

4 Statistics: Tables, Graphs, Charts – Answer Key

Text: “Some Relevant Statistics” from: Peter Freese, *The American Dream*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2011), p. 64

TASKS

1. Look at the illustration bottom left on p. 64 from the United States Census Bureau and make a note of the figure given for the national population, and then of the percentage given for white people and for African American people.
Now relate these figures to the vertical bar graph top left, “Number of People below Poverty Line, 2008.” How does it prove that a higher percentage of African American people is below the poverty line than of white people? You will have to do some calculations in order to get a precise answer.

Answer

11,97 % of white people are below the poverty line, whereas it is 24,11 % of black people. So more than twice the percentage of black people are to be considered “poor” than white people. This hardly corresponds to the American Dream’s ideal of “equal opportunity” for all citizens.

2. Relate the numbers of the Census 2010 to the pie graph “Race of Death Row Inmates”. What conclusions can be drawn from this comparison?

Answer

On the one hand, the US population consists of 72,4 % of white people, but only 44 % of Death Row inmates are white. On the other hand, although black people only represent 12,6 % of the population, 42 % of the Death Row inmates are African Americans.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these numbers: Either a much higher percentage of black people commit capital crimes in comparison to white people, or black people are more likely to be imprisoned and sentenced to death because of prejudices that the majority of the population holds against them.

Additional information

Richard C. Dieter writes in the conclusion to his study: "The Death Penalty in Black and White" (1998):

"[There is] an overwhelming body of evidence that race plays a decisive role in the question of who lives and dies by execution in this country. Race influences which cases are chosen for capital prosecution and which prosecutors are allowed to make those decisions. Likewise, race affects the make-up of the juries which determine the sentence. Racial effects have been shown not just in isolated instances, but in virtually every state for which disparities have been estimated and over an extensive period of time."

Source: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/death-penalty-black-and-white-who-lives-who-dies-who-decides> (last accessed: 9 July 2011)

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