

## 6.3.1: 2020 Census Illuminates Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Country

### BACKGROUND

The 2020 Census used the required two separate questions (one for [Hispanic or Latino origin](#) and one for [race](#)) to collect the races and ethnicities of the U.S. population — following the [standards](#) set by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1997.

Building upon our research over the past decade, we improved the two separate [questions](#) design and updated our data processing and coding procedures for the 2020 Census.

This work began in 2015 with our research and testing centered on findings from our [2015 National Content Test](#) and the designs were implemented in the [2018 Census Test](#).

The [improvements and changes](#) enabled a more thorough and accurate depiction of how people self-identify, yielding a more accurate portrait of how people report their Hispanic origin and race within the context of a two-question format.

These changes reveal that the U.S. population is much more multiracial and more [diverse](#) than what we measured in the past.

We are confident that differences in the overall racial distributions are largely due to improvements in the design of the two separate questions for race data collection and processing as well as some demographic changes over the past 10 years.

We are also confident, as shown in our research over the past decade, that using a single combined question for race and ethnicity in the decennial census would ultimately yield an even more accurate portrait of how the U.S. population self-identifies, especially for people who self-identify as multiracial or multiethnic.

Today's release of 2020 Census redistricting data provides a new snapshot of the racial and ethnic composition of the country as a result of improvements in the design of the race and ethnicity questions, processing, and coding.

Nearly all groups saw population gains this decade and the increase in the Two or More Races population (referred to throughout this story as the Multiracial population) was especially large (up 276%). The White alone population declined by 8.6% since 2010.

The 2020 Census shows (Figures 1, 2, and 3):

- The White population remained the largest race or ethnicity group in the United States, with 204.3 million people identifying as White alone. Overall, 235.4 million people reported White alone or in combination with another group. However, the White alone population decreased by 8.6% since 2010.
- The Multiracial population has changed considerably since 2010. It was measured at 9 million people in 2010 and is now 33.8 million people in 2020, a 276% increase.
- The “in combination” multiracial populations for all race groups accounted for most of the overall changes in each racial category.
- All of the race alone or in combination groups experienced increases. The Some Other Race alone or in combination group (49.9 million) increased 129% surpassing the Black or African American population (46.9 million) as the second-largest race alone or in combination group.
- The next largest racial populations were the Asian alone or in combination group (24 million), the American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination group (9.7 million), and the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination group (1.6 million).
- The Hispanic or Latino population, which includes people of any race, was 62.1 million in 2020. The Hispanic or Latino population grew 23%, while the population that was not of Hispanic or Latino origin grew 4.3% since 2010.

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.

**Nearly all groups saw population gains this decade and the increase in the Two or More Races population (referred to throughout this story as the Multiracial population) was especially large (up 276%). The White alone population declined by 8.6% since 2010.**

Accordingly, data from the 2020 Census show different but reasonable and expected distributions from the 2010 Census for the White alone population, the Some Other Race alone or in combination population and the Multiracial population, especially for

people who self-identify as both White and Some Other Race.

These results are not surprising as they align with our [expert research and corresponding findings this past decade](#), particularly with the results from the 2015 National Content Test, about the impacts of question format on race and ethnicity reporting.

To present the results, we use the [concepts](#) of *race alone*, *race in combination*, and *race alone or in combination* to frame the discussion of racial and ethnic composition, and these three concepts are central to understanding our country's changing demographics.

In addition, we have a companion data visualization that expands on these statistics, providing a comprehensive overview of racial and ethnic composition at national, state and county levels.

This story highlights national-level data. Data for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico are available in our interactive data visualization.

## Data Visualizations

[Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census](#)

[U.S. Decennial Census Measurement of Race and Ethnicity Across the Decades: 1790–2020](#)

### Hispanic or Latino Population

The Hispanic or Latino population grew from 50.5 million (16.3% of the U.S. population) in 2010 to 62.1 million (18.7%) in 2020.

- Between 2010 and 2020, the Hispanic or Latino population grew by 23%.
- Slightly more than half (51.1%) of the total U.S. population growth between 2010 and 2020 came from growth in the Hispanic or Latino population.

