

# Defining the Other: Determinants of Special Education Needs Across Three Gateway Cities

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Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., Mattison, R., Maczuga, S., Li, H., & Cook, M. (2015). Minorities are disproportionately underrepresented in special education longitudinal evidence across five disability conditions. *Educational Researcher*, 44(5), 278-292.

The screenshot shows a Google Chrome browser window with the URL [www.nytimes.com/2015/06/24/opinion/is-special-education-racist.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/24/opinion/is-special-education-racist.html?_r=0). The page is the New York Times website, featuring the masthead and navigation links. Below the masthead, there are four featured articles with author portraits and titles. The main article, "Is Special Education Racist?", is by Paul L. Morgan and George Farkas, published on June 24, 2015. The article text begins with: "MORE than six million children in the United States receive special-education services for their disabilities. Of those age 6 and older, nearly 20 percent are black. Critics claim that this high number — blacks are 1.4 times more likely to be placed in special education than other races and ethnicities combined — shows that black children are put into special education because schools are racially biased."

Is Special Education Racist? - The New York Times - Google Chrome

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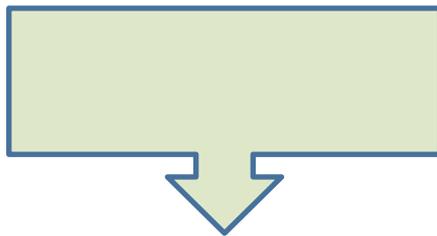
# Is Special Education Racist?

By PAUL L. MORGAN and GEORGE FARKAS JUNE 24, 2015

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MORE than six million children in the United States receive special-education services for their disabilities. Of those age 6 and older, nearly 20 percent are black.

Critics claim that this high number — blacks are 1.4 times more likely to be placed in special education than other races and ethnicities combined — shows that black children are put into special education because schools are racially biased.



“If well-intentioned but misguided advocates succeed in arbitrarily limiting placement in special education based on racial demographics, even more black children with disabilities will miss out on beneficial services.”



# Special Education

A new study says blacks and Latinos are underrepresented in special-ed classes, but lots of researchers say the exact opposite.

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Is special education racist? That was the question posed in a recent *New York Times* op-ed by two researchers who claimed their study overturned 40 years of thought on the topic. Conventional wisdom has always held that, for decades, African American children have been overrepresented in special education. Some claim this has been in part due to a racially biased educational system that relegates kids of color to classes where less is expected of them.

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# Our objectives

- To examine special education needs across 3 major urban centres
  - Toronto, Chicago, London (UK)
- To determine if race, sex, and social class influence SEN status

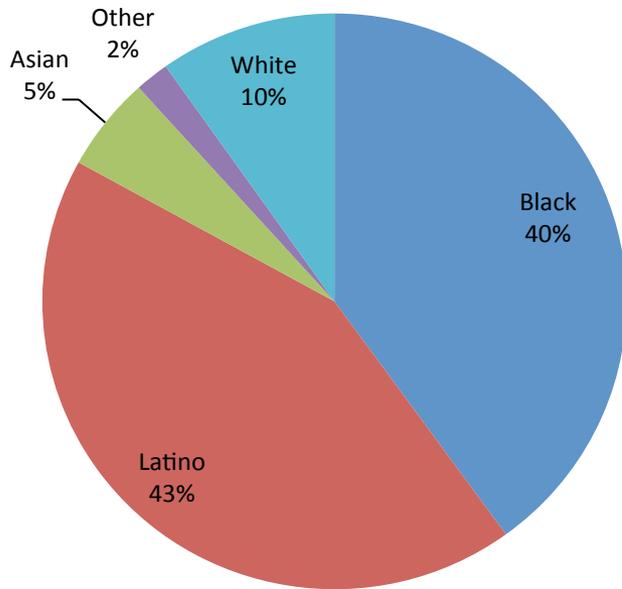
# Why these cities?

