

## **Racial and Ethnic Classifications Used in Census 2000 and Beyond**

**Introduction.** The purpose of this document is to inform Census Bureau staff about changes in the questions on race and Hispanic origin that have occurred for the Census 2000. These changes conform to the revisions of the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in October 1997.

**Old Standards.** In response to legislative, programmatic, and administrative requirements of the federal government, the OMB in 1977 issued Statistical Policy Directive Number 15, "Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting." In these standards, four racial categories were established: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, and White. In addition, two ethnicity categories were established: Hispanic origin and Not of Hispanic origin. Although the Census Bureau has traditionally used more categories for decennial censuses, those categories collapsed into the four minimum race categories identified by the OMB, plus the category Some Other Race.

**Reason For Changing the Old Standards.** The racial and ethnic makeup of the country has changed since 1977, giving rise to the question of whether those standards still reflected the diversity of the country's present population. In response to this criticism, the OMB initiated a review of the Directive. This review included (1) organizing a workshop to address the issues by the National Academy of Science, (2) convening four public hearings, and (3) appointing an Interagency Committee for the Review of Racial and Ethnic Standards, which later developed a research agenda and conducted several research studies. The result of the Committee's efforts was a report describing recommended changes to the Directive. The members of the Committee included representatives of more than 30 agencies that covered the many diverse federal requirements for data on race and ethnicity. In 1997, the OMB accepted almost all of the

recommendations of the Interagency Committee, resulting in changes to the standards.

### **What Are The New Standards And When Do They Take Effect?**

In October 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) announced the revised standards for federal data on race and ethnicity. The minimum categories for race are now: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and White. Instead of allowing a multiracial category as was originally suggested in public and congressional hearings, the OMB adopted the Interagency Committee's recommendation to allow respondents to select one or more races when they self-identify. With the OMB's approval, the Census 2000 questionnaires also include a sixth racial category: Some Other Race. There are also two minimum categories for ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race.

The new categories were used by the Census Bureau for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal in spring 1998, and will be used on the Census 2000 questionnaire. The new standards are effective immediately for new and revised data collections by federal agencies, and all federal agencies must implement the new standards by January 1, 2003.

### **How Does the Census 2000 Question on Race Differ from the 1990 Question?**

The most profound change to the question on race for Census 2000 is that respondents are allowed to identify one or more races to indicate their racial identity. There are 15 check box response categories and 3 write-in areas on the Census 2000 questionnaire, compared with 16 check box response categories and 2 write-in areas in 1990. The three separate identifiers for the American Indian and Alaska Native populations (American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut) used earlier have been combined into one category - - American Indian or Alaska Native - - with instructions for respondents who check the box to print the name of their enrolled or principal

tribe. The Asian and Pacific Islander category has been split into two categories – Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. There are six specified Asian and three detailed Pacific Islander categories shown on the Census 2000 questionnaires, as well as Other Asian and Other Pacific Islander which have write-in areas for respondents to provide other race responses. Finally, the category Some Other Race, which is intended to capture responses such as Mulatto, Creole, and Mestizo, also has a write-in area. All of the responses collected in Census 2000 can be collapsed into the minimum race categories identified in the 1997 revisions to the standards on race and ethnicity issued by the Office of Management and Budget, plus the category Some Other Race.

Other changes include terminology and formatting changes, such as spelling out “American” instead of “Amer.” for the American Indian or Alaska Native category; and adding “Native” to the Hawaiian response category. In the layout of the Census 2000 questionnaire, the Asian response categories were alphabetized and grouped together, as were the Pacific Islander categories after the Native Hawaiian category. American Indians and Alaska Natives can report one or more tribes. In addition, the question on Hispanic origin is sequenced immediately before the question on race.

### **How Will the Data on Race from Census 2000 be Tabulated?**

In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued preliminary guidelines on how data for respondents who report two or more races are to be tabulated. These guidelines stipulated that data producers should provide the number of respondents who marked (or selected) only one category, separately for each of the five racial categories, as well as the detailed distribution of respondents who reported two or more races, so long as data quality standards and confidentiality requirements are met.

For Census 2000, 63 possible combinations of the six basic racial categories exist, including six

categories for those who report exactly one race, and 57 categories for those who report two or more races. These categories will be the basic presentation for the PL 94-171 Redistricting File.

In some other presentations, the 57 combinations of two or more races will be collapsed into a category called "Two or More Races," resulting in seven mutually exclusive and exhaustive racial categories: American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, Black or African American alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, Some Other Race alone, White alone, and Two or More Races. This approach is a tally of all respondents and sums to 100 percent of the total population.

Additional tabulations, including detailed racial categories, are under discussion for Census 2000 data products.

#### **How Should You Answer the Question on Race?**

Select one or more of the categories listed on the Census 2000 questionnaire. If you select American Indian or Alaska Native, use the write-in area to report your principal or enrolled tribe. If you select Other Asian, Other Pacific Islander, or Some Other Race, use the write-in area to specify your race.

#### **How Should Hispanics or Latinos Answer the Race Question?**

People of Hispanic origin may be of any race and should answer the question on race by marking one or more race categories shown on the questionnaire, including White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race. Hispanics are asked to indicate their origin in the Hispanic origin question, not in the race question, because in the federal statistical system ethnic origin is considered to be a separate concept from race.

### **Answering the Census Is Important, Easy, and Safe.**

By law, the Census Bureau cannot share individual records with others, including welfare agencies, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, tribal officials, tribal courts, housing authorities, tribal police, and the military. Anyone who breaks this law is subject to up to five years in prison and \$5,000 in fines. The law works. Millions of questionnaires were processed during the 1990s without any breach of trust.

### **What Racial Categories Will Be Used in Current Surveys and Other Data Collections by the Census Bureau?**

By January 1, 2003, all current surveys must comply with the 1997 revisions to the Office of Management and Budget's standards for data on race and ethnicity, which establish a minimum of five categories for race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. Respondents will be able to select one or more of these racial categories. The minimum categories for ethnicity will be Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Tabulations of the racial categories will be shown as long as they meet agency standards for data quality and confidentiality protection. For most surveys, however, tables will show at most White, Black, and Asian.