# Studying Public Opinion Attitudes Towards the 2030 Census: 2023 Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS)

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United States® Census Bureau

# Outline

## Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators Study (CBAMS)

- CBAMS Overview
- 2023 Data Collection
- 2023 CBAMS Preliminary Insights:
  - ➤ Characteristics of survey respondents
  - ➤ Intent to respond to the Census
  - ➤ Motivators
  - ➤ Knowledge Gaps
  - ➤ New topics: Ancestry
  - ➤ Text analysis for *Other (specify)* categories

- Next Steps

# CBAMS Overview

## Purpose

1. Improve upon the successful 2020 Census Integrated Partnership and Communications Campaign research to inform early planning for the 2030 Census.

2. Glean insights that can benefit enterprise-wide communications, data collection and data dissemination efforts, beyond the decennial operation.

## CBAMS Objectives

Understand attitudes, barriers & motivators towards the Census

Increase focus on Historically Undercounted Populations and Hard-to-Count audiences

Explore awareness of and trust in the Census Bureau over time

# Selected Research Questions

1. Who intends to respond to the census?
2. Where do gaps in knowledge about the census exist?
3. What would motivate people to complete the census?

# 2023 CBAMS Survey Methodology

- The data was collected as part of the **Census Household Panel**, a nationally-representative, address-based, probability internet panel (includes non-internet households).
- The panel included a baseline questionnaire and the CBAMS Survey was fielded as a topical survey.
- Data collection occurred in November 2023 in both English and Spanish
- Average length of survey: 14 minutes
- Target population: U.S. Adults, 18 years of age and older, living in residential dwelling units.
- Number of respondents: 7,300

# Selected Characteristics of 2023 CBAMS Sample

| Demographic | Categories | Frequency (SE) | Unweighted N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | Male | 48.87 (0.92) | 3200 |
| | Female | 51.13 (0.92) | 4100 |
| Age | 18-34 | 26.22 (0.97) | 1100 |
| | 35-44 | 18.80 (0.69) | 1400 |
| | 45-64 | 33.04 (0.80) | 2700 |
| | 65+ | 21.94 (0.63) | 2100 |
| Education | Less than High School | 8.18 (0.66) | 250 |
| | High School, no college | 29.41 (0.97) | 1000 |
| | Some College or Associate Degree | 29.19 (0.79) | 2000 |
| | Bachelors' degree or higher | 33.21 (0.71) | 4100 |
| Race and Ethnicity | Hispanic | 17.50 (0.78) | 900 |
| | NH White Alone | 61.26 (0.91) | 4800 |
| | NH Black Alone | 11.98 (0.56) | 800 |
| | NH Asian Alone | 5.72 (0.43) | 500 |
| | NH Any Other Race | 3.54 (0.31) | 250 |

# Intent to Respond to the Census

CBAMS measure of those who are "extremely" or "very" likely to fill out the census form if the census were held today.

| 2023 CBAMS Survey | 84% | 16% |
|---|---|---|

Extremely likely=53%(0.92), Very likely=31%(0.86), Somewhat likely 15% (0.76), Not too likely 1% (0.14) and Missing/No Response 0% (0.02)
Total unweighted sample size = 7,300
Total weighted sample size = 255,000,000

# Intent to Respond to the Census

CBAMS measure of those who are "extremely" or "very" likely to fill out the census form if the census were held today.

