Citizenship Question Effects on Household Survey Response

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Potential Effects When Adding Citizenship Question (1 of 2)

- Decrease overall unit self-response rate – would increase fieldwork

- Increase household roster omissions – causes undercount

- Increase internet break-offs – increases item nonresponse

- Citizenship item nonresponse

- Heterogeneity in changes in responsiveness across groups

  - If decreases responsiveness of initially less responsive groups more, it would increase differential undercount

Research Questions

- How do characteristics of households participating in the 2019 Census Test differ from those opting out?

- How does citizenship question's effects on different types of response behavior vary by household race/ethnicity and immigration status

  - Unit self-response

  - Household roster omissions

  - Internet breakoffs at citizenship question and elsewhere

  - Citizenship item nonresponse

Data (1 of 3)

- 2019 Census Test RCT

  - Same questionnaire as in 2020 Census, except also included citizenship question at end of questionnaire for 240,000 of the 480,000 housing units

  - Self-response only, by internet, mail, and telephone

  - Data collection between June 13 and August 15, 2019, with reference date of July 1, 2019

  - Supreme Court decision leading to removal of citizenship question was announced June 27, 2019
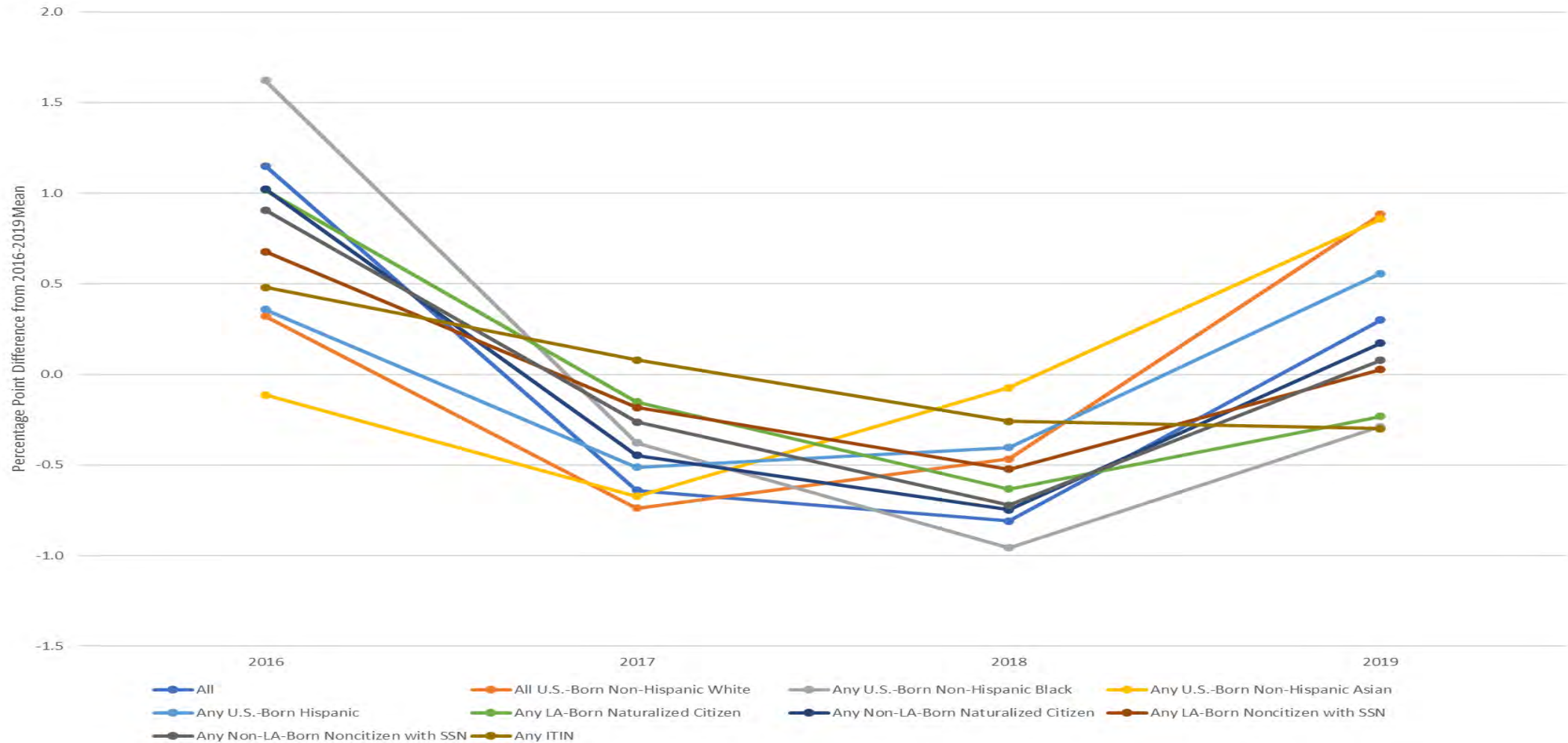
Data (2 of 2)

