

Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Retirement Outcomes: Impacts of Outreach

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Key Findings and Policy Implications

This paper reviews past studies on racial and ethnic disparities in retirement outcomes and how they are impacted by outreach efforts. A key goal is to identify gaps in the literature that can be addressed in future study. Among the key findings:

- There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in how well-prepared people feel for retirement, how accurately they assess their retirement preparedness, their knowledge of retirement-related financial issues, their financial literacy more generally, their participation in retirement savings accounts or employer-sponsored retirement plans, and their investment in riskier, higher-yielding financial assets. While Social Security plays a role in reducing the retirement wealth gap, it is not sufficient to close the gap.
- Past research has explored the impact of retirement outreach and financial literacy interventions generally. It has also looked at racial and ethnic disparities in retirement information acquisition. There is comparatively little work, however, on the differential impact of retirement outreach interventions across race and ethnicity, particularly when intersected with other demographic characteristics such as gender or immigrant and socio-economic status.
- Prior outreach experiments have primarily been implemented in collaboration with the Understanding America Study, Amazon Mechanical Turk, and field partners such as universities, private companies, or government agencies. Analyses of secondary data have primarily been conducted using the Health and Retirement Study, the Understanding America Study, and the Survey of Consumer Finances. Thus, there are opportunities for methodological innovation in data collection, linking, and analysis.

Building from this foundation of past work, future research should consider targeted interventions that cater to the needs of specific demographic groups, for example, by embracing the fact that Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites acquire retirement information from different sources. Future interventions explicitly aimed at addressing racial and ethnic disparities in retirement outcomes should also capitalize on the lessons learned from prior outreach studies, for example, the role of behavioral factors, peer effects, and culture.

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