

# OMB STATISTICAL POLICY DIRECTIVE 15

History of the Standards for Federal  
Data on Race & Ethnicity

# Race & Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting

*(adopted May 12, 1977)*

## ***Minimum race categories (4):***

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black
- White

## ***Ethnicity:***

- Hispanic origin
- Not of Hispanic origin

# Continued ... Race & Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting *(adopted May 12, 1977)*

## Selected principles and concepts:

- “*Preferable* to collect data on race and ethnicity separately” (*emphasis added*)
- “Majority” and “minority” race designations; however, “nonwhite” not allowed
- More detailed reporting options allowed as long as they can be aggregated to the major categories

# Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

*(adopted October  
30, 1997)*

## ***Minimum race categories (5):***

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

## ***Ethnicity:***

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

## Continued ... Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

*(adopted October  
30, 1997)*

### Also new or revised:

- Respondents can select more than one race, but not more than one ethnic subgroup
- Rejected proposals to add a new “multiracial” category
- “The two question format should be used in all cases involving self-identification.”
- Ethnicity question comes first in two-question format
- Collection and reporting of more detailed data *“encouraged” (except if data quality or confidentiality would be compromised)*

# Other noteworthy current principles and concepts

- Race & ethnicity categories not primarily “biological or genetic” but may be viewed as social and cultural characteristics as well as ancestries
- Standards “not intended to be used to establish eligibility for participation in any federal program,” but data should be useful for statistical analysis and program administration
- Standards reference “majority,” “principal minority,” and “minority” races
- Federal legislative and program requirements are primary consideration, but state, local, Tribal Nation, and Alaska Native village needs also important



*Thank you,  
census warriors!*