RACE/ETHNICITY IN FEDERAL STATISTICS

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CURRENT STANDARD: 1997 Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

5 Minimum Categories for Data on Race:
1. American Indian or Alaska Native
2. Asian
3. Black or African American
4. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
5. White

Mark one or more ... select one or more

2 Minimum Categories for Data on Ethnicity:
1. Hispanic or Latino
2. Not Hispanic or Latino
✓ These categories are a minimum standard.

✓ Additional categories can be used as long as they can be aggregated to the standard categories.

✓ Used for the decennial census, current surveys, and administrative records
In 1997 the Interagency Committee on race/ethnicity recommended that an Arab or Middle Eastern ethnic category should not be added to the minimum standard.

Self-identification – two question format - Hispanic origin question should precede race question.
What region of origin does Census consider for each race category?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>American Indian or Alaska Native</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Far East</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>Guam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pacific Islands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation:

- An increasing number of individuals find the current race and ethnicity categories confusing, or
- They want to see their own specific group reflected on the census questionnaire, e.g., Middle Eastern and North Africans
- The number of individuals who check the “Some Other Race” is increasing, especially among Hispanics
Following 2010 Census:
Review of the 1997 Standard

Focus of the review:
- the use of separate questions or combined question to measure race and ethnicity and question phrasing;
- the classification of a Middle Eastern and North African group and reporting category;
- the description of the intended use of minimum reporting categories; and
- terminology used for race and ethnicity classifications.
Following 2010 Census:
Review of the 1997 Standard

Census Bureau undertook several evaluations for possible changes in the 1997 Standard

- 2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE)
- 2015 National Content Test
- 2018 End to End test
Question Format

Summary of Preliminary Findings

The combined question format appears to elicit higher quality data on race and ethnicity; this is in keeping with the results of the 2010 AQE

- No changes to distribution for major groups
- Decreased Some Other Race reporting
- 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
MENA Classification

- Researched MENA classifications from 15 government, academic, and non-governmental organizations

- Nationalities in more than half of classifications researched are included in the Census Working Classification

- Census Working Classification of MENA includes:
  - 19 nationalities (e.g., Egyptian, Lebanese, Israeli, etc.)
  - 11 ethnicities and pan-ethnic terms (e.g., Kurdish, Arab, “Middle Eastern,” etc.)
Where MENA Responses are Reported by Presence of MENA Category (Percent Alone or in Combination)

MENA respondents use MENA category when it is available

MENA respondents use White category when no MENA category is available

Source: 2015 NCT
Inclusion of MENA Category – Summary of Preliminary Findings

The use of a distinct Middle Eastern or North African category appears to elicit higher quality data for people who would identify with MENA

- People who identify as MENA use the MENA category when it is available

- People who are MENA have trouble identifying as only MENA when no category is available
Combining data on race/ethnicity from dual data sources

Problems from inconsistencies in coding –

Constructing race/ethnicity specific life tables

- For death rates: Numerator data come from death certificates & denominator data come from Census population estimates

- Race/ethnicity reporting on death certificates must be agreed upon between states and the federal government – revisions of death certificate race reporting does not necessarily coincide with census data

- Similar issues for calculating birth rates by race/ethnicity