Census Bureau Research and Evidence Related to Federal Race and Ethnicity Data Standards

NALEO Educational Fund

Improving the Accuracy of Data Collection About the Latino Community: The Importance of Proposals Released by the Office of Management and Budget

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Merarys Rios-Vargas
Chief, Ethnicity & Ancestry Branch
Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau

Jessica E. Peña, Ph.D.
Senior Analyst, Ethnicity & Ancestry Branch
Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau
Initial Proposals for Updating Race and Ethnicity Statistical Standards

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) maintains government-wide standards for federal race and ethnicity data that ensure our ability to compare information and data across federal agencies, and to understand how well federal programs serve a diverse America.

On June 15, 2022, the Chief Statistician of the United States identified updating the standards as a top priority to ensure that the standards better reflect the diversity of the American people. The Interagency Technical Working Group on Race and Ethnicity Standards (Working Group) was created to lead this effort and was charged with proposing recommendations for improving the quality and usefulness of federal race and ethnicity data.


The public is invited to provide feedback through the Federal Register Notice (FRN) on the proposed revisions by April 12, 2023.

The initial proposals include:

- Collecting race and ethnicity information using one combined question.
- Adding “Middle Eastern or North African” (MENA) as a new response category.
- Requiring the collection of detailed race and ethnicity categories by default.
- The Working Group is also asking for public comment on how best to revise SPD 15’s:
  - Terminology, definitions, and question wording.
  - Guidance on implementation and adoption of revised standards.
  - Guidance on how to collect and report administrative and proxy data.

These recommendations are preliminary and they do not represent the positions of OMB or the agencies participating on the Working Group.

Your feedback will help guide the Working Group as they develop their final recommendations to OMB and will also help OMB determine how to revise SPD 15 to improve the quality and usefulness of federal race and ethnicity data.

OMB and the Working Group have set the goal of completing these important revisions by the Summer of 2024.

For more information on the FRN, providing feedback, or OMB’s process for revising SPD 15, visit: https://spd15revision.gov/
Purpose for Research on Race Ethnicity:
Increasing Non-Response Over Decades, Growing “Some Other Race” Population, Respondents Frustrated by Separate Race Ethnicity Questions

Our team responded by conducting extensive research and outreach over the past 15 years:

- 2010 Census Race and Hispanic Origin Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE)
- 2015 National Content Test (NCT)
- Qualitative research and engagements with communities found people want better ways to racially and ethnically self-identify who they are
2010 AQE Main Research Findings

Results for the Combined Question

- Reduced reporting of Some Other Race (from 7% to under 0.5%)
- Reporting of White in combined question reflects levels of Non-Hispanic White from separate questions approach
- No evidence of difference for Hispanic, Black, AIAN, Asian, NHPI
- Yielded lower item nonresponse rates
- Increased detailed reporting for most groups, but decreased for others
- Better reflects self-identity, per reinterview

Results from the AQE Focus Groups

- Fair, equitable treatment for all groups with a combined question
- Middle Eastern and North African participants did not see themselves in the current race/ethnicity categories and recommended a separate Middle Eastern, North African, or Arab response category
2015 NCT Methodology: National Survey and Oversample

- Large, nationally representative sample of 1.2 million addresses, including Puerto Rico
- Evaluate and compare different census content
- Refine estimates of national self-response and Internet response rates and continue testing different contact strategies for optimizing self-response
- Overall response rate was 51.9%
2015 NCT Oversample

- Large, nationally representative sample of 1.2 million addresses, including Puerto Rico
- NCT sampling methodology was designed to measure content testing differences for relatively small population groups.
- This enabled us to make comparisons for groups such as Afro-Latinos, detailed groups being considered for the MENA category, and detailed groups in multiple communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>Number of Tracts</th>
<th>Number of HUs</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>MENA %</th>
<th>AIAN %</th>
<th>Asian/NHPI %</th>
<th>Black %</th>
<th>Hispanic %</th>
<th>2010 Mail Response Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>1,176,267</td>
<td>3,112,719</td>
<td>19.1</td>
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<td>14.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<td>9,393,227</td>
<td>31,048,979</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
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<td>All Other</td>
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<td>75,865,280</td>
<td>195,989,644</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Scientific Refinements Testing SEPARATE vs COMBINED Question Format

**Separate Questions**

- **Note:** Please answer BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic ethnicity and Question 6 about race. For this census, Hispanic ethnicity is not race.

6. Is Person #1 Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish?

Mark all boxes that apply. AND prefill in the spaces below. (Note: You may report more than one group.)

- [ ] Yes, not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
- [ ] Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- [ ] Yes, Puerto Rican
- [ ] Yes, Cuban
- [ ] Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ethnicity — Please fill in example: Galician, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spanish, Ecuadorian, etc.

5. What is Person #1’s race?

Mark all boxes that apply. AND prefill in the spaces below. (Note: You may report more than one group.)

