

## II. Population

The population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. In recent years, Hispanics and minority racial groups<sup>1</sup>—non-Hispanic blacks, Asians, and American Indians—have each grown faster than the population as a whole (Population 1). In 1970 these groups together represented only 16 percent of the population. By 1998 this share had increased to 27 percent. Assuming current trends continue, the Bureau of the Census projects that these groups will account for almost half of the U.S. population by 2050. Although such projections are necessarily imprecise, they do indicate that the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States will grow substantially in the next century.

Immigration has played a major role in increasing diversity of the population by contributing to the rapid growth of the Asian and Hispanic populations since the 1960s. In 1997, 38 percent of the Hispanic population and 61 percent of the Asian population were foreign-born, compared with 8 percent of the white population, 6 percent of the black population, and 6 percent of the American Indian population (Population 2). The increased immigration of Asians and Hispanics over the past several decades is largely the result of changes in immigration policy. In particular, the 1965 Immigration Act ended the system of national origin quotas that had previously restricted immigration from non-European countries.<sup>2</sup> The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 also contributed to the increase in the documented Asian and Hispanic populations by legalizing a large number of immigrants.

While immigration of Asians and Hispanics has increased, population growth has slowed dramatically for the nation as a whole, largely due to declining fertility rates among non-Hispanic blacks and non-Hispanic whites. As a result of this declining fertility, the non-Hispanic white share of the population has fallen since 1970, and the non-Hispanic black share of the population has increased only slightly.

Changes in racial and ethnic identification have also contributed to the increase in (measured) racial and ethnic diversity. These changes are most important for the American Indian population, which has increased more in recent years than can be accounted for by deaths, births, immigration, and improvements in census coverage. The increase in the American Indian population suggests that people are more likely to identify themselves as American Indian in the census than they were in the past.<sup>3</sup>

National changes in the composition of the population mask differences across and within regions. (Population 3). The geographical distribution of racial and ethnic groups is important because it influences the potential for social and economic interaction between them. According to Census Bureau projections, in 1995 the West had the highest concentration of minorities (36 percent), followed by the South (30 percent), the Northeast (23 percent), and the Midwest (15 percent). Non-Hispanic blacks are most likely to live in the South, while Asians, Hispanics, and American Indians are most likely to live in the West.

Racial composition also varies from the center cities of metropolitan areas, to the suburbs (metropolitan areas outside center cities), to nonmetropolitan areas. Hispanics, blacks, and Asians are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to live in central cities—in 1996 more than half of blacks and Hispanics and nearly half of Asians lived in central cities, compared with less than a quarter of non-Hispanic whites (Population 4). In contrast, over half of all non-Hispanic whites lived in the suburbs in 1996, as did 48 percent of Asians. American Indians are by far the most likely to live in nonmetropolitan areas; in 1990 nearly half of the American Indian population lived outside of metropolitan areas.

As the population becomes more diverse, opportunities for social interaction with members of other racial and ethnic groups should increase. Intergroup marriage (marriage between persons of different races or Hispanic origin) is one measure of social interaction (Population 5). The number of interracial married couples (marriage between persons of different races) has increased dramatically over the past several decades, more than tripling since 1960. However, interracial married couples still represented only about 2 percent, and intergroup couples 4 percent, of all married couples in 1990.<sup>4</sup>

