

2020 US census: Americans calling themselves multiracial surged by 276 percent

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Last week, the US Census Bureau released new findings from the 2020 census conducted last year. The report is one in a series of ongoing releases from the bureau as it analyzes its data. Last week's report concerns the geographic distribution of the population, the self-identified racial and ethnic background of respondents, age distribution and housing stock.

Most corporate media outlets in their presentation of the report presented its findings in racist terms, drawing particular attention to the first-ever decline of self-identified “whites” and the increase of “non-whites.” The data, however, considered objectively, undercuts the claim that the basic category of US society is race rather than socio-economic class, and that America is a “white supremacist” society as a result of endemic white racism.

Rather, the data, tracking the changes over the ten-year period since the last census, reveals an accelerating movement of the population from rural areas to major cities, associated with a growth of the working class, and an increasing internationalization and intermixing of different racial, ethnic and national groups.

In other words, racial and ethnic divisions are breaking down, rather than being reinforced by intrinsic differences based on skin color or some other identity trait.

The data shows that as the urban working class has grown, numerically and as a percentage of the population, so too has its multi-racial character. People who do not consider themselves to be of any single race are driving population growth, as urban workers increasingly intermingle, intermarry and raise children with people from entirely different national, ethnic and racial backgrounds.

The racial-ethnic category that registered the biggest increase, by far, was that for people who identified themselves as multi-racial, which rose by 276 percent.

A growing urban working class

The first trend to which the census points is the massive growth of the urban population between 2010 and 2020, as rural people increasingly migrated to major metropolises, especially in the Southwest and Western United States.

Marc Perry, a demographer with the US Census, stated, “Population growth this decade was almost entirely in metro areas.” Metropolitan areas, on average, grew by 9 percent over the last 10 years, while smaller counties grew only by 1 percent. More than half of the nation's counties did not see any growth, and 52 percent of all

counties lost population.

The trend points to the continuation of a process that has spanned the last two-and-a-half centuries: the decline of rural life—especially the ranks of small farmers—as the society became increasingly dominated numerically by an urban and suburban working class. Eighty-six percent of the American population now lives in urban areas.

The breaking down of racial categories

The second major finding to which the census points is the increasingly multi-racial character of the population, as many of these urban workers meet, fall in love and have children with people from different ethnic and national backgrounds.

In 2010, about 9 million people identified themselves as being of multiple races. In 2020, 33.8 million people identified themselves in that way. This 276 percent increase in Americans who consider themselves multi-racial *far outpaces* the growth of any other racial-ethnic category during this period.

Those identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino, for example, increased from 17.3 percent of the population in 2010 to 19.5 percent in 2020. Asian Americans increased from about 5 to 6 percent. But those who identify themselves as multi-racial—including Hispanics who do so—increased from 2.9 percent of the population in 2010 to 10.2 percent in 2020.

In its data, the census distinguishes between individuals who identify with just one race and those who identify with a race “in combination” with another. Importantly, the Census Bureau notes that “The ‘in combination’ multi-racial populations of all race groups accounted for most of the overall changes in each racial category.” In other words, to the extent that any racial group grew, it was mainly because of its share in the growth of a multi-racial population.

This can be seen clearly in what is presented as the decline of the “white” population. In the 2020 census, those who marked themselves as just “white” decreased from 63 percent of the population to 57 percent, as compared to the 2010 census. However, while 57 percent of the population identified itself as “just white,” 71 percent of the population identified itself as either “just white” or “white and another race.” In other words, broad sections of white people were partnering with people from other racial and ethnic categories, creating a much larger section of the “white” population that identifies itself as multiracial.

If anything, these significant shifts point to the questionable, at best, scientific validity of the concept of “race” and its inability to provide a scientific basis for analyzing historical and social processes, let alone provide a progressive basis for the political struggles of working people.

In total, the US population grew by 23 million people since the 2010 census. The ranks of people who called themselves multi-racial grew by 24.8 million, suggesting that multi-racial couplings were a major factor on the overall population growth.