- [ ] White — Please fill in example: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.
- [ ] Black or African Am. — Please fill in example: African-American, Jamaican, Hall, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.
- [ ] Asian — Please fill in example: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native — Please fill in example: Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Cheyenne, Athabascan Village of Barrow, American Indian Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.
- [ ] Middle Eastern or North African — Please fill in example: Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander — Please fill in example: Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Tongan, Fiji, Marshallese, etc.
- [ ] Some other race — Please fill in example: Hawaiian, etc.
- [ ] Some other race or ethnicity

**Combined Question with Write-Ins**

6. What is Person #1’s race or origin?

Mark all boxes that apply. AND prefill in the spaces below. (Note: You may report more than one group.)

- [ ] White — Please fill in example: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.
- [ ] Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — Please fill in example: Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Urban, Spanish, Cuban, Ecuadorian, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spanish, Galician, etc.
- [ ] Black or African Am. — Please fill in example: African-American, Jamaican, Hall, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.
- [ ] Asian — Please fill in example: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native — Please fill in example: Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Cheyenne, Athabascan Village of Barrow, American Indian Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.
- [ ] Middle Eastern or North African — Please fill in example: Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander — Please fill in example: Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Tongan, Fiji, Marshallese, etc.
- [ ] Some other race or origin — Please fill in example: Hawaiian, etc.

**Combined Question with Checkboxes**

6. Which categories describe Person #1?

Mark all boxes that apply. AND prefill in the spaces below. (Note: You may report more than one group.)

- [ ] White — Please fill in example: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.
- [ ] Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — Please fill in example: Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Urban, Spanish, Cuban, Ecuadorian, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spanish, Galician, etc.
- [ ] Black or African Am. — Please fill in example: African-American, Jamaican, Hall, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.
- [ ] Asian — Please fill in example: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native — Please fill in example: Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Cheyenne, Athabascan Village of Barrow, American Indian Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.
- [ ] Middle Eastern or North African — Please fill in example: Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander — Please fill in example: Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Tongan, Fiji, Marshallese, etc.
- [ ] Some other race or ethnicity

7. **Note:** Please answer BOTH Question 8 about Hispanic ethnicity and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic ethnicity is not race.

9. What is Person #2’s race?

Mark all boxes that apply. AND prefill in the spaces below. (Note: You may report more than one group.)

- [ ] White — Please fill in example: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc.
- [ ] Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — Please fill in example: Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Urban, Spanish, Cuban, Ecuadorian, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spanish, Galician, etc.
- [ ] Black or African Am. — Please fill in example: African-American, Jamaican, Hall, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.
- [ ] Asian — Please fill in example: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc.
- [ ] American Indian or Alaska Native — Please fill in example: Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Cheyenne, Athabascan Village of Barrow, American Indian Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.
- [ ] Middle Eastern or North African — Please fill in example: Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc.
- [ ] Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander — Please fill in example: Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, Tongan, Fiji, Marshallese, etc.
- [ ] Some other race or origin — Please fill in example: Hawaiian, etc.
Question Format: Summary of 2015 NCT Findings

The combined question with detailed checkboxes design appears to elicit higher quality data on race and ethnicity for the decennial census and the ACS, supporting results from 2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment

- White population distribution dropped to levels reflecting non-Hispanic White population
- Decreased Some Other Race reporting
- No changes to other major race groups
- Hispanic ethnicity reporting was higher
- Lower item nonresponse for the combined race/ethnicity question than for the separate race question
- Same or higher level of detailed reporting
- Higher overall consistency for Hispanics
- Results were used to refine question design testing for 2017 Census Test, particularly for the AIAN category and MENA category
A Combined Question Permits Reporting of Race and/or Ethnicity

- The combined race and ethnicity question **does not** redefine Hispanic or Latino as a race. Hispanic or Latino is defined as an ethnicity. People who identify their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino may be any race.

- The combined race and ethnicity question asks, **“What is your race or ethnicity?”**

- The combined race and ethnicity question instruction specifies that respondents may **mark all that apply**. This allows people to report any and all races and/or ethnicities with which they identify.

- If you identify your ethnicity as Hispanic and your race as Black – **you can mark both in the combined question** – and the Census Bureau will count you as racially Black AND ethnically Hispanic.
There is No Evidence a Combined Question Reduces the Black Population

- The Census Bureau conducted the 2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment, the 2015 National Content Test, and the 2016 American Community Survey Content Test and found no evidence that a combined question reduces the population reporting as Black.

- All three studies used large, nationally representative samples. This is the most extensive research on race and ethnicity ever conducted in Census Bureau history.

- The studies included up to 1.2 million households and oversampled racial and ethnic groups (such as the Black population and the Hispanic population) in different geographic areas of the United States to ensure robust and meaningful results.

- The findings across all three studies were consistent – no differences were found in the percentages of people who identified as Black using the combined question format and the two separate questions format.

For additional information, refer to:
There is No Evidence a Combined Question Reduces the Black Hispanic Population

- The 2010 AQE results and the 2015 NCT results show **no evidence** that the combined question reduces the reporting of Hispanics who identify as Black.

- In fact, overall, Black Hispanic reporting is **higher** with the combined question with detailed checkboxes than with the two separate questions.