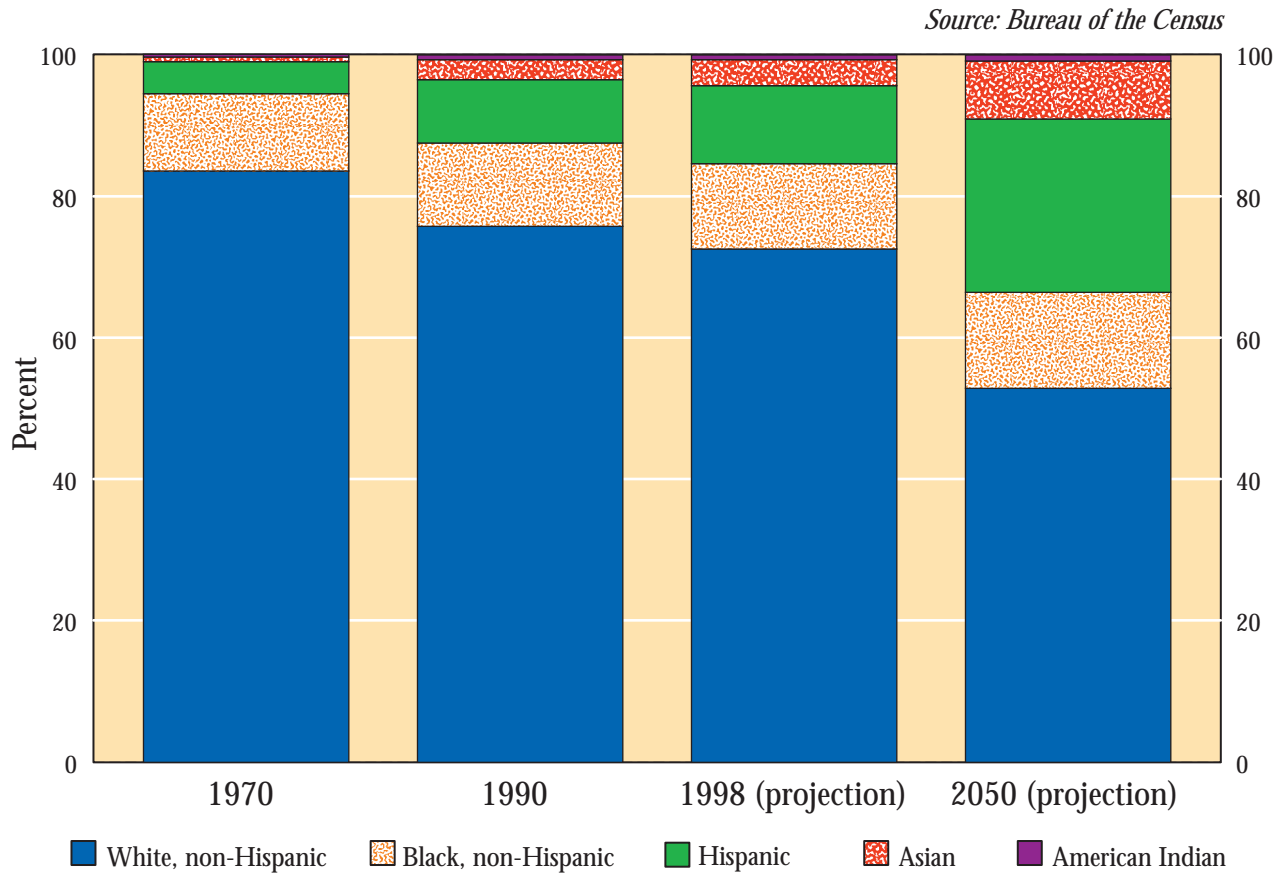
Many demographic characteristics affect economic and social status and play some role in explaining differentials in well-being among the populations discussed in this book. For instance, immigration has lowered the relative socioeconomic status of the U.S. Hispanic population, since Hispanic immigrants tend to have lower levels of education and income than the Hispanic population as a whole.

Other demographic characteristics with important effects on social and economic status include household structure and age distribution. In particular, growth of child poverty has often been associated with the rising share of single-parent families. Since 1970 the fraction of families maintained by a single parent has increased for all groups (Population 6) and is highest among blacks (38 percent), American Indians (26 percent), and Hispanics (26 percent). Household structure is also affected by economic status; for example, the greater tendency of the elderly to head their own households has been linked to their growing wealth.

Differences in the age distribution of populations (Population 7) may affect their rates of growth as well as differences in average economic and social well-being. For example, poverty rates are highest among children, and rates of criminal activity are highest among young adults. On average, the non-Hispanic white population is considerably older than the population as a whole. Only 24 percent of the non-Hispanic white population is below the age of 18, compared with about 30 percent of non-Hispanic blacks and Asians and about 35 percent of American Indians and Hispanics. Differences in age distributions between racial and ethnic groups reflect differences in death rates, fertility rates, rates of net immigration, and the age of immigrants.

1. For the purposes of this report, the term “minority” is used to refer to racial and ethnic groups that are less than 50 percent of the population.
2. Harrison, Roderick J. and Claudette E. Bennett. 1995. “Racial and Ethnic Diversity.” In *State of the Union: America in the 1990s*, ed. Reynolds Farley. Vol. 2: Social Trends. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
3. Passel, Jeffrey S. 1996. “The Growing American Indian Population, 1960–1990: Beyond Demography.” In *Changing Numbers, Changing Needs: American Indian Demography and Public Health*, ed. Gary D. Sandefur, Ronald R. Rindfuss, and Barney Cohen. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
4. Harrison and Bennett. “Racial and Ethnic Diversity.”

