DATA EQUITY IN ACTION:
A New York Community Guide

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INTRODUCTION

A DATA EQUITY TOOLKIT FOR YOU, AND YOUR COMMUNITY

Hispanic Federation is committed to ensuring all Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in the United States are seen and heard. Too often, including in New York State, the way the government collects data on BIPOC communities erases our diversity and makes it harder to fix the problems we face. With your help, that can change.

This toolkit is designed to educate and inspire you to advocate for data equity. Our goal is to transform how state and federal governments count and categorize BIPOC communities, making it easier to identify and address disparities while celebrating our successes. Data forms the foundation of policies and programs that invest in healthcare, education, housing, and more. To get those solutions right, our government needs to count us right.

Here, you will find resources to help you understand this complex issue, and tools to help advocate for equitable data collection with leaders in your community. By working together, we can ensure New York State and our country see us, hear our voices, and better address our needs.

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ABOUT HISPANIC FEDERATION

Hispanic Federation (HF) is the nation's premier Latino nonprofit membership organization. Founded in 1990, HF seeks to empower and advance the Hispanic community, support Hispanic families, and strengthen Latino institutions through work in the areas of education, health, immigration, civic engagement, economic empowerment, and climate justice.

The HF is committed to advancing equity and addressing disparities within the broader BIPOC community. To achieve this, we firmly believe in the equitable collection and use of race and ethnicity data. By doing so, we can more effectively target resources and develop policies that meet the diverse needs of our communities.

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WHAT IS DATA EQUITY? WHAT IS DATA DISAGGREGATION?

Data equity means collecting data in a way that allows us to see, understand, and address disparities within and between communities. Data can include demographic categories such as race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location, sexual orientation, and more.

Disaggregating data simply means categorizing your data according to smaller, more specific categories, rather than large umbrella categories. For example, the current population of New York City is over 8 million – but that doesn't tell us how many people live in the South Bronx. Disaggregating data breaks big numbers down into pieces that contextualize our experiences in ways big numbers, or aggregate data, can't.

This allows us to see differences and trends that may not otherwise be visible. It shines a light on what we have, and what we still need. **This toolkit will explore how disaggregated data can help create better outcomes for all communities and give you tools to discuss the importance of data equity within your community.**

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WHY DOES DATA EQUITY MATTER?

Data is power. For too long, BIPOC communities have been underrepresented in data collection efforts. This has resulted in an unfair distribution of resources and a lack of understanding about the issues that affect us most. **Our access to healthcare, education, employment, clean air, water, and other resources is directly impacted.** Moreover, policies often fail to address the root cause of inequities, perpetuating systemic disparities. It is essential to collect and analyze data equitably to ensure fair access to resources and address these fundamental issues. We've made strong progress, especially in New York State:

- In 2019, we advocated for the passage of the New York DREAM Act, which helped to shine light on the educational and financial needs of immigrant populations;

- In 2021, we worked towards the passage of a data disaggregation law that mandated New York State agencies collect and report disaggregated data on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders;

- In 2023, a similar bill for the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) communities passed the New York Senate. Despite these monumental wins, there is still much more to be done.

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WHY DOES DATA EQUITY MATTER?

Continuing to make progress on data equity is a necessity for addressing our needs. To help communicate the importance of data equity, here are some key messages that you can use when speaking to your community:
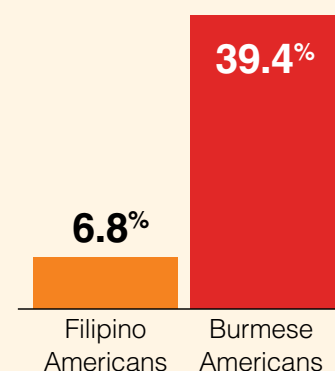
① Why Data Equity Matters Now

In today's political climate, where discussions about race and equity are met with resistance, accurate, transparent data is more important than ever.

Proof Points:

- *Counteracting narratives:* With data equity, we can counter misleading narratives that try to deny the legacy of racism, or deny the need for race-conscious policies.

  - One example is the model minority myth – the idea that Asian Americans experience above average levels of income, homeownership, education, and health. Disaggregated data shows there are sizable disparities among AANHPI groups, even though many data sets aggregate these groups together as "Asian American."

