

## 1 DEFINING ASIA AND THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The terms Asian and Pacific Islander refer to a vast geographical region, but have also been racialized. According to the National Resource Conservation Service, Asian American did not become a widely used term until the late 1960s and early '70s. The term refers largely to race because native Australians and New Zealanders are not considered Pacific Islanders, and white people born in the Asian region of the former Soviet Union are not counted as Asian.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines the following as Asian regions: (Russia is not included despite it being on the continent of Asia.)

**EASTERN ASIA:** China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, South Korea, North Korea, Macau, Mongolia, Paracel Islands, Taiwan

**SOUTH CENTRAL ASIA:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

**SOUTHEASTERN ASIA:** Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

**WESTERN ASIA:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Bahrain, Cyprus, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen

The U.S. Census Bureau also explains the delineation of the Pacific Islands as follows:

The Pacific Ocean contains an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 islands (the exact number has yet to be precisely determined). Those islands lying south of the Tropic of Cancer but excluding Australia are traditionally grouped into three divisions: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

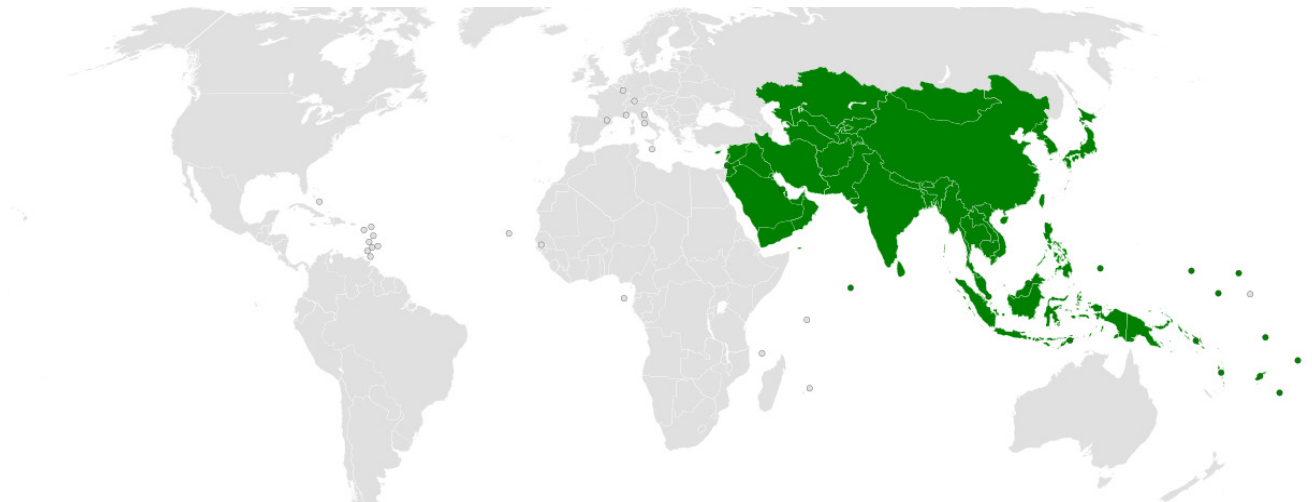
Melanesia means black islands. These include New Guinea (the largest Pacific island, which is divided into the sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian provinces of Maluku, Papua and West Papua), New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands.

Micronesia means small islands. These include the Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Most of these lie north of the equator.

Polynesia means many islands. These include New Zealand, the Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, the Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, and Easter Island. It is the largest of the three zones.

There are also many other islands located within the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean, but these are not considered part of Oceania. These islands include the Galápagos Islands of Ecuador; the Aleutian Islands in Alaska; the Russian islands of Sakhalin and Kuril Islands; Taiwan; the Philippines; the South China Sea Islands; most of the islands of Indonesia; and the island nation of Japan, which includes the Ryukyu Islands. The inhabitants of these islands are not considered to be Pacific Islanders and are usually identified with their nearest continent."

Some of these classifications and definitions are contentious. Many Pacific Islanders have spoken out against being grouped in with Asians because of the vast array of ethnic groups under these general terms. Ultimately, it is important to understand that these classifications are government tools and often do not take into account the complexity of various cultures and identities.



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