# RESPONDING TO RACE/ETHNICITY QUESTIONS & MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY

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# WHO IS CONSIDERED 'MULTIRACIAL'?

Multiracial individuals identify with two or more races. The U.S. Census Bureau made alterations to the 2020 Census questions in order to improve data collection on multiracial Americans. While there were 9 million multiracial people counted in the 2010 census, there were 33.8 million people counted in 2020 (a 276% increase). The vast majority of these individuals are biracial (reporting two races), as follows:

1. White + "Some Other Race" (19.3 million)
2. White + American Indian or Alaska Native (4 million)
3. White + Black (3.1 million)
4. White + Asian (2.7 million)
5. Black + "Some Other Race" (1 million)

# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SELECT MULTIPLE RACE/ETHNICITY CATEGORIES ON FORMS AND SURVEYS?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of multiracial Americans is growing three times as fast as the population as a whole. Developing questions that allow individuals to self-identify more specifically can prevent the underestimation of certain racial/ethnic identities. For instance, sometimes people don't identify as multiracial even if they meet the general definition above because they are perceived as another race. Allowing multiple category selection can help account for the diversity of cultures represented in the multiracial population, as well as any differences that people may experience based on perceived race/ethnicity. Forcing an individual who identifies as multiple races to choose one race is problematic and may lead to certain communities to being underrepresented.

# I IDENTIFY AS MULTIRACIAL. HOW SHOULD I ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT RACE/ETHNICITY THAT INCLUDE DISAGGREGATED CATEGORIES?

There is no 'right' way to answer questions about race and ethnicity. The way you respond to question(s) about race and ethnicity may also depend on how the question is formatted.

Self-reporting provides the most accurate responses to race and ethnicity questions. This means that these questions should be open-ended questions, giving people the opportunity to write in any response you wish. In this case, you should write out race/ethnicity that you feel best represents your identity. If you identify with more than one racial/ethnic group, you should list all of them.

Sometimes, it can be hard for institutions and people who manage data to organize many written race/ethnicity responses, so instead they offer specific racial/ethnic categories for you to choose from. Including more specific race/ethnicity categories allows more options for accurate self-reporting.

Most forms will include a multiple-choice race/ethnicity question. In this case, the race/ethnicity

options may vary. For example, there may only be one MENA category, or there may be more specific categories to choose from. You may or may not decide to select more specific groups. However, selecting all of the relevant racial/ethnic groups that you identify with is recommended for more accurate reporting.

Our recommended best practice is to allow multiple category selection, and if that option is available, we encourage multiracial people to select the categories that most accurately represent them.

Alternatively, there may be an option for you to select "Two or More Races," which may or may not allow you to specify those specific races. Or, some surveys allow you to write-in your race/ethnicity if it's not listed in the multiple-choice options.

Here are some example scenarios of how someone might respond to different race/ethnicity question formats:

| **Scenario 1:** Multiple choice, non-disaggregated options with write-in option; respondent identifies as Black Hispanic, Cuban ancestry | **Scenario 2:** Multiple choice, disaggregated options available; respondent identifies as Black and Asian only. |
|---|---|
| **What is your race or ethnicity (check all that apply)?**<br><br>☐ White<br>☑ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish<br>☑ Black<br>☐ Middle Eastern or North African<br>☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander<br>☐ Asian<br>☐ American Indian, Native, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, or Alaska Native<br>☐ Some other Race or ethnicity: _____<br>☐ Don't know<br>☐ Prefer not to anser<br><br>**What race or ethnicity best describes you?**<br><br>_Cuban_ _____ | **What is your race or ethnicity (check all that apply)?**<br><br>☐ White<br>☐ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish<br>☑ Black<br>☐ Middle Eastern or North African<br>☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander<br>☑ Asian<br>☐ American Indian, Native, First Nations, Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, or Alaska Native<br>☐ Some other Race or ethnicity: _____<br>☐ Don't know<br>☐ Prefer not to anser |

## Scenario 3: Write-in only; respondent identifies as biracial, Black and White

**What race or ethnicity best describes you?**

*African American & White*

**Since "Black" was selected as your race or ethnicity, which group best represents your ethnicity or ancestry (check all that apply)?**

- ☐ African American
- ☐ Barebadian
- ☐ Ethiopian
- ☐ Ghanaian
- ☐ Haitian
- ☐ Jamaican
- ☐ Nigerian
- ☐ Somali
- ☐ Trinidadian and Tobagonian
- ☐ Another option: _____
- ☐ Don't know
- ☑ Prefer not ot answer

**Since "Asian" was selected as your race or ethnicity, which group best represents your ethnicity or ancestry (check all that apply)?**

- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Guyanese
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Nepali
- ☐ Taiwanese
- ☐ Thai
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Another option: _____
- ☑ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not ot answer

# RECOMMENDED READINGS

Jones, et al. "**Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population Is Much More Multiracial.**" United States Census Bureau. 12 August 2021. Available from: https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html

Gilbert, et al. "**A condensed history of multiracial identification in the United States.**" OpenNews. 7 December 2021. Available from: https://source.opennews.org/articles/condensed-history-multiracial-identification/

Parker et al. "**Multiracial in America.**" Pew Research Center. 11 June 2015. Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/06/11/multiracial-in-america/