

**A STATISTICAL INQUIRY INTO
THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE
OF COLOUR, OF THE CITY AND
DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA**

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A Statistical Inquiry Into the Condition of the People of Colour, of the City and District of Philadelphia by Various

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VARIOUS

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N° 7

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STATISTICAL INQUIRY
INTO THE
CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE OF COLOUR,
OF THE
CITY AND DISTRICTS
OF
PHILADELPHIA.

PHILADELPHIA:
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1849.

THE census which forms the basis of the calculations and statements which follow, was taken near the close of the year 1847, at the suggestion and under the direction of some members of the Society of Friends. It is believed to have been faithfully and conscientiously taken; and its errors and imperfections are to be attributed, in some instances, to the unwillingness of the parties questioned to disclose their circumstances; and in others, to the misapprehensions entertained of the motives which led to the inquiries. The general uniformity of some of the results, and the agreement of others, with conclusions derived from other data, are, it is believed, sufficient evidence of its general correctness. Such as it is—it is submitted to the public in the conviction that it presents, so far as it goes, a faithful picture of the condition of our people of colour—a picture which should inspire them with hope and confidence in the future, and encourage their friends to persevere in their efforts to remove the distress and degradation which prevail among a portion of them, most of which can be distinctly traced to the evil influences of slavery.

Philadelphia, First Month 1st, 1849.

STATISTICAL INQUIRY,

&c. &c.

It being thought desirable to obtain an accurate account of the number and condition of the coloured population of the city and districts of Philadelphia, means were taken in the autumn of 1847, and the following winter, to obtain it. Three competent persons were employed to take the enumeration, and to make inquiry into the occupations, means of livelihood, estates, and general condition of the people of colour. It is believed that the results which have been obtained are, in the main, to be depended upon; and they furnish information which will be found useful to those who take an interest in the welfare of this people. The following table exhibits the population as thus ascertained.

	Males.	Fem's.	Total.	under 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 50.	above 50
City of Philadelphia	3772	5304	9076	1909	1642	5905	1090
per cent.	41.56	58.44	100.	13.3	18.1	57.3	11.3
Spring Garden,	359	476	853	119	169	441	108
per cent.	42.09	57.91	100.	14.	19.8	51.7	12.5
N. Lib. and Ken- sington	608	677	1285	245	277	682	81
per cent.	47.31	52.69	100.	19.	21.6	53.1	6.3
Southwark	512	605	1117	198	230	579	110
per cent.	45.83	54.17	100.	17.8	20.6	52.	9.7
Moyamensing	1491	1900	3391	523	649	1975	244
per cent.	44.	56.	100.	15.4	19.1	58.2	7.3
West Philadelphia	154	184	338	76	86	153	23
per cent.	45.56	54.44	100.	22.5	25.4	45.2	6.8
Total	6896	9146	16042	2370	3033	9035	1586
per cent.	42.99	57.01	100.	14.7	18.9	56.3	9.9

The enumeration thus taken does not include the coloured persons residing in white families as domestics. In order to arrive at the number of these, an abstract of the returns of the Marshal in 1820 was obtained, and the original returns of the census of 1840, were carefully examined. By these it appears that those so situated at these several periods, were as follows.

	City.			Districts.			
	Males.	Fem's.	Total.	Males.	Fem's	Total.	General total.
1820	846	1789	2665	182	353	515	3100
1840	837	2001	2840	194	505	699	3589

Showing an increase of about 14 per cent. in 20 years, or $\frac{1}{7}$ per cent. per annum: at which rate the number of this description in 1847, may be assumed to be 3716. If we take the number in the Eastern Penitentiary, 83, in Moyamensing Prison, 66, in the Alms-house, 277, and in the Shelter for Coloured Orphans, 56, amounting in all to 482, we shall find the actual population, as far as this enumeration can be relied on, to be 20,240.

This amount is probably less than the actual number, as the following statements seem to show. The coloured population of the county of Philadelphia, according to the official returns, was as follows:

in 1820	11,684,
“ 1830	15,579,
“ 1840	19,831,

being an increase from 1820 to 1830 of 31.23 per cent., and from 1830 to 1840 of 27.16 per cent.; a decreasing ratio, which, if it still continue, should be 23.5 per cent. from 1840 to 1850, making the population in 1850 about 24,500, and in 1847, about 23,000.

In the year 1837 the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, caused an enumeration of the coloured families of Philadelphia to be made, and as the census of the city itself was taken by the same individual employed in the recent one, the two make probably the same approach to accuracy. The population, according to that estimate, was 13,591; the numbers residing in white families may be taken at 3300, making together 16,891. The coloured

population of the whole county in 1837, according to the rate of increase between 1830 and 1840, was about 18,539, and the population of the rural districts was about 1250, leaving for the town population 17,289; the difference 398, is more than made up by those in the Alms-house and prisons, who were not counted in the enumeration of 1837.

The rate of increase between the two enumerations of 1837 and 1847 is 18 per cent., while the rate from 1840 to 1850, according to the decreasing ratio, computed from 1820, 1830 and 1840, should be 23.5 per cent. Several causes have probably contributed to diminish the rate of increase of this population within our city during the last ten years; the chief of which are the mobs of 1842, which drove away many of the people of colour; and the great increase of poor emigrants from Europe, who have supplanted them in employments, which a few years ago were altogether in their hands. Admitting the general accuracy of the recent census, we may expect the returns of 1850 to show a population for the county of 23,400.

