

Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Longitudinal Mortality Follow-up among Older Americans

Joseph Lariscy
University of Memphis

2024 NIMLAS Plenary

- Mortality researchers face a methodological dilemma: if survey respondents experience the event of interest (i.e., death) between the survey period and a follow-up period, they cannot report on the occurrence, timing, and cause of their death.
- The same issue arises in attrition in longitudinal studies: a survey respondent who exits a longitudinal study due to death cannot inform the data collectors.
- This project addresses NIMLAS *Thematic Area 2: Design or analytic techniques for addressing attrition in longitudinal studies of aging*.

- Vital status can be longitudinally tracked in two ways:
 - ① Active follow-up: contacting the respondent or a next of kin during a later wave
 - ② Passive follow-up: prospectively matching the survey respondent to a death record in the National Death Index (NDI)

- Record linkage depends on survey respondents reporting personally identifiable information (PII), such as Social Security number, name, date of birth, place of birth, race, and sex.
 - If the PII is available and accurate in both data sources, records can be correctly matched.
 - But, if PII is missing or inaccurate, the matching algorithm may not match the records, and respondents who died between waves will be treated as “statistically immortal” (e.g., a false negative).

Disparities by Age and Race/Ethnicity

- The surveys of racial/ethnic minority and foreign-born older adults may be longitudinally matched to death records at different rates than non-Hispanic Whites and the native-born population for several reasons:
 - ① Linkage may be less accurate for foreign-born individuals if they are undocumented and less likely to provide Social Security numbers.
 - ② Errors may occur when matching records for Hispanics or Asian Americans by first and last name and middle initial because naming practices may differ from U.S. conventions.
 - ③ Age misreporting among older adults is pronounced in social surveys and administrative records especially for older immigrants from low- and middle-income countries.
- If record linkage is less accurate for racial/ethnic minority and foreign-born populations, then the statistics of racial/ethnic and nativity mortality disparities estimated with that linked data may be biased.

Approach

- This project will use restricted-use version of the 2000–2019 National Health Interview Survey Linked Mortality File data to address the following three research aims:
 - ① Examine age, racial/ethnic, and nativity disparities in eligibility for mortality follow-up.
 - ② Compare match quality across age, racial/ethnic, and nativity groups.
 - ③ Determine whether racial/ethnic and nativity disparities in older adult mortality vary with alternative matching algorithms.



Thank you

- Contact: joseph.lariscy@memphis.edu
- Thanks to NIMLAS and NIA for funding support (#1 R24 AG077012-01).
- Research results and conclusions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Census Bureau or NIA.