For additional information, refer to:
Hispanic Overrides Race in Common Civil Rights and Voting Rights Data Products

- Currently, key data tabulations used to monitor and enforce Civil Rights and Voting Rights **do not** separately identify the race reported by Hispanics.
- Data for Hispanics who identify as Black – or as American Indian or Alaska Native or as another race group – are typically combined within the overall count for the Hispanic population.

**Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) Special Tabulation from the 2017-2021 5-Year American Community Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native and White</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian and White</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Black or African American and White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native and Black or African American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remainder of Two or More Race Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents who reported**
- Hispanic **AND** White,
- Hispanic **AND** Black,
- Hispanic **AND** American Indian or Alaska Native, etc...

**Criminal Justice: Hate Crime Data From U.S. Department of Justice**

**TABLE 4**

| Violent hate crime victimizations, by victim and population characteristics, 2010–19 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Violent hate crime victimizations | Number | Percent | Rate | Number | Percent |
| Total | 2,672,974,360 | 100% | 0.8 | 2,187,780 | 100% |
| Male | 1,301,950,340 | 48.7% | 0.9 | 1,131,990 | 51.7% |
| Female | 1,371,024,020 | 51.3% | 0.9 | 1,055,790 | 48.3% |
| Race/ethnicity | | | | | |
| White* | 1,725,137,360 | 65.4% | 0.9 | 1,221,870 | 55.1% |
| Black | 374,260,800 | 13.1% | 0.8 | 304,260 | 13.0% |
| Hispanic or Other Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 432,780,000 | 15.9% | 1.1 | 482,640 | 22.5% |
| Other† | 40,596,800 | 1.5% | 1.1 | 41,470 | 1.9% |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>248,575,200</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>372,820</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
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<td>18-24</td>
<td>301,950,300</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>304,260</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>384,819,000</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>482,640</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>417,430,000</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>45-54</td>
<td>416,490,000</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<td>22.6%</td>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>456,971,200</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>511,290</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
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<td>65 or older</td>
<td>330,240,000</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>347,820</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The categories White and Black exclude persons of Hispanic origin (e.g., “White” refers to non-Hispanic Whites and “Black” refers to non-Hispanic Blacks).


Data from a Combined Question Can Be Tabulated in Multiple Ways

The population who identified as both Hispanic and Black can be tabulated using the “minimum” approach, the “multiple responses” approach, and/or the “maximum” approach shown below.

**Minimum Approach**

The minimum approach provides counts of people who reported one race or ethnic group ‘alone’ as well as the count of people who reported multiple race and/or ethnicity groups.

In this approach, a response of Hispanic and Black is tabulated in the ‘Multiple Responses’ category.

But this is not the only approach for tabulating race and ethnicity data.

**Multiple Responses Approach**

A response of Hispanic and Black can also be tabulated in the ‘Hispanic and Black’ category. This approach provides the counts for specific combinations of race and/or ethnicity groups.

**Maximum Approach**

A response of Hispanic and Black can also be tabulated in both categories:

1. The ‘Black alone or in combination’ category represents all people who reported as Black alone plus all people who reported as Black and another group(s). This is the maximum count for the Black population.
2. The ‘Hispanic alone or in combination’ category represents all people who reported as Hispanic alone plus all people who reported as Hispanic and another group(s). This is the maximum count for the Hispanic population.

What 2020 Census Results Tell Us About Persisting Problems with Separate Questions on Race and Ethnicity in the Decennial Census

- 49.9 million people identified as Some Other Race, surpassing Black as the second-largest alone or in combination race group
- 33.8 million people reported multiple race groups, up from 9 million in 2010
- White and SOR largest combination at 19.3 million people

Source: 2020 Census
Hispanic Race Reporting and Nonresponse: 2010 Census and 2020 Census

A large proportion of Hispanics did not report an OMB race group in 2020 (43.6%), just like in 2010 (43.5%)

Many Hispanics reported their Hispanic origin as their response to the race question, which are classified as “Some Other Race” (30.5% in 2010 and 35.4% in 2020)

13.0% of Hispanics in 2010 and 8.1% in 2020 did not answer the separate race question at all

While 47.4% in 2010 of Hispanics identified as White alone in 2010, 17.6% did so in 2020

2020 showed changes in the reporting of multiple race groups by Hispanics, such as 28.6% reporting White and SOR compared to 2.7% in 2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Hundred-Percent Detailed File and 2020 Census Edited File
Where Are We Now?

Extensive outreach was conducted with many communities, advocacy groups, advisory committees, and the public over the past decade, while developing and sharing results from two groundbreaking national studies, on how to improve the collection of race and ethnicity information.

The Census Bureau research findings show that a combined question with multiple detailed checkboxes and a dedicated Middle Eastern and North African category is the optimal design for improving race and ethnicity data for the decennial census and the American Community Survey.

For more information on the SPD 15 review, please visit spd15revision.gov.
Discussion and Contact Information

Jessica Peña
Jessica.E.Pena@census.gov

Merarys Ríos-Vargas
Merarys.Rios@census.gov