A Comparison of Ancestry and Race Data in the 2021 American Community Survey: Preliminary Findings

Briefing for the Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
Presented by: Merarys Rios-Vargas and Angie Buchanan
August 30, 2023

United States® Census Bureau

AGENDA

- Why we are doing this work

- March Federal Register Notice

- Preliminary findings on ancestry and race data in the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS)

- Factors in making a recommendation on the ancestry question

- Stakeholder outreach plan

- Questions for you

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 2020, the Census Bureau implemented changes to the race question, coding, and processing. The introduction of these changes to the race question in the American Community Survey (ACS) led us to research redundancies between data from the new race question and the ancestry question.

This research will allow us to inform the public about the similarities and differences between ancestry and race estimates.

Findings from this research may lead us to recommend the removal of the ancestry question.
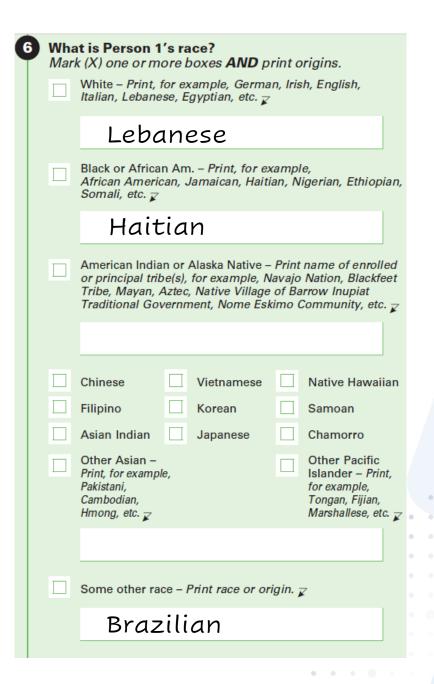
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Who else we should engage with about this research?

2. What other issues or questions should the Census Bureau consider when comparing race and ancestry responses?

3. Are there policy or research needs that can only be addressed with data from the ancestry question?

4. What pros and cons are there to using the detailed race data to produce statistics on groups that were only available previously through the data from the ancestry question?

United States® Census Bureau

ACS RACE QUESTION

In 2020, the American Community Survey (ACS) race question was revised to include write-in response areas and examples for White, and Black or African American racial categories. Updates to the write-in instructions to the Some Other Race category were also included in the design improvements.

6. What is Person 1's race?
Mark (X) one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

☐ White – *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.*

Lebanese

☐ Black or African Am. – *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.*

Haitian

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.*

☐ Chinese   ☐ Vietnamese   ☐ Native Hawaiian
☐ Filipino   ☐ Korean   ☐ Samoan
☐ Asian Indian   ☐ Japanese   ☐ Chamorro
☐ Other Asian – *Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.*   ☐ Other Pacific Islander – *Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.*

☐ Some other race – *Print race or origin.*

Brazilian

United States® Census Bureau

ACS ANCESTRY QUESTION

The ancestry question collects data through an open-ended question later on the survey.

Estimates for groups such as Lebanese, Haitian, and Brazilian are currently published only from the ancestry question.

13 What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?

Lebanese, Haitian, and

Brazilian

(For example: Italian, Jamaican, African Am., Cambodian, Cape Verdean, Norwegian, Dominican, French Canadian, Haitian, Korean, Lebanese, Polish, Nigerian, Mexican, Taiwanese, Ukrainian, and so on.)
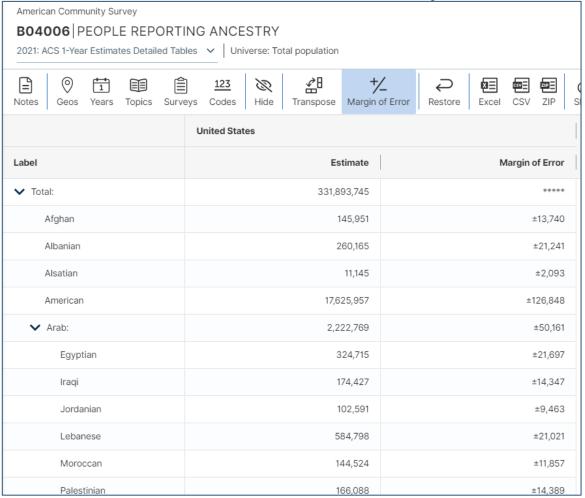
KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO QUESTIONS

