

Iowa's Minority Participants in the Economy: Analysis of Public-Use Micro-Sample Data from the 2006 American Community Survey

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August 2008

Introduction

There is much to learn about the participation of the nation's minority populations in the U.S. economy and in Iowa. In Iowa, the preponderance of net population growth during the current decade has been due to minority population increases.

This report is a straightforward comparison of the economic participation characteristics of white only and minority persons residing in Iowa at the time of the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS). Hispanics or others that are considered part of the nation's minority populations are classified as minorities in this study. The white only population is actually, therefore, white and not Hispanic. The Census Bureau samples a substantial fraction of the U.S. and state populations in preparing their annual estimates of the U.S. population. Those data are available as the Public-Use Micro-Sample (PUMS) for regions within states (called PUMS regions), states, and for the nation. This report assesses the PUMS one-percent sample for the state of Iowa for 2006: that means that we are using a sample of the population to infer to the characteristics of all Iowans.

This report does not provide detailed economic outcomes by kind of minority respondent – it simply categorizes economic activity by the two major groupings. Other analysts that are interested in more detail are encouraged to do their own analysis; we here are simply concerned with differentiating economic participation among white only and minority residents, in the main. In addition, this analysis looks only at those respondents ages 16 and older who were actively participating in the Iowa labor force. An active labor force participant is someone who has a job or is actively seeking a job.

A minority labor force participant is of a racial minority, like Black, Asian, or American Indian, or someone who is Hispanic regardless of race or country of origin. These characterizations hold fully, too, when considering whether someone was native born or foreign born. An immigrant white European would be considered white only. A native-born Black Hispanic would be a minority. This report does not, nor does the U.S. Census, distinguish explicitly among those who reside in the country legally and those who do not. It is of course likely that unauthorized residents are more difficult for the Census to survey, let alone sample. There is therefore a likelihood that the minority statistics displayed in this

report under-report the size of minority economic participants in the Iowa economy. It is not possible to estimate that magnitude.*

What follows is an incremental exploration of key compositional and participation attributes of Iowa's minority residents. It is designed to be an introduction to a discussion about minority participation in Iowa's economy, the value of their contributions, the areas within which they work, and some issues that might be pertinent to policy makers and to citizens alike.

The Basics: Going From a Sample to the Iowa Population

The 2006 Iowa sample from which this information is reported had 30,885 survey participants initially – respondents ranging from infants to 95 years of age. For this assessment, all respondents that were under age 16 were excluded as also were those that were not active participants in the 2006 civilian labor force at the time of the survey. That reduced the study sample to 16,366 civilian workers, and that is the sample that was used to represent the characteristics of all 2006 Iowa residents that were in the Iowa civilian labor force.

The census over-samples groups that are under-represented in society. This allows the survey-takers to obtain enough respondents in those under-represented groupings to have greater confidence in the results – the larger the group sample, the lower the likelihood that the sample does not reflect that group's basic characteristics. The PUMS data are then inferred to the remainder of the population using population weights. The weight that is assigned to a respondent, therefore, is a function of that respondent's race, ethnic origin, marital status, or some other important characteristic. We use the weights to ratchet-up the sample results to the Iowa population.

Sample data always contain an implicit and measurable amount of error in the estimates. There are many kinds of errors that can occur, and many reasons, but it is important to note at the outset that in instances where the number of respondents in a category is comparatively small, it is perfectly appropriate to question whether we should have confidence in the findings. In this study, for the most part, the data are aggregated so as to minimize the number of categories, which then works to minimize our concern over the reliability of the responses by maximizing the number of respondents per reported category. Still, it is important to remember that our sample and our population of minority Iowa residents are, comparatively, quite small relative to our sample of white only Iowa residents. Our PUMS sample had 15,510 white only respondents and 856 minority respondents. A discussion about the importance of understanding just how widely responses can vary within a sample is found in the technical note at the end of this report.

