

# We asked... You told us

## Race

The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.

In question 4 on the 1990 census forms, we asked people to report the race with which they most closely identified.

From what you told us, we learned that:

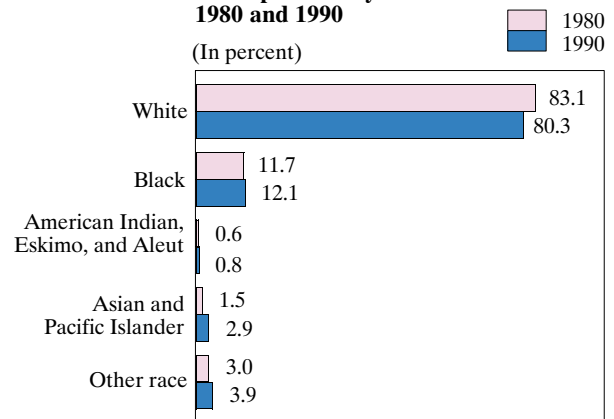
- Between 1980 and 1990, the racial diversity of the United States became more pronounced as a result of the more rapid growth among most racial groups. The rate of increase during the decade for each of the following groups—Blacks (13 percent); American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts (38 percent); and Asians and Pacific Islanders (108 percent)—exceeded the rate of increase for Whites (6 percent).
- Consequently, as the chart to the right shows, each racial group except White constituted a larger share of the total population in 1990 than in 1980. Despite this general shift, about 8 of every 10 U.S. residents in 1990 were White.
- The proportion of the population marking the "Other race" category also increased over the decade, from 3.0 to 3.9 percent. This category includes persons not included in one of the specific race categories listed in question 4. Persons marking this category and writing in an entry such as a multiracial designation or a Hispanic origin group (for example, Mexican, Cuban, or Puerto Rican) are included here. In 1990, about 97 percent of the persons marking the "Other race" category were Hispanic.<sup>1</sup> (Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.)
- More than three-fourths of the White, Black, and Asian and Pacific Islander populations lived in metropolitan areas<sup>2</sup> in 1990. Asians and Pacific Islanders were the most likely to be metropolitan dwellers (94 percent). In contrast, the American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut population was about as likely to live in nonmetro areas (49 percent) as in metro areas (51 percent).

*Census Trivia:* According to the 1990 census, which State had the highest percent increase in its Asian and Pacific Islander population between 1980 and 1990? (Answer on back page.)

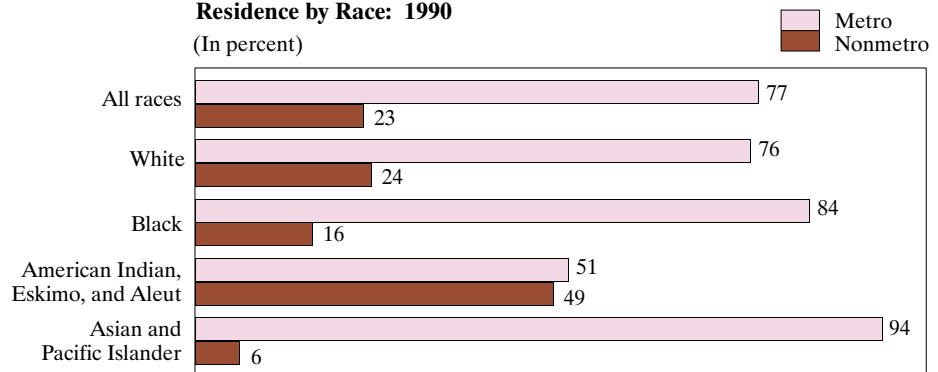
<sup>1</sup>Information on Hispanics is collected from question 7. (See CQC-7, *Hispanic Origin*.)

<sup>2</sup>Generally, a metropolitan area consists of a sizable city and its suburbs, with a total population of at least 100,000.

