Othering
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Institute

Racial Disparities Dashboard

PUBLICATION | JUNE 7, 2023 | UPDATED JUNE 16, 2025

The Othering & Belonging Institute is pleased to present the thoroughly revised Racial Disparities Dashboard, and our expanding snapshot. A racial disparity is defined as a persistent difference in outcomes or performance between racial groups.[1] An easily understood example is the racial wealth gap or the racial disparity in maternal mortality, noted below.

This project is designed to be an open resource repository on racial disparities in American society that are important, vital, and measurable. We have nearly 80 different indicators with measured disparities between Black and white Americans in our table below. We have included almost every disparity that we could find which is nationally reported, for which there is recent and apparently reliable data. Over time, we will add more data and disparity figures to this dashboard as we uncover and catalog it for your reference.

In addition to our expanding snapshot of current or recently measured disparities, this project also highlights areas of progress and regress in closing disparities in critical life outcomes. Our "**Progress Report Cards**" (visible on the right-hand menu) allow users to track changes within the United States between different racial groups and between different periods in time. The first "Progress Report Card" is the **Black-White Progress Report Card, 1970-2020**, featuring 15 different important variables, and to show areas of progress and regress. Future report cards will examine other time periods and different social and racial groupings. Eventually, we may also add intersectional identities to this dashboard that allow for comparisons not just between racial groups, but combinations of race and gender and other demographic characteristics. Additionally, the figures presented here are national data. In the future, we may disaggregate the data to examine variations between regions, states, or even cities. Check this page for future updates.

We hope this project and its various features are useful to researchers, journalists, students and concerned citizens.

A Few Words of Caution

We caution that our dashboard does not provide an explanation for why some disparities exist, arose, have shrunk, grown larger, or persist. Research shows that, when presented with disparities, people tend to either explain it in terms of discrimination or cultural or intellectual differences between groups. We caution against drawing immediate conclusions or inferences about why these disparities exist. We believe that **structural forces** play a large role behind many of these disparities, but we deliberately avoid offering an explanation for why they exist or have changed. Our goals are to provide easily accessible data on and display current disparities in a single location, and further to illustrate how they have changed, to deepen our understanding about the dynamics of racial disparities, and suggest a more nuanced and complex story about race in America.[2] Explanations for why these disparities exist or may have changed is beyond our immediate purpose with this project.

One more cautionary note: Disparities are measures of progress towards a more racially just society, a yardstick by which we can and should gauge progress. However, closing out the disparity should not necessarily be the primary policy goal (we do, however, link each grade card to our **Structural Racism Remedies Repository**, which offers policies that may be able to do this).[3] Consistent with our **Targeted Universalism framework**, we recommend instead setting a universal goal for each issue area (where appropriate), and striving, through policy, to get all groups to that threshold. A byproduct should be to reduce disparities, but that is not the policy goal. This, again, is why our Progress Report Card grades are based on more factors than simply whether the disparity widened or not.

Category

- Any -

Indicator	Data for Blacks	Data for whites	Absolute Disparity	Relative Disparity
8th graders taken Algebra [2021-22]	15.87%	26.90%	11.03%	69.5(
Alzheimer's and Other Dementias (71yrs and older) [2020]	21.30%	11.20%	-10.10%	47.42
Associate's Degree [2019-23 5-yr estimates]	56.97%	67.93%	10.96%	19.24
Average ACT Scores (max 36) [2023]*	16	20.9	4.9	30.6:
Bachelor's degree [2019-23 5-yr estimates]	27.80%	37.50%	9.70%	34.8(
Broadband Access [2019-23 5-yr estimates]	88.65%	92.49%	3.84%	4.33
Child Drowning Deaths (Age-adjusted rate per 100,000) [2023]	2.45	1.16	-1.29	52.6!

| Child Gun Deaths (per 100,000) [2023] | 11.7 | 2.1 | -9.6 | 82.0! |
| Childhood poverty [2019-22 | 27.7% | 9.9% | -17.8% | 64.3f |

Notes on the table:

- *To see a specific category of your choice, select the category from the dropdown menu above the table. The relative disparities shaded in red indicate a severe or high disparity (value 50% or above), the yellow indicates moderate (value 10% or above but less than 50%), and the green indicates low (value less than 10%). All sources are in the note below.[4]*

- **American College Testing **National Assessment of Educational Progress ***Program for International Student Assessment ****Scholastic Assessment Test*

- *Formulas: Absolute Disparity = Data for whites - Data for Blacks; Relative Disparity = Absolute Disparity/Data for Blacks*

A Few Observations

- Among our 9 categories where there are more than one indicator, the criminal justice disparities seem consistently the most severe, while the civic indicators seem the least disparate.

- Although most of the educational indicators fall in the "moderate" range, it is notable that Math-related indicators are the largest of the disparities.