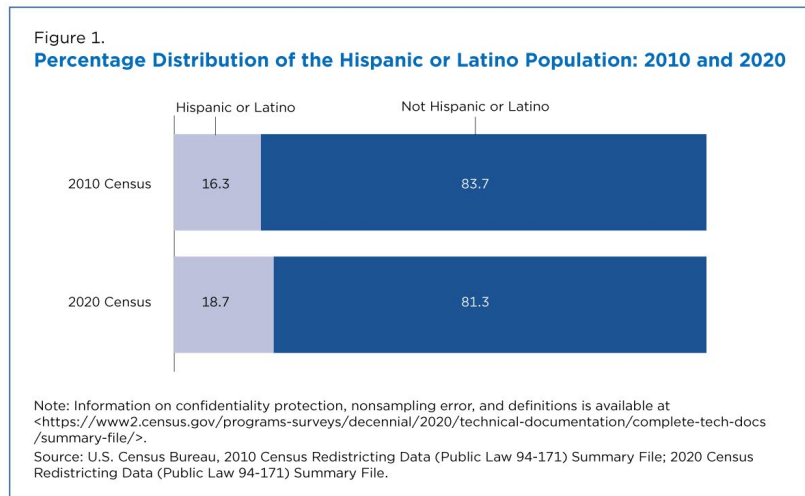
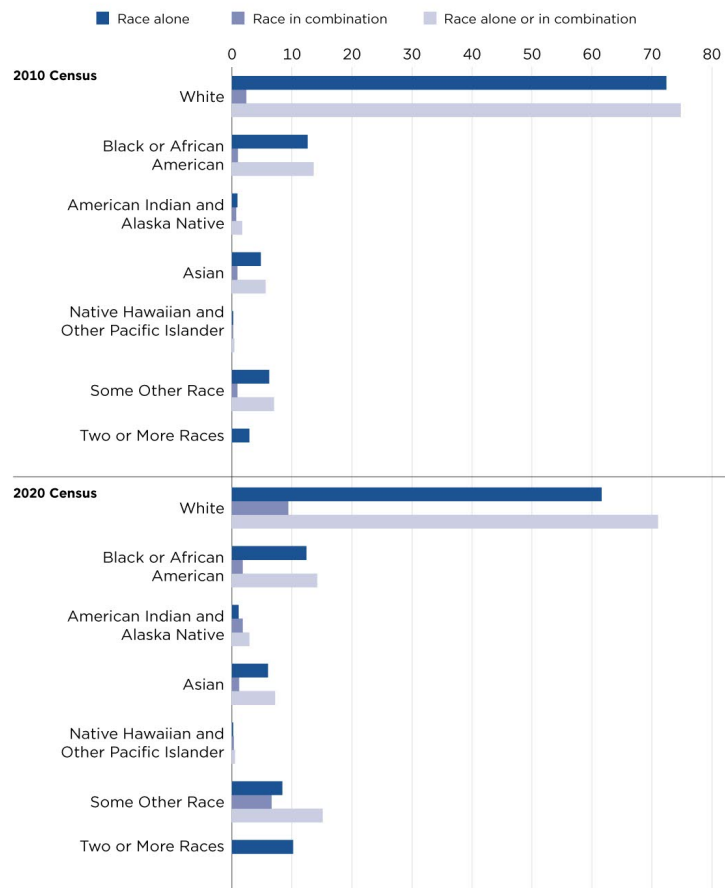


