



Forum Guide to Collecting and Using Disaggregated Data on Racial/Ethnic Subgroups

The National Forum on Education Statistics

■ Mission

- ❖ To plan, recommend, and develop education data resources that will support local, state, and national efforts to improve public and private education throughout the United States.

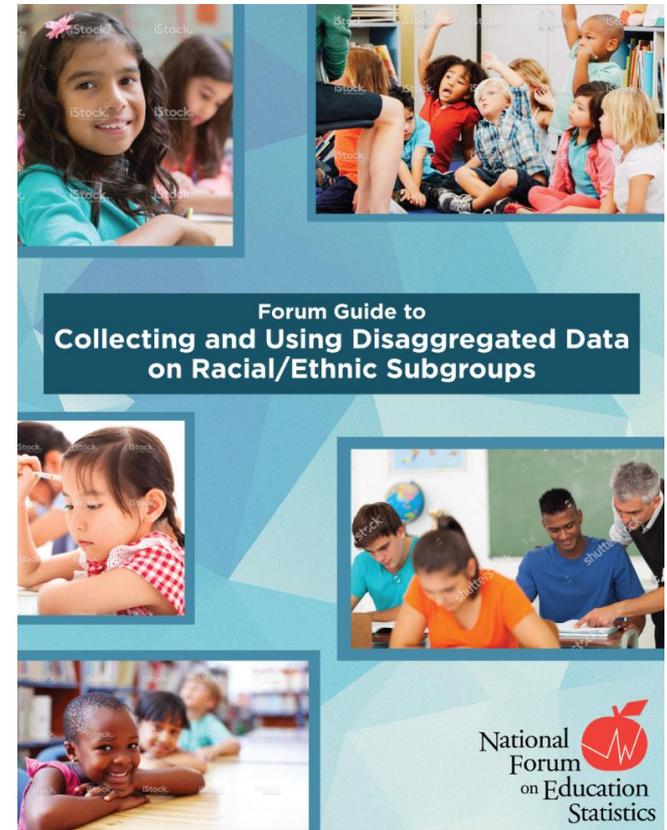
■ Members

- ❖ Representatives of state and local education agencies
- ❖ Representatives of federal agencies that collect and use education data
- ❖ Associate member representatives from RELs, national education associations, and U.S. territories

Document Purpose

To help state and district personnel

- learn more about data disaggregation in the field of education;
- decide whether data disaggregation might be appropriate for them; and
- if so, how to implement or continue a data disaggregation project.



Structure of the Guide

- ❖ **Chapter 1: Introduction to Data Disaggregation in Education Agencies**
 - ❖ explains the purpose of the document
 - ❖ describes data disaggregation
 - ❖ discusses why this issue is becoming increasingly important
 - ❖ provides a district case study of why disaggregated subgroup data collection is necessary

Structure of the Guide

- ❖ **Chapter 2: Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/Ethnic Data Subgroups** recommends specific strategies for disaggregating data, including tasks undertaken during the two major phases of the project:
 - ❖ needs assessment
 - ❖ project implementation
- ❖ **Chapter 3: Case Studies** offers an in-depth look at how disaggregation of racial/ethnic subgroup data is already being implemented through specific case studies.
- ❖ **Appendix A: Issues to Consider** identifies emerging topics of interest in data disaggregation in education agencies.

What is Data Disaggregation?

In education, *disaggregation* refers to the breaking down of student data into smaller groupings, often based on characteristics such as sex, family income, or racial/ethnic group.

Data disaggregation is referred to as . . .

- separating into parts
- drilling down

Data aggregation is referred to as . . .

