

NWX-US DEPT OF COMMERCE

**2015 National Content Test Operations Update
Preparations for the 2020 Census**

**U.S. Census Bureau Headquarters
Conference Rooms 1-4**

October 6, 2014 @ 1 p.m. EDT

Marc Perry: Good afternoon. I'm Marc Perry. I'm the acting chief of the Census Bureau's Public Information Office. I'd like to welcome everyone who's viewing today's Webcast. Today we have subject matter experts who will be discussing our preparations for the 2020 census and the 2015 National Content test.

Here's our program for today's news conference. First, our director John Thompson will give opening remarks. Then our subject matter experts will present plans for testing possible 2020 Census questioning wording on within household coverage, relationship and race ethnicity. Finally, we'll take questions and answers after the presentation.

We'll take questions from people in the room and then from those on the phones. If you're calling in on the phone, please be sure to let the operator know that you have a question so he or she can put you into the queue. As a reminder, you can go to our Web site www.census.gov and get information on this press conference as well as the slides from our presenters.

If you have questions, please feel free to call the public information office. That number is 301-763-3030. Without further delay, let me present the Census Bureau's Director, John Thompson.

John Thompson: Thank you and good afternoon. Welcome to my Census Bureau Colleges, our stakeholders and members of the media. And I am extremely pleased to open this briefing and since we have quite a bit to say today, my remarks will be very brief.

But this fall, we will be - or next fall rather, we will be doing a national content test, and this test as was mentioned we will test questions on collection on race and ethnicity, relationship and how to improve the accuracy of population on our questionnaire.

And when you think about it, this is a really, really important endeavor because the data we collect in the 2020 Census will be what we have to use for small areas through the year 2030 when we do the next census.

So this is a very important endeavor. We're really excited about it. I think you'll find that we're doing some really interesting things in our testing. And without further ado, I would like to listen to the presentations and I'll introduce Jennifer Reichert.

Jennifer Reichert: Good afternoon. I want to join the Director in thanking you all for coming out to hear about our plans for continued testing for next year for the 2020 census.

As some of you might know we just had our quarterly program management review on Friday, where we released exciting news about the tests that are upcoming in the Spring of 2015, both in Maricopa County, Arizona, as well as the Savannah market area which includes counties in both Georgia and South Carolina.

The tests you're going to hear about today is later in 2015 and as a continuation of our ongoing testing activities to research innovative methods

for reducing the costs of the 2020 census while maintaining our commitment to a high quality census.

Our briefing today will cover this agenda. First I'm going to provide you with an overview of the 2015 national content test and then we'll have a few different subject matter expert speakers who will come up and talk about the key content testing that will take place in this test. Eli Poehler will talk about the content related within household coverage.

Rose Kreider is going to cover testing of the relationship question. And Nicholas Jones will close out with discussion of the testing related to race and Hispanic origin. And then as Marc mentioned, we will have a Q&A session afterwards.

The 2015 national content test, as I said will take place in the late summer of 2015 with a census date of September 1, 2015. Our specific sample designs for the test are still under development but the test will use a nationally representative sample, including Puerto Rico, with over sampling of key population groups.

As I mentioned, the key content testing that will take place in this test is related to in household coverage, relationship and race and Hispanic origin. However, the test will also include some continued testing building on what we've learned in 2014 and what we will learn in the Spring in 2015 about contact strategies that we used to optimize and maximize self-response particularly through Internet as we know that these will be very key to our cost savings in 2020.

For this test in 2015, mostly our strategies are going to be related to the timing and format of our mailings and reminders. Now I'd like to introduce Eli Poehler, who's going to cover the content research within household coverage.

Elizabeth Poehler: A major component of the census is to determine how many people live in each housing unit in the country. The Census Bureau has established a rule to determine where a person should be counted, especially if they have more than one place they are living or staying. For the purpose of the Census we count a person where he or she lives and sleeps most of the time.

When respondents complete the Census, we must explain who should be counted in their household. In the 2010 census we used a rules based approach to explain who to count. We presented a list of instructions to the respondent that included some examples, such as how to count college students or how to count someone living with them temporarily.