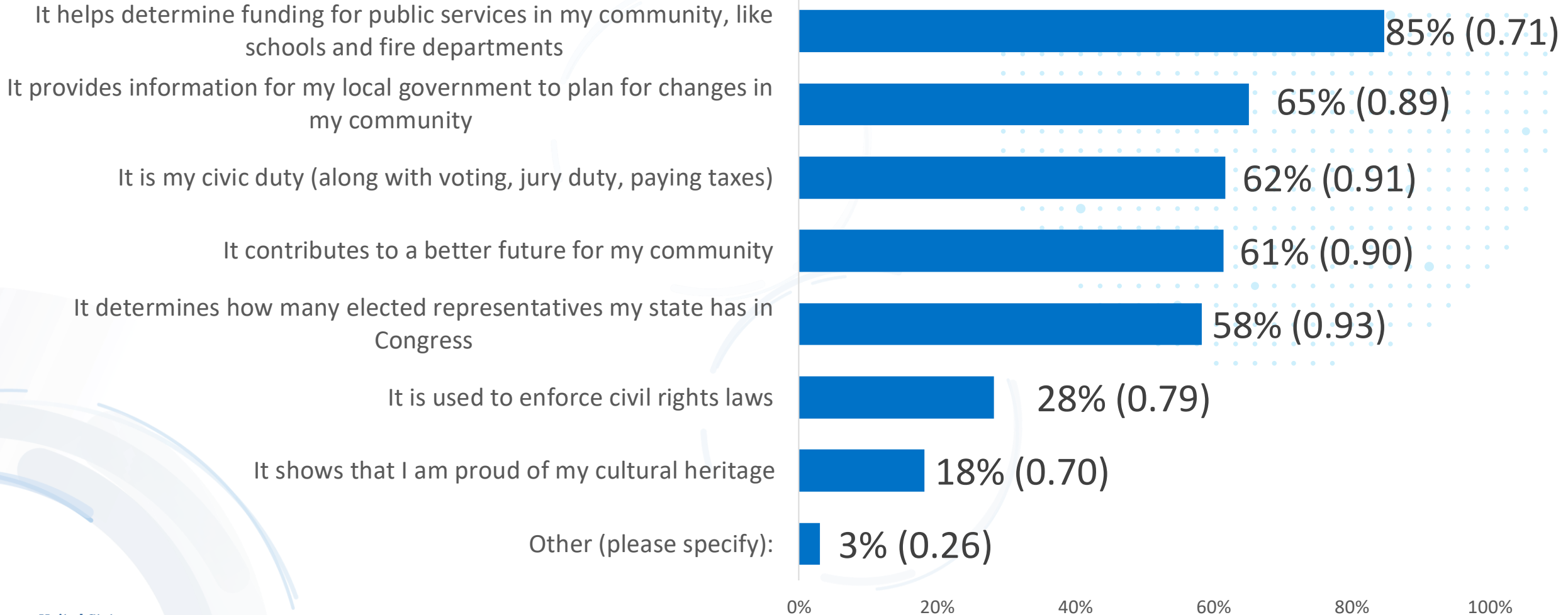| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2023 CBAMS Survey** | 84% | 16% |
| **2018 CBAMS Survey** | 67% | 33% |
| **2008 CBAMS Survey** | 86% | 14% |
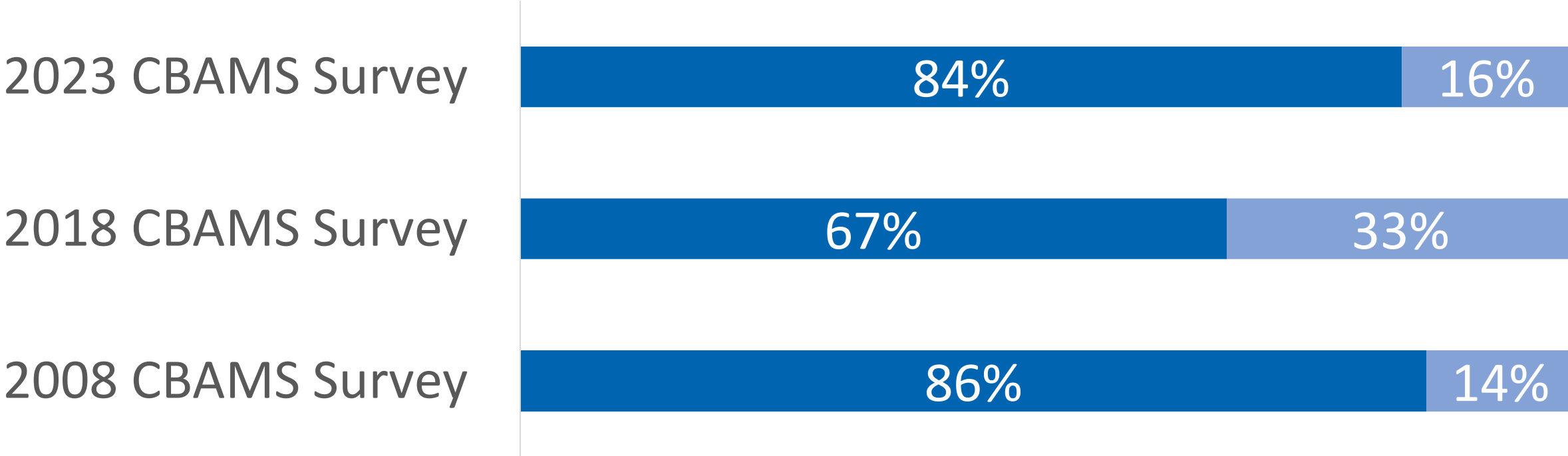
Note:
1. Due to methodological differences, direct statistical comparison between 2008, 2018 and 2023 survey are not appropriate.
2018 CBAMS and 2008 Source: 2020 Census Barriers, Attitudes, Motivators (CBAMS)
2. The point estimate for the 2008 CBAMS Survey reflects the percentage of those who said they would "definitely" or "probably" respond to the 2010 Census.
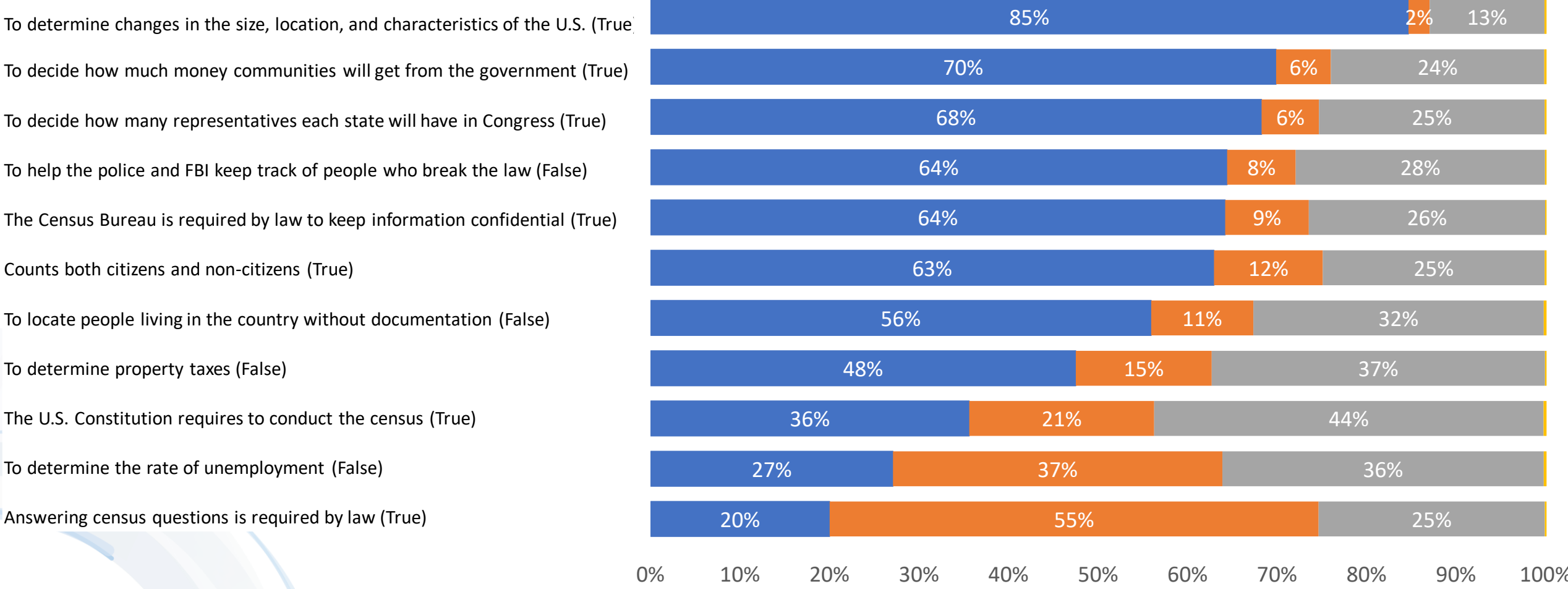
# Motivators

