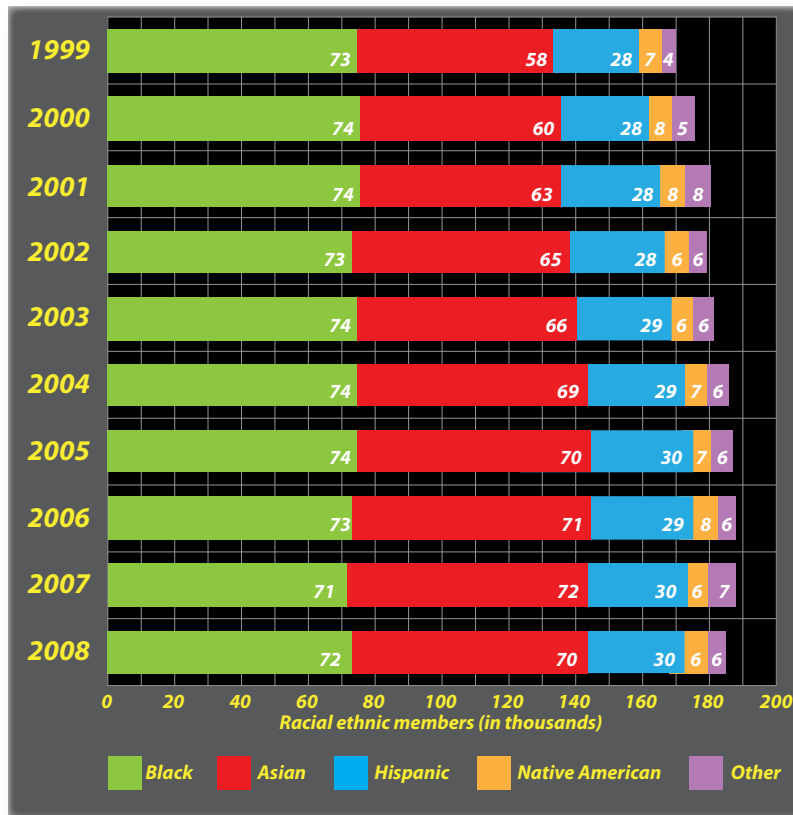


# Measuring progress on diversity



In the 1990s, the General Assembly set two diversity goals: increasing the racial ethnic (nonwhite) share of the membership to 10 percent by 2005 and to 20 percent by 2010. How are we doing?

- **In 1999**, the earliest year with near-complete racial ethnic data for all congregations, **6.4 percent of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) members were racial ethnic.**
- **By 2005 that share had grown to 8.1 percent**, and by 2008 to 8.6 percent.
- **Numerically, racial ethnic membership grew from 169,000 in 1999 to 187,000 in 2006**, before dropping slightly to 184,000 in 2008.
- **Growth has occurred in most racial ethnic groups the PC(USA) tracks**, with the Asian share going from 2.3 percent in 1999 to 3.3 percent in 2008; the share of blacks, from 2.8 to 3.3 percent; of Hispanics, 1.1 to 1.4 percent; and of “other,” 0.2 to 0.3 percent. Native Americans, the exception, have remained stable (0.3 to 0.3 percent).
- **Based on current trends, the racial ethnic membership share will reach 9.2 percent by 2010 and 10 percent by 2014**, but will not reach 20 percent until around 2060.

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## What the research shows

These numbers indicate that the PC(USA) is gradually becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. So what if we miss the (rather arbitrary) goals of 10 percent racial ethnic membership by 2005 and 20 percent by 2010? We’re still making progress, right?

Well, yes and no. Certainly we are more diverse than we were a few years ago. But the slow rate of change makes it unlikely that we will ever catch up with overall population trends. At current rates the PC(USA) will go from just less than 9 percent racial ethnic in 2008 to 16 percent in 2050, the United States from 33 percent to slightly more than 50 percent.

Furthermore, most gains in the racial ethnic share among PC(USA) members have resulted from declines in the white total, not increases in the racial ethnic one. The 1999–2008 shift from 6.4 to 8.6 percent racial ethnic membership happened partly because of a net gain of 15,000 racial ethnic members, but mostly because of a net loss of 233,000 white members.

Also, focusing on trends in the racial ethnic share may cause us to overlook other important changes, such as the drop in total racial ethnic membership since 2006.

Henceforth, we should put more emphasis on numerical growth in racial ethnic membership and less on the percentage of members who are racial ethnic. This shift will better tell us what we actually want to know: How successful are our efforts to reach the growing racial ethnic population of the United States?

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