

STUDY SERIES REPORT
(*Survey Methodology* #2005-07)

**Cognitive Test of the 2006 NRFU:
Round 1**

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Abstract

This report documents the results of Round 1 cognitive interviews conducted by the Statistical Research Division (SRD). These interviews were conducted by staff from SRD from June to August, 2005, using a paper script to evaluate respondent's problems with the 2006 NRFU instrument. The research showed that respondents tended not to read the residence rules flashcard they were handed while answering the person count question. Several respondents made the critical error of not including themselves on the household roster. In the overcount question, some respondents included houseguests who had not previously been listed and others reported nonrelatives and people staying temporarily, who had already been listed on the roster. The renter/owner question was too complex, and respondents asked for it to be repeated. There is the potential for respondent to misreport in the relationship question because their definition of "related" in the initial question ("Is this person related to Person 1?") was different from the Census Bureau's definition. Recommendations for revision or further testing to address these problems are also contained in the report.

Cognitive Test of the 2006 NRFU: Round 1

Testing Agency: Census SRD

Test Date: June 2005

Principal Investigator: Jenny Hunter

Evaluation Type: Cognitive Test

Pre-Testing Mode: Interviewer-Administered Paper

Sponsor: Census DMD

Survey Title: NRFU

Survey Year: 2006

Universe: Population

Field Mode: M-CAPI

Documentation: Summaries, Audio-tapes, Final report

The Statistical Research Division (SRD) of the U.S. Census Bureau was contacted by the Decennial Management Division to conduct pretesting of the Nonresponse Follow-up (NRFU) instrument as it was programmed for the 2006 Census Test. Results from this test and from Round 2, to be conducted in early 2006, will be used to improve the instrument for the 2008 Dress Rehearsal.

METHODS

From June to August 2005, 14 interviews were conducted by staff from SRD¹. In the 2006 Census Test, the NRFU instrument will be fielded using a mobile-computer assisted personal interview instrument operated on a hand held computer (HHC). For the first round of cognitive testing, a paper script was used to test the question content because the full instrument was not yet available. One limitation of this method is that the age calculation and verification could not be pretested in this round.

The 14 respondents who were interviewed ranged from 20 years to 57 years of age. There were seven whites and seven African Americans, none of Hispanic origin. Five of these respondents were male and nine were female. Six respondents had a GED or a high school diploma, one went to vocational school, two had some college, three had bachelors' degrees and two had graduate degrees. They resided in Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and one respondent's usual residence was in Texas, so he was interviewed about that household.

Two rounds of usability testing have been conducted to date and these results are also referenced when applicable.

This report first presents findings and recommendations that pertain to the entire instrument. Second, there are question-by-question findings and recommendations for each item. The findings and recommendations presented here are preliminary findings. They should be used in conjunction with Round 2.

OVERALL RESULTS

Issue

Each time the script for the HHC needs to refer to the housing unit, there is a fill for the enumerator to choose the appropriate designation from the choices "house/apartment/mobile

¹ Interviews were conducted by Jenny Hunter, La Toya Barnett, Kari Grow, and Maria Bruun. Lorraine Randall was instrumental in recruiting and setting up the interviews.

home.” This clutters the screen with a fill that is unnecessary on an automated instrument. This was also noted in the usability study of this instrument (Olmsted & Hourcade, 2005).

Recommendation

I recommend that the HHC give enumerators the option to choose at the beginning of the interview which designation is appropriate, and then the instrument would electronically fill that designation throughout the interview to avoid unnecessary screen clutter. The usability lab made this same recommendation in its Round 2 Quick Report (Olmsted & Hourcade, 2005).

Issue

The topic- based format repeats each question in its entirety for each household member. This became very burdensome, especially for large households. Round 1 of the usability study also found that participants found repeating the exact same question text for each person burdensome (Olmsted, Hourcade & Abdalla, 2005).