Which of the following are the most important reasons, to you personally, for filling out the census form every ten years? *Select all that apply*.

| Reason | Value |
|---|---|
| It helps determine funding for public services in my community, like schools and fire departments | 85% (0.71) |
| It provides information for my local government to plan for changes in my community | 65% (0.89) |
| It is my civic duty (along with voting, jury duty, paying taxes) | 62% (0.91) |
| It contributes to a better future for my community | 61% (0.90) |
| It determines how many elected representatives my state has in Congress | 58% (0.93) |
| It is used to enforce civil rights laws | 28% (0.79) |
| It shows that I am proud of my cultural heritage | 18% (0.70) |
| Other (please specify): | 3% (0.26) |

0%    20%    40%    60%    80%    100%

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# Census Knowledge Questions

| Question | Correct | Incorrect | Dont Know |
|---|---|---|---|
| To determine changes in the size, location, and characteristics of the U.S. (True) | 85% | 2% | 13% |
| To decide how much money communities will get from the government (True) | 70% | 6% | 24% |
| To decide how many representatives each state will have in Congress (True) | 68% | 6% | 25% |
| To help the police and FBI keep track of people who break the law (False) | 64% | 8% | 28% |
| The Census Bureau is required by law to keep information confidential (True) | 64% | 9% | 26% |
| Counts both citizens and non-citizens (True) | 63% | 12% | 25% |
| To locate people living in the country without documentation (False) | 56% | 11% | 32% |
| To determine property taxes (False) | 48% | 15% | 37% |
| The U.S. Constitution requires to conduct the census (True) | 36% | 21% | 44% |
| To determine the rate of unemployment (False) | 27% | 37% | 36% |
| Answering census questions is required by law (True) | 20% | 55% | 25% |

Legend: ■ Correct ■ Incorrect ■ Dont Know ■ Missing/INR

Standard errors were calculated for the frequencies and are avai

# Census Knowledge Index (Additive index)



33%
(0.79)
High Knowledge
(8-11 correct items)

47%
(0.91)
Medium Knowledge
(4-7 correct items)