    - For instance, when it comes to the percentage of Asian Americans living below the poverty line, the number differs vastly between communities. Filipino Americans have the lowest rate at 6.8%, but for Burmese Americans, it's as high as 39.4%.

ASIAN AMERICANS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

39.4%

6.8%

Filipino Americans

Burmese Americans

- *Identifying community challenges:* Accurate, comprehensive race and ethnicity data highlight the unique challenges we face and help us organize for policies that address our issues.

- *Telling our stories:* Data allows us to tell the story of who we are, not only shedding light on our challenges, but telling the complete story of who we are as a community – celebrating our unique experiences and the progress we have made.
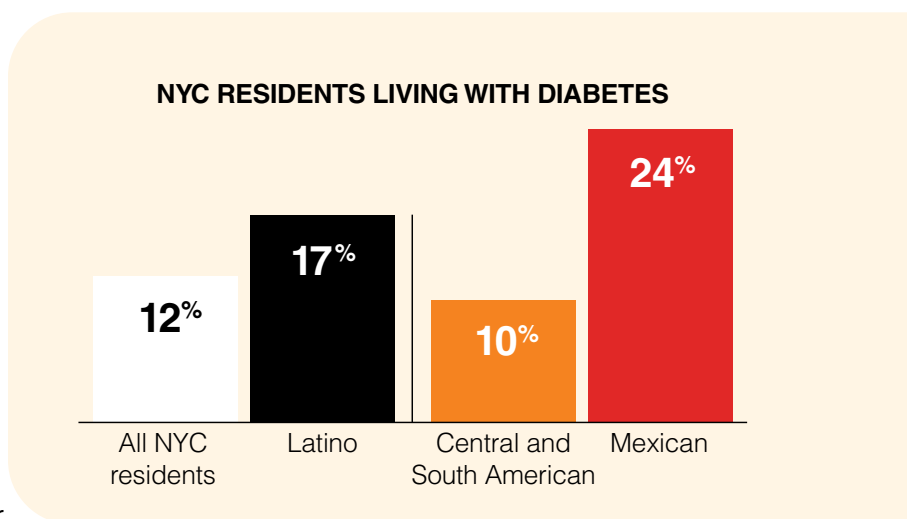
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WHY DOES DATA EQUITY MATTER?

(2) Why Data Equity Matters for Our Health

Equitable data collection is essential for identifying and addressing health disparities that affect BIPOC communities and improving our access to health care.

Proof Points:

- Many of us face community-wide health concerns, or are more likely to experience certain medical conditions. Disaggregated data makes these disparities far more clear.

  – For example, data shows that around 17% of Latino NYC residents have diabetes, compared to about 10% of the non-Latino NYC population. However, looking at Latinos overall hides further differences. Disaggregated data tells us that only 10% of Central and South American residents have diabetes, while 24% of Mexican residents do – nearly one in four adults.

  – Air pollution is another example. Data indicates about 40% of people of color live in areas with higher levels of air pollution, compared with 5% of the White population. However, this number does not specify differences between neighborhoods. More specific categories would give us access to more accurate and useful information.

NYC RESIDENTS LIVING WITH DIABETES

All NYC residents	Latino	Central and South American	Mexican
12%	17%	10%	24%

- By understanding these differences and disparities, healthcare providers and policy-makers can provide better care for our communities, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes and greater access to the healthcare we deserve.

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WHY DOES DATA EQUITY MATTER?

③ Why Data Equity Matters for Education

Data plays a critical role in shaping educational policies and practices, particularly for newly arrived New Yorkers entering the education system.

Proof Points:

- Every student, regardless of their backgrounds or experiences, deserves the best access to education.

- By collecting disaggregated and detailed data on student demographics, class sizes, and school registration, educators can better understand the unique challenges faced by different groups.

- This information is vital for ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

④ Why Data Equity Matters for Community Services

Data also impacts broad community needs and services beyond healthcare and education.

Proof Points:

- Understanding the demographics of neighborhoods can inform local government decisions about when and how often to pick up our trash, where to apply additional community outreach resources, how much funding is needed to meet a community's needs, and other decisions with wide-ranging consequences.

- By using data to identify specific community needs, local governments can allocate resources more effectively and enhance the overall quality of life for everyone who lives here.

