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## **Racial Disparities in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)**

While approximately 70 percent of all MFIP participants are successful after three years, not all MFIP sub-groups experience the same level of success. There is a large gap between the outcomes for African American or American Indian MFIP adults and the outcomes for all other races.

### **Background**

A successful adult in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is defined as one who is working an average of 30 or more hours per week or is off the cash portion of MFIP with evidence of a source of support three years after a baseline assessment.

The Self-Support Index (S-SI) is the percentage of successful MFIP adults in a county or tribe.<sup>1</sup> While the official reporting of the S-SI is based on counties and tribes, the S-SI can be calculated for any MFIP subgroup (regions, races, service providers, etc.).

Statewide, for the quarter ending March 2008, the S-SI was 70.2 percent. The S-SI varies widely by sub-group. County S-SIs ranged from 50.6 percent to 100 percent. Racial sub-groups also revealed strikingly different outcomes. The eight racial/ethnic subgroups had S-SIs that range from 57.3 percent to 79.4 percent.

This evaluation note focuses on the racial disparities in the S-SI. For purposes of measuring racial disparities, we compared the S-SI of each racial/ethnic group with the S-SI of white MFIP adults. A disparity is defined as a gap of five percentage points or more between the white S-SI and the S-SI of any other race. White MFIP adults were chosen as the reference group because, in a state with a predominantly white population, it can be assumed that they are not generally subject to racial discrimination.

## **Observations**

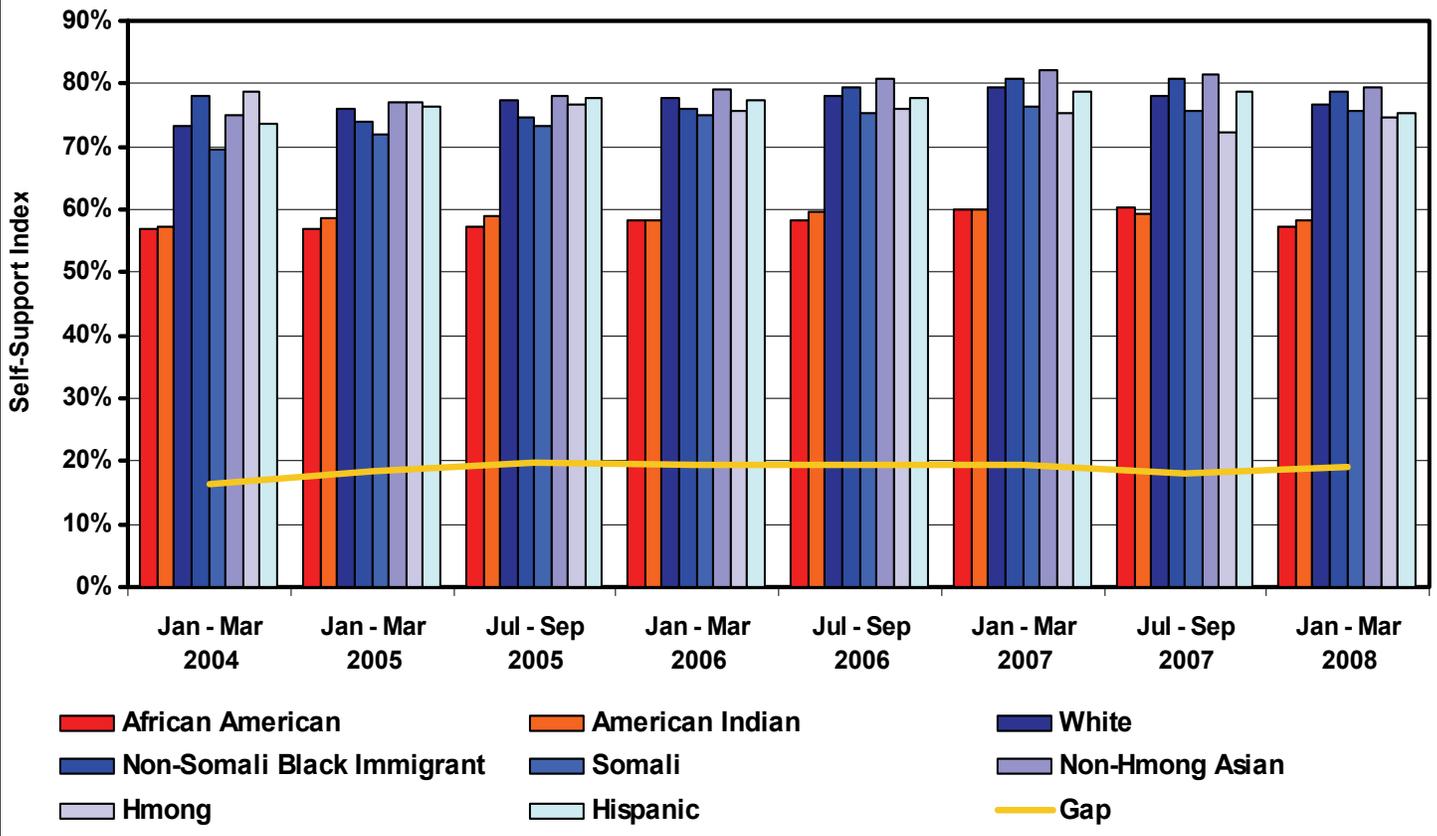
The attached graph illustrates the S-SI for each race at half-year intervals from January 2004 to March 2008 (with the exception of July – September 2004 for which there are no data). The yellow line indicates the size of the gap between the White S-SI and the average of the African American and American Indian S-SIs.

- There is a very large gap between African Americans and American Indians and all other races with respect to MFIP success. (Compare red/orange bars with blue/purple bars.)
- Between January 2004 and January 2007, the S-SI increased slowly for all racial groups (including African Americans and American Indians), except the Hmong. Since January 2007, the S-SI has decreased for all races. (Compare same color bars in successive quarterly groups.)
- The gap between African Americans or American Indians and Whites has been approximately flat since mid-2005. (The yellow line represents the size of the gap.)
- While the Hmong S-SI is still far above the African American or American Indian SSI, the trend has been generally downward during this period that included an influx of Hmong from a refugee camp in Thailand. However, the January – March 2008 data indicate that the Hmong trend may be reversing.

## **Conclusion**

- A large and persistent gap exists between the MFIP outcomes of African Americans and American Indians and those of Whites. It is imperative that every effort be made to understand the causes of these gaps and to design interventions to remedy them.

**Three Year Self-Support Index (S-SI) by Race and the Gap between the Average of the American Indian and African American S-SI and the White S-SI**



<sup>1</sup>For more detail about the Self-Support Index, see DHS Evaluation Note 15, <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-4064O-ENG>

*Evaluation Notes* is an occasional publication of the Program Assessment and Integrity Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services. This report was prepared by Mark Kleczewski. For questions on this report, please contact Mark at [mark.kleczewski@state.mn.us](mailto:mark.kleczewski@state.mn.us) or 651-431-3960.