

Racial and Ethnic Categories and Definitions for NIH Diversity Programs and for Other Reporting Purposes

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Key Dates

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Related Announcements

[NOT-OD-15-053](#)

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National Institutes of Health ([NIH](#))

Purpose

On January 12, 2015, an updated diversity statement was published describing NIH's interest in the diversity of the NIH-funded workforce. See [NOT-OD-15-053](#). After publication, we received several inquiries about the definitions applicable to each of the racial and ethnic categories. The purpose of this Notice is to identify the OMB Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, which provides guidance on such questions. See https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards. It is expected that this Notice will provide useful definitions for individuals engaged in self-identification, for investigators and administrators collecting and reporting racial and ethnic data for program participation purposes (i.e., Recruitment Plan to Enhance Diversity).

Implementation Timeline

This Notice is effective upon its release date.

Diversity in NIH Programs

NIH encourages institutions to diversify their student and faculty populations to enhance the participation of individuals from groups identified as nationally underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral and social sciences. These groups include: individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and women at senior faculty levels in biomedical-relevant disciplines. See more at: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-053.html>. This Notice clarifies the definitions for each racial and ethnic group as reflected in Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity.

Racial and Ethnic Categories

In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued the Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. See, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards. These standards are commonly used for federal data collection purposes, not only in the decennial census, but also in household surveys, on administrative forms (e.g., school registration and mortgage lending applications), and in medical and clinical research. The revised standards contain five minimum categories for race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. There are two categories for ethnicity: "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino."

Definitions for Racial and Ethnic Categories

The Revisions to OMB Directive 15 defines each racial and ethnic category as follows:

- **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, 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 categories and definitions provide a common language to promote uniformity and comparability of data on race and ethnicity. Moreover, federal agencies have a continuing commitment to monitor the operation of its review and award processes to detect, and deal appropriately with, any instances of real or apparent inequities. All analyses conducted on race and ethnicity report aggregate statistical findings and do not identify individuals.

NIH collects racial and ethnic data on appointment forms, and using other formats (certification letters, training tables, etc.). See, e.g., Section G. 110, Application Process, Related Resources, Information Collection, <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/collection-of-personal-demographic-data.htm>. Declining to provide racial and ethnic information does not affect consideration of an application; however, NIH programs designed to enhance the participation of individuals who have been determined to be underrepresented in health-related sciences on a national basis (see data at <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/showpub.cfm?TopID=2&SubID=27>, and the report [Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering](#)) require such information.

Inquiries

Please direct all inquiries to:

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