



NCHS BSC Workgroup on Measures of Discrimination for Use in NCHS Surveys

Kristen Olson, Chair

NCHS Board of Scientific Counselors Meeting

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Workgroup members

- Kristen Olson, Chair
- Scott Holan
- Helen Levy
- Andy Peytchev
- Matthew Snipp
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Charge to the Workgroup (1)

- NCHS is exploring how best to add discrimination measures to the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), and/or the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).
- Discrimination measures in this context are defined as measures that assess one aspect of racism, namely experiences of interpersonal racial discrimination, and other forms of discrimination due to non-dominant social identity or position.

Charge to the Workgroup (2)

- Incorporating discrimination measures into NCHS surveys such as the NHIS, NSFG, and NHANES could give NCHS and survey data users the ability to
 - Quantify and track the prevalence of discrimination and
 - Understand the relationships between discrimination and key health indicators in nationally representative samples.
- NCHS needs advice on how to maximize such benefits and how to best understand, interpret, and evaluate the value of such benefits.
- The Workgroup has been established to gather information, obtain individual input, exchange ideas, conduct research, analyze relevant issues and facts, and prepare findings that could be used to develop recommendations that the Board may decide to deliver to NCHS.

Process

- Questions posed by NCHS to the BSC
 - Feasibility and Practicality
 - Selecting Discrimination Measures
- Questions posed by the Workgroup to the speakers
 - Considerations and Criteria for Selecting Discrimination Measures
- Information Collection
 - Review of existing literature
 - CDC stakeholders and experts
 - LCDR Rashid Njai, PhD, Lead, Minority Health and Health Equity Science Team, CDC
 - Tina Norris, PhD, Data Scientist, Division of Health Interview Statistics, NCHS
 - Subject matter experts
 - Forthcoming
 - Three Workgroup meetings held thus far

Preliminary Findings: Feasibility and Practicality (1)

Given the limited space available on the NHIS, NSFG and NHANES, does the BSC consider the inclusion of discrimination measures to be an achievable goal for NCHS?

Preliminary feedback: Yes, we find that the inclusion of discrimination measures is an achievable goal for NCHS.

Preliminary Findings: Feasibility and Practicality (2)

What are the most important contributions NCHS can make to research or surveillance efforts related to discrimination?

Preliminary feedback: The Workgroup finds that an important role for NCHS to play in research and surveillance related to discrimination is to collect nationally representative data regularly. This regular collection will permit local communities to have national benchmark data on discrimination for comparison in community studies. As an important psychosocial stressor, researchers and the public health community will be able to evaluate how discrimination is related to a wide variety of health outcomes across the NHIS, NHANES, and NSFG in national samples and for subgroups of interest with a broad range of health-related measures included in NCHS surveys.

Preliminary Findings: Feasibility and Practicality (3)

Should NCHS surveys have a focus on discrimination in health care settings or consider experiences of discrimination more generally?

*Preliminary feedback: We find that both global experiences of discrimination and within the healthcare context are likely to be important contributors to health outcomes. Because not all US adults regularly visit health care settings, asking **only** about discrimination in health care settings is likely to not be applicable to all respondents. As a result, we believe that a limited scope may miss ongoing experiences of discrimination that may affect health. Thus, experiences of discrimination across multiple domains, which needs to include but not be limited to health care settings, is important.*

Preliminary Findings: Feasibility and Practicality (4)

Should discrimination content be similar or different across NCHS surveys?

Preliminary feedback: Because key survey variables differ across NCHS surveys, we find that having similar items on discrimination across surveys will be valuable. Specifically, it would be valuable to have a small core set of identical questions asked on all NCHS surveys. If space permits a longer evaluation with additional measures in one of the surveys, having common discrimination questions could permit scholars to use data integration techniques to combine information across surveys.

Preliminary Findings: Selecting Discrimination Measures (1)

Is additional developmental research needed? How can NCHS contribute to this development?

Preliminary feedback: Yes, additional developmental work is needed. We find that there are many areas where additional work by NCHS may be fruitful.

- *There are multiple major scales for discrimination that are applicable for general population surveys and can be asked of adults of all racial/ethnic backgrounds. These scales have not been explicitly collected in the same survey, limiting our understanding of the relative contribution of each to health outcomes.*
- *Different implementations of the same scales in large-scale probability surveys have used different question introductions and different instructions to the respondent. More work is needed to understand the effects of these question introductions.*

Preliminary Findings: Selecting Discrimination Measures (2)

Is additional developmental research needed? How can NCHS contribute to this development? (continued)

Preliminary feedback:

- *We find few direct comparisons of responses to discrimination questions across interviewer-administered and self-administered modes. Work is needed here to evaluate the effect of mode on discrimination measures.*
- *Research on race and gender-related attitudes shows race- and gender-of-interviewer effects (West and Blom 2018), and it seems likely that discrimination measures will see similar effects. More work is needed to evaluate whether interviewer-administration would yield similar interviewer-related biases and variance.*

Preliminary Findings: Selecting Discrimination Measures (3)

Is additional developmental research needed? How can NCHS contribute to this development? (continued)

Preliminary feedback:

- *More work is needed on question order effects when assessing discrimination, including placement in the survey and how the context of prior questions may affect answers to these questions.*
- *Current discrimination measures may not fully capture the severity of the experience with discrimination (e.g., interaction with police). More work is needed on assessing discrimination experience severity.*

Preliminary Findings: Selecting Discrimination Measures (4)

Is additional developmental research needed? How can NCHS contribute to this development? (continued)

Preliminary feedback:

- *Different items in existing discrimination scales may be understood differently across subgroups (e.g., older vs. younger respondents). We find that cognitive interviews or other qualitative work may be needed to evaluate the performance of these measures for respondents with a wide range of characteristics.*
- *Whether respondents (overall and across subgroups) consistently report experiences with discrimination over time needs additional exploration. We find that a reliability study would be useful.*

Future information gathering

- Forthcoming meetings with subject matter experts
- Questions posed to the SMEs:
 - What theoretical concepts related to discrimination or measures (actual scales or items) are the **strongest** predictors of health outcomes?
 - What concepts or measures are the most **consistent** predictors of health across domains?
 - Are some concepts or measures more **useful** at predicting **certain** health outcomes (general health; chronic conditions; medical care; health behaviors; biomarkers of stress; biomarkers of disease; fertility)?
 - What concepts or measures **explain variance above and beyond** information traditionally collected in NCHS surveys?
 - Are certain concepts or measures "better" (stronger, more reliable, more likely to be endorsed, easier to be answered) for **certain subgroups**?

Future information gathering (2)

- How best can NCHS surveys contribute to future research and/or surveillance efforts related to racism and discrimination?
 - Where is the need the greatest? Surveillance? Exploratory research? Identifying levels of a specific measure over time or by subgroups? Identifying previously unknown relationships of a specific measure with certain health outcomes? Tracking the strength of known relationships over time?
 - Can that need already be met with other surveys?
 - What are appropriate criteria for evaluating benefit to NCHS, CDC, public health, and data users?

Discussion questions

- The Workgroup finds a need for additional research in many areas. In which domains should methodological work begin first?
- The Workgroup will be talking with additional subject matter experts. Are there additional criteria or questions for evaluation that we should explore with the SMEs?

Thank you!

