

Measuring Race and Ethnicity in U.S. Economic Statistics: What Do We Know?

John M. Abowd

Associate Director for Research and Methodology and Chief Scientist
U.S. Census Bureau

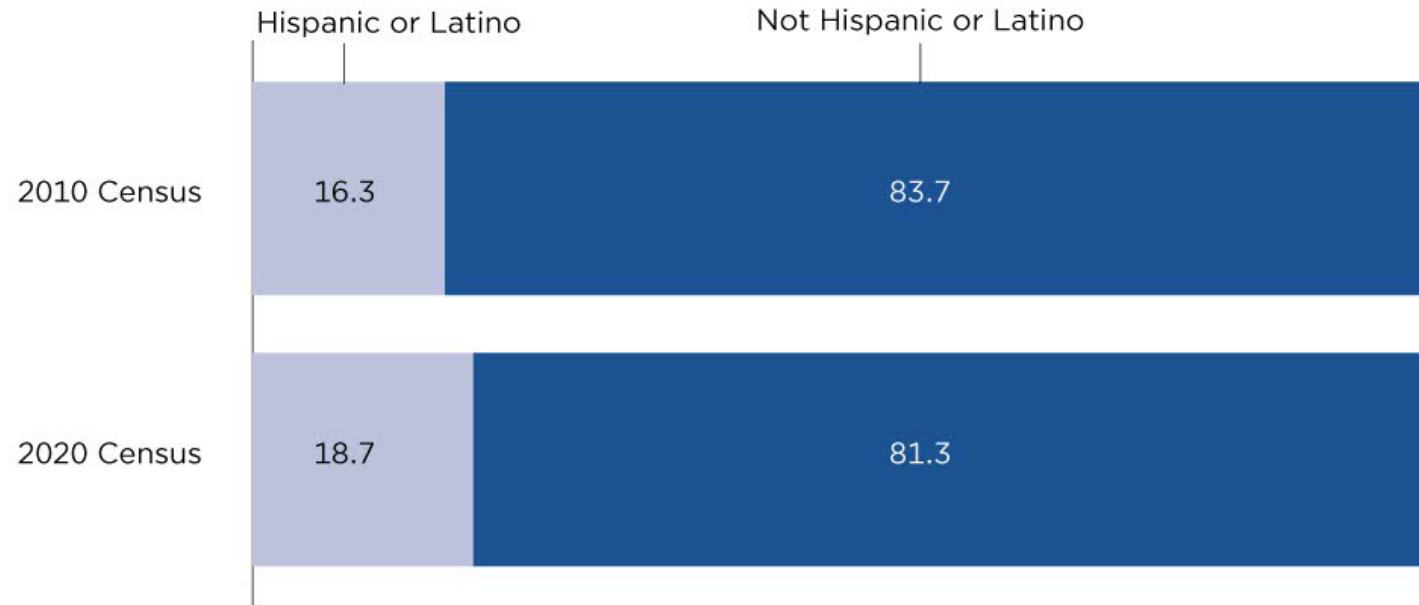
NABE Policy Options for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth
Tuesday, March 22, 2022, 10:50-11:50AM

Overview

- The Census Bureau's demographers have prepared a careful comparison of the 2010 Census to the 2020 Census redistricting race and ethnicity data ([Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population Is Much More Multiracial](#)) that highlights key changes over the decade (see Figures 1-4).
- Here's the visualization tool: [Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census](#).
- Here's the data tool: [2020 Census Redistricting: Supplementary Tables](#).
- Our research has shown that the best way to measure the racial and ethnic identities of the U.S. population is to use a single question that allows respondents to indicate their identities without imposing the separate-question restriction of SPD 15. A revision to SPD 15 by the Office of the Chief Statistician in OMB is required before such a format can be used outside of test surveys.

Figure 1.