19%
(0.82)
Low Knowledge
(0-3 correct items)
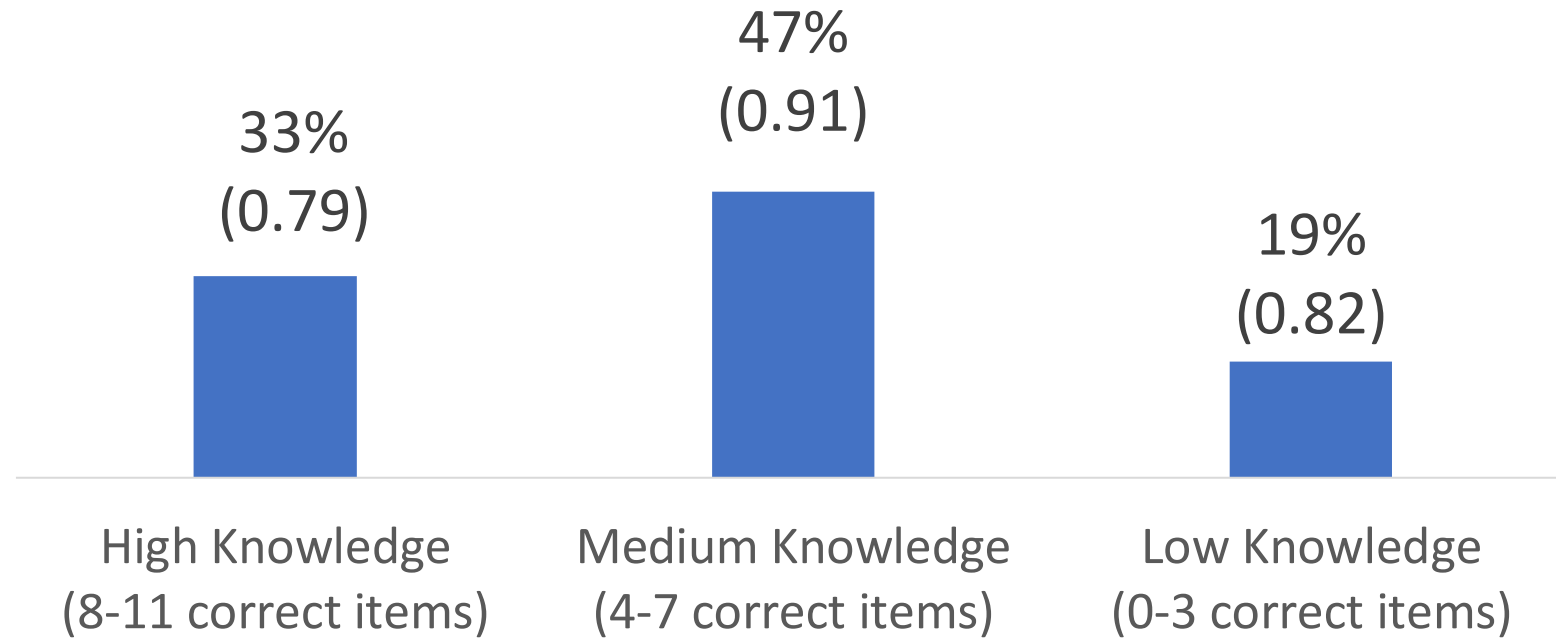
# Census Knowledge Index (Additive