* The U.S. Department of Homeland Security assumes that the Census under-estimates illegal aliens by 10 percent. Under-estimates of other groups, say those in poverty, those residing in very remote areas, or those that are homeless, are much lower.

It is important to reiterate this concern: the findings that are reported in this study may not reflect the actual distributions or occurrences in the Iowa population, and that risk of potential inaccuracy increases as the size of the particular group or subgroup that we are studying becomes smaller. Still, an initial sample of 856 minority respondents allows us to have reasonable good confidence in our findings.

Attributes of the Study Groups

Table 1 provides the estimate of the population size represented from the sample that was analyzed. First, our 129,641 minority persons were 7.9 percent of the total study population. Their respective, self-reported unemployment rates were quite different, however: the minority unemployment rate was 10.7 percent compared to a white only rate of 4.3 percent.

Table 1: Labor Force Composition

	White	Minority	Total
Employed	1,437,867	115,718	1,553,585
Unemployed	64,277	13,923	78,200
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	<i>4.3%</i>	<i>10.7%</i>	<i>4.8%</i>
Civilian Labor Force	1,502,144	129,641	1,631,785

Figure 1 gives a sense of the country of birth for our minority labor force participants. In 2006, 49 percent were estimated to have been born in the U.S, followed by 28 percent from Latin American countries, 18 percent from Asia and only 4.2 percent from the rest of the world. Less than one percent of our white only population was born in another country.

Figure 1: Country of Birth for Minority Respondents

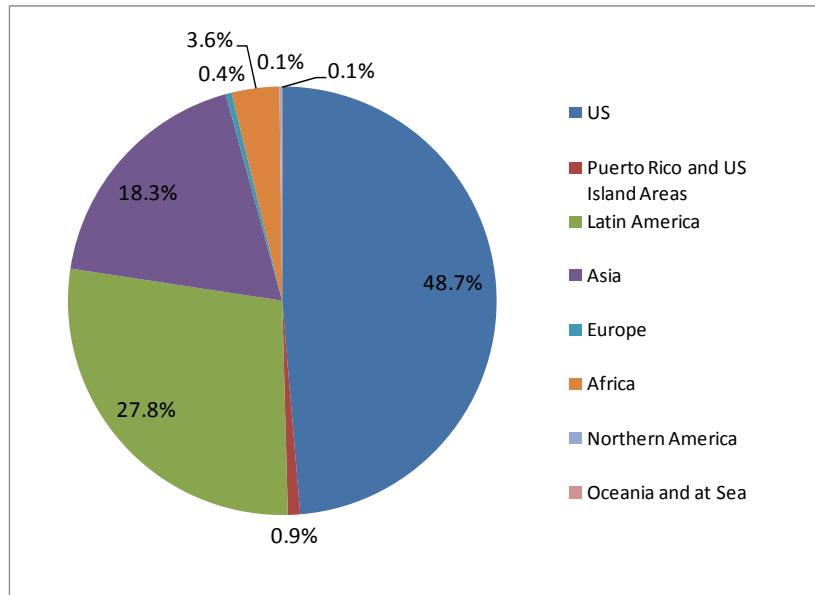


Table 2 gives the racial profile of our minority study group. Whites alone, primarily Hispanics, made up 23.2 percent and Blacks 25.6 percent. Asians were nearly 20 percent, and persons from all other races were 28.4 percent.

Table 2: The Racial Compositions of the Minority Population

	Percent of Total
White alone	23.2%
Black alone	25.6%
Asian alone	19.8%
American Indian / Alaskan native	2.9%
All others	28.4%

Table 3 gives us a sense of the ages of our two study populations.* The number ages 15 to 29 are quite dissimilar at 26.5 percent and 36.3 percent, respectively, and the fraction of minority respondents ages 30 to 44 is substantially greater at 41.2 percent than the white only population at 30.1 percent.

