



The **Opportunity** Agenda

*The State
of Opportunity
in America*

A report on the nation's progress
toward protecting and expanding
opportunity for all.



About The Opportunity Agenda

The Opportunity Agenda is a communications, research, and advocacy organization dedicated to building the national will to expand opportunity in America. The Opportunity Agenda is a project of the Tides Center.

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Opportunity is one of America's most cherished and powerful ideals. It has drawn millions to our shores in search of a better life, and it sustains the dreams of those born here. It is articulated in the seminal ideas and documents of the nation's founding, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It is reinforced in the human rights laws that the United States helped to craft a half-century ago and has sought to champion around the world. Americans have fought to protect opportunity during periods of great conflict and challenge such as World War II and during the civil and human rights struggles that marked the latter half of the twentieth century.

Today, however, after more than a half-century of progress, opportunity in the United States is at a crossroads. The nation has made great strides in building a middle class, creating a safety net, and erecting legal protections against official segregation and overt exclusion of marginalized groups. But that progress is incomplete and, in a number of important areas, our country is losing ground. Our nation faces important decisions about ensuring that the historic steppingstones to opportunity – a college education, an affordable home, a job that pays a living wage, and economic security like access to quality healthcare – do not continue to slip out of reach for everyday Americans. We face the challenge of addressing persistent inequality of opportunity for people of color in many aspects of life – from education, to housing, to healthcare, to political participation, to criminal justice – and the continuing obstacles that women face to full participation in the economic and political life of the nation. As a nation of immigrants, our country faces the challenge of ensuring that newcomers have the opportunity to contribute to and become part of our society free of exploitation and exclusion. And as a nation that believes in the importance of a chance to start over, we have important decisions to make about the role of rehabilitation and incarceration in our criminal justice system.

This report assesses the nation's progress toward protecting and expanding opportunity for all Americans. If the promise of opportunity is a core national commitment, it is essential to measure our success in fulfilling that commitment, just as we measure our economic health and our military preparedness. By gauging how the nation fares in providing opportunity, we can build on our successes and address those areas where we are falling short.

Drawing on a broad range of research, we find that opportunity is at risk for all Americans. For example, as a growing number of businesses reduce or eliminate health care benefits, more and more U.S. workers face serious health and financial risks. And high rates of uninsurance have broad effects on health care costs and access, even for the insured. Moreover, some groups of Americans are facing multiple barriers to opportunity. For example, people who live in high-poverty, predominantly minority communities are more likely to face poorly funded schools, inadequate public transportation to jobs, environmental hazards, high crime rates, and a lack of

representation on the public airwaves and in government. These obstacles build on one another and compound over time, combining to erode opportunity.

Through bold leadership and innovative policies, the nation's elected leaders can ensure the promise of opportunity in America. This report encourages our policymakers to:

- Regularly assess the impact of public policies on opportunity;
- Modernize safety net programs that help people meet their basic needs, starting with equitable and affordable health care for all Americans;
- Build Americans' skills to adapt to a global economy, evolving technology, and an increasingly diverse population;
- Renew a commitment to human rights in the United States;
- Prioritize crime prevention and rehabilitation over increased incarceration; and
- Protect voting rights and promote political participation.

METHODOLOGY

This report assesses the nation's progress toward protecting and expanding opportunity for all Americans. We define opportunity as follows:

Opportunity means that all individuals have a fair chance to achieve their full human potential. Ensuring that fair chance requires equal treatment, economic security and mobility, a voice in decisions that affect us, a chance to start over after misfortune or missteps, and a shared responsibility for each other as neighbors and fellow Americans.

In deriving this definition and the indicators that measure it, we considered the rich body of social science research about different aspects of opportunity. We surveyed studies come from a variety of academic disciplines including economics, sociology, public health, political science, education, psychology, and law. In this effort and throughout the development of this report, we consulted with a distinguished group of experts on the theoretical and practical dynamics that make up opportunity, the types of access and social assets that serve as stepping stones to opportunity, and the practical ways of measuring opportunity's components.

From that body of research and consultation we worked with our advisors to identify, extract, and report reliable data--overwhelmingly from U.S. Census and other federal governmental sources--that measure our nation's progress in providing opportunity for all. Finally, we submitted our methodology to another distinguished group of scholars that included members of our initial advisory groups and outside experts. These individuals are listed in the *Acknowledgments* section at the beginning of this document.

No body of data can fully capture an idea as rich and complex as opportunity in America, and this report is no exception. Measuring and reporting every aspect of opportunity experienced by the diverse individuals and communities that make up the U.S. population

would have been impossible. In addition, we encountered significant limitations in the data related to opportunity that government and other institutions collect. For example, data are often unavailable or are inadequate for many racial and ethnic minority groups other than African Americans and Hispanics. Nonetheless, we believe that *The State of Opportunity in America* represents a comprehensive effort to measure our society's progress toward achieving our national ideal – a Land of Opportunity.

We measure progress based on six interrelated dimensions and principles of opportunity:

Mobility. Everyone who works hard should be able to advance and participate fully in the nation's economic, political, and cultural life. Any poor child in America should be able to fulfill her or his full potential; economic status at birth should not pre-determine ultimate achievements or assets.

Equality. Access to the benefits, responsibilities, and burdens of our society should exist without discrimination or inequality based on race, gender, nationality, socioeconomic status, or other aspects of what we look like or where we come from. Nor should favoritism, nepotism, or corruption work to shut out disfavored groups or perpetuate a privileged class.

Voice. We embrace democracy as a system that depends on the ability of all of us to participate in the public dialogue. The voting booth, the town square, the street corner, and the op-ed page remain important, and have been joined by broadcast and electronic media. This aspect of the American ideal provides not only freedom from censorship, but key opportunities to participate in our society's political, cultural, and intellectual life.

Redemption. Human beings are not fixed in their abilities or motivations; they evolve and develop based on available options, incentives, and support. Current ability is not the same as future potential. People who falter in their efforts deserve a chance to get back on their feet; those who break societal rules warrant not just punishment, but also the opportunity for rehabilitation, redemption, and a second chance.

Community. We are part of a common national enterprise, linked in our successes and challenges, and responsible to each other as well as to ourselves. We value diversity as a strength, and strive to evolve with our changing population.

Security. Regardless of skills or abilities, no one should be denied access to a basic level of education, health, and economic well-being. Without this basic protection from exploitation, it is impossible to access the other rights and responsibilities that society has to offer.

HOW CAN THE NATION EXPAND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL?

This report holds important implications for policymakers, civic leaders, and all Americans concerned about the state of opportunity in the United States. Its findings include some major gains that should be a source of national pride, and that we must

work together as a society to maintain. In particular, increased rates of college enrollment for some Americans, gains in the number of women and people of color elected to political office, and freedom from violent crime are real, if incomplete, success stories.

The findings also show, however, that our progress has stalled in many areas, and that for some of the most important measures, opportunity is actively shrinking for millions of Americans. Findings such as the huge and growing number of uninsured Americans, the unprecedented number of Americans behind bars, a growing wealth gap, and the rising costs of college, housing, and other opportunity stepping stones for working families raise grave concerns.

The findings also demonstrate that some groups of Americans--including Americans of color, low-income Americans and, frequently, women and immigrants--are facing multiple barriers to opportunity that often combine to deny the promise of the American Dream. These groups must grapple with disparate obstacles like wage inequality, reduced access to credit and homeownership, unequal health care access and treatment, inadequate political and media representation, and the disproportionate impact of law enforcement practices. Research evidence shows that Americans' attitudes toward people of other groups have improved considerably in past decades. But discrimination, stereotypes, and implicit biases still play a powerful role in determining the opportunity and life outcomes of millions of Americans.

Without renewed national commitment and concrete policy changes to reverse these negative trends, the promise of opportunity for all is at great risk for current and future generations. Fulfilling the promise of opportunity for all will be one of the great challenges of the twenty-first century. It will require bold leadership from our government, civic, and business leaders; creative and effective solutions; and the sustained political will of the American people. Fortunately, a significant body of pragmatic policies has proved effective in expanding opportunity in concrete and measurable ways. The *State of Opportunity* report recommends six types of policy approaches, described below.

1. Planning for Opportunity

Experience shows that it is important to consider all aspects of opportunity when fashioning new policies and programs that will affect Americans' life chances. With these principles in mind, we recommend that:

- Governments use a new policy tool--an Opportunity Impact Statement--as a requirement for publicly funded or authorized projects like school, hospital, or highway construction, or the expansion of the telecommunications infrastructure. The statements would explain, based on available data, how a given effort would expand or contract opportunity in terms of equitable treatment, economic security and mobility, and shared responsibility, and they would require public input and participation.

- Land-use, zoning, and transportation policies actively promote opportunity by encouraging the development of mixed-income communities; reversing the isolation of highly segregated racial, ethnic, and high-poverty communities; supporting public transportation that helps people commute from areas of high unemployment to areas of high job growth; and planning regionally to address inequality among urban, suburban, and rural communities.
- Government make expanding opportunity a condition of its partnerships with private industry, for example, by requiring public contractors to pay a living wage tied to families' actual cost of living, insisting on employment practices that promote diversity and inclusion, and ensuring that new technologies using the public electromagnetic spectrum include public interest obligations and extend service to all communities.

2. Modernizing the Safety Net

Well-crafted programs that enable people to meet the basic needs of their families have lifted millions of Americans out of poverty and sustained millions more in times of crisis or transition. Despite the popularity and proven success of Social Security, the federal and state Child Health Insurance Program, and food assistance for low-income families, these programs are increasingly under-funded and reach fewer and fewer Americans in need. We recommend modernizing the traditional safety net by focusing on moving Americans from poverty and crisis to economic security and mobility. These recommendations include:

- Rapidly moving toward a system of high quality, equitable, and comprehensive health care that covers all Americans' basic health needs;
- Expanding state and federal food assistance programs such as food stamps and school lunches to serve all children and adults in need, and providing incentives for grocery stores to stock affordable, nutritious foods in low-income urban and rural communities;
- Scaling up successful pilot programs that help lower income families to save, build assets, and acquire financial skills.

3. Updating Skills in a Changing America

Americans are in the midst of monumental changes fueled by a global economy, rapidly evolving technology, and an increasingly diverse population. The new American reality demands new skills and knowledge. We must ensure that all Americans have access to the education, training, and information needed to embrace the opportunities of the new century. Our recommendations include:

- Expanding job training programs focused on quality jobs in the new economy and tailored to the differing skills and needs of different workers;
- Reducing financial barriers to college by increasing the share of need-based grants over student loans and improving private sector participation through scholarship aid. For example, federal Pell Grant awards should be doubled and

state, federal, and private financial aid better integrated, in order to create a complementary system that allocates resources more efficiently.

- Creating effective and inclusive immigrant integration policies that educate new Americans about their rights and responsibilities in the workplace, political participation, and the naturalization process, while better equipping our institutions and communities to incorporate diverse new members. An important element of these policies is assisting new Americans in learning English and providing multilingual access to necessities like health care and basic rights like voting.

4. Renewing America's Commitment to Human Rights

Some of the greatest strides in advancing American opportunity emerged from the twentieth century movements for racial equality, women's rights, and workers' rights. The findings of this report show that this work is not yet complete and that what is needed is both vigorous enforcement of existing anti-discrimination protections and a new generation of human rights laws that address evolving forms of bias and exclusion. Our recommendations include:

- Increasing the staffing and resources that federal, state, and local agencies devote to enforcing anti-discrimination laws in voting, employment, housing, education, lending, criminal justice and other spheres. This includes using data more effectively to better detect potential bias, for instance, by comparing companies' workforce diversity with the composition of an area's qualified workforce.
- Assisting employers and other institutions committed to providing a fair and diverse environment, for example, by promoting model performance evaluation practices, greater cultural fluency, and other tools to counter bias and exclusion.
- Crafting new human rights laws that complement existing civil rights protections by addressing subconscious and institutional biases more effectively, protecting economic and social rights like the right to education, and correcting exclusion based on socioeconomic status and other characteristics not fully covered by current laws.

5. Prioritizing Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Reentry

The last two decades have seen significant progress in reducing violent crime, but also a leap in the number of nonviolent and drug-addicted women and men in jails and prisons, large racial disparities among the incarcerated, and new barriers to the reentry of people with criminal records into productive society. We recommend a set of policies that build on successful crime prevention strategies while fostering rehabilitation and productive reentry, including:

- Expanding community policing--a crime prevention strategy that emphasizes community input, collaboration, and tailored responses to crime and disorder. These approaches have a demonstrated track record of improving police-community relations and community satisfaction.

- Increasing the availability of substance abuse treatment, including using it as an alternative to incarceration. Emerging research suggests that “drug courts”--specialized judicial proceedings that provide substance abuse treatment, testing, supervision, and a range of other coordinated services for people addicted to drugs who might otherwise face incarceration--are effective in reducing recidivism, increasing retention of addicted people in treatment, and saving taxpayer money. Where possible, these programs should allow successful participants to avoid a criminal record that will hamper their future progress.
- Basing criminal sentencing on individualized culpability, control, and circumstances. Mandatory minimum sentencing policies have exacerbated racial and ethnic inequality in incarceration rates, significantly increased the number of women behind bars, and led to many unjust sentences, while doing little to deter crime. Replacing these policies with sentencing based on the circumstances of each case will reduce racial inequality and adverse impacts on women while better promoting public safety and the interests of justice.
- Reviewing criminal justice practices to identify and address the junctures at which stereotypes and discrimination currently influence the outcome.
- Restoring voting rights and removing other barriers to the reentry into society of people who have been incarcerated.

6. Strengthening Our Democracy Through Stepped Up Leadership

National leadership is necessary to protect democratic participation and to promote diverse involvement in the American political process. Voting and political participation are among our most cherished federal rights; the federal government has the greatest authority and responsibility to protect them. Our recommendations include:

- Establishing minimum federal standards for voting equipment and procedures, including straightforward voter registration requirements, nationwide voting hours, and federal guidelines to verify voter identity. Meeting these standards will require federal support to help local authorities improve training, machinery, and polling stations.
- Vigorously enforcing the Voting Rights Act and fully implementing the Help America Vote Act, while providing greater assistance to new Americans and others in obtaining and exercising the right to vote.

Finally, we urge government leaders to take up the challenge, begun by this report, of measuring our progress in providing opportunity to all Americans. This includes gathering the demographic data and other information necessary to determine how different groups of Americans are faring. (see Box 2)

Chapter 2 MOBILITY

Mobility is perhaps the most cherished of American opportunity values--and is the dimension of opportunity that comes to mind most frequently when Americans are asked what opportunity means to them. Mobility is the belief that everyone who works hard should be able to advance and participate fully in the economic, political, and cultural life of the nation. Mobility means that any poor child in America should be able to fulfill her or his full potential, and that economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality should not pre-determine one's ultimate achievements or assets.

Public policies in the United States have sought to protect and expand mobility by opening avenues for education, homeownership, entrepreneurship, and wealth creation. Indeed, when our national policies have focused on strengthening the opportunity for mobility--through policies such as the G.I. Bill, Pell Grants, and federally guaranteed home loans--we have made great strides in improving our nation's economic strength and cohesiveness. This was true even though these policies largely excluded women, non-whites, and others in the years prior to anti-discrimination legislation enacted in the 1960s.

In recent years, however, important aspects of mobility for many Americans have stagnated or declined. These trends have occurred despite some significant gains in dimensions of mobility, particularly in areas such as educational attainment. This chapter assesses opportunity for mobility along several dimensions including education, economic mobility, homeownership, and the distribution of wages and wealth across demographic and socioeconomic groups. This assessment reveals several areas where opportunities for mobility have improved, as well as areas where such opportunities are stagnant or declining.

Box 2: Has the Nation Ensured Mobility for All?

Major Gains in Mobility

- Rates of college enrollment are increasing for many groups and are rising most rapidly among women, particularly some women of color.
- Women- and minority-owned businesses are increasing and gaining a larger share of all business revenue.

Areas of Limited, Mixed, or No Progress

- Today, virtually all large school districts have greater levels of segregation of minority and low-income students than in 1986, despite modest progress toward desegregation in the 1970s.
- While high school dropout rates have generally declined for all groups since the late 1960s, some schools--disproportionately poor and minority--continue to experience high dropout rates.
- Recent studies find that economic mobility is limited, particularly for individuals in the bottom socioeconomic tiers, as well as for African Americans and Hispanics.
- While the share of workers earning poverty-level wages has declined and the proportion earning three times the poverty rate has increased since 1973, significant wage inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender persists.

- Despite modest increases in homeownership over the last 35 years, racial, ethnic, and income disparities in rates of homeownership are large and persistent.

Areas Where Mobility Has Declined

- The cost of a college education is increasingly out of reach for low- and moderate-income families, as tuition has far outpaced family income and financial aid has not increased proportionally.
- Large wealth disparities are increasing among socioeconomic groups. The top 5 percent of households own nearly 60 percent of the nation's wealth--a proportion that has steadily increased since 1983.

Core to our national consciousness is the idea that Americans' economic, educational, and social advancement should depend on their effort and ability rather than on their circumstances at birth. Where we start out in society should not pre-determine where we end up, nor should the country have rigid caste lines or perpetuate a privileged class. Americans rightly see economic and social mobility as central to opportunity and vital to achieving the American Dream. And their belief in a fair chance at mobility for themselves and their families helps to power their optimism, productivity, and perseverance in tough times as well as prosperous ones.

Because we believe that class distinctions should be surmountable through effort and determination, and that Americans' human potential is vast, we expect that our nation's social categories will be fluid and unpredictable, that many people will move up or down the socioeconomic scale over their lifetimes, and that families will change their status over generations. We expect, moreover, that taken as a whole, our national mobility will be primarily upward, toward greater economic success and human achievement over time.

The U.S. Constitution reflects this commitment to mobility over caste in its prohibition of titles of nobility or "corruption of blood," and in its systematic move away from slavery, patriarchy, and the privileges of a landed gentry and toward the guarantees of equal protection of the laws, universal suffrage, and universal privileges and immunities for all Americans. As Alexis de Tocqueville noted in 1835 in his seminal *Democracy in America*, American mobility nurtures in its people a deep belief in the limitless potential of themselves and their countrymen, "Equality suggests to the Americans the idea of the indefinite perfectibility of man," he wrote. The experience of the frontier, migration and immigration, recovery from the Great Depression, and the post-World War II rise of the middle class served to galvanize this ideal.

These values are also reflected in human rights laws. For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination condemns the practices of colonialism, segregation, and apartheid that enforce caste systems and limit mobility.ⁱ And the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man provides that "every person has the right to an education that will prepare him to attain a decent life, to raise his standard of living and to be a useful member of society."ⁱⁱ

Several opportunity vehicles have long served as springboards to mobility in the United States. A high school diploma, a college degree, and, increasingly, an advanced degree have helped to catapult generations of Americans from poverty and working-class status into the middle class and, sometimes, affluence. And, in addition to its economic benefits, education advances human knowledge and development in ways that benefit society as well as the individual. Similarly, a decent job at a living wage not only provides economic advancement through wages, savings, and freedom from debt; it also provides the leisure time that is essential to creativity, entrepreneurship, and spiritual advancement. Homeownership, too, has long been an investment in economic mobility and in strong communities and social networks that aid in broader advancement. And, though more obscure, tax policy is also key to the mobility of our society, because it determines the extent to which wealth will be concentrated and perpetuated by privileged families from generation to generation or invested in expanding opportunity and prosperity for all.

This chapter assesses the nation's progress toward protecting and expanding mobility for all. Economic mobility is the centerpiece of this assessment. But mobility is also a function of access to high-quality educational opportunities, the ability to afford a home of one's choosing, and the degree to which the nation helps all children have the best possible start. Mobility is also influenced by trends in the distribution of wealth and income. A systematic concentration of wealth in a few hands runs counter to American ideals of fair play. Mobility is assessed here by several indicators, described below.

About the Data in this Chapter

We derive specific measures of mobility from many sources such as surveys of economic and human rights, reports on national economic and labor force trends (e.g., the Economic Policy Institute's *State of Working America* report), and relevant research literature.ⁱⁱⁱ We include measures of trends in: access to quality educational opportunities (as measured by levels of racial and income segregation in K-12 education, access to comprehensive, high-quality child care, high school degree attainment and dropout rates, and access to higher education); economic mobility (as measured by estimates of income gains or losses over time among people in different income quintiles and among different racial and ethnic groups); the distribution of wealth and wages; homeownership; and other measures. As with data in other chapters, most of the trend data presented here draw on cross-sectional or survey data; few longitudinal data are available that might allow more conclusive interpretations of trends over time. Our conclusions are therefore offered with caution. In a few instances, trend data are not available for important measures, but rich contemporary data provide an indication of the degree of opportunity for mobility. In these instances, we present data, but not conclusions about trends.

Data are drawn largely from federal sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Several notable exceptions exist--for example, we draw on data collected by The College Board to assess trends in college education financing. Most of the data reported here are available from other published sources. However, The

Opportunity Agenda sought assistance for data collection and analysis of trends in a few specific areas; these original analyses of federal data are noted where they appear.

Several limitations of the data should be noted. For instance, federal guidelines require the collecting and reporting of population data based on five racial groups (white, African American or black, Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Pacific Islander) and two ethnic groups (Hispanic or non-Hispanic).^{iv} But these guidelines were issued in 1997, and federal data collected prior to that year often fail to disaggregate these groups. In many cases, data are unavailable for all groups except whites, African Americans, and Hispanics.

Further, these broad racial and ethnic categories often fail to adequately capture the diversity *within* U.S. racial and ethnic groups, which may vary considerably on the basis of immigration status or nativity, primary language, cultural identification, and area of residence. A full assessment of opportunity should include a consideration of how opportunity varies along these dimensions. Where possible, we present subgroup information such as variations among Asian-American and Hispanic nationality groups.

Similarly, federal data are rarely presented disaggregated by both race and ethnicity and measures of social class or socioeconomic status. Yet the opportunity barriers for low-income whites may differ in important ways from those of better-off whites and some minorities. We encourage researchers to examine how opportunity indicators differ by race, ethnicity *and* income, and to explore their interaction.

EDUCATION

Access to high-quality education is widely recognized as being essential to mobility, both for individuals and communities. This is particularly true in the new millennium, as a growing share of workers either use technology on the job and/or are working in high-technology sectors. Yet the quality of education varies considerably in the United States by race, ethnicity, citizenship and/or immigration status, gender, family socioeconomic status, and geography (e.g., rural, suburban, or urban residence). Educational inequality starts early in life, beginning with uneven access to high-quality, center-based early childcare. It persists through K-12 education in the form of public schooling that is often separate and unequal on the basis of race, ethnicity, geography, family income and language status. And it continues in higher education that is inaccessible for many because of insufficient financial resources and/or inadequate academic preparation.

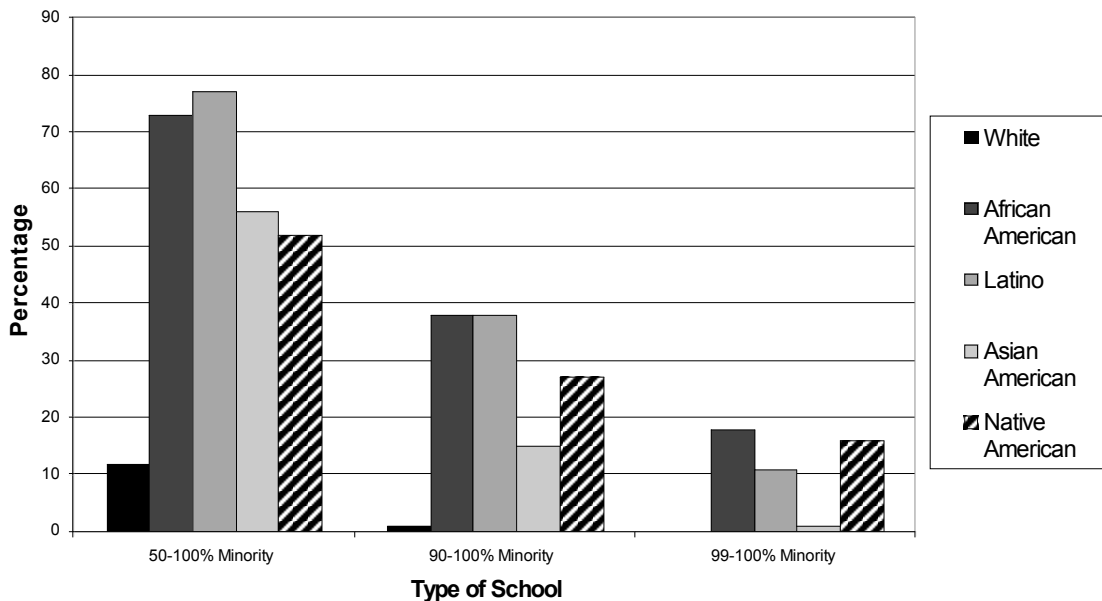
The Persistence of Segregation in Education

Racial, ethnic, and class segregation in schools--largely the consequence of residential segregation--is strongly correlated with classroom outcomes, as has been widely demonstrated.^v Predominantly minority and high-poverty schools have less experienced and fewer certified teachers, higher teacher turnover, poorer instructional quality, fewer Advanced Placement courses, poorer test scores, and higher dropout rates. For example, in 2001, rates of high school dropout in predominantly minority schools were nearly 20

percent higher than in majority white schools. In 2002, half of predominantly minority schools had dropout rates of over 40 percent, as did two-thirds of those schools that enrolled fewer than 10 percent white students.^{vi} High-poverty and predominantly minority schools are so systematically unequal relative to majority-white schools that some researchers have concluded that they are “institutions of concentrated disadvantage.” School segregation is therefore an important measure of opportunity for mobility.

Despite fifty years of legal precedent and policy at federal, state and local levels to desegregate schools, rates of school segregation have failed to decline, and are showing signs of increasing. High levels of resistance in many communities to school desegregation efforts, coupled with court-ordered dissolution of desegregation plans, have halted the movement to create more integrated public schools. Today, over 40 percent of K-12 students in the United States are nonwhite, and the great majority of them attend predominantly minority schools (see Figure 2-1).^{vii} A study examining racial isolation of African-American and Latino students in the nation’s 239 largest school districts found that despite considerable integration through the mid-1980s, virtually all large school districts have experienced increasingly lower levels of integration: Since 1986, African-American and Latino students have become more segregated from whites.^{viii} And a study of private schools found that white private school students are less likely than whites attending public schools to be exposed to racial and ethnic minority students.^{ix}

Figure 2-1. Percent of Students from Each Racial and Ethnic Group in Minority Schools, 2002-2003
 Source: Orfield and Lee, 2005



Access to High-Quality, Early Childcare

Substantial and growing research demonstrates that high-quality early child education programs produce substantial benefits, particularly for children in poverty and in other at-risk conditions, their families, and for society at large. Early child education programs have improved long-term educational outcomes for children, and are associated with lower dropout rates, reduced crime, increased employment, and less reliance on social service and safety net programs.^x

Increasing the quality and availability of early child education programs is an important opportunity policy, particularly in light of the need for childcare among working parents. Over two-thirds of U.S. households have both parents or a single parent working outside the home, and about three of five (13 million) children under age six are cared for during the day by someone other than a parent.^{xi} But for many low-income families, the cost of adequate childcare severely restricts childcare options at best, and is prohibitive at worst. Childcare assistance can make a significant difference in improving childcare options. A study comparing wages and work supports in ten U.S. communities found that childcare assistance can reduce a low-income family's out-of-pocket expenses by as much as 35 percent.^{xii}

Given the high costs and paucity of appropriate childcare, it is not surprising that low-income working families, as well as many racial and ethnic minority families, are less likely to have children enrolled in early child education programs (see Figure 2-2).^{xiii} While these families are disproportionately reliant on programs such as the federally funded Head Start program, children from higher income families remain far more likely than children from low-income families to attend a center-based early childhood preschool. As shown in Figure 2-3, children from families in the highest income quintile are more than three times more likely to attend such programs than children from families in the lowest income quintile.^{xiv}

Figure 2-2. Percent of Kindergartners Who Had Attended Center-Based Preschool by Race and Ethnicity, 1998

Source: Lee and Burkham, 2002

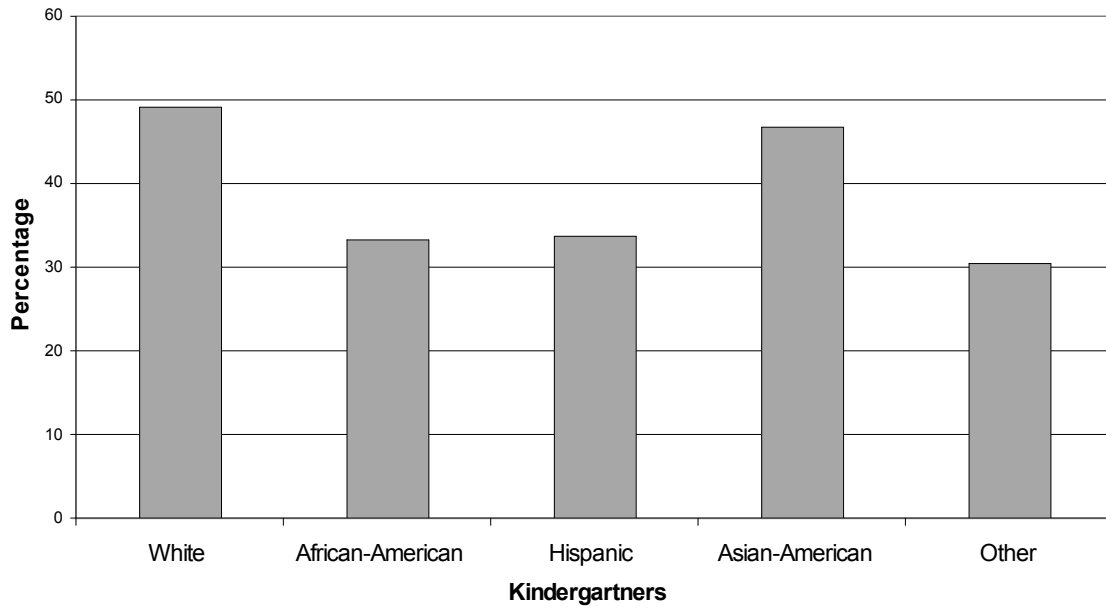
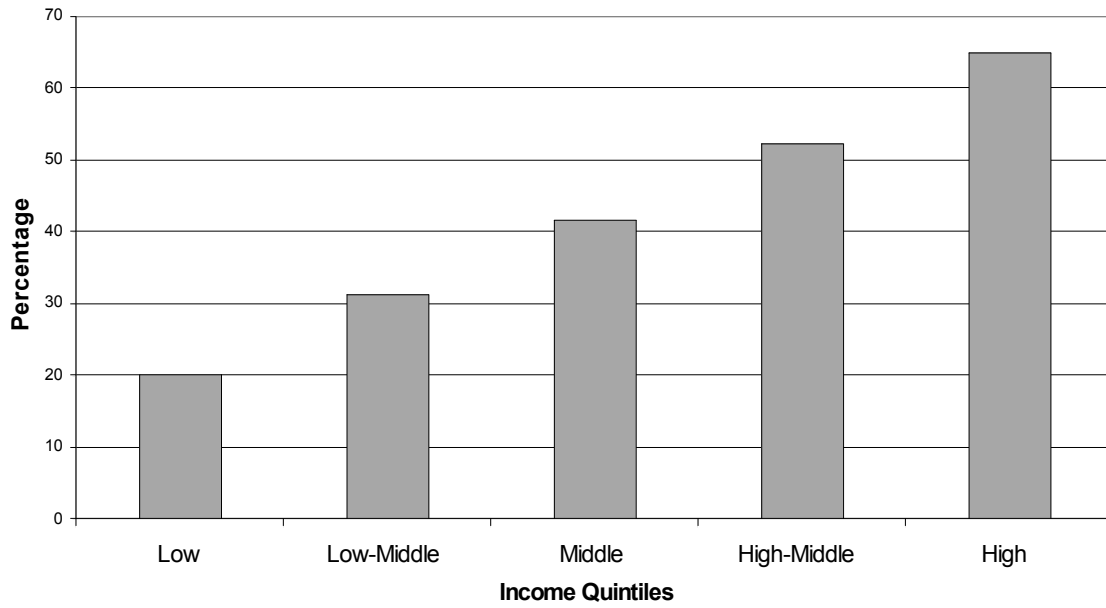


Figure 2-3. Percent of Kindergartners Who Had Attended Center-Based Preschool, by Income Quintiles, 1998

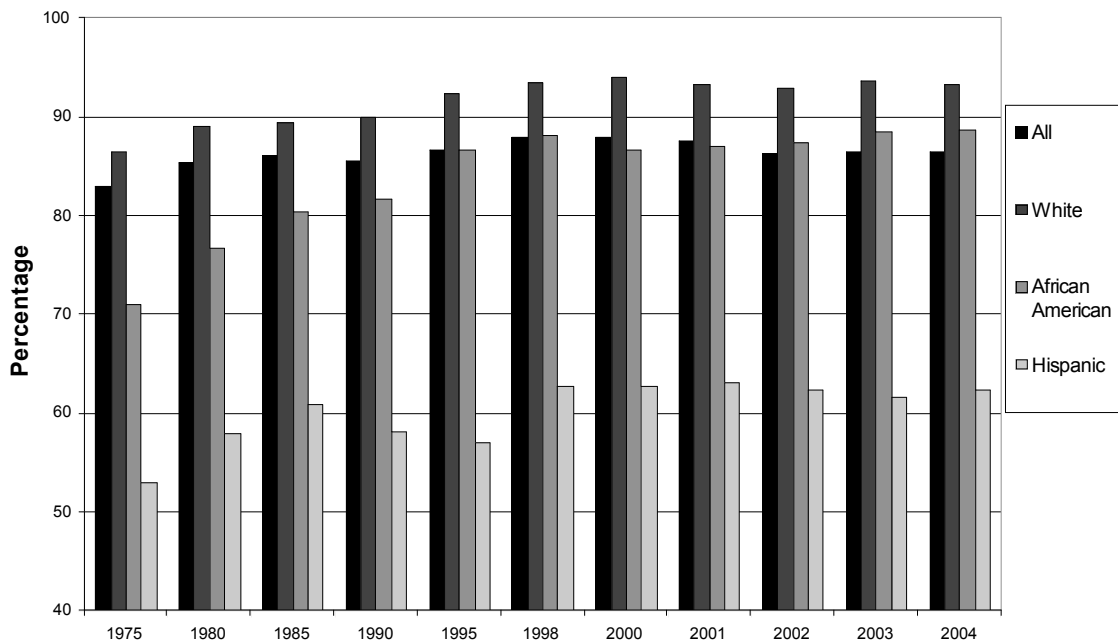
Source: Lee and Burkham, 2002



High School Degree Attainment and Dropout Rates

High school degree attainment in the United States is high overall--nearly nine in ten U.S. adults (87 percent) have obtained a high school diploma or general education equivalency degree. But rates of high school degree attainment haven't increased dramatically since 1975, when 83 percent of U.S. adults held a high school degree or equivalent. And while African Americans have considerably narrowed the high school degree attainment gap with whites (only 71 percent of African Americans held high school degrees in 1975, compared to 89 percent in 2004), Hispanics remain well behind on this indicator. The rate of high school degree attainment among Hispanic adults has held steady at just above or slightly below 60 percent for the last twenty years (see Figure 2-4).^{xv}

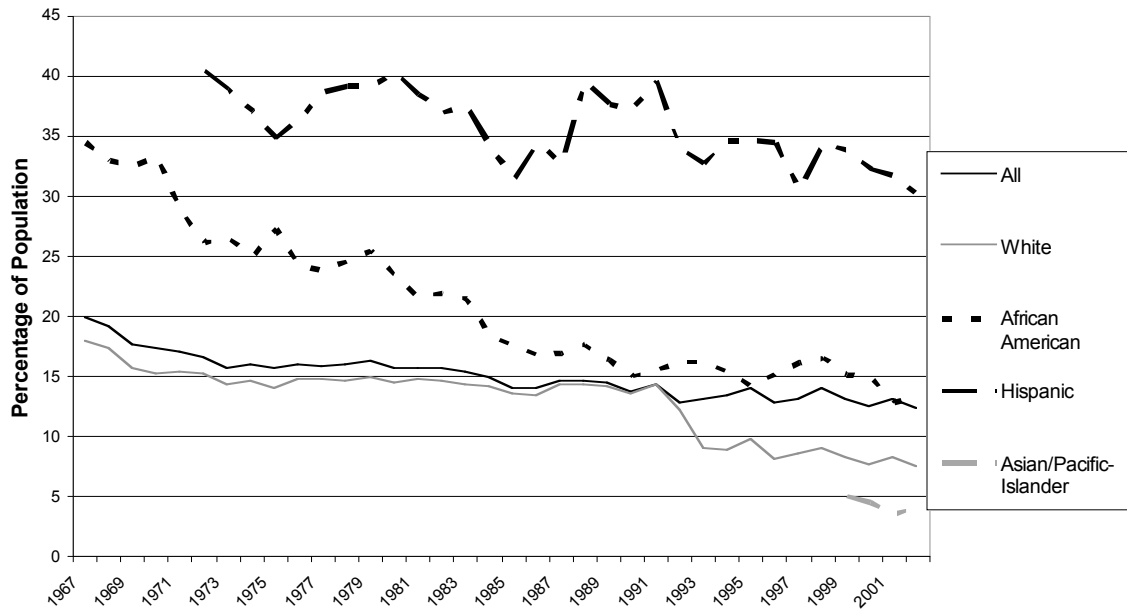
Figure 2-4. High School Completion Rates by Race/Ethnicity
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004



The percentage of young adults who have dropped out of high school has declined for the nation overall: Only about one in eight persons age 18 to 24 left high school prior to obtaining a diploma in 2002, compared to about one in five in 1967. Encouragingly, high school dropout rates have declined among all racial and ethnic groups in the United States over the past thirty-five years. Some of the most dramatic declines have occurred among Hispanic young adults, who have experienced a 25 percent decline in dropout rates since 1972, and African Americans, who have experienced a 64 percent decline in dropout rates since 1967. Significant racial and ethnic gaps in high school dropout rates persist, however. Hispanic youth, for example, are four times more likely to drop out than are white youth (see Figure 2-5).^{xvi}

These federal data often mask considerable problems of high dropout rates that are not “captured” in federal definitions, and therefore underestimate dropout rates.^{xvii} Overall, only about two-thirds of all students who enter 9th grade will graduate on time with regular diplomas in 12th grade. Three-fourths of white students will graduate on time, while only about half of Black, Latino, and Native American students earn regular diplomas alongside their classmates.^{xviii} And a study by the Educational Testing Service found that despite apparent declines in dropout rates noted in federal data, the high school completion rate declined in all but seven states between 1990 and 2000. In ten states, high school completion rates declined by 8 percentage points or more.^{xix}

Figure 2-5. Percentage of High School Dropouts, Age 18-24 Years
 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2004



Note: Data for Asian/Pacific Islander Americans are not available prior to 1999.