Figure 2.  
Percentage Distribution of Race Groups: 2010 and 2020

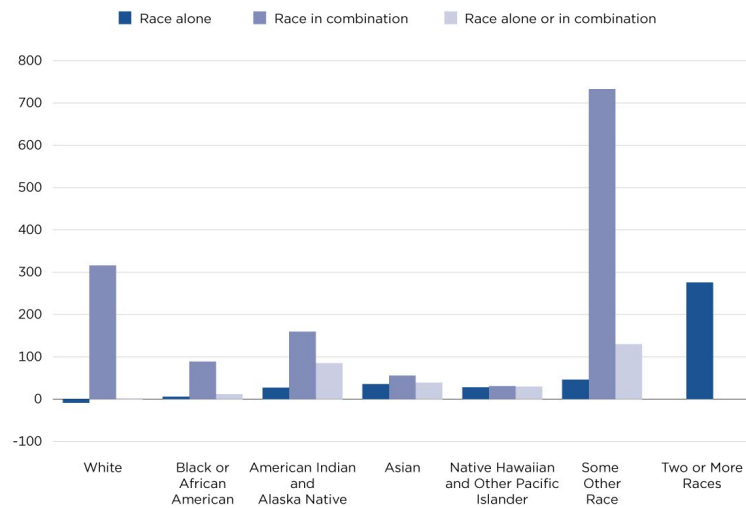


Note: Data users should use caution when comparing 2010 Census and 2020 Census race data because of improvements to the question design, data processing, and coding procedures for the 2020 Census. Information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions is available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/technical-docume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

Figure 3.

### Percentage Change in Race Groups: 2010 and 2020



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## White Population

Overall, 235.4 million people reported White alone or in combination with another group.

- The White alone population accounted for 204.3 million people and 61.6% of all people living in the United States, compared with 223.6 million and 72.4% in 2010.
- Together with the 31.1 million people who identified as White in combination with another race group, such as Black or African American or Asian, the White alone or in combination population comprised 235.4 million people and 71% of the total population.
- Although the White alone population decreased by 8.6% since 2010, the White in combination population saw a 316% increase during the same period.

The observed changes in the White population could be attributed to a number of factors, including demographic change since 2010. But we expect they were largely due to the improvements to the design of the two separate questions for race and ethnicity, data processing and coding, which enabled a more thorough and accurate depiction of how people prefer to self-identify.

## Black or African American Population

The Black or African American in combination population grew by 88.7% since 2010.

- In 2020, the Black or African American alone population (41.1 million) accounted for 12.4% of all people living in the United States, compared with 38.9 million and 12.6% in 2010.
- Coupled with the 5.8 million respondents who identified as Black or African American in combination with another race group, such as White or American Indian and Alaska Native, the Black or African American alone or in combination population totaled 46.9 million people (14.2% of the total population) in 2020.
- While the Black or African American alone population grew 5.6% since 2010, the Black or African American in combination population grew 88.7%.

## American Indian and Alaska Native Population

From 2010 to 2020, the American Indian and Alaska Native in combination population increased by 160%.

- In 2020, the American Indian and Alaska Native alone population (3.7 million) accounted for 1.1% of all people living in the United States, compared with 0.9% (2.9 million) in 2010.

- An additional 5.9 million people identified as American Indian and Alaska Native and another race group in 2020, such as White or Black or African American. Together, the American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination population comprised 9.7 million people (2.9% of the total population) in 2020, up from 5.2 million (1.7%) in 2010.
- The American Indian and Alaska Native alone population grew by 27.1%, and the American Indian and Alaska Native in combination population grew by 160% since 2010.

### Asian Population

Approximately 19.9 million people (6% of all respondents) identified as Asian alone in 2020, up from 14.7 million people (4.8%) in 2010.

- Coupled with the 4.1 million respondents who identified as Asian in combination with another race group, such as White or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, the Asian alone or in combination population comprised 24 million people (7.2% of the total population).
- The Asian alone population grew by 35.5% between 2010 and 2020. In comparison, the Asian in combination population grew by 55.5%.

### Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population

Over half of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders identified with more than one race.

- In the 2020 Census, 689,966 people (0.2%) identified as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, up from 540,013 people (0.2%) in 2010.
- Coupled with the 896,497 people who identified as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander in combination with another race group (such as Asian or White), the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone or in combination population totaled about 1.6 million people and 0.5% of the total population.
- The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone population grew by 27.8% between 2010 and 2020. In comparison, the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander in combination population grew faster — 30.8% since 2010.

### How to Access, Download and Visualize Redistricting Data

Get tips and tricks on how to access, visualize and use Census Bureau data. The Census Academy team of data experts created these [Data Gems](#).