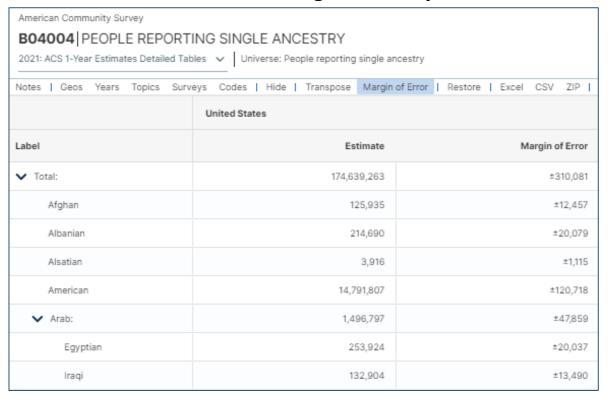| Differences	Ancestry	Race
Prompt for online respondents who initially do not provide detailed group	No	Yes
Nonresponse measures for 2021	21.1% No response	1.4% Allocation
Imputation for missing responses	No	Yes
Number of groups tabulated	Maximum of 2	Maximum of 8
Detailed groups tabulated	White Black or African American Some Other Race	Asian Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander American Indian and Alaska Native

EXAMPLES OF ANCESTRY DATA PRODUCTS

Detailed Table – Total Ancestry

American Community Survey

B04006 | PEOPLE REPORTING ANCESTRY

2021: ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables ▼ | Universe: Total population

Notes | Geos | Years | Topics | Surveys | Codes | Hide | Transpose | Margin of Error | Restore | Excel | CSV | ZIP | S

	United States	
Label	**Estimate**	**Margin of Error**
▼ Total:	331,893,745	*****
Afghan	145,951	±13,740
Albanian	260,165	±21,241
Alsatian	11,145	±2,093
American	17,625,957	±126,848
▼ Arab:	2,222,769	±50,161
Egyptian	324,715	±21,697
Iraqi	174,427	±14,347
Jordanian	102,591	±9,463
Lebanese	584,798	±21,021
Moroccan	144,524	±11,857
Palestinian	166,088	±14,389

Detailed Table – Single Ancestry

American Community Survey

B04004 | PEOPLE REPORTING SINGLE ANCESTRY

2021: ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables ▼ | Universe: People reporting single ancestry

Notes | Geos | Years | Topics | Surveys | Codes | Hide | Transpose | Margin of Error | Restore | Excel | CSV | ZIP |

	United States	
Label	**Estimate**	**Margin of Error**
▼ Total:	174,639,263	±310,081
Afghan	125,935	±12,457
Albanian	214,690	±20,079
Alsatian	3,916	±1,115
American	14,791,807	±120,718
▼ Arab:	1,496,797	±47,859
Egyptian	253,924	±20,037
Iraqi	132,904	±13,490

