

Asian subdividing in the Census? How to answer the racial questions

By Han Li

Q: Will the census ask about racial issues?

A: In the 2020 census questionnaire, the eighth and ninth questions are asking respondents to fill in the information on race and ethnicity. The eighth question asks your ethnicity - that is, if you are Hispanic or Latino. Then the ninth question asks about your race and has a detailed list of Asian, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders subgroups. There is no generic "Asian" option, but a detailed subgroup of Asian ethnicity.

AAJA-AAJC from Washington DC supports the detailed subgroups options, saying more detailed Asian subgroup information will help the whole society better understand the stories and images of Asian Americans. However, some Chinese people worry that the Asian breakdown data will be used for capping the university admissions quota.

Q: Is there a "Chinese" option for the Asian part of the ninth question?

A: 11 options are listed in the ninth question, including Chinese, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Filipino, Korean, Samoan, Indian, Japanese, Chamorro, and "Other Asians", and "Other Pacific Islanders". The paper questionnaire is only available in English and Spanish and the first Asian checkbox option is "Chinese."

In the official Census Bureau questionnaire, the "Chinese" is translated in a more politically neutral word "ethnic Chinese"(華人).

Q: How can Taiwanese answer this question?

A: Among the listed Asian options, there is no "Taiwanese" checkbox option. However, there is another option called "other Asians." The person who fills in the form can write in the ethnic information, and all the information he or she fills in will be counted in the final result. We have seen census data products that include data on the Taiwanese population. The spokesperson from the Census Bureau said that the 2020 Census will be the "most inclusive" one.

Q: What about Chinese Vietnamese (ethnic Chinese born or raised or have been living in Vietnam)?

A: Again, the respondents can write in whatever they are identifying themselves. HG Nguyen, a well-known Vietnamese language radio host in the Bay Area, said earlier that there are many

Vietnamese Chinese Americans who indicated that they will choose “Vietnamese” in the 2020 census. In 2010, this group of people identified in the Census as Chinese.

Q: Will these racial data be published?

A: Currently we don't know exactly how data will be published after the collection. The Census Bureau spokesman says all census data will be published for "statistical purposes only," ensuring that no individual's privacy will be violated.

Questionnaire information:

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/language-resources/language-guides.html>