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AMERICAN SOCIETY A CHANGING MOSAIC,
CENSUS ANCESTRY STUDY SHOWS

Americans continue to identify with their ancestral roots and mother tongues, according to a report by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau.

The report says 83 percent of individuals surveyed reported at least one specific ancestry, 6 percent reported "American" or "United States," while 11 percent provided no ancestry. About 20 percent (32.4 million) of the population 14 years old and over grew up in households in which a language other than English was spoken.

The report is based on a 1979 population survey which asked questions on ancestry, country of birth, mother tongue, current language spoken at home, ability to speak English, and ability to read and write in any language.

The study was designed to serve as a bridge between the 1970 and 1980 decennial censuses. Bureau officials indicated population estimates may differ slightly with counts from the 1980 census because of differences in collecting and processing data.

(more)

Other highlights from the report:

o German, Irish, and English are the largest ancestry groups. About 52 million people classify themselves as solely or partly of German ancestry. The other ancestry groups most frequently reported (either alone or with another ancestry group) are Irish (44 million), English (40 million), Afro-American or African (16 million), Scottish (14 million), French (14 million), Spanish (12 million), Italian (12 million), American Indian (10 million), Polish (8 million), and Dutch (8 million).

o A single ancestry was reported by 45 percent of the total population; about 38 percent provided more than one ancestry group.

o The most frequently reported mother tongues other than English were Spanish (7.7 million persons), German (5.1 million), Italian (4.1 million), Polish (2.5 million), French (2.4 million) and Yiddish (1.2 million).

o A language other than English is spoken at home by about 9 percent of the population 5 years old and over. Slightly less than half of the 18 million persons 5 and over who speak a language other than English at home speak Spanish. Italian, German, French, and Polish are the other most frequently spoken languages.

o About 8 percent (2.6 million) of elementary-school age children (5 to 13 years old) speak languages other than English at home. Two-thirds (1.8 million) of all children who speak languages other than English at home speak Spanish.

(more)

o Of the 18 million people who speak languages other than English at home, 22 percent do not speak English at all or speak English "not well"; about 20 percent speak English "well"; the remaining 58 percent speak English "very well."

o About 981,000 people (0.6 percent) 14 years old and over had not attended the 6th grade and could not read and write in any language. The proportion is larger among older persons and among persons who are foreign born.

Information from the 1980 census on ancestry and current language spoken in the home will be available for the United States, states, and substate areas in late 1982 and early 1983.

Copies of the report, Ancestry and Language in the United States: November 1979, Series P-23, No. 116, may be obtained for \$2.50 each prepaid from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or from Commerce district offices in major U.S. cities.

(NOTE: The ancestry question in the survey was open-ended, did not list examples of responses, and asked respondents to self-identify their ancestry. Social and economic characteristics of specific single and multiple ancestries, and definitions and explanations are presented in the report.)

(more)