- Toronto and Chicago – size, geographic, structural similarities
- Toronto and London – similar immigration history
- Using 2006 data from all cities (Toronto District School Board, Chicago Public Schools, Longitudinal Study of Young People in England)

# Racial Compositions –Chicago & Toronto

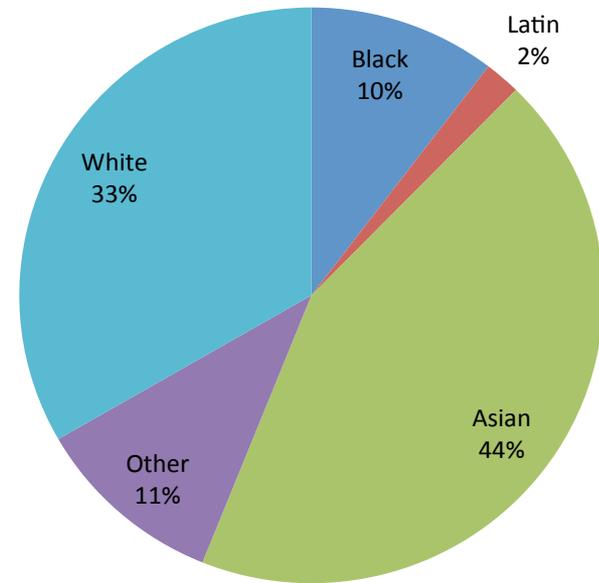
## Chicago

Racial Composition -Chicago

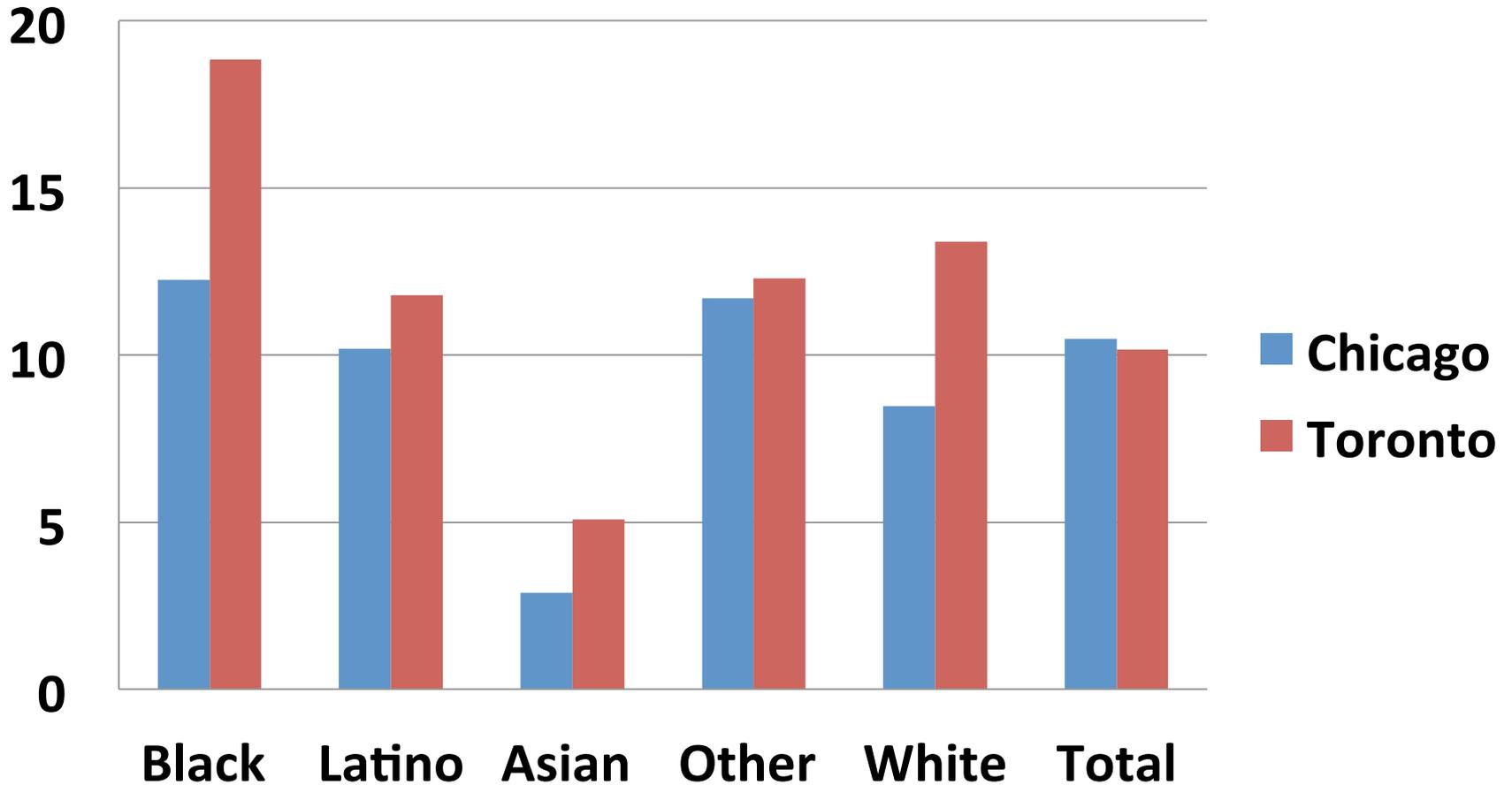


## Toronto

Racial Composition - Toronto



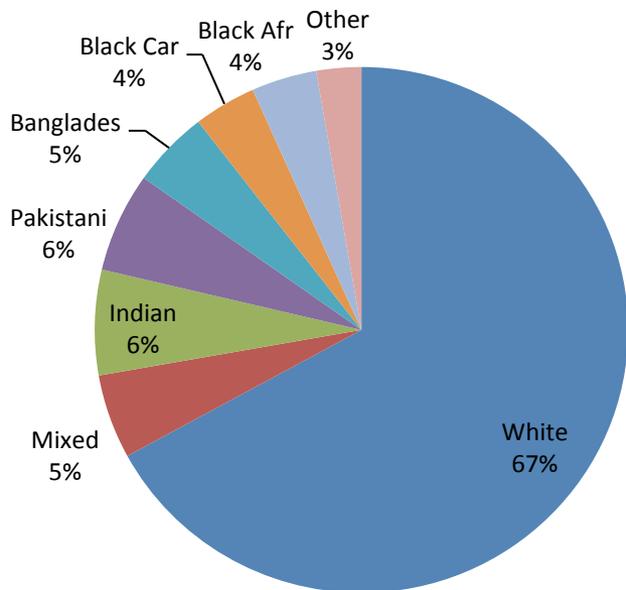
# Within Group % Having Special Education Needs



