

Lab 3: Human variation

The goal of this week's lab is to further engage with the race-based system of the US by further examining it in a broader context. Unlike other labs, you will do this lab on your own time and not in the Dalton 315 lab. The questions are mostly open-ended, reflection questions, and thus don't have a right or wrong answer.

Exercise 1 – US federal government categorization (from the Census [website](#))

The U.S. Census Bureau must adhere to the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity which guide the Census Bureau in classifying written responses to the race question:

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.

The 1997 OMB standards permit the reporting of more than one race. An individual's response to the race question is based upon self-identification.

...

What is Race?

The data on race were derived from answers to the question on race that was asked of individuals in the United States. The Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and these data are based on self-identification.

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, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. 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.

...

Reasons for Collecting Information on Race

Information on race is required for many Federal programs and is critical in making policy decisions, particularly for civil rights. States use these data to meet legislative redistricting principles. Race data also are used to promote equal employment opportunities and to assess racial disparities in health and environmental risks.

From the 2020 US Census questions on race and ethnicity:

NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 8 about Hispanic origin and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.

8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- ☐ **No**, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- ☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- ☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
- ☐ Yes, Cuban
- ☐ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – *Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.* _____

Why we ask this question: These responses help create statistics about this ethnic group. This helps federal agencies monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

9. What is Person 1's race?

Mark one or more boxes **AND** print origins.

- ☐ White – *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.* _____
- ☐ Black or African American – *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.* _____
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.* _____
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Asian Indian
- ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Other Asian – *Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.* _____
- ☐ Native Hawaiian
- ☐ Samoan
- ☐ Chamorro
- ☐ Other Pacific Islander – *Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.* _____
- ☐ Some other race – *Print race or origin.* _____

Why we ask this question: This allows us to create statistics about race and to analyze other statistics within racial groups. This data helps federal agencies monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

- 1) Do you perceive any inconsistencies between the different definitions the US government employs to describe people's ancestry? If so, what are they? What are some possible ways to address these inconsistencies?

Exercise 2 – Government categories around the world

In this exercise, you will collect some data on the demographics and official government categories in different countries around the world. Pick one country from each of the six geographic areas, approximately (though not entirely) corresponding to continents, identified in the table below. Don't worry about the exact borders of those areas, particularly when they are fairly arbitrary (e.g., Eastern and Western Eurasia); the goal is simply for you to collect data from different parts of the world for comparison, so we encourage you to think expansively.

Please use The World Factbook website to look up the data for different countries. It is a helpful resource for this exercise as it summarizes the latest information about the demographics of each country from the most recent national statistical data (including official censuses) of that country, plus provides a wealth of other information. You can look up the information in two ways:

- 1) By country: click on the name of a country, then scroll down until you see the black sidebar on the left, then click on "People and Society"; the information on official government categories is listed under "ethnic groups". Going this route also shows you a wealth of other information about each country.
- 2) Within "ethnic groups" category: scroll down the page to get to the country of your choice. This page only gives you the "ethnic groups" information and nothing else, so if you need to look up answers to the questions on aspects of each country's history, you will need to go back to the entry of that country (the "Background" section of the Introduction to each country's entry should give you enough information for you to answer the questions).

Geographic region →	Africa	Eastern Eurasia	Western Eurasia	Australia & Oceania	North America (excluding the US)*	South America
Country name						
Current government categories for race or ethnicity						
Are the categories based on race, ethnicity, a combination thereof, or something else?						
Has this country experienced a history of European colonialism?						
Which group of people currently constitutes the demographic majority in this country?**						
* Please choose any one of the 23 independent states on the North American continental landmass other than the US. ** This is the first entry in the “ethnic groups” list for each country.						

- 2) Based on the data you collected, what categories of identity formed the basis of classifications in different countries (e.g., race, ethnicity, caste, language, etc.)?

- 3) What was/were the most commonly used category/categories in countries with a history of European colonialism? What about in countries without such history? Did you observe any differences between countries with history of settler-colonialism where people of indigenous ancestry remain in the demographic majority to this day, and those where that is not the case?

Exercise 3 – Your race and ancestry

- 4) Based on data from exercises 1 and 2, which categories would you belong to in these different countries? Do any of them match how you would describe your identity and ancestry? Why or why not? Why do you think this is so?

Reflection questions

- 6) Can you imagine a future without any such categorization? What may be the pros and cons of such an approach?