

# A Brief Primer on Racial Disparities and African Americans in California

## Introduction

Years of research has shown that American society is riddled with racial disparities across sectors including healthcare, education, social services and the justice system. This is true for California (CA), the most populous state in the U.S., with more than 39 million residents. It is also one of the most diverse states, with people of color (non-“White alone” persons) now making up 62.3% of the population, according to most recent official U.S. Census estimates. A recent report by the Advancement Project, which measures racial disparities in CA across multiple issues, states “racial disparity is pervasive across CA and it impacts all of us...a rising tide does not lift all boats.” The report also found that Black Americans overwhelmingly carry the greatest burden of these disparities; they are more likely to be poor, in jail, and die young. Even though Blacks are only 6.5% of the overall CA population (U.S. Census), they are repeatedly amongst the most disproportionately over-represented when it comes to negative indicators for wellbeing, sometimes at rates as much as *three times or greater* than 6.5%.

This primer on racial disparities is designed to encourage a more inclusive conversation about racial disparities and their solutions. Conversations about racial disparities and systemic racism too frequently pit groups against one another, women against men, heterosexuals against gays, and poor Whites against Latinos and Blacks, each group vying for dwindling public resources. However, human personhood is not one thing; it is an intersectional thing. Race is the modality in which all the classification researchers use to measure disparities is lived. Indeed, race, gender class and sexuality are so intertwined, they are difficult to separate.

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The sooner empirical researchers and communities understand this, the sooner we will get beyond polarizing discussions about race, and come together to eliminate the racial disparities this primer presents.

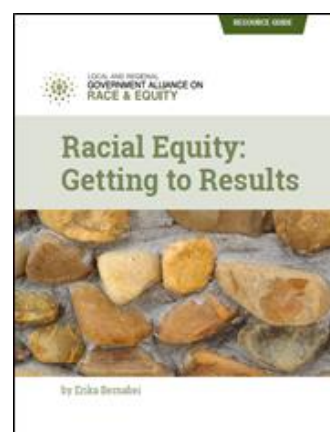
### I. What is racial equity?

*Racial Equity* is the state of affairs that would exist if racial group affiliation did not predict life outcomes, despite other affiliations such as class, gender and sexuality.

***“Equity requires on-going work, but it’s a home we will pass on to future generations.”***

### II. Why is racial equity important?

Racial equity has individual, social, and economic and national significance. The goal of racial equity is not to simply reduce disparities; racial equity develops strategies that will result in improvements for all groups, but the strategies are targeted based on the needs of a particular group.



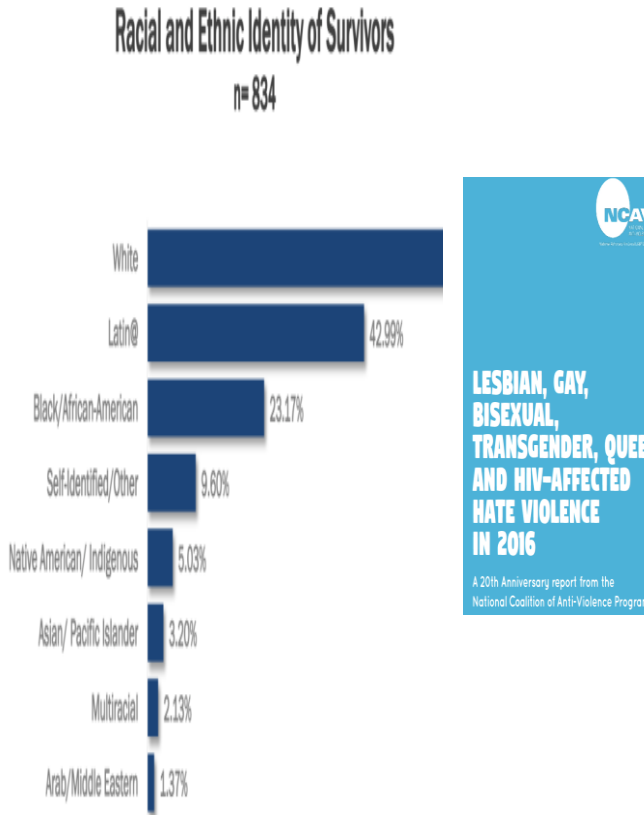
**“Systems that are failing communities of color, are actually failing all of us.”**



### III. What are racial disparities?

Racial Disparities are **not** only the comparative differences in status or outcomes *between* racial groups, but also the differences *within* other demographics.