# Racial Composition – London & Toronto

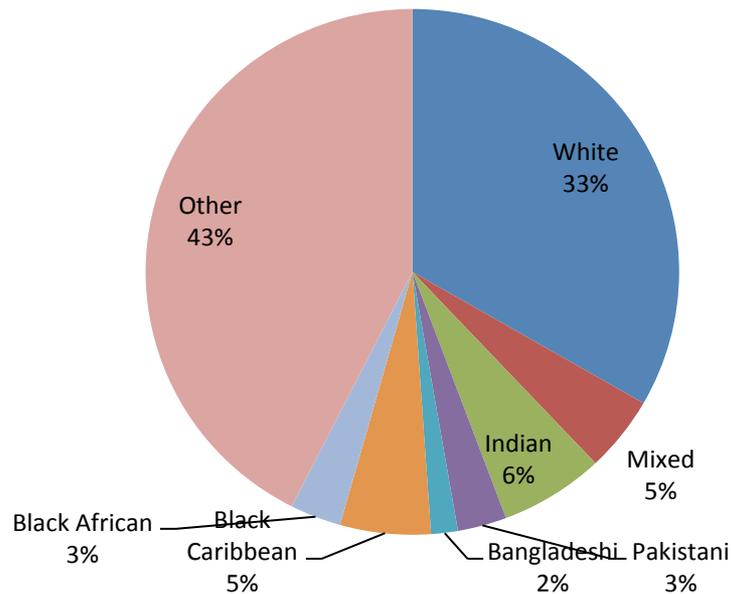
## London

### Racial Composition - London Sample

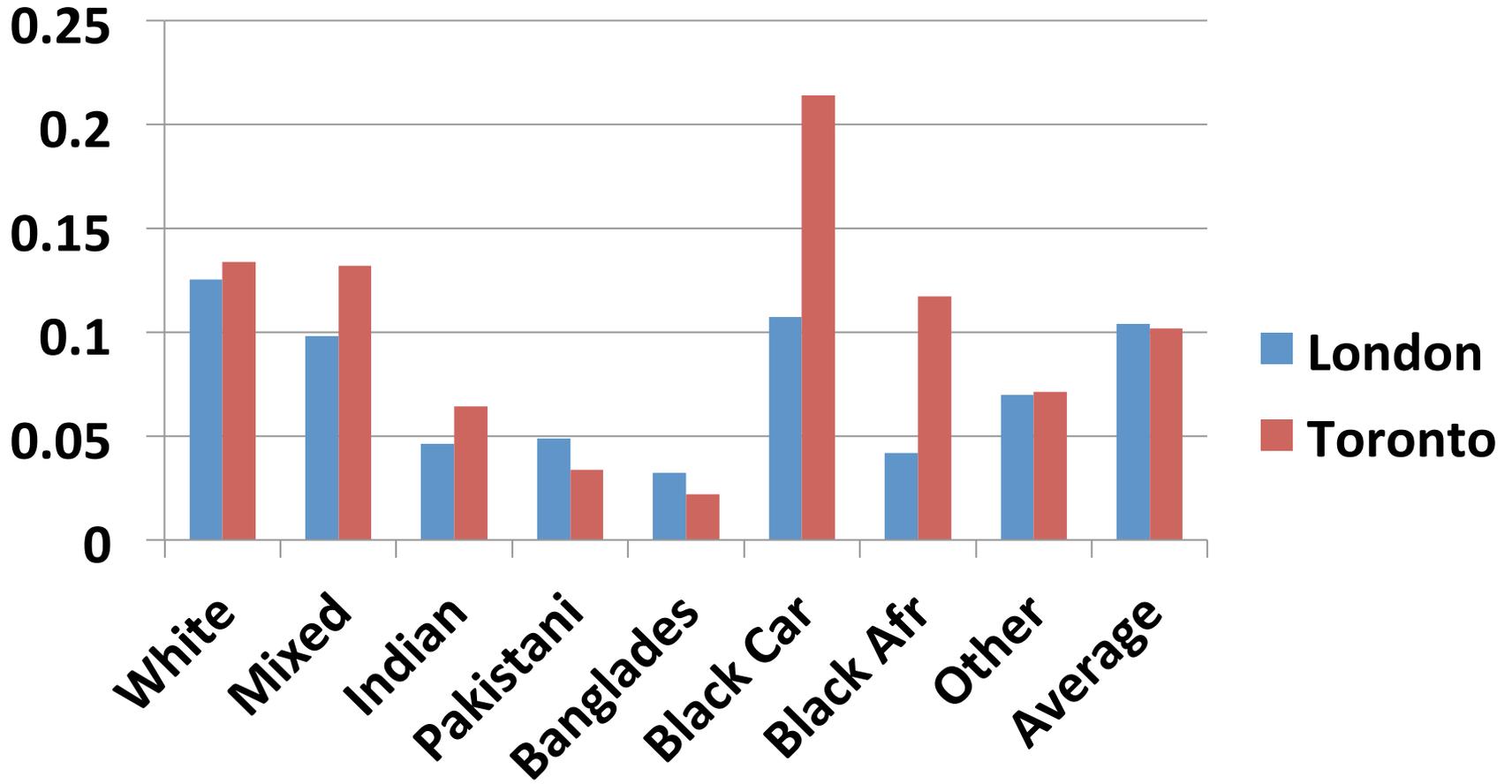