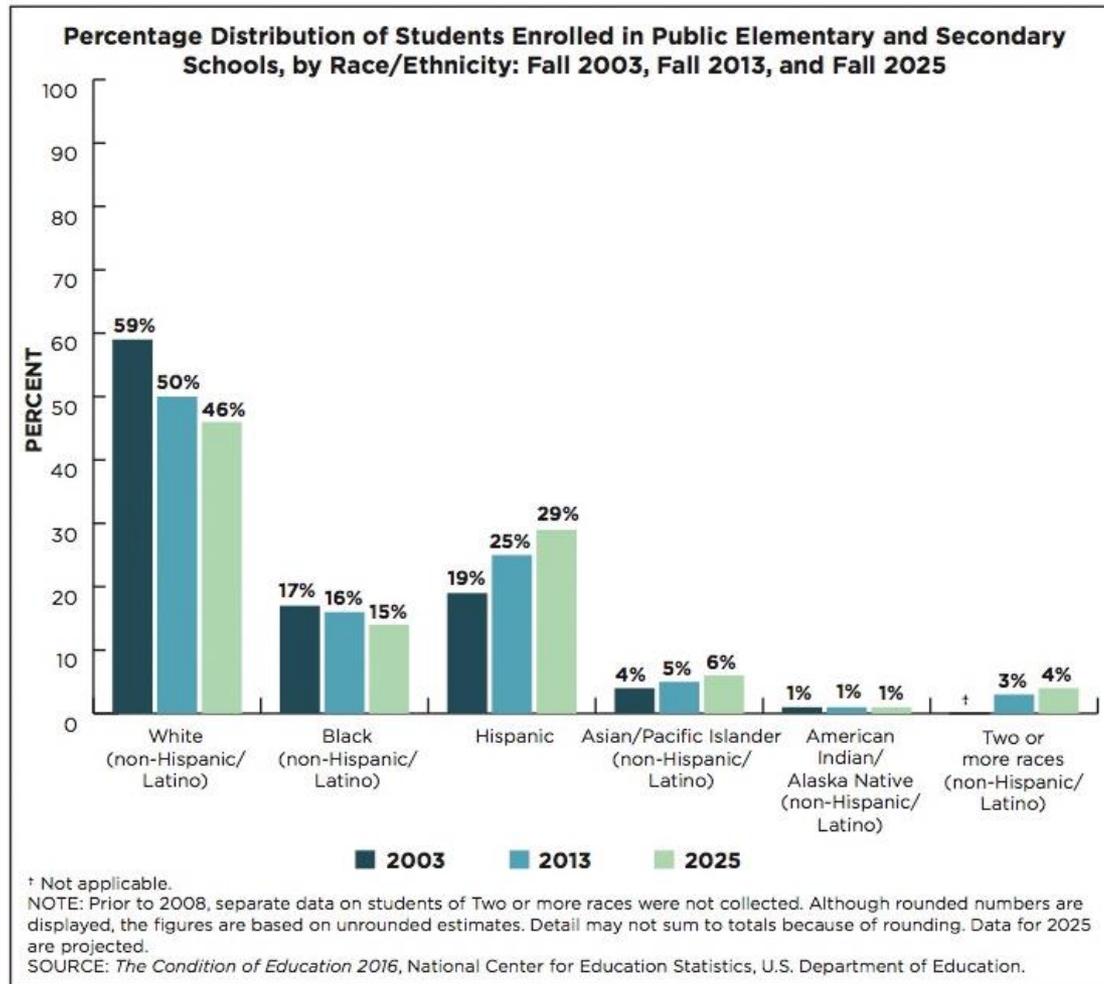
- summing
- rolling up

Racial/Ethnic Data Collection Today

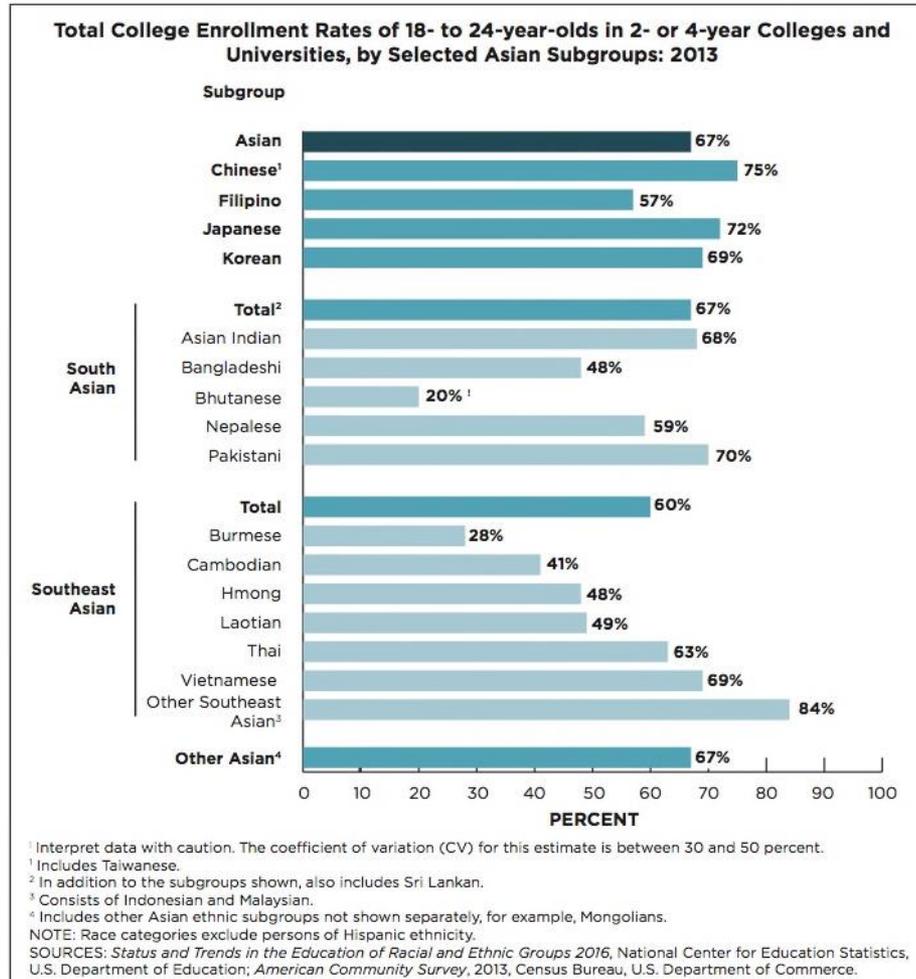
Federal Categories

- Hispanic/Latino of any race
- For individuals who are Non-Hispanic/Latino
 - ❖ American Indian or Alaska Native
 - ❖ Asian
 - ❖ Black or African American
 - ❖ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - ❖ White
 - ❖ Two or more races

The Changing U.S. School Population



What is Lost when Data Are Aggregated



Disaggregated data can assist in...

- ...evaluating how specific groups of students are performing.
- ...considering educational perspectives and teaching methods that address the differences among students.
- ...revealing patterns that can be concealed by aggregate data.
- ...identifying needs so that allocation of human and financial resources are done more accurately and equitably.
- ...acknowledging the racial/ethnic heritage of students and families.
- ...monitoring equity in educational resources and outcomes.

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Needs Assessment*

Develop a Strong Data Governance Program

What is the current data governance process and how can it support this work?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Work within your organization's existing data governance structure
- ✓ Review organization charts and management structures
- ✓ Establish responsibility for data management tasks

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Needs Assessment*

Identify and Involve Stakeholders

Who are your agency's stakeholders and how does the agency involve them?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Identify data stewards, data users, and other stakeholders who may be affected by a data collection change
- ✓ Proactively initiate a conversation with stakeholders, don't wait for the implementation stage

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Needs Assessment*

Determine Whether Change is Justified