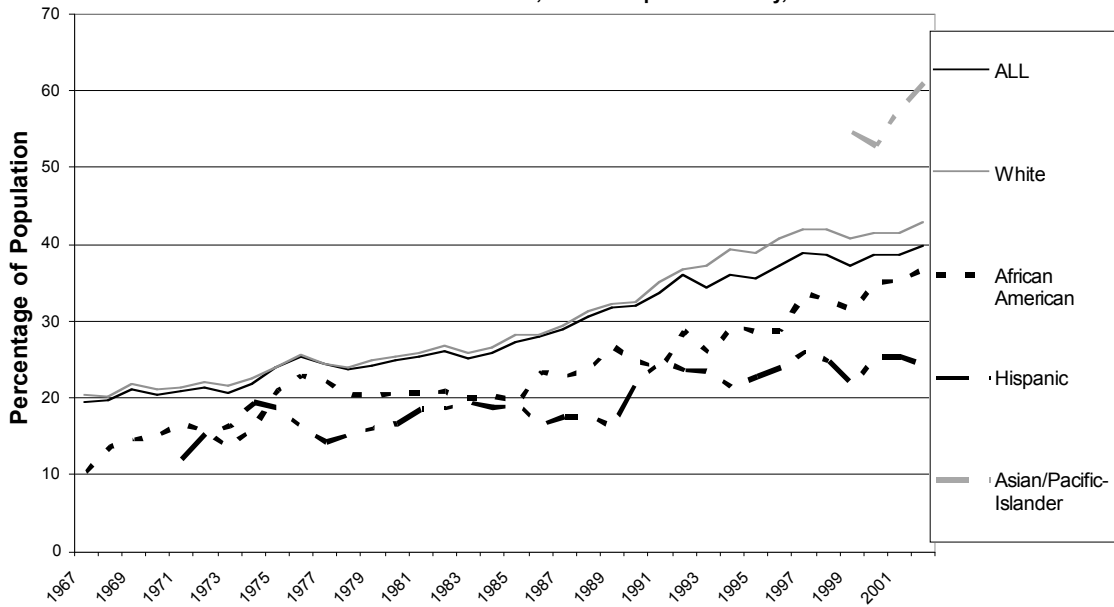
Access to Higher Education

College Enrollment. Rates of college enrollment in the United States are low relative to the proportion of high school graduates. About 40 percent of U.S. females and one-third of U.S. males age 18 to 24 were enrolled in college in 2002. On the positive side, the proportion of women enrolling in college has nearly doubled between 1967, when only about one in five women age 18 to 24 were enrolled in college, and 2002, when nearly two in five women were enrolled in college. African-American women have experienced some of the most dramatic increases in college enrollment, as rates of matriculation among this population have nearly quadrupled over the past thirty-five years (from 10 percent in 1967 to 37 percent in 2002). Male enrollment, however, has remained relatively stagnant, following a decline from a high of 35 percent in 1969 to 26 percent in 1979. Moreover, racial and ethnic gaps in college enrollment persist, despite the fact that rates of college enrollment have increased for some racial and ethnic minorities, such as African-American men and women. Hispanic women and men continue to have the

lowest college enrollment rates (24 percent and 16 percent, respectively) of any racial or ethnic group, and African-American male enrollment has remained relatively stagnant at about 26 percent over the last decade, following increases in the 1970s and 1980s (see Figures 2-6 and 2-7).^{xx}

Figure 2-6. Percentage of Female High School Graduates Age 18-24 Who Are Enrolled in College, 1967-2002

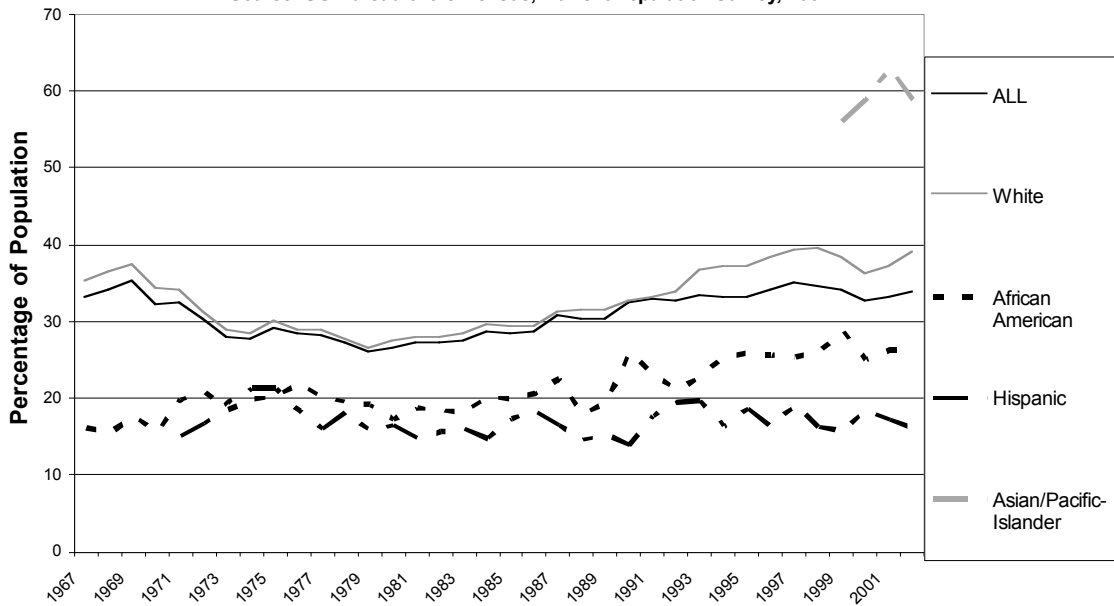
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2004



Note: Data for Asian/Pacific Islander Americans are not available prior to 1999.

Figure 2-7. Percentage of Male High School Graduates Age 18-24 Who Are Enrolled in College, 1967-2002

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2004

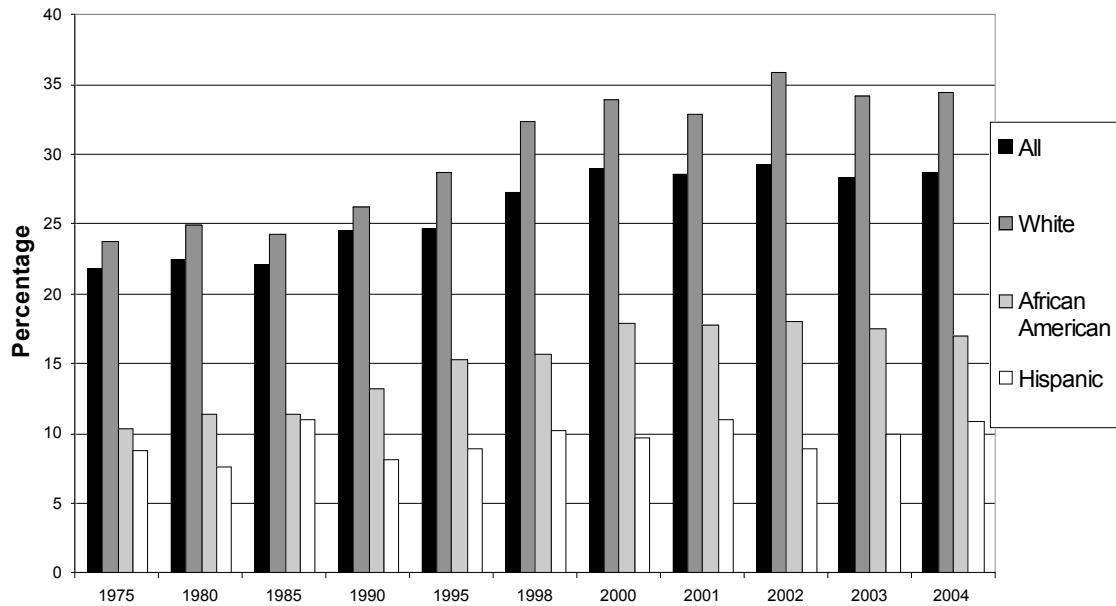


Note: Data for Asian/Pacific Islander Americans are not available prior to 1999.

College Degree Attainment. As of 2004, fewer than three in ten U.S. adults age 25 to 29 had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. In addition, significant disparities exist among racial and ethnic groups in college degree attainment--gaps that have not narrowed significantly despite a dramatic rise in the number of students of color who gained access to college in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the percentage of African Americans with a college degree increased from 10 percent in 1975 to 18 percent in 2000, but this rate has leveled off since then. Similarly, the percentage of Hispanics holding college degrees hasn’t improved since 1985, when 11 percent of the Hispanic adult population held a college degree (see Figure 2-8).^{xxi}

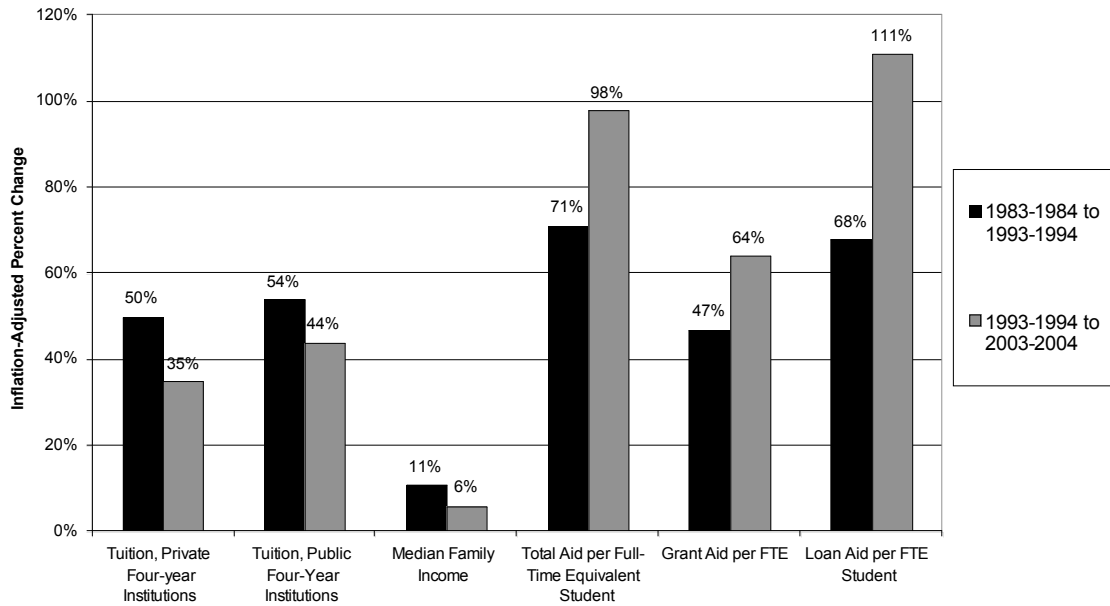
Figure 2-8. Degree Attainment by Race and Ethnicity, Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004



Financial Barriers to College Enrollment. The high cost of tuition is a barrier to opportunity for students who come from middle- and low-income families. Grants have been a vital source of financial aid to these students, and federal government programs such as the Pell Grants target aid to low-income students for whom post-secondary education would otherwise be unaffordable. Since 1983, however, the increase in tuition costs at both public and private four-year institutions has greatly outpaced the increase in median family income (see Figure 2-9). In response, many public and private institutions have greatly increased sources of financial aid, but most of the aid is in the form of loans rather than grants. Moreover, the increased aid is not targeted at low- and middle-income families. Sources of merit-based aid have increased relative to sources of need-based aid.^{xxii}

Figure 2-9. Inflation-Adjusted Changes in Tuition, Family Income, and Student Aid, 1983 to 2004
 Source: The College Board, 2004



ECONOMIC MOBILITY

The chance to “get ahead” economically is central to the American Dream. The optimism of the United States--the spirit that attracts newcomers and sustains lifelong residents--is grounded in the belief that any person in this country can achieve economic advancement, regardless of where she or he starts.

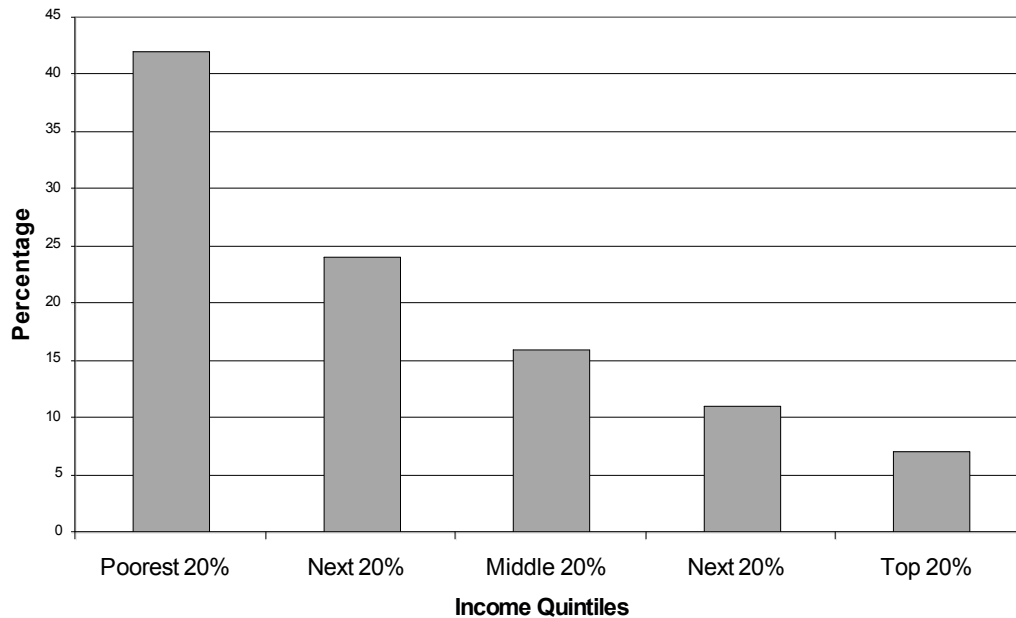
How accurate is this belief? Are economic rewards in America available to all based on effort and talent? Can everyone succeed and reap the benefits of hard work? Some studies of economic mobility published prior to the 1990s found that mobility in the United States was “significant and . . . remained stable over time.”^{xxiii} These studies also found that the share of people who moved into different income quintiles was greater when longer timeframes were studied. Over a ten-year period, for example, as many as 60 percent of people switched income quintiles, while about one-quarter to one-third moved into a different income quintile from year to year.^{xxiv}

More recent studies, however, find less mobility and a greater likelihood that those in the bottom and top quintiles will remain there. These studies show that people in the lowest income quintiles experience the least mobility, with estimates ranging from 19 percent to 38 percent average annual mobility among those in the lowest income quintile over a ten-year period.^{xxv} A study that followed more than 6,000 individuals and families with children born between 1942 and 1972 found that 42 percent of those born in the bottom income quintile remained in this group on follow up, while another 24 percent moved up only to the next income quintile. Movement from the bottom quintile to the top was

unlikely: Only 7 percent of those starting out at the bottom were among the top quintile on follow up (see Figure 2-10).^{xxvi} In addition, women, minorities, and other demographic groups who are disproportionately in the bottom income group are more likely to be stuck at the bottom. For example, one analysis found that fewer than 20 percent of whites born into families in the bottom income decile remained there as adults, compared to 42 percent of African Americans in the same circumstances.^{xxvii} Another study found that African Americans and people living in female-headed households were more likely to be chronically poor--that is, living in poverty for 24 consecutive months.^{xxviii} Moreover, whites are more likely to move up from the bottom than they are to fall from the top income group; the opposite is true for African Americans.^{xxix}

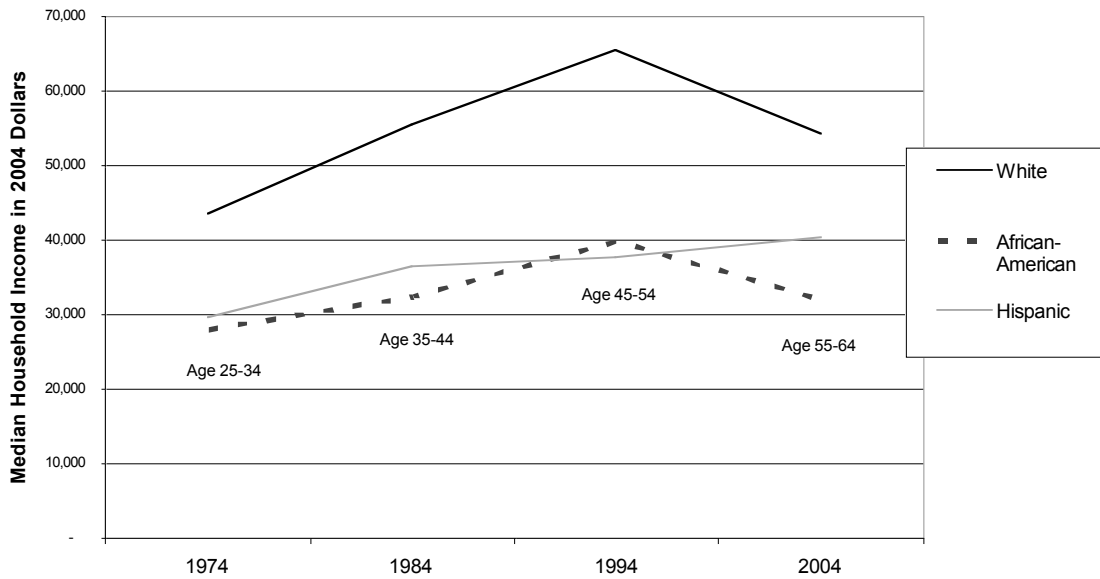
Figure 2-10. Where Those Born in the Poorest 20 Percent of the Population Ended Up as Adults

Source: Hertz, 2003, as reported by the Century Foundation, 2004



A cohort analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data reveals that white households gained more in real income than African-American and Hispanic households between 1974 and 2004. This analysis, prepared for The Opportunity Agenda by the Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute, assesses median household income for those age 25 to 34 in 1974, then again for those age 35 to 44 in 1984, for those age 45 to 54 in 1994, and for those age 55 to 64 in 2004. This analysis examines age cohorts across decades, but does not follow the same people from one decade to the next. White households enjoyed an average income increase of more than \$20,000 between 1974 and 1994, before seeing these gains cut in half by 2004. But African-American and Hispanic median household income lagged far behind that of whites at each measurement point, and increased to a smaller degree than did white household income (see Figure 2-11).^{xxx}

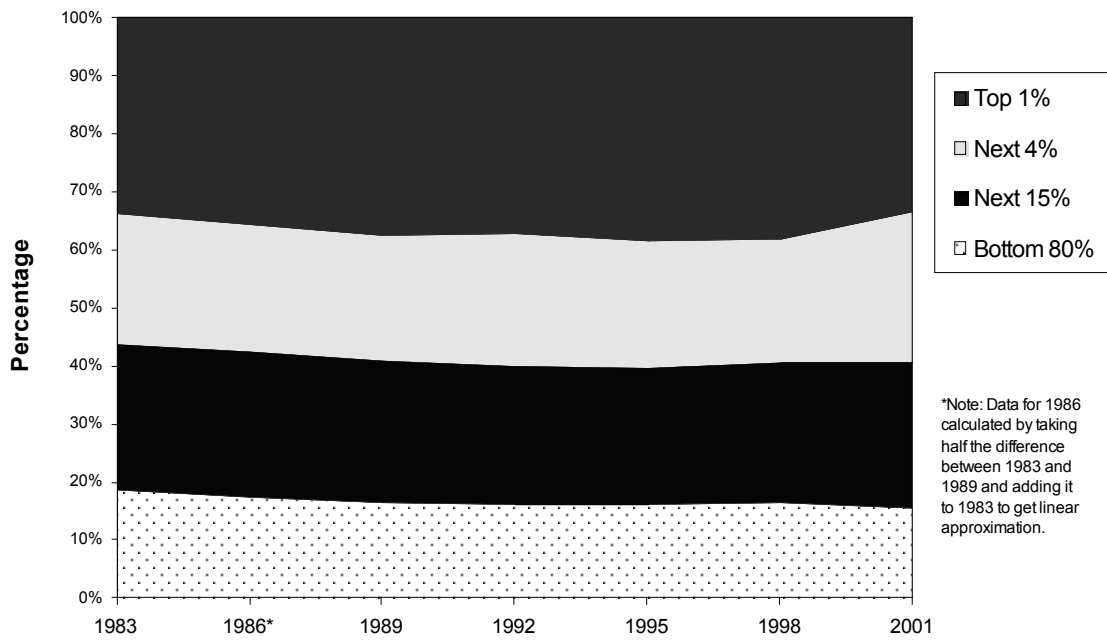
Figure 2-11. Real Median Household Income, by Race 1974-2004
 Source: Economic Policy Institute Analysis of Current Population Survey Data, 2005



Distribution of Wealth

Wealth is unequally distributed in the United States, but some periods of time have been characterized by greater wealth inequality than others. Today, the top 1 percent of households owns about one-third of household wealth, and the next 4 percent owns an additional 25 percent. The bottom 80 percent of households own about 15 percent of the nation’s wealth. This distribution has been fairly consistent over the last twenty years. But two recent trends are worthy of note: Between 1983 and 2001, the proportion of national wealth increased for the top 5 percent (from 54 percent to 59 percent), while the bottom four-fifths of households saw their share of national wealth decline from 19 percent to 16 percent (see Figure 2-12).^{xxx1}

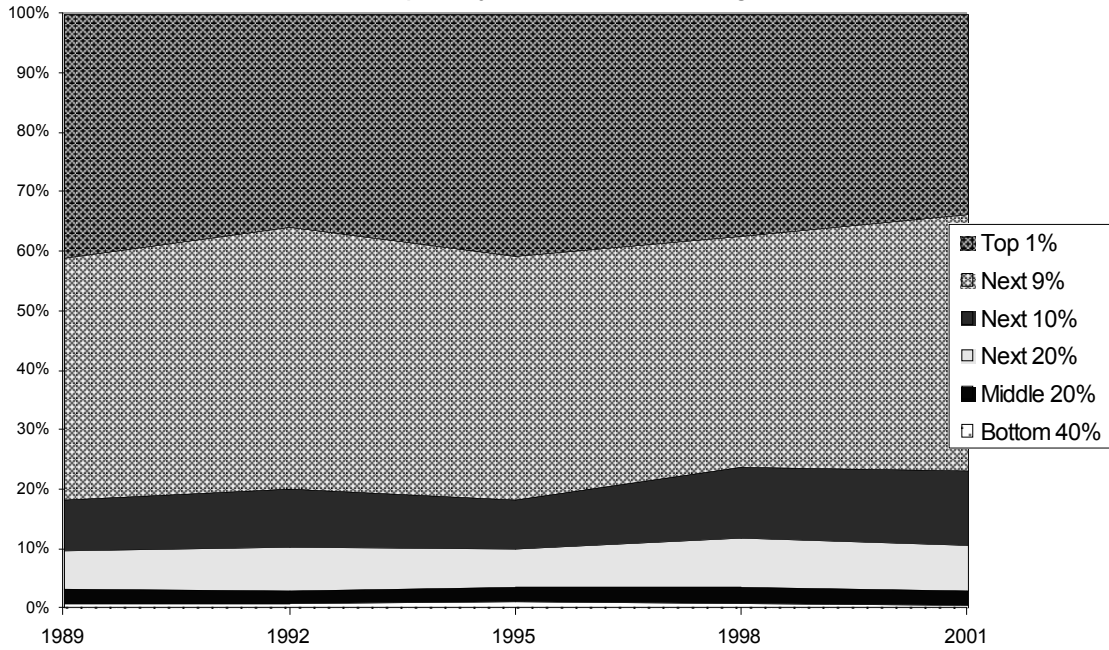
Figure 2-12. Distribution of Wealth by Wealth Class, 1983-2001
 Source: Wolff 2004, as reported by Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto, 2005



Stock market wealth--in recent years, a major source of growth in family wealth--is also unequally distributed. While the share of stock market wealth owned by the top 1 percent of stock-owning households declined from 41 percent in 1995 to 35 percent in 2001, stock wealth increased from 41 percent to 43 percent for the next 4 percent of stock-owning households during this same period. The top 5 percent of stock-owning households, therefore, maintained a disproportionately large (77 percent) share of stock wealth, a percentage largely unchanged over the last fifteen years. During this same period, the bottom 40 percent of stock-owning households barely maintained a foothold in the stock market, holding about 1 percent or less of stock (see Figure 2-13).^{xxxii}

Figure 2-13. Distribution of Stock Market Wealth by Wealth Class, Selected Years, 1989-2001

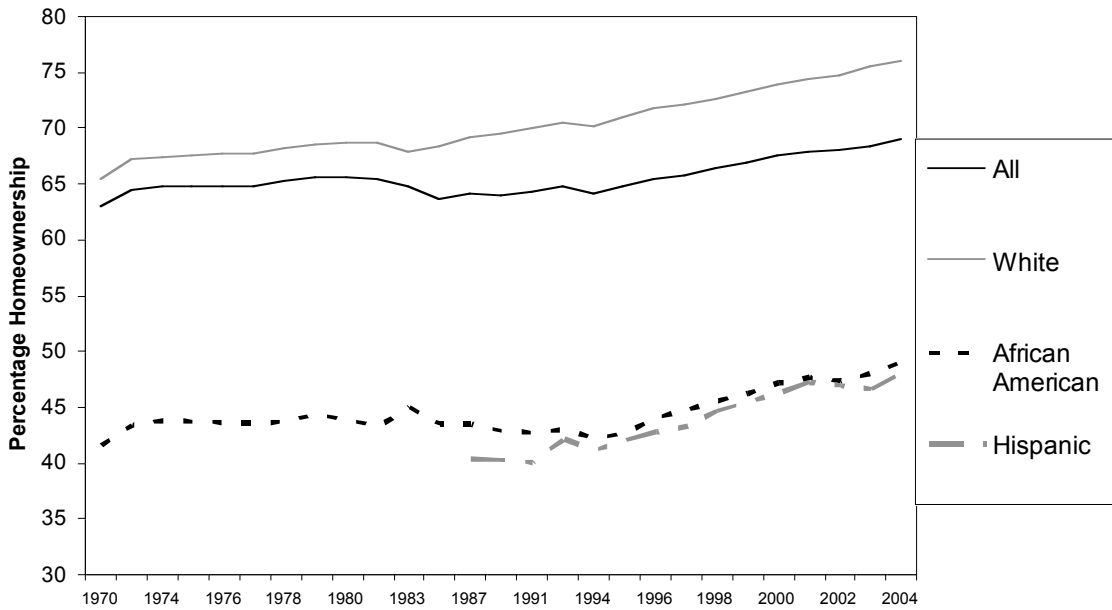
Source: Wolff, as reported by Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto, 2005



HOMEOWNERSHIP

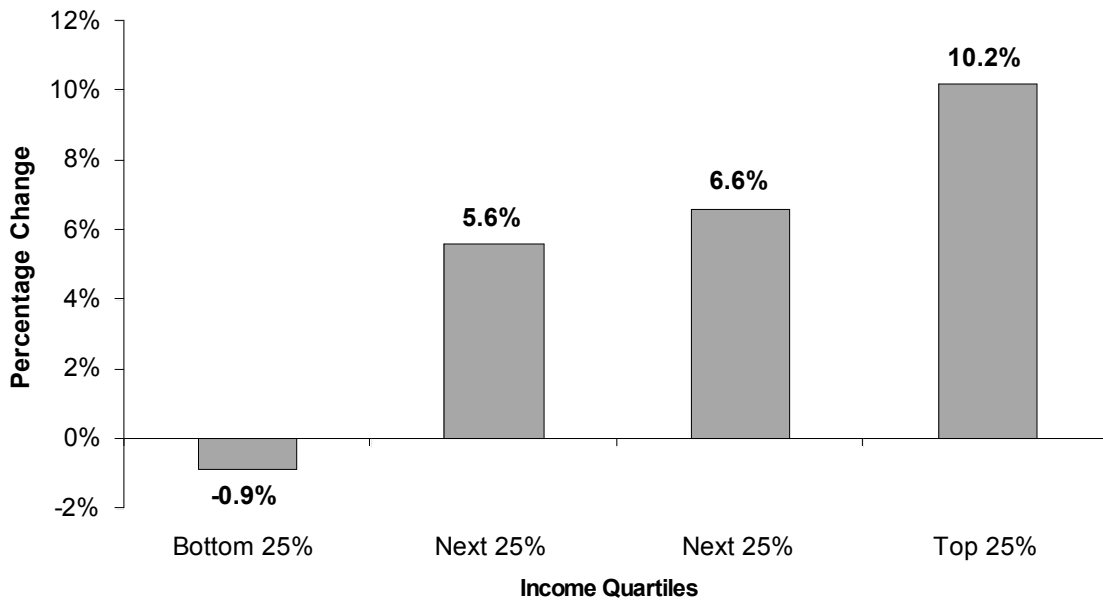
Homeownership, long acknowledged for its beneficial impact on household wealth and stabilizing impact on communities and families, has slightly increased nationally, from a rate of 65 percent homeownership in 1979 to 68 percent in 2003. Homeownership has increased for all income quartiles, as well as for all racial and ethnic groups. Hispanics saw the greatest gains in rate of homeownership, from just over forty percent in 1989 to 47 percent in 2003 (see Figure 2-14).^{xxxiii} But large gaps in homeownership are found among income, racial, and ethnic groups. In 2001, for example, nearly nine in ten of top income quartile households owned homes, compared with just over half of the lowest income quartile households. Moreover, the rate of homeownership growth has disproportionately favored higher income groups. Between 1970 and 2003, homeownership among the top income quintile grew by over 10 percent, while slightly declining among the lowest fifth of wage earners (see Figure 2-15).^{xxxiv} African-American and Latino households are also far less likely to own homes than are whites. Although this gap is narrowing slightly, it is large and has persisted for decades.

Figure 2-14. Homeownership Rates by Race, 1970-2004
 Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Data, 2005



Note: U.S. Census designations added "Hispanic" as a separate category in 1987.

Figure 2-15. Change in Homeownership Rates by Income Quartiles, 1970-2003
 Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Data, 2005



Mortgage Lending

The vast majority of American homeowners must obtain mortgage loans to purchase their homes. But a significant body of evidence shows that minority loan applicants continue to face discrimination when attempting to obtain a mortgage loan--discrimination that may, in part, explain the racial and ethnic gap in homeownership rates. One of the largest and most significant studies to date, conducted by the Boston Federal Reserve Bank, assessed loan denial rates among white, African-American, and Hispanic applicants using a sample of about 3,000 loan applications for conventional mortgages in the Boston area in 1990. Controlling for a variety of applicant, loan, and property characteristics, the study found that the rejection rate for African-American and Hispanic applicants was 82 percent higher than for white applicants. The statistical controls used in this study demonstrate that the racial difference in rejection rates occurred among comparable loan, property, and applicant characteristics.^{xxxv} Critics of the study charge that many methodological problems limit the study's ability to draw conclusions. A major reanalysis of the study's data, however, finds that the large differences in loan approval rates between white and minority applicants cannot be explained by methodological problems, omitted variables, or other errors.^{xxxvi} More recent studies using a range of controls have yielded similar findings.

Subprime Lending

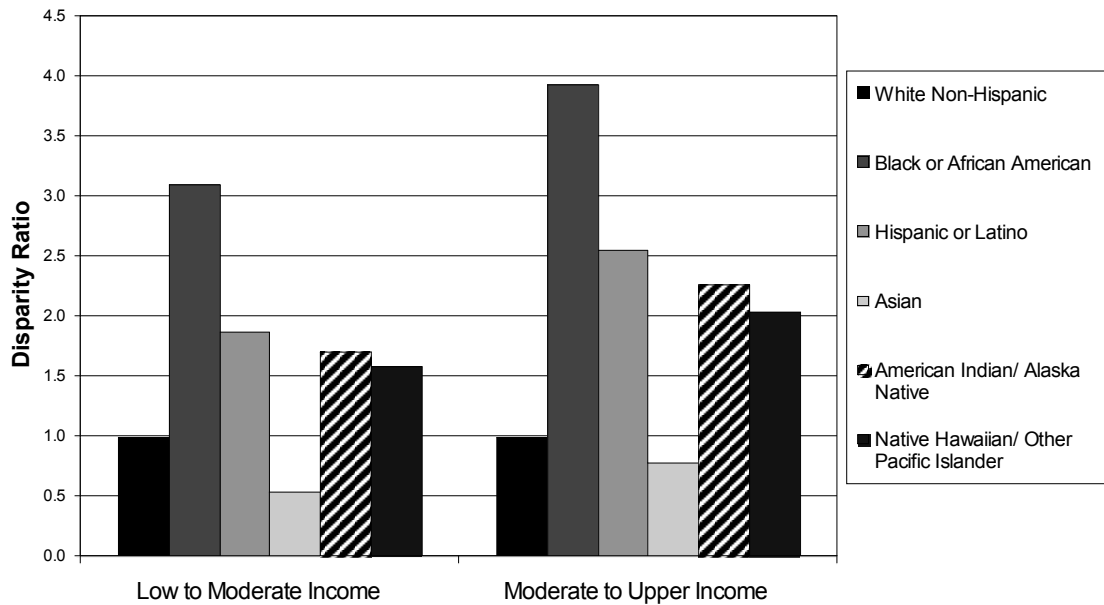
Another barrier to homeownership for many in low-income communities and communities of color can be found in the type and quality of loan products available to consumers. Prime loans--loans offered by banks and other commercial lending institutions at prevailing interest rates--are the most desirable home loans, and as such are typically only available to borrowers with good credit. In contrast, subprime loans feature higher interest than prevailing rates, and as a result are often the only lending option available to those with credit blemishes. But subprime lending can also crowd out prime lending in traditionally underserved communities, restricting the kinds of loan options available in these communities and increasing the likelihood that some individuals will fall victim to predatory and deceptive lending practices.^{xxxvii}

A recent analysis of federal home lending data conducted by the Washington, D.C.-based National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) found that African Americans and Hispanics, women, and low- or moderate-income borrowers are much more likely to have subprime loans than prime loans in the vast majority of the nation's 331 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). In all MSAs, for example, women borrowed a higher percentage of subprime loans than prime loans, and in only 5 of 331 MSAs did prime loans exceed subprime loans among African-American borrowers. In more than three-quarters of the nation's MSAs, a greater share of subprime than prime loans is found in predominantly minority census tracts. And in 98 percent of these MSAs, prime lending lagged behind subprime lending in low- to moderate-income census tracts. Moreover, the NCRC's analysis revealed that the portion of subprime loans taken out by minorities and women increased with higher levels of racial and ethnic housing segregation within census tracts.^{xxxviii}

At the request of The Opportunity Agenda, the NCRC analyzed federal data to assess the share of subprime loans relative to prime loans in low-income communities and communities of color. Using whites as the reference group, the NCRC found wide disparities in the prevalence of subprime home purchase loans, refinance loans, and home improvement loans. African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics all relied more on all types of subprime loans than did whites. These disparities *increased* among more affluent borrowers of color. For example, low- to moderate-income African Americans are three times more likely than low- to moderate-income whites to have subprime loans. But moderate- to upper income African Americans are nearly four times more likely than similarly situated whites to be dependent on subprime loans. Similarly, moderate- and upper income American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics were more dependent on subprime loans relative to whites than were their low- and moderate-income peers (see Figure 2-16).^{xxxix}

Figure 2-16. Disparity Ratio, Subprime Home Purchase Loans, by Race, Ethnicity, and Income

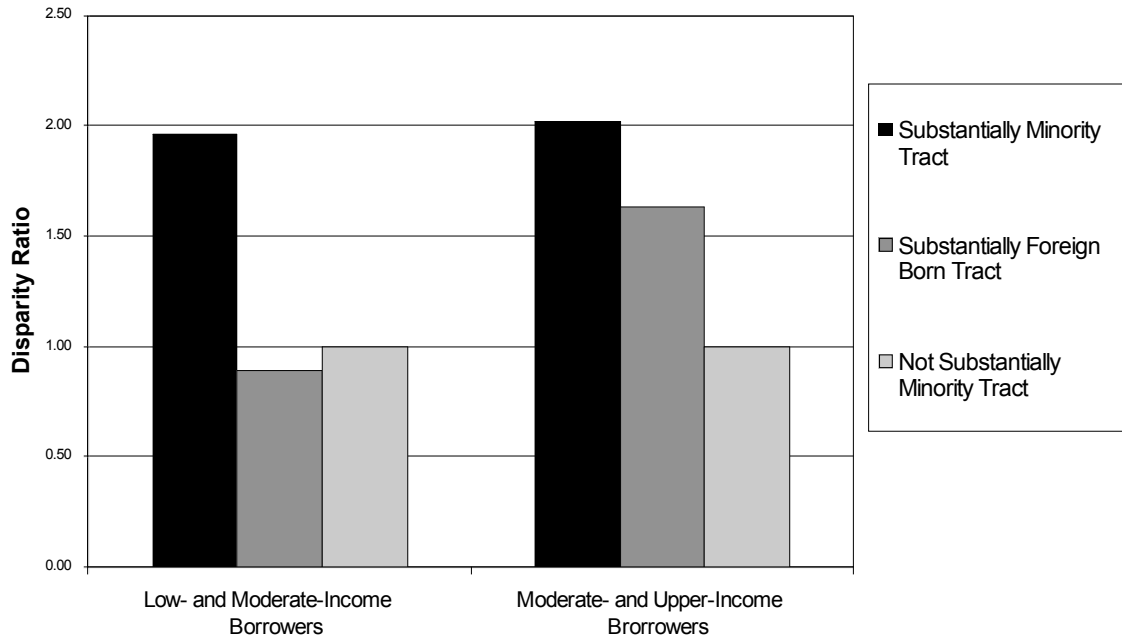
Source: National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2005



When analyzed by the demographic composition of census tracts, a similar pattern emerged. Low- and middle-income borrowers in substantially minority census tracts were nearly twice as likely as low- and middle-income borrowers in substantially non-minority tracts to receive subprime loans. Yet this disparity ratio increased slightly among middle- and upper income borrowers. And although low- and middle-income borrowers in substantially foreign-born census tracts are less dependent on subprime loans than are low- and middle-income borrowers in non-substantially foreign-born tracts, their middle- and upper income peers are over 1.5 times more likely than those in non-substantially foreign born tracts to receive subprime loans (see Figure 2-17).^{xl}

Figure 2-17. Disparity Ratio, Subprime Home Purchase Loans, by Type of Census Tract

Source: National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2005

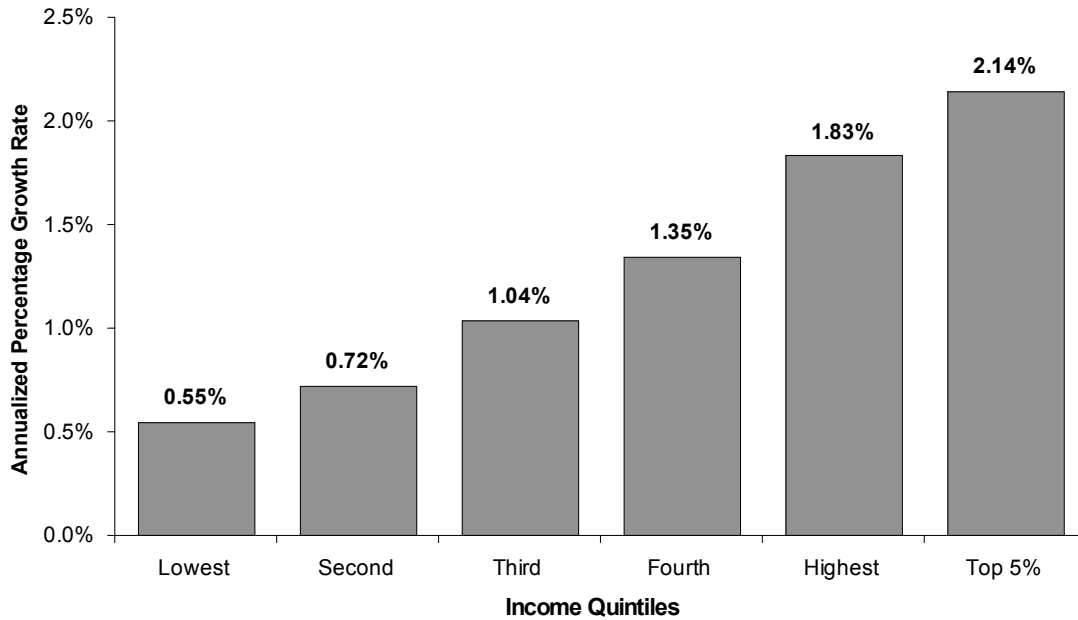


FAMILY INCOME

Median family income has steadily increased over the last fifty years.^{xli} Growth in family income has historically been relatively equally distributed across all income levels. In the last four decades, however, families at the highest income levels have seen greater average annualized income growth than have families at the lowest income levels (see Figure 2-18).^{xlii}

