

# Current and Future Federal Standards for Data on Race and Ethnicity

**Brian A. Harris-Kojetin**

Statistical and Science Policy Office  
U. S. Office of Management and Budget

September 9, 2011

*The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent policy  
of the Office of Management and Budget.*



# Background on OMB Standards

- Why is OMB in this business?
  - Statutory requirements span a variety of Federal agencies – statistical, administrative, regulatory
  - OMB is responsible for statistical classifications
  - Needs for compatible, nonduplicated, exchangeable racial and ethnic data across Federal agencies.
    - OMB is in unique position to coordinate across agencies.



# Background on OMB Standards

- Last revision to the standards in the 1990's
  - Identified and coordinated agency needs through large interagency committees
  - Conducted a large collaborative research program across agencies
  - Sought public comment via regional hearings, advisory groups, and *Federal Register* Notices.



# OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

- The Standards define WHAT information to collect
  - not WHETHER it should be collected
  - define a minimum core
  - also provide guidance on HOW best to collect it
  - applies to administrative record systems as well as statistical collections



# OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

- The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined 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, 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.



# OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity

- Two separate questions versus a combined question
- Going beyond the basic OMB race categories
- Multiple race reporting
- Aggregate Reporting



# The Future

- We have been in a period of “initial implementation” of the current standards
- A number of different strategies were tested in the 2010 Census on HOW we might collect this information better
  - Some promising strategies
- Empirical findings will inform further research that would be needed before making changes to the standards or guidance related to the standards.