We then asked the respondent to apply these instructions to their household to determine how many people were living there. This is an example of the rules based approach which was used in the previous test. Respondents were instructed to count people where they lived and sleep most of the time.

These instructions were followed by examples of who to include and not include in the household count. The Respondent was then asked to provide the total household count based on their interpretation of the rule and the example. In the 2015 test, we're planning to test the rules based approach, but also an alternative approach.

We will test what we call a questioned based approach in which we ask guided questions based on the rule and examples to elicit a household roster. The intent to take the burden of interpreting the instructions off of the

respondent and allow us to apply the rules based on the responses to the guided questions.

After asking the respondent who usually lives or sleeps at the housing unit, we'll ask questions to identify potential missing people, such as babies, relatives or people with no permanent place to live.

We will also ask questions to determine if anyone who is listed sometimes lives somewhere else. This includes questions about college students, people with vacation or second homes, people in nursing homes and the military, for example.

With this approach the respondent isn't asked to provide a total household roster count, but rather, the population for the household is calculated from the final roster. In this test we will compare the rules based approach to the question based approach and assess accuracy of the two approaches through a re-interview.

Now Rose Kreider will discuss the relationship question.

Rose Kreider: Thank you, Eli. The Census Bureau is constantly working to improve measurement. Let me just provide a short summary of the years of work we've already done on improving estimates from the relationship question.

We've participated along with some 20 other federal agencies as part of the interagency group led by the Office of Management and Budget. That group is called measuring relationship in federal household surveys.

As part of that group, the Census Bureau conducted focus groups and cognitive testing to explore ways to improve estimates of same sex couples. Over several years of work we've developed a revised relationship question.

Since the June 2013 Supreme Court decision on the defense of marriage act there's an increased need for estimates of same sex married couples for federal agencies who administer programs that depend on marital status. Throughout the process the Census Bureau has been in conversation with other counties who already have very similar questions in use.

We've been testing the new question wherever we can in small surveys, but the 2015 content test will be our first chance for a much larger scale test. Here you see the relationship question that was used in Census 2010. The red boxes highlight the two categories that are revised in the newly developed question.

This is the revised relationship question that will be tested in the 2015 content test. As you can see highlighted in the red box, unmarried partner has been moved to the top of the list along with spouse. In addition we now list the type of couple specifically, whether they're an opposite sex or same sex couple and whether they're married.

That gives you a very quick overview of what we're testing in 2015. If you'd like to see the earlier research that we've done on this topic please go to the same sex couples Web page on the Census Bureau Website. And now I'll turn it over to Nicholas Jones.

Nicholas Jones: Thank you, Rose. I'm pleased to update all of you this afternoon on our mid-decade research and our testing plans for race and ethnicity. Many of you are familiar with the extensive research that we conducted during the 2010, as

part of the alternative questionnaire experiment research on race and Hispanic origin.

But for those who are not I will take a couple of minutes to talk with you about that research and to go over some of the highlights and main findings, for what we refer to as the AQE.

After that, I will update you on some of the outreach information that has been conducted over the past couple years, and I'll talk with you about the stakeholder engagement discussions that we've been involved in.

Then I'll present an overview of the key dimensions that we're testing in the 2015 census test in our mid-decade research specifically some of the question formats that we're examining in this research. Finally I'll talk about the timeline that we have for the 2020 census in terms of determining content.

The 2010 AQE was the most comprehensive research effort ever undertaken by the Census Bureau. It was comprised of three main components, a half million household sample for mail out, mail back questionnaire, a telephone re-interview with one in five of those households to do further probing and re-interview questions and a series of 67 focus groups with over 800 people across the United States including parts of Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

Now we want to ensure that everyone has a high level understanding of the experimental research approaches we took in the 2010 AQE, both to provide context for the results as well as the foundation we are taking this decade and exploring now.

Here on the screen, the image on the left presents one of the example approaches we took for testing two separate questions on race and origin. The

image on the right presents examples for a combined question for race and ethnicity.