## Toronto

### Racial Composition - Toronto Sample

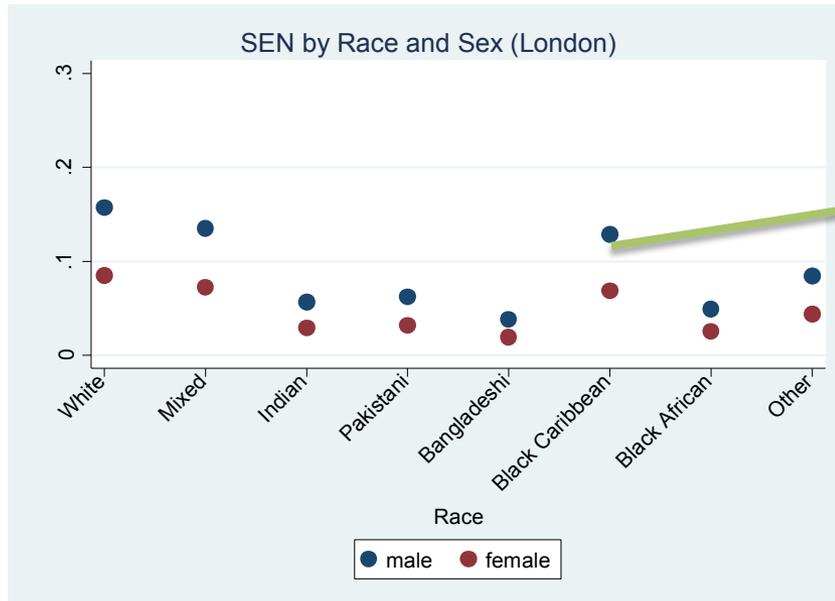


# Within Group % Having Special Education Needs

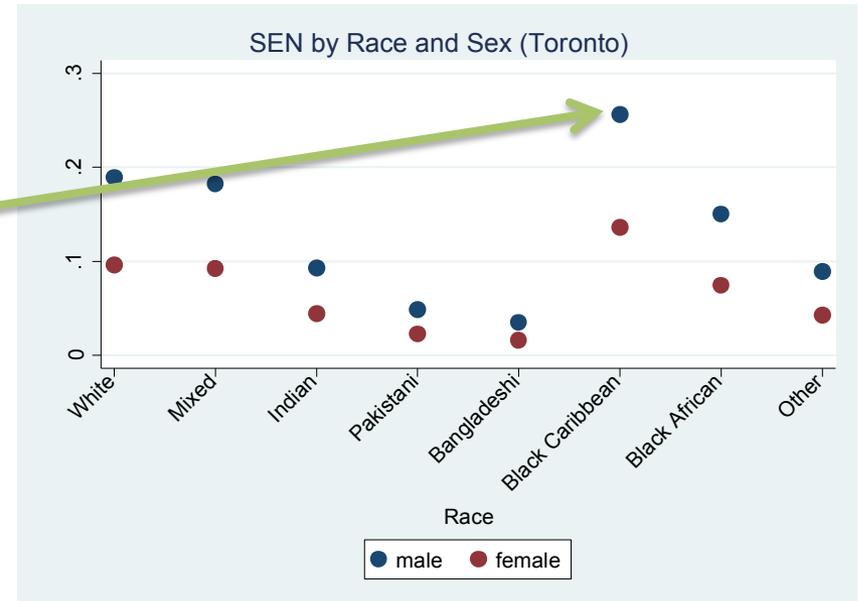


