Welcome to the latest installment of the Alaska Library Association Documents Roundtable's tutorial on Census 2000. This week we explore the largest change to the Census, the change that will allow sociologists and historians of the future to better track America's great diversity, while potentially turning simple information requests into exercises of frustration. I'm speaking, naturally, of the Federal government's decision to allow respondents to choose up to six races to describe themselves.

This sea change in how the government collects race information began in earnest back in 1997. For detailed reasoning behind the decision, please see the Census "Race Data" page at [http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race.html]. There are a number of background documents that outline the process that lead to the current decision.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?
For the 2000 Census, people could choose up to six races from the following list:

American Indian and Alaska Native (extra space to designate tribe)
Asian (extra space to denote Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese or Some Other Asian.)
Black or African American
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (extra space to denote Native Hawaiian, Samoan, and Guamanian or Chamorro or Some Other Pacific Islander)
White
Some Other Race (Fill in the blank)

WHAT WAS THE RESULT?
Nationwide, only 2.4% of the population chose to describe themselves as belonging to more than one race. This "only 2.4%" represents over six million people, so you can start to see why these new combinations were needed. In Alaska, 5.4% of the population described themselves as multiracial, while in Juneau; nearly seven percent of the population described themselves as belonging to more than one race. With this much of the population refusing to be boxed into single categories, it's a safe assumption the new race categories/combinations are here to stay.

HOW WILL ALL THIS DIVERSITY BE TABULATED?
The Census Bureau will present race data three ways. Here are the three options in the own words:

"Data on race will be shown using several different options. For example, in the Public Law 94-171 (redistricting) file [AVAILABLE NOW], data will be shown for 63 racial categories. These include White alone, Black or African American alone, American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, Some other race alone and 57 possible combinations of the above six categories."
In data products where it will not be possible to show 63 racial categories, such as the Demographic Profiles [AVAILABLE NOW at [http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/index.html]] data will be shown for seven mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. The seven categories are White alone, Black or African American alone, American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, Some other race alone, and Two or more races. The two or more races category represents all those respondents who reported more than one race. The Demographic Profiles also provide a further breakdown of the Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander categories.

A third option provides data about people who reported a race either alone or in combination with one or more other races. For example, the White alone or in combination category consists of those respondents who reported White, whether or not they reported any other races. In other words, people who reported only White or who reported combinations such as "White and Black or African American," or "White and Asian and American Indian and Alaska Native" are included in the White alone or in combination category.

Using this option there are six alone or in combinations groups: White alone or in combination; Black or African American alone or in combination, American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination, Asian alone or in combination, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination, and Some other race alone or in combination. If the number of people in these six categories is calculated, it will equal the total number of responses and will generally exceed the total population." (Source: [ http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/raceqandas.html] NOTE: this page no longer exists on the Census Bureau website. 9/2010]

Please note that only the first two options allow the race responses to equal the total population. Adding up the race responses for option three will exceed the total number of people counted for that area. Let me make this clear with an illustration from the imaginary town of Tiny, Alaska. Tiny, Alaska has a population of three individuals:

Tom, who is White.
Dick, who is Black and Asian
Harry, who is Asian and Alaska Native

Under Census option 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White alone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American, Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian and American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Race Responses</td>
<td>3 = Total Population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under Census option 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Alone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Race Responses</td>
<td>3 = Total Population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under Census option 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Alone or in Combination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Category</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American Alone or in Combination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Alone or in Combination</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native Alone or in Combination</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Race Responses - 5

*TWO MORE THAN TOTAL POPULATION*

I need to point out that Census products will contain ALL categories for all places. That means that if there were a real detailed race table for Tiny, AK, it would contain 63 lines, 60 of which would have zeros at the end. This may be a touch disconcerting for those of you who live in small towns of villages.

WHY REFERENCE MAY BE ROUGH
Since the Census Bureau will report race as numbers as both "Race Alone" and "Race Alone or in Combination," there will no longer be a single number we can point to. Supposed someone asked, "How many African Americans lived in Juneau in 1990 and 2000? How did that population change?" Our first answer could conceivably be:

1990: 292
2000: Either 248, 439, or 385, depending on your purposes.
Change between 1990 and 2000: ???

