More Than Two Centuries
Measuring Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Mark Hugo Lopez
Director of Race and Ethnicity Research
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What Census Calls Us
A Historical Timeline

This graphic displays the different race, ethnicity and origin categories used in the U.S. decennial census, from the first one in 1790 to the latest count in 2020. The category names often changed from one decade to the next, in a reflection of current politics, science and public attitudes. For example, “colored” became “black,” with “Negro” and “African American” added later. The term “Negro” was dropped for the 2020 census. Through 1950, census-takers commonly determined the race of the people they counted. From 1960 on, Americans could choose their own race. Starting in 2000, Americans could include themselves in more than one racial category. Before that, many multiracial people were counted in only one racial category.

| CENSUS YEAR | 1790 | 1800 | 1810 | 1820 | 1830 | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | People could choose two or more races |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Free white males, Free white females | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| All other free persons | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Free colored males and females | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Slaves | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Multiracial: Two or more races

Although American Indians living in white society were included in the census before 1800, the 1850 census was the first to include a complete count of American Indians on tribal land as well.

In 1910, the vast majority of the “Other” category were Korean, Filipino and Asian Indian (called “Hindu”).

Hindus: Referred to Asian Indians, regardless of religion.

Pacific Islanders and Hawaiians were grouped with Asians from 1940-1990. Starting with the 2000 census, they became their own group.

This category included smaller racial groups not specified on the census form.

Mexicans were counted as a separate race in 1930 for the first and only time.

The nation’s first census was a count of the U.S. population as of Aug. 2, 1790. U.S. marshals and their assistants were expected to visit each U.S. household and record the name of the head of the household and the number of people in each household in the following categories: free white males ages 16 and older, free white females younger than 16, free white females, other free persons, and slaves. This is the first page of the publication containing the results.

Note: The U.S. Census Bureau does not consider Hispanic/Latino ethnicity to be a race. Hispanics also are asked to select one or more races to define themselves. Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Historically, the U.S. has been a “White and Black” nation

Through the 1960s almost all Americans were either White or Black

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White*</th>
<th>Black*</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian*</th>
<th>Two+ Races*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This began to change with the passage of immigration legislation in 1965 that opened up the U.S. to new immigration streams from Latin America and Asia…

And, within a generation, dramatic changes occurred…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White*</th>
<th>Black*</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian*</th>
<th>Two+ Races*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today, Hispanics are second largest, with growing Asian and Multiracial populations

Source: Pew Research Center population. *Not Hispanic. “Other” races not shown
Proposed changes to OMB race reporting standards

• Combine Hispanic and race questions into a single question
• Add a response category for Middle Eastern and North African, separate and distinct from the “White” category
• Update Statistical Policy Directive 15’s terminology, definitions and question wording
Proposed combined question with detail

What is your race or ethnicity?
Select all that apply AND enter additional details in the spaces below.
Note, you may report more than one group.

☐ WHITE – Provide details below.
   □ German  □ Irish  □ English
   □ Italian  □ Polish  □ French
   Enter, for example, Scottish, Norwegian, Dutch, etc.

☐ HISPANIC OR LATINO – Provide details below.
   □ Mexican or Mexican American  □ Puerto Rican  □ Cuban
   □ Salvadoran  □ Dominican  □ Colombian
   Enter, for example, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.

☐ BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN – Provide details below.
   □ African American  □ Jamaican  □ Haitian
   □ Nigerian  □ Ethiopian  □ Somali
   Enter, for example, Ghanaian, South African, Barbadian, etc.

☐ ASIAN – Provide details below.
   □ Chinese  □ Filipino  □ Asian Indian
   □ Vietnamese  □ Korean  □ Japanese
   Enter, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.

☐ AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE – Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Tribal Government, Tlingit, etc.

☐ MIDDLE EASTERN OR NORTH AFRICAN – Provide details below.
   □ Lebanese  □ Iranian  □ Egyptian
   □ Syrian  □ Moroccan  □ Israeli
   Enter, for example, Algerian, Iraqi, Kurdish, etc.