For instance, there are racial disparities in health outcomes *between* African Americans and Whites, and *within* the LGBTQ demographic.



People of color are massively overrepresented among victims of anti-LGBT violence. Latino people made up 43% of survivors of anti-LGBT violence, while black LGBT people represented about 23% of survivors. These statistics likely understate the prevalence of attacks against them, given that white survivors are consistently the largest racial group that reports to NCAVP programs, the coalition says.

### IV. Racial disparities exist in every system in California.

System	Term	Definition
Health	Health Disparity	Health and mental health disparities are differences in health and mental health status among distinct segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, age, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, disability or functional impairment, or geographic location, or the combination of any of these factors. <sup>2</sup>
Child welfare	Disproportionality and Disparity	<u>Disproportionality</u> occurs when a group makes up a proportion of those experiencing some event that is higher or lower than that group's proportion of the population.  <u>Disparity</u> is a comparison of one group regarding outcomes, services, etc. to another group. <sup>1</sup>
Juvenile justice	Disproportionate minority contact ("DMC")	The rate at which youth of color contact the system as compared to the rate at which White youth contact the system. Each rate can be calculated using the total youth population as the base or the previous decision point of 9 key decision points as the base. <sup>3</sup>
Education (Achievement gap)	Racial Achievement Gap	Differences in the average standardized test scores of white and black or white, Hispanic and students of color. Achievement gaps are one way of monitoring the equality of educational outcomes. <sup>4</sup>
Education (Discipline)	Racial Discipline Gap	Differences in the rate of school suspension of students belonging to different racial groups. School suspensions are directly related to lost instruction time and to Grade Point Average (GPA) and standardized test results. <sup>5</sup>

Sources: 1)[Berkeley Social Welfare: Wendy Wiegman, May 10, 2017](#); 2)[California Health and Safety Code Section 13109.5](#); 3) [Burns Institute](#); 4) [Stanford University: The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project](#); 5) [UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project](#).

### V. What do we know about racial disparities in California?

1. With regard to African Americans, racial disparities are very similar across systems;
2. Socio-economic (SES) differences do not explain racial inequity;
3. Systems contribute significantly to disparities;



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4. Racial disparities among African Americans are not consistent across counties. Racial disparities are concentrated in certain counties;
5. Racial disparities exist within other sub-populations.



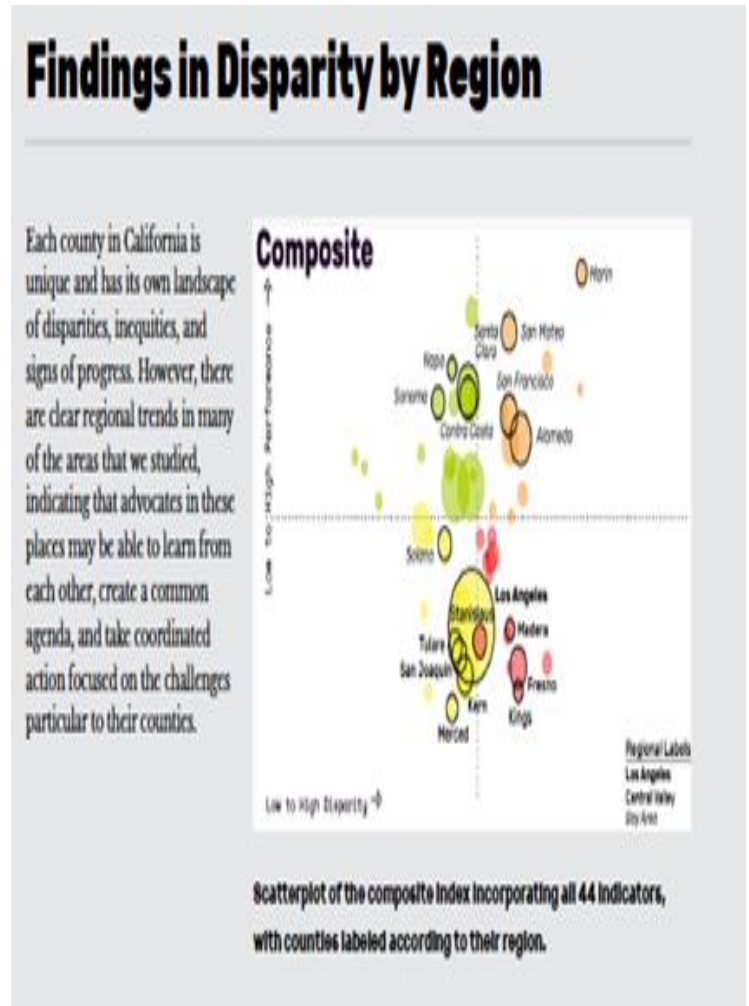
Across the indicators we examined statewide, Black Californians were most heavily weighed down by disparities. They are the lowest-performing group on 18 out of the 41 indicators for which they are included in the data—higher than any other group. For example, Black children are arrested for truancy at more than three and a half times the rate for White children. They also have the worst rates in California for life expectancy, homeownership, suspensions, household income, census participation, and incarceration. Across every issue area, Black Californians face multiple interlocking disparities that accumulate into the greatest burden of any racial group in the state.