The census data is in line with a 2017 study by the Pew Research Center on intermarriage, which showed that of newlywed Hispanic people in the US, 39 percent, on average, do not marry someone who is Hispanic. For Asians born in the US, the figure is even higher, at 46 percent. The same study also gives a sense of how intermarriage is increasing: in 2015, 10 percent of the entire married population had an interracial relationship, but among newlyweds, it was almost double, at 17 percent.

What will America look like 30 years from now if this trend continues? Taking the 2010 to 2020 rate of growth of those identifying themselves as multi-racial and projecting it onto the future, about 156 million people would come from a mixed-race background by 2050. That would be about half of today’s population.

What if the general trend continued for 100 years, or 500? What meaning would race have when the broad mass of the population had ancestry from multiple countries and ethnicities from all over the world?

The racist myth exploded

For several decades, but with increasing ferocity over the past decade or so, sections of the upper-middle class—especially in academia, the media, Democratic Party politics, and the arts—have sought to present the United States, and, for that matter, the world, as dominated by unbridgeable racial divides.

The pages of the *New York Times* and other outlets have increasingly devoted themselves to—as the *Times*’ discredited 1619 Project puts it—convincing their readers that racism is in the “very DNA of this country” and its population. This wealthy stratum of the population has in many ways gone back to the original racist conceptions of the 19th and 20th centuries, arguing as Stacey Abrams does in *Foreign Affairs* that there is an “intrinsic difference” between blacks, whites and other races.

But if racism runs in the DNA of the country and its population, why are such large and increasing sections of the population partnering, raising children and sharing finances with people who are supposedly insurmountably alien and hostile to them?

This dramatic growth—over just 10 years—is a simple and powerful refutation of the lie that America is composed of separate races of human beings who cannot genuinely understand each other, culturally relate or speak to one another, or politically unify—stuck, as it were, in entirely separate social trajectories.

But it is this very trend documented by the census that is either ignored or twisted by the leading purveyors of racist thought.

A prime example is a column published this week by Charles Blow, the right-wing, racist *New York Times* pundit. Blow presents the census data as a nightmare for “white power acolytes.” But nowhere

in his column does Blow mention that the biggest growth revealed by the census was among mixed-race people, often people with one white parent.

Blow presents the data from the standpoint of a war between races—that is, the same premise as the white supremacists—but from the “black” side of the barricades. He writes that it heralds a race war, a “passage of power... not without strife” between “whites” and “non-whites.”

Such are the filthy lengths to which the racist defenders of capitalism and enemies of the unity of the working class are prepared to go. Indeed, Blow is no less frightened by the increasing internationalization and homogenization of the population than the white supremacists and fascists.

Almost 175 years ago, Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels wrote: “The working men have no country... National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.” (*The Communist Manifesto*, Chapter two)

This is the process revealed in the census report. As the population becomes increasingly composed of urban workers, those workers are meeting, falling in love and having children with people from different national, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds... increasingly dissolving the historical baggage of reactionary racial categories used for centuries to divide and rule over the oppressed.

Two other points are worth making about the census data.

First, while data released by the Census Bureau last January showed a significant slowdown in national population growth—37 out of 50 states grew more slowly than in the previous decade—the data just released shows that young people, in particular, are declining as a share of the population. During the last 10 years there was an absolute decline of 1 million people under the age of 18.

This shrinking youth population testifies to the economic hardship that millions of younger, would-be parents face post-2008. While the Great Recession is over 12 years in the past, the US economy remains, especially with COVID-19, in dire straits. The wealth of the ultra-rich has soared, but the vast majority of the population—regardless of ethnicity or skin color—has seen a further decline in living standards.

The report also notes that housing units grew by only 6.7 percent between 2010 and 2020, about half the growth of the previous decade. Again, this points to the slowdown in economic growth and the impoverishment of broad sections of the population, including the phenomenon of young people being forced to live with their parents through their twenties. The report also notes that almost 10 percent of the entire housing stock in the country lies vacant—some 13.6 million homes with no one living in them! This not only points to the financial inability of many people to find housing, but also the absurdity of the capitalist system, which squanders resources for the enrichment of an oligarchy and for war, while millions are homeless or without decent and affordable housing.



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