**Percent Distribution of the Population by Race: 1980 and 1990**



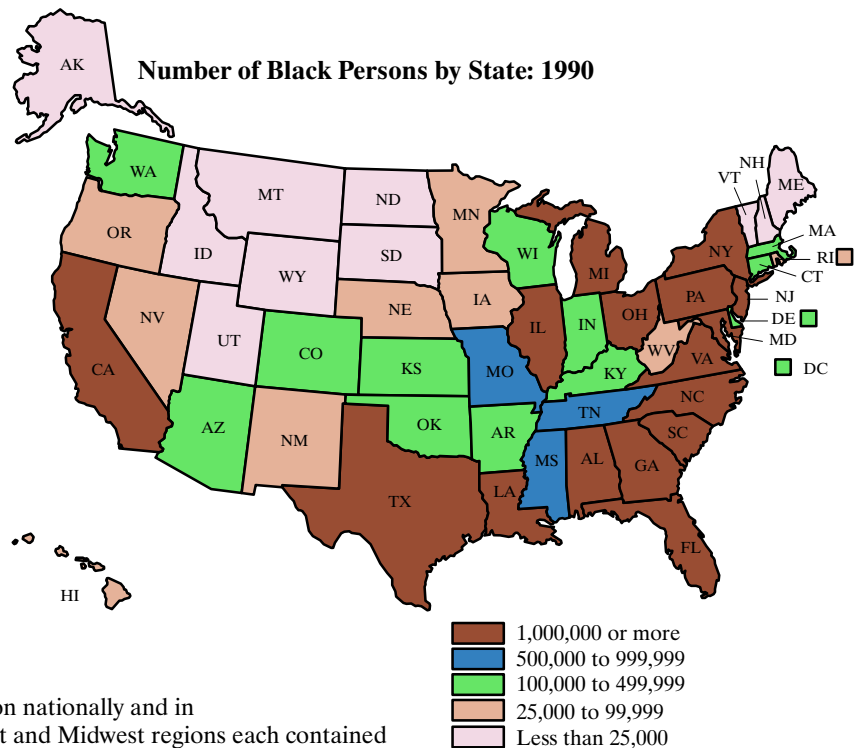
**Metropolitan—Nonmetropolitan Residence by Race: 1990**



### The Black Population

The Black population totaled about 30 million in 1990, an increase of 3.5 million since 1980.

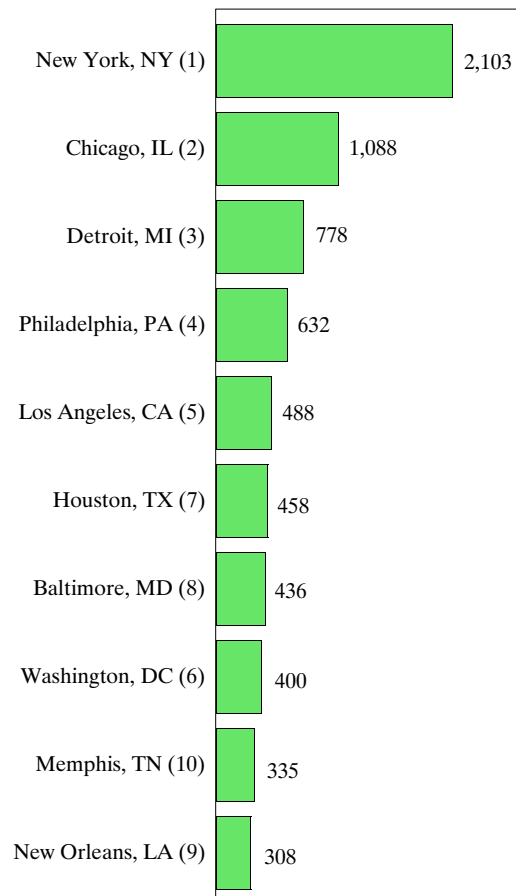
- The Black population continued to be heavily concentrated in the South. Slightly over half (53 percent) of all Blacks lived in the South in 1990, the same percentage as in 1980 and 1970. The region containing the smallest proportion of the Black population continued to be the West, with 9 percent of the Nation's Blacks in 1990. The West, however, had the largest percentage gain in Blacks of any region during the 1980's—25 percent—almost double the rates of increase for the Black population nationally and in the South (13 percent each). The Northeast and Midwest regions each contained about 19 percent of the U.S. Black population.



