



U.S. Census Bureau—About Race¹

NAME: _____

[The] U.S. Census is designed to count every resident in the United States. It is mandated by Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution and takes place every 10 years. The data collected by the decennial census determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives... [It] tells us who we are and where we are going as a nation, and helps our communities determine where to build everything from schools to supermarkets, and from homes to hospitals. It helps the government decide how to distribute funds and assistance to states and localities.

What is Race?

The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically...or genetically... People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as "American Indian" and "White." People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish may be of any race... The Census Bureau does not tell individuals which boxes to mark or what heritage to write in.

The U.S. government requires five minimum categories [of race]:

- **White**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa
- **Black or African American**—A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa
- **American Indian or Alaska Native**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment
- **Asian**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**—A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands

¹ The text on this handout is taken from: U.S. Census Bureau, "Decennial Census," <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/censuses.html>; "About Race," <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>.