Reported Single and Multiple Ancestries: November 1979

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

| Ancestry | Total | Percent of total | Persons reported single ancestry | | Persons reported multiple ancestry | Percent of persons by kind of ancestry response | | |
|---|-----------|------------------|----------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| | | | Number | Percent | | Total | Single ancestry | Multiple ancestry |
| Reported at least one specific ancestry.. | 1,179,078 | 100.0 | 96,496 | 100.0 | 182,582 | 100.0 | 53.9 | 46.1 |
| Afro-American, African..... | 16,193 | 9.0 | 15,057 | 15.6 | 1,136 | 100.0 | 93.0 | 7.0 |
| American Indian..... | 9,900 | 5.3 | 2,053 | 2.1 | 7,847 | 100.0 | 20.7 | 79.3 |
| Asian Indian..... | 182 | 0.1 | 156 | 0.2 | 26 | 100.0 | 85.7 | 14.3 |
| Austrian..... | 1,070 | 0.6 | 385 | 0.4 | 685 | 100.0 | 36.0 | 64.0 |
| Belgian..... | 448 | 0.3 | 113 | 0.1 | 335 | 100.0 | 25.2 | 74.8 |
| Canadian..... | 609 | 0.3 | 228 | 0.2 | 381 | 100.0 | 37.4 | 62.6 |
| Chinese, Taiwanese..... | 705 | 0.4 | 540 | 0.6 | 165 | 100.0 | 76.6 | 23.4 |
| Czechoslovakian..... | 1,695 | 0.9 | 794 | 0.8 | 901 | 100.0 | 46.8 | 53.2 |
| Danish..... | 1,672 | 0.9 | 438 | 0.5 | 1,234 | 100.0 | 26.2 | 73.8 |
| Dutch..... | 8,121 | 4.5 | 1,362 | 1.4 | 6,759 | 100.0 | 16.8 | 83.2 |
| English..... | 40,004 | 22.3 | 11,501 | 11.9 | 28,503 | 100.0 | 28.7 | 71.3 |
| Filipino..... | 764 | 0.4 | 525 | 0.5 | 239 | 100.0 | 68.7 | 31.3 |
| Finnish..... | 616 | 0.3 | 255 | 0.3 | 361 | 100.0 | 41.4 | 58.6 |
| French..... | 14,047 | 7.8 | 3,047 | 3.2 | 11,000 | 100.0 | 21.7 | 78.3 |
| French Canadian..... | 1,053 | 0.6 | 582 | 0.6 | 471 | 100.0 | 55.3 | 44.7 |
| German..... | 51,649 | 28.8 | 17,160 | 17.8 | 34,489 | 100.0 | 33.2 | 66.8 |
| Greek..... | 990 | 0.6 | 567 | 0.6 | 423 | 100.0 | 57.3 | 42.7 |
| Hungarian..... | 1,592 | 0.9 | 534 | 0.6 | 1,058 | 100.0 | 33.5 | 66.5 |
| Iranian..... | 118 | 0.1 | 103 | 0.1 | 15 | 100.0 | 87.3 | 12.7 |
| Irish..... | 43,752 | 24.4 | 9,760 | 10.1 | 33,992 | 100.0 | 22.3 | 77.7 |
| Italian, Sicilian..... | 11,751 | 6.6 | 6,110 | 6.3 | 5,641 | 100.0 | 52.0 | 48.0 |
| Jamaican..... | 184 | 0.1 | 158 | 0.2 | 26 | 100.0 | 85.9 | 14.1 |
| Japanese..... | 680 | 0.4 | 529 | 0.5 | 151 | 100.0 | 77.8 | 22.2 |
| Korean..... | 265 | 0.1 | 230 | 0.2 | 35 | 100.0 | 86.8 | 13.2 |
| Lebanese..... | 322 | 0.2 | 179 | 0.2 | 143 | 100.0 | 55.6 | 44.4 |
| Lithuanian..... | 832 | 0.5 | 317 | 0.3 | 515 | 100.0 | 38.1 | 61.9 |
| Norwegian..... | 4,120 | 2.3 | 1,232 | 1.3 | 2,888 | 100.0 | 29.9 | 70.1 |
| Polish..... | 8,421 | 4.7 | 3,498 | 3.6 | 4,923 | 100.0 | 41.5 | 58.5 |
| Portuguese..... | 946 | 0.5 | 493 | 0.5 | 453 | 100.0 | 52.1 | 47.9 |
| Romanian..... | 335 | 0.2 | 132 | 0.1 | 203 | 100.0 | 39.4 | 60.6 |
| Russian..... | 3,466 | 1.9 | 1,496 | 1.6 | 1,970 | 100.0 | 43.2 | 56.8 |
| Scandinavian..... | 340 | 0.2 | 110 | 0.1 | 230 | 100.0 | 32.4 | 67.6 |
| Scottish..... | 14,205 | 7.9 | 1,615 | 1.7 | 12,590 | 100.0 | 11.4 | 88.6 |
| Slavic..... | 722 | 0.4 | 300 | 0.3 | 422 | 100.0 | 41.6 | 58.4 |
| Spanish..... | 12,493 | 7.0 | 9,762 | 10.1 | 2,731 | 100.0 | 78.1 | 21.9 |
| Colombian..... | 117 | 0.1 | 101 | 0.1 | 16 | 100.0 | 86.3 | 13.7 |
| Cuban..... | 675 | 0.4 | 558 | 0.6 | 117 | 100.0 | 82.7 | 17.3 |
| Dominican..... | 119 | 0.1 | 107 | 0.1 | 12 | 100.0 | 89.9 | 10.1 |
| Mexican..... | 6,682 | 3.7 | 5,889 | 6.1 | 793 | 100.0 | 88.1 | 11.9 |
| Puerto Rican..... | 1,333 | 0.7 | 1,107 | 1.1 | 226 | 100.0 | 83.0 | 17.0 |
| Other Spanish..... | 3,566 | 2.0 | 2,000 | 2.1 | 1,566 | 100.0 | 56.1 | 43.9 |
| Swedish..... | 4,886 | 2.7 | 1,216 | 1.3 | 3,670 | 100.0 | 24.9 | 75.1 |
| Swiss..... | 1,228 | 0.7 | 312 | 0.3 | 916 | 100.0 | 25.4 | 74.6 |
| Ukrainian..... | 525 | 0.3 | 231 | 0.2 | 294 | 100.0 | 44.0 | 56.0 |
| Vietnamese..... | 198 | 0.1 | 177 | 0.2 | 21 | 100.0 | 89.4 | 10.6 |
| Welsh..... | 2,568 | 1.4 | 455 | 0.5 | 2,113 | 100.0 | 17.7 | 82.3 |
| West Indian..... | 193 | 0.1 | 129 | 0.1 | 64 | 100.0 | 66.8 | 33.2 |
| Yugoslavian..... | 467 | 0.3 | 283 | 0.3 | 184 | 100.0 | 60.6 | 39.4 |
| Other specified ancestry groups..... | 4,942 | 2.8 | 2,372 | 2.5 | 2,571 | 100.0 | 48.0 | 52.0 |