Recommendation

An equally effective method of gathering the data would be to ask each person-level question the first time in its entirety, followed by “How about NAME?” for the remaining household members. There is some evidence that enumerators take this shortcut anyway (Hunter and Landreth, 2005). If it is scripted this way, I believe it would offer enumerators a less burdensome alternative and increase the likelihood that they would stick to the script. The question would be scripted in its entirety as optional text in the case that the respondent forgot the question. This could be implemented as follows:

Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?
How about Maria? (Is she of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?)
How about John? (Is he of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?)
etc.

QUESTION-BY-QUESTION RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Do you live at <Address>?

Respondents exhibited no problems with this question. They understood what was meant by the term “live.”

No Recommendations.

2. Did you or anyone in your household live at <Address> on <Census Day>?

No problems were exhibited here. Respondents in this study did seem to notice the date in the question and they were able to distinguish this question from the one preceding it.

No Recommendations.

3. Is this (house/apartment/mobile home) the usual residence of someone in this household, (pause) or is it, a vacation home, seasonal home, or held for occasional use?

Issues

Generally, respondents in this study understood the intent of this question; however, most could not remember the term “usual residence” by the time the interviewer got to the end of the question. Even though in every single case the respondent intended to answer “usual residence,” only 3 respondents actually answered with that term. Four said some variation of “regular” – either “regular home,” “regular household” or “regular use.” Two others said it was “permanent” and two more said “usual home.” The remaining 3 said “it’s a house that houses four different people,” “residential house,” and “actual residence.” It is evident that, respondents in this study understood what the question was asking, but they struggled to find the correct term to use to identify it. This leads us to believe that the term “usual residence” is not one that respondents can identify with.

Behavior coding of the 2004 NRFU (using the same question) yielded similar results (Hunter & Landreth, 2005). In the behavior coding study, this question was administered with a major change in 63 percent of all cases. In over half of those cases, the interviewer only asked if it was the usual residence – making it a “yes/no” question instead of a “choose one.” This may have helped them alleviate the problem of respondents not remembering what the options were. The behavior coding also revealed that in 21 percent of all responses, the respondent initially gave an answer that did not match the response categories. Respondents in the behavior coding study also indicated that the house or apartment was their “regular” or “permanent” residence. In other cases, respondents misinterpreted the intent of the question and answered “no.” Interviewers were able to resolve the problem with the respondent and gather an acceptable response in about one-third of these cases, but the problem persisted for about 13% of respondents. This is further support that the question is not working as intended.

Respondents in this cognitive test seemed to understand what vacation or seasonal home meant in this context. However, when probed about “held for occasional use,” several respondents said they didn’t know what it meant.

The cognitive interviewing results combined with the behavior coding results present strong evidence that this question is not working. “Usual residence” is not a term that respondents use. Although respondents in the cognitive test understood the meaning of this question, the behavior coding results indicate that the problems might be more severe in the field.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, I recommend that we cognitively test an alternative version of this question looking for a way to convey a similar meaning to “usual residence” that is easier for respondents to understand. Eleanor Gerber and I provided this example of how this could be re-phrased:

Is (this/that) (house/apartment/mobile home) a vacation home, seasonal home, held for occasional use, or does someone in this household usually live here?

In this question, the response that most respondents will need to choose (usually live here) is the last thing that they hear and will be easy for them to remember. Additionally the concept of usual residence is spelled out for respondents.

4. The census must count every person living in the United States on <Census Day>.

Hand Residence Instructions Flashcard to respondent.

- **We want to count people where they usually live and sleep.**
- **For people with more than one place to live, this is the place where they sleep most of the time.**

How many people were living or staying in this (house/apartment/mobile home) on <Census Day>?

Issues

One of the main problems observed here dealt with use of the flashcard. The interviewer handed the respondent the flashcard after reading the first sentence, paused just long enough to hand the card, then continued reading the bullets and the question. Most respondents either barely skimmed the card or did not read it at all. When debriefed about this, one respondent said that there was not really enough time to actually read the card while the interviewer was talking and asking questions.

