

## Defining an Infant's Race and Ethnicity: A Systematic Review

### Background

Infant race and ethnicity are used ubiquitously in research and reporting. Inconsistent approaches to data collection yield variable results. The consistency of this data impacts reported findings and outcomes in research and population health metrics. The objective of this study was to systematically review and examine concordance among race and ethnicity data collection techniques.

### Methods

PubMed, CINAHL, and Ovid were searched in June 2021. English language articles published between 1980-2021 were included if they reported on the United States' infant population and compared two or more methods of capturing race and/or ethnicity. Each article was independently evaluated for inclusion and quality by two reviewers with differing areas of expertise, with disagreements resolved by a third reviewer of a separate discipline. Meta-analysis was not possible due to methodological heterogeneity and overlapping study populations.

### Results

Our search identified 4,329 unique citations. Forty articles passed the title/abstract review and were reviewed in full-text, 19 were considered relevant and assessed for quality and bias, twelve studies were ultimately included. Across these studies more than 116 million infants born over 46 years were analyzed. All reviewed studies compared birth certificate data to other data collection methods.

### Conclusions

Racial and ethnic misclassification of infants was common among varying data collection techniques, leading to inaccurate measurements and reporting of infant morbidity and mortality, often underestimating burden in minoritized populations while overestimating it in the non-Hispanic/Latinx white population. When attempting to decrease health inequities resulting from systematic racism it is crucial that all people are able to self-identify and are categorized appropriately without forcing individuals to select from a limited and specific list of races and ethnicities.