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.

¹Number and percent by ancestry groups do not add to total, as persons may be counted in more than one ancestry group.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 116.

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November
1979



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Ancestry and Language in the United States: November 1979

NOTE

The estimates of the population in this report may not agree with counts from the 1980 Census of Population and Housing. The Current Population Survey (CPS) estimates are based on population controls from the 1970 census which have been updated for changes in the population since that time. In addition, the CPS and the 1980 census used different procedures for collecting and processing the data.

INTRODUCTION

This is the first report presenting information on the ancestry¹, languages and literacy of the U.S. population based on data collected by the Bureau of the Census in November 1979 in a special supplement to its monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). The supplement was designed to provide users with a basic set of data on ethnicity and language and serve as a bridge between the 1970 and 1980 censuses. Items surveyed included ancestry, country of birth of the individual and parents, citizenship, year of immigration, mother tongue, current language spoken in the home, and ability to speak English. Questions on ability to read and write any language, which were not asked in either census, were asked in this November 1979 CPS supplement.

Only general characteristics are shown in this report. Cross-tabulations, to be presented in subsequent reports, will provide a basis for comparing ethnic and language items in the 1970 and 1980 censuses.

ANCESTRY

The ancestry question in the November 1979 CPS supplement was open-ended (that is, no prelisted categories were provided) and was based upon self-identification. Some individuals reported a single ancestry group; others reported more than one group. All single- and double-ancestry responses were coded. In addition, 17 triple-origin ancestries expected to be frequently reported were coded; only the first two reported ancestries were coded for all other responses of three or more ancestries. Since persons who reported multiple ancestries were included in more than one group, the sum of persons reporting the ancestry groups is greater than the total; for example, in table 1, a person reporting "German-English" was tabulated in both the "German" and "English" categories.

¹ In this report, the terms "ancestry" and "origin" are used interchangeably.

About 83 percent of the population in the sample reported at least one specific ancestry². The remaining 17 percent of the population included 6 percent who reported "American" or "United States" and 11 percent who did not provide any ancestry. About 45 percent of the total population reported a specific single ancestry, while about 38 percent provided more than one ancestry group (table A).

In November 1979, German, Irish, and English were the most frequently reported ancestry groups. About 52 million persons were classified as being solely or partly of German ancestry. Irish or part-Irish accounted for 44 million persons and English or part-English accounted for 40 million persons (table 1).

