



Guidance on the Classification of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders

The purpose is to discuss the use of and classification of the term Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) and to provide guidance on how to accurately address the classification of NHPI verbally and in written format.

A. Recommendations

The NHPI Alliance and the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) recommend the following terminologies:

- “Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPI)”;
- “Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders” when referring to the broad grouping; and
- “AA and NHPI” as acronym of the broad grouping in place of “API, AAPI, APIA, and APA”

B. Justification

1. **Why NHPI instead of NHOPI:** The “Other” (O) has been removed from this identifier based on discussions with major NHPI organizations and community leaders who prefer this reference not to be associated with their populations. In past and some current research publications, Asian, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders were not mentioned and often lumped into the “Other” category outside of White and Black. The evolution of referring to Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders as NHPI is a cultural construct and reflects the preference of the NHPI community.
2. **NHPI in context of data analysis and dissemination:** When presenting or referencing summary data that groups Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander populations together, it must be noted that this data is not an accurate reflection of the NHPI population.

C. Evolution of NHPI

1. **Asian and Pacific Islander (API):** In 1976, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) created for the first time racial and ethnic categories for federal data collection and reporting; one of which was “Asian and Pacific Islander,” or “API.” This aggregated identifier brought together in one category multiple and heterogeneous populations. In 1980, the U.S. Census gathered data under this new API defined group.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Asians joined and supported Afro-American civil rights activist groups in addressing racial and ethnic discrimination and civil rights abuses. Asian leaders embraced the inclusion of Pacific Islanders for in many communities such as in Hawaii, Asians and Pacific Islanders

Chairperson: Kawen T. Young • Co-Chairs: Vaka Faletau & Victor Pang • Secretary: Nancy Fa’asiu Glass

Mailing Address: 14802 S. Harvard Blvd. • Gardena, CA • 90247
Phone: 310-766-3196 • Fax: 310-900-1319 • Email: nhpi_alliance_ca@yahoo.com

had long lived together and the numbers of Pacific Islanders were viewed as too small to “stand alone” in the eyes of federal administrators¹.

2. **Asian and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI):** In 1997, the OMB announced its decision concerning the revision of Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting. OMB separated the API category into two groups- “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI).” By the separation of the Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander categories, the data on NHOPI groups would no longer be misrepresented and concealed by the aggregate data of the much larger Asian groups².

The reasons for disaggregation were: a) the need to identify health disparities and issues within the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations apart from the Asian populations within the United States; and b) the need to recognize and protect the unique relationship and political status that Native Hawaiians and certain Pacific Islanders have with the United States.

3. **Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPIs):** The NHPI Alliance and the APIAHF are attempting to advocate for the appropriate reference to the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community as “**NHPI**” within all programs and policy work, as well as strongly suggest that our constituents do the same¹.

¹ Hardy Spoehr’s *Threads in the Human Tapestry: The Disaggregation of the API Identifier and the Importance of Having the NHOPI (Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander) Category in Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting.*

² <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/1997standards.html>

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