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WHY DOES DATA EQUITY MATTER?

⑤ Why Data Equity Brings Us Together

Promoting data disaggregation helps unite our communities by highlighting shared challenges and resource needs.

Proof Points:

- When data is disaggregated, it reveals that our hopes and concerns are often more similar than we think. We can always find common ground.

- When it is easier to see our shared beliefs and opportunities, we can work together to find a unified voice, calling on policymakers and other leaders to prioritize our needs.

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WHAT
TO KNOW

Helping people understand the importance of being counted in government data can be challenging. Many communities have understandable concerns about providing such information. Hispanic Federation wants BIPOC communities in New York to be counted accurately, but we also want individuals to understand how their data will be used. We also recognize the need to improve privacy protections and other regulations to ensure data is not used against the communities we serve.

This section gives you specific points to address questions that may arise in conversations around government data collection and data equity among BIPOC communities.

1 How Will My Data Be Used?

The collection and use of personal data are governed by strict laws and regulations in New York State. Key protections include:

- **NY SHIELD Act**: Requires businesses to implement reasonable safeguards to protect the security, confidentiality, and integrity of private information.

- **NY Personal Privacy Protection Law**: This law is intended to protect your privacy by regulating the way in which the state collects, maintains, and shares personal information about you.

- **NY Privacy Act**: A proposed law that aims to give New Yorkers more control over their personal data. It requires companies to obtain explicit consent before collecting or sharing data.

Our data as it relates to the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and other key data collection efforts in New York State are used to represent our communities and make the case for better representation, resources, and attention.

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WHAT
TO KNOW

(2) **How Do I Know My Data Won't Be Used Against Me?**

It is completely valid to have concerns about data. Many populations throughout American history have experienced discrimination or misuse of their information. Today, New York has strong laws, regulations, and protections to prevent such misuse. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Data collected by government agencies can only be used for legitimate, lawful purposes like developing policies, getting government services to people who need them, and evaluating the impacts of programs.

- Data collected by New York State cannot be shared with immigration enforcement or used to discriminate.

- Private entities must also follow strict rules around data collection, use, and sharing.

- Technical measures like encryption and role-based access controls also protect data from unauthorized access.

It is important to acknowledge that laws can change. We are in a political environment where some want to end race-conscious policymaking and enforce discrimination through law. Organizations like ours are watching vigilantly for changes to state or federal law that would put our communities in danger. If data collection policies were altered, we would know. **At this time, we feel the benefits of being accurately counted far outweigh the risks.** But we respect individuals' right to make their own decision to participate.

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WHAT TO KNOW

③ What Happens if I Don't Participate?

Without more insightful data, we run the risk of perpetuating disparities and over-looking the diverse experiences of our multi-dimensional BIPOC communities. Filling out data collection forms when asked is one of the easiest ways that you can make your voice – and your community – heard.

Without adequate data, it will be harder to advocate for policies that correct disparities in healthcare, housing, education, employment, and other critical parts of our lives. With more complete data, making the case that our communities need more support is much easier.

④ Does this Even Matter? No One Listens to Us Anyway.

It's easy to feel disheartened and believe that our voices will never be heard. However, this is not true. We've had hard-fought successes in getting more attention and resources to our communities (Check out a few of these examples below in "Successes and Case Studies"). Getting better data will make that easier, not harder. Data can support advocacy efforts by providing concrete evidence of disparities and needs, making it harder for decision-makers to dismiss our concerns.

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RESOURCES
& TOOLS

The following section includes resources that can help meet your needs as you discuss the importance of data equity with your communities, including success stories, research from organizations working in the space, and sample social media toolkit language.

SUCCESS STORIES AND CASE STUDIES
How data creates positive change

The Problem

The Data-Driven Solution

The Impact

SUCCESS STORIES
AND CASE STUDIES

Repealing Transcript Fees for Students with Outstanding Balances

The Problem: Imagine trying to get a job or transfer schools, but you can't because you owe money to your college and they won't release your transcript. This was the reality for many students at public colleges and universities in New York, especially in the case of low-income and BIPOC students. These transcript fees created a big financial barrier and kept many students from moving forward with their education and careers.