- Sixteen States had Black populations of 1 million or more in 1990, compared with 12 States in 1980. The four States where Black populations surpassed the 1 million mark during the decade were Alabama, Maryland, New Jersey, and South Carolina.
- Three States had Black populations exceeding 2 million in 1990: New York, California, and Texas. Together these three States contained nearly one-fourth (24 percent) of the Nation's Black population.
- The largest numerical gain in Black population during the 1980-90 period occurred in New York (457,000), while the highest percentage gain was recorded in New Hampshire (80 percent). Only West Virginia and the District of Columbia lost Black population, and the number of Blacks in Arkansas remained about the same over the decade.
- New York City had the largest Black population of any city in 1990, with 2.1 million Black residents. The only other city with more than a million Black residents was Chicago.
- The 10 cities with the largest Black populations in 1990 were the same as in 1980, as were the rankings for the top 5 cities. There were a few changes in the rankings for the 6th through 10th positions. Washington, DC, slipped from 6th to 8th place, and the cities occupying the 9th and 10th positions in 1980 (New Orleans and Memphis, respectively) had exchanged places by 1990.
- In all but one of these cities (Los Angeles), Blacks accounted for at least 25 percent of the city's total population in 1990. Five of these cities had a majority Black population: Detroit (76 percent), Washington, DC (66 percent), New Orleans (62 percent), Baltimore (59 percent), and Memphis (55 percent).

#### Ten Cities With the Largest Black Population: 1990

(In thousands. 1980 rank in parentheses)