Figure 2-18. Annualized Growth of Family Income by Quintiles, 1966-2003

Source: Economic Policy Institute Analysis of U.S. Census Data, 2005



WOMEN- AND MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES

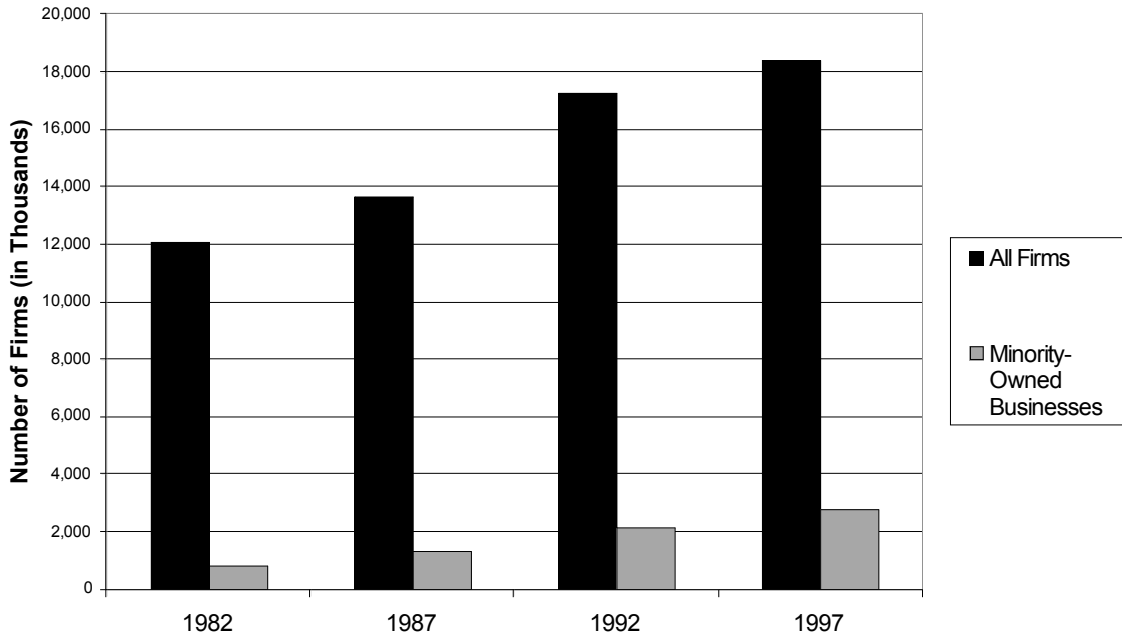
Women-owned businesses have increased both in number and share of all business receipts. Nearly 6.5 million women-owned businesses earned receipts totaling nearly \$1 trillion in 2002. These figures represent a 20 percent increase in the number of women-owned businesses since 1997, and a 16 percent increase in receipts.^{xliii} Sole proprietorships, which are nearly two-thirds of all businesses in the United States, are increasingly operated by women, whose numbers increased from 5.6 million in 1990 to 7.1 million in 1998. Women’s sole proprietorships increased their share of receipts during this period from 15 percent of the total to 18 percent. Nonetheless, women-owned businesses remain a much smaller proportion than, for example, women’s representation in the workforce. And these businesses are disproportionately concentrated in the services industries, as nearly 70 percent of all total net income among women sole proprietorships occurred in these fields. The top two types of women sole business ownerships were in door-to-door sales and childcare.^{xliiv}

Minorities have made marked progress in rates of business ownership over the last twenty-five years.^{xliv} Minority firms have seen revenues rise by about 10 percent annually, and these firms grew at rates three times higher than non-minority businesses between 1992 and 1997 (see Figure 2-19).^{xlvi} The percentage of businesses owned by minorities increased from 7 percent in 1982 to 15 percent in 1997, the last year that the Bureau of the Census and the Small Business Administration published estimates of minority business ownership.^{xlvii} But the proportion of minority-owned businesses remains far below the proportion of non-white groups in the country. In terms of the

“density” of business ownership, or rate of business ownership per capita, whites are two to four times more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to own a business.^{xlviii} In addition, minority businesses are more likely to be in low- and no-growth sectors, and are disproportionately dependent on personal and family financing over business loans or other capital investment.^{xlix}

Figure 2-19. Number of All Firms and Minority-Owned Businesses, 1982-1997

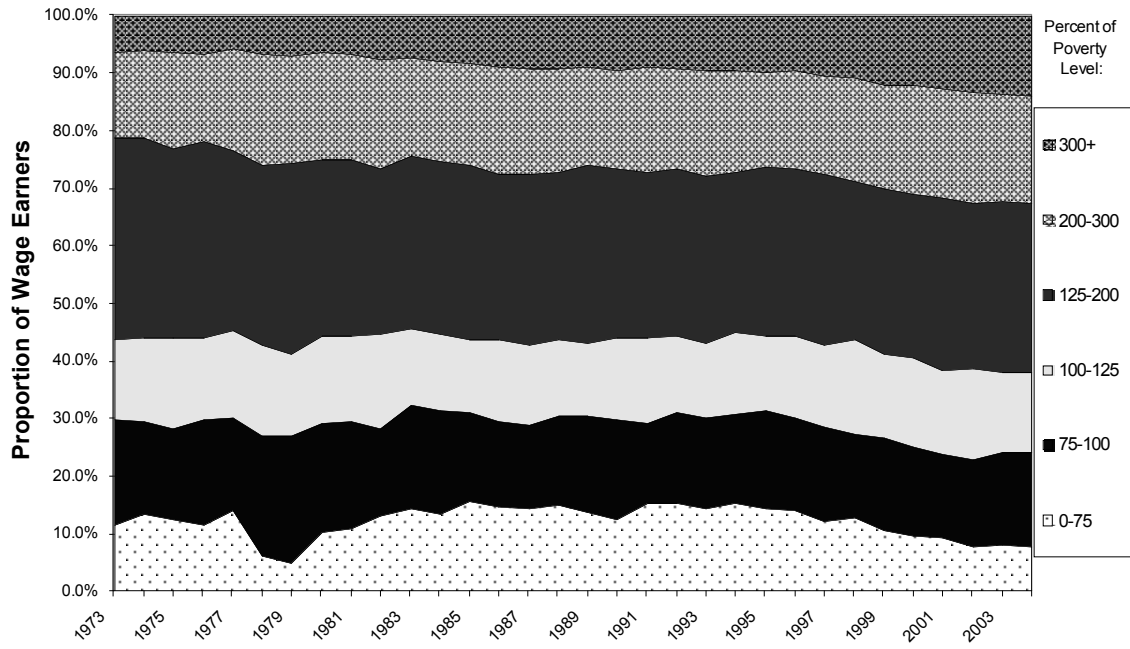
Source: The Boston Consulting Group, 2005



WAGE DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of wages across income groups has shifted significantly over the last three decades, as an increasing share of workers are earning higher incomes. The proportion of workers earning poverty-level and sub-poverty-level wages (0-75 percent of poverty) has also declined over the last three decades. But the share of low- to middle-income wage earners remained relatively stagnant in this period (see Figure 2-20).¹ Moreover, as will be discussed in the chapter on *Equality*, wage inequality grew sharply between 1973 and 2004. During this period, male workers in the lowest income brackets saw their wages decline in real dollars, while men in the highest income brackets enjoyed large wage gains. And while women’s wages increased at all income levels, women in the highest income brackets enjoyed the greatest real wage gains relative to lower income female workers, and these gains did not eliminate the gender gap in wages.¹¹

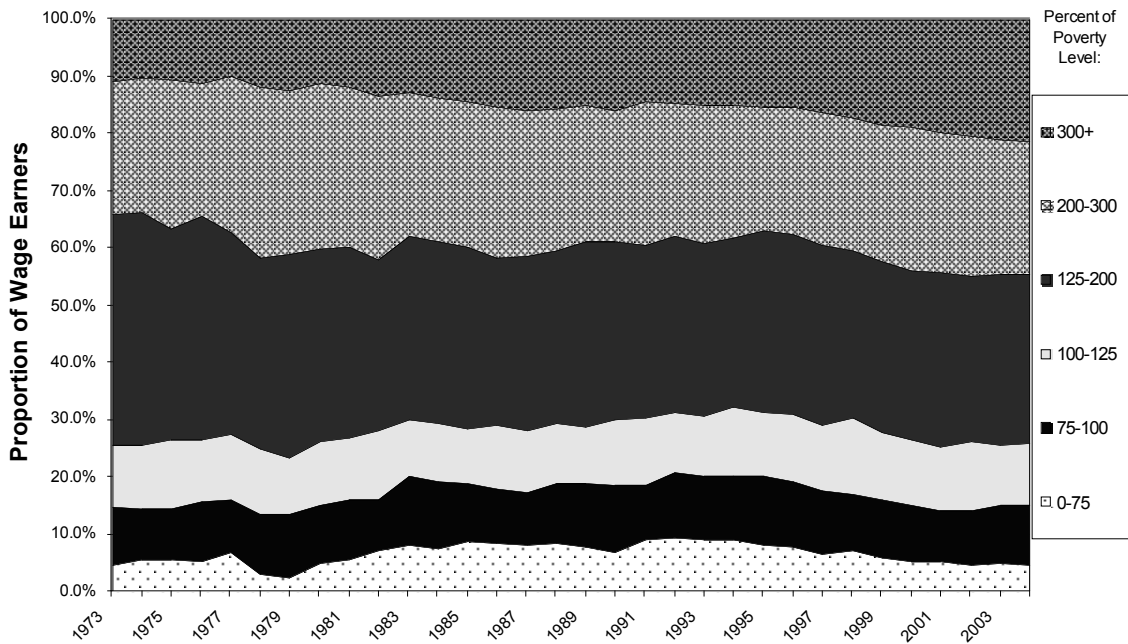
Figure 2-20. Percentage of Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004
Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005



Wage Distribution For White Men

White male wage earners saw greater gains between 1973 and 2004 than did most other racial, ethnic, and gender groups, as the proportion of this group earning 300 percent of the federal poverty level doubled. But the proportion of white male low- and middle-wage earners declined, while the segment of these workers earning poverty-level wages remained stable and low (see Figure 2-21).^{lii}

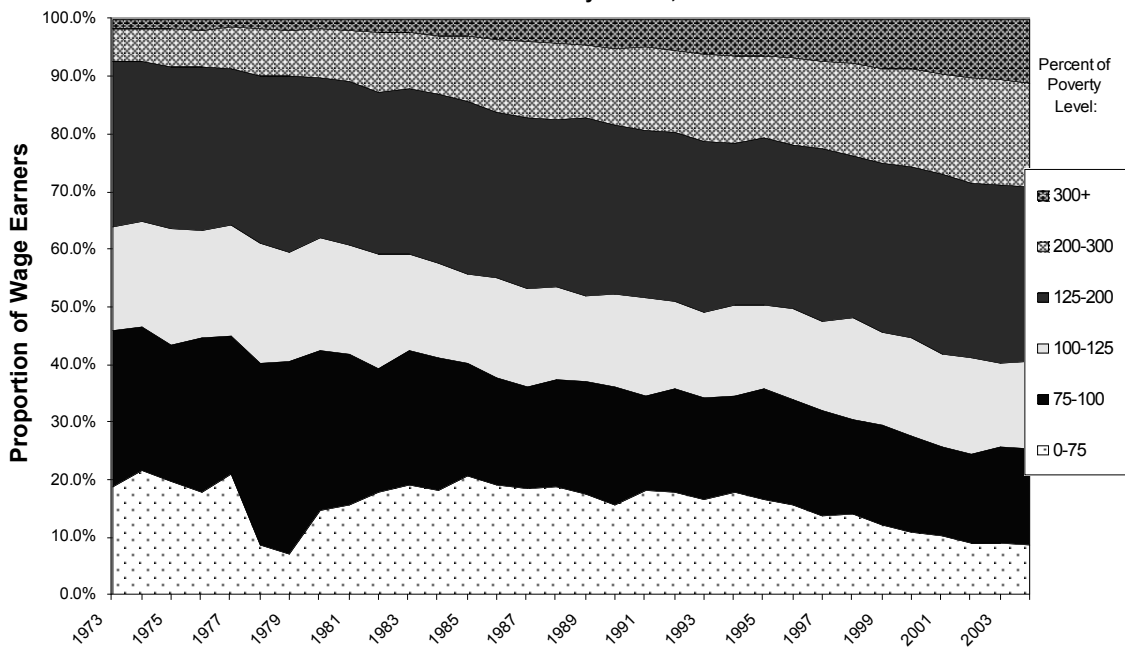
Figure 2-21. White Male Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004
 Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005



Wage Distribution For White Women

White females saw the greatest gains of any group in wages since 1973, as the proportion of this group earning wages three times the poverty rate and above increased nearly fivefold, and the proportion earning twice the poverty rate nearly doubled. At the same time, the proportion of white women earning poverty- and sub-poverty-level wages declined sharply. But the share of white women earning near-poverty (100 percent-125 percent of poverty) or moderate (125 percent-200 percent of poverty) wages remained stagnant (see Figure 2-22).^{liii} And as discussed in the chapter on *Equality*, the wage scale for white women remains far below that of white men.

Figure 2-22. White Female Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004
 Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005

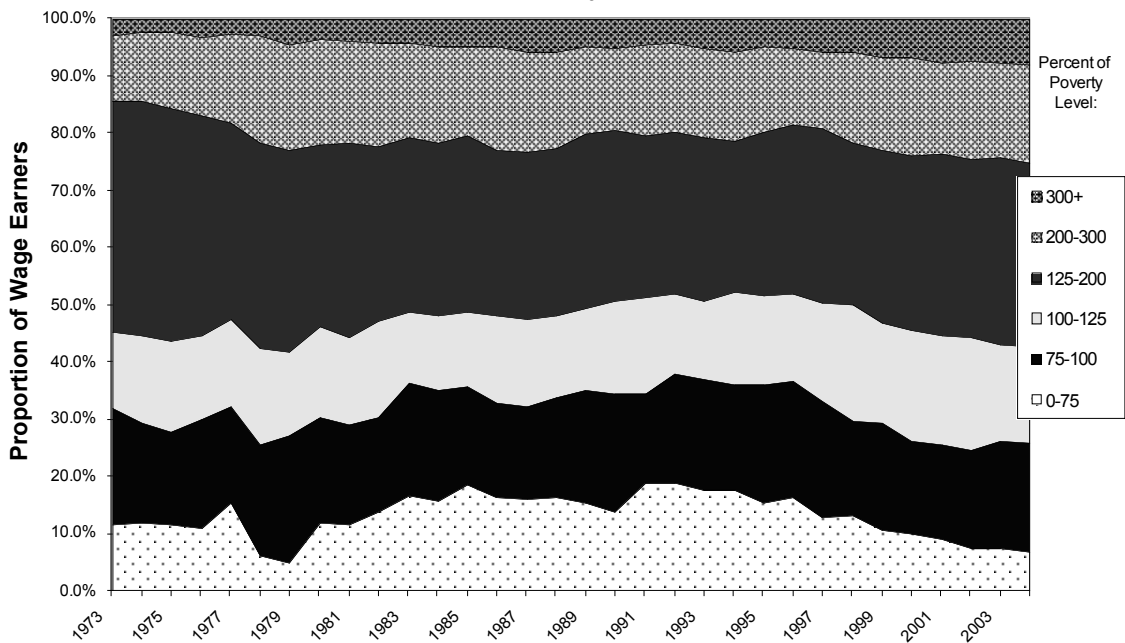


Wage Distribution For African-American Men

Since 1973 African-American male wage earners have experienced modest growth in the proportion of workers earning incomes twice and three times greater than the federal poverty level. Moreover, the proportion of African-American men earning poverty-level wages declined by nearly a third since 1992. But the share of low- and middle-income wage earners (those earning between poverty-level and 200 percent of poverty) has been stagnant or declining since 1973. And the rate of growth in wages among African-American men has been far slower than for other groups (see Figure 2-23).^{liv}

Figure 2-23. African-American Male Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005

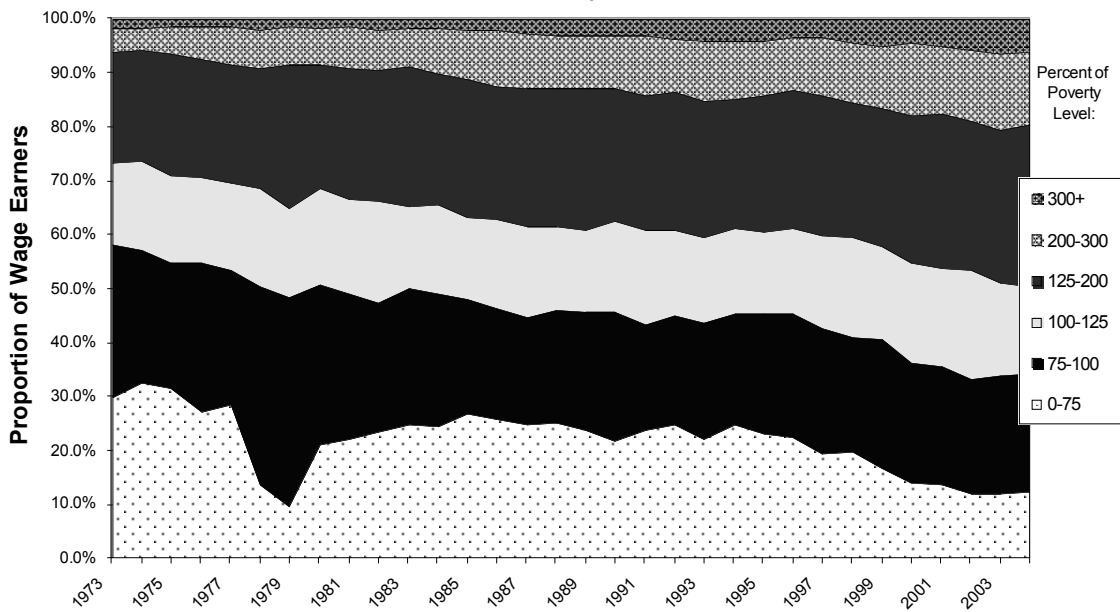


Wage Distribution For African-American Women

An increasing share of African-American women has joined the ranks of high and moderately high wage earners since 1973, as the proportion of this group earning 200 percent and 300 percent of poverty wages or more have more than doubled. At the same time, the proportion of African-American women earning poverty-level wages or below has declined sharply, particularly since the mid-1990s. But these women continue to earn far less than their white male and female counterparts, even at similar educational levels (see Figure 2-24).^{lv}

Figure 2-24. African-American Female Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005

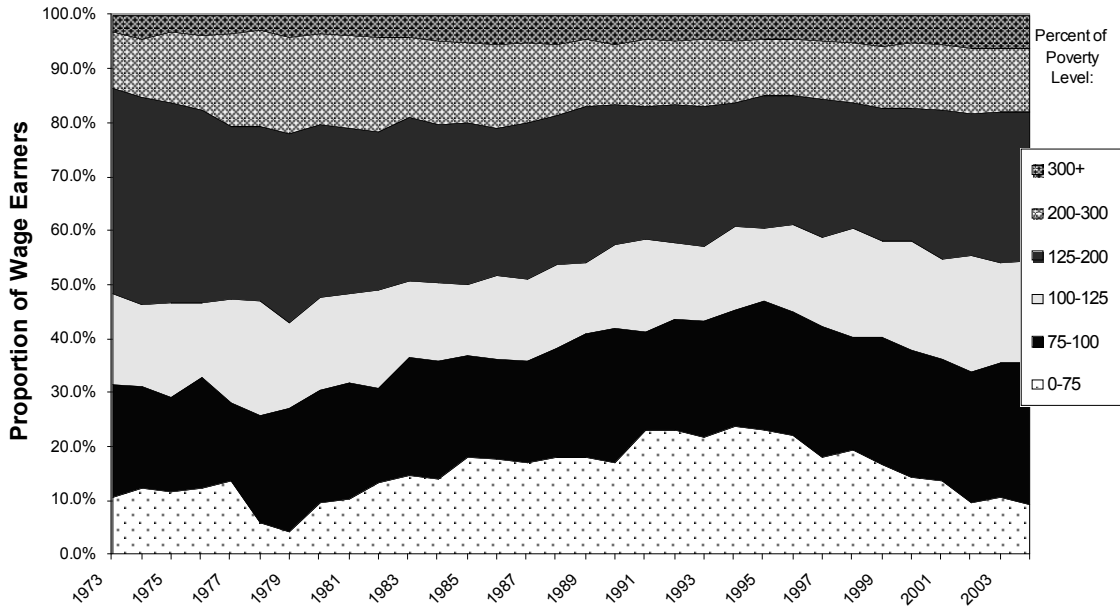


Wage Distribution For Hispanic Men

Since 1973 the share of Hispanic males earning poverty-level or near-poverty-level wages (100 percent-125 percent of poverty) has increased, while the proportion of this group earning moderate wages (125 percent-200 percent of poverty) has declined. At the same time, the proportion of Hispanic males earning wages two and three times or more greater than poverty level has remained largely stagnant. The proportion of Hispanic males earning very low (0-75 percent of poverty) or poverty-level wages has declined sharply, however, since the mid-1990s. While the distribution of wages among Hispanic men can be expected to tilt toward the lower end of the wage scale as a result of immigration, these data nonetheless suggest that Hispanic men have seen little progress toward a more equitable distribution of wages (see Figure 2-25).^{lvi}

Figure 2-25. Hispanic Male Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004

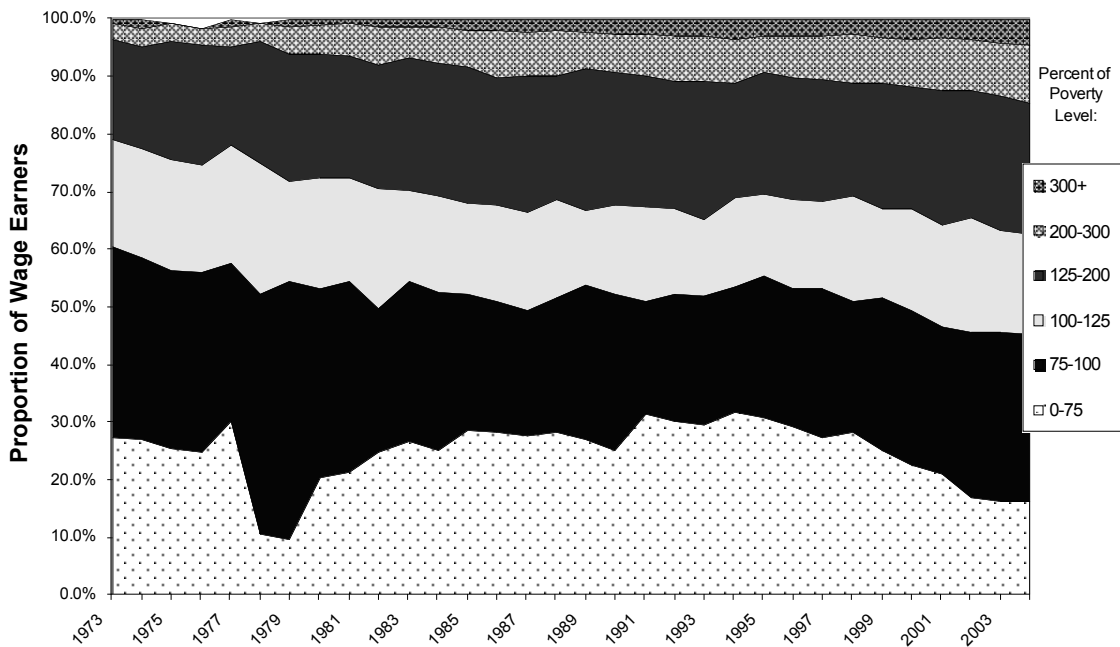
Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005



Wage Distribution For Hispanic Women

Over the last thirty years, a declining percentage of Hispanic female workers earned poverty-level wages, and an increasing share earned incomes two and three times greater than poverty wages. In 1973 60 percent of Hispanic female workers earned poverty-level wages; this percentage declined to 45 percent in 2004. During the same period, the percentage of Hispanic women earning 200 percent or more of the poverty level increased by nearly fivefold. They remain, however, disproportionately represented among low and very-low wage earners (see Figure 2-26). As with Hispanic men, immigration plays a significant role in trends in wage distribution among this group.

Figure 2-26. Hispanic Female Wage Earners by Poverty Level, 1973 to 2004
 Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005



HOW CAN THE NATION PROTECT AND EXPAND MOBILITY FOR ALL?

Renewing socioeconomic mobility requires that we ensure access to quality education, homeownership, and other gateways to wealthbuilding and human development. Our recommendations include measures that reduce financial barriers for everyday Americans, as well as greater safeguards against discrimination, isolation, and exclusion.

Investing in Comprehensive, High-Quality Early Childcare and Child Education

Early child development programs provide substantial benefits to the children and families they serve, as well as to society as a whole.^{lvii} These programs, which typically target low-income and other at-risk children, include a range of educational services, as well as (in some cases) health and nutritional services, and adult education and parenting

classes. Several studies of programs such as the Perry Preschool Project, the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention Program, Head Start, and Early Head Start, find that these programs improve academic performance, decrease the likelihood of criminal behavior, and enhance earnings later in life. Investments in early child education programs have been found to save, on average, more than \$3 for every \$1 spent, by avoiding costs for remedial and special education, criminal justice, and welfare. A recent analysis finds that if all of the nation's three- and four-year-old children living in poverty were enrolled in a high-quality early child education program, the net gains for budgets at all levels of government would exceed costs by \$31 billion (in 2004 dollars) by 2030.^{lviii}

Rather than expanding, however, early child education programs are in danger of decline. For example, over the last twenty years, the educational level of early child education teachers has fallen, as the percentage of teachers with a college degree declined from 43 percent in 1983 to 30 percent in recent years. In large part this decline is driven by stagnant wages among the early child teaching workforce. From 1984 to 1997, the wages of early child education teachers rose only 43 cents per hour in adjusted dollars.^{lix} Renewed federal, state, and local leadership is needed to expand early child education programs, with the greatest expansion targeted to low-income communities. One estimate is that expanding such programs to enroll all low-income three- and four-year-old children would initially cost about \$19 billion per year. But within thirty years, this investment would improve worker skills, reduce poverty and crime, and increase tax revenues.^{lx} Teacher training and pay should also be improved significantly, to attract better educated teachers to the field and create incentives for existing childcare workers to improve their skills.^{lxi}

Promoting Socioeconomic and Racial Diversity in Public Education

Passage of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act elevated the importance of addressing racial, ethnic, and gender-based inequality in K-12 education. Education policymakers at federal, state, and local levels are placing greater priority on improving educational performance for all groups and closing achievement gaps. Laudable success in raising achievement among low-income and minority students in a few settings has been reported. But unless addressed, high levels of school segregation threaten to undermine narrower, system-based or curricular reform efforts to improve educational attainment. Schools that have high percentages of low-income and minority students are overwhelmingly more likely to offer poorer quality educational experiences, have fewer resources, and have lower educational outcomes among students than are mixed-income, racially integrated, or minority white schools. As Orfield and Lee (2005) note, “those who argue that because there are segregated schools that succeed *we need not worry about segregation* are engaged in a fallacy of using exceptions to the rule to prove a relationship” [italics added for emphasis].^{lxii}

More and more court-ordered desegregation plans in many American communities have been dissolved, including even voluntary plans.^{lxiii} And the movement to provide vouchers to students as a means of encouraging school transfers threatens to increase

educational segregation, given relatively higher levels of segregation in private schools. School desegregation efforts, however, should not be abandoned. Because much of the racial, ethnic, and income segregation in schools is caused by residential housing segregation, strategies to increase housing integration, such as those discussed in the chapter on *Security*, can help to stimulate school desegregation. Other housing and land use policies, such as efforts to stimulate the development of mixed-income housing, should be designed to avoid the concentration of poverty and racial and ethnic isolation in schools. School districts that are considering abandoning desegregation plans should assess the social and economic impacts of high levels of segregation, and they should create incentives such as high-quality magnet and charter schools that consciously seek to increase racial/ethnic and income diversity in schools.^{lxiv} In other parts of the country, where racial and economic segregation often correspond closely with school district lines, voluntary interdistrict choice programs have had success in placing children in lower poverty public schools. Programs in St. Louis, Boston, and Minneapolis permit city children to transfer to suburban public schools. In Hartford a two-way voluntary desegregation program places more than 1000 city children in suburban schools each year, with twice that number of suburban children coming to Hartford-based interdistrict magnet schools.^{lxv}

Efforts by some school districts to decrease income segregation in schools have resulted in better educational outcomes among low-income students, supporting research showing that low-income students have better educational outcomes when they attend middle-class schools.^{lxvi} In Wake County, North Carolina, for example, the county school district's effort to limit the concentration of low-income students to no more than 40 percent within a school has resulted in dramatically improved test scores for African-American and Latino children. The school district encompasses the entire county, making it easier to assign students to schools across urban and suburban areas. The district has created magnet programs in lower income areas, attracting students with a range of family incomes, and it has assigned students from low-income communities to schools in higher income areas.^{lxvii}

Improving Access to Higher Education by Reducing Financial Barriers

Access to a college education is increasingly out of reach for students from low- and moderate-income backgrounds, as the costs of tuition and other fees are rising more sharply than income. Between 1980 and 2000, the share of a low-income family's earning required to pay for one year at a public four-year college increased from 13 percent to 25 percent. At the same time, sources of need-based student aid are declining. By the mid-1990s the maximum federal Pell Grant paid for only about one-third of the average college cost at a public four-year institution, a sharp decline from the mid-1970s, when these grants covered over 80 percent of costs.^{lxviii} Student loans, increasingly a major source of financial aid, constituted nearly 70 percent of federal student assistance in 2002-2003, and non-need-based aid constituted more than 40 percent of all financial aid. Not surprisingly in light of these trends, despite the fact that college enrollment rates are increasing, fewer than half of college-qualified low-income students went to college in 2000, compared with nearly eight in ten high income students.^{lxix} The U.S.

Department of Education's Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance estimates that families of low-income, college-eligible high school graduates face an average annual unmet need of \$3,800, and the shortage of grant aid will result in over 4 million students being unable to attend a four-year college by the end of this decade.^{lxx}

Reducing financial barriers to college will require increasing the share of need-based grants, reducing dependency on student loans, and improving private sector participation through scholarship aid. Federal Pell Grant awards should be doubled and the program fully funded, to increase the availability of need-based grants. State-based financial aid, as well, should emphasize need-based assistance, and state, federal, and institutional financial aid policy must be better integrated, to create a complementary system that allocates resources more efficiently.^{lxxi} Finally, colleges and universities should make every effort to hold the line on tuition and fee increases, and offer reduced or no-cost tuition for academically qualified students from impoverished or low-income families.

Homeownership and Lending Policies^{lxxii}

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974 outlaw disparate treatment of applicants--the use of different underwriting standards for different groups in mortgage lending. And the courts have generally interpreted federal civil rights laws as outlawing lending practices that have a disparate impact.^{lxxiii} Disparate impact discrimination occurs when policies or practices have the effect of discriminating against a particular group, and either 1) the practice cannot be justified on the grounds of business necessity or 2) the practice's disparate impact can be avoided through less discriminatory alternative policies that meet the same business objectives.

However, the current fair-lending enforcement system fails to adequately protect Americans who may face lending discrimination. Inadequate standards exist for determining when disparate impact discrimination has occurred, and agency procedures are not designed to identify disparate impact.^{lxxiv} Moreover, studies demonstrate that current procedures also fail to identify cases of disparate treatment.^{lxxv} These fair-lending enforcement procedures also insulate some discriminating lenders from investigation, in that they focus only on a subset of possible discrimination indicators.^{lxxvi}

Drawing on federal guidelines established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to assess disparate impact in employment practices, Ross and Yinger (2002) offer a set of guidelines for underwriting systems that can be used to identify disparate treatment or disparate impact mortgage lending discrimination. These guidelines draw on multivariate, performance-based procedures to determine the impact of underwriting systems as a whole on different racial and ethnic groups, to set high standards for prima facie cases of discrimination, to evaluate "business necessity" claims, and to establish fairness principles that prohibit practices that disproportionately hurt minority applicants. Ross and Yinger propose that assessments of how underwriting systems may be discriminatory should be based on loan approval regression analyses, which explain loan approval decisions for a sample of lenders based on applicant, loan, and property characteristics, and loan performance data, which can evaluate discrimination in loan

approval and can be adapted to test for “redlining,” or unlawful exclusion of certain communities from loan consideration. Fair-lending enforcement agencies must collect and assess lending and loan performance data to generate these analyses, and new provisions to the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act should require all lenders to report standardized performance indicators, loan characteristics, and originator identifiers.^{lxxvii} These provisions require resources and effort. Absent their implementation, fair-lending enforcement agencies are rendered ineffective in the effort to address discriminatory lending practices.

Chapter 3 EQUALITY

Equality was central to the United States' founding, with the declaration that "all men are created equal." Our nation's history has witnessed a gradual evolution of that core principle from an acceptance of slavery toward an egalitarian vision that embraces the inherent equality of all people. Equality is embodied in our Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under law and in the other Civil War amendments. Epic social movements of the last two centuries have moved our country, in fits and starts, further toward the reality of equal opportunity.

Equal opportunity is also central to the system of international human rights that the United States helped to craft after World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." It goes on to guarantee all people equal protection of the law, equal pay for equal work, equal access to education, equal access to public service, equal rights to marriage, and an equal right to vote, among other protections.^{lxxviii} Virtually every human rights document contains a similar guarantee of equal treatment. And the conventions on the elimination of racial discrimination and discrimination against women make concrete the affirmative obligations of all nations to provide equal opportunity. The race convention, for example, requires governments "to review governmental, national and local policies, and to amend, rescind or nullify any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists." And it recognizes the need, in some cases, for measures that affirmatively promote the inclusion of members of previously excluded groups "as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Equal opportunity requires that we all have access to the benefits, burdens, and responsibilities of our society regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, or other aspects of what we look like or where we come from. It requires proactive efforts to remake our institutions in ways that ensure fairness and inclusion. Equal opportunity also means treating similarly situated people similarly, while taking account of human, cultural, and other differences. It means, for example, that a person's race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation should be irrelevant to her or his ability to receive a quality education or to buy a home. It also means, however, that the health care women and men receive should be appropriate to their different needs. It means considering the needs of Americans who use wheelchairs in designing a home, a bus, or a courthouse. Expecting Americans who have not yet mastered English to navigate a legal system conducted only in English is not equal opportunity. Nor is treating Native American tribes--endowed by our Constitution with a sovereign status equal to the fifty states--as if they were just like other community groups. Equal opportunity is not treating everyone identically but, rather, treating everyone as equal.

Ensuring equal opportunity in the twenty-first century demands a nuanced understanding of the progress that we've made as a nation, as well as the nature of contemporary bias

and systemic inequality. It requires understanding, for example, how stereotypes based on gender, race, and other social characteristics can come together in unique ways that require individualized attention. Ensuring equal opportunity means not only ending overt and intentional discrimination, but also rooting out subconscious bias and reforming systems that unintentionally perpetuate exclusion. Ensuring equal opportunity requires acknowledging that we are all capable of bias and discrimination, including against members of our own group. And it requires addressing the overt discrimination and bigotry that remain in society without suggesting that those are the only kinds of inequality worthy of our attention.

Unquestionably, the United States has become more equal in the forty-plus years since a series of landmark civil rights laws prohibited discrimination in housing, employment, education, and other sectors of American life. Yet inequality persists, and bias, often subtly expressed, continues to harm opportunity for women, people of color, immigrants, and low-income families. Evidence in this chapter shows that the nation has witnessed major gains in equality in some areas over the last four decades, but that in many other areas equality is stagnant or declining. These findings are summarized in Box 3.

Box 3: Has the Nation Protected Equality for All?

Major Gains in Equality

- The gender gap in wages is declining, largely as a result of gains in wages earned by women, but women still earn significantly less than men at comparable education levels;
- An increasing share of women and women of color are assuming managerial and leadership positions in corporate and business sectors, although their numbers remain small relative to women's levels of representation in the professional workforce.

Areas of Limited, Mixed or No Progress

- Although some evidence suggests that housing discrimination declined slightly between 1989 and 2000, audit studies continue to find high levels of housing discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities;
- Although legal protections against employment discrimination have improved the job options of many Americans, studies demonstrate that employment discrimination against women and minorities persists.

Areas Where Equality Has Declined

- Wages are becoming more unequal across all income and education levels. Those at the top end of the income and education scales are making more today than they did thirty years ago, and those at the bottom end of the income and education scales are making less today than thirty years ago (adjusted for today's dollars);
- The nation's criminal justice laws and policies, particularly with respect to drug enforcement, are resulting in the disproportionate incarceration of people of color, and a dramatic jump in the incarceration of women and juveniles.

About the Data in this Chapter

This chapter summarizes research on equality and equality of opportunity in several areas. We draw principally on published analyses of federal data. These include Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) data, which provides information on the hiring of individuals from protected classes in the workforce. Similarly, data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice allow a broad overview of how various groups fare in the criminal justice system. Where necessary, The Opportunity Agenda has also drawn on the expertise of researchers and policy analysts to produce original analyses of these data. Finally, we review studies that measure inequality in today's housing and employment settings to assess the extent to which discriminatory treatment persists. More such studies are needed to determine if the likelihood of discrimination will change over time.

We review measures of equality of opportunity in four major areas: housing, employment, wages, and criminal justice. In some cases trend data are lacking or are not comparable due to differences in population groups studied or methodologies used. In these instances we draw cautious conclusions about trends. As noted in previous chapters, federal data often lack complete information for some racial and ethnic minorities. We hope that federal data in the future will more completely assess equality of opportunity for these populations.