The Data-Driven Solution: We, along with other advocacy groups, saw how unfair this was. We collected data to show how these fees were hurting students, especially those from low-income and BIPOC backgrounds. Our data highlighted the struggles students faced just to access their own educational records. By bringing these hidden disparities to light, we were able to push for change.

The Impact: As a result of these efforts, a new law was passed repealing transcript fees for students with outstanding balances, ensuring equitable access to education and supporting student success.

SUCCESS STORIES
AND CASE STUDIES

Using Data to Prevent Hospital Closures in Underserved Communities

The Problem: Underserved communities in New York City faced potential hospital closures, threatening to take away essential healthcare services from those in need.

The Data-Driven Solution: Community advocates saw how dangerous this could be. We pushed for Health Equity Impact Assessments (HEIA) – a way of using data to show who relies on healthcare facilities, and what would happen to our communities if they closed. The data illustrated clear disparities in healthcare access and outcomes.

The Impact: Powerful, data-driven advocacy convinced policymakers to act, leading to New York State legislation S1451A/A191. This mandated that a HEIA must accompany a Certificate of Need (CON) application for the creation, ownership, construction, renovation, or modification of healthcare facilities in New York State. These projects are now required to evaluate whether they pose a risk to availability or accessibility of healthcare in the communities they serve. In New York City, data uncovered by HEIAs convinced authorities to invest resources in keeping the hospitals open, ensuring that essential healthcare services remained available in their communities.

SUCCESS STORIES
AND CASE STUDIES

Securing Latino Representation on the Redistricting Commission

The Problem: When the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) was formed to provide feedback on the redistricting process, the law stated that the committee members should reflect the communities they serve. However, none of the original eight members of the commission were Latino/a, and the committee also lacked adequate gender diversity. This was out of compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the law, which mandated diverse representation. We needed a representative that could stand on behalf of our community.

The Data-Driven Solution: Our representation on the commission was non-negotiable, made clear by data showing that Latinos make up roughly 20% of New York State's population, including 30% of NYC. Because of organizations' advocacy to rally our communities to participate in the census, we were able to point to data emphasizing the importance of being counted, and therefore represented.

The Impact: As a result of these advocacy efforts, community organizations secured Latina representation on the IRC. Dr. Ivelisse Molina's appointment not only meant fairer representation in government, but also illustrates the value of having someone who understood cultural nuances within our community for education and engagement around redistricting. Dr. Molina worked with organizations like Hispanic Federation for meetings, social media events and livestreams, and other activities. Not only did we secure a seat at the table, but we were able to also have a representative who could advocate and speak on our community's behalf.

SUCCESS STORIES
AND CASE STUDIES

Helping Students Receive College Financial Aid

The Problem: Advocates found that many students don't apply for financial aid because they don't know it's available, are confused by the questions on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and don't have someone like a college counselor to guide them. Undocumented students in particular often think they aren't eligible for aid at all. This lack of awareness leads to low FAFSA completion rates. In 2022, high school seniors left $3.58 billion in Pell Grants unclaimed, with 40% of New York students not completing the FAFSA. Among Latino students, 34% didn't apply due to confusion or lack of support.

The Data-Driven Solution: This lack of knowledge around resources led to the implementation of universal FAFSA completion policies in several states, and a related bill is currently moving through the New York State Legislature. These measures help ensure all students know about financial aid resources, and get the support they need to complete related applications and forms.

The Impact: In the initial year of implementing their FAFSA completion policies, Alabama experienced an increase of 5,600 FAFSA completions compared to the previous year; Louisiana saw an increase of 6,600; California had 30,000 more; and Texas had 46,000 additional completions. Meanwhile, Illinois, which implemented its policy in the 2020–21 school year, observed a 4.6% rise in FAFSA completions, even as the national average dropped by 4.5%.

Increasing FAFSA completion rates will lead to more students accessing financial aid in New York and potentially improve career outcomes for our communities. With more complete FAFSA data, schools can then identify which communities need more support, allowing for targeted outreach, such as workshops and technical assistance, to help students and families navigate the application process.

DATA AND
RESEARCH REPORTS

Resources from Hispanic Federation, The Leadership Conference, and partner organizations that support the importance of accurate data collection.