**Table A. Type of Ancestry Response:
November 1979**

(Numbers in thousands)

| Type of ancestry response | Number | Percent |
|---|---------|---------|
| Total persons..... | 216,613 | 100.0 |
| Reported at least one specific ancestry..... | 179,078 | 82.7 |
| Single ancestry..... | 96,496 | 44.5 |
| Multiple ancestry..... | 82,582 | 38.1 |
| Ancestry not specified... | 37,535 | 17.3 |
| American or United States.... | 13,592 | 6.3 |
| Other ¹ | 195 | 0.1 |
| Not reported..... | 23,748 | 11.0 |

¹Includes responses indicating religious groups and other unclassifiable responses.

²"Specific ancestry" excludes persons reporting "American," "United States," religious groups, and other unclassifiable responses.

Figures for other frequently reported ancestry groups (single and multiple combined) were:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Afro-American or African ³ | 16 million |
| Scottish | 14 million |
| French | 14 million |
| Spanish | 12 million |
| Italian | 12 million |
| American Indian ³ | 10 million |
| Polish | 8 million |
| Dutch | 8 million |

The selection of ancestry groups shown in the tables of this report was based on the frequency of reporting. The ancestry groups shown in table 1 were selected on the basis of 100,000 or more individuals reporting in the single ancestry category. For tables 2 and 3, ancestry groups having 450,000 or more persons were shown.

The ancestry data from the November 1979 survey reflect the diverse nationality groups which have come to the United States throughout its history. Prior to the 17th century, most of the residents of this country were American Indians; however, most of the 10 million respondents who reported American Indian ancestry in the survey did so in combination with other groups, such as Irish, German, and English. Persons of German, Irish, and English origin—groups reported most frequently in the CPS—were the first Europeans to arrive in large numbers; the immigration of these groups peaked in the late 19th century. From the early 17th century to the early 19th century, many Africans were forcibly moved to the United States. The number of "newer immigrants" including the Italian and Polish, reached an apex in the early part of the 20th century. The most recent immigrants (during the last two decades) include substantial numbers of both Spanish⁴ and Asian persons, who were also among the earlier arrivals.

Further explanations of ancestry information in this report appear in appendix A.

Characteristics of Persons by Single or Multiple Ancestry Response

The November 1979 CPS is the first Census Bureau survey that collected information on both single- and multiple-ancestry groups. More than one-half (54 percent) of the population that specified an ancestry reported a single response. The most frequently reported single ancestry groups were:

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| German | 17 million |
| Afro-American or African | 15 million |
| English | 12 million |
| Irish | 10 million |
| Spanish | 10 million |
| Italian | 6 million |

³ See appendix A for a discussion of these groups.

⁴ In this report, Spanish refers both to immigrants directly from Spain and to immigrants from Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The proportion of multiple-origin responses varied considerably by ancestry group. For instance, 89 percent of persons indicating Scottish ancestry provided multiple responses (that is, part-Scottish); multiple responses were also frequently reported by other ancestry groups, such as Dutch, Welsh, French, and Irish. In contrast, the proportion of multiple-ancestry responses was much lower for other groups, such as Polish (59 percent), Italian (48 percent), Filipino (31 percent), and Spanish (22 percent) (table 1).

Data presented in table B show that multiple-origin reporting was also related to age and nativity of the individual. Specifically, younger persons were more likely than older persons and native persons were more likely than foreign-born persons to report multiple ancestries.

The demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the single- and multiple-ancestry populations differed considerably. The median age of persons who reported a single ancestry was much higher (34.6 years) than the median age of persons who reported a multiple ancestry (24.5 years) (table C). This differential is due, in part, to the fact that the single-ancestry population included a higher proportion of foreign-born persons who tended to be older than native-born persons. There may have also been a greater tendency for a multiple ancestry to be reported for children whose parents had different ancestries.