# 1. Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Population

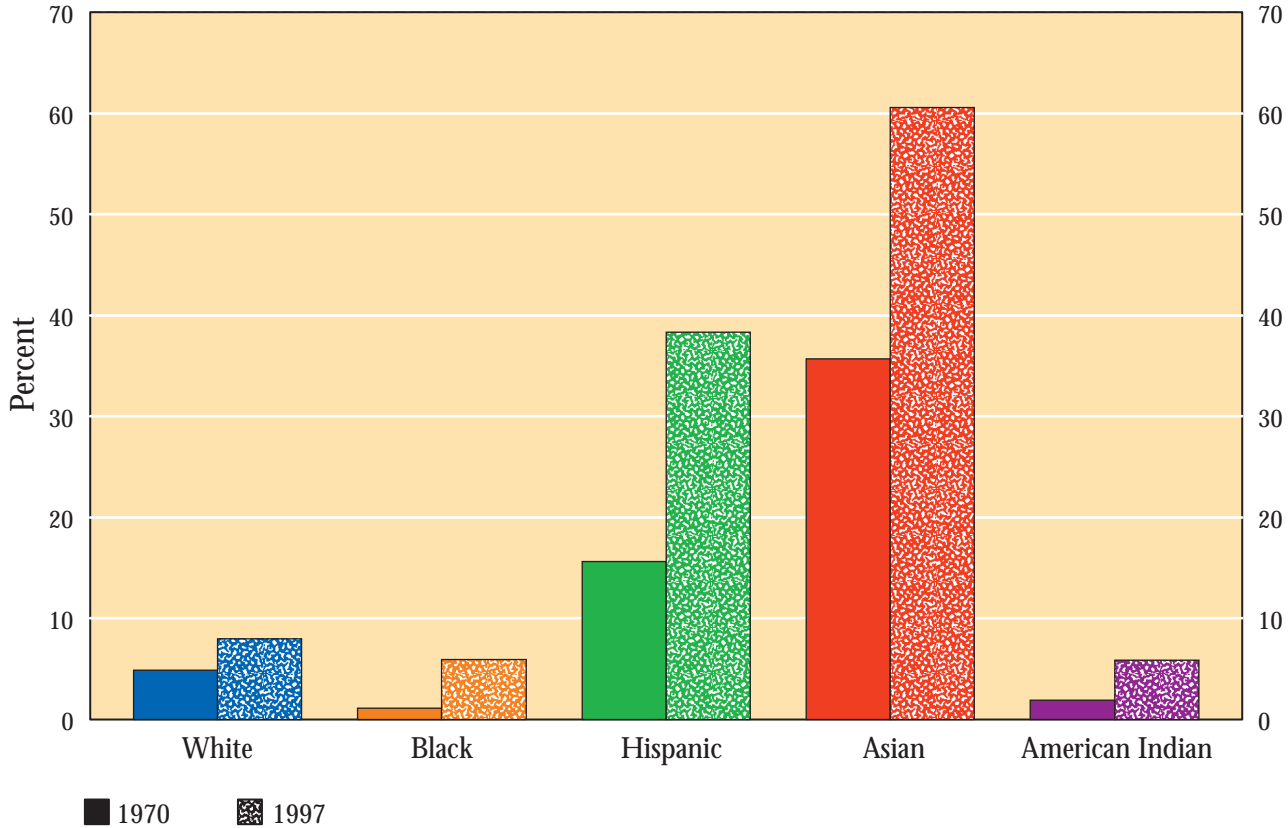


- The share of the U.S. population that is non-Hispanic black, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indian has increased since 1970. The American Indian population has grown more than can be accounted for by birth rates, death rates, and immigration, suggesting that a substantial portion of this increase has resulted from increased reporting of American Indian racial identification.
- If recent demographic trends continue, Asians, non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians together will approach 50 percent of the population by the year 2050.
- Around the year 2005, Hispanics, who may be of any race, are projected to be the largest of the minority groups considered here.