Most respondents did not pay much attention to the date, saying that the same answer would apply to just about any date. There were a few respondents who did try to remember if a visitor was staying on that date. In these cases, it was not clear if they would have counted the visitor if that person had been there on census day. One respondent who mentioned considering whether to include a visitor later read the flashcard, and then understood that visitors would not be included.

One respondent counted everyone else in the household, excluding himself. Another respondent said “one” because she thought it was asking her if there was “someone that lives in your home that doesn’t normally live there on a regular basis.” She misunderstood it to say “other than the people who normally live and sleep here. . .”

One respondent misread the flashcard and thought it said not to include babies or small children. She counted and listed only the adults in the household. It is not clear whether this would have happened had it not been a cognitive interview. She gave her original (correct) answer prior to really looking at the card. After she went back to look at the card again, she changed her answer (making it incorrect), because she thought it said to exclude babies and small children. They would have been picked up in the undercoverage probe if she had left them off the roster.

Interesting cases

One respondent pondered the flashcard to determine whether or not to count herself in her parent’s household or in the household with her roommates. She graduated 2 years ago and has not had a “permanent” residence in a while – she still thinks of her parent’s household as her permanent residence, though she doesn’t sleep there. She said she fits in to the “live and sleep there most of the time” category. She ultimately included herself in the roommates’ household. In this case, the flashcard worked.

In another case, the respondent reported that her brother's girlfriend was "staying" at the house temporarily, and was there on June 1, but she clarified that she does not "live" there. She did report her on the roster, but did not report any other residences for this person in the overcount question. This case seemed to work as well, though it is not entirely clear if there was any other place that person could have been counted.

One respondent had a hard time deciding whether to report 5 or 6 people. One of her daughters lives with her part of the time. She tried to remember if the daughter was there on census day or not. She wanted to count her "just for the simple fact that she is my daughter and we pretty much include her in just about everything. Just because she doesn't live with us full-time currently doesn't mean that she's not going to live with us full time [at some point in the future] and she is part of our family. And I don't know that her grandmother would be getting a Census Bureau form to count her, so most likely we would count her." After reading the flashcard she mentioned a cousin who "comes and goes;" she decided not to count her (correctly) because she thought her dad would probably get a form and count her. An interesting note – she seemed to think the census is used to count school-age children. Part of her reasoning for including her daughter, who lives most of the time with her grandmother, was because she was afraid the grandmother was too old to get a form.

Another respondent answered "permanently living four, one temporary, which would make five." Her daughter's boyfriend was staying with them temporarily on June 1st, while looking for a place to live. Looking at the flashcard, she said he was a college student, but he also had no other place to live on June 1 (Census day for this test). This caused her a little bit of difficulty, but she ultimately decided to include him (correctly).

Flashcard Debriefing

The 3rd Include bullet stated "People staying here temporarily on June 1st, 2005 who had no other permanent place to live." A couple of respondents got confused when they were probed on this, but they seemed to understand it until they started talking about it. I think their confusion was a result of the probing, not the text itself.

When examining the second main bullet, "For people with more than one place to live, this is the place where they sleep most of the time," the respondent who included her daughter who stays with her grandmother more often realized that, according to that rule, her daughter should not be counted. She did not want to change her answer, though, because of her attachment to her daughter as a member of the family.

It was clear from the flashcard not to count visitors in this question.

Recommendations

The usability study suggested creating a specific script to use in presenting the residence rules flashcard to help alleviate the interviewer problems (Olmsted & Hourcade, 2005). I

agree with this recommendation. I think the key to this question is getting the respondents to read that card.

