Moses Howard

Data Analysis of Demographics Survey

In a demographics survey that I issued to the classes of Professor Twicken, I asked the 94 respondents to list their estimations of the population of the United States and the percentage of American citizens that were the following ethnicities: White; African American; Asian American; or Latino. All the data that I use as the correct answers to these questions of ethnic population are taken from the U.S. Census estimated 2015. To help me sort through the data quickly, I created a program that would assist in analyzing the information. The program allowed me to filter the respondents by chosen ethnicity, political party, as well as if they had taken a sociology class or not. When the averages were calculated from the total sample, I found 60% of responses estimated the White population of the U.S. to be below 50% of the total population. This means that the majority of those who were surveyed believed that America is a majority minority nation, while the actual White alone ethnic population is 62% of the nation’s total population. The respondents estimated 21% of the population to be Latino, another 21% to be African American, and 13% Asian American. By adding up the number of respondents who estimated within 3% of the actual ethnicity’s population and dividing by four times the total sample, I saw that there was a 26% chance that a student answered correctly on the survey.

The most outstanding data was found when looking at the estimated population of American citizens by the respondents. It appears that those who accurately estimated the population were not closer in their estimates for the ethnic percentages, and vice versa. At the time of this survey, America had a population of 330 million citizens. However only 25% of the respondents gave a population gave an answer between 300 million and 360 million. 50% of students responded with answers above 360 million, and of those 50%, more than half believe the population of the U.S. to be above 1 billion. On the other end of the spectrum, we find that 15% of the total respondents believe the U.S. population to be under 50 million people in size. This data indicates that students at Saddleback College could have little grasp on the difference between millions and billions, which could have far reaching impacts on how they view national debt, the size of the national budget, and many other facets of the economy.

Interestingly, when comparing the scores of those respondents that had taken a sociology class, compared to those that did not, I found that those who had not taken a sociology class scored much higher on average; an explanation for this eludes me. Between the four most commonly reported political preferences, the data shows that those without a political party performed much better on average than those that were affiliated with a political party. However, when comparing the average number of respondents who scored within 3% of the actual population percentage, they were the second worst of the four groups. The deviation in results indicates that a greater number of incorrect answers on the opposite end of the spectrum created a misleading result. The two groups that had the largest percentage of correct answers are those who identified as Democrat and Republican. It is worthy to note that no group had even 30% of their scores within 3% of the actual percentages.

The results of this survey indicate a warped view of American Demographics. Only 1 out of 94 respondents correctly guessed within 3% of all the actual ethnic percentages and within 30 million of the total U.S. population. If I could do the survey again, I would ask respondents to include their gender and the number of hours per week they spend consuming news media. Along with a distorted view of the scale of numbers, a possible consequence of the belief that America is a majority minority nation, is a defensive fear from the large White population.