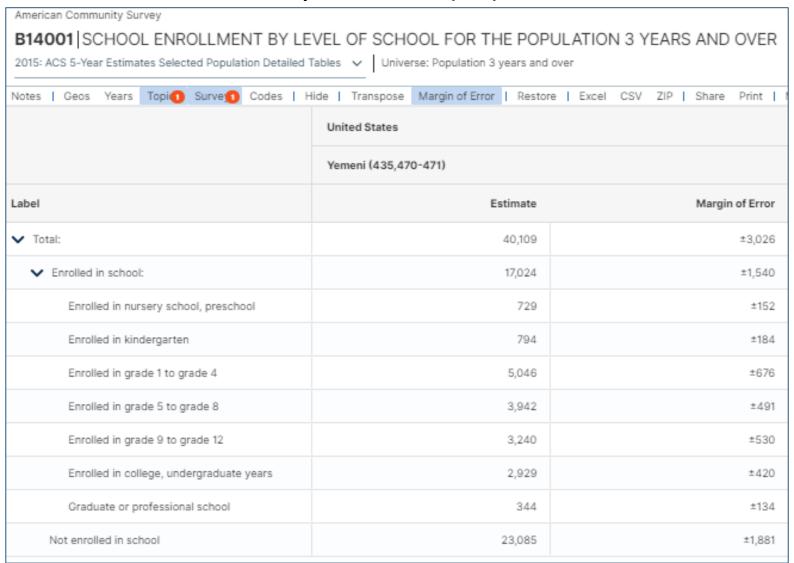⬆ **Estimate for each group shows the number of people with that ancestry *only, or* "single ancestry."**

From: www.data.census.gov
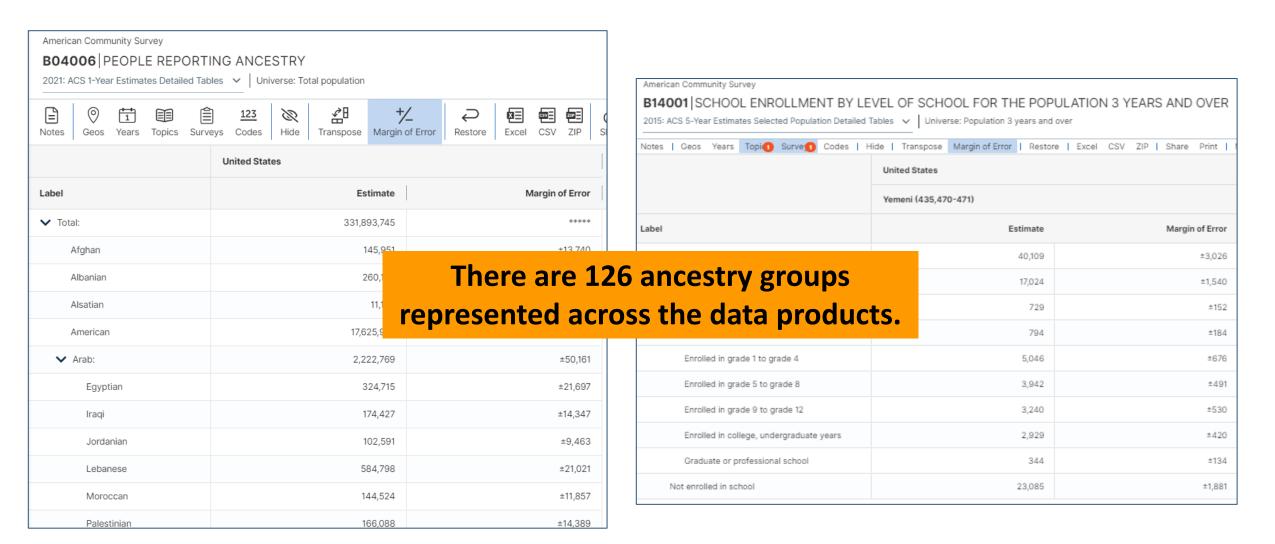Filter for Populations and
People, and then Ancestry

⬆ **Estimate for each group shows the total number of people with that ancestry, or "total ancestry."**

8

EXAMPLES OF ANCESTRY DATA PRODUCTS

Selected Population Table (SPT)

American Community Survey

B14001 | SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY LEVEL OF SCHOOL FOR THE POPULATION 3 YEARS AND OVER

2015: ACS 5-Year Estimates Selected Population Detailed Tables ⌄ | Universe: Population 3 years and over

Notes | Geos | Years | Topics ❶ | Survey ❶ | Codes | Hide | Transpose | Margin of Error | Restore | Excel | CSV | ZIP | Share | Print |

