. The Census 2000 questionnaire was a major redesign of prior forms. This redesign effort was successful; evaluations revealed that the Census 2000 questionnaire changes substantially improved the completeness of Hispanic origin and race reporting in the mail mode. The content testing program for the 2010 Census, in contrast, was designed to provide improvements to a form that was generally successful. Accordingly, changes to the Census 2000 questions should be based primarily on evaluations of test data that demonstrate improvement to the quality, completeness, and relevance of the data. Secondly, some minor changes may be warranted to improve layout and meet space constraints. Maintaining continuity from 2000 to

2010 is important, and the Census Bureau will change a question only if there is clear evidence that the change will improve the results.

Maximizing Item Response Without Reducing Detailed Information.

As a general rule, the Census Bureau should select questions that maximize item response, that is, include questions that produce lower item non-response rates. Maximizing item response is important because if the Census Bureau does not obtain a usable response, it must rely on recognized methods such as editing and imputation to supply the missing value. While editing and imputation are established and valuable procedures, the goal is to select questions that minimize their use while providing quality data.

Obtaining detailed population information is another important goal. It would not be advantageous to select questions that reduce item non-response if those questions also substantially reduce the level of detailed population information obtained from the 2010 Census.

Implementation Issues. Implementation issues, particularly related to layout and space constraints of the mail form, are of paramount importance in selecting the 2010 Census content. For example, planning for the 2010 Census assumes a short-form census, where all of the content fits onto a single sheet. Expanding the form into a booklet would greatly increase cost and has the potential to lower mail response. The ACS also has design limitations associated with its mail form.

Mode Consistency. In general, the Census Bureau should select versions of questions that can be adapted across all instruments (paper and electronic) and operations to collect equivalent information regardless of mode. Both the 2010 Census and the ACS will manage cost and quality by using multiple modes of data collection, including mailout/mailback, telephone, and personal visit. The Census Bureau issued draft “Mode Consistency Guidelines” in May 2006 with the goal to minimize differences caused by using various modes to collect data.¹ The guidelines recognize that achieving mode consistency may require adapting questions across modes.

Adherence to Pretesting Standards. The Census Bureau’s July 25, 2003 standard, “Census Bureau Standard: Pretesting Questionnaires and Related Materials for Surveys and Censuses”² states: “When a key economic or socioeconomic indicator may be affected by a questionnaire

¹ “Mode Consistency Guidelines,” Draft Issued for Internal Discussion, U.S. Census Bureau, May 3, 2006.

² “Census Bureau Standard: Pretesting Questionnaires and Related Materials for Surveys and Censuses,” U. S. Census Bureau, July 25, 2003, p.6.

or procedural change, the Census Bureau recommends that an experimental field test be conducted to evaluate the effects of the proposed changes on survey estimates.” The 2010 Census final content determination will be made largely on the basis of two large mail tests, the 2003 and 2005 National Census Tests.

Selection of an Entire Panel for Hispanic Origin and Race Questions.

The Census Bureau’s testing program has demonstrated repeatedly that even very small changes in questionnaire design for the Hispanic origin and race questions (e.g., format of the question or response categories, question order, wording, use of examples, instructions, etc.) can cause effects that are both large and difficult to anticipate. The 2005 NCT was designed so that the Census Bureau should select the Hispanic origin and race questions together and *in toto* from a single panel. The Census Bureau believes there is a significant risk in making even small revisions to the tested joint Hispanic origin and race questions, because we cannot accurately predict the full effect of any proposed changes.

2010 CENSUS PROPOSED CONTENT

This document is a summary of the Census Bureau’s decision-making process, not a repetition of all test results. Readers are strongly encouraged to consult the evaluation reports for a more complete picture of the results of the testing the Census Bureau has conducted on the questionnaire.

The following sections summarize the Census Bureau’s consideration of the foregoing decision factors in forming content proposals for the 100-percent population and housing short-form questions for the 2010 Census and the ACS. We examined the entirety of the test results; only statistically significant differences are discussed in this summary.

TENURE

Control (Census 2000 wording)

3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home —
Mark ONE box.
- Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan?
 - Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?
 - Rented for cash rent?
 - Occupied without payment of cash rent?

Alternative 1

3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home —
Mark ONE box.
- Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan?
 - Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?
 - Rented?
 - Occupied without payment of rent?

Alternative 2

3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home —
Mark ONE box.
- Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan? *Include home equity loans.*
 - Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?
 - Rented for cash rent?
 - Occupied without payment of cash rent?