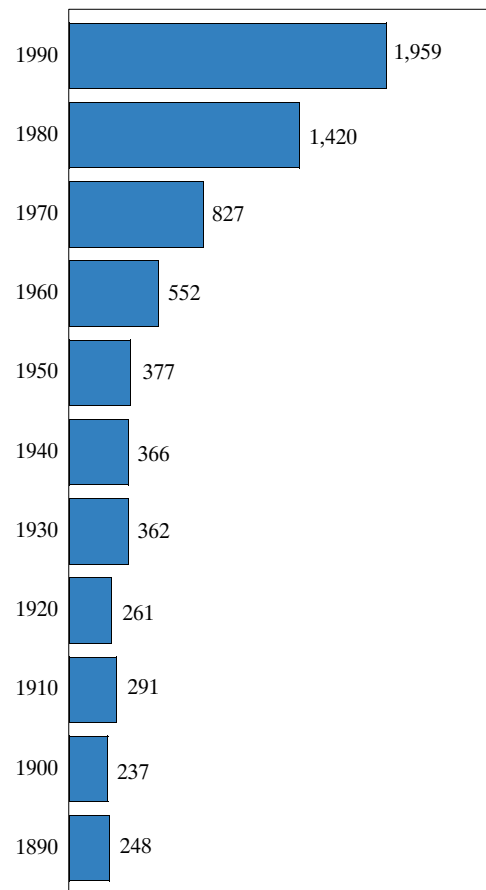


### The American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut Population

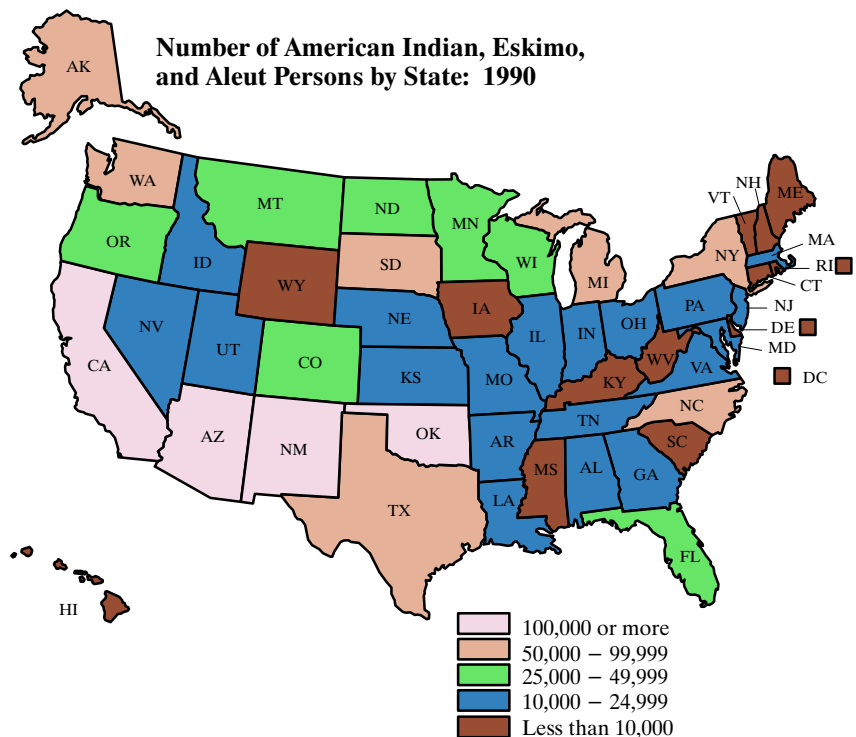
In 1990, the American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut population numbered about 2 million and showed a gain of about half a million persons since 1980. The chart to the right shows the changes in this population over the last century of census enumeration.

- From 1890 to 1950, the American Indian\* population grew slowly, increasing only about 129,000 during the 60-year span. From 1950 to 1990, the American Indian population experienced rapid growth and rose by about 1.6 million—a striking 419-percent jump.
- The impressive growth from 1950 to 1990 can be attributed not only to natural increase (births minus deaths) but also to improved census procedures for counting people on American Indian reservations and to the wider use of self-identification to obtain census information on race. Many more people in the 1980 and 1990 censuses than in previous censuses reported in the race question that they were American Indian. This was especially true for persons who were part-American Indian.
- About 22 percent (437,000) of all American Indians lived on the 314 reservations and associated trust lands in 1990. The Navajo Reservation and Trust Lands, AZ–NM–UT (with 143,000 American Indians) was by far the largest of these, followed by Pine Ridge Reservation and Trust Lands, NE–SD (11,000 American Indians).
- Nearly one-half (48 percent) of American Indians lived in the West in 1990, 29 percent in the South, 17 percent in the Midwest, and 6 percent in the Northeast.
- Oklahoma had the largest American Indian population (252,000) in 1990. California and Arizona also had American Indian populations surpassing 200,000, and New Mexico’s American Indian population exceeded 100,000. Four of every 10 American Indians resided in these 4 States.
- Between 1980 and 1990, the largest numerical increase in the American Indian population occurred in Oklahoma (83,000), while the highest percent increase was in Alabama (118 percent).
- Alaska had the highest proportion of its population that was American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut—16 percent—followed by New Mexico, with 9 percent of its population in this group.
- The 1990 census counted about 57,000 Eskimos (primarily Inupiat and Yupik) and 24,000 Aleuts. Eskimos and Aleuts were concentrated geographically, as roughly two-thirds (67 percent) lived in Alaska.

American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut Population: 1890 to 1990  
(In thousands)



Number of American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut Persons by State: 1990



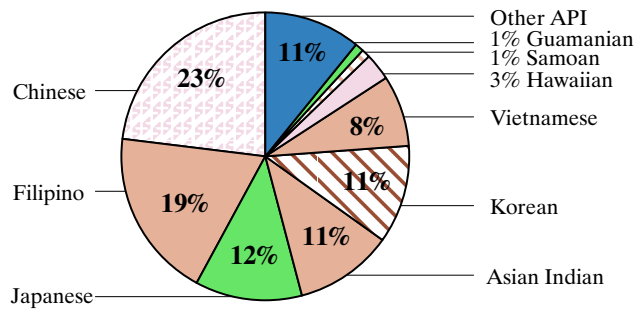
\* On this page, the term American Indian also includes Eskimo and Aleut.