Percentage Distribution of the Hispanic or Latino Population: 2010 and 2020

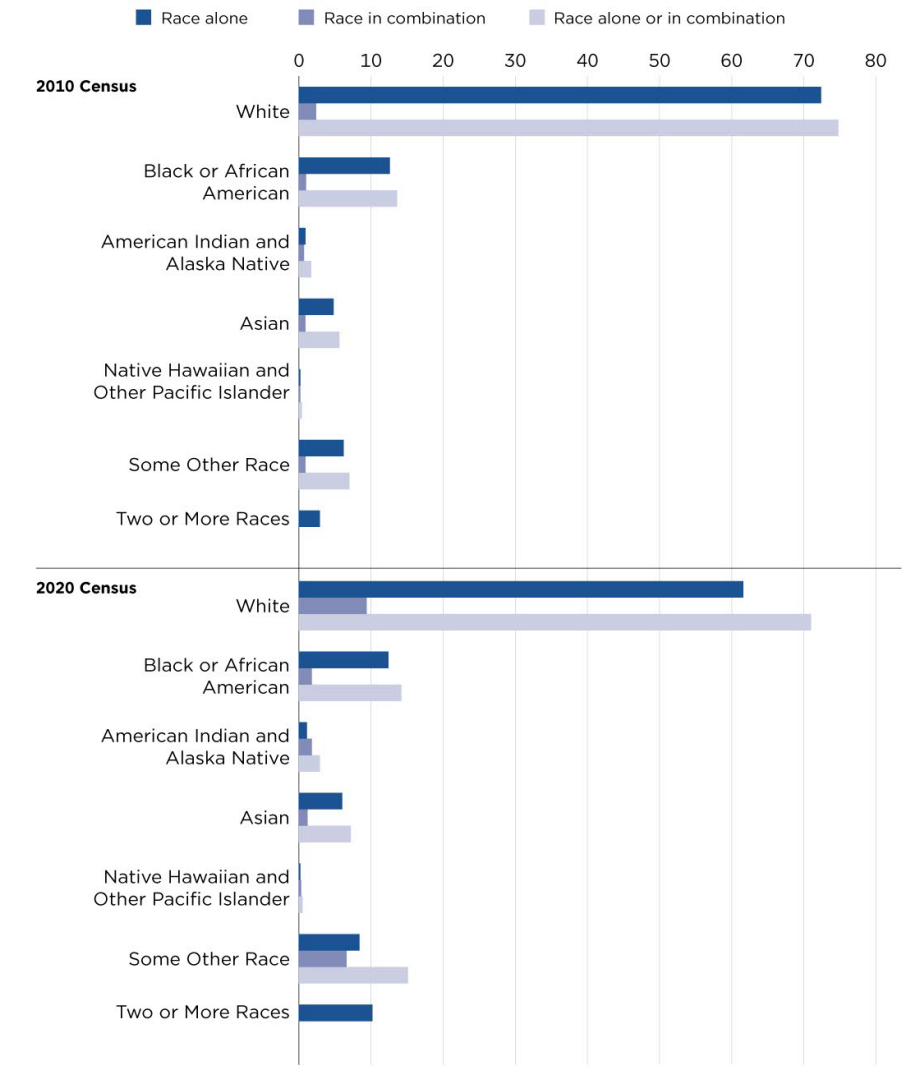


Note: Information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions is available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/technical-documentation/complete-tech-docs/summary-file/>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File.

