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.

For the first time, people who check one or both of these boxes are asked to write more about their origins, for example German, African American, Jamaican, etc.

CENSUS YEAR

People could **choose** their own race

People could choose **two or more** races

1790 | 1800 | 1810 | 1820 | 1830 | 1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2020

Free white males, Free white females

White

All other free persons

Free colored males and females

Slaves

Black

Mulatto

Black Slaves

Mulatto Slaves

Quadroon

Octoroon

Black (Negro or of Negro descent)

Black

Mulatto

Negro

Negro, or Black

Black, or Negro

Black, African American, or Negro

Black or African American

Mulatto: Definitions varied from census to census, but this term generally means someone who is black and at least one other race. Mulattoes, octoroons and quadroons were counted as single-race black, but today could be counted as multiracial.

Quadroon: Someone with "one-fourth black blood," according to census-taker instructions.
Octoroon: Someone with "one-eighth or any trace of black blood."

Aleut: People who trace their ancestry to the Aleutian Islands in Alaska.

Aleut

Eskimo

Aleut

Eskimo

American Indian or Alaska Native

Multiracial: Two or more races

Indian

American Indian

Indian (American)

Although **American Indians** living in white society were included in the census before 1890, the 1890 census was the first to include a complete count of American Indians on tribal land as well.

Chinese

Japanese

Filipino

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

Other

Korean

Hindu

Korean

Asian Indian

Vietnamese

Hindu: Referred to Asian Indians, regardless of religion.

Part Hawaiian

Other

Other Asian

Asian or Pacific Islander

Hawaiian

Native Hawaiian

Samoan

Samoan

Guamanian

Guamanian, Chamorro

Guamanian

Chamorro

Pacific Islanders and Hawaiians were grouped with Asians from 1960-1990. Starting with the 2000 census, they became their own group.

Other Pacific Islander

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

Other

Other

Other race

Some other race

CLASSIFICATION BY **RACE**

Mexican

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

Central or So. Amer.

Chicano: A variation of "Mexican American" commonly used in Western and Southwestern states.

Mexican

Mexican, Mexican Amer., Chicano

Puerto Rican

Cuban

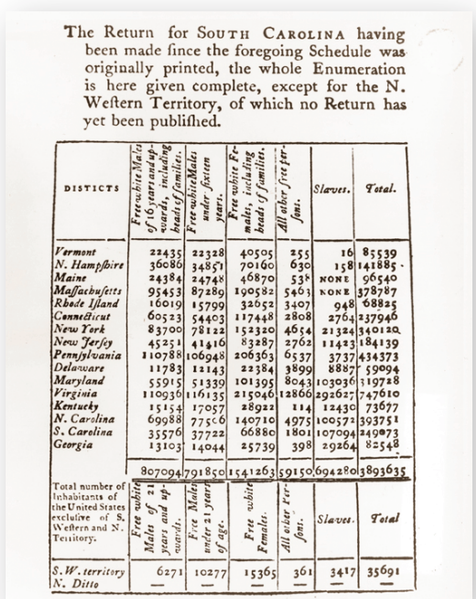
Other Spanish

Other Spanish/ Hispanic

Other Spanish/ Hispanic/ Latino

Another Hispanic, Latino, Spanish origin

CLASSIFICATION BY **HISPANIC ETHNICITY**



The Return for SOUTH CAROLINA having been made since the foregoing Schedule was originally printed, the whole Enumeration is here given complete, except for the N. Western Territory, of which no Return has yet been published.

DISTICTS	Free white Males of 16 years and upwards, including heads of families.	Free white Males under 16 years.	Free white Females, including heads of families.	All other free persons.	Slaves.	Total.
Vermont	22435	22328	40505	255	16	85539
N. Hampshire	36086	34851	70160	630	158	141885
Maine	24384	24748	46870	538	NONE	96540
Massachusetts	95453	87289	190582	5463	NONE	378787
Rhode Island	16019	15799	32652	3407	948	68825
Connecticut	60523	54403	117448	2808	2764	237946
New York	83700	78122	152320	4654	21324	340120
New Jersey	45251	41416	83287	2762	11423	184139
Pennsylvania	110788	106948	206363	6537	3737	434373
Delaware	11783	12143	22384	3899	8887	59094
Maryland	55915	51339	101395	8043	103036	319728
Virginia	110936	116135	215046	12866	292627	747610
Kentucky	15154	17057	28922	114	12430	73677
N. Carolina	69988	77506	140710	4975	100571	393751
S. Carolina	35576	37722	66880	1801	107094	249073
Georgia	13103	14044	25739	398	29264	82548
	807094	791850	1541263	59150	694280	3893635

Total number of Inhabitants of the United States exclusive of S. Western and N. Territory.	Free white Males of 21 years and upwards.	Free Males under 21 years of age.	Free white Females.	All other Free persons.	Slaves.	Total
S. W. territory	6271	10277	15365	361	3417	35691
N. Ditto	—	—	—	—	—	—

U.S. Census Bureau

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 supposed 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 males 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