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2020 CENSUS PROGRAM MEMORANDUM SERIES: 2018.02

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

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Subject: Using Two Separate Questions for Race and Ethnicity in 2018 End-to-End Census Test and 2020 Census

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This memorandum documents the 2020 Census Program decision to continue to use two separate questions for collecting data on race and ethnicity in the 2018 End-to-End Census Test and the 2020 Census.

Overview

The Census Bureau needed to make a decision on the design of the race and ethnicity questions by December 31, 2017 in order to prepare 2020 Census systems, and deliver the final 2020 Census question wording to Congress by March 31, 2018.

Discussion

The Census Bureau will continue to use two separate questions for collecting data on race and ethnicity in the 2018 End-to-End Census Test, and as the proposed format for the 2020 Census. The race and ethnicity questions include several design changes that were tested over the past decade in effort to improve the designs from the 2010 Census.

OMB Categories and Definitions

All Federal statistical agencies, including the Census Bureau, must adhere to the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity](#). The OMB standards specify five minimum categories for data on race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White; and two categories for data on ethnicity: "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino." The OMB standards explain that the specified race and ethnicity categories are socio-political constructs and should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature. The OMB standards provide the following definitions for the race and ethnicity categories:

- **American Indian or Alaska Native** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- **Asian** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Black or African American** - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as “Haitian” or “Negro” can be used in addition to “Black or African American.”
- **Hispanic or Latino** - A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, “Spanish origin,” can be used in addition to “Hispanic or Latino.”
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **White** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

The OMB standards state that respondents should be offered the option of reporting more than one race. Additionally, the standards specify that when the two questions are collected separately, ethnicity should be collected first. An individual’s responses to the race and ethnicity questions are based upon self-identification.

Decision

In accordance with current OMB standards, the 2018 End-to-End Census Test and the 2020 Census will use two separate questions for collecting data on race and ethnicity. There were a variety of changes considered during the past decade. While some of these changes will be implemented, others will not. Significant changes from the 2010 Census questions regarding race and ethnicity include: collecting multiple Hispanic ethnicities such as Mexican and Puerto Rican; adding a write-in area and examples for the White racial category and for the Black racial category; removing the term “Negro”; and adding examples for the American Indian or Alaska Native racial category. The Census Bureau will not use a combined question format for collecting race and ethnicity; or a separate “Middle Eastern or North African” category on the census form.

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1. A major program-level decision that will affect the overall design or have significant effect on 2020 Census operations or systems.
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