



PARTNERSHIP FOR AMERICA'S CHILDREN

State and local child advocates working
together for a better future

Public Comment of the Partnership for America's Children on the Ask U.S. Panel

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The Partnership for America's Children submits these comments on the Ask U.S. Panel . The Partnership's mission is to support its network of state and community multi-issue child advocacy organizations in effective advocacy. The Partnership has 49 member organizations in 40 states that advocate to improve policies for children at the state, local and federal level. Collectively they represent over 90% of the nation's children. Partnership members use Census data in their advocacy, and thirty Partnership members are also KIDS COUNT grantees in their state, serving as that state's data hub on children for policy makers, administrators, and nonprofits.

The Partnership for America's Children served as the national hub on the undercount of young children in the 2020 Decennial Census. In this role the Partnership formed and continues to co-lead a national working group of child-serving organizations that is working to improve the count of young children in all Census Bureau demographic products.

We recommend that the first survey for Ask U.S. be used to investigate why Census respondents do not include their young children on the decennial census and other Census Bureau surveys.

According to material about a new panel survey being considered by the Census Bureau (Ask U.S. Panel) the first topical survey that will be used as a proof-of-concept will be developed from the Census Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Survey (CBAMS). The CBAMS questionnaire will be adapted from that used prior to the 2020 Census and will be used to measure intercensal mindsets towards the Census Bureau and Census Bureau data collections. The pilot topical survey will be a field test of the survey instrument to be used throughout the coming decade to observe barriers, attitudes, and motivators towards the Census Bureau

The use of the CBAMS survey to test out the new panel provides a terrific opportunity for the Census Bureau to expand the CBAMS questionnaire used prior to the 2020 Census to gain more information about the undercount of young children in the Census and the under-reporting of young children in the major Census Bureau surveys such as the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey and the Survey of Income and Program Participation.

The population ages 0 to 4 had a higher net undercount in the 2010 Census than any other age group and the gap between the census coverage of young children and other age groups has been growing. Census Bureau demographers Jensen and Hogan found young children had lower coverage rates than other age groups in major Census Bureau surveys

Research (Lake 2019; Griffin and O'Hare 2020) found many parents of young children did not understand that young children are supposed to be included on census questionnaires. Specifically, the research shows that 10 percent of parents of young children in low-income families were not planning to include their young child in the 2020 Census and another 8 percent were not sure if they would include their young child in the Census. Additional questions showed that many parents were not planning to include their young child in the Census because they did not think the government needed to know about them.

The CBAMS platform would be a great place to get more information on this topic. The modified CBAMS survey could be used to find out which groups were most likely to leave their young child off the census or census bureau surveys, get more detailed information on why they are likely leaving their child off census Bureau data collection instruments, and test what messages might convince them to include their young child. Such information would be extremely helpful in planning for the 2030 Census as well as improving on-going surveys.

Moreover, this work fits neatly into the work of the newly formed Census Bureau cross-directorate team on the undercount of young child that was announced at the Census Scientific Advisory Committee meeting last fall.

Improving the count of young children should be a high priority for this survey because an accurate count of the country's young children will make sure that federal funds are directed to the children who most need them, that redistricting in 2030 is based on the most accurate information so that communities with young children have their fair share of political representation at the federal, state, and local levels, provide federal, state and local governments with the data they need to manage government programs such as determining how many young children will enter their local school systems each year, and provide better data for research, policy analysis, and policy makers.

If you have questions about these comments please feel free to contact me at dstein@foramericaschildren.org, or 202 213 8981.

Sincerely yours,

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