

Respondent Insights

Client: The United States Census Bureau

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We are a team of five from across Harvard University, bringing together diverse perspectives and skills



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Our client is the U.S. Census Bureau that collects and provides data about the nation's people and economy.

100+

different surveys
conducted
regularly

\$400bn

federal funding
allocations based
on census data






2x

**decrease in
participation** over
the past decade

How might we address...

**the concerns of census respondents and
increase the participation rates in census
household surveys?**

Agenda

-  Research Process
-  Respondent Personas
-  Respondent Journey
-  User Insights
-  Next Steps

Research Process

We conducted interviews of potential census respondents, spoke to stakeholders, and census field representatives

Interviews with potential respondents

- Diversity across age, race, education, employment
- Locations: transit centers, convenience stores, laundromats, community centers, on the street
- Challenge: Client unable to provide details of people who actually took part in the process

Experts and other stakeholders

- Clients: Lisa Clement and Ruth Chan
- Experts: Tech & design experts who have worked with the Bureau
- Census field representatives

Secondary research

- Census website
- Census publications
- Grievances log from Census

We synthesized research from several sources to derive these insights

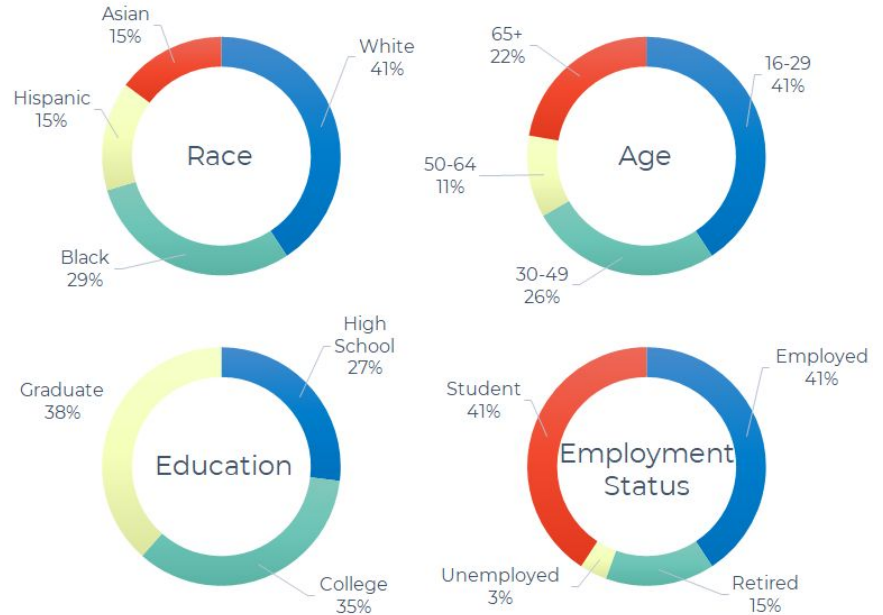
30 Potential Respondents

5 Census Experts

2 Field Representatives

100+ Rejections

Respondent Profiles



Respondent Personas

Respondent personas emerge along the spectrum of potential responses to Census survey requests

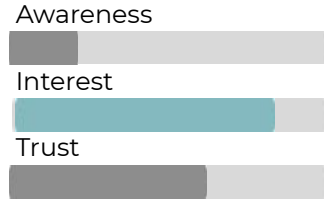
Civic Carers

"I would comply. It's the right thing; civic duty like voting and town meetings."



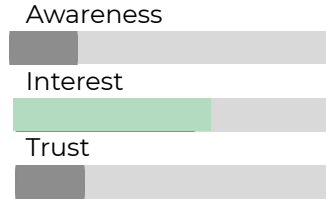
Wary Rationalists

"Scams. Why do they need to count people? Maybe legit reason but I'm not educated on it."



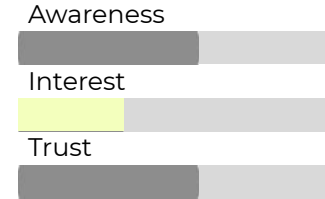
Data Guardians

"Will my data be shared? Even if it's illegal? Will it be used against me?"



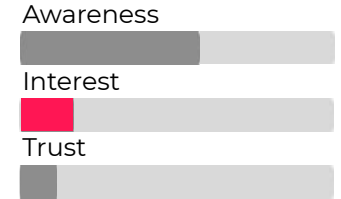
Busy Professionals

"It would depend on the day and how I'm feeling and if it's not too early. Depending on my mood."



Hard KNOcks

"I don't even trust the 10 year census. I do not believe in the system."



Respondent Journey

Respondent journey begins much before the actual survey and continues after the survey

Pre-survey

Mail

Potential respondents receive a letter in their mailbox that they have been selected for a survey



Awareness of Census

People get to know about the survey through earlier experiences and other media outreaches



Ignore or Engage

Respondents either ignore the letter or try to know more by visiting the website/ asking friends etc.

