Quantitative Testing Results from a New Race and Ethnicity Question from the Bureau of Labor Statistics

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U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

October 25, 2023

FCSM Research & Policy Conference

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Background

■ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics conducted two quantitative studies with nonprobability panels to examine the potential effects of combining the race and ethnicity questions proposed in Federal Register Notice 88 FR 5375.

Office of Management and Budget. (2023). *Initial Proposals for Updating OMB's Race and Ethnicity Statistical Standards*. Federal Register. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/27/2023-01635/initial-proposals-for-updating-ombs-race-and-ethnicity-statistical-standards

Research Questions

■ Do changes to question stem or instructions affect

▶ Response distribution?

▶ Participant understanding?

▶ Participant response?

Participants

- Recruited from two nonprobability panels as part of online screener questionnaires for other surveys

- Participants (N = 2364)

  ▶ Study 1, n = 1363 - jobs and work schedules, currently employed

  ▶ Study 2, n = 1001 - health conditions and work, had health condition that limited the kind or amount of paid work they could do

- Data for studies combined, results are reported together

Study 1 was fielded May 3-8, 2023. Study 2 was fielded May 24-26, 2023.

Design – Stems and Instructions

■ 2x2 between-subjects design, random assignment to treatment groups

■ Questions stems

  ▶ "What is your race and/or ethnicity?"

  ▶ "What is your race or ethnicity?"

■ Brief or detailed instructions

  ▶ "Select all that apply."

  ▶ "Select all that apply AND enter additional details in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group."

Design – Four Treatment Groups

■ Question Stems and Instructions

▶ race and/or ethnicity; select all

▶ race and/or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details

▶ race or ethnicity; select all

▶ race or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details

■ Random assignment to treatment groups

■ E.g., What is your race or ethnicity? Select all that apply.

Survey Questions

- Open-ended question to describe race or ethnicity

- Closed-ended, combined race and ethnicity questions

- Reflection on race and ethnicity question

- Origins and identity questions

Survey Questions – Open-Ended

■ Open-ended question to describe race or ethnicity (race and/or ethnicity)

How would you describe your race or ethnicity?

Survey Questions – Closed-Ended

- Closed-ended, combined race and ethnicity questions
  - Seven broad categories
  - Detailed categories appeared under broad categories
  - Detailed categories collected on same screen with an unfolding design

Survey Questions – Categories

Broad Category

What is your race and/or ethnicity?

Select all that apply AND enter additional details in the spaces below. Note, you may report more than one group.

☐ **WHITE**
   For example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.

☐ **HISPANIC OR LATINO**
   For example, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc.

☐ **BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN**
   For example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.

☐ **ASIAN**
   For example, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.

☐ **AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE**
   For example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Tribal Government, Tlingit, etc.

☐ **MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN**
   For example, Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Israeli, etc.

☐ **NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER**
   For example, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.

Detailed Category

You said that you are WHITE. Provide details below.
Select all that apply.

☐ German   ☐ Irish   ☐ English
☐ Italian   ☐ Polish   ☐ French

Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.

[   ]

You said that you are HISPANIC OR LATINO. Provide details below.
Select all that apply.

☐ Mexican or Mexican American   ☐ Puerto Rican   ☐ Cuban
☐ Salvadoran   ☐ Dominican   ☐ Colombian

Enter, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.

[   ]

You said that you are BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN. Provide details below.
Select all that apply.

☐ African American   ☐ Jamaican   ☐ Haitian
☐ Nigerian   ☐ Ethiopian   ☐ Somali

Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

[   ]

Survey Questions – Reflection

■ Participants were asked how well the race and ethnicity question reflected how they see themselves.

Now thinking about the last question, how well did it reflect how you see your race or ethnicity?

○ Very well

○ Somewhat well

○ Not too well

○ Not well at all

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Survey Questions – Origins

- Pair 1 – origin central to identity

- Pair 2 – familiar with origins

- Pair 3 – connection to origin

Which statement comes closer to your view–even if neither is exactly right?

○ My origin is not central to my identity

○ My origin is central to my identity

Which statement comes closer to your view–even if neither is exactly right?

○ I am not too familiar with my origins

○ I am very familiar with my origins

Which statement comes closer to your view–even if neither is exactly right?

