



BlackEconomics.org®

“Then or Now”

Table 1.—White/Non-Black-to-Black Population Ratios

Line No.	US Population Groups	Populations and Ratios: US and Its Territories			
		(A) 1860	(B) 1870	(C) Estimated 1865 [C = (A + B)/2]	(D) 2023
1	Black (Slave and Free)	4,411,830	4,880,000	4,645,915	45,548,426
2	White/Non-Black	27,031,491	33,678,371	30,354,931	288,916,522
3	White/Non-Black-to-Black Ratios (3 = 2 / 1)	6.1	6.9	6.5	6.3

Sources: US Census Bureau and BlackEconomics.org analysis and visualization.¹

In our world aswirl with small wars, skirmishes, rumors of wars, and increasing prospects for widening military conflict, it is not irrational to think the “unthinkable.”

By “unthinkable” is meant there could be violent conflict on US soil. Believe it or not, the media and its controlling interests appear determined to pit “conservatives” (Republicans) against “progressives” (Democrats). More importantly, the media has always been the primary force differentiating between Black American descendants of slaves and all other groups in the country. Is there any reason to expect this *modus operandi* to change, or that the media will not incite racial/ethnic animus to a boiling point should that benefit the media?

This should cause us to pause and consider that one day Black Americans might have to organize our self-defense (hopefully with a miniscule probability). Also, we might ask: Why did Black Americans not accept the challenge of taking their freedom when odds were more favorable? Row 3 of the first numeric column of Table 1 reveals that there were only 6.1 Whites (non-Blacks hereafter) per Black person in the US and its Territories in 1860—just one year before the Civil War.

Is it possible that the “truth we know” concerning the Civil War is untrue? Could it be that the Civil War is a case of northern non-Black elites recognizing that their southern slave state

¹ The statistics are from two sources: (1) Census Bureau (2021). *1870 Census: Volume 1. The Statistics of Population of the United States*. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1872/dec/1870a.html>; and (2) Census Bureau (2024). “QuickFacts.” <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>. (Both Ret. 062024.)

counterparts risked being overrun by Black slaves, and that the latter could then seize control of much of the nation's highly valued and critical agricultural production? Rather than risk such an outcome, northern and southern non-Black elites may have conspired to configure a war (a false divide) that would endear Black slaves to northern non-Blacks?

Rather than lose the entire kit and caboodle, northern non-Black elites and their southern elite counterparts inverted their often used tried and true "divide-and-conquer" scheme to preserve their control of the nation. As the war unfolded, northern and southern non-Black elites convinced themselves that, given the fighting valor of Black soldiers on display during the war, they both had something to fear from the soon to be freed slaves. However, because northern non-Blacks were viewed by Black slaves as their saviors, the former were endeared to the latter.

This reasoning/conjecture concerning the Civil War may warrant even more credence when we consider the short-lived (12-year) "Reconstruction Era" that was followed by the unhampered installation of a Jim Crow system that was harsher in many respects than slavery itself. Also, the impunity with which southern and northern non-Blacks violated Freedmen's rights after Reconstruction infers perfect strategic alignment by northern and southern non-Blacks to instill the deepest possible fear in the hearts and minds of all Blacks in the nation.²

Reconsidering row 3 of Table 1, the non-Black-to-Black ratio was, as already noted, lowest in 1860 at 6.1. However, we were in no position to engage in a military conflict at that time for many reasons. Now consider that by 1865 at the Civil War's end, newly freed Blacks may have been in our most favorable position to challenge non-Blacks and seize liberty. In 1865, the non-Black-to-Black ratio was 6.5. Blacks had gained great military confidence; they remained mentally unified as mainly former slaves; they were still largely responsible for important southern agricultural production; neither southern nor northern non-Black troops retained an appetite for additional military conflict; and considerable dissimilation prevailed between southern and northern non-Black nonelites. That may have been the perfect time to "turn the table."

On the other hand, the rightmost cell of Table 1's third row reveals that the non-Black-to-Black ratio is 0.2 percentage points lower at 6.3 in 2023 compared with the 1865 ratio. While the 2023 non-Black population may include some Black sympathizers/empathizers, would such support reduce the 6.3 ratio substantially in the event of violent conflict? It is common knowledge that non-Blacks are better prepared (mentally, physically, and materially) than Blacks for violent conflict in the US.³

However, it is important to realize that Black Americans may be more prepared for conflict than might be thought. Our widespread participation (overrepresentation) in athletics during K-12 grades means that we may remain in reasonable "fighting condition" well into our early adult lives. We have a history of being overrepresented in the military; therefore, we have more military

² Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) urged Black Americans not to be confused and to view northern and southern Whites as one and the same.

³ During an "All Black National Convention" in Atlanta, GA in 2016, "Killer Mike" sought to remind Black Americans concerning our unpreparedness for non-*status quo* situations. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B11XoK3juVs>, Ret. 043024).

veterans in our areas of influence (communities) than one might expect. Also, we are overrepresented in the *Security Guards and Patrol Services* industry, meaning that there is a sizeable corps of Black Americans with paramilitary-type skills. Top all of this off with the fact that a conflict would mean Blacks were fighting for our lives, taking our freedom, and controlling our destiny. Finally, our iron-willed faith (*Imani*) and our dread of being excluded from Earth's final rollcall could serve as powerful incentive to fight valiantly. Therefore, Black Americans might consider the foregoing as motivation to accept a challenge with gusto to engage in a violent conflict if confronted with no alternative.

Two important and popular sayings have salience here: (1) "Prepare for war in times of peace;"⁴ and (2) "Sometimes you choose the time, at other times, the time chooses you."⁵

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⁴ Wikipedia. An adaptation of a popular Latin adage: "If you want peace, prepare for war."
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Si_vis_pacem_para_bellum (Ret. 062124).

⁵ Adapted from a statement by the late Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA). See John Farrell (2023). "Ted Kennedy Passes the Torch." American Heritage; <https://www.americanheritage.com/ted-kennedy-passes-torch> (Ret. 062024).