

DEC POLICY TALKING POINTS ON SPD 15

What is SPD 15?

- The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) initially developed Statistical Policy Directive No. 15 (SPD 15) in 1977 in cooperation with other Federal agencies to provide consistent data on race and ethnicity throughout the Federal Government, including the decennial census, household surveys, and Federal administrative forms. |
- The goals of SPD 15 are to ensure the comparability of race and ethnicity across Federal datasets and to maximize the quality of these data by ensuring the format, language, and procedures for collecting the data are consistent.
 - To achieve these goals, SPD 15 provides a minimum set of categories that all Federal agencies must use when collecting information on race and ethnicity, regardless of the collection mechanism, as well as additional guidance on the collection, compilation, and dissemination of these data.
- On March 28, 2024, OMB revised SPD 15. The revision replaces and supersedes OMB's 1997 Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity.
 - These revisions to SPD 15 are intended to result in more accurate and useful race and ethnicity data across the Federal government.

UPDATE

On September 24, 2025, OMB released a statement shifting the timeline for implementation of the 2024 revision by six months. The Agency Action Plans previously due on September 28, 2025, are now due on March 28, 2027. The full implementation deadline was extended from March 28, 2029, to September 28, 2029.

Why are the 2024 revisions to SPD 15 important?

- Combined race and ethnicity question: The previous standards which collected race and ethnicity across two questions made people believe that there is only one ethnicity, Hispanic. The new standards highlight that there are multiple ethnicities and allow for more accurate self-reported data collection and data disaggregation.
- Ability to write in ethnicity: Seeing expanded ethnicities beyond Hispanic and having the ability to write in ethnicity allows for more accurate self-reported data collection and data disaggregation.
- MENA category: Previously, the Middle Eastern and North African populations were seen as White within the data standards. Separating this population from White allows for more accurate data collection and allows them to be more visible in data disaggregation.

DEFINITION

Data disaggregation refers to the process of breaking down aggregated data into smaller, more specific groups to reveal patterns or disparities that may be hidden within a larger dataset. This practice allows for better visualization of trends and patterns that are not visible when looking at the broader dataset. By separating compiled information into smaller units, data disaggregation helps in understanding underlying trends and making more informed decisions.

Why is SPD 15 important?

- Previous standards did not encompass the many racial and ethnic groups that are present in the country. The 2024 revision made it possible for people to be more visible in the data, which allows for more accuracy in data collection.
- By adopting robust and comprehensive race and ethnicity data, health entities can better monitor data access utilization and design sustainable community interventions that support health outcomes.
- Without more granular race and ethnicity standards, it becomes increasingly challenging to measure population health and the effectiveness of interventions for different populations accurately to meaningfully address their unique needs.