



INSIGHT02: THE HIDDEN DIVERSITY OF WHITE AMERICANS

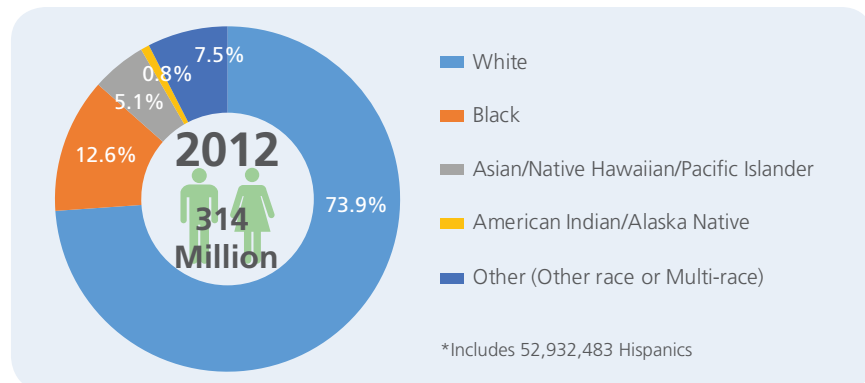
It's no secret that America is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse, a transformative statistical fact with far-reaching social implications. The estimated tipping point time ranges from the 2010 census projection of 2043 to the much more imminent date on the EthniFacts Interethnic Proximity Countdown Clock. But what has gone virtually unnoticed until now is another equally game-changing trend: the growing diversity of "White" Americans. In fact, an analysis of U.S. Census data by EthniFacts Chief Methodologist Carlos Arce reveals that about six million of those who identified themselves as racially "White" also reported ancestral links to countries and cultures in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. What's more, almost seven million of those who identified themselves as Non-Hispanic "White Only Europeans" were foreign-born. Whites who did not report any foreign ancestry links and elected to describe themselves as just "American" and nothing else comprised a total of 29 million people, or less than 10 percent of the overall U.S. population.

A recent study of U.S. Census patterns by Pew Research reported that 2.5 million Americans of Hispanic origin had changed their racial self-designation from "some other race" in 2000 to "White" in 2010. The study has prompted some to speculate that if Hispanics ultimately identify as White Americans, then Whites will remain a numerical majority into the foreseeable future. Putting aside evidence that, if anything, a **U.S. multicultural majority tipping point** is actually coming sooner—not later—than expected, the question that begs to be addressed is: what do we mean by "White"? The answer, it turns out, is much more complex—and eye-opening—than most Americans might think.

AMBER WAVES

Throughout the history of human civilization, the idea and definition of race has been controversial, polarizing, incendiary, political, scientific and subjective. What it has never been is indelible, immutable, incontestable or fixed. In the United States, the never ending and constantly-evolving effort to categorize and organize ourselves into groups with shared biological, cultural and/or genealogical traits is nationally revisited every ten years in the U.S. Census.*

