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# U.S. Census Bureau Guidance on the Presentation and Comparison of Race and Hispanic Origin Data

## Background

Traditional and current data collection and classification treat race and Hispanic origin as two separate and distinct concepts in accordance with guidelines from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In contrast, the practice of some organizations, researchers, and media is to show race and Hispanic origin together as one concept. The introduction of the option to report more than one race added more complexity to the presentation and comparison of these data. This document provides U.S. Census Bureau guidance to the user community on how to handle the interpretation of race and Hispanic origin data.

## Summary of Issues

- Race and Hispanic origin are two separate concepts in the federal statistical system.
  - People who are Hispanic may be of any race.
  - People in each race group may be either Hispanic or Not Hispanic.
  - Each person has two attributes, their race (or races) and whether or not they are Hispanic.
- Overlap of race and Hispanic origin is the main comparability issue.
  - For example, Black Hispanics (Hispanic Blacks) are included in both the number of Blacks and in the number of Hispanics.
- "More than one race" option increases possible numbers and overlapping groups.
  - For example, the three categories of Blacks, Hispanics, and people reporting two or more races produce multiple overlapping groups.
- The complete cross tabulation of race and Hispanic origin data is problematic.
  - This option allows experienced users to tailor data for their specific use, but can confuse general users.
- Comparability of data on race and Hispanic origin is affected by several other factors.
  - The universe differs across sources (censuses, national surveys, postcensal population estimates).
  - The allocation of "Some other race" responses from the Census 2000 category to standard OMB race categories increases the totals for each race, but does not affect the number of Hispanics.
  - The "Two or more races" category is present in Census 2000 and in the postcensal population estimates, but not in the 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS). It will be in the CPS every year, beginning with 2003.

## Data on Race and Hispanic Origin

As noted above, the overlap of the concepts of race and Hispanic origin is the main comparability issue when users want to compare the population size of a specific race with the number of Hispanics, or even when comparing the population size of one race group with another. Table 1 classifies the Black and the Hispanic populations from the population estimates data showing each person once (three mutually exclusive categories). Due to the overlap issue, Black Hispanics (or Hispanic Blacks) can be included in

either the total Black or the total Hispanic population.

**Table 1. Black non-Hispanic, Non-Black Hispanic, and Black Hispanic Population: April 1, 2000, July 1, 2001, and July 1, 2002**  
(Numbers in millions. Resident population)

Population group*	2000	2001	2002
A. Black, non-Hispanic	35.5	36.1	36.6
B. Non-Black, Hispanic	33.7	35.6	37.0
C. Black Hispanic (or Hispanic Black)	1.6	1.7	1.7

\* Totals include people allocated from the Census 2000 category, Some other race, to standard OMB race categories.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, population estimates program.

When comparing a race group with the number of Hispanics, U.S. Census Bureau news releases include the overlapping group in each population total. This option represents the most inclusive option for both the race group and for Hispanics. Table 2 shows the Black and the Hispanic population totals from the population estimates data, including the overlapping group, Black Hispanics (or Hispanic Blacks) in both totals.

- For Blacks, the total includes people reporting Black, regardless of whether they reported any other race(s) or being Hispanic.
- For Hispanics, the total includes people reporting an Hispanic origin, regardless of the race or races they reported.

**Table 2. Black Population and Hispanic Population: April 1, 2000, July 1, 2001, and July 1, 2002**  
(Numbers in millions. Resident population)

Population group	2000	2001	2002
Hispanic	35.3	37.2	38.8
Black alone or in combination*	37.1	37.8	38.3

\* Totals include people allocated from the Census 2000 category, Some other race, to standard OMB race categories.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, population estimates program.

## Questions and Answers Regarding the Comparison of Data on Race and Hispanic Origin

**Q1.** Why are the numbers of Blacks and Hispanics for 2002 different in the Current Population Survey (CPS) report and the population estimates?

**A1.** The population estimates numbers pertain to the total resident population and include population groups, such as the military population and people living in institutions (primarily the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes), who are not included in the CPS.

The 2002 CPS asked individuals to identify only one race. In contrast, the population estimates are based on data that asked people to report one or more races.

**Q2.** The CPS results and the population estimates are different, but I want to know the total number of Blacks in the United States. Which data source should I use?

**A2.** Use the population estimates. The CPS totals do not include people in the military or living in institutions and so do not completely represent the total population.

**Q3.** The sum of the population estimates numbers for the "Race alone or in combination with one or more other races" heading is greater than the total U.S. population. How is that possible?

**A3.** The sum is larger than the total population because people who provided more than one race response are included in the total of each race they reported. Thus, someone who reported as "Black and Asian" is counted in both the Black total and in the Asian total.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division,  
Social & Demographic Statistics  
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