Source: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>

Figure 2.
Percentage Distribution of Race Groups: 2010 and 2020

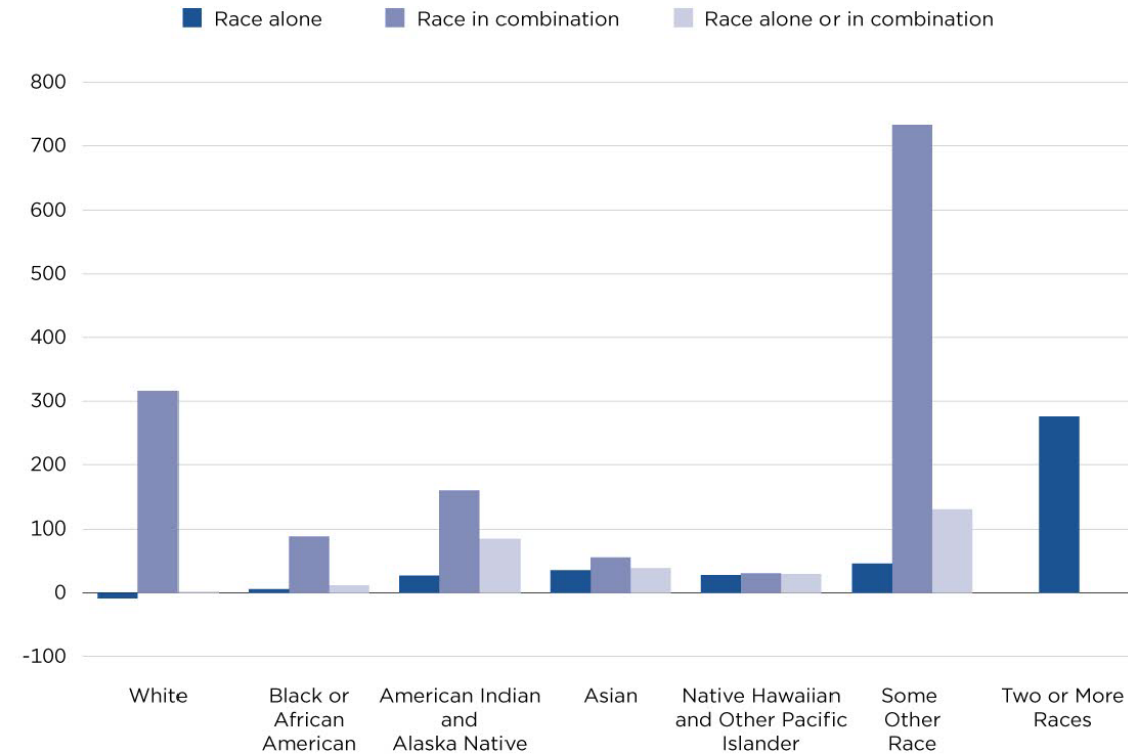


Note: Data users should use caution when comparing 2010 Census and 2020 Census race data because of improvements to the question design, data processing, and coding procedures for the 2020 Census. Information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions is available at <<https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/technical-documentation/complete-tech-docs/summary-file/>>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File.

Source:
<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>

Figure 3.
Percentage Change in Race Groups: 2010 and 2020

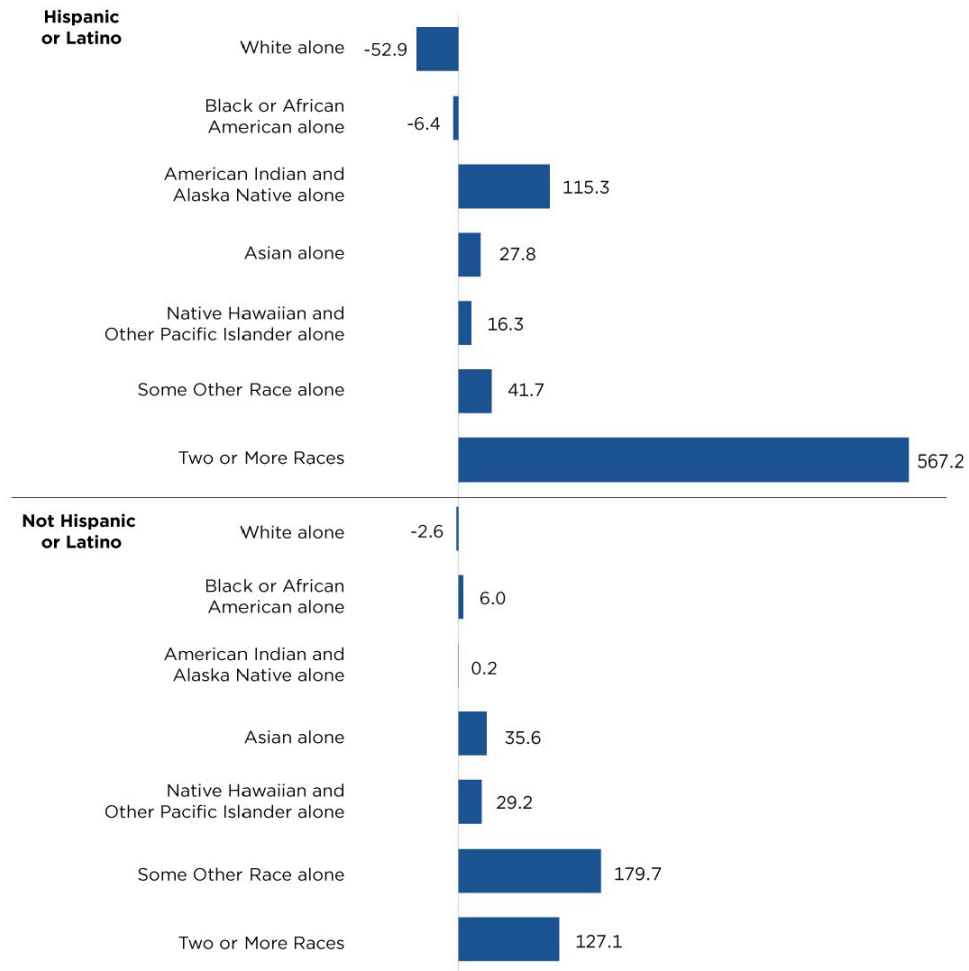


Note: Data users should use caution when comparing 2010 Census and 2020 Census race data because of improvements to the question design, data processing, and coding procedures for the 2020 Census. Information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions is available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/technical-documentation/complete-tech-docs/summary-file/>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File.