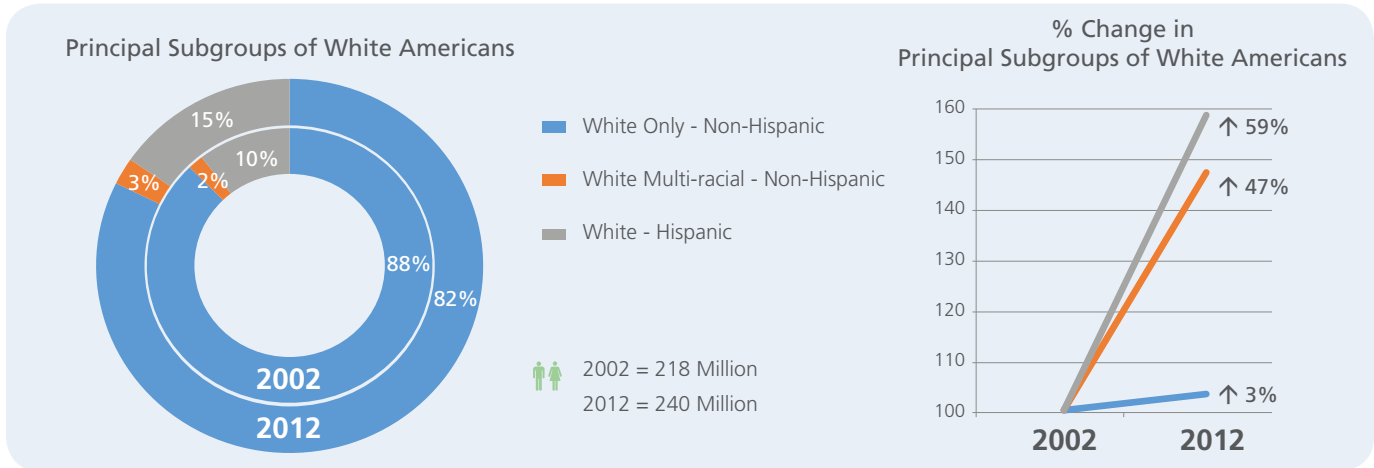
For the past half century, guided by federal policies implemented by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the United States population has been classified by the two concepts of race and Hispanic origin. The actual classification is one of self-ascription, that is, each person in the U.S. selects his/her race and ethnicity from choices provided in Census forms. For race, the five current choices are White, Black, Asian, American Indian, and Other. For the past two decades, individuals can select more than one race, thus allowing for various multiracial options. For ethnicity, persons separately indicate whether they are or are not of Hispanic/Latino origin. In the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS), Americans classified themselves as follows:



Source: American Factfinder Table DP05, ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.



Contrary to popular assumptions, the overall number of Whites in America has actually been increasing. In 2012, White Americans numbered 239.7 million or 76.3% of the total U.S. population. In 2002, there were 218.2 million, thus showing an increase of 9.8% over one decade. However, a closer look at the growth patterns for the principal subgroups of White Americans reveals a much more interesting perspective on the shift in America’s demographic composition.



Source: 2002 and 2012 American Community Survey PUMS data

The remainder of this *Insight* explores the growing diversity of the Non-Hispanic White Only population which in 2012 numbered 197.3 million persons (62.8 % of all Americans). This is particularly interesting because there is a degree of diversity often unrecognized or considered in most observations about the ethnic and racial make-up of the American population. Our focus is on further Census data dealing with ancestry (“from what country are your ancestors?”) and nativity (“born in the U.S. or outside the U.S.?”).

First, of this 197.3 million persons, we find that 12.7 million live in households with either Hispanics or with persons of Non-White races; thus exposed to diversity by virtue of their living arrangements.

The remaining 184.6 million White Only Non-Hispanics in White Only Non-Hispanic households report further degrees of diversity in their ancestry, regardless of how they currently see themselves in purely racial terms (White race only), thus showing another level of identification with their self-reported ancestry. The table shows the ancestries reported by region of the world. As can be seen, there are over 6 million who self-recognize American Indian ancestry even though they do not identify with American Indian as a racial category.

Similarly, there are 2.5 million White Only persons with ancestry in the Middle East, nearly a million with Latin American roots but who do not view themselves as Hispanic, and another million with Asian, African, African American, Indian subcontinent, and other ancestries without a Non-White racial identification. **Tellingly, there are only 32 million White Only Americans who self-report an “American” derived ancestry link and another 29 million who do not specify an ancestry link at all.**