HOUSING INEQUALITY

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 improved the housing options of many racial and ethnic minorities seeking to purchase a home or to obtain rental housing. But racial and ethnic discrimination in housing persists, as demonstrated by several studies, including large studies sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

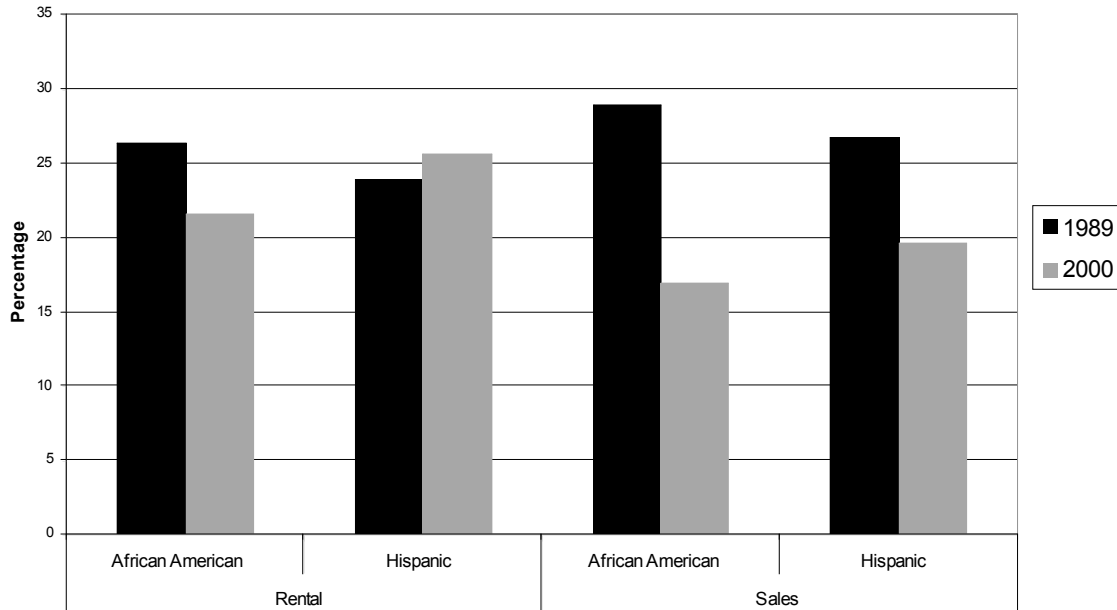
HUD's major studies of discrimination in metropolitan housing markets, initiated in 1977, use audit studies, or "paired tester" methodologies. This approach is one of the most powerful methods available for detecting discrimination in any domain. In these studies two people--one white and one minority (or an individual with a disability)--make up a pair of testers. The two individuals are matched on a variety of personal characteristics, trained to present and gather information in a consistent manner, and assigned comparable "background" information such as family circumstances, job characteristics, education levels, and housing preferences. Testers then visit random samples of real estate agencies and rental agents that advertise housing in local newspaper and other media. HUD's 2000 study of potential discrimination in rental and sales housing markets was designed as a means of measuring change relative to the agency's 1989 Housing Discrimination Study. Its findings, much like those of the 1989 study, indicate that racial and ethnic discrimination in housing markets remains significant and pervasive.

The 2000 HUD study was conducted in 23 metropolitan markets nationwide and involved 4,600 paired tests. The tests assessed experiences ranging from geographic "steering" of testers to less-desirable communities, to differences in levels of financial assistance

offered to testers posing as prospective home buyers. The study found that the incidence of discrimination against African-American and Hispanic home seekers declined slightly from 1989 to 2000, but that the likelihood of discriminatory treatment remained disturbingly high. In rental markets, whites were favored over similarly-qualified African Americans 22 percent of the time, and over Hispanics 26 percent of the time. In housing sales, whites received favorable treatment over African Americans in 17 percent of tests, representing a decline from 1989, when whites were favored in nearly 30 percent of tests. Whites were favored over Hispanics in nearly 20 percent of tests (see Figure 3-1).^{lxxix} In many cases, whites received more information about available housing and had more opportunities to inspect housing units.^{lxxx} The 2000 study also assessed discrimination faced by Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and American Indians, finding that these groups also faced significant discrimination at levels comparable to African Americans and Hispanics. Asian Americans, for example, received poorer treatment relative to white testers in 22 percent of tests of rental markets and in 20 percent of housing sales markets.^{lxxxi} These discriminatory practices are serious, limit home options for minorities, and increase the costs incurred by discriminated parties in finding housing.

Figure 3-1. Likelihood of Adverse Treatment Against African Americans and Hispanics Relative to Whites in Housing Markets, 1989 and 2000

Source: Turner et al., 2002



EMPLOYMENT

People of color, women, immigrants, and other historically marginalized groups have made significant strides in gaining access to previously all-white and all-male jobs, particularly since passage and enforcement of federal anti-discrimination laws in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, women currently make up over half of managers and

professionals in the business sector, and some racial and ethnic minorities have achieved population parity in some professional occupations. But barriers to employment equality such as race- and gender-based stereotyping and discrimination persist in many sectors.

Labor Force Distribution

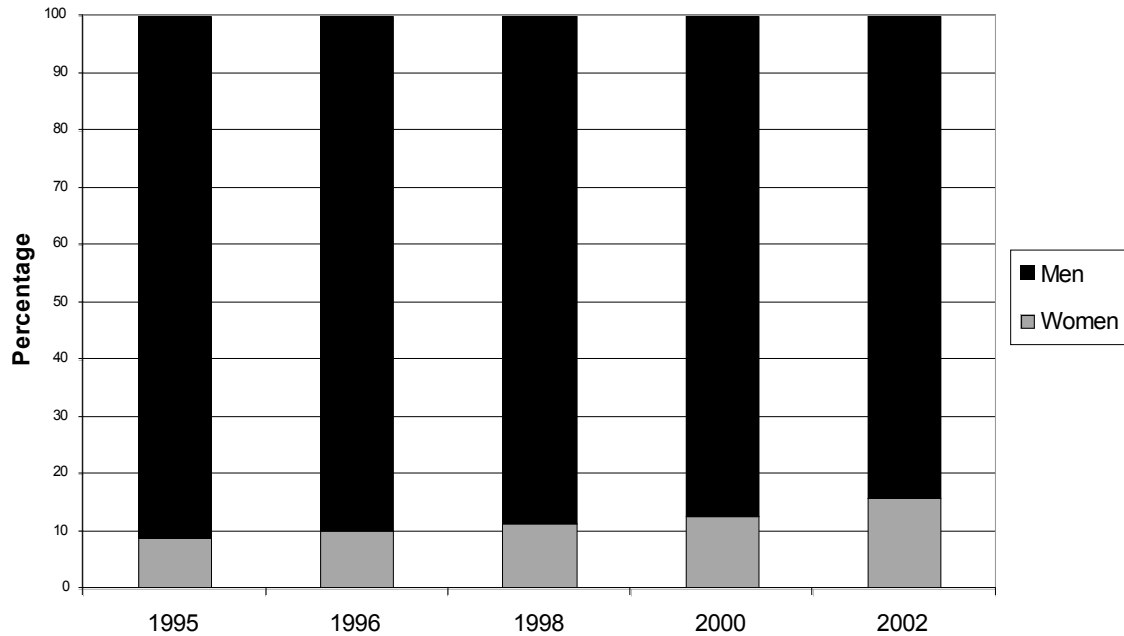
America's workplaces are becoming increasingly diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, and other aspects of employee background and status. This diversity reflects an important change in employer attitudes since the 1950s and 1960s, when white male workers were far less likely to work side-by-side with women or minorities. But many sectors of the American workforce remain significantly segregated by gender, race, and ethnicity. For example, although about three in five women seek work, women make up only 47 percent of the total labor force. Women remain concentrated in traditionally female jobs such as service sector, clerical, and administrative office positions. Nearly one in four nursing and residential care workers are African-American women, over 80 percent of office and clerical workers are women, and Hispanic women are disproportionately employed in crop production, agriculture and forestry support services, and personal and laundry service jobs.^{lxxxii}

Women and Women of Color in Management Positions

Women have made important strides in gaining access to management positions in the private sector over the last fifty years--although these gains have not been as pronounced at the highest levels of corporate leadership. Labor force data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics are not comparable across all time periods, but they suggest that women's gains in the corporate sector were most dramatic during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1950, for example, the percentage of women in "managerial-administrative" positions was 13.8 percent, a share that rose to 14.4 percent in 1960 and to 16.6 percent in 1970. In 1980 26 percent of workers in these positions were women. In the 1980s the Census Bureau reclassified this occupational category, which became "managerial and professional specialty." Women's share of these positions exceeded half of the workforce between 1990 and 2002, rising from 45 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 2002. Between 2002 and 2003, the occupational category was changed again, to "management, professional, and related occupations," and again women were found to hold more than half of these positions, although the percentage of women managers declined from 50.5 percent in 2003 to 50.3 percent in 2004.^{lxxxiii}

Women's presence among top corporate officers, however, has lagged far behind their representation among business managers. In 1995, the first year that data are available on women in uppermost management positions, as a result of survey work by Catalyst, only about 9 percent of top corporate jobs were held by women. By 2002 the share of women among top corporate officers nearly doubled, to almost 16 percent, but this percentage remains far below women's total representation in the corporate sector (see Figure 3-2).^{lxxxiv} In 2002 only about 5 percent of top corporate earners were woman, although this rate is four times higher than it was in 1995. And women comprise only 1.2 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs.^{lxxxv}

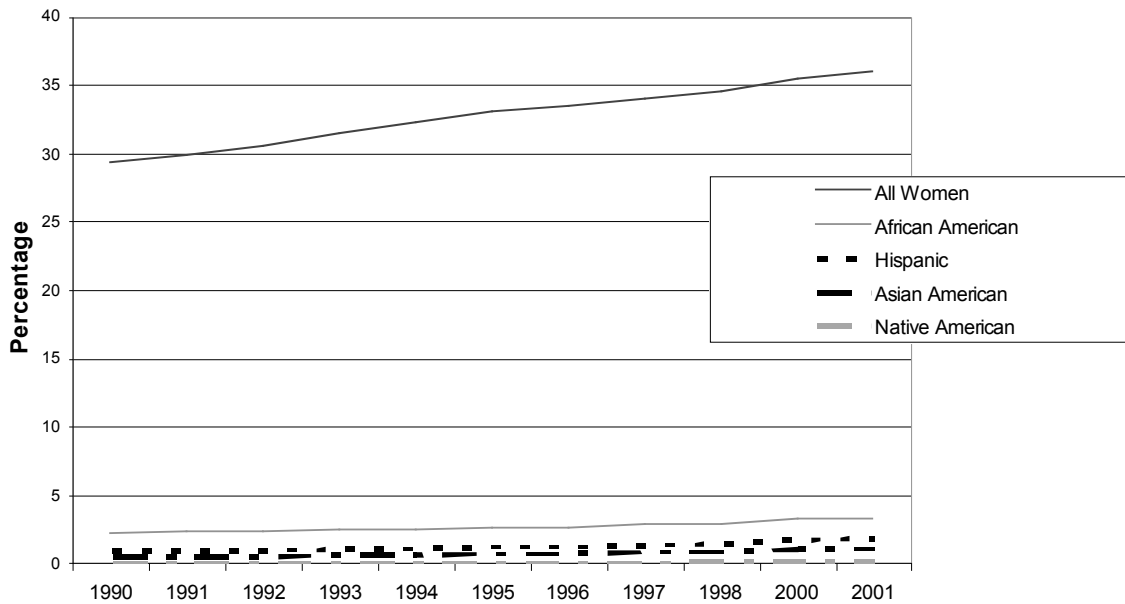
Figure 3-2. Percentage of Men and Women Corporate Officers, 1995-2002, Selected Years
 Source: Catalyst, 2005



Similarly, reports of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission demonstrate that while the proportion of women serving as officials and managers in the private sector has increased since 1990, the proportion of women of color in these positions remains low relative to their share in the overall population. In 1990 less than three in ten officials and managers were women, and fewer than 5 percent were women of color. By 2001 the proportion of women in these private sector jobs increased to almost 36 percent, and almost 7 percent of these were women of color (see Figure 3-3).^{lxxxvi} Health care sector industries are the most likely and manufacturing industries are the least likely to employ women as managers.

Figure 3-3. Percentage of Women and Women of Color as Officials and Managers, 1990-2001

Sources: EEOC, 2003 and 2004



A recent study by Catalyst of corporate senior managers’ beliefs about leadership styles found that both men and women endorse gender-based stereotypes that may significantly limit women’s corporate advancement. Catalyst assessed whether senior managers tended to ascribe stereotypically “male” or “female” traits to leadership styles. The study found that senior managers believe that women leaders are superior to men in “caretaking” behaviors such as rewarding and supporting subordinates. On the other hand, male leaders were judged as superior to women in “taking charge” behaviors such as delegating tasks, problem-solving, making decisions, and influencing superiors. These perceptions persist despite a significant body of research demonstrating that men and women corporate leaders display more similarities than differences in organizational settings.^{lxxxvii}

Employment Discrimination

Research demonstrates that employment discrimination against women, foreign-born individuals, and minorities remains persistent and widespread. This evidence emerges from two sources: a large body of carefully controlled experimental studies that assess how minority and foreign-born job applicants fare relative to identical non-minority and U.S.-born applicants; and research examining actual employment practices and the representation of women and minorities in specific industries, relative to their proportions among qualified employees in the labor market. Both types of studies are reviewed below.

Audit Studies of Employment Discrimination

Audit studies of employment discrimination, as with audit studies of housing discrimination, find that job applicants of color are more likely than whites to face unfair and discriminatory treatment. These studies find that blatant discrimination is rare, with employers rarely stating a preference for white applicants. Rather, discriminatory treatment is often subtle and may not be consciously apparent to the employer. White applicants may be coached to improve their application, may not have to follow the same application procedures required of a non-white applicant, or may be offered a position more quickly.

A 2003 audit study of temporary employment agencies in California, for example, assessed whether African-American female job applicants would receive different treatment than white women applicants, even when provided with superior (albeit fictitious) qualifications. To conduct this study, the Discrimination Research Center (DRC) selected African-American and white auditors, matched them on a range of characteristics (physical presentation, personality, speech, education level), trained them to match presentation styles and make objective observations while seeking employment, and provided them with resumes that made them ideal candidates for the jobs for which they would be applying. To eliminate any doubt about their qualifications, African-American testers were given slightly stronger credentials such as more months of relevant job experience. The DRC tested 35 temporary agencies, always assigning the African-American tester the first contact to avoid preference for white testers based on order of arrival. Findings demonstrated that employment agencies preferred less qualified white applicants nearly three times as often as African-American applicants. In 47 percent of all tests, white testers were treated more favorably than their African-American counterparts, while in only 16 percent of tests were African Americans preferred. In 27 percent of tests the pairs were treated equally, while in 11 percent of instances the data were incomplete or inconclusive.^{lxxxviii}

Audit studies have also found that job discrimination occurs not only on the basis of race, but that employers are also influenced by applicants' criminal record. Sociologist Devah Pager, in an audit study that matched African-American and white college students posing as job seekers, trained testers, varying only whether auditors were to present a fictitious history of a criminal record. Auditors' resumes were otherwise constructed to make them highly qualified for the entry-level jobs that they were seeking. Employers with actual job openings were selected from listings in the classified ads of a local newspaper and from a state-sponsored Web site for employment listings. Testers were then randomly assigned to seek jobs at these establishments, and the rate of callbacks was assessed. In conditions where African-American and white auditors were assigned no criminal record, whites were about two and a half times more likely than their African-American counterparts to be called back (34 percent to 14 percent). In contrast, callbacks were less likely among both African-American (5 percent) and white auditors (17 percent) who presented criminal records. But even white auditors who presented criminal records were more likely to receive callbacks than African Americans *who did not present criminal records* (17 percent to 14 percent), leading Pager to conclude that

“race continues to play a dominant role in shaping employment opportunities, equal to or greater than the impact of a criminal record.”^{lxxxix}

Studies of EEO Data

Since 1966 the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Department of Labor have required that private employers of 100 or more employees and government contractors employing 50 or more employees must file annual reports detailing the racial/ethnic and gender composition of their workforce. These EEO reports provide rich data about the distribution of women and minorities across a range of industries and occupations, allowing researchers to compare how specific businesses fare in the racial/ethnic and gender composition of employees compared to similar businesses in a given Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Such comparisons allow researchers to identify how many businesses employ a disproportionately small number of women and minorities, relative to similar businesses in the same labor market.

In one of the most comprehensive studies of EEO data, legal scholars Alfred and Ruth Blumrosen analyzed the employment practices of all 160,000 businesses that filed EEO reports in 1999.^{xc} This analysis included data on 37 million U.S. workers in 1999, a figure that represents slightly less than half of the U.S. workforce, as it does not include establishments with fewer than 50 workers, nor those outside of U.S. MSAs (about 20 percent of business establishments).

The Blumrosens assessed the “average utilization” of women and minorities across a range of business establishments in specific MSAs, then determined the number of businesses that employed women and minorities at disproportionately low rates relative to other similar businesses in the same MSA. In this way, employment of women and minorities can be compared relative to the pool of qualified candidates performing similar work in the same types of occupational categories and industries. Businesses that employed women and minorities at 1.65 standard deviations or more below the mean for a given occupational category and industry were classified as “at risk” for discrimination, given that the statistical odds of these employers’ workforce composition occurring by chance were less than one in ten. Businesses that employed women and minorities at rates 2.0 standard deviations or more below the mean were classified as “presumed” discriminators, while those that employed women and minorities at rates 2.5 standard deviations below similar businesses in the same MSA were classified as “clearly visible” discriminators, since the probability of their employment practices resulting from chance factors was 1 in 100. Finally, businesses that employed women and men at levels 2.5 standard deviations below average over a ten-year period were classified as “hard core” discriminators.^{xc1} These classifications also parallel legal standards for demonstrating the likelihood of discrimination through statistical evidence.

This analysis revealed some positive developments: Over 60 percent of establishments did not visibly discriminate against minorities, and over 70 percent did not discriminate against women. Since 1975 women workers increased by 3.8 million and minority workers by 4.6 million *over and above* their rates of participation in the workforce in

1975. And minorities and women made gains in managerial, professional, technical, and sales jobs.

Despite these gains, however, women and minorities continued to face widespread employment discrimination in 1999, according to the report. Over 75,000 establishments--more than one-third of the businesses studied--employed minorities at rates 1.65 standard deviations below similar business in the same MSA. This discrimination affected more than 1.3 million qualified minority workers. Similarly, nearly three in ten businesses studied employed a disproportionately low share of women in the same types of jobs as similar businesses in the same MSA, affecting more than 950,000 women. Overall, minorities were found to face a 30 percent chance of discrimination across all occupational categories, while women faced a 23 percent chance of discrimination.

Several industries were disproportionately more likely to discriminate against women and minorities. About 44 percent of health service establishments were found to discriminate against minority workers. Eating and drinking establishments, as well as general merchandise and food stores, were also disproportionate discriminators against minorities. About four in ten of these businesses were found to have disproportionately low minority representation among their employees. These same types of establishments also tended to discriminate at higher rates against women workers. In addition, nearly half of trucking and warehousing businesses and industrial machinery and equipment business were found to discriminate against women.

“Hard core” discriminating businesses were also more likely to account for discriminatory practices against women and minorities. Over 22,000 “hard core” establishments affected 433,000 minority workers, and over 13,000 hard core discriminatory establishments affected 241,000 women workers, accounting for half of the total discrimination that these groups faced in 1999.

Discrimination Complaints Filed with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

In one of the few studies to assess trends in discrimination complaints over time, the National Partnership for Women and Families found that discrimination complaints filed with the EEOC in several gender- and sex-discrimination categories increased between 1992 and 2003.^{xcii} The number of complaints filed is not necessarily indicative of the scope of discrimination in the workplace, because of data inadequacies, underreporting of complaints due to fear or lack of knowledge about how to file, and bureaucratic barriers to filing. But the consistently high number of complaints indicates that gender, race, and nationality discrimination continue to require scrutiny.

Sex Discrimination. The total number of sex discrimination charges--nearly 25,000 in 2003--increased by 12 percent from 1992. Over the last decade, sex discrimination complaints have constituted about three in ten discrimination charges, the second largest category of discrimination claims. Some groups filed complaints in dramatically

increasing numbers. The number of sex discrimination complaints filed by Hispanic women, for example, increased by 68 percent, and the number of complaints filed by Asian-American and Pacific Islander women increased by 83 percent.

Sexual Harassment. Between 1992 and 2003, the number of sexual harassment complaints increased by 29 percent, to 13,000 complaints. Increasing shares of these charges are brought by women of color. The number of complaints filed by Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native women more than doubled, while the number of complaints filed by African-American women rose by 42 percent, to nearly 1,300 charges in 2003.

Race Discrimination. In 2003 race discrimination complaints made up over one-third of all EEOC filings, more than any other type of discrimination complaint. Even so, the number of race discrimination complaints filed in 2003 relative to 1992 declined, largely due to a decline in the number of charges filed by African Americans. During the same period, however, the number of race discrimination complaints filed by other racial and ethnic minorities increased, sometimes dramatically. The number of complaints filed by Hispanic women, for example, increased by 183 percent, and the number filed by Asian/Pacific Islander women increased by 77 percent. Among men, charges filed by Hispanics increased by 181 percent, and the number filed by American Indians or Alaska Natives increased by 151 percent. These dramatic changes reflect a range of influences, including changes in awareness of discrimination law, increasing diversity of the workforce, and the relatively smaller numbers of complaints filed by groups other than African Americans.

National Origin Discrimination. Between 1992 and 2003, nearly 8,500 complaints were filed with the EEOC on the basis of national origin discrimination. The number of national origin discrimination complaints filed with the EEOC by women increased 29 percent during this period.

WAGE INEQUALITY

Wages have grown at strikingly unequal rates for different income groups over the last twenty-five years. Accompanied by differences in the rate of growth of household wealth by wealth classes, this trend has stretched the class divide to unprecedented levels. Wages and salaries are the largest factor in income inequality trends, as wages make up three-fourths of total household income.^{xciii} Despite the fact that the proportion of workers earning poverty-level wages has declined, average wages for different income groups have become more unequal in recent years. Between 1979 and 2003, wages for the top 5 percent of wage earners grew by 31 percent, while wages for workers in the bottom tenth remained stagnant, declining by 0.9 percent. Almost all other income groups experienced wage gains, but the largest gains were at the highest end. The top 10 percent of wage earners, for example, saw their income grow by 27 percent in 2003 dollars, while those in the bottom 20 percent and 40 percent saw their income grow by only 7 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively.^{xciv}

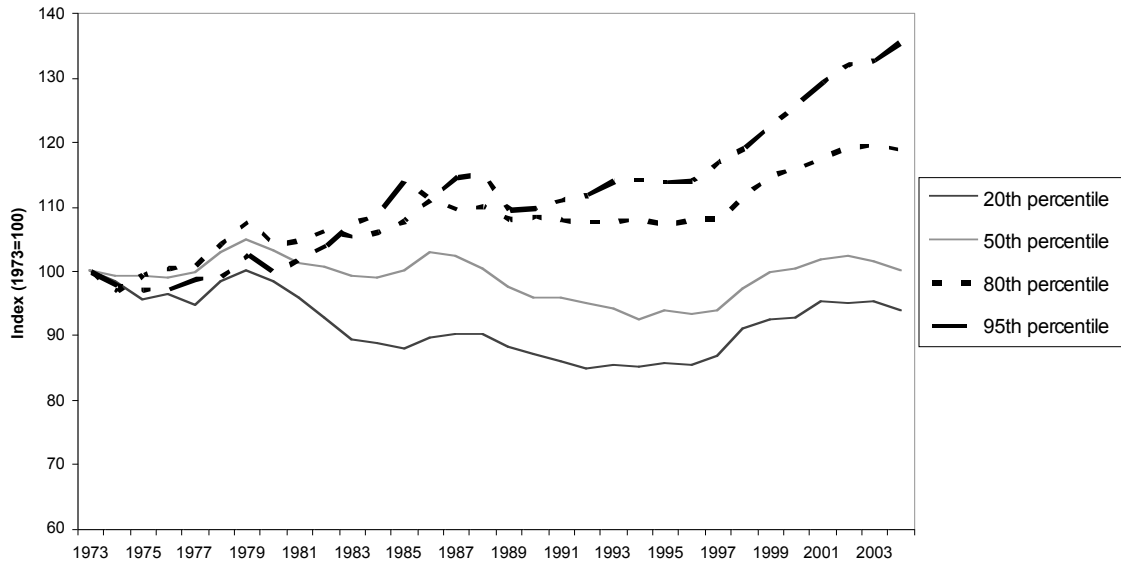
During this period, however, wages have not always grown unequally. Between 1973 and 1979, wage growth was largely stagnant for most income groups, but grew most among the lowest 10 percent of wage earners, at 6 percent. In the 1980s, however, wage inequality began to grow, as the lowest income groups experienced declines of 6 percent among the bottom quintile of wage earners and 14 percent among the bottom ten percent of wage earners. Only between 1995 and 2000 did all wage groups realize significant and relatively equivalent increases in wage growth. All income deciles experienced wage growth of at least 7 percent, with the highest growth (11 percent) occurring among both the top and bottom tenth of wage earners.^{xcv}

Wage Growth Among Male Workers

Wage inequality has increased among men since 1973. The top 5 percent of male wage earners saw a 36 percent gain in real wages, while the top 20 percent of wage earners saw an 19 percent gain in real wages. At the same time, those in the bottom quintile of wage earners saw a decline of 6 percent in real wages. Wage inequality among men increased sharply in the 1980s. Wages for the bottom tenth of men declined by 11 percent between 1979 and 1989, while wages for the top 5 percent of income earners increased by 7 percent. In the 1990s, however, inequality declined slightly as wages for all male income groups grew, although the largest growth was observed at both extremes of income. These trends were driven largely by across-the-board wage growth experienced by all income groups between 1995 and 2000, when wages for men grew by at least 6 percent, and as much as 11 percent, for all income quintiles (see Figure 3-4).^{xcvi}

Figure 3-4. Change in Real Hourly Wages for Men by Wage Percentile, 1973-2004

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005

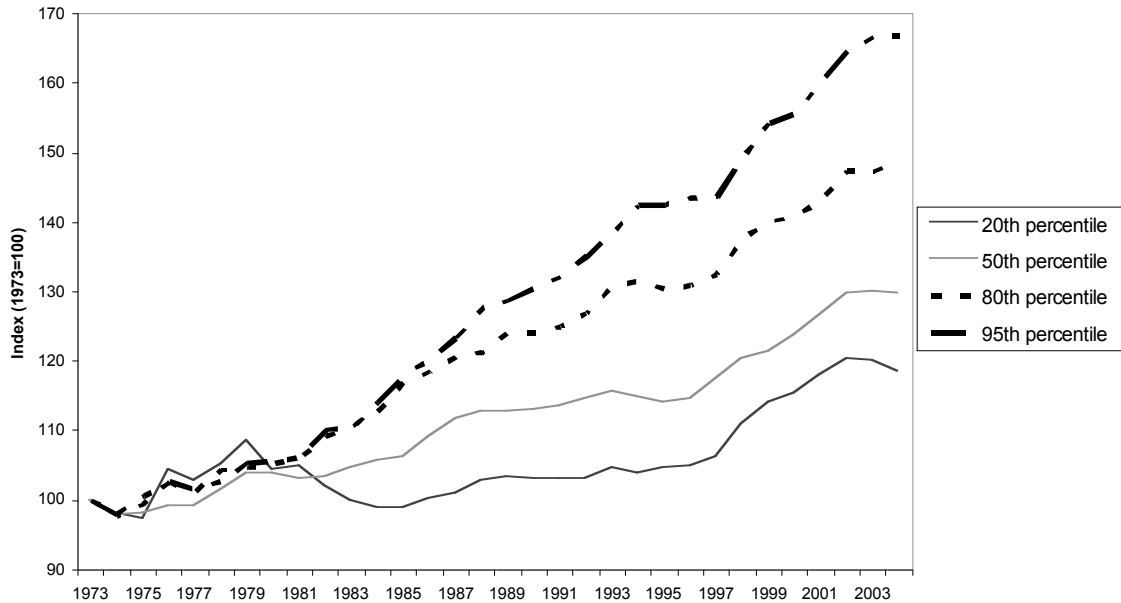


Wage Growth Among Female Workers

Women have made significant gains in earned wages since 1973. However, as is the case with men, the distribution of wages among female workers has become more unequal. The top 5 percent of women wage earners make 67 percent more today than they did three decades ago. Those at the 80th percentile make 49 percent more today than they did in 1973, while women wage earners in the 20th percentile earn 19 percent more in adjusted dollars than they did in 1973. Wage growth inequality among women grew at the sharpest rates between 1979 and 1989, when wages fell for women in the bottom tenth by 16 percent, while increasing among the top tenth and top five percent of wage earners by 20 percent and 22 percent, respectively (see Figure 3-5).^{xcvii}

Figure 3-5. Change in Real Hourly Wages for Women by Wage Percentile, 1973-2004

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005



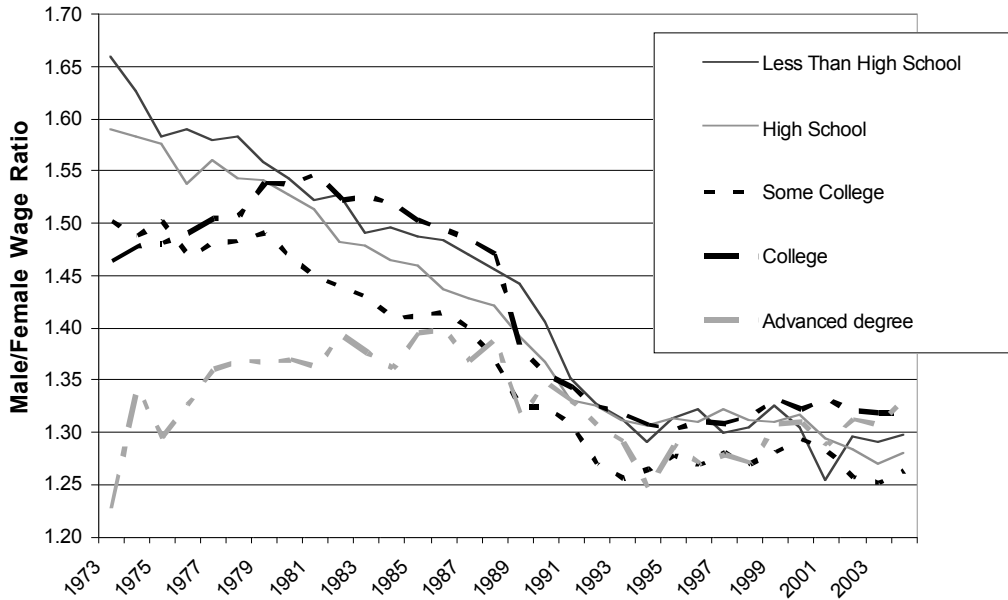
The Gender Gap in Wages

The increase in women’s real wages helped to reduce the gender gap in wages between 1973 and 2004. In 1973 the ratio of the average female wage to the average male wage was 63 percent. Three decades later the gender wage gap closed by 18 percent, when average wages for women were 81 percent of the average wage for men. This gap was reduced among all wage earners at almost all education levels. The gender wage disparity was reduced most dramatically among men and women with less than a high school degree, as this gap closed almost 40 percent between 1973 and 2004 (see Figure 3-6).^{xcviii} But the gender gap in wages *increased* between 1973 and 2004 among those with an advanced degree. The wage gap among men and women with an advanced degree grew 10 percent between 1973--when women at this educational level could *least* expect

to see a disparity between their wages and that of men--and 2004, when the gender gap was largest among men and women at this educational level.^{xix}

Figure 3-6. Ratio of Real Wages of Men to Women by Education Level, 1973-2004

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005

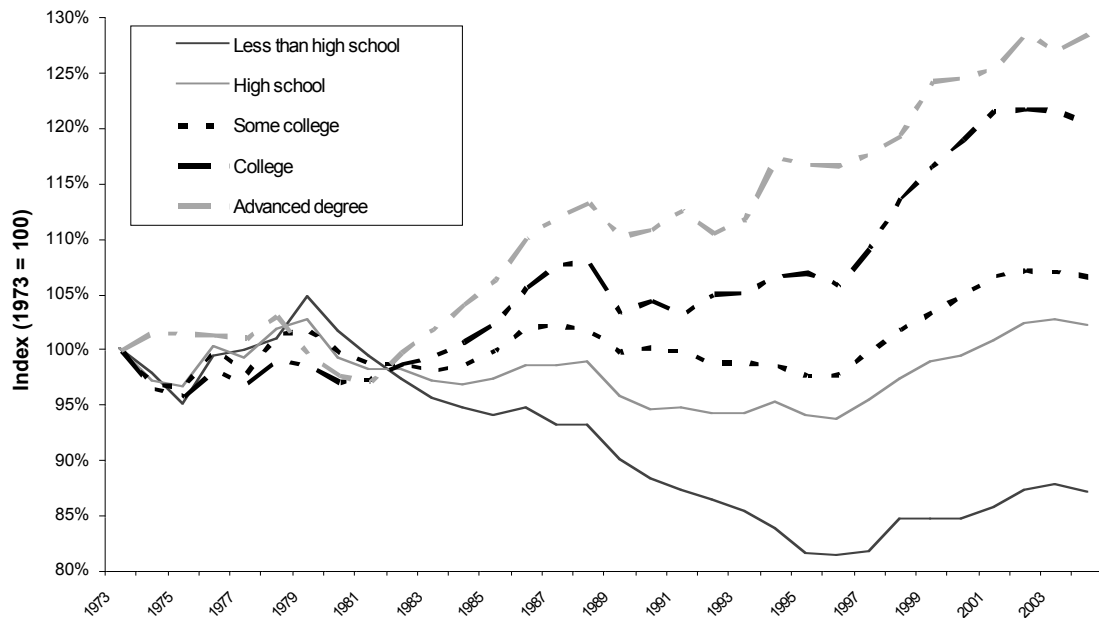


Wage Growth by Education Level

Real hourly wages became more unevenly distributed across education levels over the last thirty years, as wages rose for those with higher education levels, remained stagnant among those with a high school degree or some college, and declined among those with less than a high school degree. The trend toward increasing levels of wage inequality by education level, however, is fairly recent. In the late 1970s, wages among those with less than a high school degree rose most sharply among all education levels before markedly declining in the early 1980s. By 1983 wage growth was relatively even across all education levels, before widening sharply by 1985. That year, those with college and advanced degrees began to realize steeper wage increases, while those with high school degrees or less saw stagnant or declining wages. Wage growth at all educational levels stalled or fell by the early 1990s, before becoming rapidly unequal again by the late-1990s. During that era’s economic expansion, wages fell or stagnated for those with lower education levels, and increased rapidly for those with college or advanced degrees (see Figure 3-7).^c

Figure 3-7. Change in Real Hourly Wage by Education, Indexed to 1973

Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2005



CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal justice inequality, in both enforcement and prosecution of law, has declined significantly since the days of state-sanctioned Jim Crow discrimination and police brutality. Despite the initial progress toward equality following the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, evidence of unequal treatment in the criminal justice system on the basis of race, ethnicity, immigration status, and gender is persistent and, in some cases, growing.

Researchers and policy analysts have only recently had the benefit of better quality, more consistent federal, state, and local law enforcement data. Trend data like the kind we present in other chapters, are therefore lacking in most areas of research on criminal justice inequality. The accumulated data, however, support the conclusion of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, in *Justice on Trial*:

[I]n one critical area—criminal justice—racial inequality is growing, not receding. Our criminal laws, while facially neutral, are enforced in a manner that is massively and pervasively biased. The injustices of the criminal justice system threaten to render irrelevant fifty years of hard-fought civil rights progress.^{ci}

Racial Profiling

Racial profiling--law enforcement practices that target minorities, immigrants, or other groups as “suspicious” on the basis of group membership--is hardly a new phenomenon.

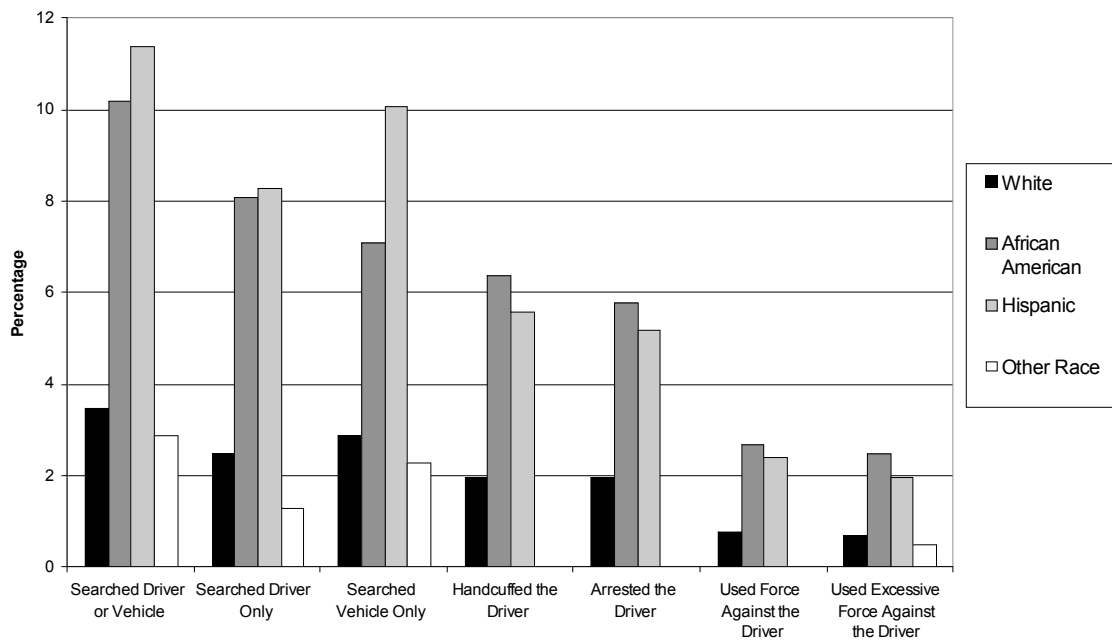
But despite admonishments from political, civic, and religious leaders to abandon the practice, including from the last two U.S. presidents, recent developments suggest that the practice is expanding. In addition to targeting of African Americans and Hispanics in past decades, law enforcement has selectively focused attention on young Arabs, Arab Americans, Muslims, Sikhs, and South Asians in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.^{cii}

Racial Profiling of Travelers and Motorists. Evidence suggests that “traditional” profiling of racial and ethnic minority motorists and travelers persists. For example, data from the Los Angeles Police Department reveal that from July to November 2002, African-American drivers were more than three times more likely than whites to be asked to step out of their cars, and African-American and Hispanic drivers were more likely than whites to be patted down and subjected to a body search. In Volusia County, Florida, nearly 70 percent of drivers stopped on an interstate highway in 1992 were African American or Hispanic, despite the fact that these minority groups constituted only 5 percent of drivers on the highway. And in Maryland, monitoring of traffic stops mandated by a court consent decree found that stops and searches by state police overwhelmingly involved African-American drivers (70 percent), despite the fact that only 17.5 percent of drivers, and those found to be speeding, were African American.^{ciii} And a 2000 U.S. General Accounting Office report of practices by the U.S. Customs Service found that African-American women were nine times more likely than white women to be x-rayed following a frisk or pat down--despite the fact that they were half as likely as whites to be found carrying contraband.^{civ} Taken together, these findings indicate a pattern of targeting certain groups far out of proportion of any evidence of criminal activity.