# Race and Sex Differences in Predicting SEN by City

## London



## Toronto

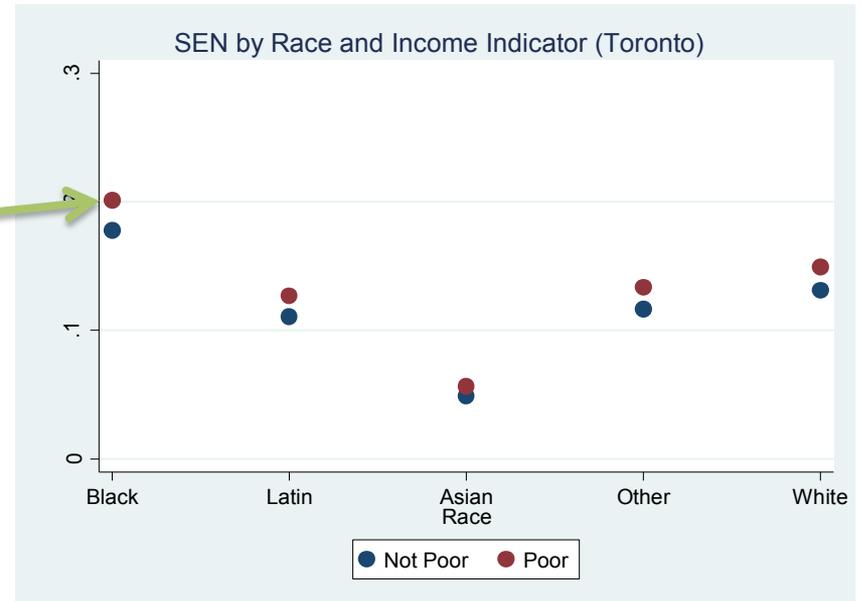
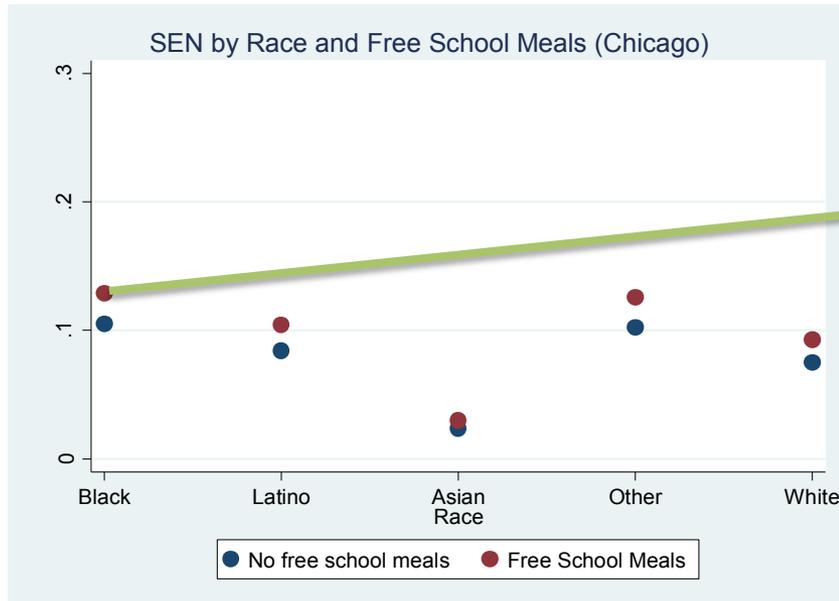