	United States	
	Yemeni (435,470-471)	
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error
⌄ Total:	40,109	±3,026
⌄ Enrolled in school:	17,024	±1,540
Enrolled in nursery school, preschool	729	±152
Enrolled in kindergarten	794	±184
Enrolled in grade 1 to grade 4	5,046	±676
Enrolled in grade 5 to grade 8	3,942	±491
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	3,240	±530
Enrolled in college, undergraduate years	2,929	±420
Graduate or professional school	344	±134
Not enrolled in school	23,085	±1,881

ANCESTRY DATA PRODUCTS

There are 126 ancestry groups represented across the data products.

MAIN RESEARCH GOALS

How many ancestry groups are potentially available from race data?

How many race estimates were similar or higher than ancestry estimates?
- *Race alone* compared with *single ancestry*
- *Race alone or in any combination* compared with *total ancestry*

Which groups had similar or higher estimates in race?
- For example, how did Jamaican in race compare to Jamaican in ancestry

Which groups had lower estimates in race?
- Did construction of categories contribute to differences in estimates?

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

ANCESTRY GROUPS AVAILABLE FROM RACE DATA

Of 126 ancestry groups across our products
- 111 are available from race data (88%)

The 111 groups include:
- 17 Arab and MENA
- 20 Sub-Saharan African
- 13 West Indian
- 61 European, Eurasian, North American, and groups from Oceania and non-Hispanic Central and South America

HOW DIFFERENT ARE THE ESTIMATES OVERALL?

Table A. Percentage of Race Estimates That Were Larger, Not Statistically Different, or Smaller Compared with Corresponding Ancestry Estimates		
Race estimate was:	**Race Alone** Compared to **Single Ancestry** (n=90)	**Race Alone or in any Combination** Compared to **Total Ancestry** (n=111)
Larger	60%	63%
Not statistically different	21%	24%
Smaller	19%	13%

87%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 1-year American Community Survey microdata.

United States® Census Bureau

14

COMPARISON OF INDIVIDUAL GROUPS

- Are the race estimates higher, not significantly different, or lower than the ancestry estimates?

- Using 111 estimates for *race alone or in any combination* compared with *total ancestry*

- For purpose of the presentation, the ancestry groups are shown on four slides:
  - Arab and other Middle Eastern and North African
  - Sub-Saharan African
  - West Indian
  - All remaining groups

- If an ancestry group does not appear on the slide, it is because there is no equivalent race group proposed to be published.

United States®
Census
Bureau

ARAB AND OTHER MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN: SIZE OF ESTIMATES FROM RACE COMPARED WITH ANCESTRY

Race higher than ancestry (11)

Egyptian, Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Palestinian, Syrian, Yemeni, and people who reported "Arab" or "Arabic"

Not significantly different (6)

Algerian, Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac, Kurdish, Libyan, Saudi Arabian, and Tunisian

Race lower than ancestry (0)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 1-year American Community Survey microdata.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN:
SIZE OF ESTIMATES FROM RACE COMPARED WITH ANCESTRY

Race higher than ancestry (11)

Cape Verdean, Congolese, Guinean, Kenyan, Nigerian, Senegalese, Sierra Leonean, Somali, South African, Tanzanian, and Togolese

Not significantly different (9)

Cameroonian, Ethiopian, Gambian, Ghanaian, Liberian, Sudanese, Ugandan, Zimbabwean, and Total Sub-Saharan African

Race lower than ancestry (0)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 1-year American Community Survey microdata.

WEST INDIAN:
SIZE OF ESTIMATES FROM RACE COMPARED WITH ANCESTRY

Race higher than ancestry (1)

Haitian

Not significantly different (6)

Antiguan and Barbudan, Bahamian, Grenadian, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, St. Lucia Islander, and St. Vincent & Grenadine Islander

Race lower than ancestry (6)

Barbadian, Belizean, Bermudan, Jamaican, U.S. Virgin Islander, and people who reported a pan-term such as "West Indian" or "Caribbean."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 1-year American Community Survey microdata.