Survey

First visit

A field representative usually calls/ visits the respondents at their homes



Survey

The actual survey lasts between 10 mins to 1 hours depending on the kind of survey



Decision to participate

The respondent decides whether to participate or not

Reflect

Respondents may reflect on the survey and talk about it to their friends and family

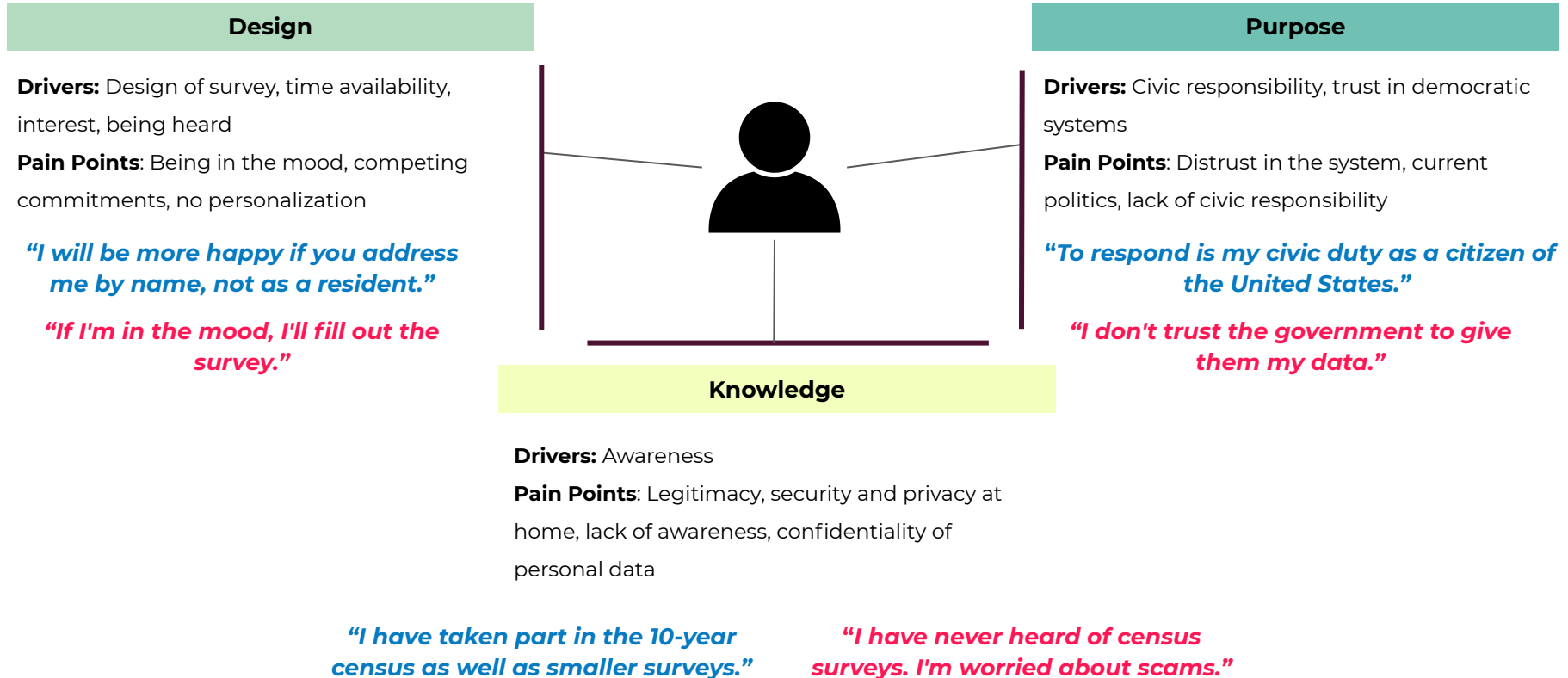


Immediate reaction

Respondents convey their reaction to the field respondent

User Insights

Census needs buy-in of the respondents in three different dimensions for a great survey experience



Legitimacy of the survey, process, and interviewer is a major concern of census respondents

"I want to know who I am talking to. Usually, government issued ids help me verify the legitimacy of surveyors."



Martha, 48-year-old white woman

"If the letter had a government stamp, I am usually comfortable."



Jackie, 70-year-old Hispanic woman

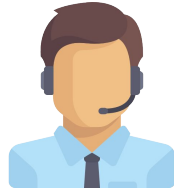
"I do tend to double check to make sure it's a legitimate government survey."