## VI. Racial disparities among African Americans are worse in some regions and counties than others.

Color coding represents “the relationship between performance and disparity for each county. Counties colored **green** are those with “Gains at Risk”; they have above average performance and below average disparity metrics—indicating progress in some areas that may be under threat by changing economic or demographic trends.

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Counties colored **orange** are those with “Prosperity for the Few,” as they have overall high performance but relatively higher race-based disparities. **Yellow** counties are “Struggling to Prosper,” as they have relatively lower disparities often due to lower performance, indicating deprivation affecting all county residents. Finally, **red** counties are “Stuck and Unequal,” with low performance and high disparities both representing barriers to progress. The size of the circle indicates a county or regions size.”



Source: *Race Counts: Advancing Opportunity for All Californians*, pg. 38, Winter 2017



**VII. Racial disparities among Blacks begin at birth.**

California	Percent
African American/Black	11.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.7%
Hispanic/Latina	6.4%
White	6.0%
Multiracial	7.4%

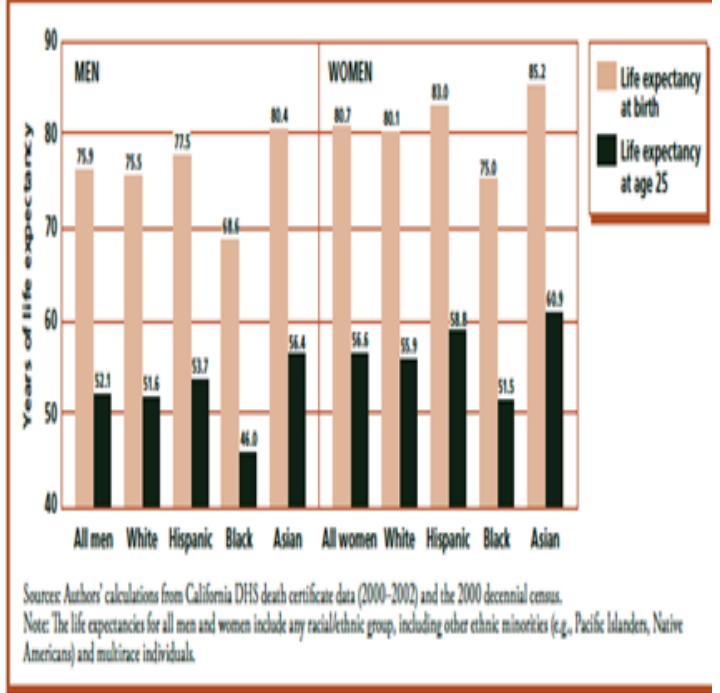
*Low birth weight is considered a weight fewer than 5.8 lbs. at birth. 11.7% of African Americans weigh less than 5.8 lbs. at birth. Conversely, only 6% of Whites are below 5.8 lbs. at birth.*



**VIII. African Americans experience shorter lifespans than other groups and lifespan differs by gender.**

The average life expectancy for an African American male at birth is 68.6 compared to 75.6 for White males and 85 years for Asians and 83 years for Latinos. The racial disparity in life expectancy among women is only slightly smaller, and women live longer than men on average.