This basic conceptual comparison is what we'd like you to keep in mind as we move forward. The AQE research sought to understand how and why respondents identified themselves in ways and in different contexts.

We tested different questionnaire strategies with four goals in mind, increasing reporting in race and ethnic categories identified by the Office of Management and Budget or OMB, decreasing non-response, increasing the accuracy and reliability of the results and eliciting detailed responses for all racial ethnic communities, for example Chinese, Mexican, Jamaican, Lebanese, et cetera.

The results of the AQE supported all of these objectives in additionally many individuals across communities liked the combined question approach as they felt it presented equity and balance to all the different categories.

Some of the main findings from the 2010 AQE include combining race and Hispanic origins did not reduce the portions of Hispanics, Blacks, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives, Asians, or Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

One of the most notable findings was that while the separate questions approach still had some other race reporting as high as 7%, the combined question design yielded a substantially reduced proportion of some other race under 1/2%.

And White dropped to levels reflecting the non-Hispanic White population that we see traditionally in two separate question approaches like the 2010

Census. Overall when a Hispanic category is provide as a response option within the combined approach, some other race becomes one of the smallest response groups demonstrating that our combined questions is more in line with how Hispanic respondents view themselves.

Another major finding was that the combined question yielded lower item non-response rates than the two separate question approach. The combined question increased reporting of detailed groups, detailed response for most groups but decreased reporting for others. The combined question better reflects self-identify.

The re-interview study and the focus group research that we conducted, confirmed these reporting patterns were a closer reflection of how individuals self-identify. Across the focus groups, participants commented that all races and ethnic groups were not treated equally in the 2010 census and felt that all groups should be treated fairly and equitably across the board.

Finally one common theme from the AQE research was that across communities many individuals liked the combined question approach and felt it presented equity as each major category received a checkbox with examples and a dedicated write-in space to provide detailed responses.

Over the past couple years our research team has been involved in ongoing dialogs, outreach discussions and engagements with many diverse advisors, stakeholders and external experts since the conception of the 2010 AQE research back in 2008. We worked with them throughout the design phase, implementation and release of the results and continue to now as we make our plans and next steps towards 2020.

For example over the past year members of our national advisory committee met with us to discuss our race and ethnicity research plans and they encouraged us to continue our research on both a separate question and a combined question approach, alternative question wording, instructions and terminology, and also the testing a distinct category for respondents of Middle Eastern, North African or Arab heritage.

Additionally earlier this year, OMB created a federal interagency working group on race and ethnicity to discuss research and possibly make recommendations on important race and ethnicity issues.

We also continue a long tradition of outreach and dialog with myriad racial and ethnic communities as well as with academic scholars and expert researchers. For example we met with the Arab American Institute and leading Middle Eastern and Arab American scholars, activists and organizations earlier this year about their request for a separate classification for a MENA category for Middle Eastern and North African respondents.

We met with members of the national council of Asians and Pacific Americans to discuss ways in which we could collect important disaggregated data for detailed Asian groups and detailed Pacific Islander groups.

We met with leaders and researchers and experts in the Latino community at a national summit to discuss, sponsored national association of Latino and, elected and appointed officials to discuss AQE findings, race reporting patterns among Hispanic and also ways to improve data on race and ethnicity.

We also met with a broad national coalition of researchers and civil rights experts to discuss the topic of race, ethnicity and civil rights at a forum sponsored by the leadership conference on civil and human rights.

And just last month we met with researchers and Afro-Latino community to take part in a panel discussion on the importance of race and ethnicity data and identity for the Afro-Latino population.

So today, I'm here to share with you on our mid-decade research plans to define our designs for race and ethnicity which follow upon the successful strategies that we tested in the 2010 census alternative questionnaire experiment.

With respect to race and ethnicity the Census Bureau has been developing refinements to several key dimensions for testing and improving questions on race and Hispanic origins. These dimensions that you see here on the screen include question format as we continue to research both the separate question approach.