Gender gap more pronounced

# Race and Income/Class Difference in Predicting SEN by City

## Chicago

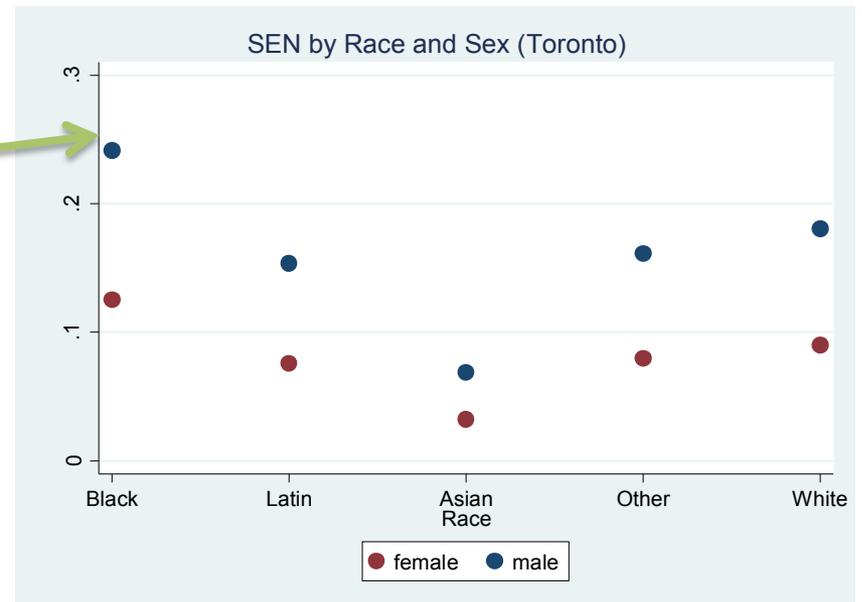
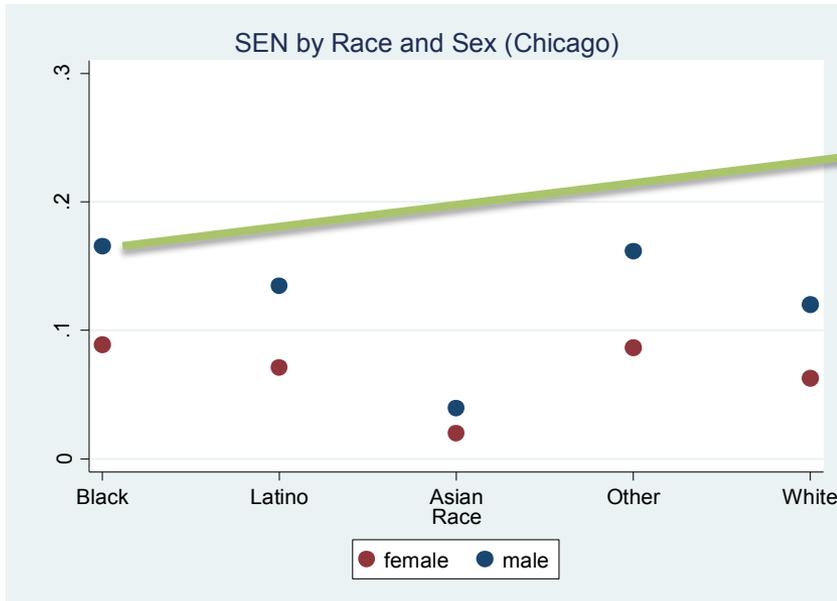
## Toronto