I do not think having the interviewer read the bullets helped respondents in this study (they understood better when they read the bullets than when they heard them). In the case where the respondent reported “one” for the one person who does not normally live and sleep there, the extra verbiage actually seemed to have hurt the respondent’s understanding of the question. However, in instances where respondents do not see the flashcard, I am not sure whether having the bullets is helpful in place of the flashcards.

5. What is the name of each person who lived or stayed at this (house/apartment/mobile home) on <Census Day>? Start with the name of one person who owned or rented this (house/apartment/mobile home).

Issues

Three respondents failed to include themselves on the roster. This is a critical error. One respondent mentioned that she had already reported that she lived there (to the first question) so she thought she didn’t have to list herself again. Another respondent reported that he thought it was asking who he lived with.

Most respondents did attend to the instruction to list the owner/renter first – although several only noticed the owner part and said it did not apply to them, since they were renters. In these cases all the adults were on the lease, so it did not make a difference. Please note that the instruction to start with the owner or renter worked fairly well in this cognitive test because the interviewer ALWAYS read this statement. In the behavior coding of the 2004 NRFU, which used identical wording, Hunter and Landreth (2005) found that in about a quarter of all cases, the enumerator asked the respondent to start with him or herself, rather than the owner or renter. The usability study of this instrument also noted that the wording on this screen is “awkward and unnatural” (Olmsted et al 2005).

Most respondents did not give middle names or middle initials. Most said they would if they were specifically asked for them, or even if they were asked for “full” name. One respondent gave nicknames – one of them being the middle name of her son (who goes by his middle name). She commented that when writing things down she usually uses his official name, but when speaking, she tends to refer to him by what they call him. This indicates that it could be a bigger problem for the NRFU than it is for the self-administered forms (mailout/mailback or Internet). This is consistent with findings by Sherri Norris (2005) that in NRFU for both Census 2000 and for the 2004 Census Test, middle initial was missing in about 80% of all cases in the Queens, NY test site and about 40% in the Georgia test site.

Recommendations

In accordance with recommendations from the Census Coverage Measurement Question Wording and Automation Team, I recommend separating the act of gathering the householder from gathering the roster. Given the flexibility of automation, it makes sense to separate the two tasks the respondent is asked to do at the same time on the census form: (1) identify the householder and (2) list the people who live at the unit. We think separating these tasks will reduce cognitive burden. In non-proxy interviews, it is much

more natural to list the respondent first, even if he or she may not own the house. Having them list themselves first eliminates the risk of leaving themselves off the form.

Additionally, if we gather the respondent's name first, it eliminates the need to ask or verify with whom the enumerator is speaking (this is an item in the NRFU that was not tested in this study). A separate question can be added to determine the reference person.

If middle initial is an important piece of information, as I believe it is for matching and unduplication, then I recommend asking for full name in the NRFU.

6. We do not want to miss any people who might have been staying here on June 1st, 2005. Were there any additional people staying here that you did not include, for example:

Children, such as newborn babies or foster children?

Relatives, such as adult children, cousins or in-laws?

Nonrelatives, such as roommates or live-in baby sitters?

People staying here temporarily?

Issues

This question may pick up guests who were staying at the address on Census Day. To some people it was very clear that "people staying here temporarily" meant essentially people with no other place to live. To others, it meant guests who may have been staying there – some people definitely would have listed visitors had they been staying on Census Day. One respondent, after asking me to re-read the question, actually said yes and listed her husband's parents who were visiting that weekend for their granddaughter's graduation. They clearly had another permanent residence.

In a few cases the respondent answered "no" prior to hearing the response options. This could cause the interviewer to stop reading, not allowing the respondent to hear all the cues.

Two respondents said "yes" to nonrelatives or to people staying here temporarily, and reported the names of people already on the roster. This could be a problem if the interviewer does not realize they have already been listed and lists them again.

Interesting case

One respondent reported 2 college-aged kids that stayed the summer with his housemates and himself. It is not clear whether these people could have been counted somewhere else or not (if census day were in the summer, as it was for the cognitive test). I think these are legitimate adds here – it is a situation CFU would want to investigate.