- 2019 Demographic Frame Extract

  - Includes people with SSNs or ITINs who have PIKs

  - Select MAFID with highest person-place probability using random forest model

  - Use MAFIDs in 2019 Census Test

  - Race/ethnicity from Census Best Race File

  - Citizenship and place of birth from Numident for people with SSNs

  - Latin American-born group from Central America, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela
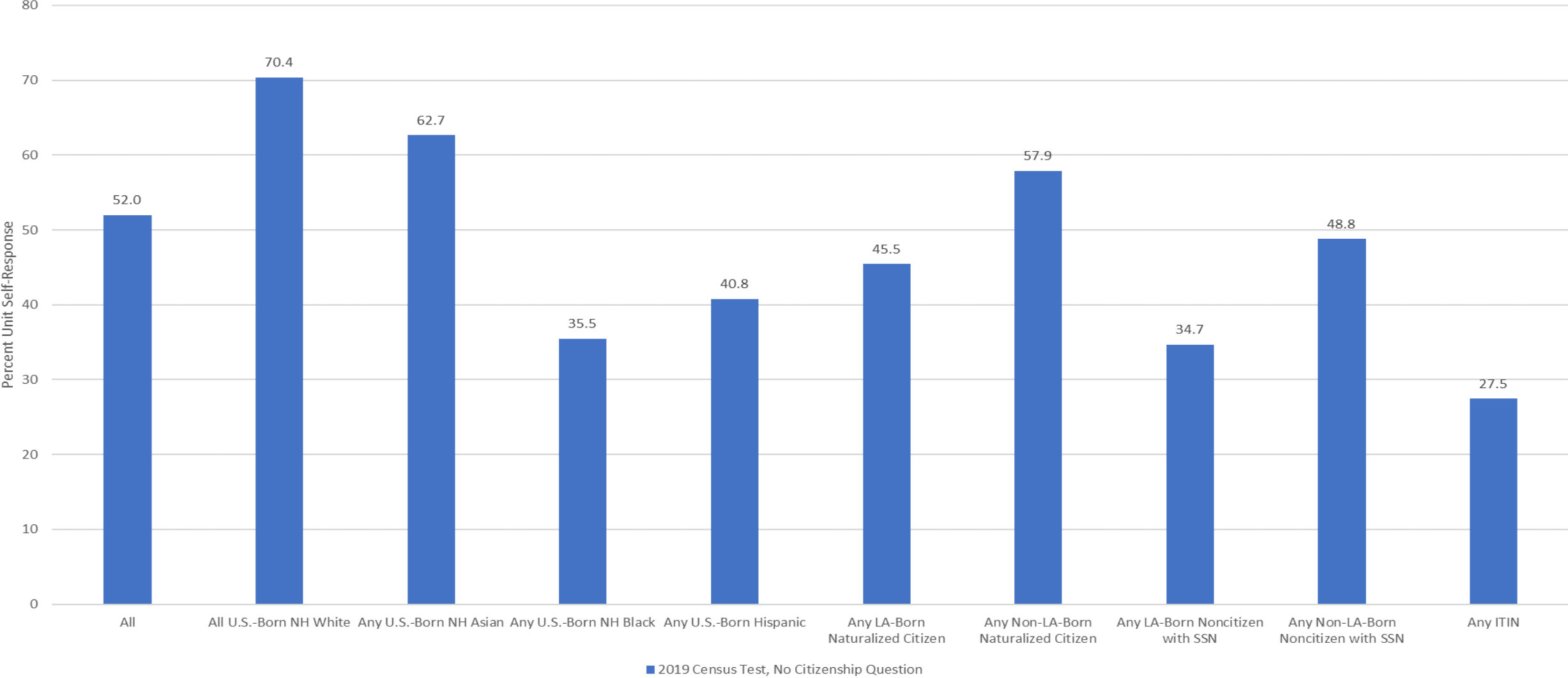
Methods