**Figure 1. Life Expectancy at Birth and at Age 25 for Californians, by Sex and Race/Ethnicity**



Public Policy Institute of California

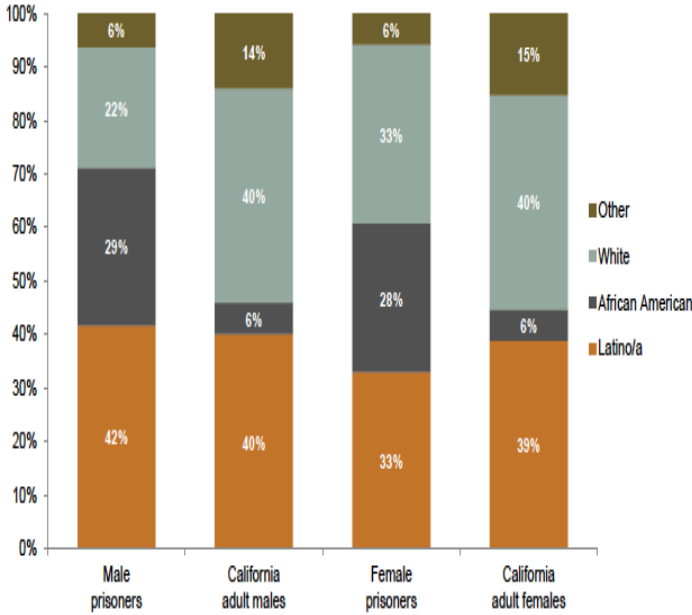


**IX. African American Men Are Dramatically More Likely to Be Incarcerated Than Other Groups?**

**African American men are dramatically more likely to be imprisoned than are other groups.**

Less than two thirds of California's adult male population is nonwhite or Latino (60%), but these groups make up three of every four men in prison: Latinos are 42%, African Americans are 29%, and other races are 6%. Among adult men in 2013, African Americans were incarcerated at a rate of 4,367 per 100,000, compared to 922 for Latinos, 488 for non-Latino whites, and 34 for Asians.

Three out of four male prisoners are nonwhite or Latino



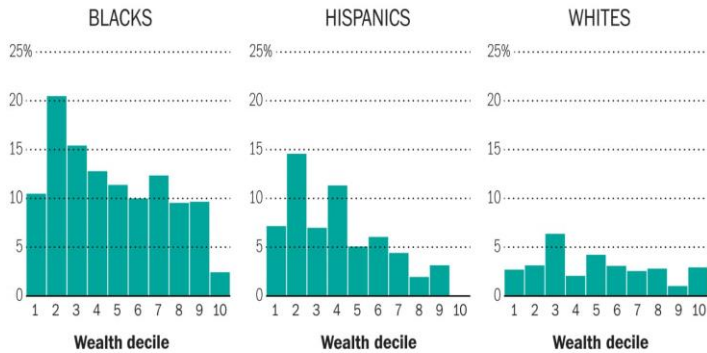
Source: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation data, 2013; Census Bureau population estimates, 2013.

Source: Public Policy Institute of California, *Just the Facts: California's Changing Prison Population*, April 2015

X. National longitudinal data demonstrates that class does not explain African American incarceration rates.

Rich black kids are more likely to go to prison than poor white kids

Share of people born between 1957 and 1965 who eventually went to prison or jail, by how much wealth they had as of 1985, when they were between 20 and 28 years old



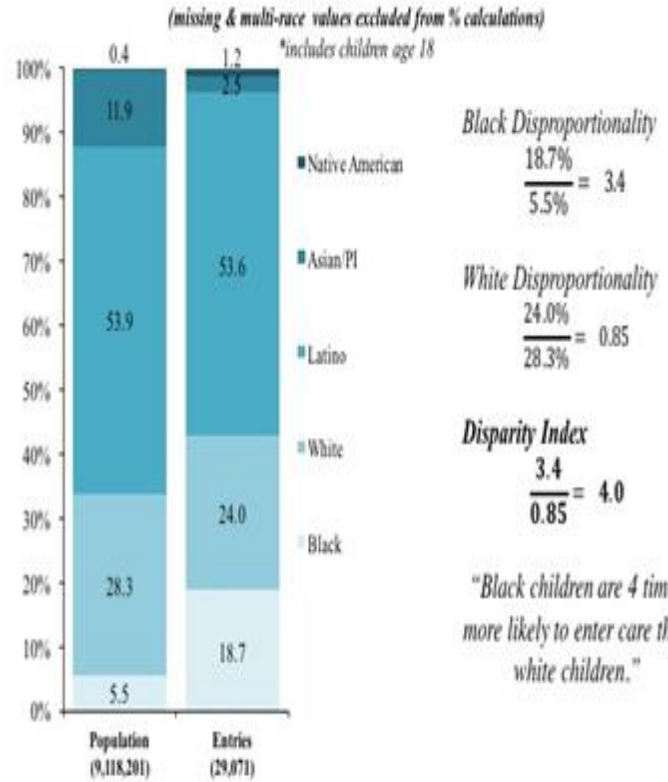
WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

Note: Rates may be understated, as those incarcerated for brief periods between surveys are not included.