# Race and Sex Differences in Predicting SEN by City

## Chicago

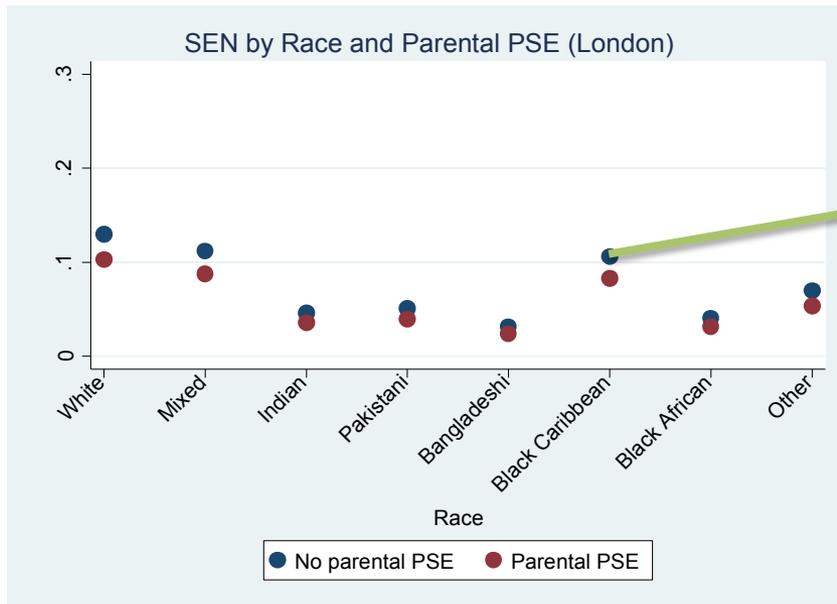
## Toronto



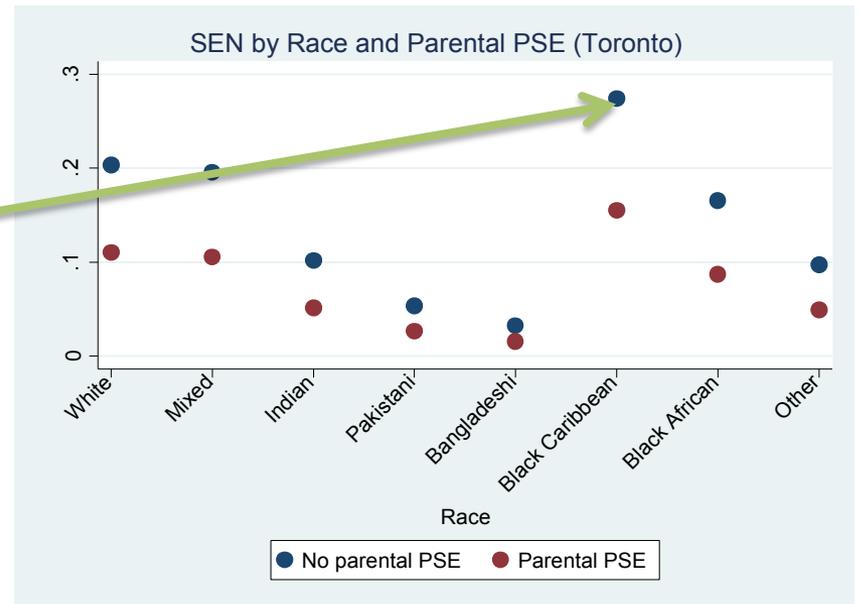
Gender gap more pronounced

# Race and Parental Education Difference in Predicting SEN by City

## London



## Toronto



Bigger gaps in Toronto

# So...Is special education racist?

- Yes! It appears so – particularly in Toronto.  
(But it is also sexist and classist!)
- Race, class, sex differences in Toronto more pronounced than in other cities.
- Having other cities to compare with demonstrates it doesn't "have to" be this way.

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