*Note: Data for Asians exclude Hispanic Asians, and data for American Indians exclude Hispanic American Indians. In 1970, data for Asians are for Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, and Hawaiians.*

## 2. Foreign-Born Population

Source: Bureau of the Census

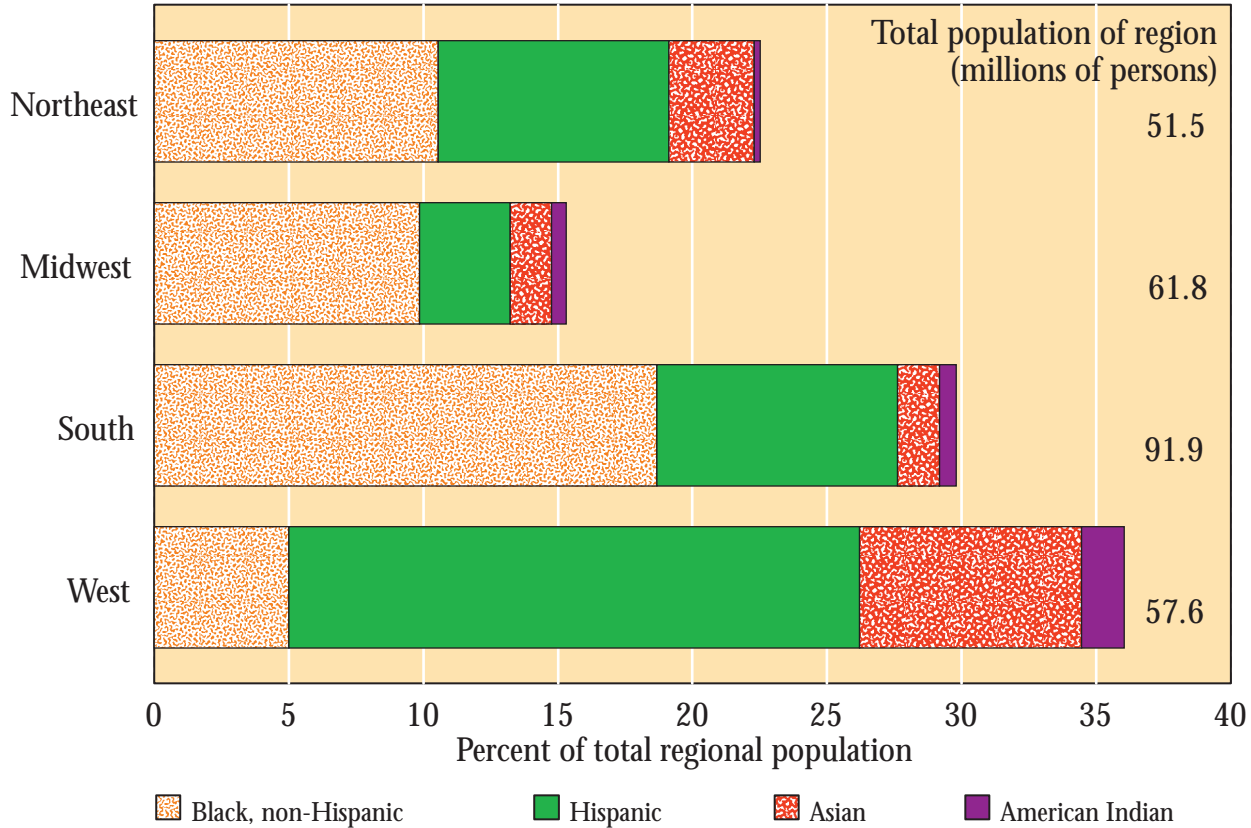


- Among all groups, the fraction of the population that is foreign-born increased between 1970 and 1997.
- As of 1997, 61 percent of the Asian population and 38 percent of the Hispanic population were foreign-born. In contrast, only 8 percent of whites, 6 percent of blacks, and 6 percent of American Indians were foreign-born.
- The immigrant population represents a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. On average, Asian immigrants are highly educated and have high incomes. Hispanic immigrants, along with immigrants from some Asian countries, have relatively low average levels of educational attainment and income.

*Note: In 1970, data for Asians are for Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans and Hawaiians.*

