

Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Child Population

Headline

The percentage of children in the United States that are Hispanic or Asian has increased steadily since 1980 to about 20 percent in 2000. By 2020 they are expected to comprise 29 percent of the child population. ([See Figure 1](#))

Importance

The United States has a long history of ethnic and racial diversity in its population. That diversity has accelerated in recent decades, a trend which is expected to continue into the future.

Race and ethnicity are important for many reasons including their relation to culture, identity, and well-being. Children of different races and ethnicities often show large differences in many areas of well-being including health, mortality, school performance and attainment, and access to family and community resources.¹ These and similar disparities are also evident in adulthood.²

According to a recent report from the National Research Council, race is determined both by physical traits (skin color, hair, and so on) and by the “individual, group, and social attributes” associated with those characteristics. It is distinguished from “ethnicity,” which does not include physical characteristics as part of its definition.³

The federal government recently changed the way it defines and measures race. A key feature of the new definition allows for identification with more than one race. This new classification was used in the 2000 Decennial Census, and is being implemented in all Federal surveys and administrative data collection efforts.⁴

Trends

From 1980 to 2000, the percentage of Non-Hispanic white children has fallen from 74 percent to 64 percent. It is expected to drop to 55 percent by the year 2020 ([See Table 1](#)). Hispanic children increased from 9 percent to 16 percent of the child population during that time period, and they are expected to increase further to 23 percent by 2020. Asian and Pacific Islanders increased from 2 to 4 percent by 2000, and are also expected to increase to 6 percent by 2020. ([See Figure 1](#))

The percent of all children who are non-Hispanic black has stayed relatively constant at about 15 percent since 1980, but is expected to drop slightly to 14 percent by 2010. American Indian and Alaska Native children have held constant at about 1 percent of the total child population since 1980. ([See Figure 1](#))

According to data from the 2000 Census, children of one race constituted roughly 96 percent of the child population ([See Table 2](#)). Among children who are identified with more than one race, the majority are white combined with one other race. The most common combinations are white and “some other race” (1.07 percent of all children) and white and African American (0.78 percent of all children). ([See Table 2](#))

State and Local Estimates

Estimates from the 2000 Census are available for the states, counties, congressional districts, metropolitan areas, and cities at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/census/>

State population projections of the child population for 1995-2025 (based on the 1990 census) are available by race and Hispanic origin at <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/state/stpjage.txt>

International Estimates

None

Data Source

Table 1: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Race, Table POP 3 <http://www.childstats.gov/ac2001/pop3.asp>

Table 2: Unpublished estimates from the 2000 Census, produced by the Population Reference Bureau.

Raw Data Source

All estimates in Table 1 are from the Census Bureau’s Population Projections and Estimates Branch, based on models that draw on many data sources.

<http://eire.census.gov/popest/estimates.php> (Estimates)

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/popproj.html> (Projections)

All Estimates in Table 2 are from the 2000 Decennial Census.

<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>

Date of Next Update

Summer 2002

¹ Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2001. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Available online at <http://www.childstats.gov>

² Blank, R. 2001. An Overview of Trends in Social and Economic Well-Being, by Race. Chapter 2 in *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, Volume 1*. Neil J. Smelser, William Julius Wilson, and Faith Mitchell, Editors. Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Available online at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/9599.html>

³ Smelser, N., Wilson, W., Mitchell, F. 2001. Introduction. In *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, Volume 1*. Neil J. Smelser, William Julius Wilson, and Faith Mitchell, Editors. Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Available online at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/9599.html>

⁴ Office of Management and Budget. 1997. Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. Available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/ombdir15.html>

Table 1

Percent of Children Under Age 18 by Race and Hispanic Origin, Selected Years, 1980-2020.

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Projections	
										2010	2020
Total Number of Children (in millions)	63.7	-	64.2	68.5	69.1	69.6	69.9	70.2	70.4	72.1	77.2
Race and Ethnicity											
White, non-Hispanic	74.0	72.0	69.0	67.0	66.0	66.0	65.0	65.0	64.0	59.0	55.0
Black, non-Hispanic	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0	14.0	14.0
Hispanic	9.0	10.0	12.0	14.0	14.0	15.0	15.0	16.0	16.0	21.0	23.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	6.0
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

"-" Indicates data not available

Note: All population figures for the year 2000 shown here are estimates based on the 1990 Census; they do not reflect Census 2000 counts.

Source: Reproduced from Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*, Tables POP1 and POP3. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



Table 2

Single and Multi-Race Children Under Age 18, 2000

	Number	Percent
Total:	72,293,812.00	100.0
Population of one race:	69,436,926.00	96.0
White alone	49,598,289.00	68.6
Black or African American alone	10,885,696.00	15.1
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	840,312.00	1.2
Asian alone	2,464,999.00	3.4
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	127,179.00	0.2
Some other race alone	5,520,451.00	7.6
Population of two or more races:	2,856,886.00	4.0
Population of two races:	2,638,229.00	3.6
White; Black or African American	562,914.00	0.8
White; American Indian and Alaska Native	337,298.00	0.5
White; Asian	445,082.00	0.6
White; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	46,250.00	0.1
White; Some other race	772,663.00	1.1
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native	58,325.00	0.1
Black or African American; Asian	49,141.00	0.1
Black or African American; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	11,165.00	0.0
Black or African American; Some other race	164,092.00	0.2
American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian	16,774.00	0.0
American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2,736.00	0.0
American Indian and Alaska Native; Some other race	31,731.00	0.0
Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	40,313.00	0.1
Asian; Some other race	86,408.00	0.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	13,337.00	0.0
Population of three races:	197,254.00	0.3
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native	47,418.00	0.1
White; Black or African American; Asian	14,032.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,876.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; Some other race	26,110.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian	12,789.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2,368.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Some other race	11,196.00	0.0
White; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	44,436.00	0.1
White; Asian; Some other race	17,178.00	0.0
White; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	3,521.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian	2,382.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	443.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Some other race	2,653.00	0.0
Black or African American; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2,343.00	0.0
Black or African American; Asian; Some other race	3,497.00	0.0
Black or African American; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	835.00	0.0

American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,260.00	0.0
American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Some other race	846.00	0.0
American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	235.00	0.0
Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	1,836.00	0.0
Population of four races:	18,389.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian	4,400.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	486.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Some other race	1,912.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,200.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; Asian; Some other race	728.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	180.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	3,720.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Some other race	610.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	156.00	0.0
White; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	4,131.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	314.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Some other race	146.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	43.00	0.0
Black or African American; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	277.00	0.0
American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	86.00	0.0
Population of five races:	2,736.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,871.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Some other race	269.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	32.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	151.00	0.0
White; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	365.00	0.0
Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	48.00	0.0
Population of six races:	278.00	0.0
White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Some other race	278.00	0.0

Source: Unpublished estimates from the 2000 Census, produced by the Population Reference Bureau