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Comments Received :

I'm Professor and Chair of Sociology at Duke University and have relied on Ancestry data from the Census for the past 2 decades in my research on MENA and Arab American populations. I also rely on Ancestry data to disaggregate other emerging white ethnic groups, such as Ukranians and Russians. I'm writing to request in the strongest terms possible that the Census Bureau keep the ANCESTRY question when they introduce the new race question. The Ancestry question taps into a distinct component of identity that may or may not be captured in the new race question. For example, individuals of Lebanese heritage might check the "White" race box but not identify as "MENA;" even if they check both boxes, they may leave the write-ins blank (especially since the prompt for Whites no longer includes them in the example). Ancestry is one of the only ways to identify these individuals, and it allows for more fine-grained distinctions between responses to 1st and 2nd Ancestry. Even more importantly, demographers, scholars, and statisticians across the country rely on Ancestry data to examine the extensive ethnic heterogeneity that exists within broad racial categories, such as Black, White, Hispanic and Asian. The general trend is to acknowledge greater within-group diversity, and removing the ancestry question would make that nearly impossible. In sum, Ancestry is not redundant with race and dropping it would remove one of the only ways to check for consistency and comparability in the ethnic identification of individuals classified into broad racial/ethnic categories. I have attached my c.v. that references several publications that use ancestry data, including a 2013 article on Mexican and Arab identity that was funded by the U.S. Census Bureau (also attached). Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional information or clarification.