- [Invisible in the Data: The Lack of a Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Race & Ethnicity Category Obscures Disparities](#) – Malikah and New York Immigration Coalition

  – The report serves as a guide for community leaders and advocates working to advance equity for Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) communities by outlining the importance and impact of accurate and representative demographic data collection, analysis, and reporting.

- [New York State (NYS) Hispanic/Latinx Health Action Agenda](#) – NYS Hispanic/Latinx Health Action Network

  – This health agenda was created to address health inequities among Hispanic communities in New York State. It acknowledges the historical health, socioeconomic, and political disparities in the U.S. while using key indicators to demonstrate that health outcomes are intimately related to factors such as sociocultural norms, immigration and migration, educational attainment, occupation, primary language, social support systems, and eligibility for health services, among other factors.

- [Disaggregation Nation Report](#) – The Leadership Conference

  – Provides an overview of state race and ethnicity data collection standards, including New York.

- [Counting All Kids: Data Disaggregation in New York's Child Care System](#) – Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

  – Fact sheets highlighting gaps in disaggregated data for early childhood programs in New York.

SAMPLE SOCIAL CONTENT

For you, your communities, or any organizations that serve your community, social media is an invaluable tool for spreading messages quickly. Ahead of any legislation or advocacy for data equity, or to promote greater awareness around the value of equitable data, here are a few sample social media posts to use at your discretion. Please feel empowered to customize posts with appropriate links and content as you see fit.

- New Yorkers, make your voices heard! Better data is crucial to understanding the unique needs of all communities in our great state. Learn more: [INSERT LINK] #DataEquity #DataForGood

- Accurate data collection helps us see the full picture. To create effective policies and programs, we need data that reflects us and who we are. Learn more: [INSERT LINK] #DataMatters #DataEquity #InclusiveData

- Data equity is more than just numbers – it's about recognizing our unique stories and challenges, and making meaningful change together. Visit [INSERT LINK] to learn more. #DataEquity #SocialJustice #InclusiveData #EquityInAction

- New York is one of the most diverse places in the country. To serve our communities correctly, we need accurate data. Get involved near you: [INSERT LINK] #DataEquity #DataMatters #InclusiveData

- BIPOC communities need better data to understand the challenges we face and find real solutions. Find out how you can help: [INSERT LINK] #BIPOCData #DataEquity #InclusiveData

SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

Data saves lives! Thanks to Health Equity Impact Assessments, we exposed the risks of hospital closures in underserved communities. Now, legislation is in place to protect healthcare access for ALL New Yorkers. #HealthEquity #DataForGood #NYHealthcare

PROTECT HEALTHCARE ACCESS FOR ALL NEW YORKERS

DATA HELPS DRIVE REPRESENTATION

Representation matters! Latinos make up 20% of NY's population, but they were left out of the Redistricting Commission. Thanks to data-driven advocacy, Dr. Ivelisse Molina has joined the commission. #RepresentationMatters #DataEquity #LatinoVoices

40% of NY students didn't complete the FAFSA in 2022, leaving millions in aid unclaimed. We're pushing for universal FAFSA completion policies to ensure every student gets the financial support they need to succeed. #FAFSAForAll #EducationEquity #DataForChange

UNIVERSAL FAFSA COMPLETION= MORE OPPORTUNITIES

⊙ Click here to download the social graphics for use on your channels.

NEXT STEPS

The Path Forward for Data Equity

Data disaggregation is not just a technical necessity; it is a moral imperative that plays a vital role in building a more just and equitable New York. By breaking down data we can uncover hidden disparities, inform targeted interventions, and ensure that the needs of all communities are recognized and addressed. This approach enables us to advocate for our own communities to get the recognition and resources to thrive. Data gives us the power to tell our own stories and encourage policymakers to see us and listen.

To you, our partners and community leaders: We invite you to actively engage with the resources provided in this toolkit. You know your communities best: use these materials as a guide to help educate your communities about the importance of data disaggregation and its impact on policy-making. Feel free to customize the talking points within to fit your needs. By fostering awareness and understanding, we can collectively advocate for the changes needed to improve health, education, and community services for all New Yorkers.

The Hispanic Federation is dedicated to ongoing advocacy and educational efforts to advance equity and address systemic inequities. We invite you to contact us for more information, collaboration opportunities, and support in your community engagement initiatives. Together, we can amplify our voices and drive meaningful change.

For inquiries, please contact us at:

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