



Effective collection of race and ethnicity data for institutional research and assessment requires attention to evolving trends in local and national policy and attending the unique needs of your institutional context. OSU does not currently have one standardized question to collect race and ethnicity information beyond federal regulation guidelines. At OSU, you will encounter several versions of questions that collect race and ethnicity information as a result of varied needs and uses for the data.

Given that race and ethnicity information collection continues to be in flux, our guidance offers a variety of considerations to help you make the most informed decision relative to your inquiry design.

### Get started

To arrive at the best method for your inquiry requires that you wrestle with complications connected to the purpose and use of your data:

- How will you use the data?
  - Your answer will determine the level of specificity you need to collect.
  - If you are reporting using federal guidelines you will need to use federal race/ethnicity categories or have a roll-up structure for more specific categories. For example, while you may use “Mexican American/Chicano” as an option, that will roll up to “Hispanic” for federal reporting.
  - If you are collecting information for your department or project solely, consider if you will use nuances in race and ethnicity categorization to make more informed program decisions.
- Do you need to collect race and ethnicity data at all?
  - Consider if you already have access to race and ethnicity data that can be aligned after collection to reduce the burden on your respondents.
  - A caveat to using this approach: Identity categories can change over time as individuals learn more about themselves and new, more accurate language, to describe themselves.
- What is recognizable to students and employees?
  - Students do not always describe themselves in the same way standardized race and ethnicity categories are written. For example, the use of “European” may be confusing to students.
  - Some students may not identify with the federal race category “Asian” but rather as “Japanese”.
- What is your plan to align race and ethnicity categories?
  - If many categories are offered to collect race and ethnicity information and you need to narrow the information for reporting purposes, you will need a plan to align the information collected to the categories for reporting. In this case, the information collected will need to nest under broader race and ethnicity categories. For example, if someone selects African, Caribbean and African American, would you may need to align the information to one overarching category like “Black/Black American”.



## Examples

Here are examples of data tools from Oregon State University that take different approaches to collecting race and ethnicity data.

OSU common application	OSU employee climate survey
<p>Are you Hispanic or Latino?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes</li><li>• No</li></ul> <p>Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please indicate how you identify yourself. (Select one or more)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• American Indian or Alaska Native</li><li>• Asian</li><li>• Black or African American</li><li>• Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</li><li>• White</li></ul>	<p>Which group(s) best represent your ethnic/racial background (select all that apply):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• American Indian/Alaska Native</li><li>• Asian</li><li>• Black</li><li>• Hispanic/Latino</li><li>• Middle Eastern/North African</li><li>• Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</li><li>• White</li><li>• I prefer not to answer"</li></ul>

## Go deeper

Policy work is taking place on the federal level to advance the depth and nuance of race and ethnicity data collection.

- A more inclusive example for race and ethnicity data collection can be found in the United States Office of Management and Budget's [Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity](#) (Figure 2).