Recommendations

This question appears to gather more of a "de facto" residence for some respondents as opposed to the "de jure" rules in the POP count question. There is a trade-off here of capturing people who might have no other place to be captured, versus capturing visitors who definitely have another place they can and should be counted. One possible solution is to allow respondents to report that this person has a permanent home elsewhere in the overcount question. Another solution is to re-script this question to make it clear that visitors with permanent homes elsewhere should not be included. And, finally, a third

option would be to leave this question as it is, and add a question immediately following this one to determine if the people reported here have a permanent home elsewhere.

7. Is this (house/apartment/mobile home)

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?

Issues

Most respondents in this study who rented easily responded “rented,” but most had never heard the term “cash rent.” One reported “occupied for cash rent,” indicating that she understood the concept of cash rent, but got mixed up between the last two response options. Another respondent answered “rented for cash rent” but clarified that she paid with check. There was one respondent who had particular difficulty with this question. She asked for the question to be repeated, then answered “no,” not understanding the question’s intent even after hearing it multiple times. She thought the question was asking “is the house owned or not?”. She finally answered “well no one in the house owns it and we’re not renting it for cash.” She paid with checks and thought “rented for cash rent” meant paying with “American currency.” A couple of additional respondents mentioned that “rented for cash rent” might be less official or more under the table than just “rented.” Confusion over the term “cash rent” has been found consistently in pretesting of this question.

Several respondents asked for the question to be repeated. This indicates that it is too complex to be understood easily.

Recommendation

Recommendations for this question include taking advantage of the computer-administered mode by unfolding (i.e., creating a series of shorter questions with tailored follow-up probes), as well as providing an opportunity to fill “house,” “apartment” or “mobile home” electronically, reducing clutter on the screen. Additionally, omit the word “cash” from the rented statement, as it causes confusion in respondents. Such a question could look like this (note that Dillman and Christian, 2005, had a very similar suggestion):

Is this house owned by you or someone in the household?

Yes – Is it owned with a mortgage or owned free and clear?

No – Is it rented?

7. SHOW FLASHCARD
ARE YOU/IS NAME related to PERSON 1?

YES - Which one of these categories best describes how YOU ARE/NAME IS related to PERSON 1?

NO - Which one of these categories best describes YOUR/NAME's relationship to PERSON 1?

Issues

Most respondents in this study used this flashcard. Many stopped answering the first question in the series and went straight to the detailed relationship when asked if the people were related.

There are several situations where respondents' ideas of whether or not people are related differ from the official Census Bureau definitions. This becomes an issue because we are asking respondents first to determine whether or not someone is related, and then asking them to pick from the list. Prior to this implementation of the NRFU, the short form relationship question had asked respondents to choose from the list, without explicitly asking them to classify relatives and non-relatives. In past cognitive and ethnographic research, we have seen examples of particular difficulty classifying spouses and foster children. We saw similar problems in this study. In hypothetical situations, many respondents thought foster children were related to their foster parents. Three respondents reported that husbands and wives are not related. One respondent said adopted children are not related. One respondent said a godson or goddaughter was a relative. One respondent in this study reported that a boyfriend and girlfriend could be considered related, depending on how serious they are about one another. Though for each case only a small number of respondents were affected, this demonstrates that respondents do not always classify relatives and non-relatives in a manner consistent with the Census Bureau's definition. We can avoid the issue entirely by asking respondents to choose from the list of relationships directly rather than asking them to first classify the relationship.

Most respondents were not familiar with the term "roomer." There is not a really clear distinction between the roomer/boarder and housemate/roommate categories for most people.

Most respondents did understand unmarried partner, though one thought it could also refer to a business partner.

After person 3, one respondent asked if she could save time by saying none of the people in the household are related and all are housemates. This question became redundant in large households of non-related people.