index)
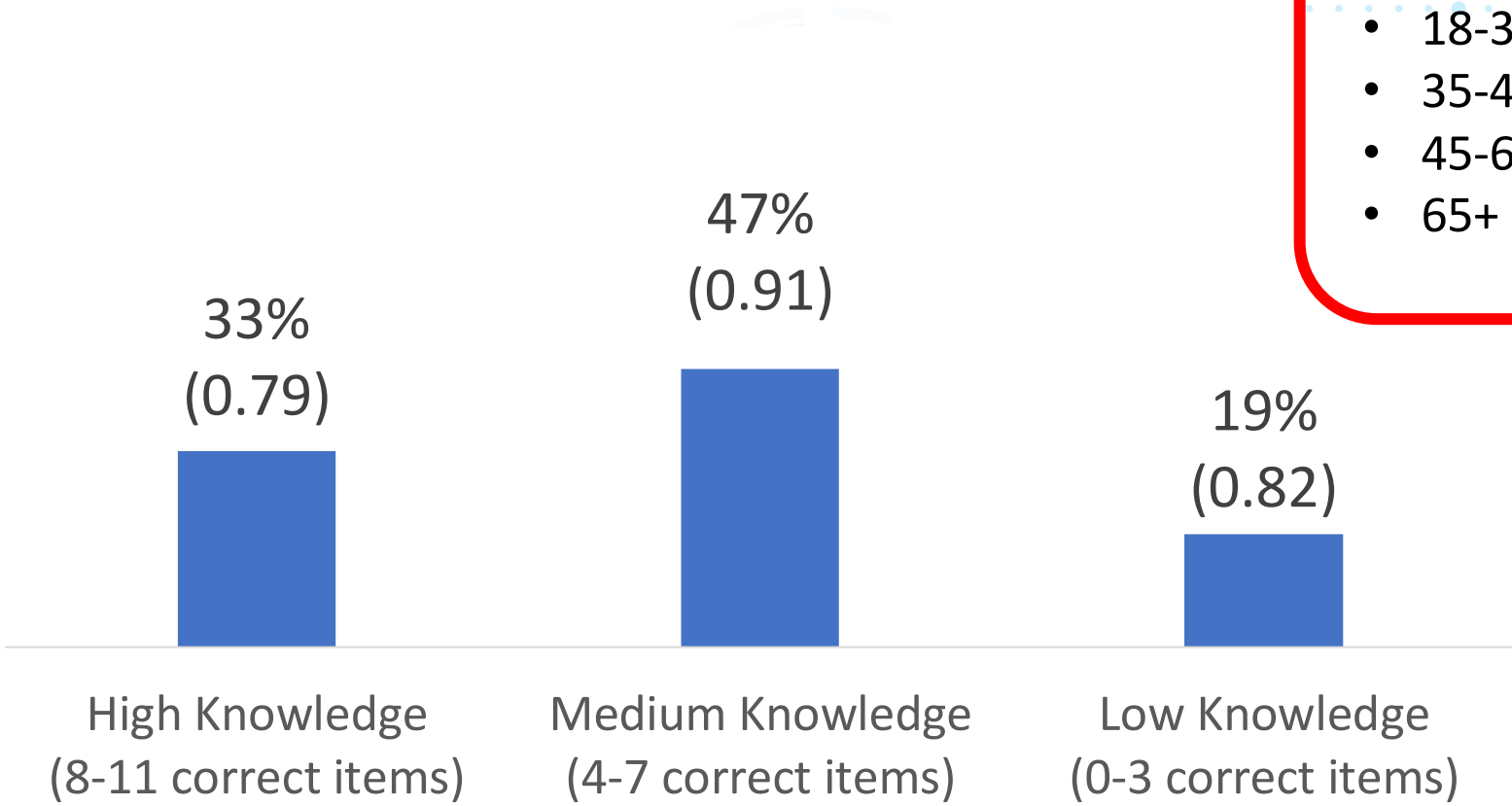
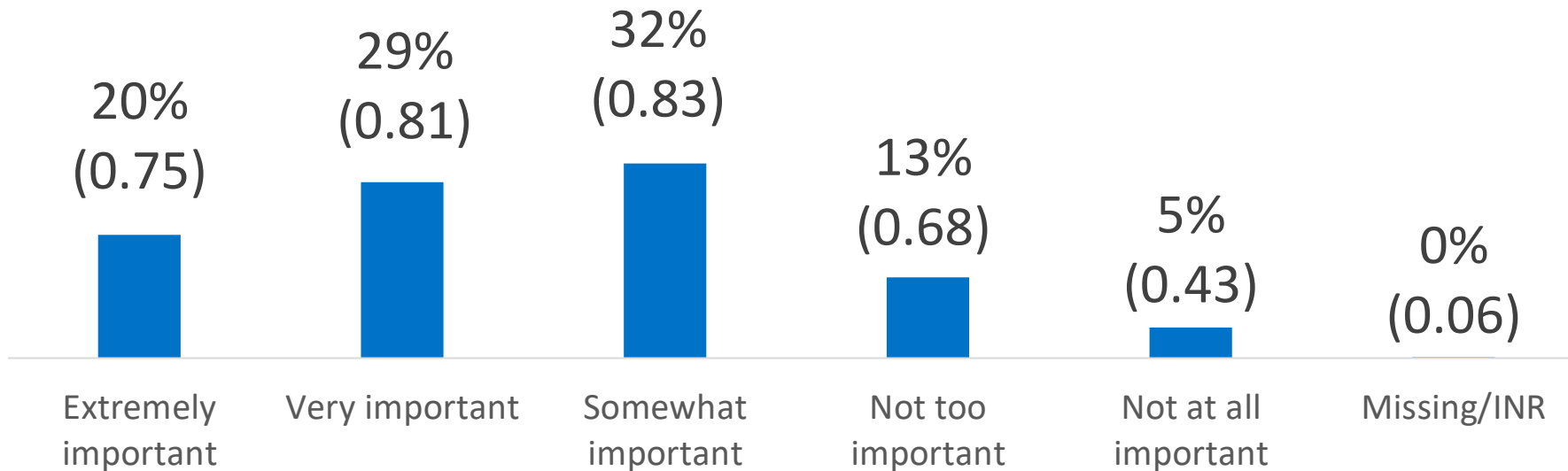% High Knowledge by Age:

