Tribes and the 2020 Census:
Plans with Big Consequences

The Census Bureau's plans for the 2020 decennial census are continuing to advance, step by step. At Monday's meeting of the Bureau's National Advisory Committee (NAC), Census staff announced that they are making two recommendations to the agency's Director that would change the way the question on race is asked. The changes involve more than just a few tweaks in the wording of the question that was asked in the 2010 Census. One of the proposed changes could have major consequences for the total count of the American Indian and Alaska Native population in 2020.

As is the case with so many issues at the Census Bureau, the major change being proposed is couched in rather obscure terms. The recommendation is to use a "combined [race/ethnicity] question with checkboxes." The last page of this newsletter has a picture of how the proposed question would appear in the paper version of the 2020 Census questionnaire. (A similar version would appear in the on-line version.)

In the past there were two separate questions. One asked the person to identify her or his race. A second question asked the person to indicate whether she or he was of Hispanic origin. The results were shown in separate tabulations.

In the "combined question" format, Hispanic is listed as a racial category. There would be no separate question on Hispanic ethnicity.

The discussion on this issue has largely involved representatives of the Hispanic community. The impact on the population counts for the five current major race groups has seldom figured in the conversation.

There has been virtually no discussion on the potential impact on the total US count of those identifying American Indian or Alaska Native as their only race -- what the Census Bureau calls the AI/AN "alone" population.

The number of persons who said their race was AI/AN only in the 2010 Census was over 2.9 million. An additional 2.3 million said they were AI/AN and also a member of another race, that is, AI/AN multi-racial, or, in Census Bureau terms, "AI/AN in combination."

Much less noticed was the fact that in 2010 nearly 700,000 persons said that they were AI/AN only and Hispanic. They represented nearly 24% of the total AI/AN only population.
If the 2010 Census had used the "combined" race/ethnicity question that the Bureau staff recommends be used in 2020, the AI/AN only count would have dropped from 2.9 million to about 2.2 million. That would have been fewer than the 2.5 million AI/AN only persons counted in 2000. The 700,000 persons who said they were AI/AN only and Hispanic would have been counted as AI/AN multi-racial instead.

It seems likely that such a significant drop in the AI/AN only count might have resulted in lots of press articles about "the vanishing Indian."

An analysis of who the 700,000 were shows that most lived in major metropolitan areas. Nearly 66,000 were in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and over 61,000 were in the MSA that includes New York City. The 12 MSAs with the largest numbers of AI/AN only-Hispanic persons, each with more than 10,000, were all in the Southwest with just three exceptions -- the MSA that includes New York City, the MSA that includes Chicago and the MSA that includes Washington, DC.

A little under 4% of the persons counted as AI/AN only-Hispanic in 2010 lived in reservation areas. There were only 9 reservations where such persons accounted for more than 10% of the total AI/AN only population. All but one was in the Southwest.

When asked at yesterday's Census Advisory Committee meeting, the Census Bureau official in charge of the statistics on race and ethnicity said that those responding to the "combined" question being proposed for the 2020 Census would be tabulated as AI/AN multi-racial. They would no longer be counted as AI/AN only.

In order for this "combined" question to be used in 2020, it must first be approved by the Director of the Census Bureau, then by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and then only after consultation with the Congress. Congress has the opportunity to review the topics to be covered in the 2020 Census next April. In April of 2018 Congress has the opportunity to review and comment on the actual questions that will go on the 2020 Census form. In the meantime, there will be a number of opportunities for public comment.

There is one other change in the works for the race question on the 2020 Census form. This involves adding one additional category to the list of major race groups. It would be a category for persons identifying as Middle Eastern or North African (MENA). If approved, it would be the first new category to be added since Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders became a separate major race category in the 2000 Census.

The Census Bureau is also proposing to reorder the list of racial categories. Instead of the old order, when the AI/AN category was the third on the list, it would now become the fifth. The list would be in order of the size of that racial group: White, Hispanic, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, MENA, Native
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and Some Other Race (for those that don't identify with any of the other categories).

**OMB Considers Revising Its Directive on Racial Classification**

In a move that parallels what the Census Bureau is considering for the 2020 national headcount, OMB issued a Federal Register Notice last Friday, September 30th, that it is considering revising its Statistical Policy Directive Number 15. The Directive is called "Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity." That Directive, last revised in 1997, is binding on all federal agencies.

The revisions that OMB is proposing are limited to just four issues:

- The use of a combined race/ethnicity question instead of two separate questions.
- The addition of a MENA category to the list of racial categories.
- The description of the intended use of the categories.
- The terminology used in discussing the categories. For example, the Census Bureau is considering a wording change to the 2020 questionnaire that would ask a person to check his or her "category" instead of his or her "race."

OMB staff is thought to believe that a change in the Directive is necessary for the Census Bureau to make the changes it is considering.

The Notice in Friday's Federal Register gave the public just 30 days to weigh in on these four issues.

The Federal Register Notice can be found at:


**Standing Rock Tribal Council Refuses to Turn Over Enrollment Records**

The Tribal Council of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has formally rejected a request by the Census Bureau that it turn over its enrollment records to the Bureau.
The Census Bureau is planning to test a question on tribal enrollment on that reservation, along with the Colville reservation, in a special Census test scheduled for April of next year. The test also includes a nationwide sample of households that will receive a self-response questionnaire.

The Standing Rock Tribe's action was taken shortly after the Mid-Year Conference of the National Congress of American Indians, at which the tribal delegates unanimously passed a resolution opposing the use of a tribal enrollment question in the next Census.

The NCAI resolution cited a number of reasons why such a question should not be asked by the Census Bureau. A primary reason was that it is a right of tribes as sovereign nations to determine who is a member of the tribe and to collect and maintain enrollment data. The resolution stated that enrollment status is not information to be gathered in a census or survey based simply on self-identification, as the US Census is.

A sample of the proposed "combined" Census 2020 question on race and ethnicity is shown on the next page.

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Redistribution of this information is encouraged.
"Combined" Race/Ethnicity Question as Developed by the Census Bureau

Combined w/ Checkboxes

8. Which categories describe Person 1?
Mark boxes that apply AND print details in the spaces below. Note, you may select more than one group.

- WHITE – Provide details below:
  - German
  - Irish
  - English
  - Italian
  - Polish
  - French
  - Print, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.

- HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH – Provide details below:
  - Mexican or Mexican American
  - Puerto Rican
  - Cuban
  - Dominican
  - Colombian
  - Print, for example, Guatemalan, Spanish, Ecuadorian, etc.

- BLACK OR AFRICAN AM. – Provide details below:
  - African American
  - Jamaican
  - Haitian
  - Nigerian
  - Ethiopian
  - Somali
  - Print, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Alabastian, etc.

- ASIAN – Provide details below:
  - Chinese
  - Filipino
  - Asian Indian
  - Vietnamese
  - Korean
  - Japanese
  - Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

- AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE – Provide details below:
  - American Indian
  - Native or South American Indian
  - Print, for example, Nakina-Nation, Atwood Point, Montier Arter.
  - Native Village of Barrow Inlet, Namekakok Community, etc.

- MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN – Provide details below:
  - Lebanese
  - Iranian
  - Egyptian
  - Syrian
  - Morroccan
  - Algerian
  - Print, for example, Israeli, Arab, Tunisian, etc.

- NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER – Provide details below:
  - Hawaiian
  - Samoan
  - Chamorro
  - Fijian
  - Marshallese
  - Print, for example, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuksha, etc.

- SOME OTHER RACE, ETHNICITY, OR ORIGIN – Print below.