Race is also a factor in the intrusiveness of police encounters. In 2002 police stopped 16.8 million drivers, almost 9 percent of all U.S. drivers. While the likelihood of being stopped by police did not differ significantly among white, African-American, and Hispanic drivers, African Americans and Hispanics were 2.5 and 3 times more likely than whites, respectively, to be searched during the stop. Over 1 in 10 African-American and Hispanic drivers were searched during traffic stops, compared to fewer than 1 in 25 whites. African-American and Latino drivers were also almost 3.5 and 2.5 times more likely than whites, respectively, to experience police threat or use of force during the contact. While whites were about as likely as African Americans to be ticketed (56.5 percent and 58.4 percent, respectively), Hispanic drivers were significantly more likely to receive a ticket (71.5 percent). Moreover, African Americans and Hispanics were more likely than whites to be arrested after a traffic stop (see Figure 3-8).^{cv}

Figure 3-8. Police Actions During Traffic Stops by Race and Ethnicity, 2002

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005



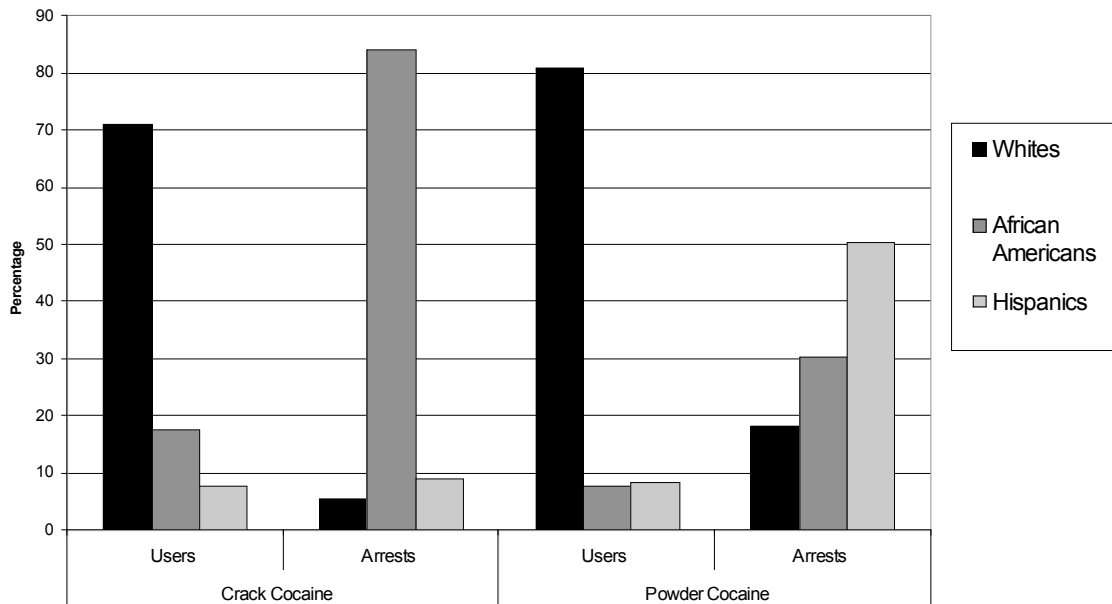
Racial Profiling and Immigration Enforcement. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was aimed at abolishing discrimination in immigration policy and practice. But some groups still face barriers to equal treatment in immigration enforcement. A study by the National Council of La Raza found that immigration officials and local law enforcement disproportionately target people who “appear Hispanic” for interrogation, detention, or arrest on suspicion of violating immigration laws, including many who are American citizens or legal permanent residents. In the late 1990s, almost three-fourths of those deported by the Immigration and Naturalization Service were of Mexican origin, even though Mexicans constituted less than half of all undocumented persons in the United States. And Amnesty International has documented a dramatic rise in the rate of law enforcement stops and interrogation of Arab Americans, South Asian Americans, and Muslim and Sikh Americans since September 11.^{cv1}

Racial Profiling of Drug Offenses. The rise of the crack cocaine epidemic in the 1980s led many jurisdictions to dramatically increase criminal sentencing and law enforcement efforts to combat its trade. Penalties for distribution of crack cocaine are now far higher than for distribution of larger amounts of powder cocaine, and law enforcement has disproportionately targeted African-American and other minority communities in the effort to halt crack cocaine’s distribution. But national surveys of drug use and statistics on arrests for drug possession and distribution reveal that targeting minority communities misses the mark. In 2000, for example, the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse found that 71 percent of crack cocaine users were white, while only 18 percent of those who used crack were African American, and just 8 percent were Hispanic. Yet 84 percent of those arrested for possession of crack were African Americans, while fewer

than 6 percent of those arrested for possession were white. In contrast, although 81 percent of users of powder cocaine are white, 30 percent of those arrested for possession in 2000 were African American, and half were Hispanic (see Figure 3-9).^{cvi}

Figure 3-9. Drug Use vs. Drug Arrests, Crack Cocaine and Powder Cocaine, by Race and Ethnicity, 2000

Source: Amnesty International, 2004



Prosecutorial Discretion and Sentencing

Criminal prosecutors enjoy a great deal of discretion in decisions to bring charges against defendants in plea negotiations and in sentencing. For example, the decision to bring charges in state versus federal court can have profound implications for defendants, who often face stiffer prison sentences if convicted in federal court. This is especially true in drug offenses.

Evidence showed that--whether intentionally or due to subconscious stereotypes and bias--prosecutors often exercise their discretion in ways that discriminate based on race, ethnicity, or gender. For example, after 1986, when Congress enacted mandatory minimum penalties for crack cocaine distribution offenses, federal prosecutors rarely handled cases of white defendants. A 1992 U.S. Sentencing Commission report, for instance, found that *only* minorities were prosecuted in half of the federal judicial districts that handled crack offense cases. Only a handful of whites were prosecuted for these offenses in other federal districts, while hundreds of African Americans and Hispanics were prosecuted.^{cvi} Between 1992 and 1994, over 95 percent of all federal crack prosecutions were of non-whites. As noted above, however, whites are the largest share of crack cocaine users, and at least one federal study concludes that users are more likely to purchase drugs from dealers of the same race or ethnicity.^{cix}

Many studies also show racial and ethnic inequality in sentencing. Mandatory minimum sentencing policies adopted in many jurisdictions have exacerbated racial and ethnic inequality in rates of incarceration, while doing little to deter crime.^{cx} In California, for example, the state's three strikes law resulted in the incarceration of over four times as many offenders as any of the other twenty-one states that have adopted such laws. Over two-thirds of those convicted of a second or third offense were incarcerated for non-violent crimes, and African Americans and Latinos were disproportionately more likely to be imprisoned under the three strikes law. African Americans, for example, make up 6.5 percent of the California population and nearly 30 percent of the state's prison population, but they represent 36 percent of second strikers and 45 percent of third strikers.^{cxⁱ}

While some studies of racial disparities in death penalty application find that the race of the defendant alone does not predict a death penalty sentence, significant disparities in application of the death penalty emerge when the race of the defendant is considered in combination with the race of the victim. Since 1976 African Americans have been murdered at rates seven to eight times higher than whites, resulting in a roughly equivalent number of African-American and white murder victims. But 80 percent of the more than 840 people put to death since 1976 have been convicted of the murder of whites. And a 1990 General Accounting Office review of death penalty studies found that eight in ten studies were consistent in their findings: When African Americans murder whites, death penalty convictions are several times more likely than when the murder victim is a person of color, regardless of who committed the murder.^{cxⁱⁱ}

Gender Inequality in Criminal Justice

As will be noted in the chapter on *Redemption*, in recent years rates of incarceration of women have risen more sharply than those of men. Since 1980 the number of women in state and federal prisons and local jails has increased by more than 800 percent. Today the total number of women involved in the criminal justice system--in prison, on probation, or on parole--exceeds one million. Much of this increase relates to drug-related offenses. Between 1986 and 1999 the number of women incarcerated in state prisons for drug offenses grew by almost 900 percent, far exceeding the increase in imprisonment of male drug offenders during the same period. Women of color have been affected most by the sharp rise in imprisonment of female drug offenders, even though rates of drug use among women of color are equal to or lower than rates among white women. In 1997 about 44 percent of Hispanic and 39 percent of African-American women in state prisons were convicted of a drug offense.^{cxⁱⁱⁱ}

Moreover, in an increasing number of instances, much longer sentences are imposed on people with remote or passive connections to drug use or transaction, with a disproportionately harsh effect on women. As detailed in a report produced by the American Civil Liberties Union, Break the Chains, and The Brennan Center for Justice:

Even when they have minimal or no involvement whatsoever in the drug trade, women are increasingly caught in the ever-widening net cast by current drug laws through provisions such as conspiracy, accomplice liability and constructive possession, that expand criminal liability to reach partners, relatives, and bystanders. Sentencing laws fail to consider the many reasons—including domestic violence, economic dependence, or dependent immigration status—that may compel women to remain silent or not to report a partner or family member’s drug activity to authorities. Moreover, existing sentencing policies, particularly mandatory minimum laws, often subject women to the same, or in some cases, harsher sentences than the principals in the drug trade who are ostensibly the target of those policies.^{cxiv}

Racial Disparities in Juvenile Justice

A 1999 report by the Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention found that there is “substantial evidence of widespread disparity in juvenile case processing.”^{cxv} For example, while minority youth are more likely than whites to be involved in the juvenile justice system, they are also more likely to be placed in public secure facilities, while white youth are more likely to be placed in private facilities or diverted from the juvenile system altogether. And the defendant’s race or ethnicity plays a significant role at many stages of processing in the juvenile justice system, but appears to be particularly salient at intake and detention decision points. When these disparities occur they tend to accumulate as youth are processed, exacerbating racial and ethnic differences.^{cxvi}

More recently, a report by Building Blocks for Youth found that:

- Minority juvenile defendants are more likely than white juveniles to be waived to adult courts; African-American youth are almost 25 percent more likely than whites to have their cases waived to adult courts, even when charged with the same offenses;
- African-American youth are more likely than whites to receive a disposition of out-of-home placement such as commitment to a locked facility, while white youth are more likely to be placed on probation for the same types of offenses;
- Controlling for type of offense and prior admissions, incarceration rates for state public facilities were higher for African-American and Hispanic youth than for whites.^{cxvii}

Taken together, these studies show that significant barriers to equal opportunity remain in the criminal justice system, as in other aspects of society. Moreover, as detailed in the chapter on *Redemption*, the consequences of involvement in the criminal justice system are increasingly severe, including the denial of voting rights, public services, and education.

HOW CAN THE NATION PROTECT AND EXPAND EQUALITY?

The Glass Ceiling

Catalyst's reports on women in corporate leadership positions show that hiring more women executives or instituting more "diversity" or sensitivity training programs are not enough to counter persistent gender-based stereotypes that undermine women's corporate advancement. In fact, many of the corporate leaders who hold some of the strongest gender-based stereotypes about women's leadership are more likely to work side-by-side with women than those who work in more male-dominated corporate settings. Catalyst recommends four steps to combat the influence of stereotyping:

- Make the performance evaluation process more rigorous and transparent;
- Implement checks and balances such as mechanisms to more objectively assess personnel decisions to counter the effects of individuals' implicit biases and stereotypes;
- Educate corporate leaders and managers about the powerful and insidious effects of stereotyping; and
- Highlight the accomplishments of women leaders, to actively challenge gender biases.^{cxviii}

In addition, individual employers should assess their own hiring and advancement practices with respect to racial, ethnic, and gender diversity by using statistical models and analytic tools to compare their workforce diversity to the pool of potential job candidates in a region, and by reviewing personnel practices and procedures to ensure that they embrace objective criteria.^{cxix}

Employment and Housing Discrimination

The United States has made great strides in reducing barriers to housing and employment faced by historically disadvantaged groups. Yet discrimination in these sectors persists, often in subtle forms. Current methods of detecting and enforcing civil rights laws must be supplemented with strategies such as more routine use of matched pairs of testers that proactively assess discrimination. In addition, better and more consistent data collection and analysis of potential discriminatory patterns are needed to understand how discrimination can persist, particularly in employment, in ways that employers may not be aware of. Blumrosen and Blumrosen offer the observation that individual employers and potential employees rarely "see" discrimination at the interpersonal level, particularly when employers don't have a conscious desire to subordinate women and minorities. Rather, discriminatory practices are only visible when data are collected and aggregated across a series of employment decisions. "The discriminatory character of [employers'] judgments may become visible only when a pattern of similar activity is observed--often when employers are compared to similar establishments," they write. "When the comparison yields a significant disparity, the Supreme Court has concluded that there is 'substantial reason, based upon the statistical manifestations of the net effects of the

employer's practices, to believe that the employer has violated Title VII [of the Civil Rights Act] on a continuing basis."^{cxv}

Criminal Justice

Juvenile Justice. Juvenile justice systems around the country are facing rapid transformation, as the demographic mix of the nation's youth shifts significantly and larger shares of minority youth are involved in the juvenile justice system. In the late 1990s the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention selected five states to pilot initiatives to assess the disproportionate involvement of minorities in youth courts, and to improve how the juvenile justice system responds to the needs of communities of color. Some of the best practices from these programs included efforts to address racial and ethnic bias within the system, such as data collection to track how minority youth are treated more harshly in the juvenile justice system (e.g., through higher rates of minority confinement), and strategies to improve diversion options for low-income and minority youth (e.g., through programs to encourage extended family placement). Other strategies include developing programs to reduce barriers to parental and family advocacy, such as providing information and assistance to families to help them understand and better navigate the juvenile justice system.^{cxvi}

Gender Inequality. Women are poorly and inequitably served by the criminal justice system. As noted above, many women who are unwittingly or involuntarily co-conspirators with drug-dealing male partners are treated as harshly as and sometimes more harshly than their partners. Sentencing policies should take into account women's level of culpability and control when their partners commit drug crimes. Mothers who are sent to prison suffer twice the price for their offenses when their parental rights are removed. Criminal justice policies should attempt to preserve families despite incarceration, so that families can serve as an important source of support for rehabilitation and reentry into the community. Moreover, harsh penalties for drug violations have vastly expanded the role of the criminal justice system in addressing substance abuse, which is fundamentally a public health problem. Yet the criminal justice system is poorly equipped to address the needs of women who face substance abuse problems. And it is not at all prepared to correct the conditions--such as mental illness, poor economic and social supports, abuse and trauma, and coercive relationships--that lead many women to abuse drugs. Substance abuse treatment and prevention programs must be made more widely available to those who need them, and treatment programs must address the needs of women with children by allowing mothers to care for their children while in treatment.^{cxvii}

Racial Profiling. Racial profiling, whether based on race, ethnicity, nationality, or gender, or some combination, is based on stereotypes about the likelihood that members of these groups are involved in criminal activity. But group stereotypes are an inappropriate and inaccurate foundation on which to base law enforcement practice. Frequently such practices violate the civil rights of those unfairly targeted, and alienate communities that might otherwise serve as allies to law enforcement.^{cxviii} The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Amnesty International, and other organizations concerned

about racial profiling have offered several recommendations to curb the practice, including:

- Encouraging all federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to expressly ban racial profiling, to establish complaint procedures for individuals who claim that they are the target of unfair profiling, to collect data on all traffic and pedestrian stops to determine if a pattern of profiling exists, and to adopt disciplinary procedures against officers who violate the profiling ban;
- Establishing legal mechanisms to enforce bans on profiling, including by private citizens;
- Developing public education campaigns to debunk myths about profiling and explain its flaws as a law enforcement tool; and
- Establishing nationwide standards for the accreditation of law enforcement agencies, including standards to eliminate profiling.^{cxxiv}

More broadly, there is a need for both vigorous enforcement of existing anti-discrimination protection and a new generation of human rights laws that address evolving forms of bias and exclusion. This includes:

- Increasing the staffing and resources that federal, state, and local agencies devote to enforcing anti-discrimination laws in voting, employment, housing, education, lending, criminal justice and other spheres. This includes using data more effectively to better detect potential bias, for instance, by comparing companies' workforce diversity with the composition of an area's qualified workforce.
- Assisting employers and other institutions committed to providing a fair and diverse environment, for example, by promoting model performance evaluation practices, greater cultural fluency, and other tools to counter bias and exclusion.
- Crafting new human rights laws that complement existing civil rights protections by addressing subconscious and institutional biases more effectively, protecting economic and social rights like the right to education, and correcting exclusion based on socioeconomic status and other characteristics not fully covered by current laws.

Chapter 4 VOICE

Americans cherish the idea that everyone should be able to express their opinions, whether in the town hall, at the office water cooler, in newspaper opinion pages, in the voting booth, or face-to-face with elected representatives. Indeed, democracy depends on the ability of all citizens to participate in the public dialogue. Without the ability to express viewpoints and have them represented in government, individuals cannot exercise political power to help shape their community and country, nor can they participate fully in the nation's cultural and social life. And without diverse viewpoints, the nation suffers from insularity and fails to reap the benefits of pluralism. Voice is therefore an important element of opportunity. This notion is also embedded in international human rights principles, which the United States was instrumental in shaping. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers."^{xxxv}

The nation has made progress in expanding voice over the last four decades. A note of great promise was sounded with passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and enactment of many of the 1968 Kerner Commission's recommendations about the importance of protecting minority voices in the media. However, significant obstacles to full democratic participation and expression remain for many. More ominously, federal deregulation and relaxation of media ownership requirements--and general embrace of the goals of private interests at the expense of the public interest--threaten to reverse some of the gains and protections put in place in the 1970s and 1980s to protect and expand voice. These findings are summarized in Box 4.

Box 4: Has Voice Expanded in America?

Major Gains in Voice

- While they remain underrepresented among elected officials relative to their proportions in the general population, women and minorities have made substantial gains over the last three decades in election to local, statewide, and national offices.
- The presence of women and minorities in news organizations has increased over the last three decades, although these groups also remain underrepresented relative to their proportions in the general population.

Areas of Limited, Mixed or No Progress

- Women continue to be grossly underrepresented as sources in news reporting.
- Communities of color are rarely the subject of news stories. When they are the focus, the content of these stories remains largely negative.
- The "digital divide" persists, as rural, low-income, and minority communities continue to lag behind wealthier and better-educated communities in access to and use of digital communications technologies.
- Electoral participation among all groups has declined slightly over the last four decades, and significant gaps in voting persist among racial and ethnic groups. Asian Americans and Hispanics remain disproportionately less likely to vote for reasons of language access as well as lower rates of citizenship.

Areas Where Voice Has Declined

- The racial and ethnic diversity of radio news organizations declined by almost half between 1995 and 2005.
- Minority and local ownership of radio, television, and print media has declined in the face of greater corporate consolidation of media and communications outlets.
- Rates of other kinds of political participation such as working for political campaigns or giving money remain low, and are declining for most groups.

About the Data in this Chapter

This chapter reviews trends in voice, and assesses the nation's progress in protecting and expanding expression and political participation. We examine a range of indicators including measures of political participation, diversity in news media, diversity of media ownership, media consolidation, and the digital divide. Sources of data and information include federal data and reports, particularly the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, which regularly surveys a representative sample of Americans to assess voting behavior. We also summarize federal reports on access to communications technology and on diversity among elected federal officials. Other sources are reports by independent research and policy organizations such as the Project for Excellence in Journalism and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, and scholarly research published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Where data are available, we present trends over time on measures of voice. As with the measures of opportunity presented in other chapters, common limitations of the data persist. Data on trends over time are often not available, are not available for the same time periods across all measures, and are sometimes limited by a lack of data comparability. In most cases trend data are limited by a lack of data on several underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups such as American Indians, Alaska Natives, Pacific Islanders, as well as subgroups of Asian Americans and Hispanics. And data are often lacking on the experiences of low-income communities of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. We urge researchers to compensate for these limitations in the future by focusing on understudied groups.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**Voting in the 2004 Election**

Voting is a core function in a democratic society and therefore is an important indicator of political voice. Yet the degree of U.S. electoral participation has fluctuated dramatically over the years, both overall and by race, ethnicity, gender, income, and education status.^{cxxvi}

The November 2004 elections drew the highest turnout of voters since 1992. Nearly two-thirds of people age 18 and older reported registering to vote, and almost 60 percent reported voting in 2004. This relatively high voter turnout rate was good news, as rates of electoral participation had declined over the last several decades. But the 2004

elections also revealed gaps in electoral participation among racial, ethnic, income and education groups that have persisted over the last forty years, despite a slight narrowing of some of these gaps over time.^{cxxvii} For example, fewer than three in ten Asian Americans and Hispanics voted in 2004, a rate half that of white non-Hispanics (see Figure 4-1).^{cxxviii} Women were slightly more likely to vote than men in 2004 (see Figure 4-2).^{cxxix}

Figure 4-1. Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2004
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005

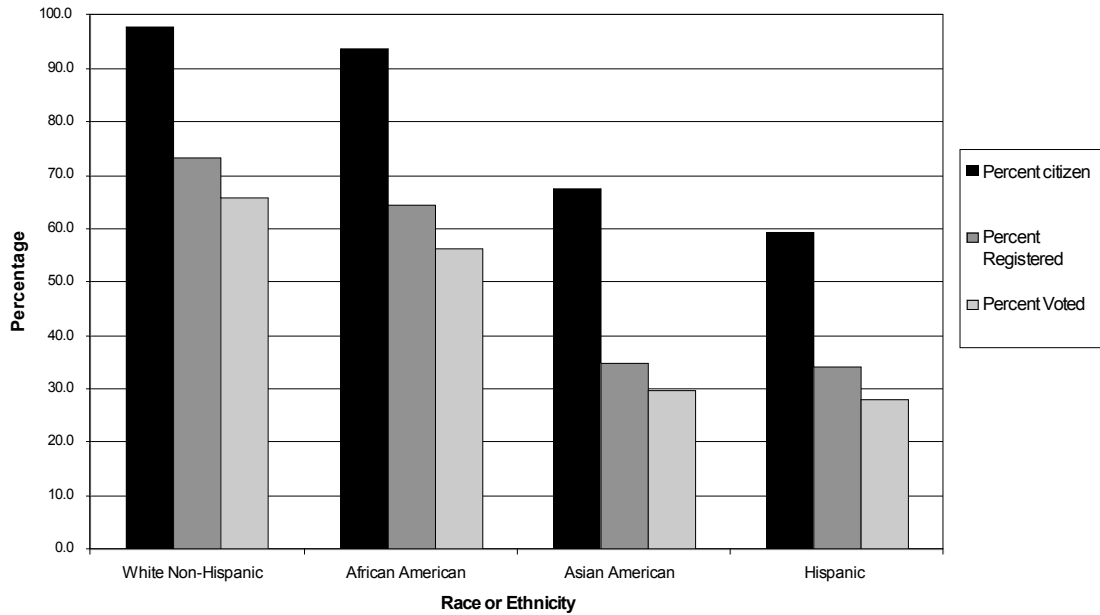
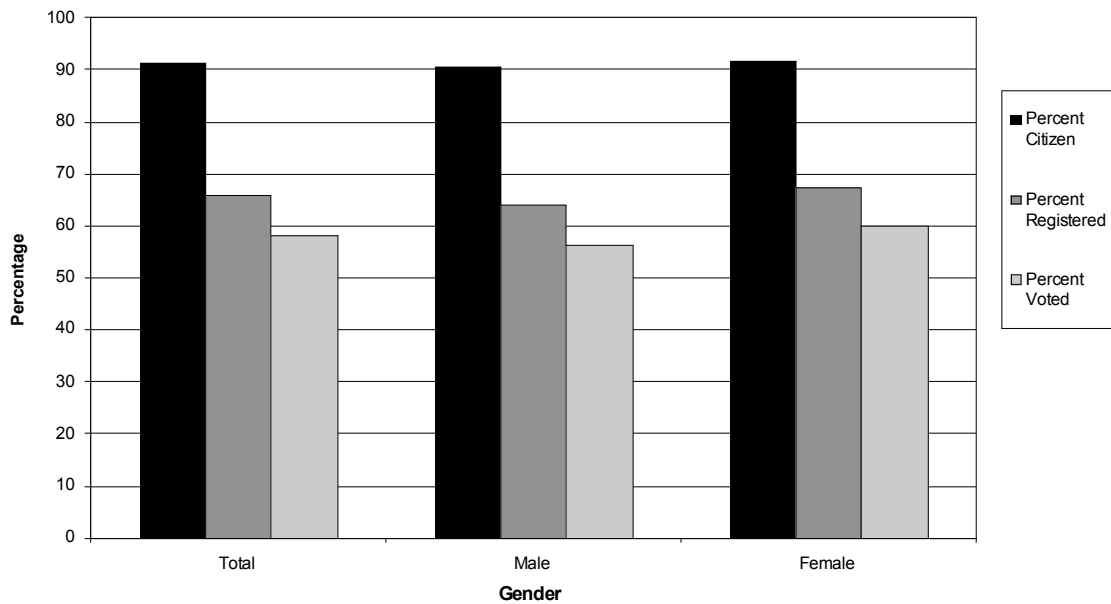


Figure 4-2. Reported Voting and Registration of the Total Voting-Age Population by Gender, 2004

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005



Important differences in rates of voting emerge when gender, race, education, citizenship and income are considered. About 56 percent of African Americans reported voting in 2004. But the gender gap--52 percent of African-American males voted, relative to 60 percent of African-American females--was larger than that for other racial and ethnic groups. By comparison, the gender difference in voting rates for white males (64.5 percent) and white females (67 percent) was much smaller. Hispanics were much less likely to report having voted: Only about 35 percent reported registering and only 28 percent reported voting. This appears largely due to the fact that 41 percent of voting-age Hispanics are not U.S. citizens and therefore were not eligible to vote. By contrast, only 2 percent of white non-Hispanics and 6.3 percent of African Americans reported not being U.S. citizens and therefore not being eligible to vote. Only 25 percent of Hispanic males reported voting, compared to 31 percent of Hispanic females. Asian and Pacific Islander Americans had the lowest level of voting: Only about 30 percent reported voting in 2004 and 32.5 percent of adults reported not being U.S. citizens. Asian-American males were slightly less likely to report voting (29 percent) than were Asian-American females (30.5 percent).^{cxxx}

Voting is tied to education for all racial groups. Overall, fewer than 24 percent of people with less than a ninth-grade education reported voting, compared to 52 percent of high school graduates, 73 percent of college graduates, and 77 percent of people with advanced degrees. Family income also contributes to differences in electoral turnout. Reported voting increases with income for all races. About 36 percent of those with family incomes less than \$10,000 reported voting in 1994, compared to 49 percent for those with family incomes between \$20,000 and \$29,000, 68 percent for those with family incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,999, and 78 percent for those with family

incomes of \$150,000 and above. The increase in voting rates actually doubles between the lowest income group and the highest income group for whites, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Among low-income voters, however, African Americans report higher levels of voting than do other racial and ethnic groups.^{cxxxii}

The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey also asks about reasons for not voting in the November 2004 election. One of the best predictors of not voting was being "too busy, conflicting schedule," which was selected by 31 percent of Asian Americans and 19 percent of white non-Hispanics. Asian Americans were also more likely to report being out of town on election day (12 percent), another example of conflicting schedules. Illness or disability was the most frequent reason for not voting among people age 65 and over (46 percent) and for people with less than a high school education (26 percent), but was also high for African Americans (16 percent) and for white non-Hispanics (16 percent). Registration problems were highest for Hispanics (11 percent) but, surprisingly, were lowest for Asian Americans (6 percent), who are more likely than other racial and ethnic groups except Hispanics to face language and citizenship barriers stemming from recent immigration. Not surprisingly, only 6 percent of white non-Hispanics reported registration problems. African Americans provided the highest percentage of "don't know, or refused to answer" responses (13 percent), and white non-Hispanics reported the highest percentage of "didn't like the candidates or campaign issues" responses (11 percent).^{cxxxiii}

Trends in Voting Over Time

Data on trends in voting behavior over time reveal that registration and voting rates have generally declined since 1964. This trend extends to men and women and to all racial and ethnic groups (see Figures 4-3 and 4-4).^{cxxxiii} Men were slightly more likely than women to vote until the early 1980s, when women's rates of electoral participation overtook those of men. Since then, women have been more likely to vote than men. In 2004 this difference reached almost four percentage points, as 56 percent of men voted, compared to 60 percent of women. Racial and ethnic minorities, in contrast, have voted at lower rates than whites, although voting rates among African Americans have generally increased since 1992, narrowing the African-American/white voting gap significantly.^{cxxxiv}

Figure 4-3. Percent of Population Voting by Gender, 1964-2004
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005

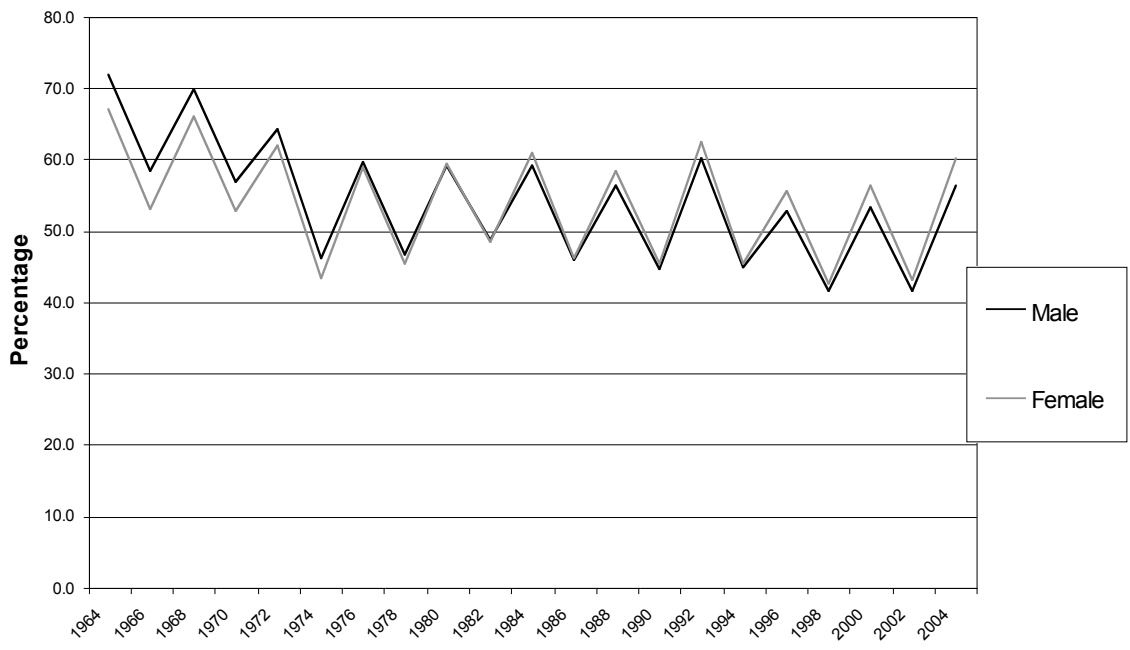
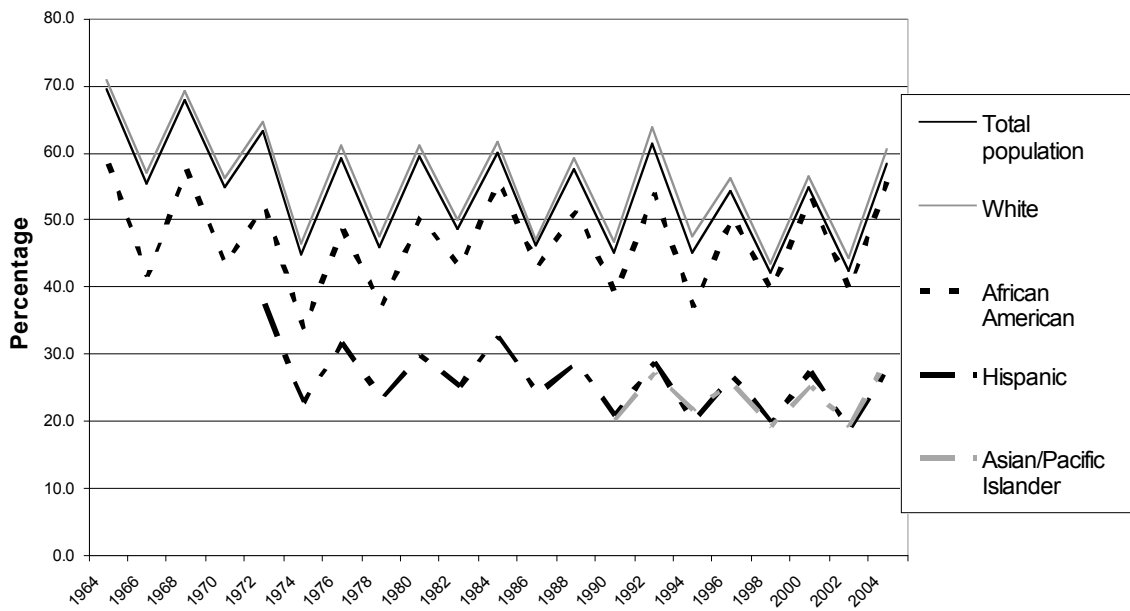


Figure 4-4. Percent of Population Voting, by Race and Ethnicity, 1964-2004
 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005



Although not displayed in the figures above, the overall decline over the last forty years in electoral participation extends to almost all age groups. The youngest age group, age 18 to 24, who report the lowest level of voting today (42 percent), reported higher voting

rates in 1964 (51 percent). Although people age 18 and 19 became eligible to vote in 1972, they slid to an all-time voter participation low of 16.6 percent in 1998. The youth turnout for the 2004 election (42 percent) marked a large rebound from its 17 percent voting rate in the 2002 election. This contrast is partly explained by the lower voting rates for congressional elections every two years, compared to the presidential elections every four years. Although white non-Hispanics appeared to have the highest voting rate among young people in 2004 (48 percent), this rate was less than that of young whites who reported voting in 1964 (52 percent). In 2004 young Hispanics voted at rates far lower (20 percent) than their highest level in 1972 (31 percent), although their 2004 turnout was far greater than it was in 2002 (8 percent) and 1990 (8 percent). On the other hand, two positive trends emerged among young voters of color in 2004. Nearly one-quarter of young Asian Americans reported voting, which more than doubled their voting rate relative to 1994. And in 2004 young African Americans reported voting at rates as high as those in 1964.^{cxxxv}

Rates of voting among African Americans were highest in 1964, when 58.5 percent of the U.S. African-American population cast ballots. This rate declined through the late 1970s, before increasing slightly in the early 1980s. African Americans age 25 to 44 reported higher voting rates in 1964, 1968, and 1972 than in 2004, and those aged 45 to 64 also had higher voting rates in 1964, 1968, 1986, 1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000 than in 2004. African Americans over age 65 voted at rates almost as high as in 2004 (64 percent) as in 2000 (65 percent), which was considerably higher than their 45 percent turnout in 1964, before passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

In 2004 younger Hispanics voted at rates below their rate for 1972 and 1984. In 2004 Hispanics over age 65 increased their voting rate to 46 percent. This figure was much higher than their voting rate of 27 percent in 1972, but lower than their peak of 50 percent in 2000.

Asian Americans were more likely to vote at older age groups in each of the last eight election cycles, and have gradually increased their voting rate over time. But Asian Americans over age 65 remained virtually tied with the low voting rate of Hispanics, before dropping to the lowest rate of 38 percent in 2004.

Other Forms of Political Participation

Voting is the most significant form of political expression in a democracy, but other political activities such as helping political campaigns or making contributions to political parties or candidates are also important elements of voice. Without public engagement in these activities, the political process is likely to be dominated by narrow private interests.

Unfortunately, Americans' level of involvement in political activity, as with voting, has been low and declining slightly over the last three to four decades. With some important exceptions, Americans are less likely to volunteer time or contribute money to political campaigns than they were a generation ago. And although men and women don't vary

significantly in these activities, gaps in measures of political activity do exist among racial and socioeconomic groups.^{cxxxvi}

The National Election Studies (NES) database, assembled by the University of Michigan, has tracked public opinion and electoral behavior for a random sample of the U.S. population from 1948 to 2002. The thousands of respondents in this database are representative of a range of demographic groups, including people with different income and education levels, although data on racial and ethnic groups are limited to African Americans and whites. These data reveal large overall declines in activities such as attending a political meeting. Fewer than 6 percent of NES respondents reported attending a political meeting in 2002, compared to 9 percent in 1968. These data reveal minimal differences between men and women and between African Americans and whites on this variable. But people with higher incomes and higher levels of education are more likely to attend a political meeting, although these gaps have narrowed as rates of participation in political meetings have declined overall (see Figures 4-5 and 4-6).^{cxxxvii}

Figure 4-5. Percentage of Respondents Who Attended a Political Meeting by Education Level, 1968-2004

Source: National Election Studies, 2005

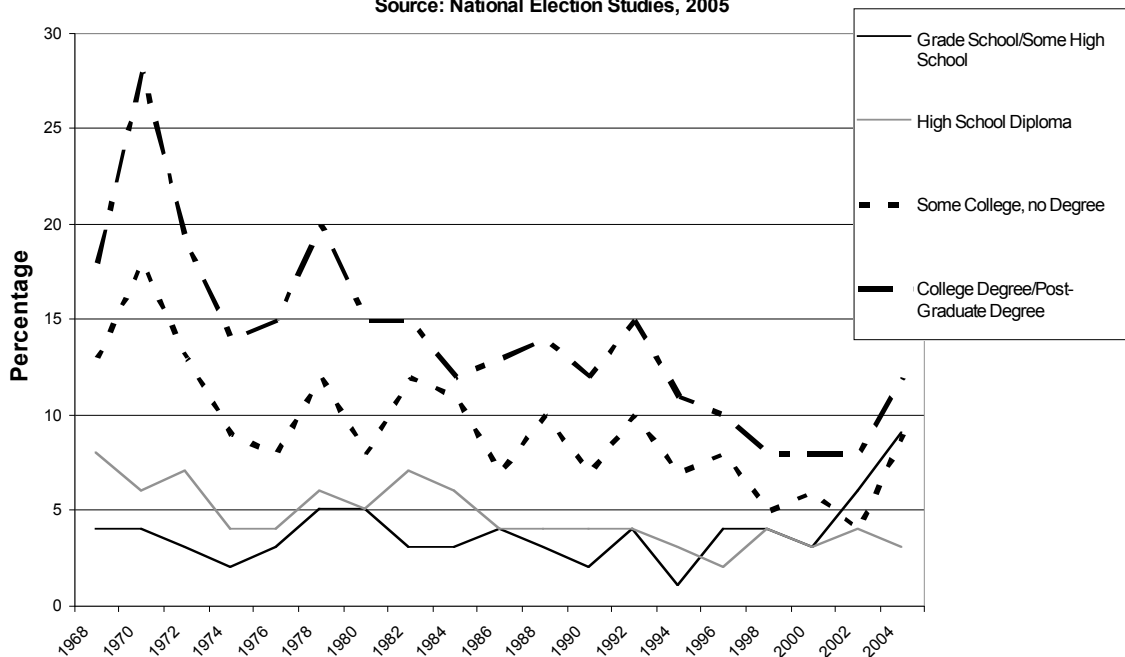
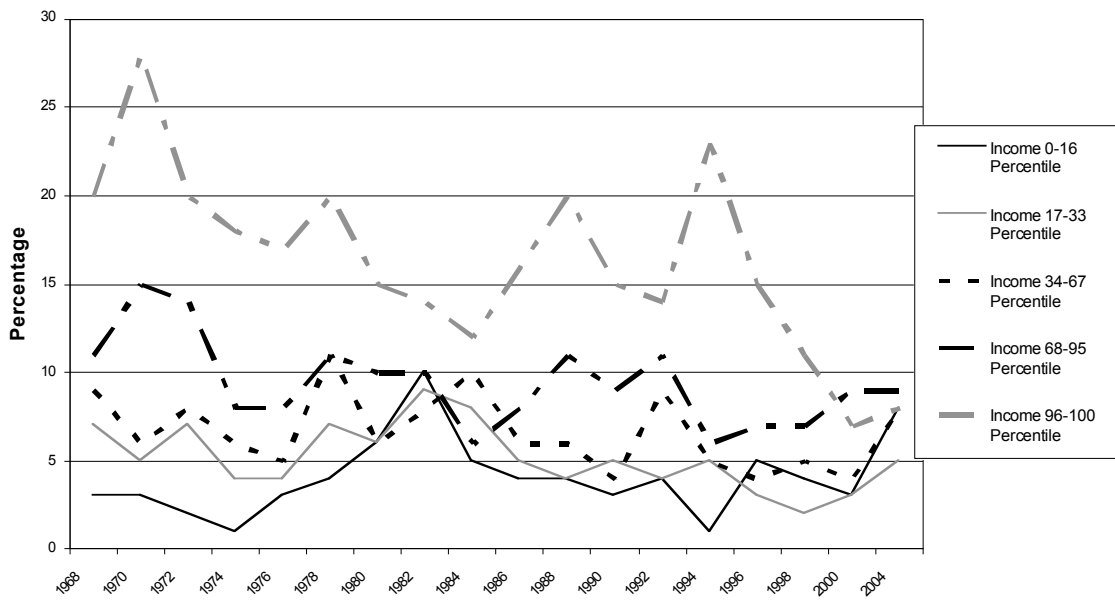


Figure 4-6. Percentage of Respondents Who Attended a Political Meeting by Income Percentile, 1968-2004

Source: National Election Studies, 2005



Note: Data not available for 2002.