○ I do not feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family

○ I feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family

Results

Item Nonresponse – Broad Category

■ Low item nonresponse ($n = 6$) for broad category question

Item Nonresponse for Race and Ethnicity by Treatment Group

Treatment Group	Nonresponse (%)	Response (%)	n
race and/or ethnicity; select all	2 (0.34)	593 (99.66)	595
race and/or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details	2 (0.33)	598 (99.67)	600
race or ethnicity; select all	1 (0.17)	582 (99.83)	583
race or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details	1 (0.17)	585 (99.83)	586
Total	6 (0.25)	2358 (99.75)	2364

*All six participants answered the open-ended question "How would you describe your race or ethnicity (race and/or ethnicity)?"
White ($n = 3$), Multi-racial ($n = 1$), Mixed ($n = 1$), White American with a Native American grandmother ($n = 1$)

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Broad Categories Selected

- Most participants selected at least one broad category.
  - ▶ 0.25% did not select a broad category, but answered open-ended race or ethnicity question
  - ▶ **92.6% – one broad category**
  - ▶ 6% – two broad categories
  - ▶ Participant who selected all 7 categories wrote "prefer not to disclose" in response to open-ended question

Number of Broad Categories Selected		
Number Selected	Count	Percent
0	6	0.25
1	2190	92.64
2	142	6.01
3	20	0.85
4	3	0.13
5	2	0.08
6	0	0.00
7	1	0.04
Total	2364	100

Broad Categories Selected by Treatment Group

- Average number of broad categories **not significantly different** between treatment groups, $F(3, 2360) = 1.84$, $p = .138$

Average Number of Broad Categories Selected by Treatment Group

Treatment Group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
race and/or ethnicity; select all	1.11	0	5
race and/or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details	1.07	0	3
race or ethnicity; select all	1.07	0	7
race or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details	1.09	0	4
Total	1.08	0	7

Detailed Categories Selected

■ Most participants selected a detailed category

▶ 13.45% – did not select a detailed category

▶ **86.55% – selected one or more detailed categories**

Number of Detailed Categories Selected		
Number Selected	Count	Percent
0	318	13.45
1	1203	50.89
2	500	21.15
3	223	9.43
4	86	3.64
5	21	0.89
6	9	0.38
7	2	0.08
8	2	0.08
Total	2364	100

Detailed Categories Selected by Treatment Group

- Average number of detailed categories **not significantly different** between treatment groups, $F(3, 2360) = 1.44$, $p = .231$

Average Number of Detailed Categories Selected by Treatment Group

Treatment Group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
race and/or ethnicity; select all	1.44	0	8
race and/or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details	1.40	0	6
race or ethnicity; select all	1.41	0	7
race or ethnicity; select all AND enter additional details	1.52	0	7
Total	1.44	0	8

Detailed Categories Write-Ins

Most participants did not write details.

- **74% – did not provide a write-in response**
- 26% wrote something in at least one text box
- One participant wrote "unknown" in all seven boxes

Number of Write-Ins		
Number of Write-Ins	Count	Percent
0	1749	73.98
1	581	24.58
2	32	1.35
3	1	0.04
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00
7	1	0.04
Total	2364	100

Detailed Write-Ins by Treatment Group

- Average number of write-ins **not significantly different** between treatment groups, $F(3, 2360) = 0.44$, $p = .728$

Average Number of Write-ins by Treatment Group

Treatment Group	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
race and/or ethnicity; select all	0.29	0	2
race and/or ethnicity; select AND enter additional details	0.27	0	2
race or ethnicity, select all	0.29	0	7
race or ethnicity, select all AND enter additional details	0.27	0	3
Total	0.28	0	7

Detailed Categories Write-Ins

■ Participants used write-in boxes to provide additional categories, explain their ancestry, or provide commentary about why they selected a particular category.

  ▶ "Unknown" or "unsure" because they or a parent were adopted

  ▶ "7 generations all US born."

  ▶ "Mother is from the US, father is from the UK."

  ▶ "I am mixed like most people. Would have to get a DNA test to know for sure what exactly."
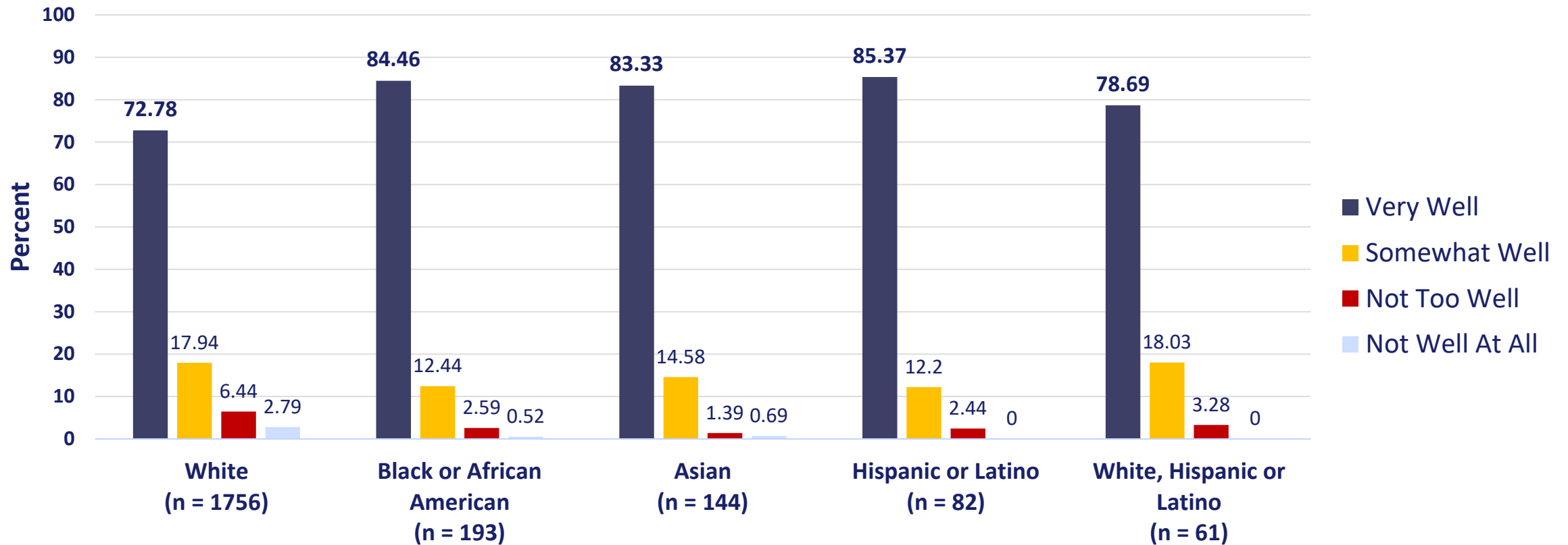
Reflection of Self in Race or Ethnicity Question