* For the remainder of this report, where we deem it appropriate, instances in which we are 90 percent confident that the differences between white only and our minority sample are indeed meaningful have an asterisk (*) preceding the result. When a difference does not have an asterisk, either the number of respondents was too small to generate statistical confidence in the results or that the confidence intervals indicated that there was no statistical difference between the two comparison groups.

Consequently, the white only population would have a much higher fraction of persons ages 45 to 64. There are strong generational compositional differences across the two groups. Over 77.5 percent of Iowa’s minority population is age 44 or less compared to 56.6 percent of the white population.

Table 3: Age of Respondents

	White	Minority
15 to 29	26.5%	*36.3%
30-44	30.1%	*41.2%
45-64	38.3%	*20.6%
65 and older	5.1%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

There are very strong age-based unemployment rate differences as well between two study groups. In Figure 2 the civilian unemployment rate for minorities ages 15 to 29 is 2.7 times higher than for their white counterparts. The rate for minorities ages 30 to 44 is nearly twice as high. The difference in unemployment, however, for those ages 45 to 64 is statistically similar.

Figure 2: Unemployment Rates by Age Group

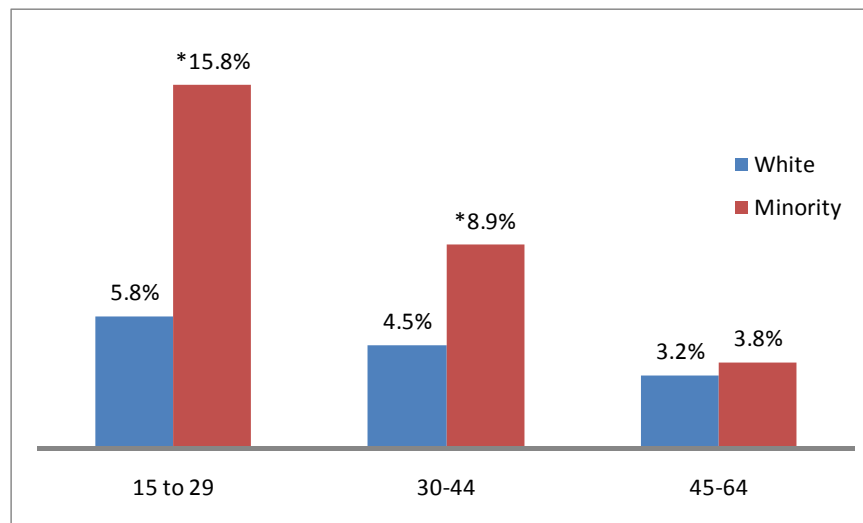


Table 4 tells us that the percentages of female respondents in the civilian labor force were essentially identical. Figure 3, however, reveals that there are strong differences in reported unemployment rates

among our respondents. While civilian unemployment rates among white women were a half of a percentage point higher than white men, both male and female minority unemployment rates were much higher than their white counterparts. The unemployment rate among the state’s female minorities was 2.7 times higher than white females in the labor force.

Table 4: Sex of Respondents

	White	Minority
Male	789,004	68,193
Female	713,140	61,448
<i>Percent female</i>	<i>47.5%</i>	<i>47.4%</i>
Total	1,502,144	129,641