Similarly, the percentage of NES respondents who worked for a political campaign is small and has declined over the last thirty years. Both men and women and African Americans and whites volunteered at roughly equivalent levels (not shown). However, those with lower levels of education and income historically have been less likely than their better educated and better off counterparts to work for political campaigns. However, these gaps reversed dramatically in 2002, when more people with less than a high school degree reported working for political campaigns (see Figures 4-7 and 4-8).^{cxxxviii}

Figure 4-7. Percentage of Respondents Who Worked for a Political Party or Candidate by Education Level, 1968-2002

Source: National Election Studies, 2004

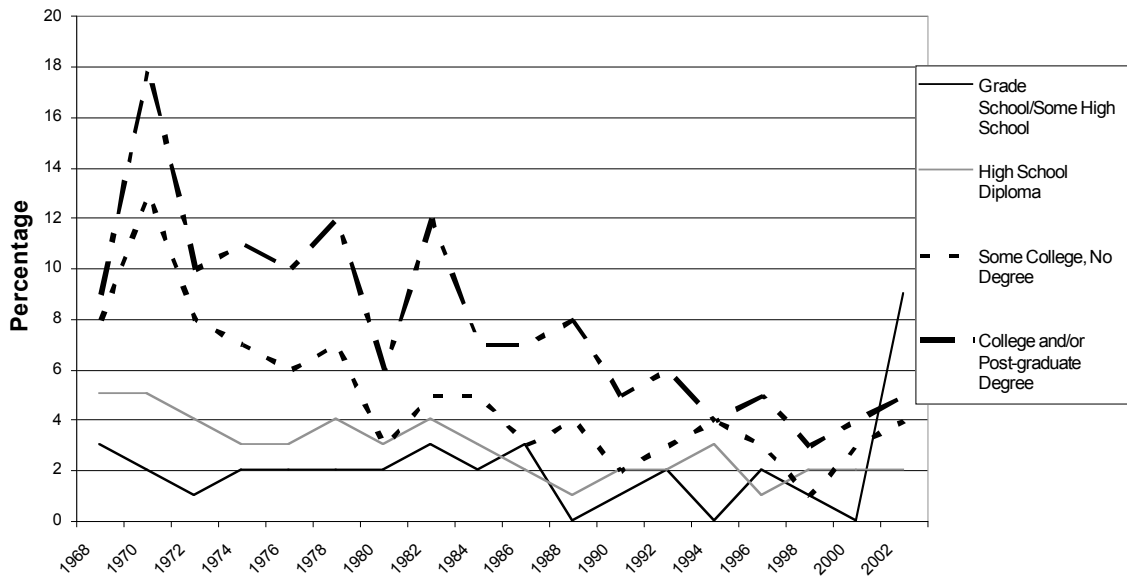
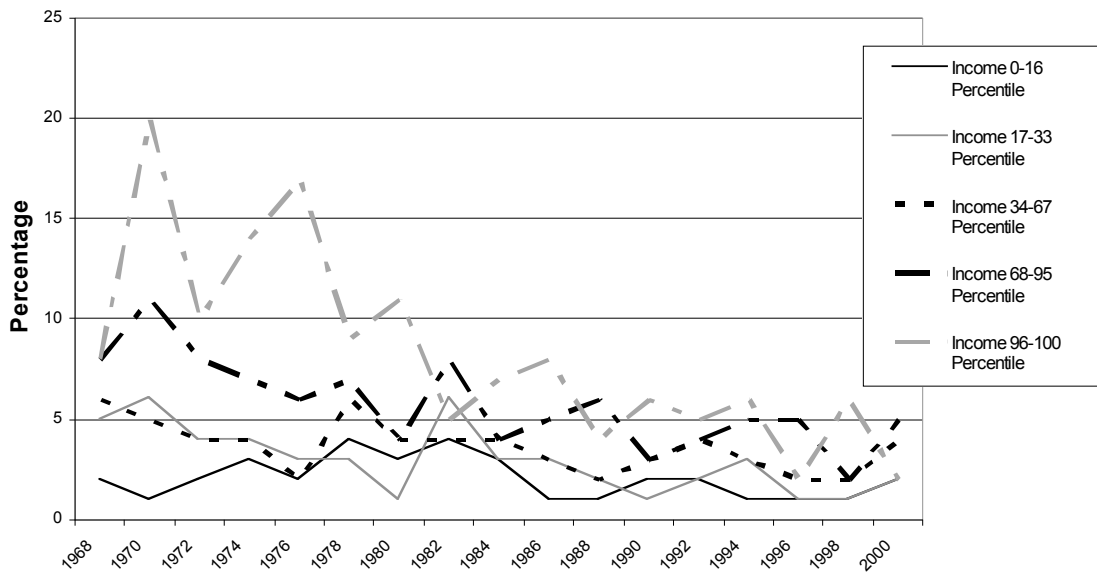


Figure 4-8. Percentage of Respondents Who Worked for a Political Party or Candidate by Income Percentile, 1968-2000

Source: National Election Studies, 2004

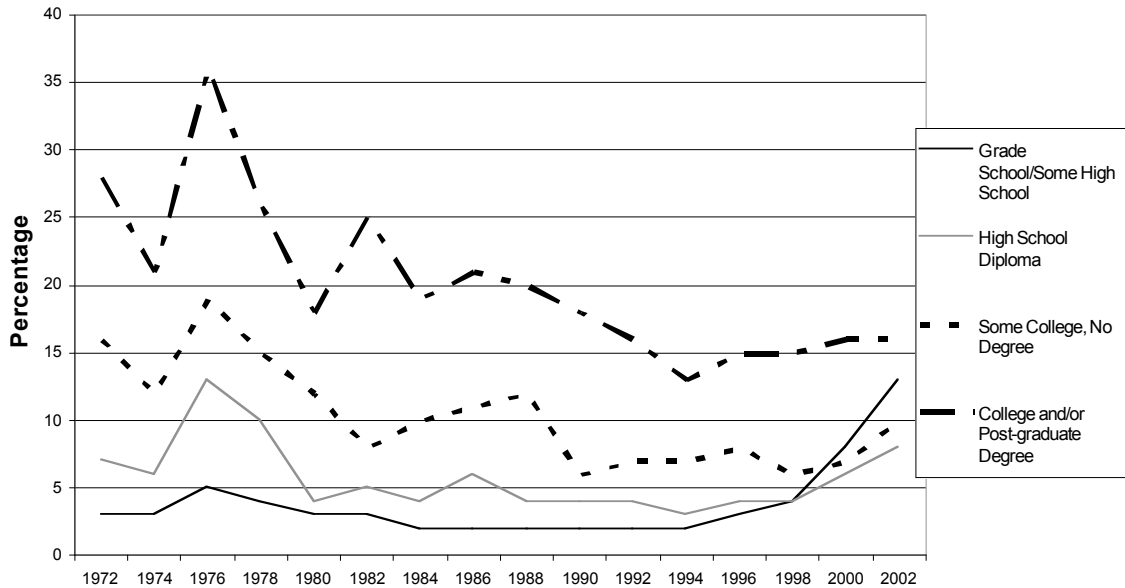


People with higher levels of education and income historically have been more likely to report contributing money to a political campaign, although NES data suggest that these

trends are shifting dramatically, as individuals with a high school degree or less reported sharply increased levels of political giving in 1998, 2000, and 2002 (see Figure 4-9).^{cxxxix}

Figure 4-9. Percentage of Respondents Who Gave Money to Help a Campaign, by Education Level, 1970-2002

Source: National Election Studies, 2004



It is not clear whether this increase in reported political giving reflects an actual rise in political activity, or is driven by a response bias--a tendency to respond positively or the creation of skewed responses due to elimination of respondents who refuse to answer questions about income level. Other NES data, however, do not suggest high rates of response bias. It is therefore possible that these trends reflect increasing levels of political engagement among groups whose voice is less often heard in the political arena.

Diversity Among Elected Officials

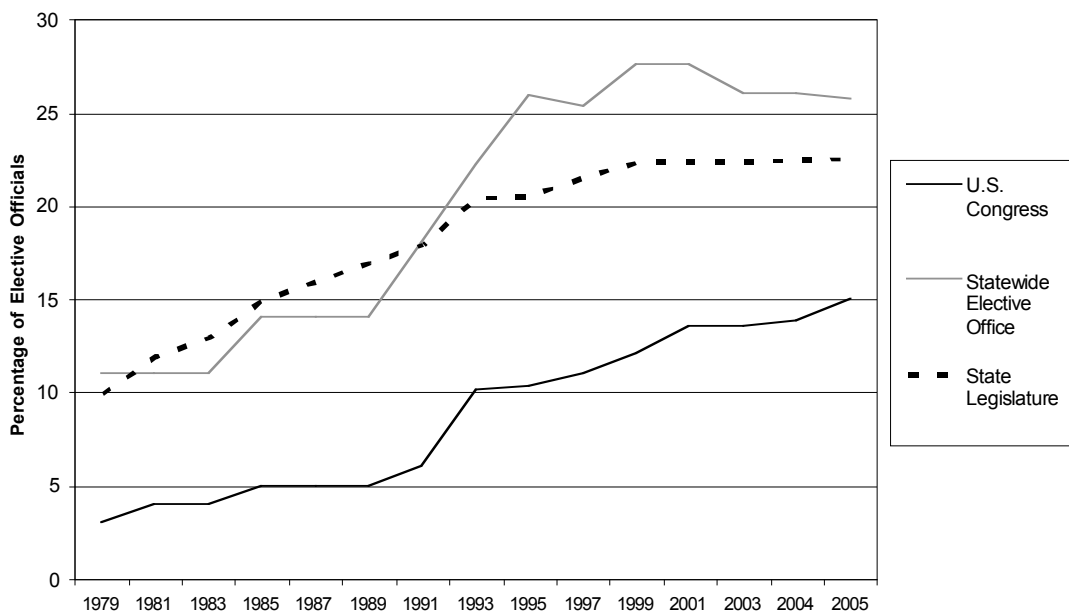
The doors to elective offices are opening for groups that historically have been underrepresented in government. Women and racial and ethnic minorities have made substantial gains in election to local, statewide, and national offices. These gains have been particularly pronounced in the last three decades, when the percentages of women and minority elected officials grew severalfold. However, these groups remain underrepresented in these positions relative to their proportions in the overall population. Moreover, the gains that women and minorities have made in attaining elective office appear to have leveled off in the last ten years, halting progress toward greater inclusiveness in government.

Over the last thirty years women have been elected to local, statewide, and national offices in substantial numbers. More recently, several gender barriers were broken in the

2004 election cycle. Today, 12 of the nation's 100 largest cities are led by women mayors, and over 16 percent of cities with populations over 30,000 are led by women. In six states--Maryland, Delaware, Arizona, Nevada, Vermont, and Washington--women hold one-third or more of seats in the state legislature.^{cxl} Women hold 15 percent of the seats in the U.S. Congress, and nationally women hold almost 26 percent of statewide elective offices and 23 percent of seats in state legislatures. But these gains still leave women underrepresented relative to the proportion in the overall population. Moreover, as displayed in Figure 4-10, women's gains in attaining elective office in the 1970s and 1980s have leveled off, and in some cases have declined slightly.^{cxli}

Figure 4-10. Percentages of Women in Elective Offices

Source: Center for American Women and Politics, 2005

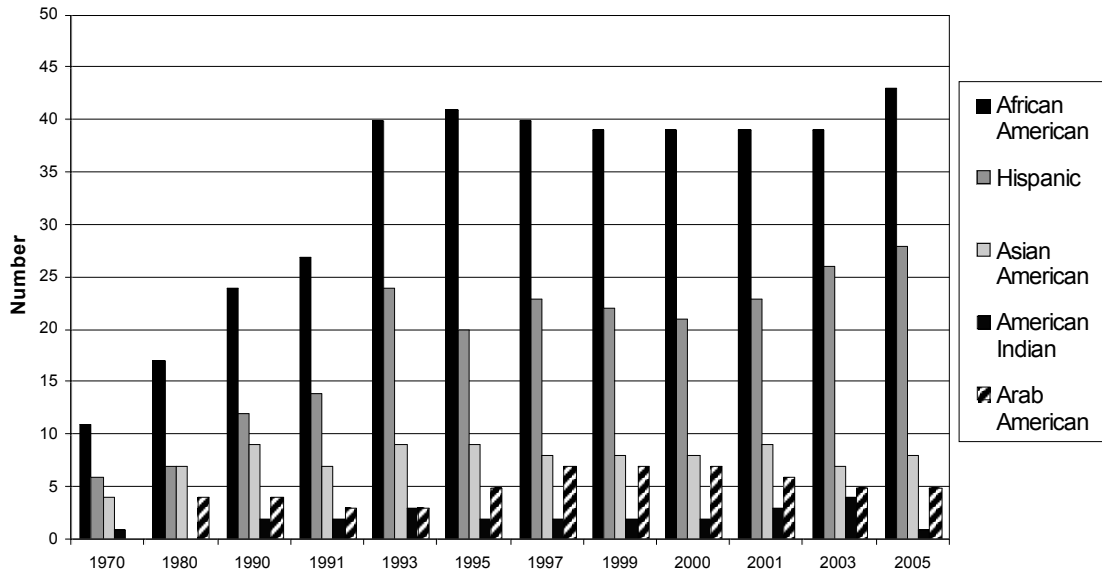


Racial and ethnic minorities have similarly made gains in attaining elective office. African Americans, for example, now hold more than 9,000 elected offices across the nation, six times the number of African-American elected officials in 1970.^{cxlii} And Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders now hold over 2,000 elected and appointed positions in 37 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, and the Mariana Islands.^{cxliii}

As with women elected officials, however, these gains appear to have leveled off since the mid-1990s. The number of racial and ethnic minorities elected to the U.S. Congress, for example, has remained relatively stagnant since 1993, following a period from 1970 to 1990 in which congressional members of color increased two- and three-fold for most groups (see Figure 4-11).^{cxliv} And the U.S. Senate has only recently regained an African-American senator, and for the first time includes two Hispanic senators in the same congressional session.

Figure 4-11. Elected Officials in Congress by Racial/Ethnic Minority Group, 1970-2005

Sources: CRS, 2005, and Arab-American Institute, 2005



DIVERSITY IN NEWS MEDIA

In the summer of 2005 most American consumers of national broadcast television news received almost daily stories of missing people, but these stories were hardly representative of the thousands of missing person cases that law enforcement confronts each year. In almost all of these stories, the missing individuals were young, white, attractive women. Similar stories involving women or children of color were rarely covered, prompting columnists such as Eugene Robinson and others to observe that “Cable television executives, producers and anchors have decided that viewers will stay glued to the set to hear endlessly about young, photogenic, missing women--but only if they're white.”^{»cxlv}

Media critics argue that such omissions are to be expected in a ratings-driven environment, where major media outlets compete to be the first to provide a narrow range of content that meets the public’s appetite. But negative consequences can arise from insufficient diversity of news content and attention to the concerns of all communities. A 2001 poll conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation, *The Washington Post*, and Harvard University found that a majority of white Americans were unaware of the wide social and economic gap that persists between African Americans and whites. “Whether out of hostility, indifference or simple lack of knowledge,” Richard Morin and Claudia Deane of *The Washington Post* wrote, “large numbers of White Americans incorrectly believe that African Americans are as well off as Whites in terms of their jobs, incomes, schooling, and health care.”^{»cxlvi}

Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Diversity in the News Media Workforce

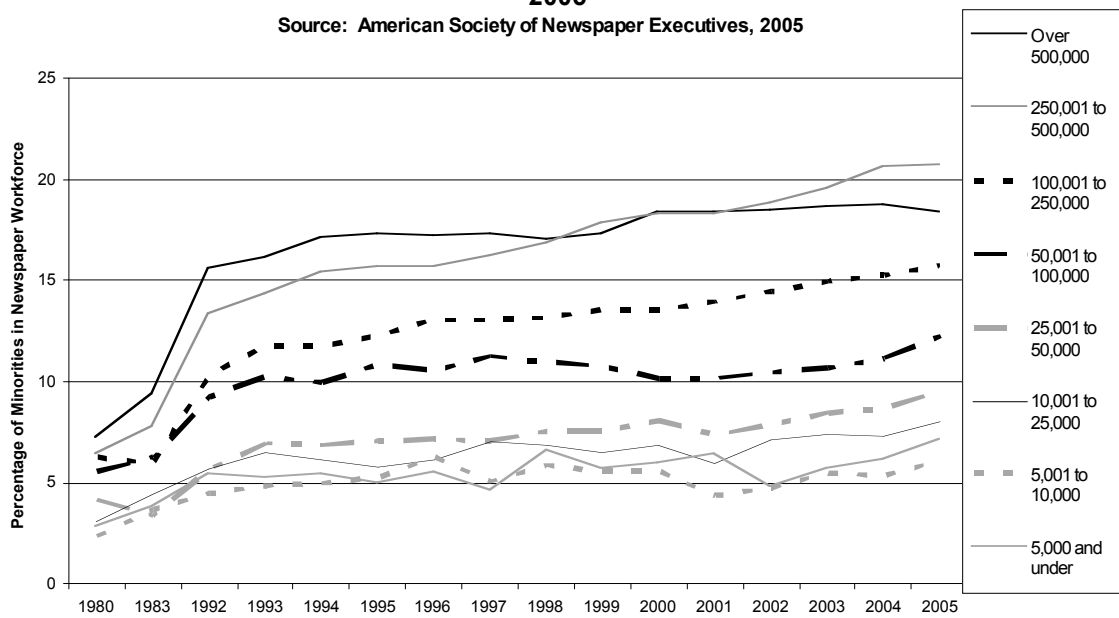
Many factors influence why and how news content is assessed, produced, and delivered. But some factors are likely to be important influences on the extent and quality of diversity in news coverage: the degree of diversity in the news media workforce, particularly at the level of editors, supervisors, and managers; attitudes of the media workforce toward the importance of covering marginalized communities and diversity issues; diversity of media ownership; and the level of commitment of news organizations to serve a public interest mission and present a representative picture of the community.^{cxlvii} Below we assess part of this equation by reviewing trends in the gender and racial/ethnic diversity of the news media workforce.

Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Diversity in the Print Newspaper Workforce. Have the newsrooms of America's print media, still a major source of news coverage and analysis, despite the growth of electronic media sources, changed over the years? Have they become more or less racially and ethnically diverse? Have women been able to overcome historical barriers to leadership roles? Since 1978 the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has supported an annual survey of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) to answer these questions. The survey allows comparisons of the racial composition of newspaper staffs to the racial composition of the communities they serve. The ASNE's annual census of newsroom employment, also conducted since 1978, tracks the number of racial and ethnic minorities and women who serve as full-time journalists in daily English-language newspapers nationwide.^{cxlviii} Of the 1,410 daily English-language newspapers surveyed by the ASNE in 2005, 924 responded to the survey--a 66 percent response rate.

Figure 4-12 displays ASNE data on the percentage of minorities in the professional workforce of newspapers in eight circulation categories.^{cxlix} Minority employment has gradually increased from 4 percent to 13 percent between 1978 and 2005, and diversity has increased across all circulation categories. Diversity is greatest among the mid-size (100,000 circulation) and largest circulation newspapers, and continues to increase modestly in most circulation categories. However, since 2000 this expansion has leveled off and is declining in the largest newspapers (above 500,000 circulation). In fact, almost three-quarters of the nation's 200 largest newspapers experienced declines in the number of minority professionals working in their newsrooms between 1990 and 2004.

Figure 4-12. Minorities as a Percentage of the Professional Workforce of Newspapers in Eight Circulation Categories, Selected Years 1980 - 2005

Source: American Society of Newspaper Executives, 2005



Of all newspapers participating in the ASNE study, only about one in eight achieved ASNE’s goal of reaching parity between the paper’s professional staff and the community it serves. Nearly two of every five newspapers reported having no minorities among their professional staffs. In ASNE’s 2005 survey this latter group included 346 newspapers. Many of these papers are very small and serve majority-white communities. But the survey revealed that several all-white newspapers serve “majority minority” communities, and forty all-white newspapers serve communities where at least 25 percent of the population is non-white. Perhaps of greater concern is the fact that more than half of the 486 dailies that did not respond to the survey had reported in a previous year’s response that they had no minorities in the newsroom. This suggests that as many as 44 percent of all newspapers (621 out of 1,410) may have had all-white newsrooms.^{cl}

Women have increased as a proportion of the newspaper workforce, but gains have been slow or stagnant in recent years. Published ASNE data do not report the proportion of women in newsrooms prior to 1999. But women have made few gains in proportion to men in newsrooms over the last seven years. Women are disproportionately more likely to serve as copy or layout editors, and are underrepresented among newspaper supervisors and photographers.

Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Diversity in Radio and TV News Broadcasting. As with print news organizations, radio and television broadcast news organizations appear to have achieved peak levels of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the 1990s. But this diversity has since leveled off and, in some cases, has declined in recent years. These

trends occur when the percentage of U.S. racial and ethnic minorities has increased sharply, far outpacing these groups' representation in the TV and radio news workforce.

The Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) sponsors an annual survey to monitor the presence of minorities and women in radio and TV news station workforces around the country. The RTNDA's 2005 survey reached all 1,624 nonsatellite television stations and a random sample of 1,509 radio stations. With more than three-quarters of television stations responding, this survey provides one of the most complete assessments of gender and racial/ethnic diversity in the radio and TV marketplace. The RTNDA's surveys began in 1990, and comparable forms of data gauging the progress of women and minorities are available beginning in the mid-1990s. This timeframe therefore only permits an assessment of trends over the last ten years.

Although the representation of women and minorities in television news hasn't changed much over the last decade, the percentage of minorities in radio news has declined since 1998, when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) suspended rules requiring that all radio, television, and cable broadcast licensees report the participation of women and minorities in the news media workforce. This change came in response to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling in *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod v. FCC*, which held that aspects of the FCC's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements were unconstitutional. In 2000 the FCC reinstated the requirement that broadcasters file annual employment reports, but the agency uses the data only to monitor employment trends and to prepare reports for Congress. It no longer uses the data to ensure that stations are making sufficient efforts to recruit minorities.^{cli}

The percentage of racial and ethnic minorities in the radio workforce declined by almost half, from 15 percent to 8 percent between 1995 and 2005. In 2005 over 92 percent of the radio news workforce was white. In contrast, minority representation in television news grew from 17 percent in 1995 to 21 percent in 2005, although the latter figure is much lower than the percentage of minorities in the U.S. population (30 percent). Minority participation rates in the radio and TV news workforce are displayed in Figures 4-13 and 4-14.^{clii}

Figure 4-13. Percentage of Broadcast TV News Workforce, by Race/Ethnicity, Selected Years 1995 - 2005

Sources: Papper, 2003, 2004, 2005, and RTNDA, 2000

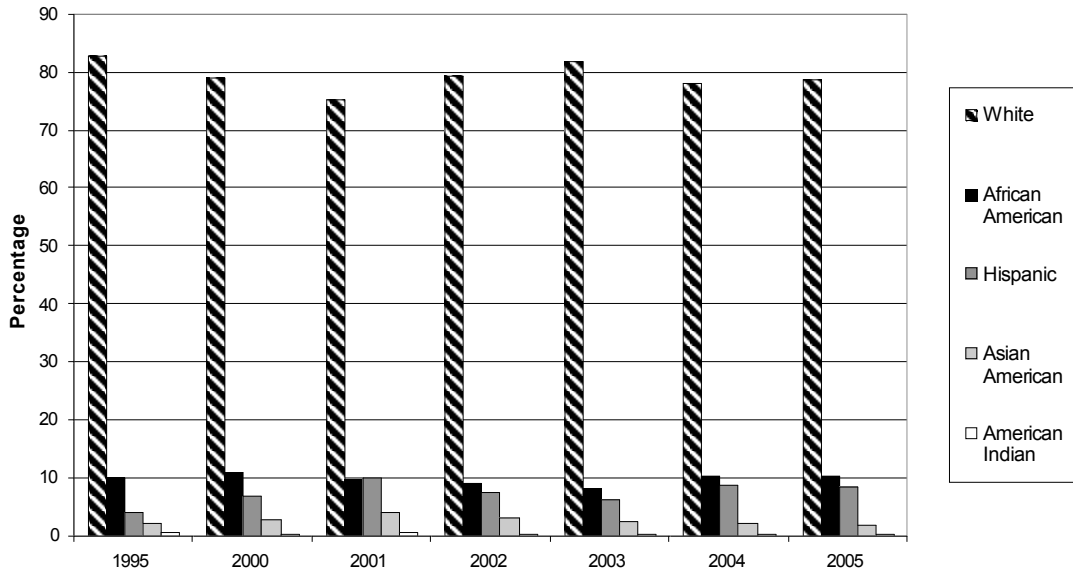
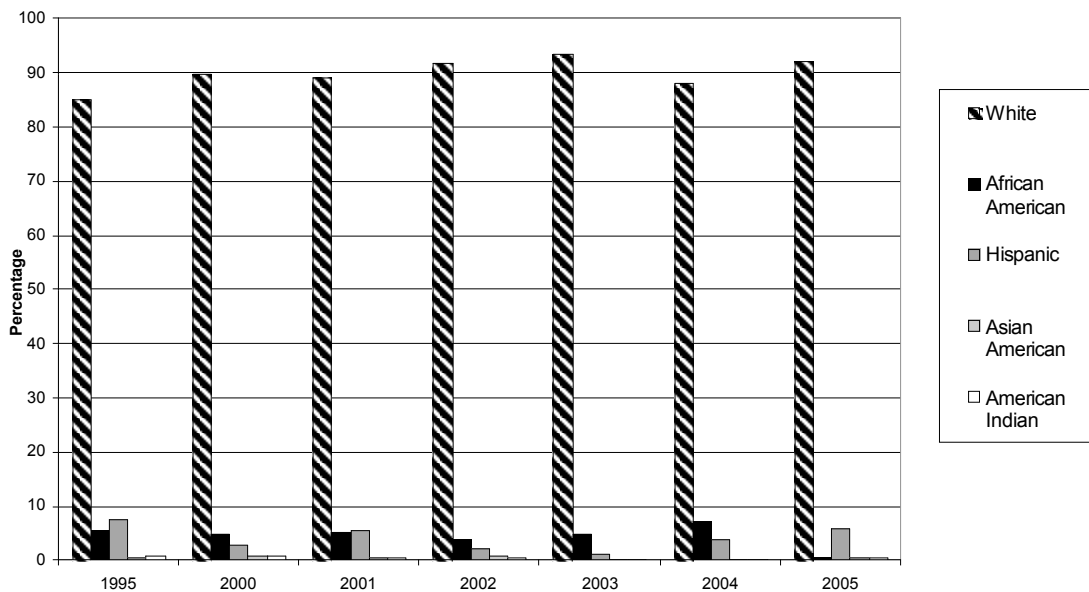


Figure 4-14. Percentage of Broadcast Radio News Workforce, by Race/Ethnicity, Selected Years 1995-2005

Sources: Papper, 2003, 2004, 2005, and RTNDA, 2000

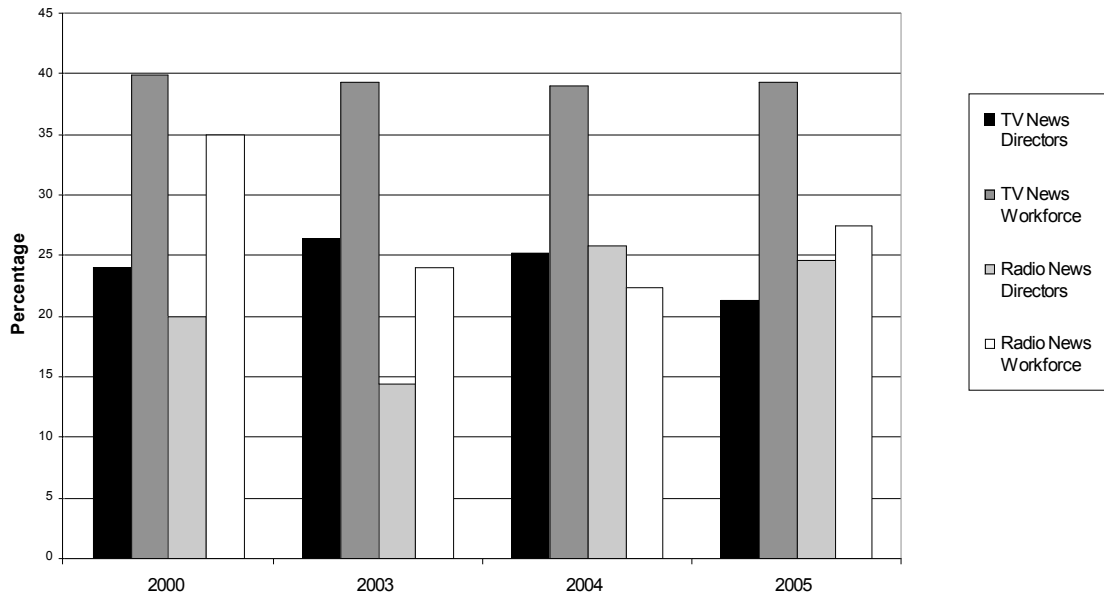


Women made inconsistent gains in the radio and TV broadcast news industry, although published RTNDA data do not track their representation before 2000. A larger percentage of women hold jobs in the television news workforce than in the radio news

industry, but the percentage of women news directors in radio news has surpassed that of television news in 2004 and 2005 (see Figure 4-15).^{cliii}

Figure 4-15. Percentage of Women in Broadcast TV and Radio News Workforce by Position, Selected Years 2000-2005

Sources: Papper, 2005, 2004, 2003 and RTNDA, 2000



Women and Minorities as Sources for and Subjects in the News

Women and minorities also face barriers to being sources for and subjects of the news media.

Women as News Sources. In a 2005 study of news media sources appearing in more than 16,000 news articles published by 45 news outlets, the Project for Excellence in Journalism found that women are grossly underrepresented as news sources. More than three-fourths of news stories contain male sources, but only one-third include a woman as a source. This disparity extends beyond primary sources--reporters are three times more likely to cite two or more males than two or more females in news stories. Newspapers tend to use women as sources to a higher degree than do other media, as just over two in five newspaper stories contain a female source. Cable network news, on the other hand, tends to overlook women as sources, as fewer than one in five cable news stories contain a female source. Not surprisingly, lifestyle stories are the only type of news story across all news media that tend to feature women as sources: Over half of these stories include female sources.^{cliv}

Research by the White House Project that was released in 2001 showed that women and people of color are almost absent as speakers on influential Sunday news shows such as *This Week* (ABC), *Face the Nation* (CBS), *Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer* (CNN), *Fox*

News Sunday (FOX), and *Meet the Press* (NBC). The research showed that “while the topics and areas of expertise of the guests may differ, one factor remains constant: the vast majority of guests are white and male.”^{clv}

Minorities as News Subjects

Minorities are still rarely covered in news media. When they are, coverage tends to be negative, subtly reinforcing racial and ethnic stereotypes. A study commissioned by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, for example, found that of 16,000 stories covered on four network news channels in 2002, only 120 (0.75 percent) were about Latinos. This represented an increase of more than 20 percent from previous years, when only 99 stories were about Latinos. But the proportion of news stories on these networks was far below the 13 percent representation of Latinos in the U.S. population. Two-thirds of the 2002 network news coverage of Latinos involved crime, terrorism, or illegal immigration, and 47 stories involved Latinos as victims or perpetrators of crime.^{clvi}

Negative media depictions of poverty are inextricably linked to notions of race. For example, although African Americans represent only 29 percent of poor Americans, 65 percent of poor Americans shown on television news in 2002 were African American.^{clvii} TV news, where most Americans get their news, reinforces negative racial stereotypes more than other news media. As media scholar Robert Entman has noted, “scientific surveys designed to measure racist attitudes suggest a connection between exposure to television news and the extent of anti-black racism in the public.”^{clviii}

DIVERSITY OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP

For many of the same reasons that diversity is important in the news media workforce, diversity of media ownership has been a national goal, as expressed in U.S. Supreme Court rulings, policy, and law. As former U.S. Department of Commerce secretary Norman Mineta has stated,

For almost a century, we have promoted diversity of independent editorial viewpoints and guarded against undue media concentration. We have labored to prevent the potential monopolization of the marketplace of ideas, to protect the needs of local communities, and to promote the free exchange of diverse viewpoints and information. We have supported policies that would increase opportunities for minorities, women, and small businesses to participate fully in the broadcast industry.^{clix}

Since 1990 the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA) has collected data on minority ownership of commercial radio and television stations. But since 2000 it has not reported these data publicly, as had been the Commerce Department’s practice. This decade-long view does not fully capture how minority ownership has fared in the forty years since federal efforts were initiated to increase ownership opportunities for minorities. But it does provide a glimpse into the challenges and opportunities for increasing media ownership diversity.

According to NTIA data, minority broadcasters owned almost 4 percent (449) of all commercial radio and television stations in 2000, compared to almost 3 percent in 1991. Minority ownership has therefore remained dismally low. Moreover, about half of the increases captured in the NTIA data are due to improvements in the methodology used to identify minority owners.^{clx}

A comparison of commercial radio and TV station ownership shows that minority ownership is more prevalent in the commercial radio industry. In 2000, 175 minority broadcasters owned 426 stations, a sharp increase from the 305 minority-owned stations in 1998. (About half of this increase, however, is due to better methods for identifying existing owners.) Only 23 television stations were owned by minorities in 2000, less than 2 percent of the nation’s 1,228 stations. Just five years earlier--prior to passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which increased incentives for consolidation of media ownership--minorities owned 38 television stations. The number of both African-American- and Hispanic-owned TV stations declined significantly between 1996 and 2000 (see Figure 4-16).^{clxi} On the other hand, ownership of radio stations increased among all racial and ethnic groups, with the sharpest increase occurring among Hispanic-owned stations (see Figure 4-17).^{clxii}

Figure 4-16. Minority-Owned TV Stations, 1990-2000
 Source: National Telecommunications and Information Agency, 2000

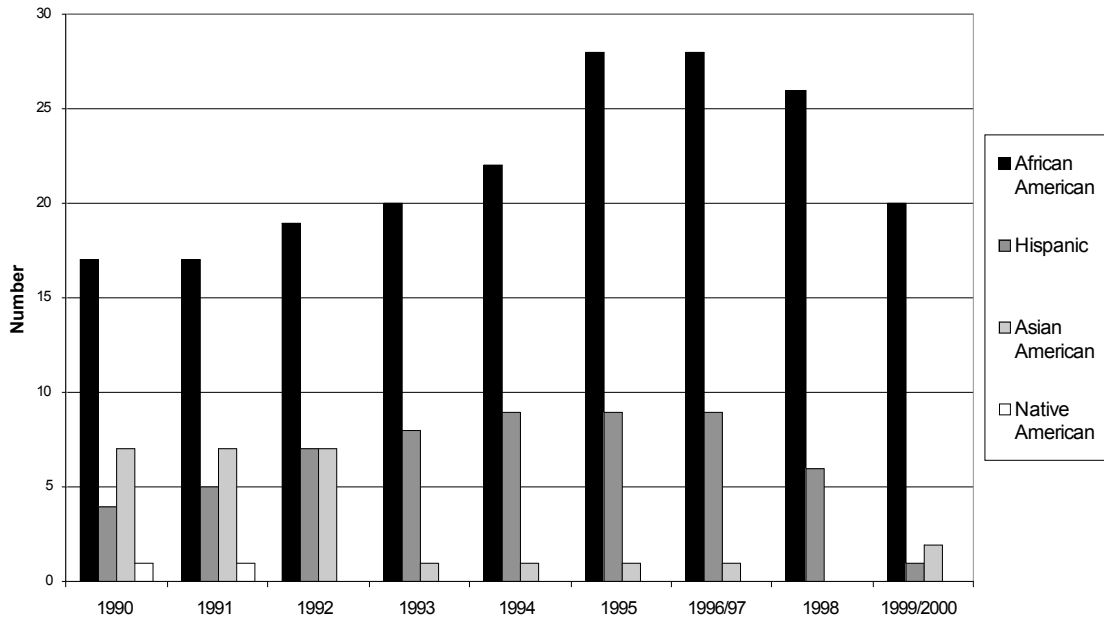
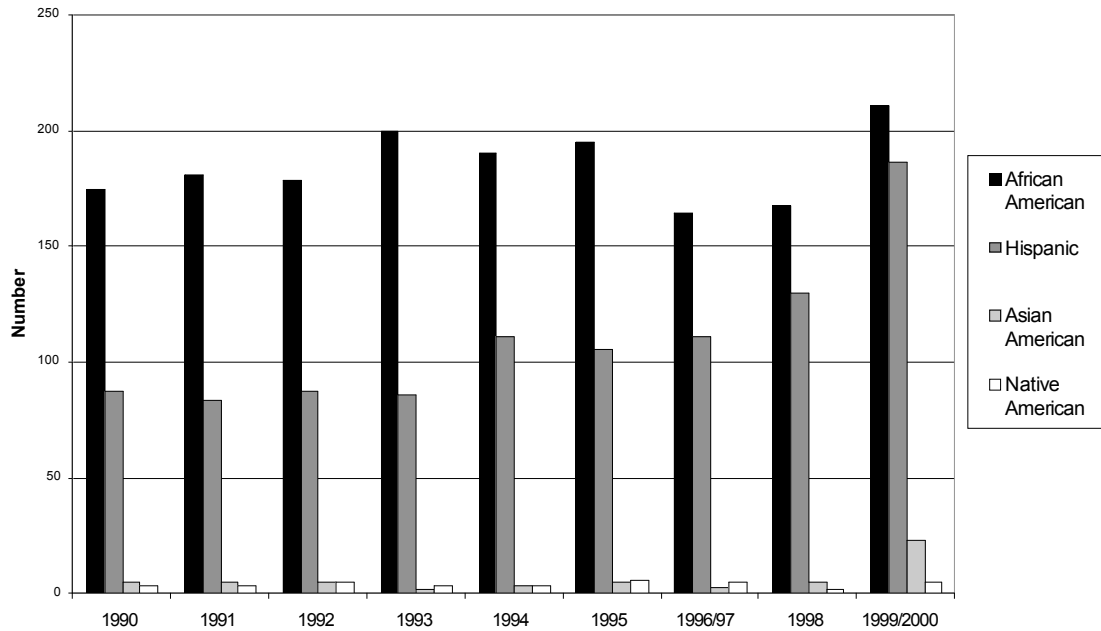


Figure 4-17. Minority-Owned Radio Station Ownership, 1990-2000
 Source: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2000



The link between minority ownership and diversity of content has been established in several studies, which find that minority-owned media tend to produce more content focused on the interests and concerns of minority communities. In 1988 the Congressional Research Service analyzed FCC media ownership data and concluded that minority-owned outlets tended to feature a higher degree of programming directed to a range of minority groups.^{clxiii} More recently, the FCC issued a series of reports that evaluated program content and ownership, concluding that minority-owned radio stations (and to a lesser extent, television stations) tend to produce content that appeals to minority interests and delivers more news and public interest programming relevant to minority communities.^{clxiv}