Source: NLSY; Zaw, K., Hamilton, D. and Darity, W. 2016. "Race, Wealth and Incarceration,"

XI. Blacks are four times as likely than Whites to enter the child welfare system.

Ethnicity and Path Through the Child Welfare System  
California: 2016

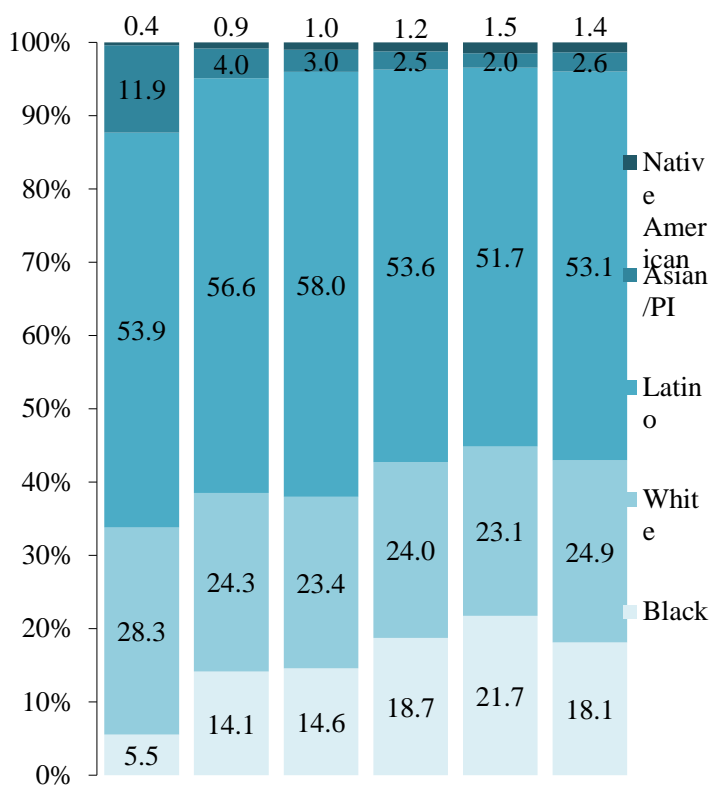


Source: Wendy Wigeman, *Equity from the Start: Disproportionality and Disparity Among Young Children in the CW System: What the Data Tell U?* University of California, Berkeley, Social Welfare.



**XII. Blacks are overrepresented in child welfare system and disparities increase as they progress through the system.**

**Ethnicity and Path Through the Child Welfare System  
California: 2016**  
(Missing & multi-race values excluded from % calculations)  
\*includes children age 18