- 18-34 years old: 21% (1.76)
- 35-44 years old: 27% (1.60)
- 45-64 years old: 38% (1.27)
- 65+ years old: 47% (1.48)

33%
(0.79)

47%
(0.91)

19%
(0.82)

High Knowledge
(8-11 correct items)

Medium Knowledge
(4-7 correct items)

Low Knowledge
(0-3 correct items)

# New Topics: Ancestry

How important is it to you to know your ancestry?



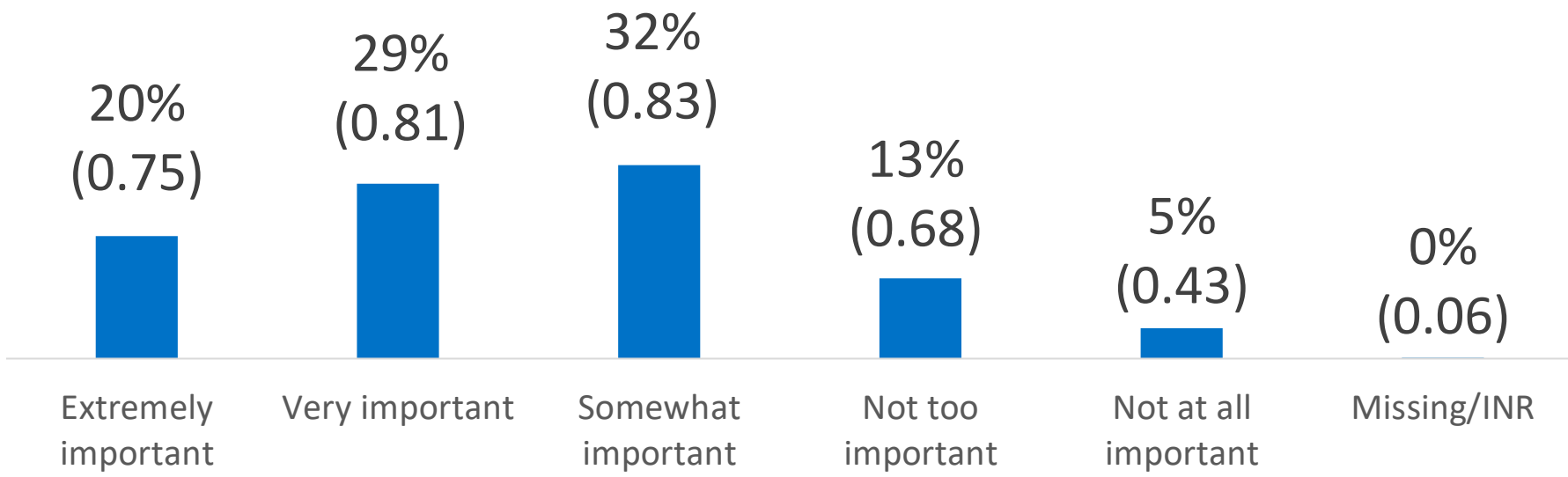| Extremely important | Very important | Somewhat important | Not too important | Not at all important | Missing/INR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20% (0.75) | 29% (0.81) | 32% (0.83) | 13% (0.68) | 5% (0.43) | 0% (0.06) |