Figure 3: Unemployment Rates by Sex

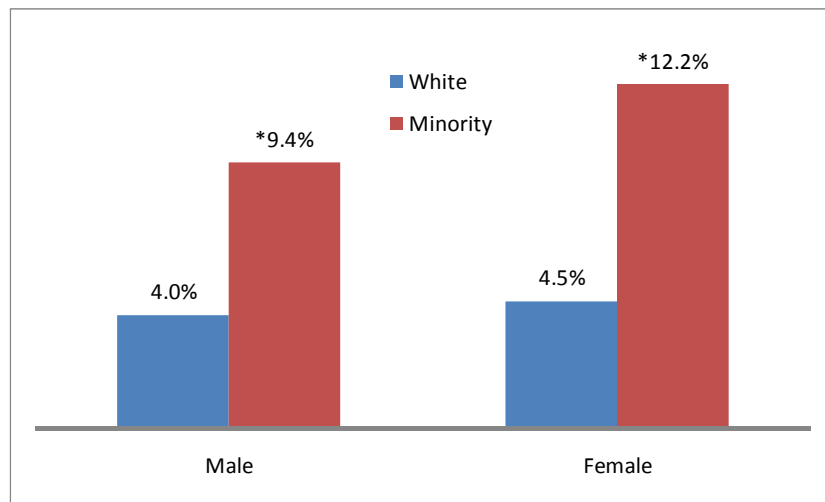


Table 5 details marital characteristics of the two labor force components. The incidence of marriage is significantly different among minorities in total, but minorities are much more likely to have an absent from the home spouse. Over 37 percent of the minority labor force sample had never married compared to only 26 percent for the white group.

Table 5: Marital Characteristics

	White	Minority
Now married, spouse present	58.8%	*44.4%
Now married, spouse absent	0.9%	*5.7%
Widowed	2.0%	1.2%
Divorced	11.0%	8.6%
Separated	1.3%	2.8%
Never married	25.9%	*37.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

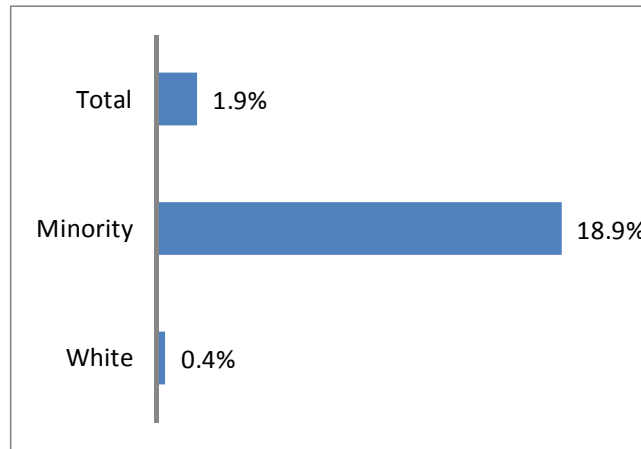
Table 6 allows an accounting of the educational accomplishments of the respective respondent groups. Our minority residents were over 3.6 times more likely to have less than a high school education and trailed the percentage of whites with just a high school only education by 5.7 percentage points. The minority incidence of some higher education up to an associate’s degree is also significantly lower than for their white counterparts, and the rate for bachelor’s or higher degrees was lower as well. While the actual difference between the two groups in this last category may be statistically insignificant given assumed errors of estimate in this sample, a quite substantial fraction of minority residents have college degrees but their incidence is *probably* much less than that of the white only population.

Table 6: Education Attainment for Respondents over Age 24

	White	Minority
Less than high school	8.2%	*30.0%
High school only	31.9%	*26.2%
Some college up to an associate’s degree	34.4%	*23.4%
Bachelor's or advanced degree	25.5%	20.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

We see additional functional detriments influencing the labor force participation of our minority residents in the next graphic. Figure 4 reveals that nearly 19 percent of Iowa’s minority workers had poor or non-existent English speaking skills, according to the 2006 survey.

Figure 4: Percentage with Poor or No English Speaking Skills



The last measure of participation in the state’s civilian work force simply looks at our respondents’ likelihoods of working full or part time. About the same percentages of white only and minority residents worked fewer 20 hours or fewer, but minority workers were more likely to work from 20 to 39 hours and to report working a standard 40 hour week. They were, however, somewhat less likely to be working in excess of 40 hours. If categories are collapsed to less than full time and full time or more, however, there are only minor comparative differences between the two groups. For whites, 72.2 percent work full time or more compared to 68.2 percent for minorities, a difference that is statistically significant in this sample of respondents, but nevertheless still quite small.