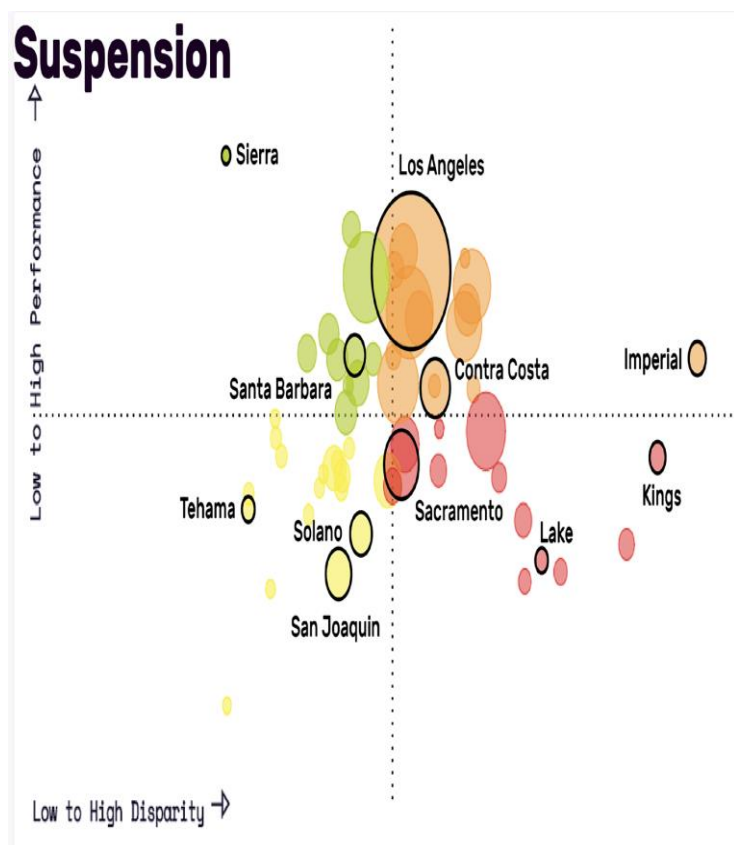


Pop	Allegations	Sub	Entries	In Care	Exits
(9,118,201)	(494,062)	(70,859)	(29,071)	(53,749)	(28,006)

**Source:** Wendy Wigeman, *Equity from the Start: Disproportionality and Disparity Among Young Children in the CW System: What the Data Tell U?* University of California, Berkeley, Social Welfare.

**XII. School Suspensions are the most Racially Disparate Issue in California severely compromising the future of Black Americans.**

Counties colored **green** are those with “Gains at Risk”; they have above average performance and below average disparity metrics—indicating progress in some areas that may be under threat by changing economic or demographic trends. Counties colored **orange** are those with “Prosperity for the Few,” as they have overall high performance but relatively higher race-based disparities. **Yellow** counties are “Struggling to Prosper,” as they have relatively lower disparities often due to lower performance, indicating deprivation affecting all county residents. Finally, **red** counties are “Stuck and Unequal,” with low performance and high disparities both representing barriers to progress. The size of the circle indicates a county or regions size.”

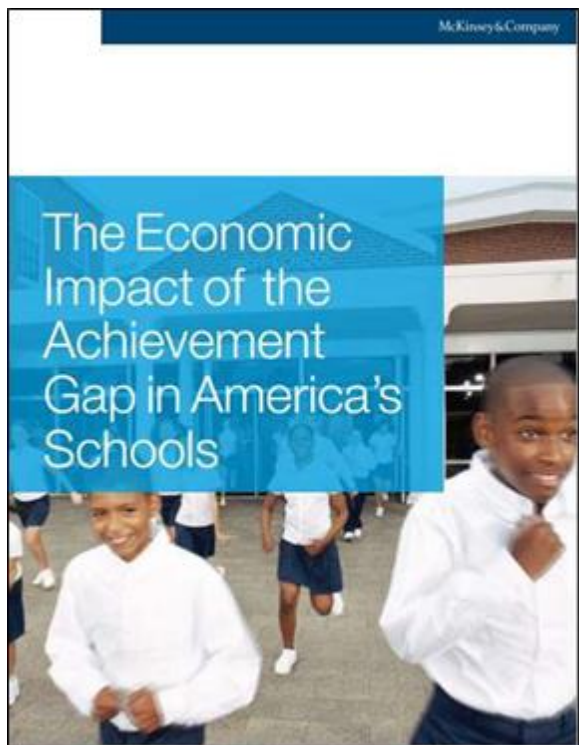


**Source:** *Race Counts: Advancing Opportunity for All Californians*, Winter 2017.

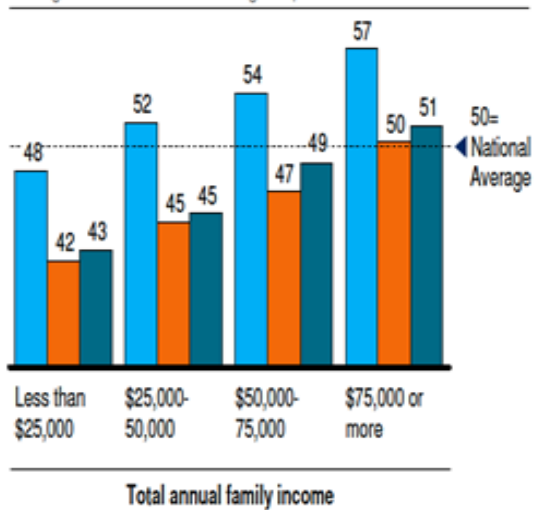


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XII. National data shows income does not explain test results.