I picture patrons being understandably upset we can't answer such a seemingly simple question. It will be important to explain where the numbers come from. If you've been following along ok, then you've probably guessed that the first number is Black or African American Alone and that the second number is Black or African American Alone or in Combination.

These two numbers together give someone a range of how many people in Juneau identify with an African American heritage. If you have patrons needing race data for a particular grant or other aid program, they need to check with their aid agency to be sure of what numbers to report. What about that third number? Why that's the figure used by the EEOC and other agencies with civil rights responsibilities. See the next section for details.

CIVIL RIGHTS/EEOC ALERT
The federal government decided that they would only use 10 of the possible 63 race categories to guide compliance in civil rights monitoring and enforcement.

These categories (Announced in OMB (Office of Management and Budget) Bulletin No. 00-02, "Guidance on Aggregation and Allocation of Data on Race for Use in Civil Rights Monitoring and Enforcement") to be used are:

1. American Indian and Alaska Native
2. Asian
3. Black or African American
4. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
5. White
6. American Indian and Alaska Native and White
7. Asian and White
8. Black or African American and White
9. American Indian and Alaska Native and Black or African American
10. >1 percent: Fill in if applicable with multiracial combinations
greater than 1% of the population
11. Balance of individuals reporting more than one race
12. Total

The use of these categories, including the identification of specific two
or more race combinations greater than 1 percent, is mandatory for civil
rights monitoring and enforcement agencies. For more information, see
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/bulletins/b00-02.html].

As far as I've been able to determine, the Census Bureau has no plans to
offer race tabulations in the format described in OMB Bulletin 00-02. If
your patron needs this kind of data, I would refer them to the detailed
race tables that list all 63 race combinations and let them make their own
calculations. If one of you is aware of a Census product that will provide
just the OMB specific civil rights categories, please let me know and I'll
post it to the group.

A NOTE ON COMPARABILITY
I hate to repeat the obvious, but it's too important not to. Race data in
Census 2000 is NOT directly comparable to race data collected in prior
censuses. I'm reprinting two Q&A's on race comparability from the Census
Bureau:

"Question: Can data users compare data by race from Census 2000 with
previous censuses?

Answer: Data on race from Census 2000 are not directly comparable with
those from the 1990 census and previous censuses due, in large part, to
giving respondents the option to report more than one race. Other factors,
such as reversing the order of the questions on race and Hispanic origin
and changing question wording and format, also may affect comparability.

Question: Will the Census Bureau develop methods to facilitate comparisons between the race data in
Census 2000 and previous censuses?

Answer: An OMB federal agency working group is studying possible bridging methods for comparing
Census 2000 data on race with data from previous censuses. The Census Bureau did not develop these
methods, but it is participating with the working group that is evaluating them. The Census Bureau is
conducting evaluation studies to understand better the impact of
changes to the question on race. For example, during the summer of 2001,
the Census Bureau will implement a Census Quality Survey, gathering data
from approximately 50,000 households, to assess the reporting of race and
Hispanic origin in Census 2000. The purpose of this study is to produce a
data file that will assist users in developing ways to make comparisons
between Census 2000 data on race, where respondents were asked to report one or more races, and data
on race from other sources that asked for only
a single race."

If you'd like to see the rest of this helpful Q&A, it is available at:
Thank you all for staying with me through five pages of detail on how new multiracial categories both rightfully reflect diversity and challenge us at the Reference desk. If you have additional questions on race or if I wasn't clear on this topic, let me know. If enough of you ask for clarification, I will add one to next week's message.

Until next week,

Daniel Cornwall, Member Alaska Library Association Government Documents Roundtable.

If you find any part of this tutorial useful, you may use it in training materials with proper attribution, and if you drop me a line at dan_cornwall@eed.state.ak.us telling me how you're going to use it. Thanks!

Census Tutorial Home

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