- Logistic, multinomial logistic and OLS regressions with

  - Single race/ethnicity/immigration status category

  - All race/ethnicity/immigration status categories (all U.S.-born non-Hispanic White is base category)

  - With other controls, including Undeliverable As Addressed, household income, IRS 1040 filing type, household size, housing structure type, Internet First/Choice and English/Bilingual materials, mean number of addresses per person, and presence of people in different age groups

- Interact characteristics with citizenship question panel indicator

Percentage Point Differences in ACS Unit Self-Response Relative to 2016-2019 Mean
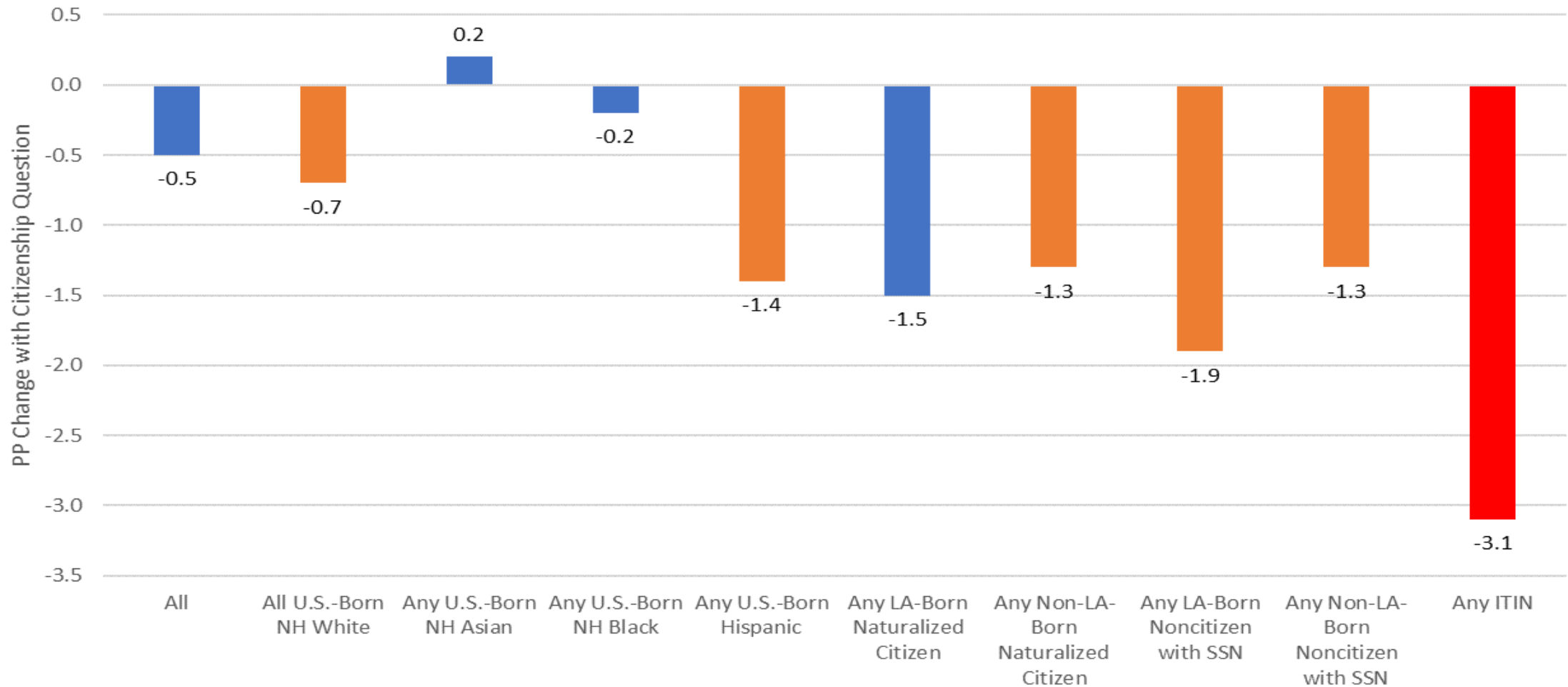

The data presented in this figure are approved for dissemination by the DRB (CBDRB-FY24-CES019-008).