Alternative 3

3. Is this house, apartment, or mobile home —
Mark ONE box.
- Owned by you or someone in this household with a mortgage or loan? *Include home equity loans.*
 - Owned by you or someone in this household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)?
 - Rented?
 - Occupied without payment of rent?

Scope: The Census Bureau tested three versions of the tenure question. Each was designed to examine specific changes to response categories. In the first alternative, the use of “cash rent” was dropped from the two renter response options, since earlier research demonstrated that respondents commonly misunderstood the concept of “cash rent” because most rent is paid by check rather than cash (Hunter and DeMaio, 2004). The second alternative tested an added instruction to include home equity loans in the first owner response option, “Owned ... with a mortgage or loan? *Include home equity loans.*” The Census Bureau used this approach to address concerns that respondents may not understand that a home should be classified as “mortgaged” if there is a home equity loan (Hunter and DeMaio, 2004). For the third alternative, both of the above treatments were included to determine any impact on the results when the changes appear together in a single question.

Findings: Alternative 1, which dropped the word “cash” from the renter response options, showed significantly less item nonresponse than the control. Thus, the evidence suggests that the word “cash” was confusing renters who typically pay by check. Also, significantly fewer housing units were reported as owned “*free and clear*” when a home equity loan instruction was included as in alternative 2. This instruction clarified for respondents that their property is considered “mortgaged” if a home equity loan is present. Alternative 3 also had significantly lower item nonresponse and reflected the improvements tested individually in alternatives 1 and 2. No implementation or mode consistency issues are raised with these alternatives.

Proposed Content: The Census Bureau’s proposal for the tenure question is alternative 3. Alternative 3 appears to represent an improvement to the baseline.

References:

Cynthia A. Rothhaas, et al., “2005 National Census Test: Tenure, Relationship, and Age Report,” U.S. Census Bureau, August 30, 2006.

Jennifer Hunter and Theresa DeMaio, “Report on Cognitive Testing of Tenure, Age, and Relationship Questions for the 2005 National Content Test,” U.S. Census Bureau, November 22, 2004.

RELATIONSHIP

Control (Census 2000 wording)

2. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark ONE box.

<input type="checkbox"/> Husband/wife	<input type="checkbox"/> Other relative — <i>Print exact relationship.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural-born son/daughter	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son/daughter	
<input type="checkbox"/> Stepson/stepdaughter	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother/sister	If NOT RELATED to Person 1:
<input type="checkbox"/> Father/mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Roomer, boarder
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild	<input type="checkbox"/> Housemate, roommate
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law	<input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried partner
<input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law/daughter-in-law	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster child
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative

Alternative

2. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark ONE box.

<input type="checkbox"/> Husband or wife	<input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
<input type="checkbox"/> Biological son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Other relative
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Roomer or boarder
<input type="checkbox"/> Stepson or stepdaughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Housemate or roommate
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried partner
<input type="checkbox"/> Father or mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster child or foster adult
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild	<input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law	

Scope: The Census Bureau tested one alternative to the Census 2000 relationship question. Our objective was to clarify response categories, eliminate known sources of confusion with this item, and save space on the form.

The first response option, “Natural-born son/daughter” was changed to “Biological son or daughter” because earlier testing showed that adoptive parents had an unfavorable reaction to the use of the term “Natural born.” From cognitive testing, the Census Bureau learned that some respondents misinterpreted the term by equating “natural” to births involving no drugs, and possibly excluding caesarian birth or in-vitro fertilization (Hunter and DeMaio, 2004). Also, some Spanish speakers misinterpret the term, “Natural-born” in English as “born out of wedlock.” On other Census Bureau surveys, such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), the word “biological” is used already instead of “natural.” Other terms also were changed for clarification. The phrase, “foster adult” was added to the “foster child” category to address changing living arrangements of adults receiving care in residential housing, since persons 18 years and older receiving such care were found to have reported themselves in the “foster child” category in Census 2000. The conjunction “or” replaced slashes (/) and commas (,) to clarify wording and improve the readability of the relationship categories.

The write-in space for the “Other relative” response option was deleted. Census Bureau coding experts have observed that a relatively large number of the write-in entries represented nonrelatives, data that could not be coded, duplicates of another response

category, or foreign language equivalents of English relationship categories already listed. Finally, due to questionnaire space constraints, the Census Bureau removed the spanner above the nonrelative categories that read “If NOT RELATED to Person 1:.”