And the combined question approach, response categories where we're exploring how to collect and tabulate data for respondents of Middle Eastern, North African and Arab heritage, the wording of instructions and question terminology, through examining ways to optimize detailed reporting and to improve respondent understanding of the options to report multiple race and ethnic groups.

In addition, we're also testing Web based technology, for example the Internet, Smart phone, Tablet and telephone options to enhance question designs and to optimize reporting of detailed racial and ethnic groups.

Now when the 2010 AQE research was conducted the Census Bureau emphasized that the research strategies that were being tested did not intend to pick the 2020 census questions ten years ahead of time.

We also advised that we expected to conduct more research during the decade to build upon the successful strategies of the 2010 AQE, in order to make recommendations and determination for the 2020 census content.

Our 2015 census test will enable us further evaluate the separate questions approach and the combined question approach to determine how the questions perform in new Web based data collection methods using the Internet, Smartphone, telephone and in-person response options.

What you see here are some of the revisions that we're testing. The results and the findings from the 2015 research will inform recommendations to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget on question design format, for example the separate versus the combined question for the 2020 census.

2015 tests will also evaluate the use of the Middle Eastern or North African...

Coordinator: If you'd like to ask a question from the phone press star 1 and please record your name. Again, it's star 1 and please record your name to ask a question from the phones.

Nicholas Jones: ...selecting a major race or ethnic category. Taking a closer look this image shows the Middle Eastern or North African category along with six example groups and a dedicated write-in space for respondents to enter their detailed ethnicities such as Lebanese or Egyptian.

The 2015 test will also evaluate the use of alternative instruction wording and terminology for improving respondent understanding of the question and the reporting options. Recent qualitative focus groups and cognitive research

found that the instruction to mark with X one or more boxes, is frequently overlooked by respondents.

In fact the research found that some respondents stopped reading the instructions after noticing the visual cue X and proceeded to do just that, mark a box, overlooking the remainder of the instructions to mark one or more boxes.

We're testing alternative instruction wording to mark all boxes that apply and also noting that people may report more than one group. This is an attempt to improve the clarity of the question and to make it apparent that more than one group may be selected.

We will also evaluate the use of different terminology to describe the question and the concept of race, ethnicity and origin. Recent qualitative research found that the term origin is confusing or misleading to many respondents who may think it's asking about where they originated from or where they were born.

Two alternative options are being explored in cognitive testing this year and usability research with one approach testing the term ethnicities along with race. For example print this specified races or ethnicities. The other approach tests the removal of the terms race, ethnicity and origin altogether from the questions stemming from the instructions and the examples.

Instead a general approach would ask which categories describe this person. Now the exact terminology to be used for these alternative versions of our testing are pending the cognitive research and usability testing later this year which will inform the wording that we plan for the 2015 test.

In addition with the advantage of new technology to collect data via Web based designs we will also be testing a combined testing with detailed checkboxes for soliciting detailed racial and ethnic groups.

This approach will provide a series of detailed checkboxes and write-in spaces for each of the OMB categories to help collect data for detailed groups, for example Samoan, Iranian, Filipino, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, Irish, et cetera.

This design example that you see here on the screen emphasis some of the options that we're exploring for our Internet and Web based data collections. On the initial screen that you see here a combined question for race and ethnicity collects data on the major OMB categories.

For each of the major categories a checkbox is provided, examples are shown for the six largest groups representing the geographic diversity of the OMB race and ethnic definition. For example, someone may mark that they are Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish, and also mark that they are also Black, or African American and also mark that they are Asian.

After doing so, they will be guided to a subsequent set of screens that collects detailed information. For any category selected a subsequent Internet screen presents several detailed checkbox groups and a dedicated write-in area to collect additional detailed responses.

So for example, this screen would collect detailed responses for a respondent that marked they were Hispanic, Latino or Spanish, offering them checkboxes for Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Salvadoran, Columbian, et cetera, with the opportunity to write-in more detailed groups on the line below.

In similar fashion, a respondent who marked Black or African American would receive a screen that collects detailed responses for specific Black groups such as African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, et cetera.

