

FACT SHEET

Race & Origin Questions

A GUIDE TO 2020 CENSUS OPERATIONS

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Accurate, detailed data on race and origin are necessary to enforce a broad array of civil rights protections, reveal disparate impacts of laws and policies, and ensure programs meet the needs of diverse communities.
- The 2020 Census will ask a question about Hispanic origin and a separate question about race and national origin.
- All respondents will be able to check off or write in their national origin, ethnicity, or principal or enrolled tribe.

WHAT WILL BE ASKED?

The 2020 Census will include two questions about race and origin:

“Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?”

- The federal government defines Hispanic origin as an ethnicity, not a race.

“What is this person’s race?”

- All respondents will be able to identify or write in their national origin or their principal or enrolled tribe, after their race.
- Filling out the national origin write-in area will help the Census Bureau collect more detailed, accurate data about people of all ethnicities that might otherwise be buried within the broad race categories.

For more information, including a discussion of proposed but rejected changes to the questions, see [Race & Origin Questions in Context: Understanding the 2020 Census](#).

The categories that are used often do not reflect the ways that people would prefer to identify themselves. For more on the history of race and origin questions on the census, see [Race and Ethnicity in the 2020 Census: Improving Data to Capture a Multiethnic America and What Census Calls Us: A Historical Timeline](#).

Figure 1. 2020 Census Hispanic Origin Question

Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – *Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.*

Figure 2. 2020 Census Race Question

What is this person’s race?

Mark one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

- White – *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.*

- Black or African Am. – *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.*

- American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.*

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Filipino | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> Samoan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Chamorro |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian – <i>Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander – <i>Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.</i> | |

- Some other race – *Print race or origin.*

Source: Questions Planned for the 2020 Census and American Community Survey. Available at www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2020/operations/planned-questions-2020-acs.pdf.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING?

- **Those who are unsure** how to identify can reference a glossary provided by the Census Bureau. For example, someone who identifies as “Kanaka Maoli” would be listed as “Native Hawaiian” on the glossary.
- **Everyone should respond to both questions** so the Census Bureau can produce accurate data. For example, Latinos of African descent (i.e. Afro- Latinos) and Latinos of Asian descent should answer both the Hispanic origin and race questions to indicate their heritage.
- **Black respondents and White respondents** can now write in their national origin and the census form provides examples.
- **Black respondents** who are unsure about their national origin(s) can identify as Black or African American. Black immigrants (e.g. Nigerian Americans and Haitian Americans) can check the Black or African American checkbox and write in their national origin.
- **White respondents** who do not know their national origin(s) can identify as White.
- **Respondents with ancestors of multiple nationalities** can check or write in all of their origins, or the one(s) they identify with most.
- **Mixed-race respondents** can select multiple race groups (e.g. Asian and Black) and write in the origins for each in the corresponding space.
- **People of Hispanic/Latino origin** can mark one or more check boxes on the Hispanic origin question to identify as Mexican, Puerto Rican, and/or Cuban, and/or mark the “Other Hispanic” check box and write in their origin (such as Dominican, Guatemalan, or Colombian).
- **Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander respondents** who do not see their national origin listed can write it in.
- **Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) respondents** can check the race category they identify with or the “Some Other Race” box and write in their national origin. MENA is not listed as its own race category on the census.
- **Respondents who do not identify with any of the provided race categories** can select “Some other race” and write in their national origin.
- **American Indian and Alaska Native respondents** can write in their tribal affiliation.

WHY RESPOND?

Title 13 of the U.S. Code protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information collected in the census, including data on race. Accurate, detailed census data on race and origin are necessary to enforce civil rights protections, reveal disparate impacts of laws and policies, and meet the needs of diverse communities. Examples include:

- **Enforcing the Voting Rights Act of 1965.** Race and origin data provide evidence of [racial discrimination in voting practices and policies](#).
- **Enforcing fair housing laws such as the Fair Housing Act and Home Mortgage Disclosure Act.** Race and origin data are important tools for unveiling disparate impacts of housing policies or practices.
- **Evaluating discrimination in employment.** These data can [reveal discrimination](#) in the private sector and can help establish federal affirmative action plans.
- **Highlighting health disparities.** These data allow researchers to [uncover health disparities](#) between groups and inform the work of policymakers tasked with eliminating those disparities.
- **Allocating resources to tribal communities.** Census data is crucial to the [accurate allocation of funds](#) that support programs and help tribal leaders understand the needs and characteristics of their communities.
- **Supporting environmental justice.** Census data are used to produce the EPA’s Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool, which is used to [inform environmental justice initiatives related to racial health disparities](#).
- **Allocating funds to school districts.** Census data are used to [allocate funds to school districts](#). For example, race data are used to allocate funds for bilingual services under the Bilingual Education Act.