Findings: All of the above-described changes were tested together, so Census Bureau staff cannot determine which wording change or changes caused the observed response changes. No difference was observed in item nonresponse between using “Natural-born son/daughter” and “Biological son or daughter.” This finding was contrary to the Census Bureau’s expectation that the alternative response option would show slightly higher distributional totals than the category “Natural born” in the control version. Regarding the change to “Foster child or foster adult,” the results were based on two groups -- individuals whose reported age was under 18 years and those with a reported age of 18 years and older. No significant difference in response distributions between the control question and the test version for the population under 18 years was found. The Census Bureau was unable to determine estimates for individuals 18 years and over in this response category because the cell sizes were too small.

One clear advantage from the changes to the relationship question was the reduction in multiple responses, which the Census Bureau thinks is attributable to removing the spanner above the categories of nonrelatives. Our findings showed a significant difference between the percentages of multiple responses occurring in the test version (0.1 percent) and in the control (0.3 percent). In the “high non-White or Hispanic stratum,”³ the “Other relative” category without a write-in option showed a significantly higher number of responses than the control (2.4 percent to 1.6 percent, respectively). For the remaining changes in this question, no significant effect on reporting at the national level was found.

Proposed Content: The Census Bureau proposes the alternative, with a modification dictated by implementation issues. Space considerations for both the 2010 Census and the ACS mandate that the relationship question drop a response category. The Census Bureau chose to remove the response category of “Foster child or foster adult” because “Foster child” was the category with the fewest responses reported in Census 2000. The following question is believed to represent an improvement over the Census 2000 question.

³ The samples in the test were allocated to two strata (High non-White or Hispanic Concentration and Low non-White or Hispanic Concentration) that reflect differences in the racial composition of the sample area. Twelve demographic/tenure groups were combined based on block level proportions to create the two strata.

Proposed Question

2. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark ONE box.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband or wife | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biological son or daughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law, daughter-in-law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son or daughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Other relative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stepson or stepdaughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Roomer or boarder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister | <input type="checkbox"/> Housemate or roommate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father or mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild | <input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative |

References:

Cynthia A. Rothhaas, et al., “2005 National Census Test: Tenure, Relationship, and Age Report,” U.S. Census Bureau, August 30, 2006.

Jennifer Hunter and Theresa DeMaio, “Report on Cognitive Testing of Tenure, Age, and Relationship Questions for the 2005 National Content Test,” U.S. Census Bureau, November 22, 2004.

SEX

Control (Census 2000 wording)

6. What is Person 1's sex? Mark ONE box.

- Male Female

Alternative

6. What is Person 1's sex? Male Female

Scope: An alternative question about sex was tested to see if space on the form could be saved. The alternative did not include the instruction, “Mark [X] ONE box” and placed the response categories, “Male” and “Female” on the same line with the question itself. The instruction may have been a carry over from the 1990 Census intended to train respondents how to answer, since sex was the first item on the form requiring a filled circle.

Findings: The alternative had different results for Person 1 than for subsequent people in the form. For Person 1, there was a small but statistically significant improvement in the completeness of sex reporting. For Persons 2 through 6, the changes in the test version led to a significant loss of data. Some respondents may have overlooked the entire compressed, single-line item or the individual response categories if they extended beyond eyeshot of the vertical navigational path. The findings also showed that deleting the “Mark [X] ONE box” instruction did not lead to more respondents marking both response categories. About 0.05 percent checked “Male” and “Female” in both the control and test versions.

Proposed Content: The Census Bureau’s proposal for the sex question is the control version, which places the instruction and the response categories on separate lines. The implementation (space) advantages of the alternative are outweighed by the fact that the control appears to produce more complete data.

Reference:

Elizabeth A. Martin, “Results of the ‘Space Saving’ Format Changes and Reversal of the Order of Age and Date of Birth Items,” U.S. Census Bureau, October 23, 2006.

AGE AND DATE OF BIRTH

Control (Census 2000 wording)

7. What is Person 1’s age and what is Person 1’s date of birth?

Print numbers in boxes.

Age on September 15, 2005	Month	Day	Year of birth

Alternative 1

7. What is Person 1’s age and what is Person 1’s date of birth?

Please report babies as age 0 when the child is less than 1 year old.

Print numbers in boxes.

Age on September 15, 2005	Month	Day	Year of birth

Alternative 2

7. What is Person 1’s date of birth and what is Person 1’s age?

Print numbers in boxes.