Gretel, 26-year-old white woman

Lack of awareness of the intent of census surveys or the Census Bureau often leads respondents to be disengaged from the survey process

*"I know of the Census surveys.
Not sure of household surveys"*



Nandu, a 35-year-old Indian immigrant

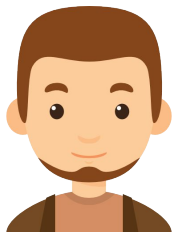
*"I do it all the time for the city
government. Not sure of census
bureau"*



Hansel, a 34-year-old Hispanic immigrant

Respondents are concerned about privacy and potential data breaches that may result in misuse of personal information

"So many issues! I am very, very careful always. What if they find my SSN and misuse it."



Augusto, 58-year-old
Hispanic man

"I am feeding the big data monster but how will they use it?"



Ed, 76-year-old white
man

Mood and competing commitments decrease the respondents' likelihood of answering a survey

"We receive so many, sometimes you ignore"



Tyrese, 27-year-old black man

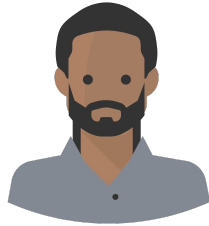
"My immediate reaction to mail like this is oh great, another thing I have to do."



Gretel, 26-year-old white woman

Growing distrust in democratic systems deter respondents from taking part in government events, including census surveys

“Get rid of all politicians, take care of homeless. All those needs to change.”



Madueno, a 58-year-old
black man

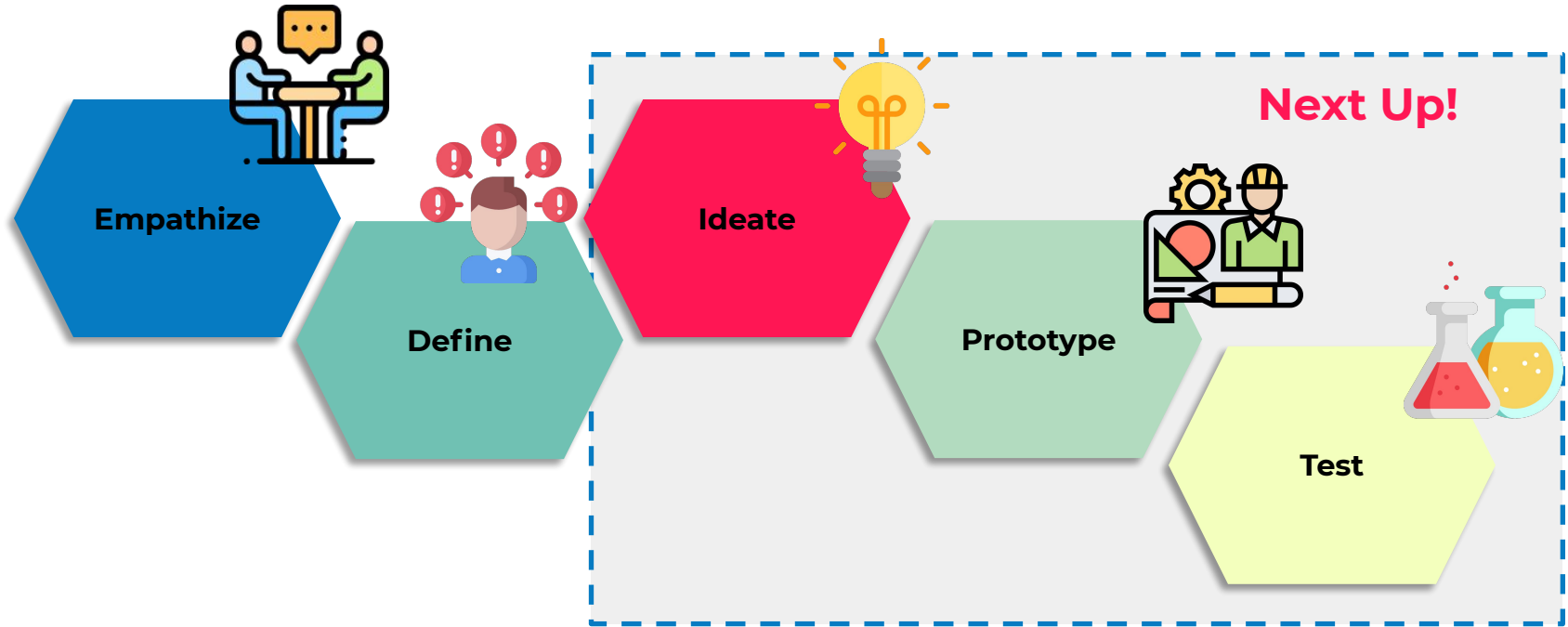
“I do not believe in the system.”



Mallory, a 35-year-old
Hispanic woman

Next Steps

Next steps include brainstorming ideas for the user insights, prototyping and testing potential solutions



**You are Census.
Census is you.**