

Racial Disparities in the United States

In the past forty years, America has, for the most part, failed to meet the Kerner Commission's¹ goals of less poverty, inequality, racial injustice and crime. Statistics from their findings and various other sources are presented below. (Unless otherwise noted, data is from the Kerner Commission report):

Poverty

- 37 million Americans live in poverty, the richest country in history. Poverty has deepened for those who have remained poor. The proportion of poor below half the poverty line was about 30 % in 1975 and 43 % in 2006.
- Poor African Americans are 3 times as likely and poor Latinos twice as likely as Whites to live in deep poverty, below half the poverty line.
- The poverty rate has declined for African Americans since the Kerner Commission, but poverty in African American female headed households with children under 18 was almost 44 percent in 2006.
- Unemployment and underemployment were the most important causes of poverty; African American unemployment [continues] to be twice as high as White employment in each of the 4 decades since 1968.

Income and Wealth

- The top 1% of the population (300,000 Americans) now receives as much income as the lower one-half of the population (150 million Americans).
- A recent Brookings Institution study on mobility found that 68 percent of White children from middle income families grew up to surpass their parents' income in real terms. But that share was only 31 percent for middle income African American children – demonstrating downward mobility.
- America has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the industrialized world.
- Among full-time workers, Whites earn over 22 percent more than equivalent African American workers and almost 34 percent more than equivalent Latino workers.

Employment

- There is continuing evidence from distinguished scholars that some employers “steer” People of Color applicants into the worst jobs regardless of their qualifications.
- Among high school drop-outs aged 19, 38 % of African Americans are employed, compared to 67% of Whites.
- The Washington, DC, Fair Employment Practices Commission found African Americans face discrimination in one out of every five job interviews.⁹
- Federal job discrimination complaints filed by workers against private employers shot up 9% last year [2007]. The data released by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission show ... allegations of discrimination based on race were the leading category of complaints – 30,510 in all, or 37% of all filings, said the commission, which enforces federal anti-discrimination laws among private employers.¹⁰

Education

- Large disparities remain in America between the educational achievement of White and Asian American high school students compared to Latino and African American high school students.
- American educational disparities remain linked to funding disparities. The wealthiest 10- percent of school districts in the U.S. spend nearly 10 times more than the poorest 10 percent.
- The American educational system allocates more unequal inputs and produces more unequal outcomes than most other industrialized nations.
- African American adults have narrowed the gap with White adults in earning high school diplomas, but the gap has widened for college degrees. Thirty percent of White adults had at least a bachelor's degree in 2005, while 17 percent of African American adults and 12 percent of Latino adults had degrees.⁸

Housing

- Many real estate agents steer People of Color to less desirable locations, compared to Whites; and that lenders treat People of Color differently from Whites in terms of percentage of mortgage applications accepted.
- Residential segregation declined overall for African Americans in the 1990's but it rose for African Americans below age 18.
- Overall levels of residential segregation remain high for African Americans and Latinos.

Criminal Justice

- The likelihood for the death sentence is greater for People of Color than Whites. People of Color receive longer sentences than Whites for the same crimes. Sentences for crack cocaine, used disproportionately by People of Color, have been much longer than sentences for powder cocaine, used disproportionately by Whites.
- Well over 2,000,000 persons now are in American prisons and jails. America has the highest reported rate of incarceration in the world. African American men ages 25 to 29 are almost 7 times as likely to be incarcerated as White counterparts.
- Today, the rate of incarceration of African American men in the U.S. is 4 times higher than the rate of incarceration of African American men in South Africa during the pre-Nelson Mandela apartheid govt.
- African-Americans make up 12 percent of the U.S. population but account for about 40 percent of all arrests, 50 percent of the prison population, and 50 percent of the inmates on death row.⁷

Healthcare

- U.S. African Americans continue to get inferior cancer treatment compared to whites.²
- A new study from the American Cancer Society finds African American and Latino smokers are less likely than whites to receive and use smoking cessation advice and aids.³
- African American infants in the United States are more than twice as likely as white infants to die in the first year of life. The racial disparities in neonatal deaths, or deaths that occur within 28 days after delivery, are similar.⁴
- Numerous studies over the past two decades have documented racial and ethnic differences in care for heart conditions. The strongest studies provide credible evidence that African Americans are less likely than whites to receive diagnostic procedures, revascularization procedures and thrombolytic therapy.⁵
- In a study presented at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference in 2005 researchers reported that African Americans living in the South were at the greatest disadvantage for combating stroke.⁶

¹(In response to the 1967 rebellion in Detroit and similar events across the country, President Lyndon Johnson formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders – the Kerner Riot Commission. The Eisenhower Foundation is the private sector continuation of the Kerner Riot Commission (and the National Violence Commission). This information was excerpted from the Eisenhower Foundation's Forty Year Update of the Kerner Riot Commission Executive Summary released in February 2008. The full summary can be found at www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/kerner.php)

²www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSN0430653420080107

³www.reuters.com/article/blogBurst/domestic?type=domesticNews&w1=B7ovpm21laDoL40ZFnNfGe&w2=B9IYAiV6g03xWUXstkq1JR&src=blogBurst_domesticNews&bbPostId=CzBWOOP0qX8KVBFbH6HQRAXV0Cz5e9NZ5i6huaAtLNvDBkKIY&bbParentWidgetId=B9IYAiV6g03xWUXstkq1JR

⁴www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=670967

⁵www.amsa.org/disparities/whatis.cfm

⁶www.blackcommentator.com/273/273_health_care_disparities_stone_guest.html

⁷www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/CliffsReviewTopic/Racial-Disparities.topicArticleId-10065,articleId-9915.html

⁸www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15704759/

⁹www.asanet.org/cs/06182002

¹⁰www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2008-03-05-job-discrimination_N.htm