

Racial and Ethnic Data: Why We Collect It; How We Use It

Wednesday, May 28, 2003, Washington, DC - Racial and ethnic disparities are evident in many social institutions, such as education, housing, law enforcement and criminal justice, and healthcare. The collection of racial and ethnic data is essential for recognizing and documenting these disparities, so that steps may then be taken to address them. In this program, examples were given of inequalities already illuminated by such data and of other areas in which data collection is needed. In addition, the speakers discussed issues inherent in the collection of data by race or ethnicity, including the potential for misuse of the data, and the difficulty in defining race. Nevertheless, they affirmed the need for this data collection as the critical first step in formulating effective public policy.



Moderator:

The Honorable Thomas C. Sawyer, Akron, Ohio

Speakers:

The Need for Racial and Ethnic Data

Troy Duster, Professor of Sociology, New York University and University of California-Berkeley

The Role of Data Collection and Monitoring in Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare

Brian Smedley, Senior Program Officer, Institute of Medicine, The National Academies

Practical Uses for Racial and Ethnic Data

Gerald (Jerry) Sanders, President and C.O.O., Virtual Capital of California, LLC; Former Chief of Police, San Diego



Co-Sponsors:

American Sociological Association, California Institute for Federal Policy Research and Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Quick Facts:

"Historically, race has been a primary sorting mechanism for marriage. Until anti-miscegenation laws were outlawed in the United States in 1967, many states prohibited interracial marriage. Since then, interracial rates have more than doubled to 2.2 percent of all marriages, according to the latest census information."

"The Importance of Collecting Data and Doing Social Scientific Research on Race," American Sociological Association, 2003.



"Among Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and older in 1993, the rate of limb amputation was 3.6 times higher for blacks than whites. In all health services studied, blacks received a poorer quality of care than whites."

Brian Smedley, Senior Program Officer, Institute of Medicine, The National Academies

"In 1933, the ratio of incarceration rates by race was 2.5 blacks for every white. This ratio has steadily grown since then, to eight blacks for every white in 1995. Gene pools do not change fast enough to use race as an explanation for this trend."

Troy Duster, Professor of Sociology, New York University and University of California-Berkeley

"According to the Maryland State Police files for 1995-1996, minority drivers were 22 percent of the drivers observed, 21 percent of the violators observed, but 81 percent of the people stopped by police."

Troy Duster, Professor of Sociology, New York University and University of California-Berkeley

In Attendance:

Offices of Senators:

Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)

Jack Reed (D-RI)

Offices of Representatives:

Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-Guam)

Max Burns (R-GA)

Julia M. Carson (D-IN)

Donna Christian-Christensen (D-VI)

Danny K. Davis (D-IL)

Harold E. Ford, Jr. (D-TN)

Luis V. Guttierrez (D-IL)

Michael M. Honda (D-CA)

Duncan L. Hunter (R-CA)

Steve Israel (D-NY)

Nita M. Lowey (D-NY)

Jim Matheson (D-UT)

Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Robert C. Scott (D-VA)

Hilda L. Solis (D-CA)

and representatives from 60 federal, state, and non-profit organizations

Media:

The Associated Press

Knight Ridder

Research USA

The Washington Post