### 3. Minority Population by Region, 1995

Source: Bureau of the Census

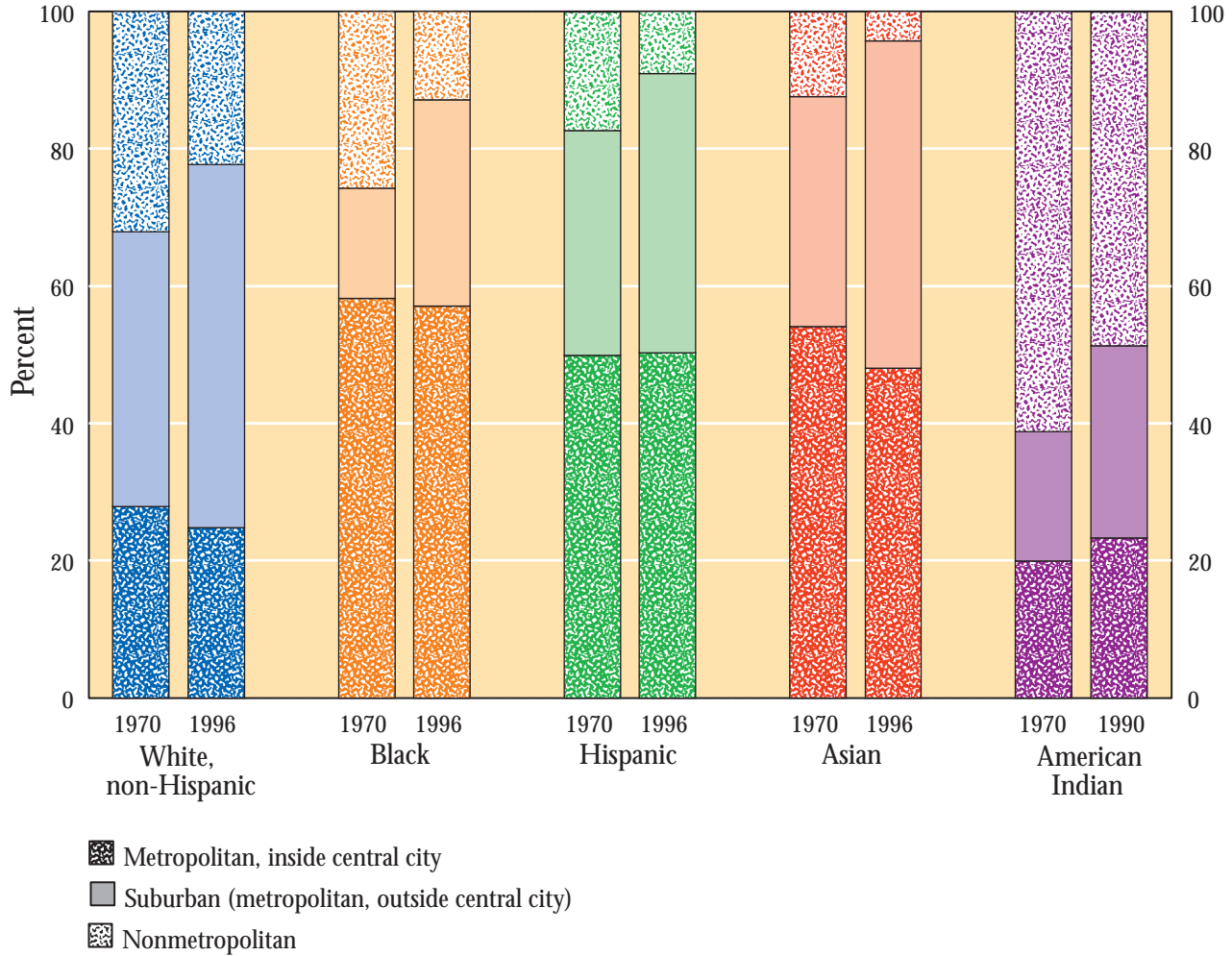


- Hispanics and members of racial minority groups are not evenly distributed across regions of the country. The differing distribution of these populations across regions may contribute to differences in individuals' experiences of racial and ethnic diversity.
- The highest concentration of Hispanics and members of racial minority populations is found in the West (36 percent), followed by the South (30 percent), the Northeast (23 percent), and the Midwest (15 percent).
- More than half of non-Hispanic blacks live in the South. About half of American Indians, Hispanics, and Asians live in the West.
- In general, the minority share of the population has increased in all four regions since 1970 (not shown in chart). The Hispanic population has grown considerably in the West and the South, and the Asian population has grown considerably in the West.