Table 7: Average Hours Worked Per Week in 2006

	White	Minority
Under 20	7.7%	6.9%
20 to 39	20.1%	*24.9%
40 hours	38.9%	*46.1%
More than 40 hours	33.3%	*22.1%

Direct Economic Contributions

This section profiles the industries in which white only and minority respondents indicated that they worked, along with their overall earnings levels in these industries. Figure 5 below displays the fraction of the respondents that were self-employed. The differences are stark: among Iowa’s white only respondents, nearly 12 percent indicated that they are self-employed; the value for our minority workers was just 3.6 percent – more than 4 times less.

Figure 5: Incidence of Self-Employment in 2006

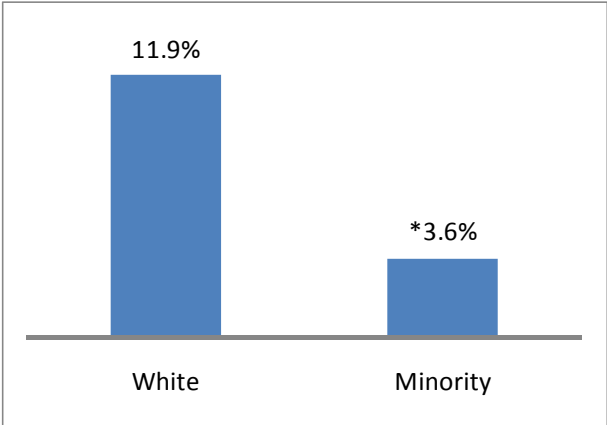


Table 8 displays the broad industrial composition of the respective workforces. These industrial categories have been collapsed to allow for a sample size of at least 70 in each minority category. By virtue of the magnitude of differences that are reported in the table, it is evident that minority workers were much more likely to have a manufacturing job than the white population, much less likely to work in basic services and trade, and much more likely to work in the entertainment and hospitality sector (dining and accommodations, primarily). Over 27 percent of Iowa’s minority workers were in manufacturing in this sample; cumulatively, though, 34 percent worked in finance and professional services industries, which compared to 43.3 percent for the white only population. While a plurality of the minority respondents was concentrated in manufacturing and in hospitality and entertainment jobs, a substantial fraction was employed in sectors that demanded skilled, highly educated professionals.

Table 8: Distribution of Jobs by Major Industry Grouping

	White	Minority
Basic Services and Trade	19.9%	*13.0%
Entertainment and Hospitality	6.3%	*16.6%
Finance & Professional Services	43.3%	*34.0%
Manufacturing	14.5%	*27.4%
Other Goods Production and Distribution	16.1%	*9.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

The next table describes the average earnings by sector for our two groups. In Table 9 there were wide variations in the average earnings among minority workers compared to white only workers by broad industry aggregation. Overall, for all industries, for those respondents that were not unemployed at the time of the survey, minority Iowa job-holders made \$26,259 per job compared to \$34,479 for the native population, or just 76 percent as much. Iowa's minority population made more than 30 percent less per job in manufacturing, the area where they had a strong concentration, as well in all other goods production jobs, which includes construction. They made only 7 percent less in finance and professional services; the same in entertainment and hospitality; and 32 percent less in basic service and trade jobs.

Table 9: Average Earnings per Job in 2005

	White	Minority	Minority as a Percentage of White
Basic Service and Trade	28,130	*19,074	68%
Entertainment and Hospitality	13,789	13,776	100%
Finance & Professional Service	36,494	33,812	93%
Manufacturing	41,239	*27,729	67%
Other Goods Production and Distribution	38,871	*26,732	69%
All Workers	34,479	*26,259	76%

To help reduce our error assumptions and to arrive at more confident conclusions, we can explain some of these differences in earnings by differentiating further among skilled or highly educated professional jobs and those that required substantially fewer skills or education. Table 10 provides some an explanation of the earnings differences. There is a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of minority respondents to work in professional positions. For the white group, 37 percent had professional roles compared to only a quarter of the minority group.

