

# Research Examinations within the Federal Statistical System for Improving Federal Race/Ethnicity Data



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*For*

*FCSM*

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*By*

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This presentation is intended to promote ideas. The views expressed are part of ongoing research and do not necessarily reflect the position of the contributing agencies.

# History of OMB standards for race and ethnicity

- 1977: Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting
- 1997: Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity
- 2014: IWG for Research on Race and Ethnicity established
- September 2016: First Federal Register Notice (FRN) published
- March 2017: Second FRN published
- August 2017: IWG shares research and findings with OMB

# Four research areas identified

- Use of separate questions versus a combined question to measure race and ethnicity
- Classification of a Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) group
- Description of intended use for minimum reporting categories
- Salience of terminology

# Data sources and methods used

Research Area	Quantitative	Qualitative
Separate vs. Combined	2000, 2010 Decennial Census, ACS, 2015 NCT, National Survey of College Graduates, 2015 CPS, Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey, & National Crime and Victimization Survey	2010 Alternative Questionnaire Experiment (AQE), Public comments to FRNs
MENA	2015 NCT	2010 AQE, 2017 NCHS Cognitive Interviews, Public comments to FRNs, Stakeholder outreach
Intended Use of Minimum Categories	ACS	Public comments to FRNs
Terminology	ACS, 2015 NCT	2010 AQE, Public comments to FRNs

# Separate question format in the current standard

- The current standard requires separate ethnicity and race questions
  - Are you Hispanic or Latino?
    - Yes
    - No
  - What is your race? Please select all that apply.
    - White
    - Black or African American
    - Asian
    - American Indian or Alaska Native
    - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
    - Other or Some Other Race (SOR)

# Combined question format improves data quality when “other” is available

- Decline in Hispanic respondents reporting at least one race category, leading to an increase in overall nonresponse to the race question in some federal data collections
- Hispanics are selecting “other” or “some other race option” when available
- Qualitative research supports the findings that many Hispanics do not identify with any of the race categories and view their Hispanic identity as their race
- 2015 NCT found that using a combined question may improve data quality for some data collections, especially those that offer an “other” or “some other race” category

# Lower nonresponse to race question when “other” is not available

- Lower levels of race nonresponse for Hispanics in data collections without an “other” category
  - Nonresponse rates between 0.5%-5.1% to the race question
  - A combined question format may not improve data quality for surveys that do not offer a “some other race” or “other” category

# Classification of Middle Eastern/North African population

- Federal standards define the White race group as “people having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa”
- 1997 revisions: OMB considered including a distinct minimum reporting category “Arab or Middle Easterner”, but no agreement on how to define category
- 1997-present: continued support for Middle Eastern/North African minimum reporting category from community

# MENA Research Questions

- Should a MENA classification be added to the standards?
- Which groups should be considered part of the MENA classification?
- Should MENA continue to be collected as part of the White minimum reporting category?

## Respondents identify with MENA category when available

- Focus group participants of Middle Eastern or North African origin did not identify with the White category
- Cognitive interviews found that some MENA respondents preferred a MENA racial category to the racial category they had previously been identifying with
  - Some respondents overlooked the category when included with the other racial categories
- 2015 NCT results
  - MENA respondents identified within the Census description of the category when available, reported as White when MENA was not available

## Intended use of minimum reporting categories

- Current standard language is confusing
  - “In no case shall the provisions of the standards be construed to limit the collection of data to the categories described above. The collection of greater detail is encouraged; however, any collection that uses more detail shall be organized in such a way that the additional categories can be aggregated into these minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity”
- Should agencies be required to collect detailed groups for minimum reporting categories?
  - Most surveys do not have sufficient sample to publish data for more detailed groups beyond the minimum reporting categories

# Salience of terminology

- Clarify instructions for reporting race and ethnicity data
  - Instructions to “Mark all that apply” or “Select all that apply” preferable to “Mark [X] one or more boxes”
  - Using the terms “race and ethnicity” preferable to “race or origin” or “categories”
- Update and clarify terms used in the standards for race and ethnicity groups
  - Remove terms “Negro” and “Far East”