*Note: Data for Asians exclude Hispanic Asians, and data for American Indians exclude Hispanic American Indians. Data are projections based on the 1990 census.*

## 4. Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Residence

Source: Bureau of the Census

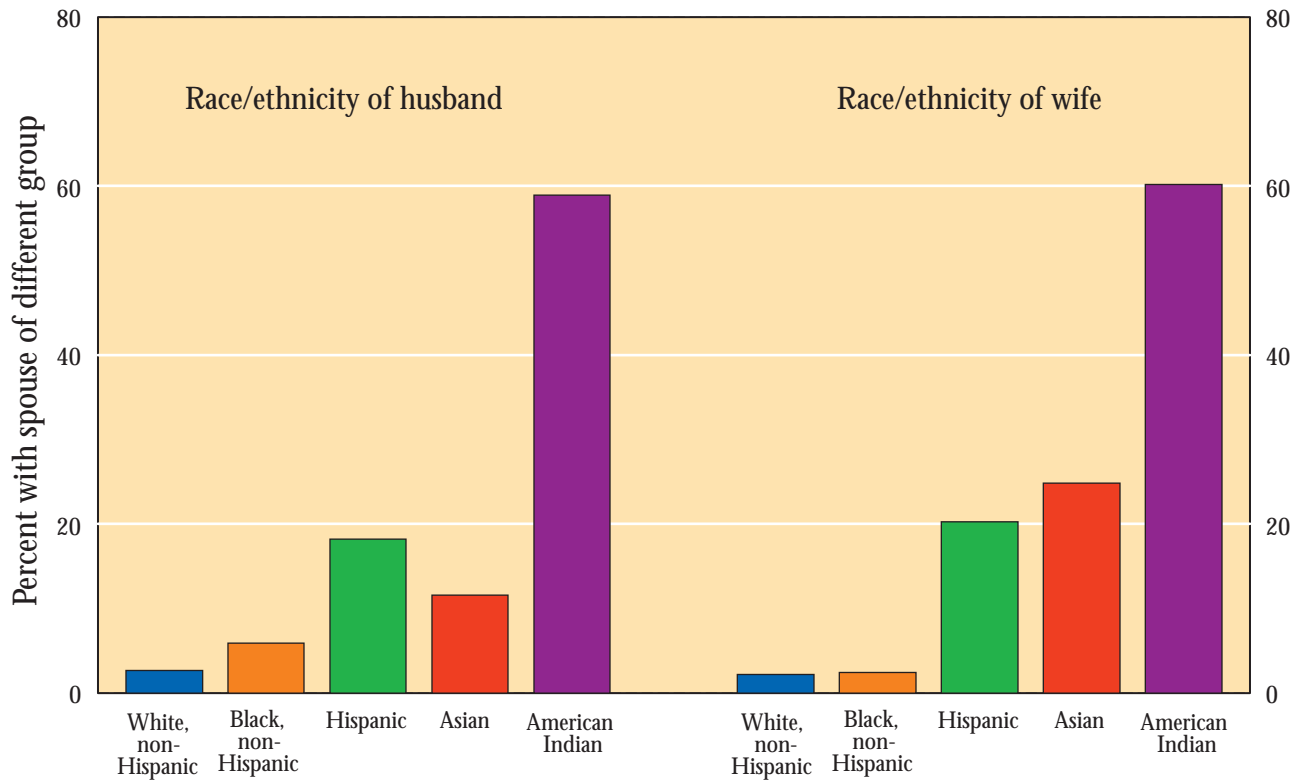


- Residents of nonmetropolitan, central city, and suburban areas may have different public service needs and different political interests.
- Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics are more likely to live in central cities of metropolitan areas than are non-Hispanic whites or American Indians.
- A large percentage of non-Hispanic whites and Asians live in suburbs. The fraction living in suburbs has increased since 1970 among all groups.
- Nearly half of American Indians in 1990, and nearly one quarter of non-Hispanic whites in 1996, lived outside of metropolitan areas. These nonmetropolitan proportions of the population are shrinking for all groups, however.

*Note: In 1970, data for whites include Hispanic whites. In 1970, data for Asians are for Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos. Data for 1996 are not available for American Indians.*

