Social Security Column

# HOW PROVIDING RACE AND ETHNICITY DATA HELPS ALL CUSTOMERS

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We are continuously working to better understand how Social Security’s programs serve the public. Collecting race and ethnicity data for research and statistical purposes is one way for us to determine whether we are equitably serving the public. Applicants and customers may voluntarily provide this information. It does not affect decisions on benefit applications.

**Why does it matter if people provide race and ethnicity data?**

When customers choose to provide race and ethnicity information, it lets us know:

* Who our benefit payments and programs are helping and who may be left out.
* What unintended barriers may impact benefits and services.
* Where to expand outreach efforts.
* How to increase awareness of eligibility for programs and benefits.

In other words, race and ethnicity data can help expand access to our programs, which is one of the objectives in our Equity Action Plan at [blog.ssa.gov/social-securitys-equity-action-plan](https://blog.ssa.gov/social-securitys-equity-action-plan/). Examples of how we use this information can be found on our Racial Equity Resources webpage at [www.ssa.gov/policy/about/racial-equity-resources.html](https://www.ssa.gov/policy/about/racial-equity-resources.html).

Currently, we collect race and ethnicity information on applications for new or replacement Social Security number (SSN) cards. These applications can be completed:

* Online at [www.ssa.gov/number-card](https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/).
* At one of our local offices or card centers.

Soon, parents may voluntarily provide this information when requesting their newborn’s SSN at the hospital. The option to provide this data will be available in participating states.

We encourage you to provide your race and ethnicity information on your or your child’s application for a new or replacement SSN card. This information will help us better understand and serve all our current and future customers.

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