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LZPYS0cR68&feature=youtu.be>.

### Some Other Race Population

The Some Other Race population was the second-largest alone or in combination race group, comprising 15.1% of the total population.

- About 27.9 million people (8.4% of all respondents) identified as Some Other Race alone in 2020, up from 19.1 million people (6.2%) in 2010.
- Coupled with the 22 million respondents who identified as Some Other Race in combination with another race group (such as White or Black or African American), the Some Other Race alone or in combination population comprised 49.9 million people.
- The Some Other Race alone population changed 46.1% and the Some Other Race in combination population changed 733% since 2010.
- Approximately 45.3 million people of Hispanic or Latino origin were classified as Some Other Race either alone or in combination, compared with only 4.6 million people who were not of Hispanic or Latino origin. Nearly all of those who were classified as Some Other Race alone were of Hispanic or Latino origin (26.2 million out of 27.9 million, or 93.9%).

The observed changes in the Some Other Race population could be attributed to a number of factors, including demographic change since 2010. But we expect they were largely due to the improvements to the design of the two separate questions for race and ethnicity, data processing and coding, which enabled a more thorough and accurate depiction of how people prefer to self-identify.

### Multiracial Population

In 2020, the percentage of people who reported multiple races changed more than all of the race alone groups, increasing from 2.9% of the population (9 million people) in 2010 to 10.2% of the population (33.8 million people) in 2020.

- The largest Multiracial combinations in 2020 were White and Some Other Race (19.3 million), White and American Indian and Alaska Native (4 million), White and Black or African American (3.1 million), White and Asian (2.7 million), and Black or African American and Some Other Race (1 million).
- Between 2010 and 2020, the White and Some Other Race population added 17.6 million people to the Multiracial population, a change of over 1,000%.
- The White and American Indian and Alaska Native population also increased, growing by about 2.5 million people or 177%.
- The White and Black or African American population increased by 1.2 million people, a 67.4% change.
- The White and Asian population increased by 1.1 million people, a 65.8% change in size.
- The Black or African American and Some Other Race population increased by 722,383 people, a 230% change.

The observed changes in the Multiracial population could be attributed to a number of factors, including demographic change since 2010. But we expect they were largely due to the improvements to the design of the two separate questions for race and ethnicity, data processing, and coding, which enabled a more thorough and accurate depiction of how people prefer to self-identify.

### Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race

Another way to examine data on race and ethnicity is to cross-tabulate Hispanic or Latino origin by race. [As we saw with the 2010 Census](#), many Hispanic or Latino respondents answered the separate question on race by reporting their race as “Mexican,” “Hispanic,” “Latin American,” “Puerto Rican,” etc.

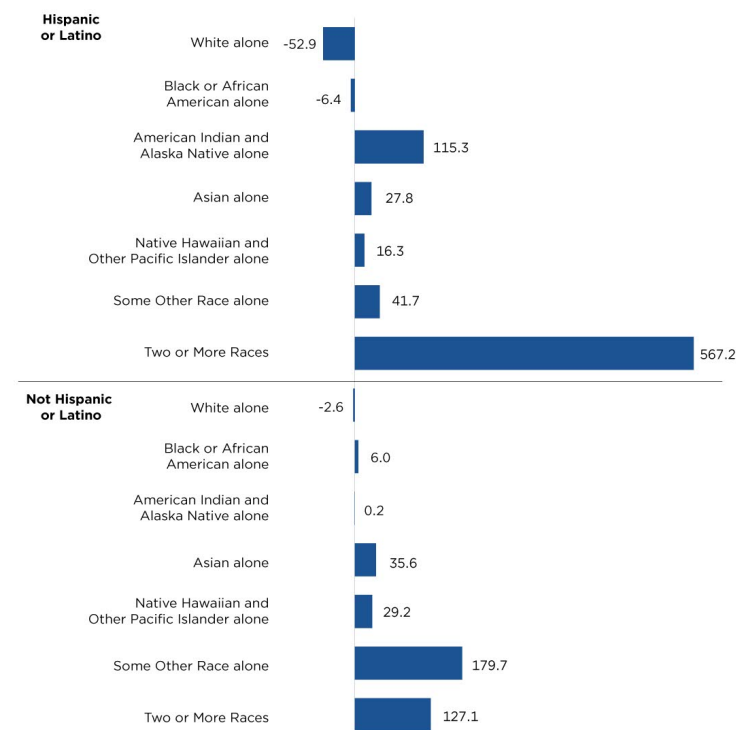
These and other responses to the race question that reflect a Hispanic or Latino origin were classified in the Some Other Race category, as people of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race per the 1997 OMB standards.