ELS Cognitive tests for 10th graders, 2002  
Average score – math and reading composite



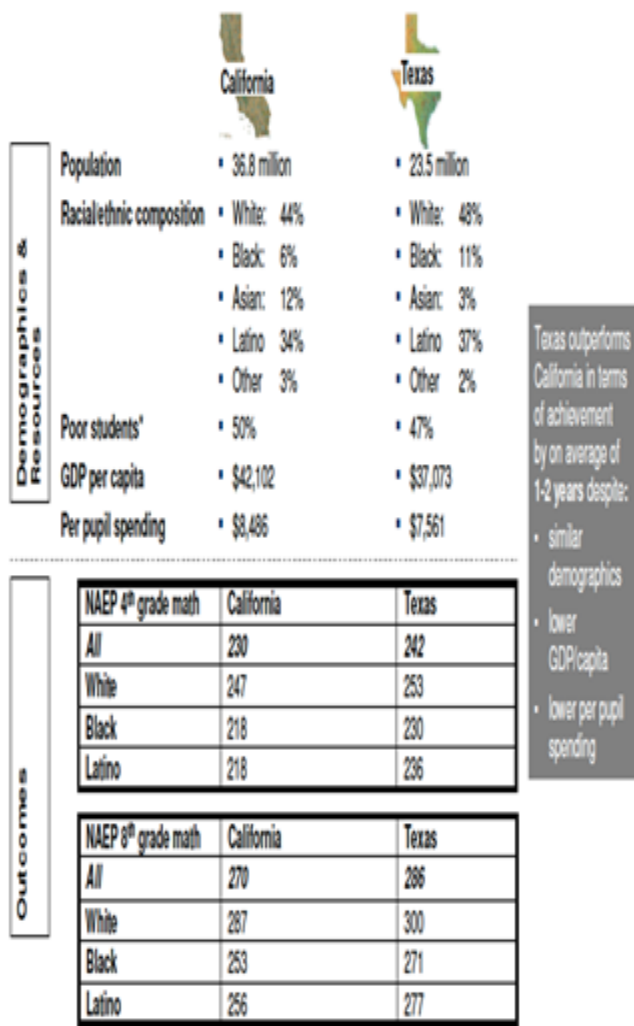
Note: The ELS test is standardized with a national mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10.

SOURCE: ELS: 2002, National Center for Education Statistics, sample includes both public and private schools



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XIII. The racial achievement gap is the result of systems and programs, and some do better than others. With similar demographics, Texas produces better results with African Americans than does California.



Texas outperforms California in terms of achievement by an average of 1-2 years despite:

- similar demographics
- lower GDP/capita
- lower per pupil spending

Note: Data for California and Texas exclusions for NAEP sampling purposes do not differ significantly and are not believed to be a meaningful explanatory factor in the test-score differences between California and Texas students.

\* Defined as students receiving free or reduced school lunches in the 2006/2007 school year



Source: McKinsey and Co. "The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools." 2009.



XIV. While state-wide hate crime data shows that anti-Black hate crimes outnumber all others, the data is incomplete in that it does not disaggregate sub-populations by race.



