

Why Do We Ask for Client's Race and Ethnicity - FAQs



The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) require food banks to separate race and ethnicity into two distinct questions for several important reasons:

Compliance with Civil Rights Laws

Separating race and ethnicity into two questions ensures more precise compliance with federal civil rights laws, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This separation allows for a more detailed and accurate collection of demographic data, ensuring nondiscrimination in programs receiving federal assistance.

Enhanced Monitoring and Enforcement:

With distinct questions for race and ethnicity, the FNS and USDA can more effectively monitor and enforce compliance with nondiscrimination policies. This level of detail helps identify specific disparities or instances of discrimination in the delivery of food assistance services.

Improving Program Tailoring:

By collecting separate data on race and ethnicity, food banks can better analyze and understand the needs of diverse communities. This granular data enables more effective tailoring of programs and outreach efforts to meet the needs of different racial and ethnic groups.

Equitable Resource Allocation:

Detailed demographic data helps in the equitable allocation of resources. By understanding the specific needs of various racial and ethnic groups, funding and food assistance can be distributed more effectively and fairly.

Accurate Reporting and Accountability:

Federal agencies, including the FNS and USDA, are required to report on the demographics of participants in their programs. Separating race and ethnicity into two questions provides a more accurate and transparent representation of the population served, promoting accountability and aiding in the evaluation of program effectiveness.

By requiring food banks to collect race and ethnicity data separately, the FNS and USDA aim to ensure that food assistance programs are fair, equitable, and accessible to all individuals. This practice supports their mission to alleviate hunger and promote nutrition among diverse populations, ensuring that all groups are appropriately served and represented.