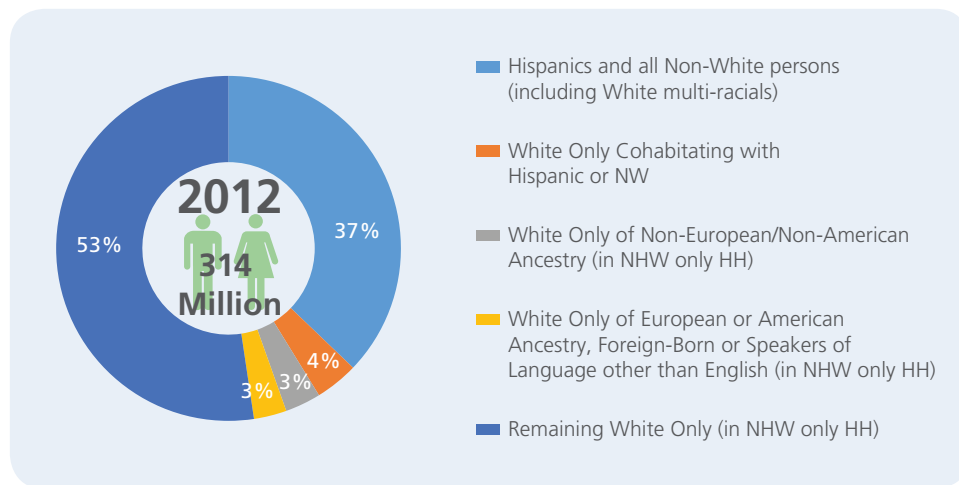
Self-Ascribed Ancestry of NH White Only in NHW Only Households	Combined Ancestry	Ancestry Percentage
European, West, Central, Eastern	112,953,294	61.20%
American	31,890,925	17.28%
Native American, North American Indian	6,174,684	3.35%
Middle East	2,468,863	1.34%
Latin American, incl. Brasil	984,541	0.53%
East Asian, Pacific Islander, SE Asian	459,202	0.25%
Continental African	370,041	0.20%
US African American/Black	127,371	0.07%
Caribbean African	72,951	0.04%
Indian Subcontinent to Himalayas	51,903	0.03%
Unspecified or no data	28,999,260	15.71%
Total	184,553,035	100.0%

Source: 2012 American Community Survey PUMS data



TALKING THE TALK

Finally, it is worth looking at the 173.8 million White Only persons of European, American, or unspecified ancestry with regards to nativity and language use. We find that about 5.3 million were born outside the U.S.; countries represented with at least a quarter million each are Canada, Germany, Poland, Russia, Italy, Ukraine, United Kingdom. Of the remaining 168.5 million, just over 4.5% or 7.5 million speak another language other than English at home. The six most numerous languages mentioned are Spanish, German, Russian, French, Italian, and Polish. Thus, a look at the diversity of Americans, focusing particularly on White Americans shows the following distribution:



Source: 2012 American Community Survey PUMS data

Since the founding of our Republic the definition of “American” has changed and enlarged as diverse groups have joined the mainstream, which has itself been transformed in the process. *What America Reimagined Insight02* shows is that the definition of “White” has likewise changed and enlarged as immigrants and multicultural Americans have opted to define themselves as “White” too, without denying—or suppressing—their cultural and ethnic heritage. For many Hispanics and others, the ability to be emphatically from here AND from there – the Ambicultural phenomenon – is becoming not just acceptable but desirable. In the new America Reimagined, being racially “White” and having some degree of self-identification to a culture or country of origin is increasingly prevalent—and also quintessentially American.

NOTES

- “More Hispanics Declaring Themselves White,” Nate Cohn; the UpShot
 - “New York Times Editor Stands Behind Cohn’s Pieces on Latinos and Whiteness,” Julio Ricardo Varela; Latino Rebels
 - “Millions Changed Their Race on the 2010 Census,” Richard Prince; The Root
- * Ever since the first census was conducted in 1790, the bureau has struggled to keep up with social and cultural change, adding the designation of “Mexican” in the 1930 questionnaire, then removing it shortly thereafter. Over time, designations for “Hindu,” “Korean,” and “mulatto” have come and gone. “Hispanic,” conceived as an umbrella term for Spanish-speaking populations with a common ancestry from Spain, appeared for the first time in 1970. But as American society became more diverse and Hispanic identity evolved, the blanket category became increasingly confining and confusing. Between 1980 and 2010 more than a third of all Hispanics eschewed “Hispanic” altogether, choosing “some other race” instead. In the 2010 census, nine million Americans of various national and ethnic origins identified themselves as being of more than one race.