

Do Group Differences Always Mean Discrimination?

Careful and Caring Thinking About Disparities and Their Causes

The idea that disparities between groups are 1) bad and 2) automatic evidence for pervasive, systemic discrimination has been popular for decades. Both of these assertions are flawed and better assertions exist. Adopting the most reality-based assertions for the cause(s) of various group differences is necessary both for guiding individuals toward success and for the rational and effective use of public resources. The interview and articles below feature reputable sources and clearly and persuasively demonstrate that group disparities are 1) common and 2) frequently best explained by non-discriminatory factors.



Group disparities and their causes

Link: https://youtu.be/atqB_7bzNFc (15m video)

Economist Thomas Sowell never shies from subjecting popular narratives to pointed, evidence-based analysis. He's researched group disparities in the US and around the world for decades, and the volume and scope of his writings is impressive. In this short video, Sowell outlines some examples of disparities and shows that, in free societies, different outcomes between groups are actually quite common. He also discusses disparities found among children within the same family, proving that, even within the smallest, most basic social unit, we can expect differences in outcomes.

The use and misuse of data in assessing disparities

Link: <https://www.creators.com/read/walter-williams/09/14/do-statistical-disparities-mean-injustice> (5m read)

Walter Williams was also an economist and a colleague of Thomas Sowell. In this short article, he explains that, frequently, data on disparities is selectively presented—by including data to highlight groups in social tension but excluding data for other groups that confound the desired narrative. Williams includes some interesting statistics on sports, extreme weather events, and science participation, and demonstrates that such differences cannot be explained by a simplistic appeal to “discrimination”. Other factors, such as preferences, culture, and luck, play an important role.

Agency, not managed outcomes, as the principled public policy goal

Link: <https://1776unites.org/essays/frederick-douglass-and-the-essence-of-authentic-antiracism/> (5m read)

Delano Squires is an entrepreneur and a writer for the pro-human 1776 Unites organization. In this article, Squires touches on how data regarding group disparities can easily be presented in ways that mislead the reader. He challenges purveyors of popular, but misguided (and often harmful) belief systems. For example, writer Ibram X. Kendi advocates explicit, formal anti-White discrimination to be continued until outcomes are equalized. Referencing the ideas of former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, Squires directly challenges this view by stressing the importance of dignity, grace, and agency. The article draws a revealing contrast between the pro-human, pro-agency philosophy of Frederick Douglass and the dehumanizing ideology of Ibram Kendi.

Persuasive alternative causes of group disparities that matter to public policy

Link: <https://www.commentary.org/articles/wilfred-reilly/racism-ibram-x-kendi/> (10m read)

If discrimination cannot adequately explain group disparities, what can? Wilfred Reilly, a political scientist who specializes in analyzing the data behind popular beliefs, summarizes in layman's terms the academic research on disparities. His own research shows that variables such as student study time, region and age more consistently explain common disparities between groups in the US than do simplistic, but appealing, narratives invoking discrimination.

twin-cities@fairforall.org
<https://www.fairforall.org/twin-cities/>