



# Introduction to the Special Issue: Socioeconomic Outcomes of Indigenous Groups — Determinants and Trends

Sefa Awaworyi Churchill<sup>1</sup> · Samuelson Appau<sup>2</sup>

Received: 25 June 2022 / Revised: 30 June 2022 / Accepted: 3 July 2022 / Published online: 12 July 2022  
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

Improving socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous groups is a challenge for policymakers around the world. Indigenous groups have been identified to have higher mortality, poorer health, shorter life expectancy, lower literacy, and poorer labour market outcomes (see, e.g., Biddle et al. 2013; Hu et al. 2019; Kozhimannil et al. 2020; Randall et al. 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly demonstrated the disparities in mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, with higher rates of mortality among Indigenous groups (Arrazola et al. 2020). Moreover, the gap in socioeconomic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups remains very wide and has been identified as a human rights issue by several international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations.

This special issues of the *Journal of Economics, Race and Policy* (JERP) features contributions from researchers that provide further insights required to understand the trends in socioeconomic and health outcomes of Indigenous groups. The five contributions, all of which were subject to external peer review, add to our knowledge on important trends regarding Indigenous people focusing on outcomes such as health, housing, mortality, education, and the labour market, and across three countries comprising the USA, Canada, and Australia.

Mintah, Churchill, Baako, and Kavaarpuo focus on Australia and examine how self-reported health of Indigenous Australians influence housing tenure decisions. They use

longitudinal data drawn from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey covering 2001–2019 and indicators of housing tenure decisions that reflect homeownership as well as transitions from renting to owning a home and vice versa. Their findings suggest that better health is associated with a higher probability of homeownership and a higher probability of transitioning from renting to homeownership. Their findings demonstrate the need for policies aimed at improving health outcomes for Indigenous people to promote favourable housing tenure outcomes.

Gorzig, Feir, Akee, Myers, Navid, Tiede, and Matzke examine disparities in mortality rates between Native Americans and other groups in the USA. Using microdata, they examine the relationship between geographic location, specific causes of death, and age at death. Their findings demonstrate significant disparities in mortality rates. Specifically, they find that Native American women, on average, die 13 years earlier than White women while Native American men, on average, die 12 years earlier than White men. Their results further demonstrate that the disparity in age at death is, in part, due to Native Americans dying from diseases at younger ages than White Americans. This lends support to findings from Mintah and colleagues, and call for the need for policies that improve health outcomes among Indigenous groups. Gorzig and colleagues also identify homicide as a factor contributing to the disparity in mortality rates between groups.

Diverging from the historical focus on the USA, Gillezeau, Rushford, and Weaver examine trends in police killings of civilians in Canada. They use data from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Deadly Force team to conduct an event history analysis of where and when civilians in Canada are killed by law enforcement, with a particular focus on the deaths of Indigenous civilians. They find that police killings of civilians are most likely in urban centres and not in Indigenous communities. Their findings also suggest that higher levels of female officer employment

✉ Sefa Awaworyi Churchill  
sefa.churchill@rmit.edu.au

Samuelson Appau  
s.appau@mbs.edu

<sup>1</sup> School of Economics, Finance & Marketing, RMIT University, 445 Swanston Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia

<sup>2</sup> Melbourne Business School, 200 Leicester Street, Carlton, VIC 3053, Australia

are linked to lower civilian deaths for Indigenous peoples, and lend support to the idea that improving force diversity may be able to lower deaths of Indigenous civilian deaths in Canada.

Huysler and Locklear examine the association between demographic characteristics and the education and income levels of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) and non-Hispanic white men. They apply logistic regressions to a sample of men aged between 22 and 83, and consider veteran status as a moderator of socioeconomic status. They find that single-race AIAN active-duty veterans for eras between 1975 and 2001 were associated with higher education than their non-veteran counterparts and those who did not serve in these specific active-duty eras. Their findings further demonstrated that single-race AIAN active-duty veterans for eras between 1975 and 2001 have higher incomes than those AIAN men who did not. Yet, the gains by AIAN veterans were insufficient to close the income gap between AIAN and white men, and thus inequality continues to persist for AIAN men despite individual pursuits for socioeconomic advancement.

Roach, Maisch, and Oller examine how the recent surge in oil and gas production brought on by hydraulic fracturing has differentially affected native and non-native communities in state of Oklahoma and surrounding areas. They use data from the Quarterly Workforce Indicators and exploit the natural experiment setting that the advent of hydraulic fracturing provides. They find that earnings in the oil and gas extraction sector have increased for white workers by about 10%, but that earnings for Native workers are unchanged. Their findings suggest spillover effects for other sectors with increased employment and earnings for Native workers, although the spillover gains are not at the same scale as white workers.

We are grateful to each author for participating in this special issue of the *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy*. The policy recommendations that have emerged from the studies are important and, if actioned, can work towards improving socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous people.

A special thanks to all referees who devoted their time to provide useful suggestions that improved each contribution. We are also grateful to Gary A. Hoover, the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy*, for enabling the special issue, and to Kelli E. Broome for her editorial support.

## References

- Arrazola J, Masiello MM, Joshi S, Dominguez AE, Poel A, Wilkie CM, Komatsu KK. COVID-19 mortality among American Indian and Alaska native persons—14 states, January–June 2020. *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2020;69(49):1853.
- Biddle N, Howlett M, Hunter B, Paradies Y. Labour market and other discrimination facing Indigenous Australian. *Aust J Labour Econ*. 2013;16(1):91–113.
- Hu M, Daley A, Warman C. Literacy, numeracy, technology skill, and labour market outcomes among Indigenous Peoples in Canada. *Can Public Policy*. 2019;45(1):48–73.
- Kozhimannil KB, Interrante JD, Tofte AN, Admon LK. Severe maternal morbidity and mortality among indigenous women in the United States. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2020;135(2):294.
- Randall DA, Lujic S, Havard A, Eades SJ, Jorm L. Multimorbidity among Aboriginal people in New South Wales contributes significantly to their higher mortality. *Med J Aust*. 2018;209(1):19–23.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.