Source: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html>

Figure 4.
**Percentage Change in Race Reporting by Hispanic or Latino Origin:
 2010 and 2020**



Note: Data users should use caution when comparing 2010 Census and 2020 Census race data because of improvements to the question design, data processing, and coding procedures for the 2020 Census. Information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions is available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/technical-documentation/complete-tech-docs/summary-file/>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File.

Well-formed Comparisons

- Improvements for the 2020 Census questions on ethnicity and race better capture the reality of our diverse nation, and more accurately illustrate the richness and complexity of how people identify their race and ethnicity in the 21st century.
- The Census Bureau is confident that differences in the overall racial distributions are largely due to improvements in the design of the two separate questions for race and ethnicity data collection and processing as well as some demographic changes over the past 10 years.
- It is important to note that these data comparisons between the 2020 Census and 2010 Census race data should be made with caution, taking into account the improvements we have made to the Hispanic origin and race questions and the ways we code what people tell us.

Policy Background

- Intercensal research, particularly the [2015 National Content Test](#), tested an enhanced version of the two-question format used in the 2010 Census (including write-in areas for White and Black or African American respondents to enter detail), in addition to testing a single question format.
- The two-question format was used on the 2020 Census because it conforms with Statistical Policy Directive 15 (1997), which was not revised by the Office of the Chief Statistician (in OMB) before the 2018 End-to-End Census Test. That test was required to use the final form for the 2020 Census questionnaire. But this two-question format included detail not collected in the 2010 Census (or the ACS until 2020). In addition, the data processing allowed up to eight responses to be coded (compared to two for the 2010 processing).
- These differences affect comparisons to the 2010 Census and the 2019 ACS data in important ways ([Improvements to the 2020 Census Race and Hispanic Origin Question Designs, Data Processing, and Coding Procedures](#)).

Comparison Cautions

- When you compare 2020 Experimental 1-year ACS to 2019 1-year ACS data, you are confounding the effects of the redesigned question with changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population and pandemic-induced nonresponse biases in the 2020 1-year Experimental ACS data.
- The redesigned question provides a much richer description of the diversity of the U.S. population. Comparing the 2020 ACS 1-year experimental data to the 2019 1-year data helps understand this; however, the 2020 ACS have serious nonresponse biases due to the COVID pandemic.
- The experimental release addressed some of this problem, but other research efforts are needed to fully understand the effects of the revised question format. The 5-year ACS data released last week make additional corrections for the non-response bias, and are not experimental; however, further research is underway to elaborate the effects of the 2020 Census race and ethnicity measurements.

Population	United States (2020 Census)		United States (2010 Census)	
	Count	Percent of Total	Count	Percent of Total
Total:	331,449,281		308,745,538	
White alone	204,277,273	61.6%	223,553,265	72.4%
Black or African American alone	41,104,200	12.4%	38,929,319	12.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	3,727,135	1.1%	2,932,248	0.9%
Asian alone	19,886,049	6.0%	14,674,252	4.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	689,966	0.2%	540,013	0.2%
Some Other Race alone	27,915,715	8.4%	19,107,368	6.2%
Two or More Races	33,848,943	10.2%	9,009,073	2.9%

Population	United States (2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental)			United States (2019 ACS 1-Year)		
	Estimate	Percent of Total	Margin of Error	Estimate	Percent of Total	Margin of Error
Total:	329,484,119		13,206	328,239,523		
White alone	206,619,960	62.7%	163,627	236,475,401	72.0%	99,212
Black or African American alone	39,839,863	12.1%	71,421	41,989,671	12.8%	77,381
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	3,239,492	1.0%	38,164	2,847,336	0.9%	33,671
Asian alone	18,943,940	5.7%	41,975	18,636,984	5.7%	39,562
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	601,228	0.2%	12,460	628,683	0.2%	17,795
Some Other Race alone	22,316,584	6.8%	176,213	16,352,553	5.0%	122,060
Two or More Races	37,923,052	11.5%	199,358	11,308,895	3.4%	119,592

Caution: Comparisons between the 2020 and 2010 Census confound changes in the question design with changes in the underlying demographic characteristics. Comparisons between the 2020 Experimental 1-year ACS and the 2019 1-year ACS confound changes in the question design, pandemic-related nonresponse to the ACS and the underlying demographic characteristics.

Thank you.

John.Maron.Abowd@census.gov