Table 10: The Distribution of Employment by Professional Status

	White	Minority
Nonprofessional	63%	*75%
Professional	37%	*25%
Total	100%	100%

These differences in the aggregate allow us to explain much of the average earnings differences displayed in Table 11. Iowa’s minority, nonprofessional workers earned 76 percent of what white workers made. While minority professionals earned less than their white counterparts the difference was not statistically significant. The overall difference in the weighted-average earnings of our two groups, however, was statistically different, and that difference is explained in the main by the earnings differences among the nonprofessional workers.

Table 11: Average Earnings per Job by Industry Type and Professional Status

	White	Minority
Nonprofessional	27,639	*20,907
Professional	46,151	42,608
Total	34,479	*26,259

Inferring Minority Gross Domestic Product

Iowa’s minority respondents to the 2006 PUMS survey were about 7.9 percent of the labor force. This next section uses the information developed from this survey to infer the amount of Iowa Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is directly or indirectly linked to minority worker participation. GDP is the preferred measure of industrial value in a state across areas and across time. The minority group’s contribution to state GDP is stimulated directly by the value of earnings that it generated in each respective industry. All workers indirectly support GDP by providing the labor that yields a return on investment either to sole proprietors or to investors. Accordingly, the group’s share of earnings in each industry as a percentage of total earnings among our survey population is used to allocate Iowa GDP to

determine potential minority contributions. Overall returns to workers and to owners (sole or investors) are in the first instance a function of all participants' labor, which also includes owners, managers, and other generally well paid employees. Workers, like in manufacturing, that have proportionately high levels of minority participation will find their overall calculated contributions muted, however, by the much lower level of earnings that they make compared to their white only counterparts.

Iowa had \$121.35 billion in GDP in 2006. Using the simple allocation method just listed, \$7.01 billion of that productivity could be considered due to the labor of minority workers, 5.8 percent of the state total. The fraction was highest in the entertainment and hospitality sector at 17.6 percent, trailed by manufacturing at 9.3 percent. The most estimated GDP contribution of our minority workers is in all finance and professional services at \$3.2 billion, followed by manufacturing at \$2.3 billion.

Table 12: Minority Contributions to Iowa Gross Domestic Product in 2006

	GDP	GDP by Minority Workers	Percent Minority
Basic Service and Trade	17,102	588	3.4%
Entertainment and Hospitality	3,723	655	17.6%
Finance & Professional Service	57,887	3,200	5.5%
Manufacturing	24,826	2,302	9.3%
Other Goods Production and Distribution	17,809	537	3.0%
Grand Total	121,347	7,008	5.8%

Conclusions and a Discussion on Confidence

The assessment of the PUMS data allows for a sample-based look at the characteristics of an important Iowa population component. At the outset, however, it is critical to note that our statistical confidence in these results is tempered by the comparatively lower number of minority respondents that are part of the overall sample. In this study, of those that are in the workforce, the minority sample was 771 persons, and the white only sample was 14,907. This means that we have, with regard to the probability of error in our conclusions, little reason to question the results of our white only group, but ample reason to question whether the values described by our minority respondents are in fact representative of the group as a whole. That confidence declines as the number of categories increases. In the future, in an effort to boost our sample sizes, we can combine annual PUMS surveys from more than one year to get a moving, continuous sample of our smaller subgroups. This pooled approach will boost our comfort level in our results and give us lower overall standard errors in our estimates in many cases.

A question may arise at the initial utility of trying to tease out findings from such a comparatively small sample if there are statistical confidence issues. An answer to that question is that, initially, a sample size of 771 allows us to have a reasonable amount of confidence in the findings *in the aggregate and*

with regard to relatively simple classifications such as broad age categories, sex, whether the respondents were married or not, whether they worked in a professional or nonprofessional position, etc. There is, nonetheless, quite a lot of variability in the number of workers by industry, and the number of minority workers in several industry classifications is quite small; hence our decision to collapse our industrial analysis to just 5 categories, for example.