## 5. Intergroup Married Couples, 1990

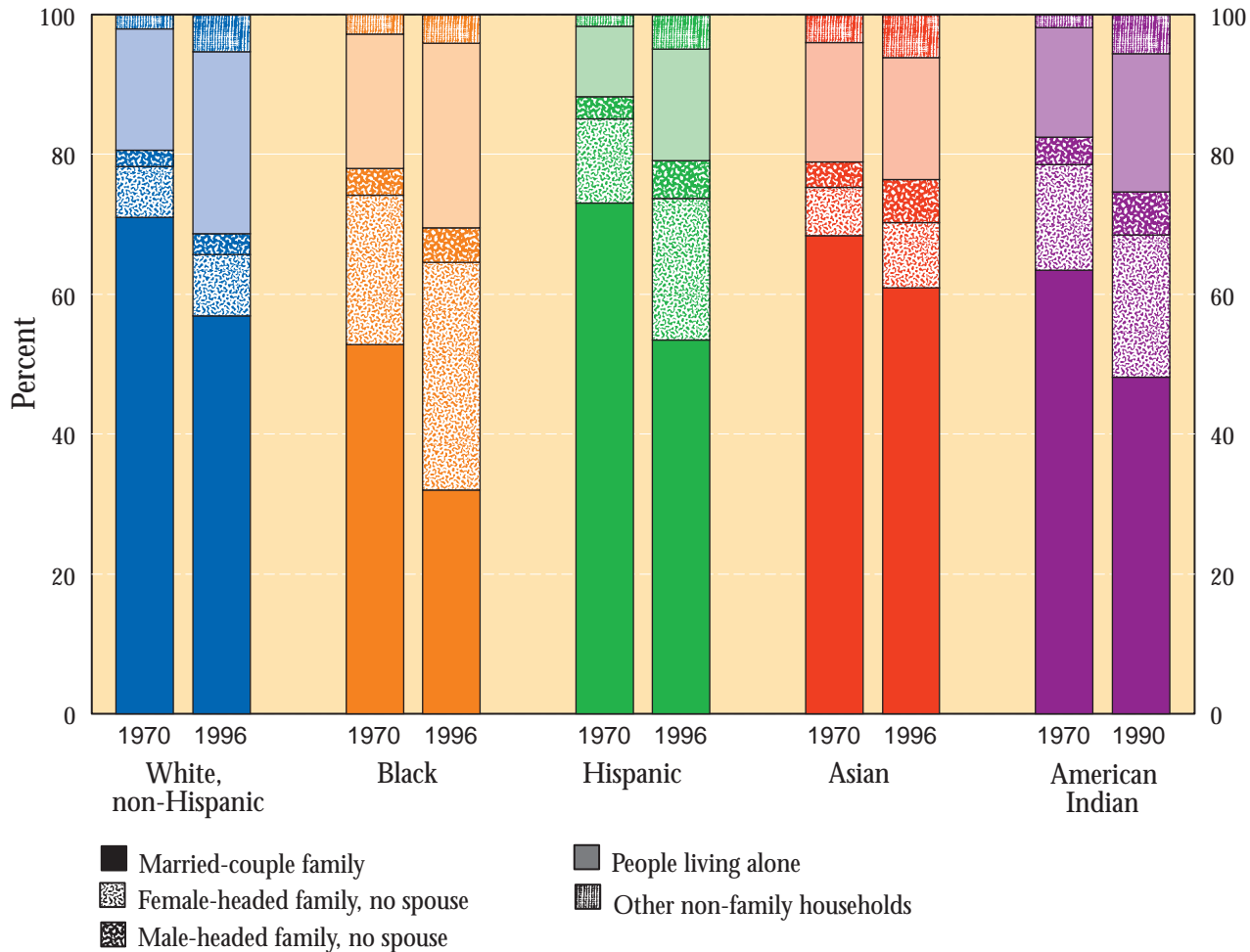
Source: Bureau of the Census



- Intergroup marriage (marriage between persons of different races or Hispanic origin) is an indicator of social integration. This chart shows on the left the percentage of married men who are members of intergroup couples and on the right the percentage of married women who are members of intergroup couples.
- Between 1960 and 1990, interracial married couples (not including marriages between Hispanics and non-Hispanics) more than tripled as a percentage of all married couples (not shown in chart). However, intergroup married couples still accounted for only 4 percent of all married couples in 1990.
- Non-Hispanic blacks and non-Hispanic whites are proportionately least likely to marry outside their groups. When non-Hispanic whites marry members of minority groups, they are least likely to marry non-Hispanic blacks (not shown in chart).