It is interesting to examine what conclusions can be drawn as to the condition of a people from the manner in which the population is distributed through the several ages. Where the natural increase is least checked, the number of young persons will be the greatest; and in proportion as checks upon the natural rate of increase exist, whether they be those of vicious habits—oppression—an unhealthy climate, or a redundant population, the number of young persons will relatively decrease; as may be seen by the following table which exhibits these proportions—the whole population in each case being taken at 100.

Whole population.		under 5	under 10	5 to 15	15 to 20	above 50	Rate of increase for preceding ten years.
England	1841	13.23	25.20	22.84	50.38	13.55	
Connecticut	1840	12.3	23.7	22.35	50.95	14.3	
Massachusetts	"	12.7	23.7	21.3	53.9	12.1	
New Hampshire	"	14.15	26.56	24.81	48.12	12.92	
Vermont	"	15.38	29.	25.92	48.04	19.66	
New Jersey	"	16.02	29.38	25.38	48.81	9.78	
Ohio	1830	20.08	36.93	29.86	44.43	6.63	
do	1840	18.08	33.89	27.61	46.47	7.12	
United States	1830	18.01	32.58	26.89	46.8	8.3	33.8
do	1840	17.31	31.88	26.08	48.06	7.56	35.7
		under 10.	10 to 24	24 to 38	38 to 55	above 55	
Coloured, free, U. S.	"	28.84	28.31	19.83	15.18	7.74	20.85
Coloured Slaves, U. S.	"	33.93	31.41	19.11	11.43	4.12	28.77

The only ages at which we can compare the white and coloured population of the United States as given by the census, are those above and those under 10 years.

It will be seen by the above table, that the ratio which persons under 10 years of age bear to the whole population, is lowest in the densely peopled States of Connecticut and Massachusetts, where they form but 23.7 per cent. of the population; while it rises in the other States till it reaches its maximum in Ohio in 1830, where they formed nearly 37 per cent. of the population of that state. It further appears by the above table, that the per centage of slaves under ten years is greater than that of the whole United States, and even than that of Ohio in 1840, showing apparently that the checks upon population do not operate upon the slaves, but that they increase as fast as the most rapidly increasing population of the Union. A closer examination, however, shows this inference to be unfounded; for we find the following to be the respective rates of increase in the whole United States, according to the official returns.

	From 1810 to 1820.	1830 to 1830.	1830 to 1840.
Whites	34.1	33.8	35.7
Slaves	29.1	30.6	23.77
Free Blacks	27.7	37.28	20.85

The sudden diminution of the rate of increase of the people of colour between 1830 and 1840, is so extraordinary, as to induce the suspicion that some error must have crept into the returns of 1830, for in the second of the above decennial periods, the rate of increase of the slaves was 90 and of the free blacks 110, that of the whites being 100; while in the third decennial period these rates were respectively 67 and 58 to 100.

During the last decennial period the increase of the slaves was only two-thirds that of the whites, so that it is clear that the large proportion of slaves under 10 years of age is not caused by their rapid increase, but that it must be owing to causes which lessen the numbers above that age. These causes undoubtedly are the shorter lives of the slaves and consequently greater mortality among the adults; and the escape and emancipation of very considerable numbers.

It appears from the same table, that by the returns of 1840, the ratio of free blacks under 10 years of age to the whole number of that population is rather less than that of the whites under 10 in the slowly increasing states of Vermont and New Jersey, while the increase of that class during the preceding decennial period was 20.85 per cent; being less than that of the slaves. When we consider the extent to which the free coloured population is constantly augmented from the emancipated and fugitive slaves of the south, we shall see no reason to doubt that their numbers are kept down by the greater number of deaths among them, as well as by checks upon the natural increase, much greater than operate upon the slaves.

When we compare the white and coloured populations of the large cities, the same greater mortality and shorter duration of life is apparent, as will be seen by the following table.

Whole population.	under 5	under 10	5 to 15	15 to 50	above 50		Rate of increase for preceding ten years.
City of New York 1840	15.51	26.01	19.24	59.13	6.12		
City of Philadelphia "	15.4	26.77	21.	55.4	8.2		37.41
" col'd fam. 1847	14.7		15.9	53.3	8.9		
Coloured population "			10 to 24	24 to 38	36 to 55	above 55	
Philadelphia county 1830		22.42	29.09	26.92	16.12	6.05	31.23
" " 1840		21.77	27.25	27.64	17.65	6.29	27.18
City of New York 1840		20.91	24.73	28.31	20.38	5.67	
City of Baltimore "		25.1	27.13	23.	17.72	7.05	
New Jersey "		27.81	31.05	19.28	14.85	7.01	
Delaware "		31.61	30.36	16.59	13.53	7.91	
Maryland including Baltimore "		32.4	26.01	16.11	15.5	9.98	
Pennsylvania including Philadelphia "		29.67	29.31	20.6	14.25	6.15	

The proportions which naturally exist between the various ages of the community, are greatly disturbed in large cities by those who resort to them from the country to seek a livelihood, and thus swell the number between the ages of 15 and 50. Thus the proportionate numbers of the white inhabitants of New York and Philadelphia, between those ages, are 20 and 16½ per cent. respectively greater than the proportionate numbers for those ages in the whole United States.

The same increase in the proportion of coloured persons between