What is the problem the agency is trying to solve? How might data disaggregation help? What are the applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Identify issues that currently exist that might be addressed by disaggregating data
- ✓ Identify and comply with applicable laws and policies

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Needs Assessment*

Assess Your Current Data Systems

*What data collections and systems
related to racial/ethnic data are
currently in use?*

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Conduct a thorough assessment of what currently exists in each data system that is related to racial/ethnic data

Data systems that may contain racial/ethnic data:

Student records/SIS
Central registration
Special education
Assessment
Title I, VI, and VII
English language learners
Career and technical education
Charter schools registration and records
Free-and-reduced-price lunch
Migrant education
Gifted and talented
Discipline
Virtual education
Human resources
Retirement
State certification/licensure information

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Needs Assessment*

Identify Needed Subgroups

What subgroups are growing in your area? What subgroups are projected to grow in the future?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Ask for input from stakeholders
- ✓ Utilize existing elements in your system
- ✓ Utilize outside resources
- ✓ Don't forget about mandated reporting categories and requirements

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Needs Assessment*

Estimate Costs

What is the impact? What will it cost? Will the cost yield a return on investment?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Identify needed technical changes
- ✓ Clearly define what changes you propose to make to data systems, data structures, data processes, and related technical support and services
- ✓ Consider staff and contractor hours needed

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Implementation*

Develop a Schedule

What are the timelines and implementation calendar?

