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Statistical Brief

Blacks in America

Black Americans have experienced many changes during the 1980's. This Brief, based on recent data collected in ongoing surveys, touches on a few of these changes.

Education

Young Black adults have made impressive gains in earning high school diplomas. In 1980, 75 percent of Blacks 25-34 years old had completed at least 4 years of high school; by 1988, this percentage had risen to 80.

This gain at the high school level was not repeated at the college level: the proportion of Blacks completing 4 or more years of college in 1988 was not significantly different from that in 1980 (nor was the proportion significantly different for Whites). In 1988, 13 percent of Blacks and 24 percent of Whites had completed 4 or more years of college.

The Black Family

Perhaps the most dramatic and far-reaching change among families, regardless of race, occurred

during the 1970's. It was the substantial increase in the proportion of families maintained by women. This trend has continued at a slower pace on into the 1980's, and by 1988, 43 percent of Black families were maintained by a woman with no husband present. When women who, with their children, live in someone else's household are included, the proportion of single mothers rises to over half of all Black family groups.

Jobs

In 1988, the unemployment rate for Blacks was more than twice that for Whites: 11.7 versus 4.7 percent, respectively. During the 1980's, unemployment rates for

both Blacks and Whites fluctuated with changing economic conditions, rising as high as 19.5 percent for Blacks in 1983. The data suggest that finding a job is particularly difficult for Black teenagers: among Blacks 16-19 years old, about one-third were unemployed in 1988. Among White teenagers, only 13 percent were unemployed.

Income

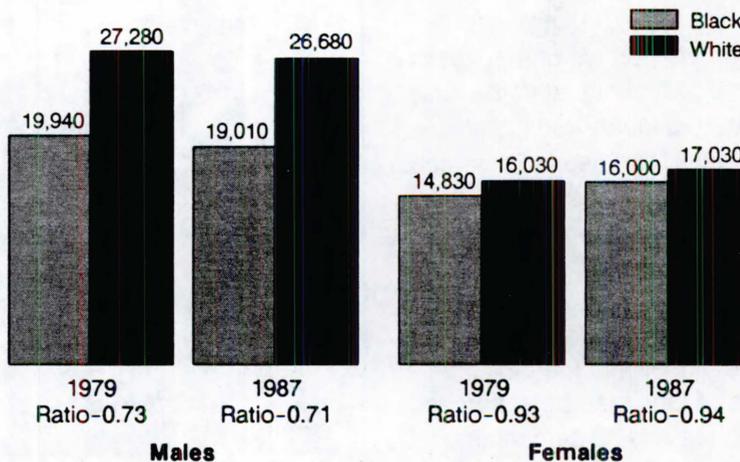
For Black and White families alike, median family income in 1987 was not significantly different than it had been in 1979, after adjusting for inflation. Income levels fluctuated throughout the 1980's; income declined



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The Black-to-White ratio of median earnings declined for males between 1979 and 1987.

(Median earnings of year-round, full-time workers in 1987 dollars)



between 1979 and 1982 (the end of the most recent recession) and has gradually moved back up to the 1979 level. Black median family income (\$18,100) was only 56 percent of White median family income (\$32,270), and that relationship has not changed significantly in the last decade.

Black families maintained by a woman with no husband present had a 1987 median income of \$9,710--about 57 percent of the median of comparable White families. The median income for Black, married-couple families was \$27,180, or 77 percent of that for their White counterparts.

Poverty

About 30 percent of Black families were poor in 1987, compared with 28 percent in 1979. Black families were three times as likely to be poor as White families. Among Black families maintained by a woman with no husband present, 52 percent were poor, almost twice the rate for comparable White families. Black related children under 18 years old in families had a poverty rate of 45 percent; Blacks 65 and over had a rate of 34 percent.

Government Assistance

Forty-nine percent of Blacks received assistance at some time between January 1984 and August 1986, and nearly 25 percent received assistance during the entire 32-month period. For Whites, the proportions were 14 and 5 percent, respectively. When income is defined to include money income plus the value of food stamps, 6 percent of Whites and 30 percent of Blacks had 1 or more months in which half or more of their income came from cash assis-

tance and/ or food stamps.

Data on persons receiving benefits from government assistance programs, such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, food stamps, and rent assistance, are provided by the Survey of Income and Program Participation. All other data shown in this Brief are based on estimates from the Current Population Survey for March 1988 and earlier years.

For information on this topic:

See

Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 442, *The Black Population in the United States: March 1988* (Stock number 803-005-00041-9, \$3.25; and Current Population Reports, Series P-70, No. 14, *Characteristics of Persons Receiving Benefits from Major Assistance Programs* (Stock number 803-044-00002-3, \$1.75). Both publica-

tions are for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. For telephone orders, call (202) 783-3238.

Contact

Claudette Bennett
(301) 763-2607

For information on Statistical Briefs:

Contact

Jennifer Marks
(301) 763-8337

This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. It may include data from businesses, households, or other sources. All statistics are subject to error, including sampling errors, design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and analytical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, caution should be exercised when comparing these data with other sources.

For the first time in this century, the proportion of Blacks living in the South increased.