And additional screens would collect data for other categories that were selected by the respondent going back to our example, for a respondent who selected Asian, a follow up screen would collect detailed responses for a specific Asian group, such as Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, et cetera.

These Web based designs enable us to do much more than paper questionnaires. And we believe these new design approaches will help us collect data, not only for the broader OMB race and ethnic categories but also for detailed race and Hispanic origin groups across the country.

Finally this graphic provides a high level timeline for making decision on content on the 2020 census. Today we've announced our plans for content research that will be conducted as part of the 2015 national census test.

Later this year a federal register notice will elicit public comment on the mid-decade research that we're undertaking and over the next year we'll conduct cognitive testing, systems development and also finalize our plan for the question designs to conduct with the 2015 test.

In 2016 we will analyze the results and discuss the findings with stakeholders and external advisors, as we prepare to make recommendations to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. By early 2017, the 2020 census topics must be submitted to Congress with the final question wording due by April of 2018.

In 2019 we must finalize and test our operational and processing plans to collect, edit and tabulate the 2020 census data. And along the way, as you can see here at the bottom of the timeline, the Census Bureau will have ongoing outreach and dialog with myriad stakeholders, communities, leaders, experts, scholars and advisors and these important discussions.

And interactions have been and will continue to be paramount in our efforts to conduct the 2020 Census.

We hope this presentation has given you a good overview of research plans for the 2015 national content test and we look forward to addressing your questions. With that I'll turn it back over to our MC Marc Perry.

Marc Perry: Thank you, Nicholas. Now we'll be opening up the discussion to questions from the media first and then non-media. We ask that you state your name and your affiliation when you ask a question. We want to give everyone an opportunity to ask a question so be allowing one question and one follow up. Operator, can you provide instructions for us?

Coordinator: Please press Star 1 and record name to ask a question. Again it's Star 1 and record your name.

Marc Perry: And while we're waiting for questions from callers bear in mind that our staff can arrange for interviews after the news conference. You can obtain further information by calling 301-763-3030, or emailing us at PIO@census.org.

Coordinator: So far there are no questions from the phones.

Marc Perry: Do we have any questions in the room? Yes. Could you walk up? You can walk up, yes.

Randa Serhan: My question is about who did you reach out to? You said you, earlier this year you reached to the Arab American Institute. But have you reached out to more, you used the word communities. Have you actually done anything more grassroots?

Nicholas Jones: Sorry is this specifically about the research on the Middle Eastern, North African category?

Randa Serhan: Yes

Nicholas Jones: Okay. Thank you for the question. We've actually been involved, and I'm going to ask my colleague Roberto Ramirez to come up and join me. We've been involved in a number of discussions with representatives from the Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab American communities.

This started several years ago and it continues. Roberto can provide you with some of the specifics that we done in terms of the outreach with specific stakeholders. Thanks for the question.

Roberto Ramirez: Hello, I'm Roberto Ramirez. I'm the Chief of the Ethnicity and Ancestry Branch here at the Census Bureau, so yes actually we have been involved and talking to a number of key stakeholders from the MENA community. In particular we have been working with the Arab American Institute.

We have also been working with the American Arab anti-discrimination committee and the Iranian coalition and Iraqi coalition. And we also have been in great consultation with two members of our national advisory

committee, that would be Akram Khater, History Professor from North Carolina Community, Director of Middle Eastern Studies, and also Hassan Jaber from Dearborn.

He is the director of ACCESS, the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services. So we have been in consultation as Nicholas said. And we plan to continue to do consultation, in fact we are now tentatively planning an expert forum to convene a number of experts throughout the country this spring in 2015, to hear about the reviews and to hear about how we should classify people from this region.

Marc Perry: Thank you, Roberto. Operator, do we have callers?

Coordinator: Again, it's Star 1 and please record your name to ask a question from the phones. The first question is from Olivia Winslow from Newsday.

Olivia Winslow: Good afternoon. Can you all hear me?

Marc Perry: Yes, we can. Please ask the question.