Interesting case

One respondent was in a same sex relationship. When asked if they were related, she said "I think of her as related to me, as my partner." She had a lot of difficulty determining whether or not she was related to her partner – she said she would not answer the yes/no relationship question directly, but rather state the relationship (partner) and let the interviewer classify it. They are not yet married, so if asked to choose from the list, she would choose "unmarried partner." She also reported her adopted sons as "sons" first, and I had to probe to find out whether they were biological or adopted.

Unique cases of misclassification

- One respondent reported step-grandson as grandchild and the boyfriend of daughter as son-in-law.
- In another case the householder's son's girlfriend's daughter reported as a granddaughter to the householder.

Recommendations

In my opinion, we cannot fix all potential cases of misclassifications, like those mentioned immediately above. What we can fix, however, is whether we ask the respondent to make the relative/non-relative distinction or we ask them to pick the relationship from our list of relationship types. I recommend eliminating the first relationship question and reverting to the question that more simply asks the respondent to choose the relationship from a list of relationships.

An additional arena that was not fully explored in this cognitive test is the inversion of relationships. It has been found in previous field tests that respondents give the opposite relationship to that which is correct. For example, the respondent may report that Person 1 (the householder) is the son of Person 3 when, in fact, Person 1 is the parent of Person 3. This aspect should be explored in Round 2.

8. ARE YOU/IS NAME male or female?

Issues

There were no problems noted with comprehension of this item. However, many respondents did laugh at this question. There is the potential for this question to make interviewers feel very uncomfortable. From personal experience, despite knowing that it is important to read questions as worded, with a couple of my respondents, I verified sex rather than asking it. It is very uncomfortable to look a person in the eye and ask him if he is a male or female. The usability study agreed that asking the sex question could be offensive (Olmsted, 2005). Note that in the behavior coding study this question was skipped in almost half of all administrations (Hunter & Landreth, 2005).

Recommendation

Allow interviewers to verify sex if known.

9A. What is YOUR/NAME'S date of birth?

DK- What was YOUR/NAME'S age on June 1, 2005? If you don't know the exact age, please estimate.

9B. For the Census, we need to record age as of June 1, 2005. So, just to confirm YOU WERE/NAME WAS FILL AGE on June 1, 2005?

The follow-up to this question (9B) could not adequately be tested because of the inability of the interviewers to calculate age quickly enough to verify it.

Issues

Since many respondents lived with non-relatives, there were quite a few cases where date of birth was not known, so the age question was asked as well. Several respondents who said “don’t know” to the date of birth question could report partial dates of birth if probed. If this is important for matching for unduplication, enumerators should be instructed to probe for partial dates of birth.

It was not clear from this test if there were discrepancies between age as of June 1 and reported age. Most respondents who reported about someone with a birthday between census day and the date of the interview answered giving age as of census day – however, due to the inability of interviewers to calculate age on census day from date of birth, the confirmation of age question was not tested as scripted in the instrument.

Interesting cases

One respondent reported 5 months for her infant. She said if she was given the instruction to report 0, she would do that, but “putting zero seems funny – zero doesn’t exist yet.” If there was an opportunity to put “<1,” she would rather do that. Another respondent also answered for her infant in months as well. I want to note here that, although the confirming age screen was not cognitively tested in this round, usability testing found cognitive difficulties when confirming the age of an infant who was less than one year old on census day (Olmsted & Hourcade, 2005).

Recommendations

For an interviewer–administered survey, reporting of infants’ age seems easy to alleviate by an instruction to the interviewer (e.g., *If the respondent gives an age less than one year, report 0 in the box*) without impacting the interviewer/respondent interaction.

Rather than confirming the infant’s age as 0, the usability specialists recommend confirming that the infant was “less than one year old”, or “under a year old” (Olmsted & Hourcade, 2005). I concur with this recommendation.

