

Diversity on a Personal Level: A First Look at Multiple Race Population

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For many decades, census data have provided a look at racial diversity in our nation's communities. But Census 2000 offers a truly innovative look at racial diversity, with counts of persons claiming a heritage of two or more races. Census 2000 race tabulations include six different categories of one race "alone," and 57 different combinations of these six discrete races. Adding to the mountain of data, the 63 race categories are also cross-tabulated by two origin categories (Hispanic or Not Hispanic). The unprecedented detail afforded by 126 race-origin combinations was made possible (necessary?) by the new "check all that apply" option for identifying race on the Census 2000 questionnaire. Former Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt, the man in charge of the 2000 national headcount, recently expressed his opinion that the most significant historical development from the 2000 census will be

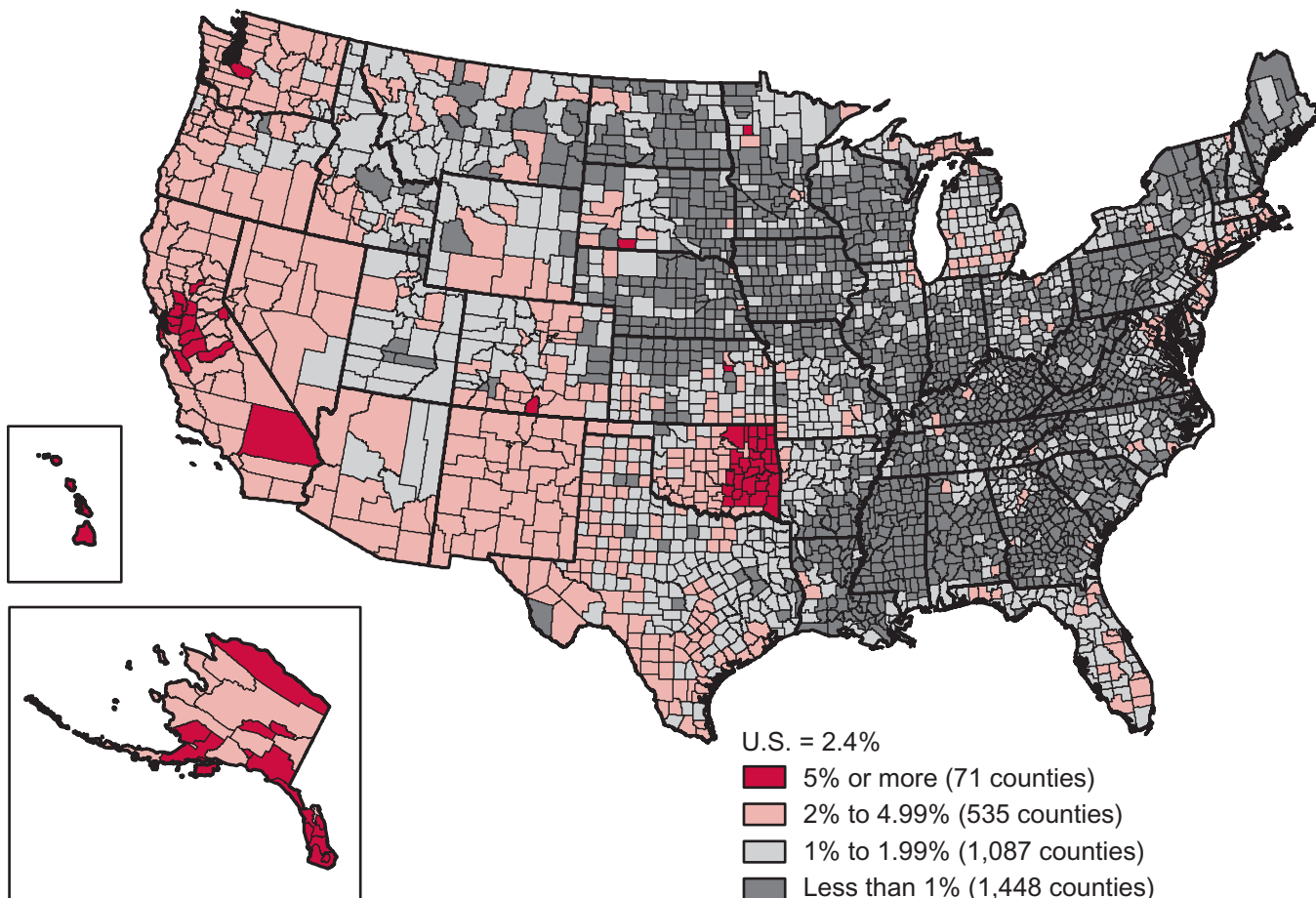
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the introduction of the multiple race option.

The option to choose two or more races has complicated comparisons with results of earlier censuses. But it also presents a new opportunity to examine the geographic distribution of this unique population. For the purposes of this analysis, the 57 race combinations have been collapsed to a single category: persons of two or more races.

At the national level, 6.8 million persons, or 2.4 percent of U.S. residents, were classified as multi-racial in Census 2000. A relatively small number of urbanized counties are home to the majority of multiple race respondents. The nation's 100 largest counties in total population account for 59 percent of the multiple race population, but only 42 percent of total population. One-third of the nation's multi-racial population lived in the 25 largest counties in 2000. California alone accounted for almost one in four multi-racial persons in the United States.

Figure 1
Multi-racial Population Share by County, 2000



Although the largest counties hold most of the U.S. multi-racial population, many smaller counties have comparatively high shares of multiple race persons. **Figure 1** portrays the multiple race population share for each county in the United States. It is clear from this map that the multi-racial population is not evenly distributed across the country. In fact, when counties are ranked on their multi-racial population share, 86 of the top 100 counties are found in only four states: Oklahoma (with 37), California (with 26), Alaska (with 18), and Hawaii (with 5). In particular, the counties of eastern Oklahoma, where many American Indian tribes from eastern states were banished in the 19th century, stand out like an island compared to neighboring states.

While persons of two or more races accounted for only 2.4 percent of U.S. residents, the picture is somewhat different when the population of interest is limited to children, that is, persons under age

18. Nationwide, multi-racial children comprised 4.0 percent of the child population. **Figure 2** depicts the proportion of multi-racial children in each county, and a quick comparison with Figure 1 reveals that multi-racial persons are much more common among children than in the total population. Figure 2 has a total of 253 counties in the highest category (5 percent or more multi-racial), compared to only 71 in Figure 1. In the Hoosier state, the disparity between children and total population is even greater. Twelve of 92 Indiana counties reached the 5 percent threshold for multi-racial children, compared to zero for the total population. Nine other counties came in with multiple race shares between 2 percent and 5 percent among children, but again there were none in that range when the total population was examined.

Judging from the higher multiple race shares among children, it is predictable that this population segment is likely to expand substantially in the future, in Indiana and across the nation.

Figure 2
Proportion of Multi-racial Children by County, 2000