ALL REMAINING:
SIZE OF ESTIMATES FROM RACE COMPARED WITH ANCESTRY

Race higher than ancestry (47)

Afghan, Albanian, Alsatian, Armenian, Australian, Austrian, Belgian, Brazilian, Bulgarian, Cajun, Canadian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Georgian, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelander, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourger, Maltese, New Zealander, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Scandinavian, Scottish, Serbian, Slavic, Slovak, Slovene, Swedish, Swiss, Turkish, Ukrainian, Uzbek, and Welsh

Not significantly different (6)

Basque, Belarusian, Carpatho Rusyn, Cypriot, Macedonian, and Romanian

Race lower than ancestry (8)

Azerbaijani, British, Celtic, French Canadian, Guyanese, Pennsylvania German, Romani, and Scotch-Irish

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 1-year American Community Survey microdata.

CONCEPTS OF ANCESTRY AND RACE

Cognitive interviews pre-2016 ACS Content Test

- Respondents presented with shortened version of ACS and asked to tell us what they were thinking as they went through.

- Half of respondents thought the ancestry question was duplicative of the race and Hispanic origin questions.

- The majority provided responses to ancestry that were the same as what they reported in race and Hispanic origin.

United States® **Census** Bureau

PREVIOUS RESEARCH FROM 2016 ACS CONTENT TEST

- 73% of respondents' ancestry responses completely matched their race/Hispanic origin response, 7% partially matched, and 20% did not match at all

- 74% provided a detailed response to race/Hispanic origin compared with 70% in ancestry

- 92% of group estimates were not statistically different or higher from race than from ancestry

- British, Czechoslovakian, Ethiopian, French Canadian, Haitian, Kenyan, and Pennsylvania German had fewer responses in race

United States®
Census
Bureau

FACTORS IN DECISION MAKING

- Overlap in the concepts
- Data quality
- Overlap in data products
- Results from this research
- Burden on respondents
- Costs associated with collecting, coding, processing, reviewing, tabulating, and disseminating data
- Stakeholder feedback

United States® Census Bureau

NEXT STEPS

- Complete research

- Stakeholder outreach through email and briefings

- Summarize initial feedback and develop preliminary recommendation

- Federal Register Notice (FRN)

- Review and document feedback from the FRN

- Develop final recommendation

STAKEHOLDER ORGANIZATIONS

1. ACS Data Users Group, organized by the Population Reference Bureau (PRB)
2. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, U.S. Department for Health and Human Services
3. American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
4. Arab American Institute
5. Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services
6. Association of Public Data Users
7. Brookings Institute
8. Institute of Caribbean Studies
9. John D. Calandra Italian American Institute
10. Leadership Council on Civil and Human Rights
11. Piast Institute
12. Pew Research Center, Race and Ethnicity Team

13. The Demographic Statistical Atlas of the U.S.
14. U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
15. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
16. Census Equity Initiative
17. Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans
18. FCCP's Funders Census Initiative
19. Census Counts
20. The Census Project
21. Census Info. Centers and State Data Centers
22. Haitian American Association for Advancement
23. African Studies Association
24. Salvere Public Health Consultants
25. Culturingua
26. Dept of Human Services, San Antonio, TX
27. Afghan American Foundation

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To access data on ancestry and other topics please visit our online data dissemination platform at:

data.census.gov

For questions about disclosure avoidance on the ACS, please send an email to:

acsprivacy@census.gov

United States® Census Bureau

QUESTIONS

1. Who else we should engage with about this research?

2. What other issues or questions should the Census Bureau consider when comparing race and ancestry responses?

3. Are there policy or research needs that can only be addressed with data from the ancestry question?

4. What pros and cons are there to using the detailed race data to produce statistics on groups that were only available previously through the data from the ancestry question?

United States®
Census
Bureau

United States® Census Bureau

THANK YOU!

✉ ASK.CENSUS.GOV

⁂ CENSUS.GOV