Percent Unit Self-Response in 2019 Census Test, No Citizenship Question Panel

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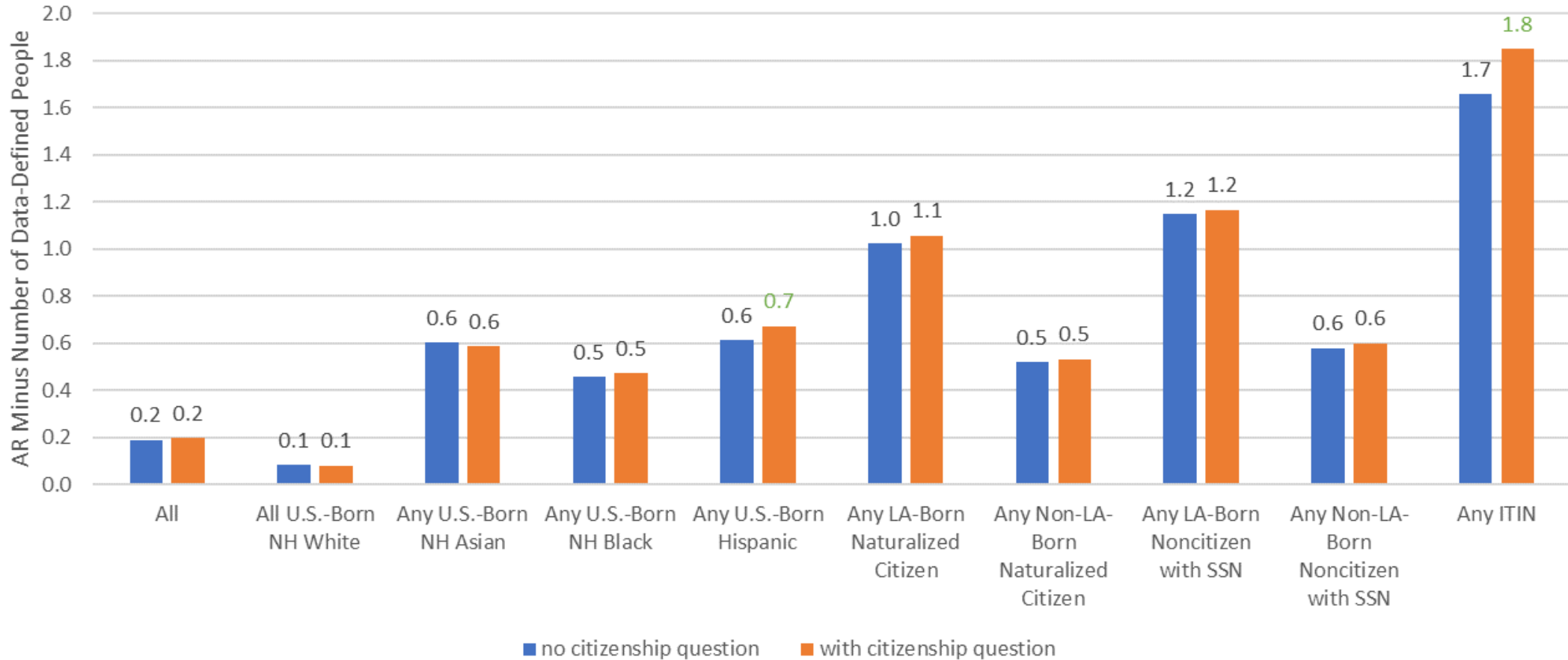
Percentage Point Change in Unit Self-Response with Citizenship Question

Blue bars are statistically insignificant at the 5% level in all regressions. Orange bars are statistically significant in univariate regressions only. Red bars are statistically significant in the univariate regression, the regression including all race/ethnicity and immigration status categories, and the regression including controls.