All cautions noted, these findings help to confirm many aspects of our minority population that are reasonably well known from other decennial studies. First, Iowa's minority born population is quite diverse consisting in the main of Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and persons of other races. A plurality of that population, mostly Hispanics, considers itself to be White alone (23.2 percent). A substantial fraction has less than a high school education, and our minority residents are less likely to have a bachelors degree in this sample of Iowa residents. While entrepreneurship as measured by self-employment in our minority group is evident, the incidence is substantially lower than the white only population. Rates of unemployment are much greater among minorities, and the unemployment rates for women minorities are substantially greater than for their white counterparts.

There are large earnings differentials for our minority residents. Those in manufacturing and in other goods production can expect to earn more than 30 percent less per job than white only persons. In contrast, although minority professionals in this sample had fewer earnings than white only professional workers, on average, that difference was not statistically significant. The overall difference in earnings was, however, statistically significant and the lower earnings received by minority nonprofessionals explains the vast majority of that difference.

Last, Iowa's foreign born workers contributed strongly to the state's Gross Domestic Product. They were an estimated 7.9 percent of the state's labor force and 5.8 percent of state GDP as allocated through earnings, nearly \$7.01 billion in 2006. About 46 percent of that amount is found in professional and financial services (within which would fall medicine, education, legal, and business services), and just under a third of that amount is in manufacturing.

By way of comparison, when considering the value and magnitude of minority workers' contributions to the state's economy of 5.8 percent, in 2006 the state's entire animal and crop farming sector directly contributed less than 4.1 percent towards state GDP, as also did Iowa's entire construction sector. Its transportation and warehousing sector contributed 3.9 percent towards state GDP, and all ambulatory health care facilities (doctors' and dentists' office) contributed 3.3 percent to state GDP. Thus compared, minority contributions to state GDP are substantial and important to the state's productivity and well-being in the aggregate.

Technical Notes:

The working sample size for the labor force measured in this study was 16,366 persons, of whom 856 were minority. In a general survey of 856 persons assuming only a 5 percent risk of mis-measuring the population, we would at the outset assume a confidence interval of ± 3.35 percentage points on a simple binomial, even distribution like male or female adults, or whether respondents were Republican or Democrat.* That confidence interval increases (or our statistical happiness decreases), however, as the number of categories increases to about ± 4.5 percent when the sample size is halved for each group, such as male Republicans or female Democrats. That happens because when we group our data into smaller subsets, we increase the likelihood that the sampled subgroup's reported results are not indicative of the entire subpopulation represented – for example sampled male Republicans versus all male Republicans. If a hypothetical random sample survey of 856 persons found that 25 percent of the respondents were female Democrats, then we could be 95 percent sure that the true percentage of female Democrats was between 20.5 percent and 29.5 percent of the population, given our sample size and the number of categories.

If we are willing to accept a greater risk that we have mis-surveyed the population (or a lower level of confidence in the survey results), we can decrease the width of the confidence intervals. That is a trade-off between the sureness of the results versus the risk of not surveying the population properly. American Community Survey results are generally reported for states assuming a 90 percent confidence level. By so doing the Census Bureau decreases (or tightens) its confidence intervals but acknowledges that there is a one in ten risk that the results do not represent the population at large in many categories, most especially those for which the original number of survey respondents was quite small.

Here are two examples from this study where we have calculated the expected confidence intervals of continuous data to demonstrate the issue. The first example is for the average age of the respondent, and the second is for average earnings of the professional and nonprofessional occupations of White only and Minority respondents. The first example only has two subdivisions (white only and minority). The second is a two-by-two table of white and minority respondents times professional or nonprofessional average earnings. We see that our survey response lists the average age of minority respondents to be just over 36 and the average for our white group to be a little more than 43. Owing to the overall size of the population measured in each group, we can calculate the standard error of estimate. For the white only population, it is a mere $12/100^{\text{th}}$ of a year. For the minority responses, however, it is nearly one-half of a year – their standard error is almost four-times greater owing to their comparatively smaller sample size. Were we to assume a normal distribution and a 95 percent confidence level ($1.96 \times \pm$ standard error), then the white population average age could range from 43.0 to 43.4. The minority average age could range from 35.5 to 37.3. As the intervals of both groups do not

