



Disaggregating Health Data among Whites: Implications for Research and Policy

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May 24, 2017

Thanks to Jessica West, Duke sociology graduate student, for her invaluable assistance in the preparation of this document.

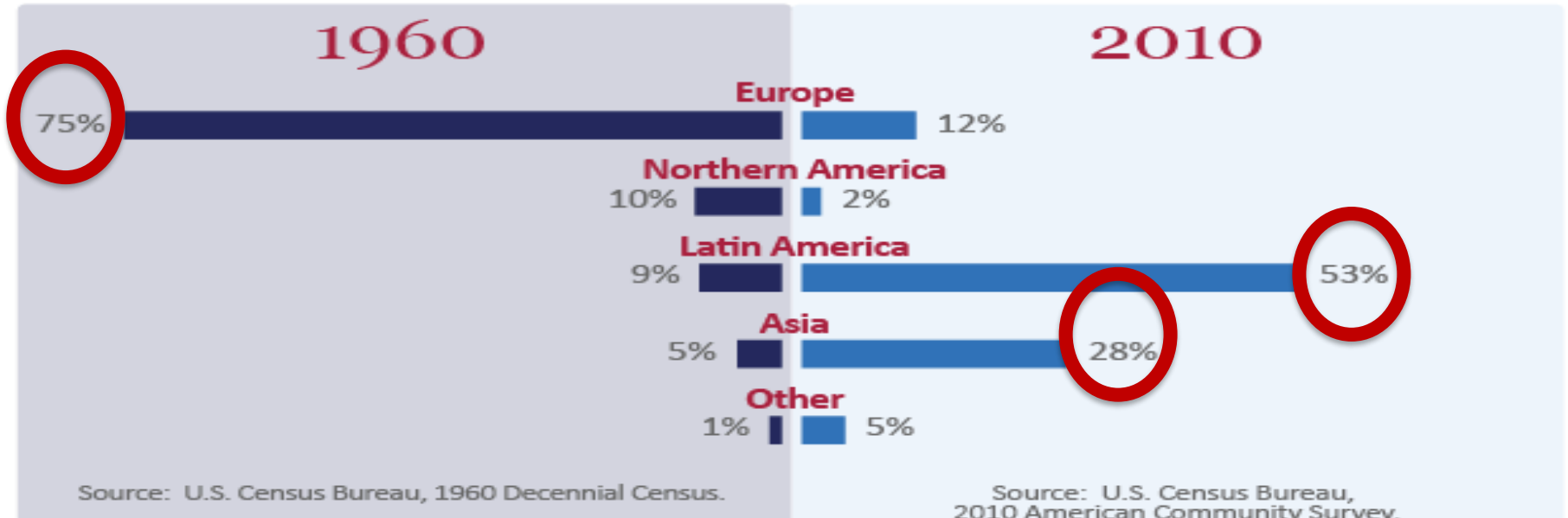
Today

- Background and significance
- Project objectives and methods
- Key Findings
- Challenges and recommendations

Background

- Growing racial/ethnic diversity in U.S. population
 - 1960: 88% white
 - 2010: 72% white

Change in Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth



Background

- Growing diversity among Whites.
- Defined:
“....persons who trace their ancestries to any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.”
- 104 white ancestries in U.S. Census
 - 1980: 55% of total U.S. population
German, Irish, English
 - 2010: dropped to 23%



Significance

- Despite diversity, aggregated white category is typically used as the reference group.
- May produce inaccurate estimates of racial/ethnic disparities.
- May obscure the health needs of underserved white populations (e.g., Appalachians, Arabs).

Project Objectives

1. Provide a review of key issues related to disaggregating health data among non-Hispanic whites.
2. Identify opportunities and challenges for data disaggregation.
3. Offer recommendations for overcoming obstacles.

Methods

1. Comprehensive review of existing research.

- ✓ 90% of 307 articles used whites as reference group.
- ✓ 10% focus on specific groups (e.g. Italian, Arab).

Is the composite category adequate for describing the experiences of whites?

