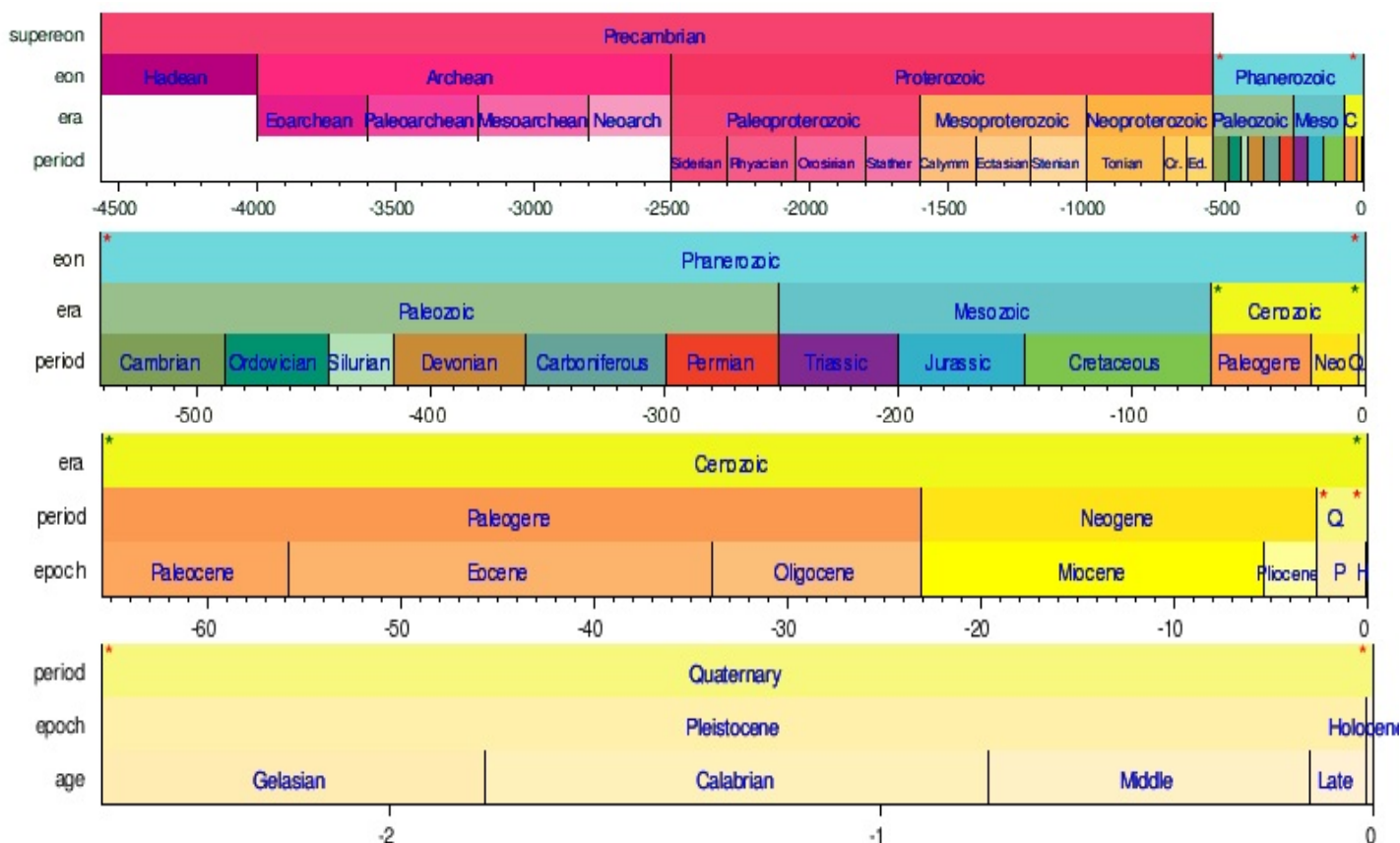


## EXPERTS DECLARE THE ANTHROPOCENE AGE HAS BEGUN

The geological time scale (GTS) is a system of chronological dating that relates geological strata (stratigraphy) to time, and is used by geologists, paleontologists, and other Earth scientists to describe the timing and relationships of events that have occurred during Earth's history. A scientific working group – at an international meeting of geologists – just recommended including an Anthropocene age in the Geologic Time Scale. It means the Age of Humans.

HERE ARE CONDENSED GRAPHICAL TIMELINES OF THE AGES OF THE EARTH



The four timelines above show the geologic time scales. The top (Supereon) shows the entire time from the formation of the Earth to the present. The next scale shows the most recent Eon with an expanded scale. This Era is expanded again in the third scale. The Quaternary is further expanded in the fourth scale. Each scale shows the time in years from the present, The Holocene (the latest epoch) is too small to be shown clearly on the third timeline on the right, a good reason for expanding the fourth scale by creating an Anthropocene within it.

Humanity has become so prevalent and powerful on Earth that it is now globally affecting the geologic record, the actual rock record used by geologists to divide the past into named blocks. A group of scientists said, yes, we should officially consider a new epoch. The Anthropocene Work Group reported this conclusion on August 29, 2016 to the 35th International Geological Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. Scientists now have to decide when it began. Scientists speak of golden spikes in Earth's sediment layers that clearly demarcate one geologic epoch from another.

**A widely known example of a golden spike occurred with the demise of the dinosaurs, 65 million years ago when an asteroid struck the Earth and left a layer of iridium in the rock records. It is the golden spike that marks the end of the Cretaceous epoch.**

What would be the golden spike separating the Anthropocene – the Age of Humans – from the rest of history? 28 of the 35 scientists agree that the golden spike for the Anthropocene is in the 1950s, when human impacts intensified and began to happen globally, not just locally. Others felt the start of the Anthropocene should coincide with the use of nuclear energy, testing and bombing, which caused radioactive elements to be dispersed across Earth. Or perhaps with the use of plastic pollution, aluminium and concrete particles, or the high levels of Nitrogen and Phosphate in soils from artificial fertilizers. There are even suggestions to use man's first footprint on the Moon as a golden spike.

And so defining when and how the Anthropocene began – assuming scientists do accept it and include it in the Geologic Time Scale – is a task that lies ahead.