10. ARE YOU/IS NAME of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?

Issues

None of the respondents were of Hispanic origin themselves. A couple reported other household members who were. One respondent asked if Cuban was considered Hispanic. Another respondent thought Italian counted as Hispanic.

One respondent debated whether or not to report Hispanic ethnicity of her adopted sons. Their father was part Spanish and part Portuguese. She said she wanted to know first if there would be questions on other origins, so she “could say yes to multiple things and no to multiple things.” She ultimately reported “yes.”

Respondents differed as to whether they thought all 3 terms referred to the same people, or to different people. Most who thought it meant different groups thought they were distinguished by country (or region) of origin.

This question became redundant after repeating it several times within a household. Respondents began interrupting or laughing.

Recommendations

This question is a good candidate for tailoring the topic-based approach to make it more conversational. This could be implemented as follows:

Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?

How about Maria? (Is she of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?)

How about John? (Is he of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?)

etc.

11. What is YOUR/NAME’S race? You may choose one or more races. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.

White or Caucasian

Black, African American, or Negro

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Some other Race

Issues

Several respondents did not hear the instruction to mark one or more races. Two respondents actually asked what to do if you wanted to report two races – after the interviewer read that instruction where it exists in the question text. Several respondents indicated the tendency to choose the predominant race, rather than marking more than one. One respondent wanted to be able to mark “Mixed” for a child in her household who she reported as being half white and half black.

One respondent reported Spanish for his roommate, prior to hearing the entire question. After hearing the response options he chose “Some Other Race.” For his other Hispanic roommates, he chose other, Cuban and Mexican. He interpreted the instruction “Hispanic origins are not races” to mean that he could not categorize all Hispanics together, but rather had to give their countries of origin. Several other respondents reported being confused by the “Hispanic origins are not races” note.

There were two respondents who reported someone of Hispanic ethnicity as being of Caucasian race. In these two cases, this series worked well.

Recommendations

In an interviewer-administered instrument, the Hispanic origin instruction could be programmed to appear only when the previous question on Hispanic origin had been answered affirmatively.

Additionally, the note that you can choose one or more races should be made more prominent, perhaps by moving it to the end of the question – respondents are not hearing this where it is currently scripted.

It might also be wise to script the response options into the question text, since they are required reading. Otherwise interviewers may simply read the question and not read the response options. Betsy Martin scripted a similar question as a recommendation for the Update/Enumerate form.

For Person 1:

Please choose one or more of the following 6 race categories to describe NAME’s race. <For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.>

(Read all response categories for person 1).

For persons 2 and higher:

How about NAME? (Please choose one or more races to describe NAME's race.)

12. SHOW FLASHCARD

People in the United States are from many countries, tribes and cultural groups. What is YOUR/NAME'S ancestry or tribe? For example, Italian, African American, Dominican, Aleut, Jamaican, Chinese, Pakistani, Salvadoran, Rosebud Sioux, Nigerian, Samoan, Russian, etc.

Issues

While the instruction to mark one or more races did not influence many respondents for the race question, most did realize they were able to provide more than one ancestry.

A few respondents saw no difference between race and ancestry and thought this series was repetitive.

The examples did seem to help, but a couple of respondents initially thought they had to pick from the list of examples, rather than choosing something that wasn't on the list. One mentioned that you had to pick from the list for race, and this question immediately follows race.

Interesting cases

One respondent reported white as an ancestry. Several reported African American. One respondent did not know her own or the other household member's ancestries – they were all reported as white. One respondent reported Anglo-Saxon.

One respondent who had reported African American reported his ancestry as Blackfoot Indian and Cherokee. There were a couple of people to whom this question sounded largely like it focused on Native Americans. It is interesting that several people reported Native American ancestries to this question, but none of them had reported it, or even mentioned it, to the race question.

One respondent pointed out that we had African American but not, for example, Italian American – she thought that was odd.