Table 4  
HATE CRIMES, 2016  
Victim Type by Bias Motivation

Bias Motivation	Total		Individual		Business/ financial institution		Government		Religious organization		Other	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	1,146	100.0	886	100.0	33	100.0	68	100.0	42	100.0	17	100.0
Single-bias total	1,139	99.6	869	98.4	33	100.0	68	100.0	42	100.0	17	100.0
Race/ethnicity/national origin	842	68.1	682	68.6	19	67.6	43	74.1	8	14.3	12	70.6
Anti-white	74	6.5	67	6.7	3	9.1	4	6.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-black or African American	315	27.5	261	28.2	8	24.2	20	34.5	2	4.8	4	23.5
Anti-Hispanic or Latino	110	9.6	106	10.7	0	0.0	3	5.2	1	2.4	0	0.0
Anti-American Indian/ Alaska native	10	0.9	8	0.8	0	0.0	2	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-Asian	31	2.7	26	2.8	2	6.1	3	5.2	1	2.4	0	0.0
Anti-Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	0.4	5	0.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-Arab	19	1.7	19	1.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-multiple races (group)	37	3.2	32	3.2	4	12.1	9	15.5	0	0.0	2	11.8
Anti-other ethnicity/ national origin	36	3.3	27	2.7	2	6.1	2	3.4	1	2.4	6	35.3
Anti-citizenship status	3	0.3	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.4	0	0.0
Religion	229	19.6	186	18.8	10	30.3	12	20.7	32	76.2	4	23.6
Anti-Jewish	130	11.4	105	10.6	9	27.3	8	13.8	4	9.5	4	23.5
Anti-Catholic	12	1.0	3	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	21.4	0	0.0
Anti-Protestant	2	0.2	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-Islamic (Muslim)	40	3.5	38	3.8	0	0.0	1	1.7	1	2.4	0	0.0
Anti-Sikh	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-multiple religions (group)	4	0.3	2	0.2	0	0.0	2	3.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-other religion	34	3.0	14	1.4	1	3.0	1	1.7	18	42.9	0	0.0
Anti-athens/agnosticism/etc.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Sexual orientation	242	21.1	201	20.2	9	9.1	9	6.2	4	9.6	1	6.9
Anti-gay (male)	177	15.5	174	17.5	0	0.0	2	3.4	1	2.4	0	0.0
Anti-lesbian	23	2.0	23	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-homosexual	36	3.1	29	2.9	3	9.1	1	1.7	2	4.8	1	5.9
Anti-heterosexual	6	0.4	4	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.4	0	0.0
Anti-bisexual	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Physical/mental disability	2	0.2	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-physical disability	2	0.2	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-mental disability	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Gender	30	2.6	29	2.9	1	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-male	2	0.2	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-female	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-transgender	25	2.2	24	2.4	1	3.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Anti-gender non-conforming	2	0.2	2	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Multiple-bias total	8	0.6	8	0.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding.  
Crimes committed against property (e.g., a business, government institution, religious organization, etc.) can only be counted as one victim, whereas a crime committed against an individual can have more than one victim per event.  
For a more complete definition of each term, please refer to Appendix 2.

XV. Systems and individuals contribute to racial disparities.

Excerpts from  
Institute of Medicine’s “Unequal Treatment”

“...research indicates that minorities are less likely than whites to receive needed services, including clinically necessary procedures, **even after correcting for access-related factors, such as insurance status.**”

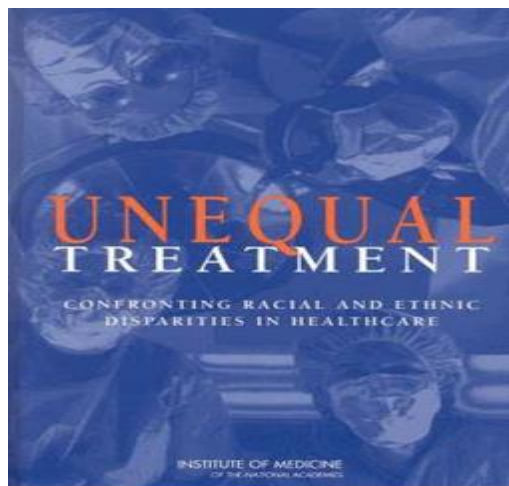




“Aspects of health systems—such as the ways in which systems are organized and financed, and the availability of services— may exert different effects on patient care, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities.”

“... research to date has demonstrated that health care providers’ diagnostic and treatment **decisions, as well as their feelings about patients, are influenced by patients’ race or ethnicity** and stereotypes associated with them...

...[stereotypes] are held **even by people who truly believe that they do not judge others** based on social categories”.



**Source:** Racial Equity Institute, Measuring Racial Equity: A Groundwater Approach.

Nelson, Alan R., Brian D. Smedley, and Adrienne Y. Stith, eds. *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care* (full printed version). National Academies Press, 2002. Executive summary available at

[www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2003/Unequal-Treatment-Confronting-Racial-and-Ethnic-Disparities-in-Health-](http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2003/Unequal-Treatment-Confronting-Racial-and-Ethnic-Disparities-in-Health-Care/DisparitiesAdmin8pg.pdf)

[Care/DisparitiesAdmin8pg.pdf.](http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2003/Unequal-Treatment-Confronting-Racial-and-Ethnic-Disparities-in-Health-Care/DisparitiesAdmin8pg.pdf)

### XV. Five truths of Racial Disparities Affecting African Americans?

1. Black Californians face the greatest burden of any racial group in the state.
2. Socio-economic differences are not the causes of racial inequity.
3. Systems and individuals contribute to racial disparities.
4. Racial disparities among African Americans are not consistent across counties. Racial disparities are concentrated in certain counties;
5. Race is a category of all sub-populations, such as gender, sexual identity and social economic status. Racial disparities in status and outcomes exist in all subgroups.
6. Racial disparities impact the future of all groups and the future of California as a whole.