## 6. Household Structure

Source: Bureau of the Census



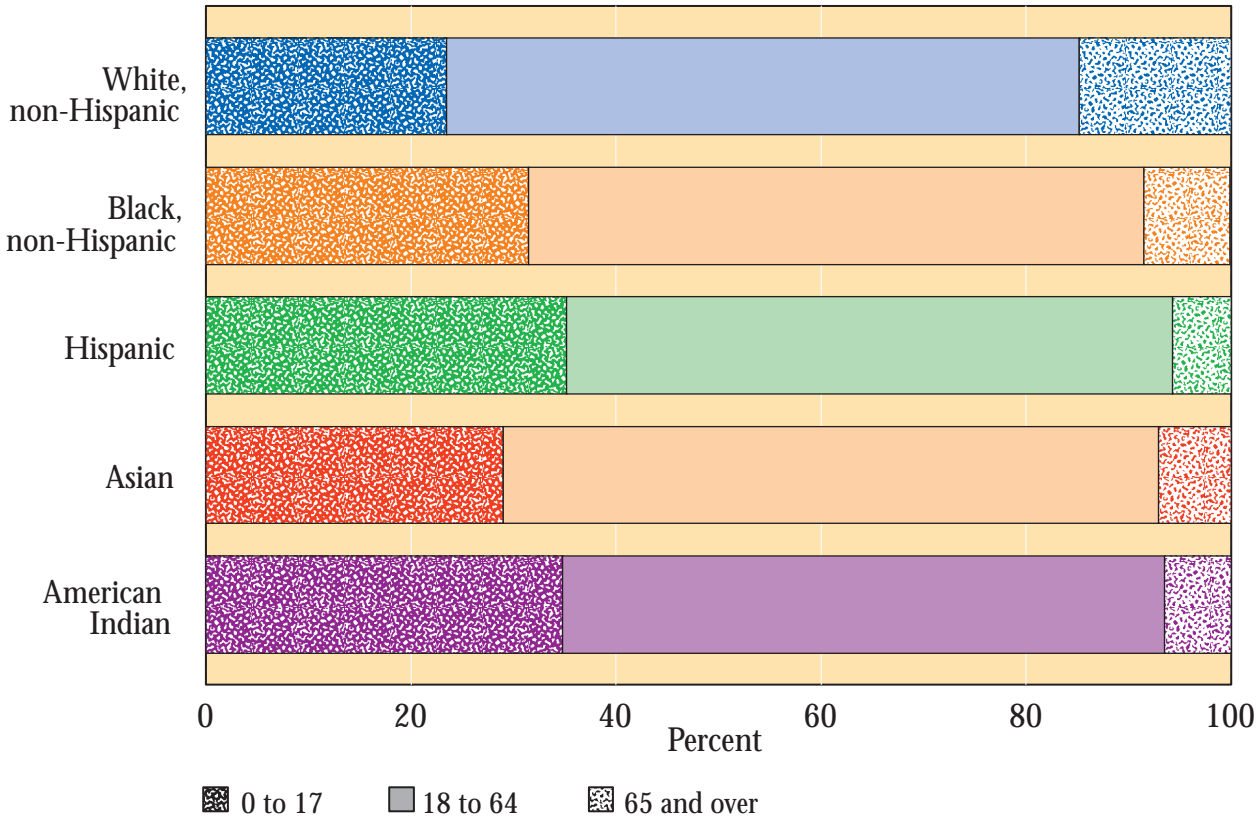
- Because resources can be pooled in households, household structure influences an individual's economic well-being. Changes in household structure may influence and be influenced by economic status. For example, child poverty is higher in single-parent families, and as the wealth of older persons has increased, they have become more likely to head their own households.
- Since 1970, the fraction of households maintained by a married couple has declined substantially; this decline has been greatest for blacks.
- The fraction of households maintained by a single parent has increased for all groups. The increase has occurred for both families maintained by single females and single males, although male-headed families with no spouse present make up less than one quarter of single-parent families.
- Since 1970, the fraction of households composed of only one person has increased for all groups. Other non-family households (unrelated individuals living together) have also increased as a fraction of all households for all groups over this period.

*Note: In 1970, data for whites include Hispanic whites. In 1970, data for Asians are for Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos. Data for 1996 are not available for American Indians.*



## 7. Age Distribution, 1997

Source: Bureau of the Census



- Differences in age distributions between population groups reflect differences in death rates, fertility rates, rates of net immigration, and the age of immigrants. These age differences can contribute to differences in economic, health, or social status across racial and ethnic groups.
- The non-Hispanic white population is older, on average, than other groups. Less than 25 percent of non-Hispanic whites are below the age of 17, compared with nearly 30 percent of Asians and more than 30 percent of Hispanics, non-Hispanic blacks, and American Indians. In part, the young average age of Asians and Hispanics reflects the many children born to new immigrants in these groups, since new immigrants are likely to be of childbearing age.
- The school-aged population (persons aged 5 to 17, not shown separately in chart) is more racially and ethnically diverse than the population as a whole; the racial/ethnic composition of this population resembles the projected composition of the population as a whole for 2010.