Research on Census Messaging

- With Latino Decisions, NALEO Educational Fund conducted a national poll and four focus groups focused on the census.
- The poll surveyed a nationally representative sample of the Latino adult population (1,600 Latinos) from April 11 - 20, 2018.
- Latino survey participants were assigned to four treatment groups and a control group to test messaging.
- The four focus groups, held May 8 and 9, were conducted in Charlotte, North Carolina and the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. Each location had an English and Spanish group.
- The 40 scientifically-selected focus group Latino participants were comprised of individuals with mixed citizenship statuses (29 citizens and 11 non-citizens). Each participant knew people who were non-citizens, with a majority having both parents born outside of the United States.

Concerns Raised About Immigration Enforcement and Citizenship Question

- Latino participants in all four focus groups discussed increased immigration enforcement, and traffic stops for minor infractions that have made people fearful about interactions with law enforcement and government.
- Hesitation, fear and cynicism arose among Latino focus group participants when they saw a version of the actual census questionnaire.
- The citizenship question raised the most concerns, with anxiety increasing as Latino participants considered the reality of providing their information to the current administration.
- There was a lack of confidence among Latino participants that the data provided would be kept confidential, especially among the Charlotte focus group participants who mentioned a recent countywide data hack.

Effectiveness of Messaging Can Vary by Group and Location

- Four messages were tested – convenient, safe required; civic/community duty; funding; and resistance/defend community.
- Messages about census participation being convenient, safe and required showed the most positive response in the survey.
- Messages about the role of Census data in providing funding for local schools and community programs were the most effective in the focus groups.
- All four messages tested better than the control group which received no message. Effectiveness did vary between locations and subgroups, making local context an important tool in developing successful messaging campaigns targeting Latinos.
- Latino immigrants were especially responsive to the “convenience, safe and required” message with 75 percent saying they would participate in response to this type of messaging.
- Latinos under age 40 were most responsive to the “resistance” message, with 53 percent saying this messaging would make them definitely participate.
- The “civic and community duty” message was most effective among Latinas, with 57 percent saying they would definitely participate in response to that particular message.

Trusted Messengers and Sources of Information

- Consistent with previous NALEO Educational Fund voter engagement research, “family members” (especially female household members) were the most trusted messengers among Latinos.
- People who speak for “the children” or “the schools” were especially respected as messengers, with nurses, doctors, health providers and Latino community organizations also highly trusted.
- For Spanish-speakers, Spanish-language media were a trusted source of information. Younger Latino participants had more favorable views of social media as a source of information.
- Latino survey participants frequently search online to get more information or verify what they have heard on social media or the news, with email and Facebook the most frequently used and Twitter the least frequently used.