Olivia Winslow: All right. I have one question and a follow up. First if you could clarify the tests that are taking place in 2015. So you have the National Content Test in September but there are also tests earlier, I guess earlier in the year, in Maricopa County, Arizona, and Savannah, Georgia testing various aspects of the Internet capabilities.

Could you clarify how the National Tests would work in conjunction with these tests in Arizona and Georgia?

Marc Perry: Yes, thank you for this question and I'll have Jennifer Reichert come up and clarify that.

Jennifer Reichert: Okay thanks for the question. As I mentioned we will have, and you mentioned, we will have two tests that will have census dates surrounding April 1, 2015 as you mentioned one in Maricopa County, Arizona and the other in the Savannah market area, in both Georgia and South Carolina.

Those tests are going to be focused on very specific objectives related to the census. The Maricopa County test will really focus on our non-response follow up operations. So those are our operations where we have to go out and send the numerators to people's households to collect interview data when we have not received anything through the self-response.

We will also have a self-response component to that test but we won't be testing any objectives in that part of the test. Whereas in the Savannah site, we will be testing very specific objectives related to self-response.

And as we've released last Friday, those primary objectives are allowing respondents to respond without a census ID, as well as allowing respondents to engage early in the census process through our Notify Me initiative, which allows them to choose their mode of contact. So if they want to be contacted by the Census Bureau in the future by email or text.

That initiative will enable them to come in and register their email address or their cell phone number to be able to be contacted in that way. Those tests will be focused on those parts of the census.

The National test that we're talking about here today is really mostly about content and some of the contact strategies that we're using so they're not

necessarily related. However whatever we learn in those site tests in the early part of the year, we will make every attempt to try to build into any additional testing that we do in 2015.

But we are, all three of these tests are testing slightly different objectives in terms of the entire census process.

Olivia Winslow: And my follow up is it a foregone conclusion that the Internet will be part of the 2020 Census, either in whole or in part and how will that work?

Jennifer Reichert: Yes. Right now we are operating the under the we will have the Internet as a primary self-response option for all respondents in 2020. And that will work by, right now what our plans are is probably we will do some kind of a mail out invitation for everybody to respond via the Internet.

But we will also have, as we always do at ever census, an integrated communications campaign that will make the entire public aware of this option and enable them to go onto the Website and complete their Census, through the Internet option.

Olivia Winslow: Thank you.

Coordinator: The next question is from...

Jennifer Reichert: And yes, Director Thompson just asked me to run, we understand that there are portions of our country that don't have Internet access or prefer not to use it and they will also have a paper option available to them so there'll be that option as well. But we're going to encourage the public to use the Internet to the extent we can.

Coordinator: Are you ready for the next question from the phones?

Marc Perry: Yes, we are.

Coordinator: That's from Terri Ann Lowenthal from the Census Project Blog.

Terri Ann Lowenthal : Yes, good afternoon. Can you hear me?

Marc Perry: You're doing great, thank you.

Terri Ann Lowenthal: Okay. My question specifically relates to the budget and funding for fiscal year 2015. I'm wondering if anyone can comment on the possibility there might be a longer term temporary resolution, a continuing resolution for the entire year which would not increase the Census Bureau's funding over this year's funding level.

And I'm wondering how that prospect might affect all of these testing plans?

Marc Perry: Thanks for that question. Director Thompson is coming up here.

John Thompson: So, we are working, we understand the components of potential funding scenarios and we've doing a lot of prioritization. We've been working closely with our colleagues at the Department of Commerce, the Office of Management and Budget, and providing timely information to the Congress.

Right now we are not in a position to publicly discuss the actions we have, but you can rest assured that we've been doing lot of prioritization and planning and what if analysis which will become available as the budget situation unfolds.

Terri Ann Lowenthal: Thank you.

Coordinator: Again, it's Star 1 to record your name to ask a question from the phone.

Marc Perry: Do we have any other questions in the room? No. Operator do we have any other questions online.

Coordinator: There's no questions from the phones right now.

Marc Perry: All right. That wraps up today's news conference. Thank you very much for participating. We appreciate your interest in the 2020 Census and in the Census Bureau. Thank you.

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