Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

The "Other" Race Category on Birth Certificates and Its Impact on Analyses of Preterm Birth Inequity

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Objective: Not all individuals self-identify with race categories on birth certificates, selecting "Other" and writing in identities. Our hypothesis was that curating write-in responses in the "Other" race category would contribute to understanding preterm birth inequities.

Methods: We analyzed Pennsylvania birth certificates (2006-2014). Two independent coders reviewed each write-in response among those who selected "Other" race. We compared preterm birth rates across subpopulations within "Other" race category using a Monte Carlo simulated Chi-square test.

Results: Among 1,196,125 singleton births, 72,891 (6.1%) exclusively selected "Other" race; Hispanic more often than non-Hispanic individuals (54.5% vs 0.7%), $p < 0.0001$). Only 545 (0.8%) of Hispanic individuals wrote in responses aligned with preestablished race categories compared to 2,601 (33.2%) of non-Hispanic individuals. Preterm birth rates varied significantly across identities within the "Other" group ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Utilizing combinations of self-identified race, ethnicity, and continental origin may facilitate public health efforts focused on birth outcome equity.

Journal:

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