Month	Day	Year of birth	Age on September 15, 2005

Scope: Alternative 1 of the age and date of birth question tested the addition of an instruction to direct respondents to report babies as age zero when the child is less than one year old. Earlier research showed that people do not think of their babies as having lived zero years, but rather report their babies’ ages in months, weeks, or days (Spencer and Perkins, 1998).

Alternative 2 tested reversing the traditional sequence of the age and the date of birth categories to first obtain the person’s month, day, and year of birth before his or her age on Census Day. This sequence is consistent with electronic data collection modes used in 2000 and planned for 2010.

Findings: For alternative 1, the findings, regardless of the presence of the babies' age instruction, showed that there was no difference in item non-response for reported age nationally or in the "high non-White or Hispanic stratum."⁴ For the "low non-White or Hispanic stratum," the item non-response rate was significantly lower (0.3 percentage points) than from the control. For babies' who are age zero (based on their date of birth), it is important to note that the age instruction increased the reporting of age zero and decreased the erroneous reporting of ages 1 through 11. Also, item non-response for reported age zero was significantly lower with the age instruction included for babies' age zero (based on their date of birth). While the percent of babies with a reported age of zero was significantly higher with the babies' age instruction than without, distributions for the other age groups (ages 1-11, 12-24 and individual ages 1-11) did not change significantly.

For alternative 2, the findings showed that asking date of birth first led to small but significant improvements in all the date of birth items, with no statistically significant effects on the completeness or validity of reported age. Specifically, month, day, and year of birth are significantly less likely to be left blank when date of birth is asked before age. In the 1996 National Content Test, the results from the 1998 report by Spencer and Perkins favored the age-first sequence, although direct comparisons between the 2005 National Census Test and 1996 National Content Test are impossible due to differences in question format and statistical analysis.

Proposed Content: The Census Bureau proposes using alternative 1. While mode consistency would favor alternative 2 (because it has the same question order as electronic instruments), no individual alternative both reversed the age and the date of birth sequence and added the babies' age instruction. The Census Bureau, therefore, proposes including the age instruction to increase the accuracy of age reporting for babies and retaining the traditional sequence of age before date of birth. The Census Bureau expects substantive improvements in reporting age zero as a result of adding the babies' age instruction, while tests of both orders of the age and date of birth question included individually in alternatives 1 and 2 reflected good results.

References:

Elizabeth A. Martin, "Results of the 'Space Saving' Format Changes and Reversal of the Order of Age and Date of Birth Items," U.S. Census Bureau, October 23, 2006.

Cynthia A. Rothhaas, et al., "2005 National Census Test: Tenure, Relationship, and Age Report," U.S. Census Bureau, August 30, 2006.

Gregory Spencer and R. Colby Perkins, Jr., "The Effect of Different Question Formats on Age and Birthdate Statistics From the 1996 National Content Survey," U.S. Census Bureau, January 23, 1998.

⁴ Op. cit., p. 6.

HISPANIC ORIGIN AND RACE

(NOTE: Facsimiles of the control and alternatives 2-6 appear at the end of this discussion.)

Scope: As discussed earlier, the content portion of the testing program for the 2010 Census was designed to refine the success achieved with the Census 2000 questionnaire. There was no overall effort, as was the case prior to Census 2000, to revise the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity reporting.

The Hispanic origin and race portions of the 2005 NCT involved a control and five experimental panels (alternatives 2-5). The major focus for the Hispanic origin and race questions in the 2005 NCT was to compare a two-question format (the Hispanic origin question, followed by the race question) with an experimental three-question format (a shortened Hispanic origin question, followed by a shortened race question, followed by a modified ancestry question). The modified ancestry question used in the alternatives with the three-question format was intended to elicit detailed information on all race and ethnic groups. The expectation was that the question could produce data that could be used for editing and imputation when the respondent left blank the questions on Hispanic origin and/or race. The Hispanic origin and race questions were designed and tested in tandem. The Census Bureau believes that these questions should be considered as a package, as small changes in one question may impact the other.

Other treatments included:

- 1) an expanded note to respondents that directed them to answer both the Hispanic origin and race questions and the statement that *“For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.”*
- 2) changes to question wording and response categories (e.g., with and without examples of groups).
- 3) formatting differences (i.e., single- and double-banked response categories). In the three-question format, the Hispanic origin question included a “Yes” and “No” response option, and the question on race included the five minimum race categories (White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) required by the OMB as well as “Some other race.”