* For a sample of 16,366 native persons, and assuming the same 5 percent risk of mis-measuring the population, and assuming a heterogeneous population, our confidence intervals would be $\pm .76\%$. Given the high fraction that is white, therefore highly homogeneous, their white-only intervals would be $\pm .33\%$, an amount considered nearly negligible in most instances. We are thus much more concerned with our smaller subgroups in this discussion.

intersect or overlap, we can be confident that the differences are “statistically significant.” There is, therefore, a very low chance that the average ages of both groups were, in fact, the same.

Example one: Average age of respondents

	White	Minority
Total	43.2	36.4
<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>0.12</i>	<i>0.46</i>
Minimum	43.0	35.5
Maximum	43.4	37.3

Example two introduces more variability. Here we are looking just at the sample results from the ACS for Iowa. That sample indicated that, on average, minority nonprofessional workers would expect to earn 77 percent of what white only nonprofessionals earned.* Minority professionals would expect to earn 12.5 percent less than white professionals. We see that the two groups have substantially different standard errors. The standard error reported for the minority nonprofessionals was more than 3 times greater than their white only counterparts. For the minority professionals, their standard error was almost 4.8 times greater. Still, by keeping the number of data cells analyzed to just four, we can have confidence that at least some of the differences that have been reported are “statistically significant.” The minority nonprofessional confidence intervals (the spread between the minimum and maximum) do not intersect with the white only confidence intervals. The professional intervals do intersect. We can state, in this case, with 95 percent confidence, that the mean earnings of the nonprofessional groups are, indeed, different, but we would not say that about the professional group.

Example two: Average earnings by professional and nonprofessional roles

	White	Minority
Average Earnings		
Nonprofessional	27,634	21,210
Professional	44,920	39,240
Standard Error		
Nonprofessional	524	1,653
Professional	1,205	5,759
Minimum		
Nonprofessional	27,110	19,557
Professional	43,715	33,481
Maximum		
Nonprofessional	28,158	22,863
Professional	46,125	44,999

* The percentages reported here are different from the text because the ACS weights responses differently for each respondent. Minority and other special groups are over-sampled, so their weights are different than those for the native-born groups. These are therefore the sample results, not the weighted results used to infer population totals.

When our analysis of minority respondents goes up to five or six cells of data we begin to lose confidence in the differences that are displayed for our minority respondents as well as in comparison to our white only respondents. In general, then, for variables that summarize the economic characteristics of our respondents, or other important aspects, we made sure that there were at least 70 minority respondents per data item.

We have not printed the actual confidence intervals for each variable and for each cell, opting instead to mark with an asterisk (*) those results for the minority respondents that were statistically significant from the white only group assuming a level of confidence in the survey of 90 percent, the same as the ACS. In addition, both confidence intervals and standard errors were calculated as if these were simple random samples of the population – the ACS is a multi-layered and ongoing survey that over-samples certain groups and certain areas of the U.S. It is not, therefore, a simple random sample design. As there are literally infinite numbers of potential cross-tabulations and controls, the procedures for standard error calculations as documented by the Census Bureau are intricate, involved, and cumbersome depending on whether one is looking at frequencies or means, plus there are additional adjustments to the calculations that are contingent on the specific question or questions investigated and on the actual state being studied. Were we attempting to make causal relationships as would be the case when writing an academic paper, we would be obliged to work through all of those calculations to increase our level of confidence (we would have surely chosen many fewer variables to display). We would also assume tighter risk levels opting, for example, for a 95 percent confidence level rather than the 90 percent level assumed here. As we are here preliminarily investigating the usefulness of a new data set and its ability to inform us about subpopulations for which we have limited knowledge, it was determined that such rigor was not necessary.

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