# New Topics: Ancestry

How important is it to you to know your ancestry?
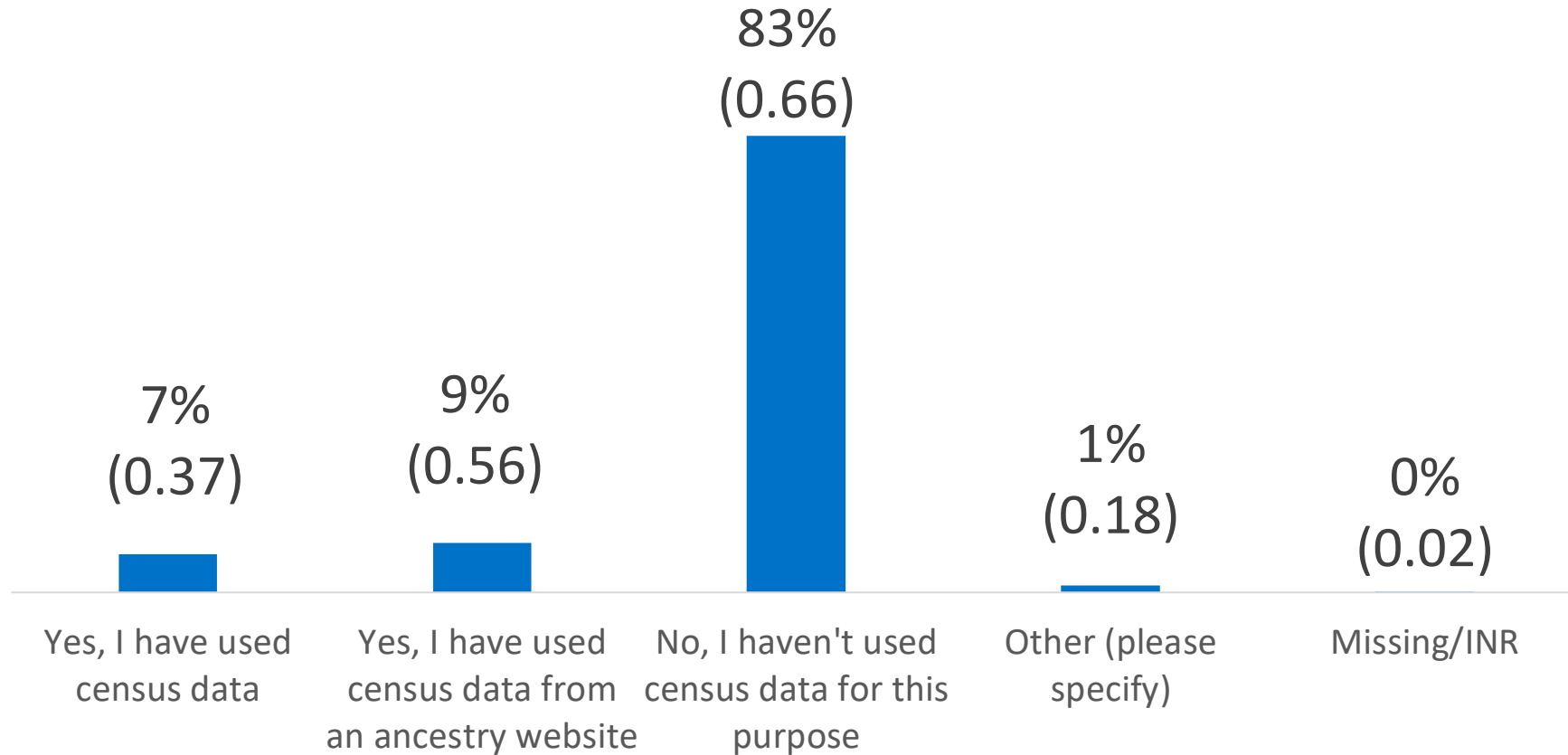
% Race and Ethnicity for Extremely Important:

- White: 15% (0.87)
- Black/AA: 38% (2.44)
- Asian: 19% (3.13)
- Hispanic: 24% (2.01)

20%
(0.75)
Extremely important

29%
(0.81)
Very important

32%
(0.83)
Somewhat important

13%
(0.68)
Not too important

5%
(0.43)
Not at all important

0%
(0.06)
Missing/INR

# New Topics: Ancestry

Have you used census data to research your ancestry?