2. Statistical analysis of U.S. Census data

- ✓ Identified all ancestry groups classified as non-Hispanic white.
- ✓ Examined diversity in their demographic and health profiles.

Findings (2010-14 ACS)

227 ancestry codes

- 104 groups 66% non-Hispanic white
- 82 groups 90% white

Ancestry	n	Ancestry	n	Ancestry	n
German	31,863,125	Ukrainian	681,515	Albanian	171,401
Irish	20,448,306	Czech	673,660	Bohemian	164,072
United States	18,791,253	Swiss	535,266	Turkish	159,514
English	16,683,054	Canadian	473,367	Arabic	145,995
Italian	12,628,171	Cherokee	460,851	Serbian	136,001
White/Caucasian	9,885,808	Anglo	441,868	Bosnian,Herzegovinia	128,166
Polish	6,140,736	Slovak	441,677	Sicilian	109,966
French	4,686,896	Finnish	416,889	Israeli	108,454
Scottish	3,302,847	Eastern European	412,361	Syrian	106,128
European	3,086,086	Armenian	393,074	Slovene	103,224
Norwegian	2,874,271	Scandinavian,Nordic	381,667	Yugoslavian	102,338
Dutch	2,407,647	Lithuanian	377,289	Iraqi	95,904
Scotch Irish	2,308,459	Austrian	367,769	Middle Eastern	89,253
Swedish	2,292,297	Iranian	351,272	Arab	87,817
Russian	1,960,255	Lebanese	340,573	Cajun	83,362
French Canadian	1,457,733	Romanian	313,690	Palestinian	82,000
Irish Scotch	995,194	Croatian	264,407	Bulgarian	79,892
Greek	966,284	Pennsylvania German	247,808	Slav	69,691
Portuguese	898,471	Northern European	237,419	Australian	64,216
Welsh	878,628	Brazilian	236,524	Moroccan	60,144
Hungarian	861,800	Western European	220,343	Latvian	59,799
British	854,927	Belgian	201,371	Jordanian	52,265
Danish	758,486	Egyptian	189,478	Chaldean	46,449
Indian	732,212	Czechoslovakian	188,875	British Isles	44,415

Findings

		Equivalent		Better		Worse	
	White	German	Russian	Egyptian	Lebanese	Appalachian	Cajun
% with Disability							
Cognitive difficulty	5.6	4.53	4.69	2.77	3.62	9.82	8.14
Ambulatory difficulty	8.53	7.38	7.63	4.76	5.59	13.16	10.22
Independent living difficulty	6.1	4.92	5.79	3.68	4.25	8.30	6.53
Vision or hearing difficulty	6.58	6.11	5.68	3.18	4.22	12.15	8.35
% with health insurance	91.02	92.11	93.04	83.62	91.35	88.06	87.86
% U.S. citizen	95.77	97.49	77.28	32.57	73.15	99.8	99.09
% poor English fluency	0.52	0.17	3.8	8.62	3.02	0.2	0.51
% less than high school	25.93	23.51	19.78	27.96	25.66	26.11	28.75
N	10,533,297	1,739,085	99,903	8,778	17,116	988	4,285



Key Findings

1. Changes in research and policy have resulted in varying levels of progress in disaggregating Asian, Hispanic, and Black populations.
2. Progress on non-Hispanic whites is limited/nonexistent despite changes in the ethnic composition of this group.
3. These changes are being driven by national origin immigrant groups that are more diverse than their European predecessors.

Challenges

1. Group identification

- U.S. census (Egypt vs. Arab; % white cut point)
- Other sources (e.g., NHIS)

2. Sample sizes

3. Methodological expertise

- Ancestry data with race/ethnicity
- Accessing restricted data

Conclusions

1. Aggregate category masks diversity among whites.
2. More training and better guidelines are needed for overcoming methodological and practical challenges in data disaggregation.
3. At minimum, encourage researchers to disaggregate foreign- and native-born whites to capture increasing diversity among this population due to immigration.