Although minority media ownership remains low, ethnic media outlets play a prominent role in providing news content to diverse communities. A survey conducted by New California Media (now New American Media) of nearly 2000 racial and ethnic minority households found that 45 percent of African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American, and Arab-American adults prefer ethnic media to their “mainstream” counterparts. Ethnic media are a primary news source for 29 million U.S. adults of color and reach another 22 million on a regular basis. More than half of the Hispanic adults surveyed indicated that they are primary consumers of ethnic media. And about 40 percent of African Americans and Arab Americans and one-fourth of Asian Americans and Native Americans indicated a preference for ethnic media.^{clxv}

MEDIA CONSOLIDATION

With the growth of communications technology, Americans have witnessed a dramatic expansion of media sources. Today there are more media outlets than ever before. But mass media organizations have consolidated at a rapid rate since passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a trend that has alarmed policymakers across the political spectrum.^{clxvi} At issue is whether consolidation undermines the public interest by concentrating decisions about media content in the hands of a small number of corporations. In an increasingly competitive corporate market, this concern is not trivial: Today, six corporations (General Electric, AOL Time Warner, Disney, News Corporation, Viacom, and Bertelsmann) control more than 90 percent of media content in North America.^{clxvii}

How might this trend affect the ability of diverse communities to express themselves and access independent content? Critics of media consolidation raise several concerns, arguing that consolidation limits the diversity of media opinions and voices; increases the likelihood that commercial and market forces will dictate media content; reduces local interest and public affairs content; and squeezes out smaller, independent voices, which are more likely to include minority community perspectives.^{clxviii}

The Telecommunications Act of 1996, which eased ownership rules, preceded a decline in minority-owned television stations, as noted above. In its 2000 report on minority ownership, the NTIA found that over 61 percent of minority-owned commercial radio and television stations were stand-alone operations, which are less likely to be able to compete with larger group owners. At the same time, the number of media owners declined nationally. From March 1996 to November 1997, for example, the number of radio station owners declined by almost 12 percent, while the number of radio stations grew by 2.5 percent.^{clxix} In many communities, far fewer radio licensees compete against one another, thus squeezing smaller competitors. The NTIA found that minority-owned stations were less likely to be part of a duopoly (two or more stations of the same type in the same market), and were less likely to participate in a local market agreement. The agency concluded that “consolidation still threatens the survival of most minority owners.”^{clxx}

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

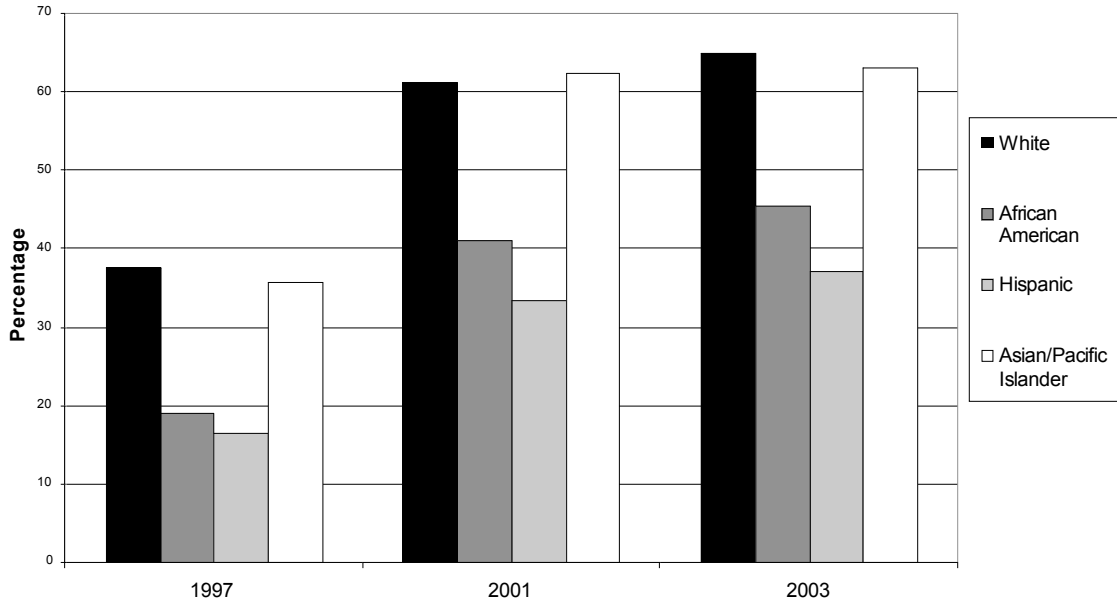
The gap in different demographic groups’ access to new communications technology such as broadband high-speed Internet, dubbed the “digital divide,” has drawn significant national attention. Concerns surround the fact that some new technologies are also public resources that are vital for democracy and free expression, full participation in the nation’s growing electronic and high-tech economy, and access to vital educational and other information resources.^{clxxi}

Data on access to and use of new technology dates back only a decade, therefore limiting our ability to analyze trends. But these data show that lower income households, racial and ethnic minorities, and households in rural areas are less likely to access the Internet--

at home, work, school, or public library. For African Americans and Latinos, this gap was larger when Internet technologies began to explode in the mid-1990s, and it has narrowed slightly (see Figure 4-18).^{clxxii}

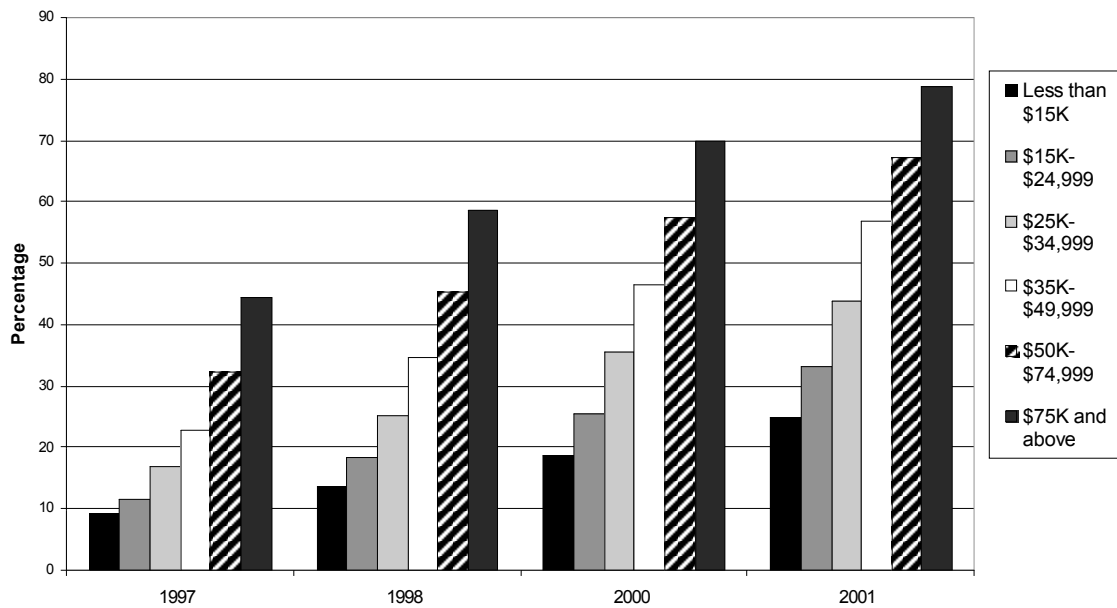
Figure 4-18. Internet Use from Any Location by Race/Ethnicity, 1997, 2001, 2003

Source: National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2000 and 2004



Digital gaps among income groups remain large but have decreased slightly. Households earning less than \$15,000, for example, were more than four times less likely than those earning \$75,000 or more to have Internet access at home in 1997. By 2001 this gap closed to the point where households earning less than \$15,000 (in adjusted dollars) were slightly more than three times less likely to have Internet access at home (see Figure 4-19).^{clxxiii}

Figure 4-19. U.S. Households with Internet Access by Income
 Source: National Telecommunications and Information Agency, 2000 and 2004



HOW CAN THE NATION EXPAND VOICE?

This analysis suggests that many factors influence the diversity of voices that participate in the national discourse. Deregulation and its sequel, media consolidation, threaten to absorb or push smaller, independent media stations out of major markets. Ownership of major media outlets is increasingly in the hands of a small number of international communications corporations. Broadband Internet will be vital to future educational and commercial applications, yet many marginalized communities lack access, and racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic divides in access persist. Moreover, political participation such as voting and contributing time and money to campaigns remains low among Americans overall. Racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic divides contribute to this low rate of political involvement.

Several opportunity strategies hold promise for enhancing Americans' voice in the public discourse and in public decisionmaking.

Electoral and Political Participation

Ensuring and expanding political participation among diverse groups remains a highly partisan and controversial issue. However controversial, all sides agree that the nation should strive toward greater engagement in the political process.

Equal access to the vote, however, continues to be impeded by problems caused by geographic and language barriers, faulty voting equipment and infrastructure,

inadequately trained poll workers, state laws disenfranchising ex-felons, and other state and federal policies that disproportionately limit voting among marginalized groups. In the wake of the disputed 2000 election, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights identified 18 barriers to electoral participation that disproportionately affect communities of color and other marginalized groups. Some of the barriers identified by the commission include:

- Considerable state and local variability in the quality of voting equipment, voter identity verification standards, sample ballots, and use of absentee ballots;
- Lax or non-existent enforcement of federal voting rights laws;
- Early registration deadlines;
- Restrictive hours of polling stations for voting; and,
- Inaccessible and/or overburdened polling stations.^{clxxiv}

These structural problems, coupled with a growing sentiment among the general public that government is beholden to narrow, well-heeled interests at the expense of grassroots voices, contribute to worsening problems of voice and expression in the nation overall and for disenfranchised groups.

Voting infrastructure must be improved by universally employing new technologies such as direct record electronic voting systems, which offer more accurate vote counts, ballot screens in multiple languages, and low error rates. Mechanisms for public accountability such as printed voter ballots should be incorporated into these systems.^{clxxv} Voter education programs can help familiarize new voters with registration and voting processes. Similarly, training poll workers and recruiting multilingual poll workers can improve local jurisdiction compliance with federal and state voting rights laws, particularly language assistance provisions.^{clxxvi}

Barriers to voting must be addressed by establishing minimum federal standards for voting procedures and equipment; providing federal funds to help local jurisdictions improve training, equipment, and polling stations; improving voting rights laws enforcement and placing jurisdiction for review of complaints within the U.S. Department of Justice; easing voter registration requirements; establishing uniform nationwide voting hours; creating federal guidelines for verifying voter identity; restoring voting rights of people who have previously served time in prison; and assisting new Americans in obtaining the right to vote.^{clxxvii}

Finally, vigorous enforcement of the Voting Rights Act and full implementation of the Help America Vote Act are essential to ensuring equal access to electoral participation.

Diverse Media Ownership

Today's radio and television stations are less likely to be locally owned and operated than at any previous time in the modern communications age. Large multinational corporations have control over the vast majority of media content. Until recently the federal government exercised oversight of the communications and broadcast media

industries to ensure that they served the public interest. But deregulation and consolidation of several large media and telecommunications industries have resulted in diminished opportunity for independent and minority-owned media to gain a foothold.

In 1995 Congress eliminated the FCC Minority Tax Certificate program, which provided tax incentives to encourage minority ownership of broadcast and cable properties. During the program's fifteen years of operation, more than 360 media outlets were acquired by minority operations--including 288 radio stations, 43 TV stations, and 31 cable systems. Only 40 of 8,500 broadcast stations were owned by minorities prior to the policy's enactment.^{clxxviii}

Encouraging diverse ownership is an important public interest goal that is reflected in law, policy, and judicial rulings. The U.S. Supreme Court's 2003 decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, upholding the consideration of racial diversity in admission at the University of Michigan Law School, reaffirmed that carefully crafted consideration of race and gender is permissible in pursuing the compelling government interest in diversity. A new federal tax incentive program is needed that provides modest incentives for sellers of communications outlets, to defer capital gains taxes when franchises are sold to minority investors. As with the former tax certificate program, such a policy provides an unobtrusive, revenue-neutral means of helping minority investors compete in a market that is tilted against them because of rising station prices and a lack of access to capital.^{clxxix} Other policies such as expanding the FCC's Distress Sale Policy, which allows broadcasters to sell properties to minority investors at reduced rates, must be explored.^{clxxx} Such policies are a means of balancing private market interests with those of the communities that own a share of the public infrastructure with which broadcasters are entrusted. Moreover, the FCC should resume public reporting of data on minority and women-owned broadcast and cable properties. This practice, which was discontinued in 2001 after ten years of data collection and reporting, is important to assess whether diverse viewpoints are adequately represented, and whether the interests of diverse communities are being met.

Digital Divide

The explosion of new communications technologies has coincided with a dramatic policy shift in Washington, one that assumes that market forces will increase access to digital technology by fostering competition that will reduce costs and improve quality. New policies adopted by the FCC reflect this philosophy, yet connectivity costs remain high and many Americans continue to lack access to digital technology, particularly broadband. Penetration of Internet access into U.S. households has stagnated, and the United States has fallen behind internationally in broadband adaptation.^{clxxxii} Broadband is not simply a luxury that should be available to those who can afford it. It is a tool with "special transformative power" that is increasingly important for participation in new economic and educational opportunities that will become less available via narrowband connections.^{clxxxii} Broadband and other advanced technologies should be classified as telecommunications services that provide essential functions. They therefore should be subject to a universal service policy that encourages true competition and extends access

as broadly as possible. Federal programs such as the Technology Opportunities Program and the Community Technology Centers Program have provided innovative community-based technology and infrastructure support to improve nonprofits' use of telecommunications and digital network technologies. These programs have also promoted model educational technology programs, and have had a special focus on inner city and rural underserved areas. But they have also been slated for elimination in federal budgets.^{clxxxiii}

Media Democracy

All of the trends noted above--the growing rate of media consolidation, increasing privatization of public communications resources, and dampening of federal incentives to encourage diverse media ownership--threaten to limit public voice. They therefore require greater government vigilance in order to protect the public interest and stimulate greater civic and democratic uses of media and communications technology.

Media democracy advocates have advanced ideas such as electronic or "dot-commons" policies, which would protect public interest programming in the same way that the non-profit sector is promoted through tax-exempt status and charitable contributions. These policies are built on the principle that the civic sector should flourish online, just as civic interests are protected in other electronic media.

Finally, new technologies to use the electromagnetic spectrum portend an explosion of new applications such as "third generation" wireless telephone services, and therefore growth in new commercial enterprises. These technologies will use the public airways and therefore should be managed so that the public interest is protected. Some policy organizations have called for a portion of the proceeds from spectrum auctions to be devoted to public interest use. As digital technology increases the application and use of the spectrum, some portion of use should be set aside for open, community-access communications systems or for other civic and public interest uses.^{clxxxiv}

Chapter 5 REDEMPTION

Over the last two decades, the scope of the criminal justice system has been expanded as a means of social control. But this expansion has had a dampening effect on opportunity. Opportunity is threatened by high rates of incarceration and the disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on low-income communities of color. Policies that limit access to educational resources, provide inadequate resources to address prisoners' health problems, and deny the vote and access to public benefits, also hurt opportunity--often well after offenders have paid their debts to society. Measures of these problems demonstrate that opportunity for redemption is in crisis and may be more threatened than any other dimension of opportunity (major findings of this chapter are summarized in Box 5).

Box 5: Has the Nation Made Gains in Redemption?

Major Gains in Redemption

- None

Areas of Limited, Mixed or No Progress

- While multi-year data are largely unavailable, a large percentage of inmates have untreated substance abuse or mental health problems.

Areas Where Redemption Has Declined

- The number of incarcerated Americans has increased dramatically since 1980, despite the fact that crime rates began declining in the 1970s and 1980s. More than 2.1 million people incarcerated in the United States, a rate of incarceration far higher than that of any other nation, and unprecedented in U.S. history.
- Mass incarceration has had disproportionate effects on communities of color. At the current rate, about 1 in 3 African-American males, 1 in 6 Hispanic males, and 1 in 17 white males born in 2001 will spend time in prison at some point in their lifetimes--rates much higher than in 1991.
- The rate of incarcerated women has increased more than twelvefold since 1970.
- A growing number of children are being adjudicated in adult courts and sentenced to prison terms, despite the fact that the incidence of serious and violent crimes by youth is decreasing. The number of juvenile offenders (under age 18) in state prisons more than doubled between 1985 and 1997, from 3,400 to 7,400.
- The number of children with a parent in state or federal prison increased from 936,500 in 1991 to 1.5 million in 1997, the last year that prisoners were surveyed by the federal government. In 1997 an estimated 336,300 children were directly affected by the imprisonment of a parent who lived with them.

People grow and change over time in response to their circumstances, and those who falter or break societal rules warrant the chance for rehabilitation and a new start. Redemption is an element of opportunity that provides the conditions that allow people to rebuild their lives and to take full responsibility for their actions after mistakes or misfortune. Redemptive policies use rehabilitative approaches that are appropriate and proportionate to a person's conduct, culpability, and circumstances. Those who design these policies recognize that rehabilitation can be a rocky road that requires patience and

compassion as well as swift and sure intervention. Redemptive policies reject the principle of retribution, which delivers punishment as revenge.

Accordingly, redemptive policies treat problems of drug addiction and mental illness through public health responses designed to help people conquer these problems. Designers of redemptive policies view incarceration as an opportunity-ending event that is a last resort, and use restorative approaches that address the harms caused by misconduct. They recognize that the best way to protect the public from crime and violence is by addressing their causes and by reducing recidivism by building the social and economic skills of people who have resorted to crime. They consider the impact of crime and punishment on individuals, families, and communities. And they realize that denying the fundamental rights to vote, to housing, and to education is contrary to the goal of a return to productive citizenship.

These ideals are reflected in human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that, “The penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation.”^{clxxxv} Many states have made these ideals part of their constitutions. Illinois’s constitution for example, provides that “All penalties shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship.”^{clxxxvi}

The idea of redemption is especially powerful when it comes to children, who have virtually unlimited potential to develop and change with age and experience, and who are by nature less responsible for their circumstances. A century ago the United States developed a separate juvenile justice system that aimed to reform children’s behavior, shield them from adults convicted of crimes, and protect their ability to enter adulthood with a clean record and a fresh start.

Similarly, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that “Juvenile offenders shall be segregated from adults and be accorded treatment appropriate to their age and legal status.” The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that “the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time,” and that “every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of their age.”^{clxxxvii}

For the better part of the last century, criminal justice policies of most states and the federal government were guided by rehabilitative philosophies. Today, many criminal justice policies and practices have closed the door to opportunity. Moreover, the stigma of incarceration damages employment prospects and increases the likelihood of being discriminated against when seeking a job. Stigma and discrimination also affect opportunity prospects for the children of the incarcerated, more than 300,000 of whom are directly affected by the imprisonment of a parent. Finally, whole communities suffer opportunity losses when large segments of residents are involved in the criminal justice system. High levels of incarceration render families less stable; siphon off resources that

are needed for social, health, and education programs; and keep streets unsafe as offenders cycle in and out of prisons with few skills or resources to right their course.^{clxxxviii}

We measure redemption here by national progress in adopting and expanding criminal justice policies that provide opportunity for those in the criminal justice system who can contribute positively to society. Indicators of redemption are based on measures of incarceration trends over time, federal treatment of immigration offenses, mental health and substance abuse testing and treatment, drug offenses over time, and juvenile justice policies.

About the Data in this Chapter

For this chapter we use data and analyses published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the research branch of the Department of Justice. The Bureau publishes regular reports on a wide range of criminal justice measures and is the preeminent resource for criminal justice data. As with other federal sources, the BJS reports suffer from inadequacies in racial and ethnic data, as well as other data limitations. Few reports include racial or ethnic groups other than whites, African Americans, and Hispanics, and data are often unavailable for Hispanics earlier than 1990. Data on female prisoners is lacking for many measures. Finally, some of the time trends presented here are based on only a few years of data. Trends are therefore interpreted with caution, as even dramatic changes in data in a short time may reflect only a fleeting trend.

INCARCERATION

The United States has witnessed a dramatic rise in the rate and number of people incarcerated in federal, state, and local prisons. There are currently more than 2.1 million people incarcerated in the United States, a rate of incarceration far higher than that of any other nation, and unprecedented in U.S. history.^{clxxxix} This increase began in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s, and has leveled slightly within the last ten years (see Figures 5-1 and 5-2).^{cx} This increase was more dramatic among women than men.^{cxci} The rate of incarceration of women increased more than twelvefold between 1970 and 2003.^{cxcii} The unprecedented growth in the nation's incarcerated population has occurred despite a significant decline in rates of crime and violence.

Figure 5-1. Rate of Sentenced Male Prisoners Under Jurisdiction of State and Federal Correctional Authorities, 1960-2003

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003

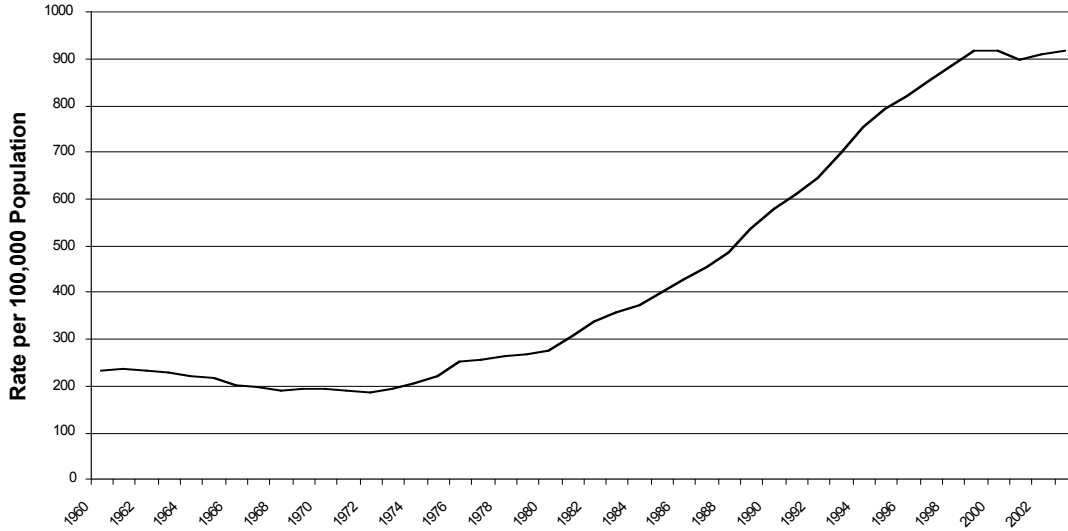
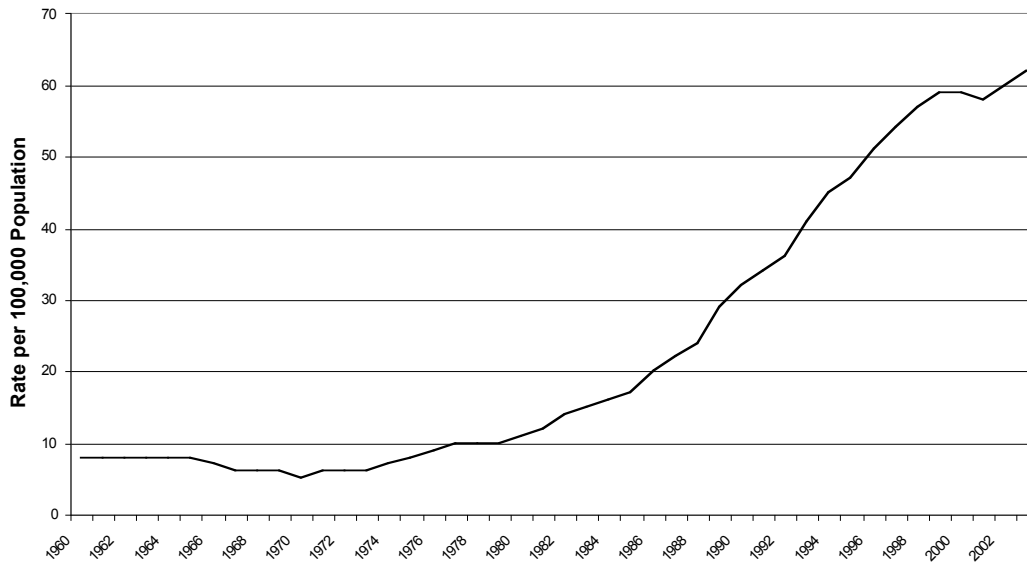


Figure 5-2. Rate of Sentenced Female Prisoners Under Jurisdiction of State and Federal Correctional Authorities, 1960-2003

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003



In mid-2004, 2.13 million people were incarcerated. Of these, more than 1.4 million were in state or federal prisons and more than 713,000 people were in local jails.^{cxci} In

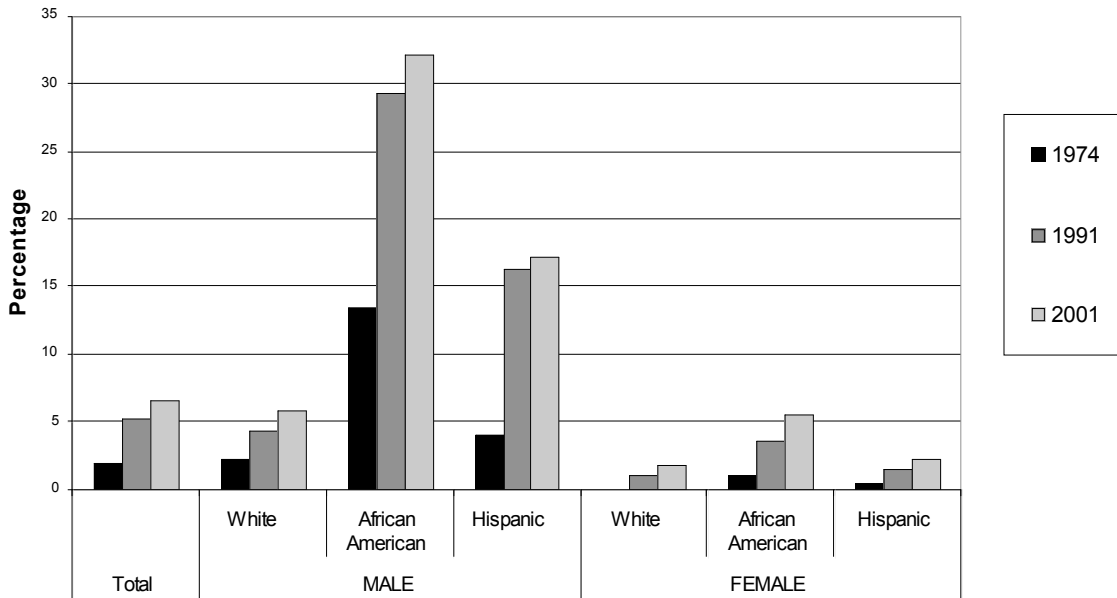
2003 more than 5.6 million U.S. adults had ever been incarcerated, about 1 in every 37 U.S. adult residents.^{cxci}

If this rate of incarceration persists, an estimated 6.6 percent of all babies born in the United States in 2001 will go to prison at some point in their lives, an increase from a 5 percent likelihood in 1991 and a 2 percent likelihood in 1974.^{cxci}

Based on current trends, about 1 in 3 African-American males, 1 in 6 Hispanic males, and 1 in 17 white males born in 2001 will spend time in prison at some point in their lifetimes (see Figure 5-3).^{cxci}

Figure 5-3. Lifetime Likelihood of Going to Prison by Race, Ethnicity and Gender, 1974, 1991, and 2001

Source: Bonczar, 2003



About two-thirds of the 3.8 million increase in people incarcerated between 1974 and 2001 is due to an increase in the rate of first incarceration.

In 1997 over three-quarters of nonviolent offenders about to be released from state prisons were convicted of a nonviolent offense, defined as property, drug, and public order offenses that do not involve threats or actual harm to a victim.^{cxci}

The number of children with a parent in state or federal prison increased from 936,500 in 1991 to 1.5 million in 1997, the last year that prisoners were surveyed by the federal government.^{cxci} Slightly less than half of state and federal prisoners reported living with their children prior to incarceration. As a result, in 1997 an estimated 336,300 children were directly affected by the imprisonment of a parent who lived with them.^{cxci}

A Bureau of Justice Statistics survey of state prisoners in 1997 found that over 40 percent of nonviolent offenders about to be discharged from state prison had less than a high school degree, and only 26 percent of them had earned a G.E.D.

IMMIGRATION OFFENSES

Changes in federal law and practice regarding immigration, such as severe penalties for minor crimes because of past immigration violations, also reduce opportunities for redemption. Changes in federal sentencing policies in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, stiffened immigration violation penalties, expanded the types of crimes that are considered aggravated felonies, and increased the likelihood of sentencing offenders to prison. These policies also increased enforcement and prosecutions.

As a result, between 1985 and 2000 the number of immigration offenders serving federal prison sentences increased almost ninefold, from 1,600 to 13,700 (see Figure 5-4).^{cc} The average time served by these prisoners increased from 4 months in 1985 to 21 months in 2000 (Figure 5-5), despite the fact that these immigration violators were not likely to be repeat offenders. Only 13 percent of immigration violators were returned to federal prison within three years of their release.^{cci}

Figure 5-4. Number of Immigration Offenders Serving Time in Federal Prisons, 1985-2000

Source: Scalia and Lintras, 2002

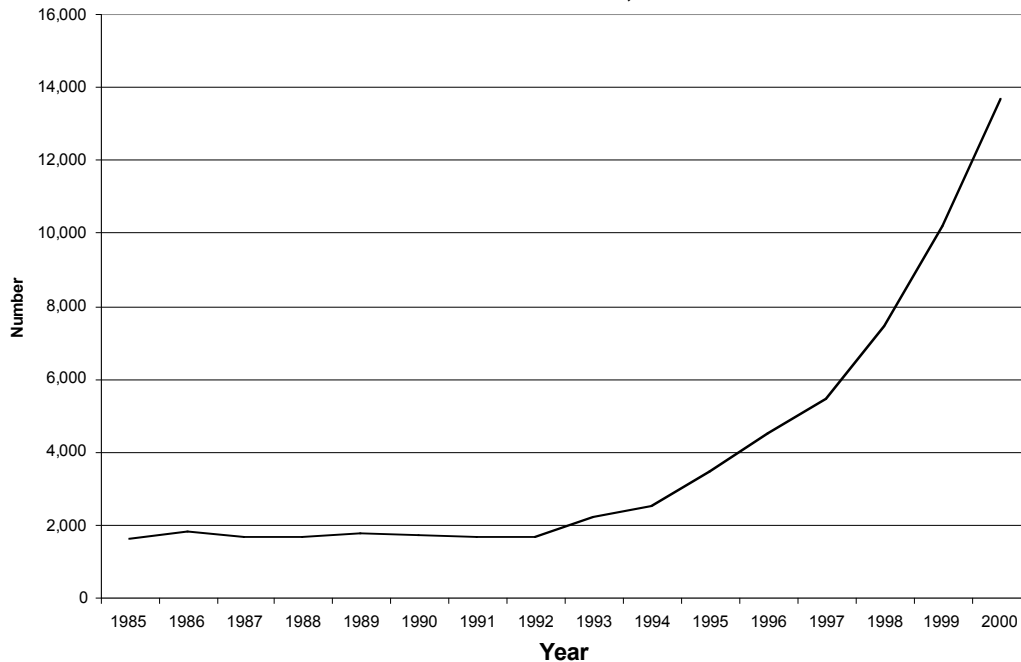
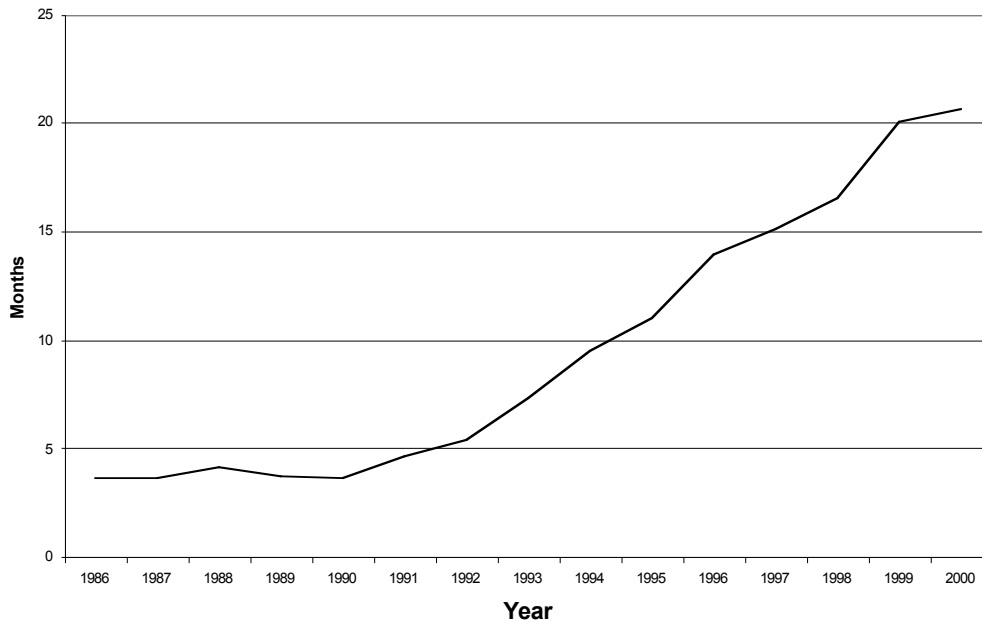


Figure 5-5. Average Time to be Served by Immigration Offenders Entering Federal Prisons, 1986-2000

Source: Scalia and Lintras, 2002



DRUG TREATMENT FOR SUBSTANCE-ABUSING PRISONERS

Rates of substance abuse among incarcerated populations are so high that the U.S. criminal justice system is arguably the nation's largest portal for people with mental illness and substance abuse problems.

The BJS's 1997 survey found that over 80 percent of state and 70 percent of federal prisoners had used drugs in the past, and that 57 percent used drugs in the month before their conviction.^{ccii} Nearly two-thirds of nonviolent offenders about to be discharged used illegal drugs in the month prior to committing the crime for which they were jailed, and about 40 percent reported using drugs at the time that they committed the offense.^{cciii}

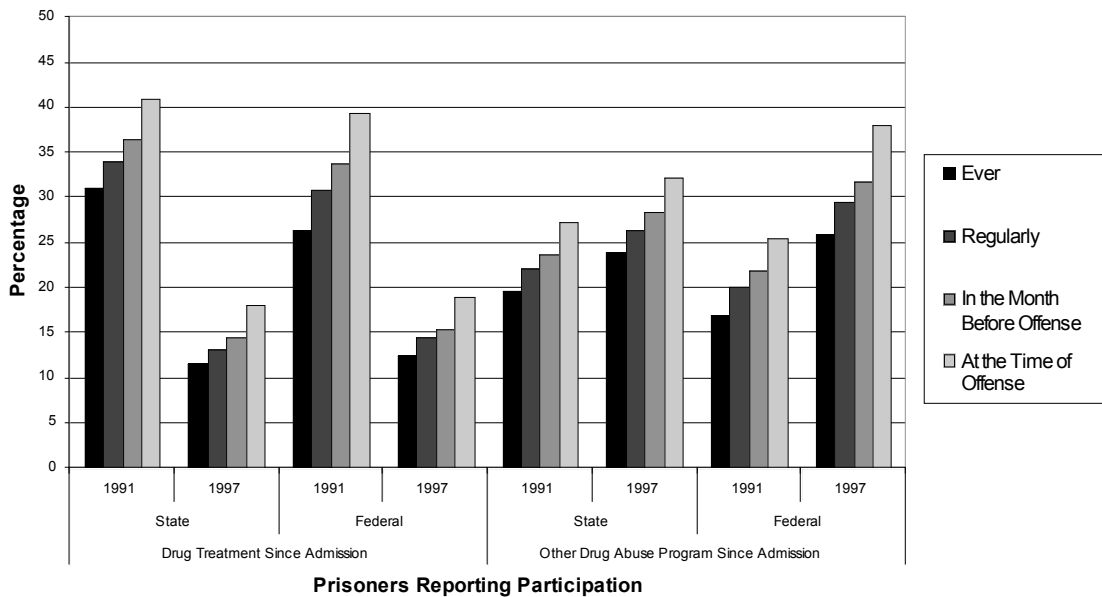
A 1998 BJS survey found that although 71 percent of local jails have policies to control drug use in their facilities, smaller jails (those with fewer than 50 inmates) were 10 percent less likely to test for substance abuse among inmates or staff. Only about half of inmates in local jails were in facilities that tested for drug use.^{cciv} Of these jails, over two-thirds (69 percent) found at least one positive test. Only 5 percent of local jails, however, have a policy to test all inmates at admission.^{ccv}

The vast majority (73 percent) of local jails surveyed by the BJS in 1998 offered some type of substance abuse treatment program, but as with testing policies, smaller jails were less likely (63 percent) to offer substance abuse treatment. And far fewer jails (43 percent) provided substance abuse treatment services such as detoxification, a residential treatment facility, or professional counseling. A larger share of jails (68 percent) offered

other programs such as self-help groups or education and awareness programs. Three in ten jails offered only this latter category of programs.^{ccvi}

Despite the reported prevalence of substance abuse programs, these programs often fail to reach inmates who need them most. The BJS's 1997 survey revealed that only about one-third of state prisoners and about one-quarter of federal prisoners had participated in drug or alcohol treatment since admission.^{ccvii} Moreover, the availability of substance abuse treatment for the incarcerated--detoxification, professional counseling, or residential treatment--is declining. The percentage of inmates in state and federal prisons who received treatment for a substance abuse problem declined between 1991 and 1997, from 25 percent of state and 16 percent of federal prisoners to less than 10 percent of both state and federal prisoners. In contrast, a larger share of prisoners (20 percent of both state and federal inmates) with substance abuse problems received other kinds of drug abuse programs such as self-help groups, peer counseling, and education awareness. This percentage increased by 5 percent since 1991. Prisoners who abuse substances at the time of their offense were generally more likely to receive services than inmates with lower levels of substance abuse involvement (see Figure 5-6).^{ccviii}

Figure 5-6. Prisoners with History of Drug Use Who Reported Participating in Drug Treatment, by Levels of Prior Use, 1991 and 1997
Source: Mumola, 1999



WOMEN

Women involved in the criminal justice system often face different circumstances and have different needs than those of male offenders. Forty-four percent of women under correctional authority report that they have been physically or sexually assaulted at some time in their lives.^{ccix} Nearly seven in ten (69 percent) of those reporting assaults say it

occurred before age 18. About half of women in state prisons had been using drugs or alcohol at the time they committed the offense for which they were incarcerated. About seven in ten women involved in the criminal justice system have minor children. And in 1997 an estimated 2,200 women in state prisons, about 3.5 percent of the female inmate population, were HIV-positive.