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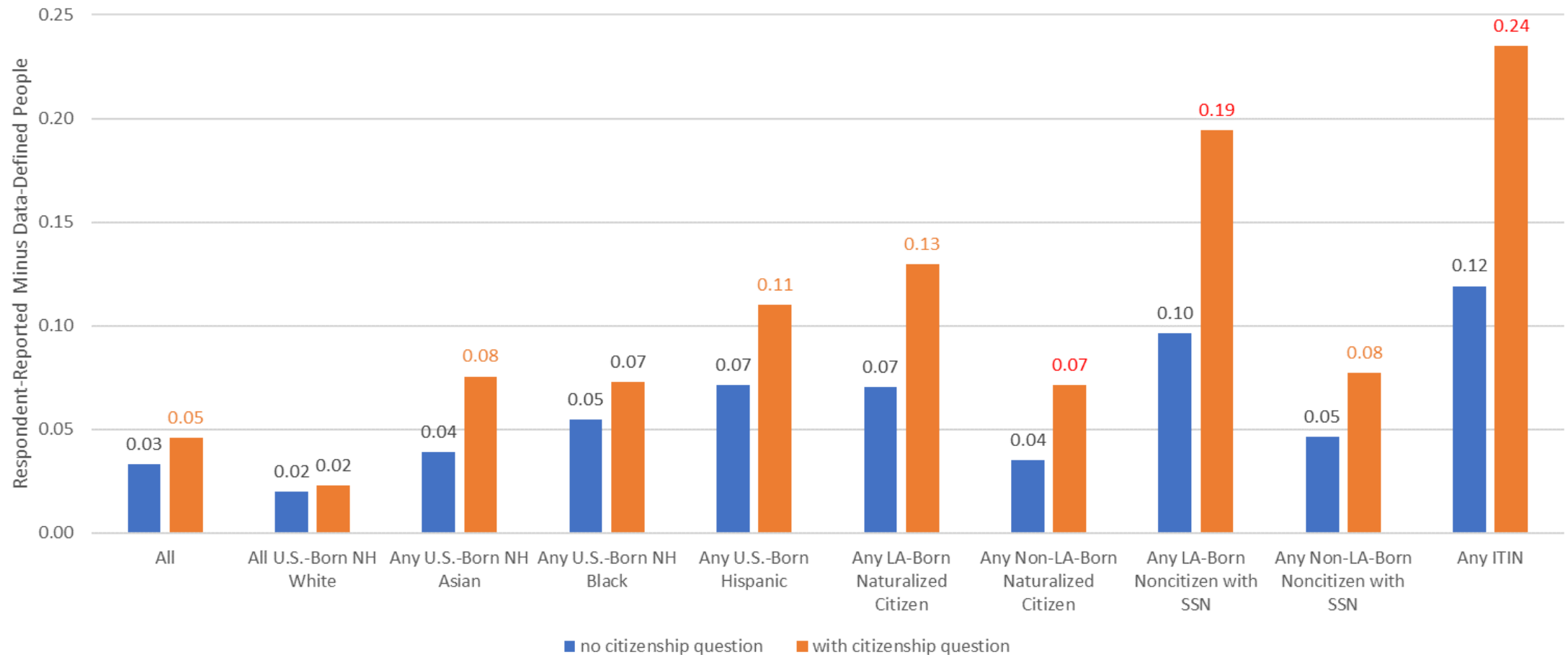
Number of People in Administrative Records Minus Survey Data-Defined People

Black numbers with citizenship question are for categories with statistically insignificant (5% level) citizenship question effects in all regressions. Green numbers are for categories with statistically significant citizenship question effects in the univariate regression and the regression including all race/ethnicity and immigration status categories, but not the regression including controls.