### The Asian and Pacific Islander (API) Population

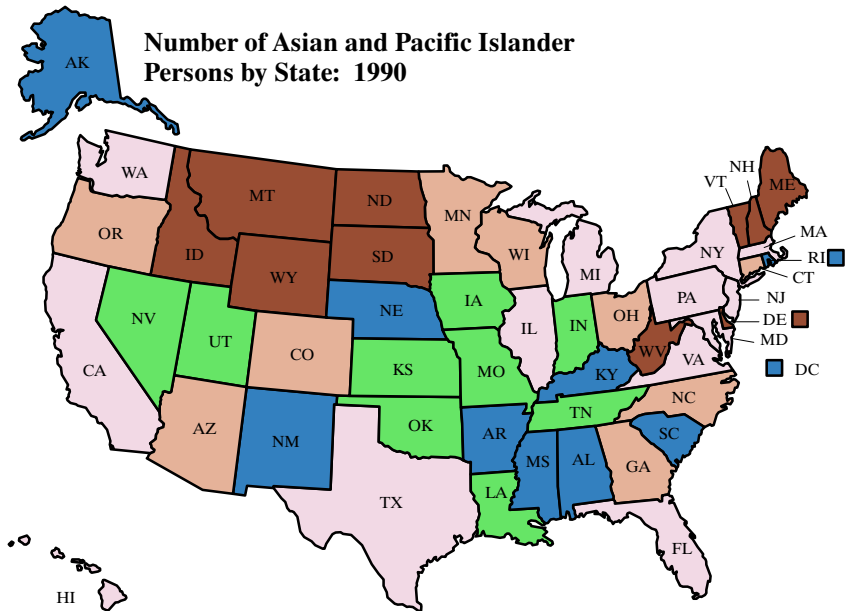
Boosted by a high level of immigration, the API population more than doubled during the last decade to reach 7.3 million by 1990. As a result, the API proportion of the total population rose between 1980 and 1990 from 1.5 to 2.9 percent.

- The API population in 1990 encompassed a number of diverse groups that differed in language, culture, geographic distribution, and recency of immigration to the United States.
- Chinese made up the largest API group (1.6 million), followed by Filipino (1.4 million) and Japanese (848,000). These three groups represented more than half of the Nation's API population.
- Thirteen States had API populations surpassing 100,000 in 1990.
- California ranked first with 2.8 million API persons, followed by New York (694,000) and Hawaii (685,000). About 58 percent of the total API population lived in these three States.
- The API population was the largest racial group in one State—Hawaii—where it constituted 62 percent of the population.

### Composition of the Asian and Pacific Islander Population: 1990



### Number of Asian and Pacific Islander Persons by State: 1990



#### Who Uses This Information?

Just a few examples:

- Federal agencies to monitor compliance with the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act
- State governments to determine congressional, State, and local voting districts
- Private community organizations to set up child and elderly assistance programs and conduct voter registration drives

*Trivia Answer:* New Hampshire's Asian and Pacific Islander population grew by 246 percent over the 1980-90 decade, the largest percent increase of any State.

#### Want to Know More?

Consult the series of 1990 census reports, CPH-1, *Summary Population and Housing Characteristics*, and CP-1, *General Population Characteristics*, at a large local or university library. Also for sale by Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. For ordering information, call Customer Services at the Census Bureau, 301-763-4100.

For copies of CQC bulletins, call Customer Services. For more information on CQC bulletins, contact Karen Mills, 301-763-4263.

For further information on race data, contact the Population Division, 301-763-7572.



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