As in the usability study, it was noted that reading the entire question text for persons 2 and higher was very burdensome for the interviewer (see also Olmsted, Hourcade, & Abdalla, 2005 and Olmsted & Hourcade, 2005). Additionally, the usability team noted that it would be beneficial to have a script to introduce the flashcard.

Recommendations

Script the question so that it is not repetitive for Persons 2 and higher in the household. Script the use of the flashcard. Have only examples on the flashcard, instead of the question text to be consistent with all other flashcards used with this instrument.

For Person 1:

People in the United States are from many countries, tribes and cultural groups. What is YOUR/NAME'S ancestry or tribe? This card provides examples of the kinds of things we are looking for. (HAND RESPONDENT FLASHCARD AND READ EXAMPLES IF NECESSARY). For example, Italian, African American, Dominican,

Aleut, Jamaican, Chinese, Pakistani, Salvadoran, Rosebud Sioux, Nigerian, Samoan, Russian, etc.

For Persons 2 and higher:

How about NAME? (What is NAME'S ancestry or tribe?) (HAND RESPONDENT FLASHCARD).

13. <Do you/Does NAME >sometimes live or stay somewhere else

**To attend college?
To be closer to work?
While in the military?
To stay at a seasonal or second residence?
For a child custody arrangement?
While in jail or prison?
While in a nursing home?
For another reason?**

Note that this question was tested as it appeared in the instrument spec, NOT as it is programmed currently on the handheld. Each response option was read in full for the first person in the household. Later household members were simply asked the question stem – then asked which option if they said “yes.” For testing purposes, we asked this question in the present tense.

Issues

A few respondents did report fairly infrequent stays. One respondent stayed with his mother or sister once a month or less for a night or two at a time. Most respondents did not report things of such short frequency.

In the places where guests got on the roster in the undercount question, the respondent wanted to report that their permanent residence is elsewhere – this really didn't fit into any of the response options.

For several respondents the time frame was as long as they have been living at the present residence. Other respondents thought of presently.

We asked this question using the present tense for this study. This may have made respondents more likely to consider current situations. This did not seem to be a problem with these respondents. One respondent did report, however, that if she had a situation where she had a second residence in the spring, but had, for example, sold her other house prior to the interview, she would probably not report it during this interview due to the present tense of this question.

One respondent thought this question was invasive. He did not like reporting on where his roommates sometimes stay the night.

This question did pick up some legitimate cases where a person stays with his parents almost every weekend; a case where a man lives with roommates during the week and his wife on the weekends; and a custody arrangement where the child lives most of the time elsewhere.

Interesting cases

One respondent initially answered yes to “to attend college” but then realized that it was asking currently, not in the past. The person she was reporting on had lived away to attend college when she was in college (at some point in the past), but she was no longer there.

One respondent reported being in jail recently, and reported that his roommates stay with girlfriends when they have girlfriends, but also noted that none of them had girlfriends currently. He was answering thinking the question was asking if each person “ever stays at another place.” One other respondent answered yes for all household members because they all sometimes stay a night somewhere else. Both of these cases seemed to be over-reporting of other possible addresses.

Recommendations

This question should be scripted so that it is clear how the interviewer should administer it. Also, give a clear response option for those who are guests mistakenly included on the roster. I am not sure how this would be scripted, but an example of wording that could be used is listed below.

For Person 1

<Do you/Does NAME >sometimes live or stay somewhere else

(Read all response options)

To attend college?

To be closer to work?

While in the military?

To stay at a seasonal or second residence?

For a child custody arrangement?

While in jail or prison?

While in a nursing home?

Because their permanent residence is elsewhere?

For another reason?

For Persons 2 and higher

How about NAME? (Does NAME sometimes live or stay somewhere else?)

IF YES, For which of the following reasons?

To attend college?

To be closer to work?

While in the military?

To stay at a seasonal or second residence?

For a child custody arrangement?

While in jail or prison?

While in a nursing home?

Because their permanent residence is elsewhere?

For another reason?

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