83%
(0.66)

7%
(0.37)

9%
(0.56)

1%
(0.18)

0%
(0.02)

Yes, I have used census data

Yes, I have used census data from an ancestry website

No, I haven't used census data for this purpose

Other (please specify)

Missing/INR

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# Text Analysis for *Other (specify)* Categories

**Methods**

- For questions with < 1K responses (n=8)
  - Coded responses for presence of top 20 most frequent words
  - Used each word in turn as a sorting factor for manual labeling

- For questions with > 1K responses (n=2)
  - Encoded responses into numeric representations using machine learning techniques
  - Applied clustering algorithm & labeled coherent clusters
  - Further processed incoherent clusters
    - Used keywords to predict labels OR
    - Predicted labels using processed data & manually validated

# Text Analysis for *Other (specify) Categories*

- Selected emerging topics from self-reported write-up for "other" category.

English ▾

Which of the following are the most important reasons, to you personally, for filling out the census form every ten years? *Select all that apply.*

☐ It helps determine funding for public services in my community, like schools and fire departments

☐ It determines how many elected representatives my state has in Congress

☐ It is used to enforce civil rights laws

☐ It provides information for my local government to plan for changes in my community

☐ It shows that I am proud of my cultural heritage

☐ It is my civic duty (along with voting, jury duty, paying taxes)

☐ It contributes to a better future for my community

☐ Other (please specify):

Important reasons to fill out the census (Other)*

- Future ancestry research

- Understand community data trends

- Provide data for research generally

- Provide representation of my community

- You have to

- Social duty

* Labels created by the authors for analysis purposes. The labels are not verbatim responses from write-in responses

# A glimpse into the data: Emerging topics from 2023 CBAMS

English ▾

Which of the following are the TOP THREE reasons why your household did not complete the 2020 Census? Select up to three answers.

- ☐ I am not a citizen and did not think I had to respond to the 2020 Census
- ☐ Was concerned about COVID-19 (e.g., wanted to avoid interacting with people outside my household)
- ☐ Did not have time or forgot to respond
- ☐ A census interviewer did not visit my household to encourage me to respond
- ☐ I thought someone else at my household was going to respond
- ☐ Concerned about citizenship status
- ☐ Did not want to speak with a U.S. Census Bureau enumerator
- ☐ Did not want to give out personal information
- ☐ Do not trust the government
- ☐ I rented the place where I lived and did not think I had to respond to the 2020 Census
- ☐ Did not think my response would matter
- ☐ Did not know the 2020 Census was happening
- ☐ I was worried my responses could cause trouble with my living situation (e.g., increasing rent, evictions, inspections, limiting the number of people living in my place, etc.)
- ☐ Did not get a census form
- ☐ Other (please specify):

## Top 3 reasons not filled out census? (Other)

- Was not in the country

- Not sure if I responded

- Don't remember why

- Had no permanent address

- Lived at a different location

- Didn't get Census form

\* Labels created by the authors for analysis purposes. The labels are not verbatim responses from write-in responses

# 2023 CBAMS Preliminary Insights: A summary

### Intent to participate

- High intent to respond observed in first intercensal measurement

### Knowledge gaps

- Positive – Knowledge gains/higher than 2018
- Don't Know answers outweigh incorrect informational

### Motivators

- Funding for community needs remains the most influential motivator across audiences

### Ancestry

- Ancestry data is important for people but no connection with Census data

✓ It is important to monitor public opinion towards the decennial census over time; this successful data collection represents the first in a time series leading up to the development of the 2030 Census communications campaign

✓ 2020 Census messaging did not include information about ancestry or the connection between the decennial census and ancestry research/websites. However, survey findings suggest we continue to explore the use of ancestry messaging.

✓ The addition of open-ended response options provides the opportunity to identify new survey content and topics to explore qualitatively.

# Next steps

- Planning for the next iteration of the CBAMS Survey, which will occur in 2025. Quantitative and qualitative data collection will continue in odd years through 2030

- Continue analysis of open-ended questions

- Continue to identify new topics for the survey instrument and for exploration in focus groups

# QUESTIONS?

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