The 2005 NCT tested four versions of the three-question format (alternatives 2-5). Alternative 2 included examples, while alternatives 3-5 did not. Examples were included to test whether respondents needed them to understand the categories in these shortened versions of the questions. Alternative 4 included an additional statement in the race question – *“For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.”* – designed to increase reporting in the OMB race categories. An introduction was added to the ancestry question to provide clarification of the intent of the question and to increase respondents’ willingness to provide detailed information. Alternative 5 assessed the necessity of

having a separate American Indian or Alaska Native question to collect information on tribal affiliation and enrollment.

Recognizing that the experimental alternatives might not be successful, the 2005 NCT also included two alternatives that retained the convention from Census 2000 of a two-question series. Neither of these two alternatives was identical to the Census 2000 question; rather each is believed to represent an incremental improvement to Census 2000. The question wording of the control was slightly revised from Census 2000, and we considered this as the control because it was the closest to the Census 2000 design. The control included examples for the “Other Hispanic,” “Other Asian,” and “Other Pacific Islander” response categories. The 2003 National Census Test suggested that adding examples improved reporting of specific Hispanic origin and detailed race groups. Alternative 6 also included examples, an expanded note to respondents to answer both the question on Hispanic origin and the question on race, and changes to the instruction to the race question. Alternative 6 also included other changes intended to simplify and shorten instructions and formats.

The variations between the alternatives are complex and best summarized by the chart on the next page.

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES AND TREATMENTS FOR HISPANIC ORIGIN AND RACE

TREATMENT	CONTROL	ALTERNATIVES				
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Two-Question Format						
Census 2000-style question	X					X
Note to respondents included only an instruction to answer both the Hispanic origin and race questions	X					
Note to respondents included an instruction to answer both the Hispanic origin <u>and</u> race questions and a statement saying that – <i>For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.</i>						X
Reordered Hispanic origin identifiers						X
Single-banked Hispanic origin response categories						X
Included instruction – <i>Mark [X] “No” if not of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin.</i>	X					
Different race instructions – For Control: <i>Mark [X] one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.</i> For Alternative 6: <i>Mark [X] one or more boxes.</i>	X					X
Examples in Hispanic origin and race questions	X					X
Three-Question Format						
Shortened Hispanic origin and race questions combined with added ancestry question		X	X	X	X	
Examples in Hispanic origin and race questions		X				
Note to respondents included only an instruction to answer both the Hispanic origin and race questions				X		
Included a modified ancestry question with a narrative lead in				X	X	
Separate question for American Indian or Alaska Native tribe					X	

Findings:

Three-Question Format Versus Two-Question Format. In the 2005 NCT, the experimental panels with a three-question format generally obtained a higher rate of response to the Hispanic origin and race questions than did the two-question format. Alternatives 2-5, however, exhibited two major problems. The first was a loss of detailed information for Hispanics, Asians, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders. The second was a decrease in the proportion of all respondents reporting in OMB-recognized race categories.

A lower proportion of Hispanics reported a specific origin via the ancestry question in alternatives 2-5 than in the control. Hispanics failed to provide a specific Hispanic origin group more than 35 percent of the time in alternatives 2-5. By comparison, 93.5 percent reported a specific Hispanic origin in the control.

For the overall population, the response rate to the race question was high in both the control and alternatives 2-5, and no differences in the response rate to the race question were found between alternatives 2-5 and the control. There were higher percentages of “Some other race” respondents in alternatives 2-5 among the overall population, and they reported a detailed race group more often in alternatives 2, 3, and 5 than in the control.

There were more Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders reported in alternatives 3-5 than in the control, but these respondents reported a detailed race (e.g., Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Fijian) less often in alternatives 3-5 compared with the control. Asian respondents reported a detailed race (e.g., Asian Indian, Filipino) less often in alternatives 2-5 compared with the control, although no difference in item response was found for Asians.

Two-Question Format Alternative. The control and alternative 6 differ from each other in multiple ways, making it difficult to determine which difference led to which result. Results, however, generally favored alternative 6 over the control in terms of obtaining more complete and usable data.

A larger proportion of Hispanics reported a specific Hispanic origin group in alternative 6 than in the control. A lower proportion reported “Some other race” in alternative 6 when compared with the control. The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander group is the only race group for which there is a statistical difference in the percentage who report a detailed race group.

Proposed Content: The Census Bureau’s initial question was whether to select one of the alternatives with the two-question format or one of the experimental alternatives with the three-question format. While the three-question format shows promise in a number of areas, alternatives 2-5 all showed an unacceptable drop in detailed responses for the Hispanic, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander groups. Additionally, alternatives 2-5 represent a substantial change from the successful Census 2000 content.