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of people of Hispanic or Latino origin reporting more than one race increased 567% from 3 million (6.0%) to 20.3 million (32.7%) (Figure 4).

We are confident these differences in racial distributions were largely due to the improvements to the design of the two separate questions for race and ethnicity, data processing, and coding, which enabled a more thorough and accurate depiction of how people prefer to self-identify.

- In 2020, among people of Hispanic or Latino origin, 26.2 million people (42.2%) identified their race as Some Other Race alone, a 41.7% change from 2010.
- The number of people of Hispanic or Latino origin who identified as White alone decreased by 52.9%, down from 26.7 million to 12.6 million over the decade.
- The number of people who were not of Hispanic or Latino origin who identified as White alone declined at a slower rate, with a -2.6% change.

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.

## Race and Hispanic Origin by Age Group

The 2020 Census data also enable us to examine the racial and ethnic composition of the population under age 18 (children) and the population age 18 and over (adults) (Figure 5).

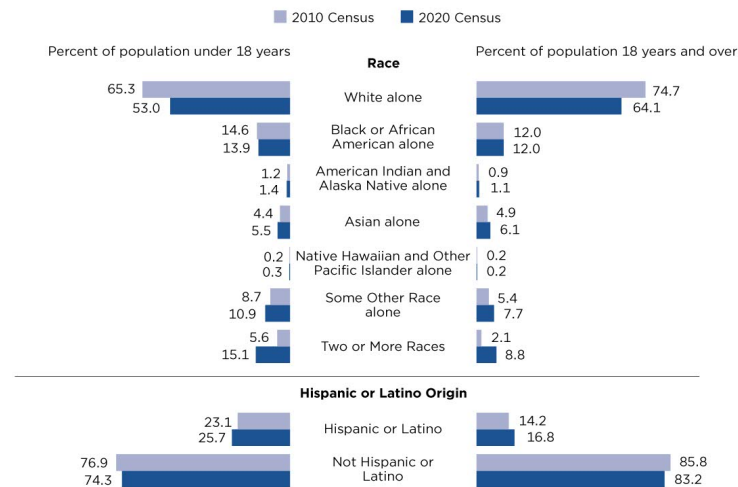
The racial and ethnic composition among children is quite different from adults. This comparison offers insights into the demographics of younger generations in this country and glimpses of what the future may bring.

- The White alone adult population (age 18 and over) went from 74.7% in 2010 to 64.1% in 2020. In contrast, the Multiracial adult population increased from 2.1% in 2010 to 8.8% in 2020.
- In 2020, the Black or African American alone (12%), American Indian and Alaska Native alone (1.1%), and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (0.2%) populations comprised similar shares of the total adult population as in 2010.
- Among children, the White alone population changed from 65.3% to 53%; the Black or African American alone population changed from 14.6% to 13.9%.
- The percentages increased for children in all other groups, especially the Some Other Race alone (8.7% in 2010; 10.9% in 2020) and Multiracial (5.6% in 2010; 15.1% in 2020) populations.
- The percentages also increased for Hispanic or Latino children from 2010 to 2020 (23.1% to 25.7%).

The observed changes in the White population, Some Other Race population, and Multiracial population could be attributed to a number of factors, including demographic change since 2010. But we expect they were largely due to the improvements to the design of the two separate questions for race and ethnicity, data processing, and coding, which enabled a more thorough and accurate depiction of how people prefer to self-identify.

Figure 5.

**Percentage Distribution of Race and Hispanic Origin by Age Group:  
2010 and 2020**



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