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Respondent-Reported Population Count Minus Data-Defined People
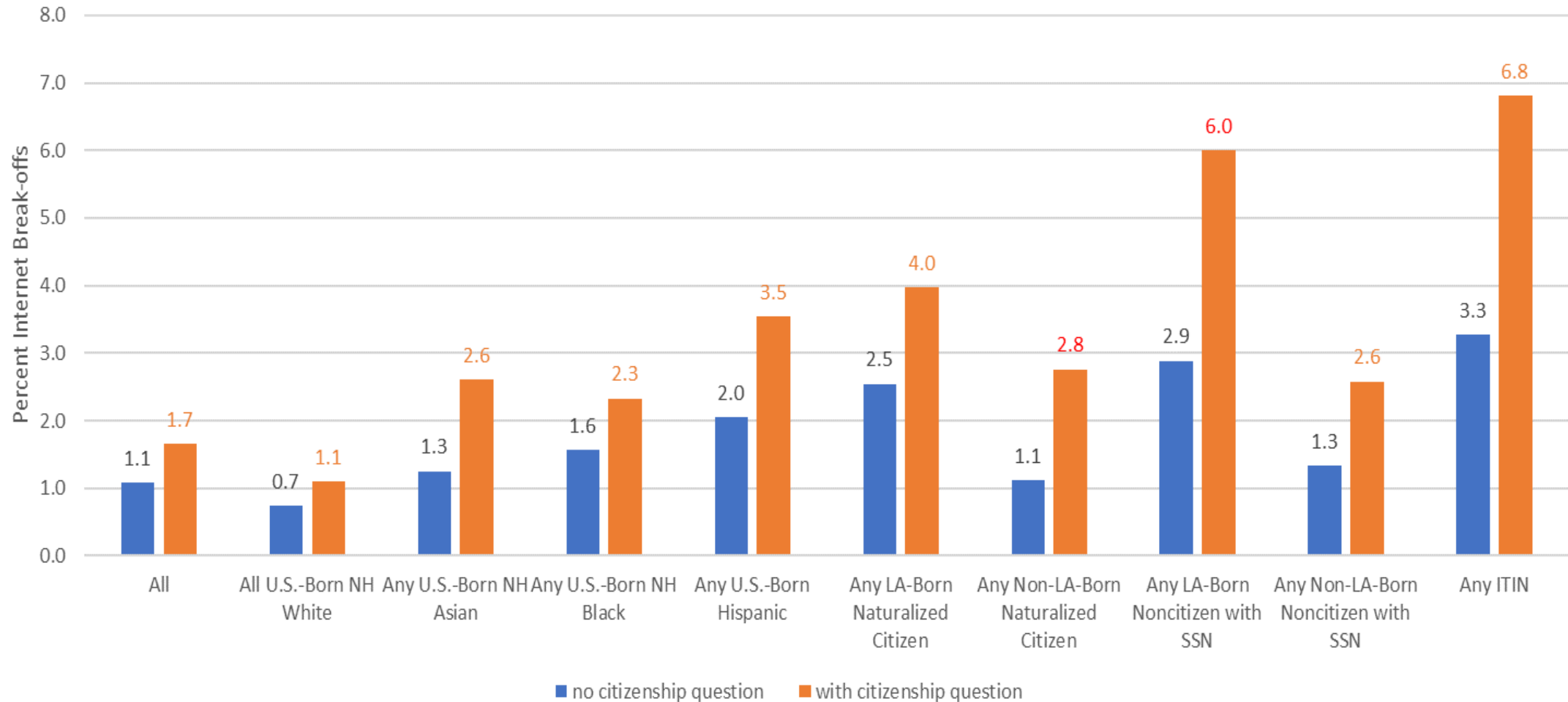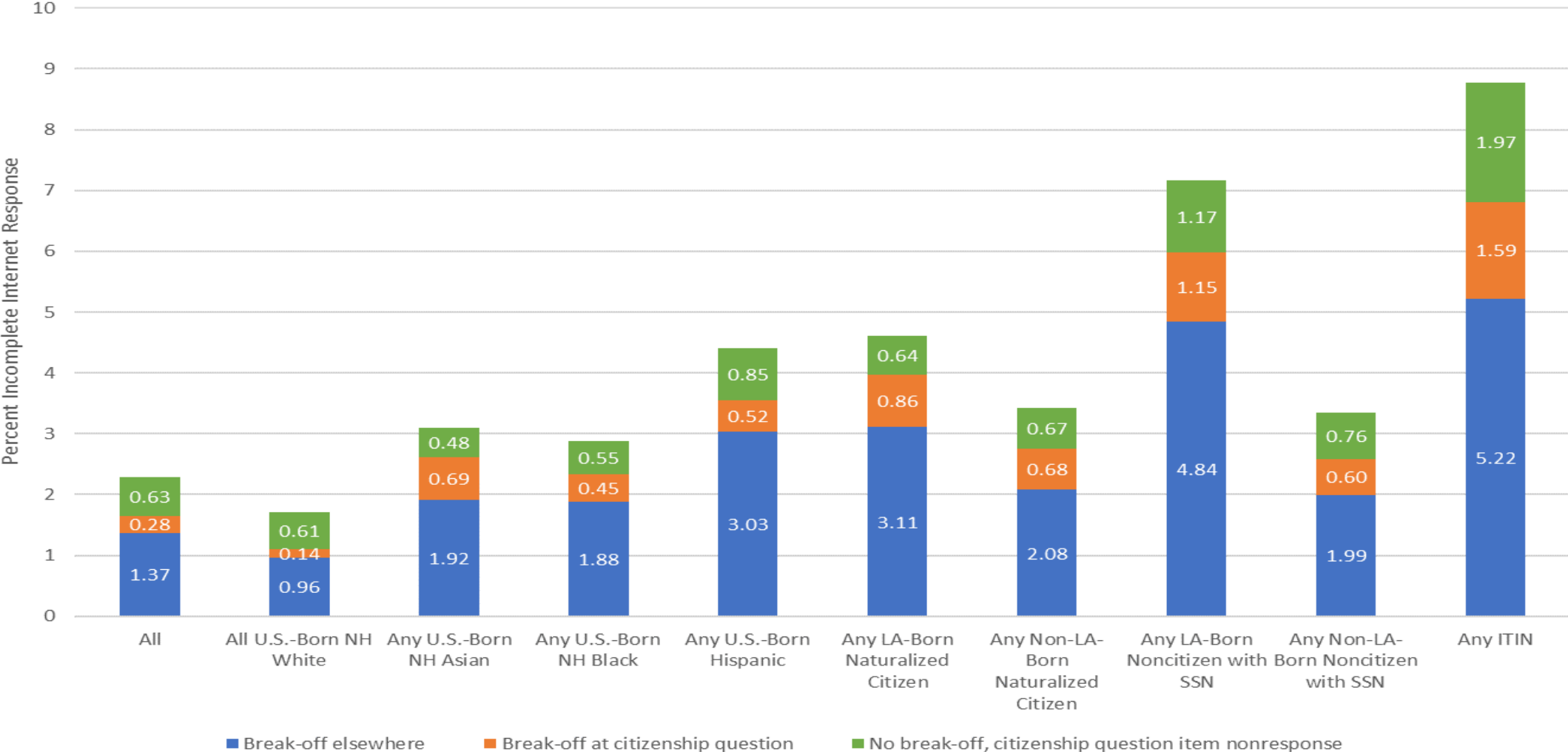