Table B. Multiple-Ancestry Reporting, by Age and Nativity of Persons Who Reported at Least One Specific Ancestry Group: November 1979

| Age and nativity | Percent reported multiple ancestry |
|---|------------------------------------|
| AGE | |
| Under 18 years..... | 59.6 |
| 18 to 64 years..... | 42.1 |
| 65 years and over..... | 32.5 |
| NATIVITY | |
| Native of native parentage... | 51.8 |
| Native of foreign or mixed parentage..... | 27.8 |
| Foreign born..... | 9.3 |

The single-ancestry population was more likely than the multiple-ancestry population to be foreign born or native of foreign or mixed parentage. The proportion foreign born and native of foreign or mixed parentage for the single-ancestry population was 27 percent, about three times the 9 percent shown for the multiple-ancestry persons. Conversely, a larger proportion of persons with multiple ancestries (91 percent) than with single ancestries (73 percent) was native of native parentage (table C).

The proportion of single-ancestry persons (19 percent) living in central cities within SMSA's of 1 million or more

Table C. Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of Persons Who Reported at Least One Specific Ancestry Group: November 1979

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

| Selected characteristics | Reported at least one specific ancestry | Reported single ancestry | Reported multiple ancestry |
|---|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| AGE | | | |
| Total persons..... | 179,078 | 96,496 | 82,582 |
| Percent..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Under 18 years..... | 28.9 | 21.7 | 37.4 |
| 18 to 24 years..... | 12.7 | 11.8 | 13.7 |
| 25 to 64 years..... | 47.5 | 52.9 | 41.2 |
| 65 years and over..... | 10.9 | 13.7 | 7.7 |
| Median age (years)..... | 30.3 | 34.6 | 24.5 |
| NATIVITY | | | |
| Total persons..... | 179,078 | 96,496 | 82,582 |
| Percent..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Native of native parentage..... | 81.1 | 72.5 | 91.1 |
| Foreign birth or parentage..... | 18.8 | 27.2 | 8.8 |
| Native of foreign or mixed parentage..... | 12.6 | 16.9 | 7.6 |
| Foreign born..... | 6.2 | 10.4 | 1.2 |
| Not reported..... | 0.1 | 0.2 | - |
| RESIDENCE | | | |
| Total persons..... | 179,078 | 96,496 | 82,582 |
| Percent..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Metropolitan..... | 69.3 | 70.9 | 67.4 |
| In SMSA's of 1 million or more..... | 39.5 | 42.3 | 36.1 |
| In central cities..... | 14.5 | 19.1 | 9.2 |
| Outside central cities..... | 24.9 | 23.2 | 26.9 |
| In SMSA's of under 1 million..... | 29.8 | 28.6 | 31.3 |
| Nonmetropolitan..... | 30.7 | 29.1 | 32.6 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | | |
| Persons, 14 years old and over..... | 140,265 | 80,729 | 59,536 |
| Percent..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Single (never married)..... | 27.0 | 22.2 | 33.4 |
| Ever married..... | 73.0 | 77.8 | 66.6 |
| YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED | | | |
| Persons, 25 years old and over..... | 104,554 | 64,207 | 40,347 |
| Percent..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Elementary: 0 to 8 years..... | 16.0 | 19.9 | 9.8 |
| High school: 1 to 3 years..... | 13.3 | 14.1 | 11.9 |
| High school graduates..... | 70.7 | 66.0 | 78.2 |
| College: 1 year or more..... | 33.2 | 29.5 | 39.0 |
| EMPLOYMENT STATUS | | | |
| Persons, 16 years old and over..... | 133,905 | 78,236 | 55,669 |
| In civilian labor force..... | 86,006 | 49,273 | 36,733 |
| Percent in civilian labor force..... | 64.2 | 63.0 | 66.0 |
| Percent unemployed..... | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.7 |
| FAMILY INCOME¹ | | | |
| Total families reporting income..... | 44,711 | 28,626 | 16,085 |
| Percent..... | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Under \$10,000..... | 25.6 | 28.1 | 21.1 |
| \$10,000 to \$14,999..... | 19.4 | 19.9 | 18.5 |
| \$15,000 to \$24,999..... | 31.7 | 30.9 | 33.0 |
| \$25,000 and over..... | 23.3 | 21.0 | 27.3 |

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.

¹Families are classified by the kind of ancestry group reported by the householder.