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Are Hispanics discriminated in the US Criminal Justice System?

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Background

A survey of Centro Hispano PEW, a non-political research group in Washington, showed that only 45% of Latinos consider the police treat everyone equal, compared to 74% of Whites. With respect to Justice, only 49% believed that they would receive an impartial process in the community tribunals. Hispanics also claim that they are incarcerated before conviction nearly twice as often as Whites.

Unfair treatment perception by the population reduces legitimacy of police and government. Most of the research on race in the US criminal justice system is focused only on African Americans. Thus, it is imperative to analyze these issues related to Hispanics.

Aim

The purpose of this study is to analyze with updated and reliable statistics whether Hispanics are incarcerated before conviction more often than Whites.

Method

The method used in this study is a Moderated Regression Model in which the outcome or Dependent variable is Incarceration without conviction (as of June 30, 2014) and the Independent variable is Hispanic race. The Level of confidence in this study was 95%.

The Hispanic population has increased during the last decade four times more than the increase of the total population (it increased from 35.3 millions to 50.5 millions in 2010) and they represent 16% of the US total population.

New data available

The present study is based on the 2014 US Department of Justice's Annual Survey of Jails. It is the first Annual Survey of Jails to include the number of inmates that were unconvicted. This allowed for the first time to obtain reliable data to investigate this issue.



According to the US 2010 Census, Latino population are already a majority in 30 cities and now they even represent more than 70% of the population in 13 cities with more than 100,000 within the US.

Results

From the regression analysis of the data of this study, it resulted that the relationship between the possibility of being **incarcerated without conviction** in a US jail and the fact of **being Hispanic was not statistically significant** when controlling for age and gender (considering only adult males). When the same moderated regression analysis was ran for other races, it showed that the relationship was statistically significant only in the case of White subjects and not African Americans.

LIMITATIONS: This study includes only data from State jails but not from prisons. However, of the 2,3 million people incarcerated in 2007 in the US, only 200,000 (i.e. 8,6%) approx. were in federal institutions.

Conclusions

According to the analysis of the data of June 30, 2014, only the fact of being a White was related to the possibility of being incarcerated more before conviction in a US jail.

Future research should be implemented in order to properly address other criticisms to US criminal justice systems, such as the one made by the National Council of Race's (the largest national Latino civil rights organization in the U.S.), who claim that Hispanics are incarcerated three times more often than Whites.