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PATTERNS: CREATE A USER PROFILE

Race and ethnicity

Help users to provide the race and ethnicity that reflects their lived experience.

The race and ethnicity pattern allows users to provide race and ethnicity information in the most accurate and respectful manner possible. Race and ethnicity are often integral to an individual's sense of self, but they are complex topics; there is no generally accepted agreement that race is a real, biological attribute. Race and ethnicity can, however, be helpful information in assessing the civil rights impact of programs and services, and this data is sometimes a required reporting element.

About this pattern

Background

While there isn't a generally accepted definition for race, the Census Bureau describes the [race categories included in census questionnaires](#) as reflecting "a social definition ... not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically."

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requires that five minimum categories of race and ethnicity are tracked when the data will be used for statistical, administrative, or compliance purposes: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White.

OMB requires only two categories for data on ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino.

[OMB's Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity \(9/30/2016\)](#) actually encourage the collection of detailed race and ethnicity information provided it can be aggregated into their minimum categories. The challenge comes in ensuring that the people answering race and ethnicity questions see themselves in the provided choices. Increasingly, Americans do not. This has led the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct extensive research into alternative ways to collect information on race and ethnicity. This research suggests that a combined race and ethnicity question with detailed checkboxes and the ability to provide additional detail is the optimal way to improve the collection of race and ethnicity data.

What problem does this solve?

Race and ethnicity can be challenging information for a user to provide, especially when choices are limited or do not align with how an individual self-identifies. Collecting race and ethnicity information can help illuminate issues of equity and disparities in incarceration rates, income, housing, employment, health care, education, and more. Respect for individual dignity should guide the methods for collecting data on race and ethnicity.

When to use this pattern

Follow this pattern when asking for a user's race and ethnicity as part of your service or program. Only ask for this information if you need it.

What's the solution?

Allow selection of more than one race and acknowledge people with multiple racial backgrounds. Provide direction on how to complete the form, for example, "Select one or more" or "Select all that apply" explanatory text. Whenever possible, allow respondents to self-identify their ethnicity through an open-ended text entry field.

Guidance

✔ What to do	✘ What not to do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do explain why race and ethnicity information is being collected, and how this information will be used.Do ask for race and ethnicity as a two-part question as currently required by OMB.Do allow users to select more than one race.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not restrict choices to a single race or ethnicity.Do not use a single question to capture both race and ethnicity information. While the questions should be asked together, they should not be combined.

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Disclaimer

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- Do allow users to select more than one race and ethnicity.
 - Do allow an open-ended text entry field when ethnicity information is requested and use hint text to communicate that more than one ethnicity can be provided.
 - Do include the ability to opt out of providing this information.
 - Do consider gender-neutral options when listing ethnicities. As an example, Latino encompasses both Hispanic and Latin-American ethnicities but has an implied masculine gender. Consider using `Hispanic` or `Latin American` instead. Gender-neutral options like `Latinx` have grown in use and adoption within the federal government, but this recommendation may change over time.
- Do not require the user to answer. Provide an option like "Prefer not to say."
 - Do not capture race or ethnicity information for operational or generalization purposes. For example, understanding that a majority of your webinar attendees self-identify as Hispanic does not mean that Hispanic people enjoy webinars.

Pattern preview

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race

Which of the following race classifications best describe you?
Select all that apply. For example, "Black or African American" and "White"

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Some other race

Ethnicity

I identify my ethnicity as:
You may report more than one ethnicity. For example, "Hmong and Italian"

☐ Prefer not to share my race and ethnicity

Pattern code

Considerations

Confirm you need this information. As with all personal information, consider whether you need to collect it at all. Clearly explain the reason for asking for the information and what will be done to secure the user's privacy.

If you don't need a controlled vocabulary. If you don't need to restrict the list of races and ethnicities to a specified data collection requirement, consider allowing for user self-identification with an open-ended text field. Users should also have the ability to opt out of providing this information.

If the information being collected is intended to be used for statistical, administrative, or compliance purposes. If the intent of your data collection requires race and ethnicity to be mapped to a fixed minimum set of categories, refer to OMB's [Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity \(9/30/2016\)](#), which encourages the collection of detailed race and ethnicity information provided it can be aggregated into the minimum categories.

If you are collecting information on a family. Do not assume that partners or dependents of the person completing the form will identify as the same race or ethnicity.

If you will be displaying race and/or ethnicity in a list. Always treat racial and ethnic groups as proper nouns and capitalize them. Consider the order list items appear to avoid the perception of bias or favoritism.

Usability guidance

If you're only collecting information on race. Do allow users to select all races that apply with clear hint text, for example, "Select all that apply".

If you're collecting race and ethnicity information. Strongly consider using checkboxes for race combined with an open-ended text input for ethnicity self-identification. Do allow users to select all races that apply, and multiple ethnicities, with clear hint text, for example, "Select all that apply" and "You may report more than one ethnicity".

Do allow users to opt out of providing race and ethnicity information with a "Prefer not to answer" option.

OMB's minimum categories for race:

American Indian or Alaska Native

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

Accessibility

Follow input guidance. These text fields should follow the accessibility [guidelines for all text inputs](#).

Use a fieldset and legend for a checkbox group. Surround a related set of checkboxes with a `<fieldset>`. The `<legend>` provides context for the grouping. Don't use fieldset and legend for a single check.

These custom checkboxes are accessible. The custom checkbox component is accessible to screen readers because the default checkbox is moved off-screen with `position: absolute; left: -999em`.

Use a semantic tag. The checkbox should have a semantic tag for the `id` attribute, and its corresponding label should have the same value in its `for` attribute.

Customization. As you customize, make sure you follow [accessibility guidelines for form templates](#) and the [accessibility guidelines for form controls](#).

Related components, patterns, and templates

- [Checkbox](#) component
- [Text input](#) component

References

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Latest updates

Meaningful code and guidance updates are listed in the following table:

Date	USWDS version	Affects	Breaking	Description
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2022-11-16	N/A	Guidance	No	Updated preview to remove ethnicity from race question. We removed Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish from the Race question so we don't combine race and ethnicity in the same question, per current OMB requirements. Updated references to this preview. More information: uswds-site#1906
2022-11-16	N/A	Guidance	No	Updated guidance to clarify race and ethnicity question format and requirements. Added link to guidance on asking for race and ethnicity as a two-part question as currently required by OMB. Removed suggested link to working group considering a combined question. Removed list of combined race and ethnicity categories tested in the 2020 Census to prevent confusion. More information: uswds-site#1906
2022-11-14	3.3.0	Guidance	No	Pattern published.

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