Sample 3-Year Implementation Timeline

Year 1: Lay the Groundwork

- Develop policies, procedures, and guidelines for the project.
- Provide clear direction to partners, such as schools, vendors, contractors, and other stakeholders.
- Be open to exploring a range of possibilities, while progressively narrowing options and making decisions in a timely manner.

Year 2: Prepare Systems and Personnel

- Have your in-house, contractor, or vendor technical experts create or modify your data systems so they can collect disaggregated information. It is likely that existing systems will need to run in parallel until project leaders are convinced that the new system has been successfully released.
- Provide training to personnel who will be tasked with collecting, managing, or using the disaggregated data.
- Continue to provide information and guidance to stakeholders.

Year 3: Initiate the Re-identification Process

- Create forms and notify parents as needed; continue to communicate with stakeholders.
- Ask students, parents, staff, and other individuals to re-identify their racial/ethnic selection.
- Follow up on your processes and procedures to ensure that data are being collected, managed, and used properly.

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Implementation*

Provide Communication and Training Resources

What materials and media are needed? Which tools do the stakeholders need?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Write materials in plain, easy-to-understand language, and if possible, in multiple languages
- ✓ Use multiple channels of communication
- ✓ Maintain ongoing dialogue with stakeholders
- ✓ Place communication and training materials on your website
- ✓ Provide trainings for data stewards, users, and related staff

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Implementation*

Update Your Data Systems

What needs design, development and testing? How will the data be protected when shared?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Work with your IT experts to create and implement a plan
- ✓ Design your data entry screen to be as simple as possible
- ✓ Test your systems
- ✓ Establish business rules and procedures
- ✓ Expect that additional corrections will be needed
- ✓ Be proactive about discussing security and privacy protections
- ✓ Test suppression techniques

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Implementation*

Identify and Re-identify Individuals into New Subgroups

How should the question be asked? What to do when students/families refuse to provide the information?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Identify new individuals: Use a two-part question
- ✓ Re-identify individuals: Develop and implement a plan for notifying students, parents, staff, and others about the change, the reasons for the change, and request they re-identify
- ✓ Use observer identification as a last resort: Create a policy and set of procedures staff can follow

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Implementation*

Review Data Quality

What are the data quality processes? What are all the ramifications of changes on data quality?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Review the attributes of data quality (timeliness, completeness, accuracy, validity, and consistency) and take steps to ensure they are all addressed
- ✓ Conduct regular data quality audits
- ✓ Consider the ramifications of changing racial/ethnic subgroups

Strategies for Disaggregating Racial/ Ethnic Subgroups: *Implementation*

Support Data Use

What are the impacts on data reporting? How can the agency support its users?

Some Strategies:

- ✓ Devote resources to support a range of stakeholders as they use the disaggregated data
- ✓ Provide support for recurring reports, program/service needs, research, and outreach
- ✓ Items such as MOUs, data licenses, or general data use agreements can also be used
- ✓ Make decisions on public reporting such as small cell size limits, subgroup selection, and how to report students who identify with more than one subgroup
- ✓ Develop data translation and storage processes

Case Studies

- Overarching descriptive information about the agency
- Why the agency disaggregated racial/ethnic subgroups
- How the agency disaggregated racial/ethnic subgroups
- Data quality challenges
- Uses of the disaggregated data
- Lessons learned

Case Studies

- **Highline Public Schools, Washington:** case study of a district striving to meet community needs
- **Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:** case study of a statewide expansion of subgroups
- **Portland Public Schools, Oregon:** case study of a district that added an optional question
- **Hawaii Department of Education:** case study of a historically racially/ethnically diverse state
- **Guam Department of Education:** case study of an outlying area that is part of the Compact of Free Association
- **Springdale School District, Arkansas:** case study of a U.S. mainland district with a Pacific Islander population

Issues to Consider

- How is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) relevant to data disaggregation?
- Will there be more state legislation requiring additional subgroups or detailing how racial/ethnic groupings should be defined?
- Will there be more district policies on racial/ethnic subgroups?
- Will more subgroups be defined and added?
- Will staff data also become disaggregated by racial/ethnic subgroup?
- What are the implications if a student changes racial/ethnic subgroups over time?
- Can the strategies from this document be used to disaggregate data in other areas?

Data Disaggregation Working Group

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Other Forum Resources

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