☐ NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER – Provide details below.
   □ Native Hawaiian  □ Samoan  □ Chamorro
   □ Tongan  □ Fijian  □ Marshallese
   Enter, for example, Palauan, Tahitian, Chuukese, etc.

Proposed combined question with details

What is your race or ethnicity?
Select all that apply.

☐ White
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Black or African American
☐ Asian
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Middle Eastern or North African
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Reconsidering approaches to race and ethnicity quantitative research

- Redefine racial and ethnic groups
  - Alone or in combination or broad groupings
  - When comparing groups, take overlap into account

- Editorially, show within-group, in-depth analyses first
  - Place the group first, comparisons to others second
  - Disaggregation is important to sharing nuanced stories

- Consider alternative approaches to measuring racial and ethnic identity
  - The Census Bureau’s approach isn’t the only one
  - Approaches may vary across groups
A broader Black American population

U.S. Black population

- **U.S. Black population 36,200,000**
  - 1,000,000
  - 1,500,000
  - 33,700,000

- **U.S. Black population 42,000,000**
  - 1,700,000
  - 2,400,000
  - 37,900,000

- **U.S. Black population 46,800,000**
  - 2,400,000

- **Black Hispanic**
  - 2,400,000

- **Multiracial (Non-Hispanic)**
  - 3,700,000

- **Single race (Non-Hispanic)**
  - 40,700,000

Note: Populations rounded to the nearest 100,000. Population numbers may not sum to total for a given year due to rounding. "U.S. Black population" refers to all people who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. "Single race" refers to people who self-identify as Black alone and do not identify as Hispanic or Latino. "Multiracial" refers to people who self-identify as Black and one or more races in combination, but do not identify as Hispanic or Latino. "Black Hispanic" refers to people who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino and as Black (multiracial or otherwise).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2000 decennial census (5% IPUMS) and 2006-2019 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).
## Most Black college graduates working in STEM jobs recall positive experience in STEM classes

Among employed adults with a college degree or more education, % who say in their most recent STEM schooling, they had someone who ...  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Experience</th>
<th>Among those who work in STEM jobs</th>
<th>Among those who work in jobs other than STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made you feel excited about your abilities in these subjects</td>
<td>Black adults: 69</td>
<td>Black adults: 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 70</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you see ways these subjects could be useful for your job or career</td>
<td>Black adults: 68</td>
<td>Black adults: 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 70</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged you to keep taking classes in these subjects</td>
<td>Black adults: 59</td>
<td>Black adults: 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 68</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of these three positive experiences</td>
<td>Black adults: 81</td>
<td>Black adults: 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 82</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Experience</th>
<th>Among those who work in STEM jobs</th>
<th>Among those who work in jobs other than STEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treated you as if you could not understand these subjects</td>
<td>Black adults: 34</td>
<td>Black adults: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 24</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made you feel like you didn’t belong in these classes</td>
<td>Black adults: 34</td>
<td>Black adults: 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 18</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made repeated negative comments or slights about your race or ethnicity</td>
<td>Black adults: 20</td>
<td>Black adults: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 8</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of these three negative experiences</td>
<td>Black adults: 48</td>
<td>Black adults: 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 33</td>
<td>All U.S. adults: 36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on employed adults with a college degree or more education. Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2021.
"Black Americans’ Views of and Engagement With Science"
Skin-color approach:
Eight-in-ten Latinos describe their skin color as lighter

% of Latino adults who say ____ most closely matches their own skin color

Note: Color scale base on the Yadon-Ostfeld skin-color scale. Share of respondents who did not offer an answer not shown.
Source: National Survey of Latinos conducted March 15-28, 2021
Afro-Latinos are about 2% of the U.S. adult population and 12% of Latino adults

% saying they are Afro-Latino among ...

All adults  2%
Latino adults  12%

... but almost one-in-seven do not identify as Hispanic or Latino

In millions

Afro-Latino adults  5.2  0.8

Note: Estimates of the total number of Afro-Latino adults in the U.S. have a margin of error of plus or minus 600,000. Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on a Center survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 19, 2019-June 3, 2020.
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