- The Health disparities are well-documented and wide-ranging, but the largest disparity is the prevalence of practicing physicians and cancer.

- The smallest disparity overall is high school degree completion.

- By far the worst disparity, in percentage terms, is the stunning racial wealth gap, and it may be one of the most important.

We thank you for your interest in this project and hope you find it useful. This expanding snapshot of current disparities will be continually updated as new indicators or variables are included and as data becomes available. As always, get updates by **subscribing to our newsletter here**. If you have a request or suggestion for items that should be included or considered for inclusion or questions about this project, please email **Stephen Menendian** and **Samir Gambhir**. Your feedback will be important to us as we consider further iterations of and updates to this project.

Acknowledgments

This project was a joint effort with contributions from the Equity Metrics team, Communications, and leadership under **Stephen Menendian**. This project was conceived and led by Stephen Menendian, and the methodology was designed and refined by Stephen and **Samir Gambhir**. The data was collected and organized by Samir Gambhir and **Eve Liao**, who provided invaluable suggestions from a data science perspective. The dashboard with visualizations was designed by **Jake Tompkins** with input from the rest of the project team.

[1] For purposes of this project, we use racial group definitions as supplied by the US Census. We recognize that racial categories are social constructions and under continuous evolution rather than immutable categorical distinctions. For purposes of this project, however, we follow conventions used by the Census.

[2] One of the complexities which we lack space to illuminate more broadly is the reality that disparities can shrink or grow wider even if the conditions or outcomes of either group decline or get worse. At the outset of this project, we theorized four possible outcomes in this regard: 1) The disparity improved (that is, it shrank), and this was driven, at least in part, by the improvement in the performance of the marginalized group. 2) A disparity improved (again, it shrank), but this was driven, at least in part, by worsening outcomes for the non-marginalized group, even as the performance of the marginalized group declined. 3) The disparity worsened (that is, it grew larger), even as the performance of the marginalized group nonetheless improved in an absolute sense. 4) The disparity worsened (again, grew larger), but the performance of the marginalized group worsened in an absolute sense. We originally planned to code each disparity according to this typology, but abandoned this typology after we realized that determining whether a disparity improved or worsened was not straightforward, because it could get worse in an absolute sense, but shrink in a relative sense (see Median Home Values). Thus, this typology broke down when looking at the details.

[3] It may seem paradoxical to feature an analysis on disparities, but then suggest that reducing disparities should not be the primary policy goal, but there are many problems with a disparities focus. First, disparities can normalize the performance, outcomes or ownership of the non-marginalized group. In many cases, that means setting white outcomes as the bar. There are reasons we shouldn't do that, not just normative reasons. Secondly, and relatedly, the performance of the non-marginalized group can be declining, as we see with declines in life expectancy and maternal mortality among white Americans. If we are simply and narrowly focused on reducing a disparity, then that can theoretically happen even if the performance of the marginalized group does not improve. But we don't want a society where the goal is bringing or leveling down the performance of another group, through retrogression. Rather, we want to raise all groups up. Thirdly, and related to the second point, disparities can grow larger even if absolute progress has been enormous (see Bachelor's Degree attainment). We can and should celebrate progress, even if disparities persist. Fourthly, and related to this last point, as this project shows, determining whether a disparity is growing or shrinking is not easy or straightforward. It can grow in an absolute sense even as it shrinks in a relative sense, and is on track to eventually close. This is paradoxical, but true. Fifthly, the reduction in disparities does not necessarily entail a just society. Even if we eliminated disparities between groups, there could be enormous disparities within groups that are masked by a disparity focus. Sixthly, a disparity lens is inherently a deficit model. We want to bring groups up, not focus on what groups lack. Relatedly, a deficit frame can often make it hard to build coalitions to solve problems because it creates a zero-sum mentality, even where the issue is not zero-sum.

[4] For a list of sources used to gather this data, please see:

- Civic: **Pew Research**

- Criminal Justice: **Washington Post**, **FBI Crime Data**, and **CDC**

- Economic: **Opportunity Atlas**, **Survey of Consumer Finances**, **Panel Study of Income Dynamics**

- Education: **American Community Survey**, **National Center for Education Statistics**, **The Nation's Report Card**, **College Board**, **ACT**, **Civil Rights Data Collection from the US Department of Education**

- Familial: **American Community Survey** and **Center for Equal Opportunity**

- Health: **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, **National Institute of Health**, **March of Dimes**, **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**, **Alzheimer's Association**, **CDC WISQARS**, **Association of American Medical Colleges**, **U.S. Department of Agriculture**, and **Environmental Protection Agency**

- Housing: **National Alliance to End Homelessness**

- Transportation: **CDC WISQARS**

- Utilities: **American Community Survey**

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