Without clear evidence of improvement, the Census Bureau does not believe it is appropriate to change the baseline content. This led us to focus on the control and alternative 6 as the two options for the 2010 Census. Some of the objectives for the 2005 NCT are relevant only in the context of alternatives 2-5: e.g., obtaining information on tribal enrollment and assessing the use of ancestry data for editing and imputation.

In choosing between the control and alternative 6, the Census Bureau first noted that both panels represent what we believe to be incremental refinements to the successful Census 2000 content. Decades of expertise in survey methodology and qualitative testing led us to prefer certain elements of alternative 6. For example, the identifier “of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin” in alternative 6 is believed to represent a design improvement over the Census 2000 identifier “Spanish/Hispanic/Latino.” Mode consistency is not a major factor in deciding between the control and alternative 6, but somewhat favors alternative 6 as space constraints in both the 2010 Census and the ACS will likely require single banking the Hispanic origin response categories on certain forms.

While the Census Bureau noted differences in distributions between the control and alternative 6 for both Hispanic origin and race, we do not believe these differences can be used to favor one over the other. Distributions are presented only to provide broad information about how the alternatives performed, as the test was not designed to allow inferences about the number or percentage of any population group. Additionally, one must keep in mind that the 2005 NCT was a national mail test only and did not contain a content reinterview that would have allowed validation of responses. One must be careful in drawing conclusions about the total universe and about which distribution is superior.

The control obtained a lower item non-response rate than alternative 6 to the Hispanic origin question; there was no difference between the control and alternative 6 for item non-response to the race question. However, the evidence did reveal differences in detailed reporting for both the Hispanic origin and the race questions. Hispanic respondents were more likely to provide detailed Hispanic origin groups in alternative 6 than in the control. Conversely, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander respondents were less likely to provide detailed information in alternative 6 than in the control. The two alternatives produced similar detailed reporting for Asians, and there was no statistically significant difference in the reporting of tribes. It appears, therefore, that alternative 6 will result in the collection of the largest amount of detailed information for the total population.

The Census Bureau proposes to use alternative 6 in the 2010 Decennial Census Program. We believe this alternative represents an improvement over the Census 2000 question series and best reflects the necessary balance between maximizing self-response and producing detailed information about Hispanic origin and race. This alternative meets operational considerations and can be adapted to maximize mode consistency.

References:

Eleanor Gerber and Melinda Crowley, "Report on Cognitive Testing of a Shortened Sequence of Hispanic Origin, Race, and Modified Ancestry Questions: Content Development for the 2005 National Content Test," U.S. Census Bureau, October 18, 2005.

Elizabeth A. Martin, "Results of the 'Space Saving' Format Changes and Reversal of the Order of Age and Date of Birth Items," U.S. Census Bureau, October 23, 2006.

Nicholas Alberti, "2005 National Census Test Race and Ethnicity Questions," U.S. Census Bureau, October 30, 2006.

Control (Census 2000-style w/ Hispanic origin and race examples)

→ NOTE: Please answer BOTH Questions 8 and 9.

8. Is Person 1 of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin? Mark "No" if not of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin.

No, not of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin Yes, Puerto Rican
 Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano Yes, Cuban
 Yes, another Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin — Print origin, for example, Argentinian, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on. ↴

9. What is Person 1's race? Mark one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

White
 Black, African Am., or Negro
 American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe. ↴

Asian Indian Japanese Native Hawaiian
 Chinese Korean Guamanian or Chamorro
 Filipino Vietnamese Samoan
 Other Asian — Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on. ↴ Other Pacific Islander — Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on. ↴

Some other race — Print race. ↴

Two-Question Format

Alternative 2 (Shortened Hispanic origin and race (w/examples) and ancestry)

8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? For example, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Colombian, etc.

Yes No

9. What is Person 1's race? Mark one or more races.

White or Caucasian (French, Scottish, etc.)
 Black, African Am., or Negro (Ethiopian, West Indian, etc.)
 American Indian or Alaska Native (Navajo, Athabascan, etc.)
 Asian (Asian Indian, Korean, etc.)
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Fijian, Tongan, etc.)
 Some other race

10. What is Person 1's ancestry or tribe? For example, Italian, African American, Dominican, Aleut, Jamaican, Chinese, Pakistani, Salvadoran, Rosebud Sioux, Nigerian, Samoan, Russian, etc. ↴

Don't know

Three-Question Format

