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# Census study shows possible miscount of Hispanic subgroups in 2000

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AP Breaking News

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The population of Hispanic subgroups in the 2000 census may have been miscounted, and it could be due partly to confusion over the wording of a question on the form, the Census Bureau said Monday.

A bureau study on the question doesn't change the overall number of Hispanics counted in 2000, which stood at just over 35 million, nor will it change the official count of the Hispanic subgroups released two years ago.

Still, some demographers, advocacy groups and city planners said the confusion may have led millions of people to identify themselves with a generic term like "Hispanic" or "Latino", rather than a more specific description like "Dominican" or "Spaniard."

The latest study, done at the request of Congress, incorporated census data on ancestry and place of birth that were not available when the first Hispanic population statistics were released.

The study estimated as many as 22.3 million Hispanics considered themselves "Mexican," 7 percent higher than a 2000 census estimate of about 20.9 million Mexicans; the latest estimate of 3.5 million Puerto Ricans was 4 percent higher than the 2000 census.

Differences were larger for the smaller Latino subgroups. For instance, the estimate of nearly 1 million Dominicans was 25 percent larger than the 2000 estimate. The study also estimated at least one-third more Colombians and two-thirds more Spaniards.

By comparison, the bureau estimated that more than half the 5.5 million people who called themselves a generic Hispanic term actually should have been classified by a more specific description. Almost three-fourths of the 93,000 who said they were "Other Central American" could have been classified to a specific country.

The 2000 census asked "Are you Hispanic?" A respondent who answered yes checked off a box next to "Mexican," "Puerto Rican" or "Cuban" -- the three largest Hispanic groups -- or a fourth box that asked the person to write in a more appropriate Latino group. No sample responses were provided for that question.

The 1990 form offered the same four options, although the last also included examples of answers, such as "Argentinian" or "Dominican." Joseph Salvo, director of the population division for the New York City planning department, said that was the main reason for the low estimate of Hispanic subgroups in the original 2000 census results.

New York has one of the largest Dominican populations in the country. The data is used by the city to help target outreach programs for day care or English proficiency.

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Census Bureau analyst Roberto Ramirez said some third- or fourth-generation Hispanic-Americans may also have identified more with simply calling themselves "Latino" or "Hispanic" than with a specific group.

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On the Net: Census Bureau paper, local census data:  
[www2.census.gov/census\(underscore\)2000/datasets/Sim\(underscore\)eHispan ic\(underscore\)Totals/](http://www2.census.gov/census(underscore)2000/datasets/Sim(underscore)eHispan ic(underscore)Totals/)

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