Black numbers with citizenship question are for categories with statistically insignificant (5% level) citizenship question effects in all regressions. Orange numbers are for categories with statistically significant (5% level) citizenship effects in univariate regressions only. Red numbers are for categories with statistically significant citizenship question effects in all three regressions.

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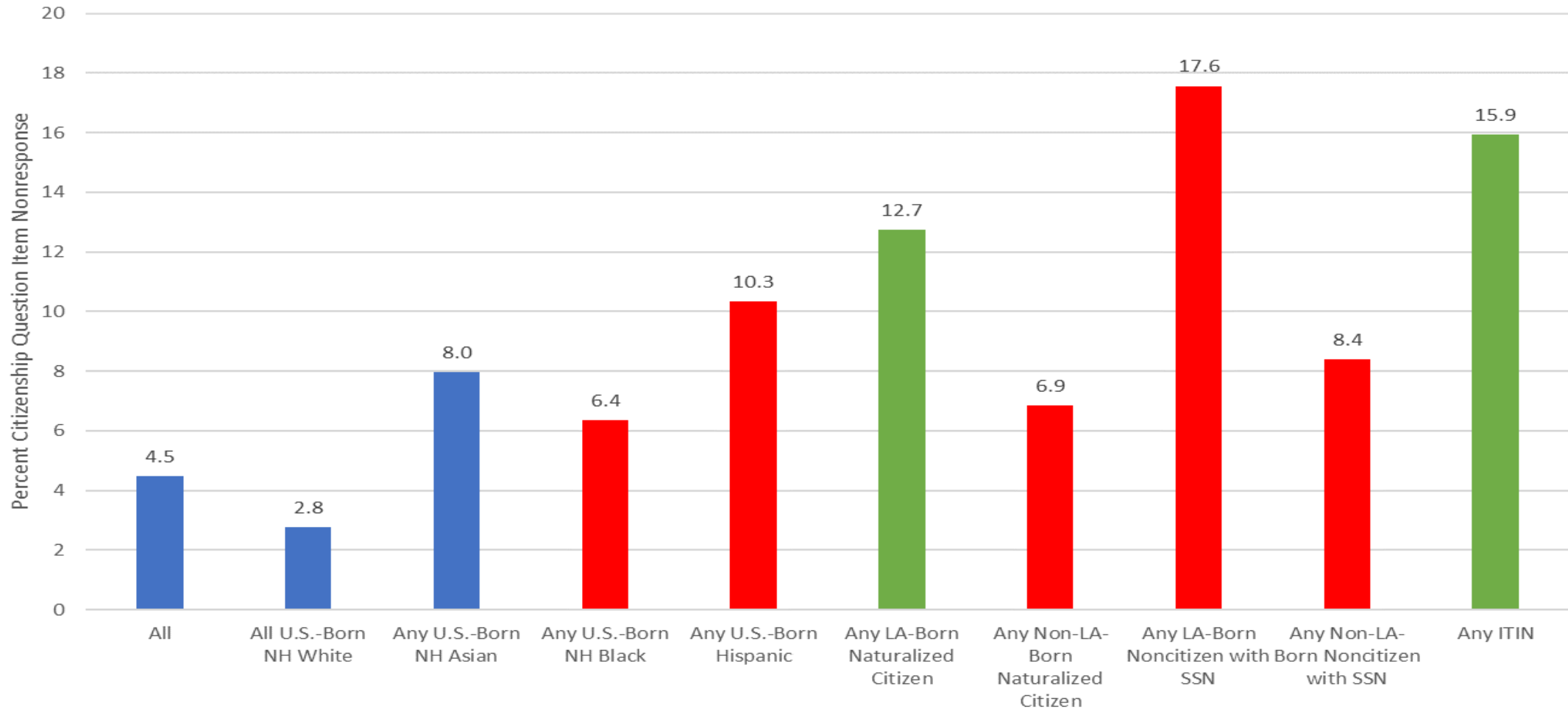# Percent of Internet Responses Ending in Break-off

Orange numbers are for categories with statistically significant (5% level) citizenship effects in univariate regressions only. Red numbers are for categories with statistically significant citizenship question effects in all three regressions.

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Percent Incomplete Internet Response with Citizenship Question

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Percent Citizenship Question Item Nonresponse in Mail Responses

Blue bars are statistically insignificant at the 5% level in both regressions. Green bars are statistically significant in the regression with all race/ethnicity and immigration status categories, but not in the regression with controls. Red bars are statistically significant in both regressions.

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Results Summary

- Groups with more to fear about citizenship question less likely to fully respond, even without citizenship question
  - Lower unit self-response
  - More household roster omissions
  - Higher internet breakoffs

- Citizenship question effects
  - Reduces ITIN-holder unit self-response
  - Increases household roster omissions by ITIN-holders, non-LA-born naturalized citizens, LA-born noncitizens with SSNs, and U.S.-born Hispanics
  - Increases internet breakoffs by non-LA-born naturalized citizens and LA-born noncitizens with SSNs

- Citizenship question item nonresponse especially high for LA-born noncitizens with SSNs and ITIN-holders

Conclusion

- The citizenship question is associated with further response avoidance by noncitizens who are already hard-to-count, worsening differential undercounts

- Survey noncitizen household roster omissions can help explain coverage differences between survey- and AR-based noncitizen population estimates

- Administrative data can provide insights about survey tests

- Household roster omission proxies can be constructed without doing fieldwork followup

- The paper can be downloaded from https://www2.census.gov/library/working-papers/2024/adrm/ces/CES-WP-24-31.pdf