■ "Now thinking about the last question, how well did it reflect how you see your race and/or ethnicity?"

  ▶ **75% – "very well"**
  ▶ 16.9% – "somewhat well"

How Well Question Reflected Race or Ethnicity		
Response	Count	Percent
Did Not Respond	1	0.04
Not well at all	58	2.45
Not too well	130	5.50
Somewhat well	399	16.88
Very well	1776	75.13
Total	2364	100

Reflection of Self in Race or Ethnicity Question

Thinking about the last question, how well did it reflect how you see your race and/or ethnicity?"

Origins – Broad Categories

■ Average number of broad categories **not significantly different** between the two statements

- ■ Pair 1 - $F(1, 2362) = 0.09$, $p = .767$
  - ▶ My origin is not central to my identity ($M = 1.09$, $SD = 0.31$, $n = 1443$)
  - ▶ My origin is central to my identity ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.39$, $n = 921$)
- ■ Pair 2 - $F(1, 2360) = 0.04$, $p = .837$
  - ▶ I am not too familiar with my origins ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.38$, $n = 911$)
  - ▶ I am very familiar with my origins ($M = 1.09$, $SD = 0.35$, $n = 1451$)
- ■ Pair 3 - $F(1, 2361) = 0.8$, $p = .372$
  - ▶ I do not feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.37$, $n = 1209$)
  - ▶ I feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family ($M = 1.09$, $SD = 0.35$, $n = 1154$)

Origins – Detailed Categories

■ Average number of detailed categories **significantly different** between the two statements in Pair 1 and Pair 3

- ■ *Pair 1 - $F(1, 2362) = 36.5$, $p < .001$
  - ▶ My origin is not central to my identity ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.14$, $n = 1443$)
  - ▶ My origin is central to my identity ($M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.95$, $n = 921$)
- ■ Pair 2 - $F(1, 2360) = 2.23$, $p = .136$
  - ▶ I am not too familiar with my origins ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 1.10$, $n = 911$)
  - ▶ I am very familiar with my origins ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 1.07$, $n = 1451$)
- ■ *Pair 3 - $F(1, 2361) = 17.81$, $p < .001$
  - ▶ I do not feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 1.12$, $n = 1209$)
  - ▶ I feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.03$, $n = 1154$)

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Origins – Detailed Categories

■ **Average number of detailed categories significantly different between the two statements in Pair 1 and Pair 3**

  ■ *Pair 1 - $F(1, 2362) = 36.5$, $p < .001$
    ▶ My origin is **not central** to my identity ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.14$, $n = 1443$)
    ▶ My origin is central to my identity ($M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.95$, $n = 921$)

  ■ *Pair 3 - $F(1, 2361) = 17.81$, $p < .001$
    ▶ I do **not feel a strong connection** with the cultural origin of my family ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 1.12$, $n = 1209$)
    ▶ I feel a strong connection with the cultural origin of my family ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.03$, $n = 1154$)

Conclusions

- Participants in this study

  ▶ Able to select broad and detailed categories that reflected their race or ethnicity

  ▶ Willing to answer the race and ethnicity questions, but did not make additional effort to provide written responses

  ▶ Indicated questions reflected their race or ethnicity "very well" or "somewhat well"

Conclusions

- **No significant differences** by treatment group for broad categories, detailed categories, or write-ins

- Changes to question stem or instructions did **not** affect
  - ▶ Response distribution
  - ▶ Participant understanding
  - ▶ Participant response

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