



Do Statistical Disparities Mean Injustice?

How many times have we heard laments such as “women are 50 percent of the population but only 5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs” and, as the Justice Department recently found, “blacks are 54 percent of the population in Newark, New Jersey, but 85 percent of pedestrian stops and 79 percent of arrests”? If one believes that people should be represented socio-economically according to their numbers in the population, then statistical disparities represent injustices that demand government remedies. Before we jump to conclusions about what disparities mean and whether they are indicators of injustice, we might examine some other disparities to see what we can make of them.



According to a recent study conducted by Bond University in Australia, sharks are nine times as likely to attack and kill men than they are women. If sinister motivation is attributed for this disparity, as is done in the cases of sex and racial disparities, we can only conclude that sharks are sexist. Another sex disparity is despite the fact that men are 50 percent of the population and so are women, men are struck by lightning six times as often as women. I wonder what whoever is in charge of lightning has against men.

Another gross statistical disparity is despite the fact that Jews are less than 3 percent of the U.S. population and a mere 0.2 percent of the world’s population, between 1901 and 2010, Jews were 35 percent of American and 22 percent of the world’s Nobel Prize winners.

There are other disparities that we might acknowledge with an eye to corrective public policy. Asian-Americans routinely score the highest on the math portion of the SAT, whereas blacks score the lowest. The population statistics for South Dakota, Iowa, Maine, Montana and Vermont show that not even 1 percent of their populations is black. In states such as Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, blacks are overrepresented in terms of their percentages in the general population. When this kind of “segregation” is found in schooling, the remedy is busing.

There are loads of international examples of ethnic disparities. During the 1960s, the Chinese minority in Malaysia, where Malays politically dominate, received more university degrees than the Malay majority — including 400 engineering degrees, compared with just four for the Malays. In Brazil’s state of Sao Paulo, more than two-thirds of the potatoes and 90 percent of the tomatoes produced have been produced by people of Japanese ancestry.

Blacks are 13 percent of our population but 80 percent of professional basketball players and 65 percent of professional football players and among the highest-paid players in both sports. By stark contrast, blacks are only 2 percent of the NHL’s professional ice hockey players. Basketball, football and ice hockey represent gross racial disparities and come nowhere close to “looking like America.”



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on September 24, 2014

Even in terms of sports achievement, racial diversity is absent. In Major League Baseball, three out of the four hitters with the most career home runs are black. Since blacks entered the major leagues, of the eight times more than 100 bases have been stolen in a season, all were by blacks. In basketball, 50 of the 59 MVP awards have been won by black players.

If America's diversity worshippers see underrepresentation as "probative" of racial discrimination, what do they propose be done about overrepresentation? After all, overrepresentation and underrepresentation are simply different sides of injustice. If those in one race are overrepresented, it might mean they're taking away what rightfully belongs to another race. For example, is it possible that Jews are doing things that sabotage the chances of a potential Indian, Alaska Native or Mexican Nobel Prize winner? What about the disgraceful lack of diversity in professional basketball and ice hockey? There's not even geographical diversity in professional ice hockey; not a single player can boast of having been born and raised in Hawaii, Louisiana or Mississippi.

Courts, bureaucrats and the intellectual elite have consistently concluded that "gross" disparities are probative of a pattern and practice of discrimination. Given all of the differences among people, such a position is pure nonsense.

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