As with men, the criminal justice system responds to women offenders more harshly than it did three decades ago. For example, despite the fact that the rates of women convicted of homicide are at their lowest levels since 1976, the number of women sentenced to death has increased more than fourfold since 1980.^{ccx}

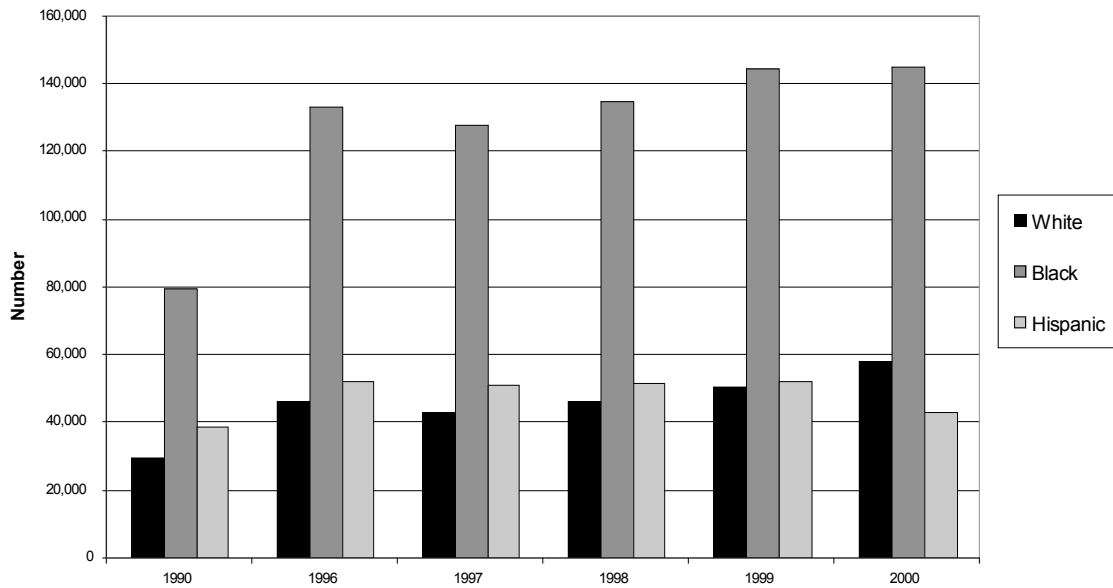
DRUG OFFENSES

State and federal laws enacted from the 1970s to the 1990s in response to drug trafficking stiffened sentences and increased prosecution for drug offenses. But critics have charged that these laws have merely increased the rate of incarceration of low-level drug dealers and nonviolent drug offenders. Moreover, these laws (and their enforcement) have had a disproportionate racial impact.

This disproportionate impact can be seen in the numbers of individuals incarcerated for drug crimes. Although African Americans and whites use illegal substances at about the same rates, African Americans are more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses. Between 1990 and 2000 the number of African Americans incarcerated in state prisons for drug offenses increased by over 80 percent to 145,000, a number that is 2.5 times higher than that for whites and 3.4 times higher than that for Hispanics (see Figure 5-7).^{ccxi}

Figure 5-7. Drug Offenders in State Prisons by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years 1990 - 2000

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004.



JUVENILES

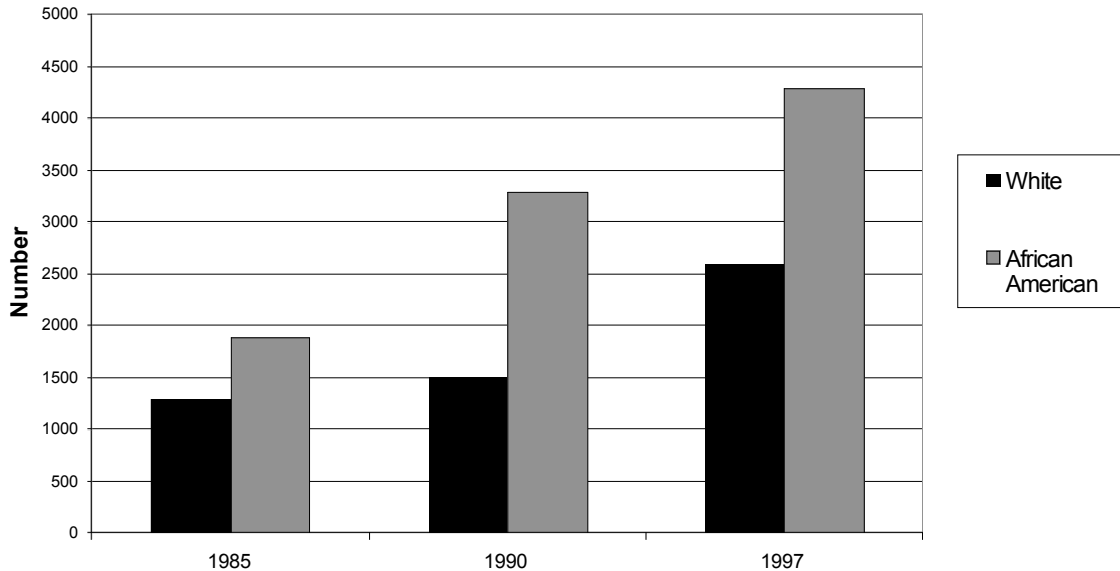
Involvement with the juvenile justice system can be a pivotal point in the life trajectory for many youth. For some, it represents an opportunity to correct course, to take advantage of services that help restore them to productive society. For others, however, brushes with the juvenile justice system can be an opportunity-ending event.

Since the 1980s juvenile justice policies nationwide have increasingly emphasized punitive measures at the expense of rehabilitative efforts. All states currently have provisions allowing waiver of juvenile offenders to adult courts, depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the offense. In three states, juvenile offenders over age 16 are processed in adult courts, and in ten states juveniles over age 17 are handled in adult courts. The number of juvenile offenders in state prisons more than doubled between 1985 and 1997, from 3,400 to 7,400.^{ccxii} This dramatic increase occurred despite the fact that the juvenile arrest rate for violent offenses declined by 23 percent from 1994 to 1997.^{ccxiii} And relative to the number of juvenile arrests, the likelihood that offenders under age 18 would be incarcerated in state prisons increased between 1986 and 1997.^{ccxiv}

The increase in the number of African-American youths in state prisons has been more dramatic than it has been for white youths. Between 1985 and 1997, for example, the number of African-American juveniles incarcerated in state prisons increased by 226 percent, while the number of white juveniles in state prisons doubled. And in 1985 only 20 white male juveniles and 30 African-American male juveniles were incarcerated in state prisons for drug offenses. By 1997 the number of African-American juveniles

admitted to state prisons for the same offenses increased twentyfold to 640, outnumbering white male juveniles by more than 5 to 1 (see Figure 5-8).^{ccxv}

Figure 5-8. Number of Males Under 18 Admitted to State Prison by Race, 1985-1997
Source: Strom, 2000



DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND DENIAL OF PUBLIC BENEFITS

Another outgrowth of the “war on drugs” and other public policies that purport to “get tough” on offenders has been the trend toward denial of public benefits and voting rights for some types of offenses. Despite high levels of need for social services that help ex-drug offenders to reintegrate into their communities, several state and federal policies enacted in recent years deny a range of public services that reduce recidivism. As Gwen Rubinstein and Debbie Mukamal note:

Low-income individuals affected by addiction and criminal records . . . need access to public benefits—including welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, and public housing—as they learn to live drug-free in the community. Without these temporary supports, it is unrealistic to expect full recovery without relapse and recidivism. Yet, laws enacted in recent years counterproductively act as barriers to these benefits, virtually (and sadly) ensuring failure for thousands of Americans affected by addiction.^{ccxvi}

In 1996 Congress passed (and President Clinton signed into law) the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which, among other provisions, imposed a lifetime ban on eligibility for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Food Stamps for those convicted of drug use, possession, and distribution. States may opt out of the provision or modify it, but the ban is otherwise permanent and

applies regardless of an ex-offender's status, such as pregnancy or participation in drug treatment. As of 2001, 22 states have retained the ban, and another 20 enforce the ban but have narrowed its scope. While the exact number of ex-offenders affected by this ban is unclear, as many as 15 percent of women in drug treatment programs in a recent survey were found to have a drug felony conviction that may result in the denial of benefits needed to complete treatment. And many treatment programs that relied on funding from the federal benefits of their clients have reported drops in revenue as a result of losses of eligibility.^{ccxvii}

Similarly, many states have limited or severely curtailed voting privileges among currently and/or formerly incarcerated populations. Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia do not allow inmates to vote, 32 states deny the vote to felons while on parole, and 28 states block voting among offenders on probation. But 13 states disenfranchise felons for life, even after the ex-offenders have completed their sentence. Nearly 4 million currently or formerly incarcerated Americans were denied the vote in 2000, about 2 percent of the adult population. An estimated 1 in 7 African-American males is currently disenfranchised.^{ccxviii}

HOW CAN THE NATION RESTORE REDEMPTIVE VALUES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE?

The nation's criminal justice policies should punish offenders, provide restitution to victims, and protect the public. But they should also restore and redeem individuals and communities whose lives are affected both directly and indirectly by criminal justice policies. Several strategies accomplish these goals.

Drug Courts

Drug courts are specialized judicial processes that provide substance abuse treatment, testing, probation supervision, case management, and a range of other coordinated services for drug offenders who might otherwise face costly, often less effective incarceration. This combination of intensive services and legal requirements to complete treatment increases the likelihood that offenders' underlying substance abuse can be addressed, while ensuring accountability to communities harmed by high rates of drug offenses. More than a thousand drug courts are currently in operation; the Department of Justice provides formal court planning and training for these courts.

Noting the difficulties faced by rural communities hit hard by trafficking of methamphetamine, a Bureau of Justice Statistics report finds that the drug court model "is unprecedented in its ability to effectively intervene with the methamphetamine-abusing population and unequalled by any other criminal justice response."^{ccxix} A 2001 review of published studies of drug court effectiveness found that drug courts increase the likelihood that offenders will complete treatment, reduce drug use and criminal activity of offenders while in treatment, decrease the likelihood of recidivism after treatment (although few longitudinal studies follow ex-offenders over long periods of time to assess effectiveness), and provide cost savings compared to traditional adjudication.^{ccxx}

Community Policing

The 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act encouraged the adoption of community policing, a strategy characterized by high levels of community input and collaboration and tailored responses to crime and disorder.^{ccxxi} In response to the unique needs of different communities, community policing strategies vary considerably across jurisdictions. Because of this variability there is “little systematic evidence on what industry structure best promotes effectiveness, innovations, and experimentation.”^{ccxxii} A nationwide study of community policing found that these policies had little effect on crime control or the decline in violent crime seen in many U.S. cities in the 1990s. But this study did find, as did dozens of other studies, that structural indicators of disadvantage such as family and community instability and poverty are the most powerful predictors of urban crime and violence.^{ccxxiii}

Given that policing policies in and of themselves cannot undo the impact of social inequality and disadvantage on crime, they should instead be judged by the extent to which they address community needs and preserve opportunity and human rights. Many community policing models emphasize a problem-solving framework that shifts the emphasis from intervention, arrest, and punishment to addressing community needs. Other models encourage prevention strategies that engage and provide support to youth and families. This policing framework therefore draws heavily on the goals and law enforcement needs of the community, which suffers most when crime is poorly addressed and redemption is denied.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice programs have gained attention in recent years, as some communities have begun raising different questions about the costs and impact of crime--and how to correct its damage. Restorative justice programs seek to repair the harm caused to victims and communities, while holding perpetrators responsible for restitution. These programs include practices such as family group conferences, victim-offender mediation, community decision making, victim impact statements, and mechanisms for offender restitution. Restorative justice seeks to identify what harm has been caused, how it can be repaired, and who is to be held accountable, while finding a balance among the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community.^{ccxxiv}

Studies of the effectiveness of restorative justice programs have generally examined three types of outcomes: victim, offender, family, and relevant community members' level of satisfaction with the program; compliance with reparation agreements; and rates of offender recidivism. Several Canadian studies have found mild to moderate positive effects of restorative justice on recidivism, generally high levels of satisfaction with the programs among all participants, and high rates of restitution compliance.^{ccxxv} These studies have also found that adult rates of recidivism are reduced more than youth rates are. But other studies find restorative justice programs to be promising even among youth. Young juvenile offenders are more likely to reoffend than those who commit

crimes at later ages. The risk of reoffending among child delinquents (ages 7 to 12) is two to three times higher than that among adolescent offenders. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention supported a “family conference” restorative justice program among early offenders in an urban setting that generated high satisfaction among victims, offenders, and their family members. Over 80 percent of offending youth who participated in the family conferences completed their restitution agreement.^{ccxxvi}

Reentry Programming

Three forces--the rising number of prisoners released each year, the growing caseloads of parole officers, and the decline in educational and drug treatment services available to the incarcerated--have contributed to the growing level of concern over how to facilitate the successful transition of ex-inmates.^{ccxxvii} These factors, combined with the recognition that unless prisoners die in prison or are executed, all of them must eventually be returned to society, have led to interest among policymakers in developing and supporting prisoner reentry programs. Planning for reentry must therefore begin at the point of incarceration, or even at sentencing.^{ccxxviii}

A large-scale analysis of Canadian studies that embrace comprehensive reentry strategies (including intensive programs in behavioral techniques to help model social and job skills, and programs that emphasize family and community involvement) found that reentry programs significantly reduce recidivism.^{ccxxix} However, few studies have assessed the effectiveness of reentry programs in facilitating community reintegration, broadly defined. Future studies should examine a broader range of outcomes other than remaining arrest-free for a defined period of time. These outcomes should include employment, connection to the community, sobriety, and support of family.^{ccxxx}

Promising reentry practices include Project Greenlight, a partnership of the Vera Institute and the New York State Department of Correctional Services. Project Greenlight offers family-focused services such as family counseling, workshops on practical skills and job readiness, community counseling, and housing assistance.^{ccxxxi} Other successful reentry programs have received support from the Department of Justice’s Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative. The Justice Department’s evaluation of that program found that the most effective reentry outcomes result from collaboration among public and private partners, particularly key criminal justice actors (police, corrections, and community service providers) to coordinate services and policies.^{ccxxxii}

Justice Reinvestment

At a broader level, communities and governments must weigh the costs and benefits of criminal justice philosophies that emphasize arrest and incarceration against those that prioritize investment in communities as a means of social control. The stark contrast between these options becomes apparent in newspaper articles reporting that a handful of urban neighborhoods costs taxpayers millions of dollars in criminal justice enforcement that could have been averted by a small investment in social and educational programs proved to reduce crime.^{ccxxxiii} The Open Society Institute’s Justice Reinvestment project

seeks to identify and promote such practices. Noting that the national strategy of increasing incarceration actually sacrifices public safety, the Open Society Institute has funded initiatives that seek to reallocate funding throughout the U.S. criminal justice system toward education, housing, health care, and jobs--all priority areas that can directly influence crime rates.^{CCXXXIV}

One of the largest examples of a justice reinvestment program is being implemented in Maryland, where the state has entered into an agreement with private partners to establish the Maryland Opportunity Compact. The compact is designed to spur public and private investment in strategies such as drug treatment, after-school programs, and job training, and to reduce the state's funding in costly remedial and corrective services such as prisons and foster care. Under this agreement, private and philanthropic partners agree to commit seed money to second-chance interventions such as substance abuse treatment, prisoner reentry programs, and family reunification for children in foster care. The state, in turn, commits to reinvesting 60 percent of the expected savings from reduced criminal justice and foster care costs to expand the availability of second-chance programs such as educational and wraparound services for nonviolent youth offenders. Such strategies have drawn bipartisan support in Maryland, as they are expected to provide greater public accountability and a more responsible investment of public resources.^{CCXXXV}

Chapter 6 COMMUNITY

Americans have long adhered to a strong belief in individualism and self-reliance. But this ethic is accompanied by a conviction that we share responsibility for each other and our communities, just as we are responsible for ourselves. Furthermore, we recognize that the strength of our people and our nation depends on the vibrancy and cohesiveness of our diverse communities. Social capital--the degree of trust, cohesiveness, reciprocity, and feelings of collective empowerment among community residents--is therefore an important indicator of community and national strength. But also important to this assessment are measures of Americans' attitudes toward newcomers and diverse groups, and of the policies that the nation adopts in response to their needs. Finally, evaluating community strength also requires assessing how the nation responds to diversity. Perhaps the most sensitive measure of diversity is the degree of residential segregation of diverse groups. We assess these dimensions of community in this chapter, the major findings of which are presented in Box 6.

Box 6: Has the Nation Protected and Enhanced Community?

Major Gains in Community

- Americans' attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities and the value of racial equality have improved significantly over the past several decades.

Areas of Limited, Mixed, or No Progress

- Rates of residential segregation on the basis of race, ethnicity, and income declined in the 1990s, but many disenfranchised groups, particularly poor African Americans and Hispanics, female-headed households, and immigrants, remain more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods relative to poor whites.

Areas Where Community Has Declined

- Social capital has declined in many communities, as Americans are less involved in civic, community, and other volunteer activities.
- Anti-immigrant policies enacted in recent years have decreased immigrants' access to social, health, and education programs, and immigrant integration programs have not kept pace with need.

A strong and cohesive sense of community is essential to expanding opportunity for all. When we care about the progress of all members of our society, opportunity is no longer just about personal success but also about our success as a people. This ideal is embodied in the motto *E Pluribus Unum*--"from many one"--that John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson proposed for the first Great Seal of the United States in 1776. It symbolizes both the American resolve to form one nation from a collection of states, and our determination to forge one unified country from people of different backgrounds and beliefs. Our enduring national commitment to seeking unity while respecting diversity is crucial to our progress as a nation.

The interdependence of community and opportunity is also expressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "everyone has duties to the community in

which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.” It is only through our relationships with other members of society that we can achieve our own aspirations and protect our own rights. This is the notion of mutuality or “the interrelatedness of all communities and states” described by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the idea that “whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” and that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Indeed, it is a central teaching of virtually all of the world’s major religions, expressed most familiarly in Western culture as “love thy neighbor as thyself.”

The value of community goes beyond the notion of assimilation, which usually means expecting newcomers to adapt to the dominant culture and give up their own. Instead, community embraces mutual respect, diversity, and integration, which mean learning from each other’s experiences and beliefs to build a common and evolving national character. As people who came here from other lands--some as immigrants, some in chains, and some as the first indigenous settlers of untamed wilderness--we are committed to welcoming new generations as a personal and political expression of community.

We all benefit in different ways from being Americans, and we all must contribute our fair share to the larger society as well as to our own pursuit of happiness. That sometimes means that those of us who have benefited most from being part of the American venture must give back the most, sharing our national prosperity with those who have benefited the least. It means willingly sharing the risks, burdens, and advantages of making America work. It also means remembering that our national embrace of human rights and fundamental freedoms is based not on hostility toward government but on hostility toward the excesses of government. And that there are certain things--from public transportation to national defense, from protecting human rights to providing health care for all--that we cannot do on our own as individuals or as individual cities, states, or corporations.

Finally, community comprises the connections, rights, and responsibilities that we have as world citizens and as members of the world’s most powerful nation. Those ties obligate us to search for solutions that move us forward together rather than pitting us against one another. If, as the Universal Declaration states, “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,” it is incumbent upon us always to seek common ground.

About the Data in this Chapter

This chapter examines four aspects of community that are essential to opportunity: social capital, or the degree to which members of a community share feelings of reciprocity, trust, and cohesiveness; national policies on immigrant integration; Americans’ attitudes about racial and ethnic minorities and the value of diversity; and the degree of residential integration/segregation across racial, ethnic, income, and national origin groups.

Many measures of social capital such as the Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey provide detailed data on levels of general social trust, interracial trust, civic and faith-based engagement, informal social ties, volunteerism, and other dimensions of social capital. The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey comprises both a national sample of 3,000 respondents and an additional 26,700 community respondents in 41 communities nationwide across 29 states. Initiated in 2000, the survey does not provide data on trends over time. We therefore supplement this assessment with national trend data from the National Election Studies survey from the University of Michigan (to assess trends in attitudes toward government), the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, and data from Independent Sector reports that assess national levels of volunteerism and giving.

Our assessments of attitudes about racial and ethnic minorities and the value of diversity and of immigrant integration policies are guided by a review of relevant literature. Finally, we examine trends in residential segregation through a literature review and original data analyses performed specifically for this report.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Policymakers, community leaders, researchers, and the business community are increasingly recognizing the importance of social capital to the economic and social health and well-being of groups ranging from small communities to large nations. Research on social capital has found associations between the strength of informal networks and the success of organizations, the safety of neighborhoods, and the health of individuals and whole communities. For example, research has found an association between social capital and levels of crime and violence in communities. Communities that have fewer informal social ties and lower levels of trust and cohesion also face higher rates of serious and violent crime.^{ccxxxvi} “Bonding” social capital may emerge from networks of people who share common interests and backgrounds, while “bridging” social capital encompasses more diverse groups and individuals. Both types of social capital are essential, but bridging social capital is harder to create and presents different challenges. In an increasingly diverse society, however, social networks that bridge the various splits in contemporary communities are critically important.^{ccxxxvii}

The measurement and interpretation of trends in social capital are controversial, but research indicates that Americans are less involved in some types of volunteer and community activities than they were a generation ago.^{ccxxxviii} For example, rates of participation in clubs and civic organizations have declined by half over the last twenty-five years, and involvement in public meetings has declined by over one-third during the same period.^{ccxxxix}

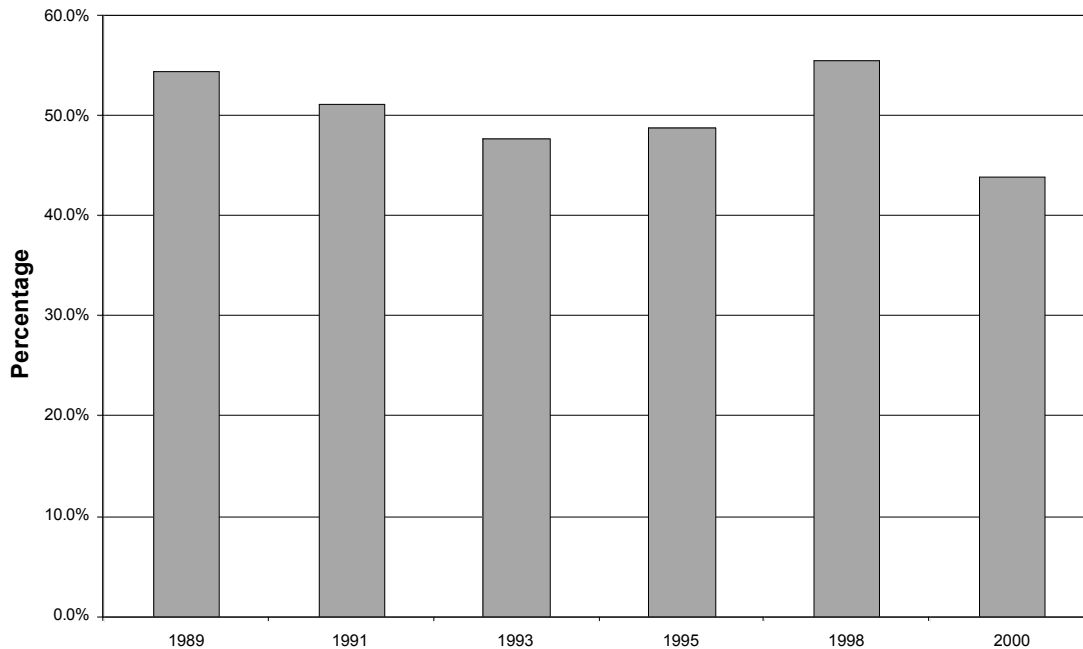
However, some aspects of social capital such as rates of volunteerism and charitable giving may have improved in recent years. These dimensions are influenced by economic conditions. For example, the economic recession of the early 2000s suppressed some aspects of charitable giving. But events such as the December 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean and 2005 hurricanes in the U.S. Gulf Coast region may have spurred recent

charitable giving. U.S. charitable giving reached a record in 2004 of nearly \$250 billion, including nearly \$188 billion from individuals.^{ccxi} And according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), rates of volunteerism in the United States increased from 27.4 percent in 2002 to 29 percent in 2004.^{ccxli}

Independent Sector, a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of more than 700 national organizations, foundations, and corporate philanthropy programs, conducts regular surveys of charitable giving and volunteering in the United States. Using a different survey and methodology than the federal Current Population Survey (on which BLS data cited above are based), Independent Sector finds much higher rates of volunteering than does the BLS. In 2000, 44 percent of adults over age 21 were found to volunteer with a formal organization, with 63 percent of these individuals lending time on a regular basis (monthly or more often). Independent Sector's biennial national survey is not completely comparable over time due to changes in survey methodology, but it suggests that rates of volunteering have declined slightly since 1989 (see Figure 6-1).^{ccxlii}

Figure 6-1. Volunteers as a Percentage of Population, 1989-2000

Source: Independent Sector, 2 002



The 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey does not provide data on trends over time, but that year found generally low levels of community engagement and trust, particularly in institutions such as government and the media. For example, fewer than half (47 percent) of respondents felt that “most people can be trusted.” Whites (54 percent) were more than twice as likely as African Americans (27 percent) or Hispanics (23 percent) to endorse this view. Twenty percent of respondents reported participating in a neighborhood association, and only 9 percent reported participating in a political group. Only 14 percent of respondents stated that they trust their local news media “a

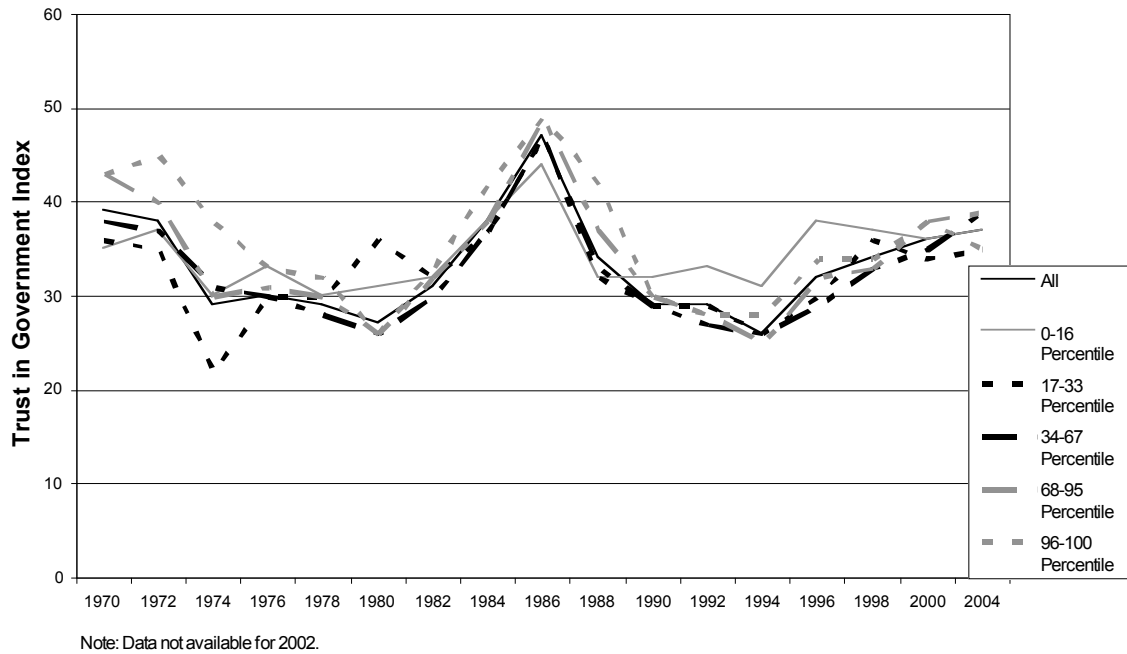
lot.” And only 28 percent of respondents stated that they trust the federal government “just about always” or “most of the time,” while only 43 percent reported that they trust their local government “just about always” or “most of the time.” On the other hand, a large majority of survey respondents felt a strong sense of community in their neighborhoods, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. Eight in 10 respondents felt that people in their neighborhood gave them a sense of community, a response rate that does not vary greatly on the basis of respondent race, ethnicity, or education level.^{ccxliii}

The National Election Studies (NES) survey, conducted since 1948, provides trend data on a range of measures including trust of government. NES’s measure of trust in government is a composite index constructed from response data to the following questions:

- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right--just about always, most of the time or only some of the time?
- Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?
- Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?
- Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked?

This index reveals considerable variation for the nation as a whole over time, but little variation among gender, racial, and income groups. Peak levels of trust in the federal government occurred in 1986 for all income groups, before declining through the early 1990s and rising again in 2000. Figure 6-2 displays trends in this measure for different income groups between 1970 and 2002.^{ccxliv}

Figure 6-2. Trust in Government by Income Percentile, 1970-2004
 Source: National Election Studies, 2005



IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Many Americans would likely be surprised to learn that immigration to the United States is no greater today than it was at earlier points in the nation's history. Between 1901 and 1925, 17.2 million immigrants were admitted to the United States, a record number at the time. Similarly, 17.1 million immigrants were admitted between 1971 and 1995.^{ccxlv} The impact of immigration on the U.S. population was greater in the early 1900s, however, when the immigration rate—11.1 per 1,000 native-born residents—was more than two and a half times higher than contemporary immigration rates.^{ccxlv} Perhaps more significantly, the face of immigration has changed. In the early part of the last century, immigrants were overwhelmingly from European nations. Since the 1980s, almost 90 percent of immigrants have come from Central and South America and Asia, while only one in ten are from Europe.^{ccxlvii}

Immigrants historically have greatly benefited from migration networks formed by family, kinship, and friendship ties.^{ccxlviii} But many immigrants have always needed assistance in integrating into U.S. society. Immigrant integration programs are therefore important to assist newcomers with basic needs such as health care and English-language classes, and to establish themselves in their new communities. But no national immigrant integration policy exists. And despite the fact that federal funding for adult basic education and English classes increased by almost 50 percent between 1992 and 2000, funding has not kept pace with the growing demand for English-language and civic education programs.^{ccxlix}

Moreover, recent federal and state policy developments have limited opportunity for many immigrants. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and other legislation barred many documented and undocumented immigrants from federal programs such as Food Stamps, Social Security benefits, student loans, and other benefits. And state referenda such as California's Proposition 187, which sought to bar undocumented children from attending public schools, have contributed to a growing trend of anti-immigrant legislation, even though some of these policies have been successfully challenged and blocked in federal courts.^{ccl}

AMERICANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

Americans share a broad national consensus about the importance of racial and ethnic equality and integration. Survey data consistently reveal a strong positive shift in racial attitudes over the last half century, as whites increasingly express tolerance and egalitarian attitudes about non-whites. Similarly, minorities' attitudes toward whites have improved significantly.^{ccli}

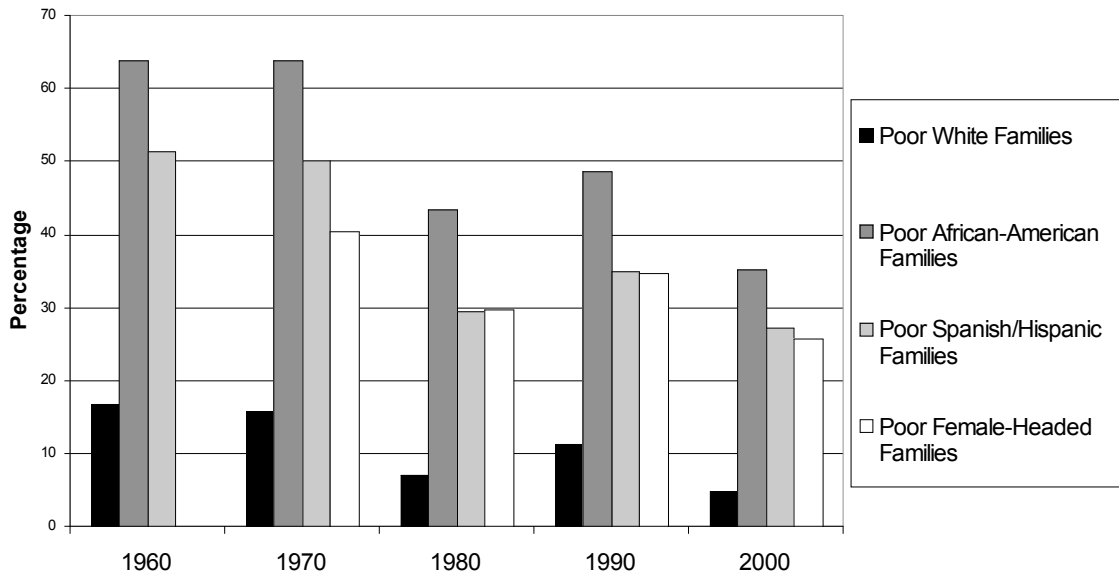
Despite these positive trends, however, in many instances Americans' attitudes stand in contrast with their observable preferences. Sociologists have noted, for example, the consistent tendency in many U.S. communities for whites to leave neighborhoods when African Americans integrate at levels higher than 20 percent.^{cclii} Americans also continue to endorse negative racial and ethnic stereotypes at high rates. Findings from the General Social Survey, for example, reveal that significant majorities of whites believe that African Americans are less intelligent, lazier, and more prone to violence than whites.^{ccliii} Moreover, despite the strong plurality of opinion about the need for racial equality, large proportions of white Americans remain opposed to social policies that address inequality, and tend to disagree with minority Americans about the persistence of racial discrimination.^{ccliv}

RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Historically, the United States has been characterized by high levels of residential segregation on the basis of race, ethnicity, income, and nativity. From the late 1960s through the 1980s, poverty became increasingly concentrated in inner city neighborhoods.^{cclv} Encouragingly, levels of racial, ethnic, and income segregation declined in many U.S. communities in the 1990s.^{cclvi} These trends are not consistent across all demographic groups, however. A 2002 study by the U.S. Census Bureau, for example, found that while levels of African American segregation declined across many dimensions between 1980 and 2000, residential segregation is still higher for African Americans than for any other group. In addition, this study found that Hispanics and Asian and Pacific Islanders also face high levels of residential segregation. On some measures of segregation, such as the degree of isolation from other groups, Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders experienced increases in segregation over the last two decades.^{cclvii}

Residential segregation is particularly problematic when race, ethnicity, and poverty converge. An analysis of trends in the residential segregation of poor families of color, prepared for The Opportunity Agenda by the Washington, D.C.-based Poverty and Race Research Action Council, examines Census Bureau data on the poverty status of neighborhoods. Using data on census tracts within metropolitan areas defined in 1960, this analysis finds that the percentage of poor whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and female-headed households living in high-poverty neighborhoods (those with 30 percent or more residents living in poverty) generally declined between 1960 and 2000. But the rate of decline for poor white families was much sharper than for poor families of color. While poor African-American families were 3.8 times more likely than poor white families to live in high-poverty neighborhoods in metropolitan areas in 1960, they were 7.3 times more likely than poor whites to live in high-poverty neighborhoods in 2000. Similarly, poor Hispanic families were 5.7 times more likely than poor white families to live in high-poverty neighborhoods in 2000, but were only 3.0 times as likely as poor white families to live in such communities in 1960. And while poor female-headed households were 2.5 times more likely than poor whites to live in high-poverty neighborhoods in 1970, they were 5.3 times more likely than poor whites to live in these conditions three decades later. These findings confirm other research that demonstrates that even when family income is similarly low, families of color are more likely to be relegated to high-poverty communities (see Figure 6).^{cclviii}

Figure 6-3. Percentage of Poor Families Living in High Poverty (30 Percent or More in Poverty) Neighborhoods. 1960-2000
 Source: Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2005



Note: Analyses restricted to census tracts within metropolitan areas defined in 1960. "Spanish" refers to U.S. Census designations used prior to 1970. No data are available for poor female-headed households prior to 1970

HOW CAN THE NATION ENHANCE COMMUNITY?

Social Capital. At least two trends have been found to contribute to the decline in social capital in many communities: the increase in television consumption, and the expansion of “exurban” communities far from traditional urban and suburban cores. These trends suggest that government policies to enhance social capital should first carefully consider how regional development strategies and land use such as the placement of parks, recreation centers, and community centers may contribute to social cohesion, and second, assess how television and other media can enhance democratic participation, connection, and expression (see the chapter on *Voice* for a discussion of media democracy). Other strategies such as congregation-based community organizing, civic environmentalism, and participatory school reform are promising strategies to enhance public problem solving.^{cclix}

Immigrant Integration. An effective comprehensive immigration integration policy is needed to assist newcomers to fully participate in the social, cultural, and political life of the nation. Several strategies are needed, including greater support for programs such as health care, English-language classes, and other social services that provide basic assistance to immigrants. Immigrant workers also require assistance in learning about workplace rights, fair wages and benefits, and means to garner legal assistance to protect these rights. Other programs should encourage public education and outreach to raise newcomers’ awareness of the federal naturalization process, and increase the availability of civics education and other programs that are needed to gain citizenship. Among new citizens, voter education programs and other efforts to increase political participation (discussed in the chapter on *Voice*) are important to stimulate political engagement and empowerment.

Residential Segregation. Communities that are highly segregated on the basis of race, ethnicity, and poverty receive fewer and poorer quality public services, are disproportionately victimized by high levels of crime and violence (often accompanied by aggressive law enforcement tactics), face higher levels of environmental health risks, and are plagued with a host of other problems. Moreover, the costs of segregation--both in human and economic terms--burden *all* communities. As noted in the chapter on *Mobility*, housing policies should encourage the development of mixed-income communities, and land use policies should consider the impact of zoning decisions on the isolation of racial, ethnic, and high-poverty communities. Because a high level of housing discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity persists (as discussed in the section on *Equality*) stepped-up state and federal enforcement of anti-discrimination laws is necessary, perhaps enforced through audit studies. And because mortgage lending discrimination also may limit the housing options of many low-income and minority families, federal enforcement of the 1968 Fair Housing Act must be strengthened.

Chapter 7 SECURITY

Americans believe that we are all entitled to a basic level of education, economic well-being, health care, and other protections necessary to human dignity.^{ccix} Without this security, it is impossible to access society's other rights and responsibilities, or to enjoy full opportunity. Moreover, international human rights commitments--many of which, as noted in the introduction to this report, were spearheaded by the United States--obligate our nation to ensure basic levels of health, housing, and income security for its residents. In this chapter we review threats to the security of our nation and assess our progress over time. We examine measures of income security, health and health care security, housing and food security, and physical safety.

This review shows that Americans are more secure on some measures of opportunity, such as rates of criminal victimization, than we have been in more than two decades. But for most other measures of security, national progress is stagnant or declining. Increasingly, threats to security are found in rising social and economic inequality, the eroding safety net, and unequal access to our vast resources. Moreover, these threats affect all Americans, both directly and indirectly, as our communities and public institutions are weakened by a lack of basic security. A summary of the major findings of this chapter are presented in Box 7.

Box 7: Has the Nation Made Gains in Security?

Major Gains in Security

- Many Americans are now more secure from criminal victimization than in decades. The percentage of U.S. households that were victimized by crimes (including both violent crimes and property crimes) fell from 25 percent to 15 percent between 1994 and 2003, and homicide rates have declined by more than 50 percent since 1970.
- Overall health status has steadily improved for all Americans, and life expectancy has increased to record levels for all groups.

Areas of Limited, Mixed or No Progress

- Poverty has increased over the last five years, despite declines in the 1990s. Today, 5.4 million more Americans live in poverty than did in 2000. In 2004 nearly 37 million people, about one in eight U.S. residents, lived in poverty. Over one-third of these individuals are children under age 18.
- Gaps in health status among racial and ethnic groups, citizenship groups, and socioeconomic groups have not narrowed much in nearly a generation. African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders have dramatically poorer health relative to national averages. The same is true for whites who live in poverty compared to those who are better off. And although women can expect to live longer than men, their longer lifespan is offset by higher rates of functional impairment and disability.

Areas Where Security Has Declined

- The number of Americans without health insurance has risen steadily over the last thirty years to unprecedented levels. More than 45 million Americans lack health insurance, and more than 87 million Americans were uninsured at any point over the last two years.
- Affordable high-quality housing is increasingly out of the grasp of working families

who make less than a living wage.

- Hunger and food insecurity rates rose for the fourth year in a row between 2003 and 2004. Most alarming is the rise in food insecurity among children. About 31 percent of African-American, 30 percent of Hispanic children and 43 percent of all low-income children live in homes that experienced periods of food insecurity in 2004.

Americans generally view the United States as a land of boundless opportunity, where individuals can achieve their dreams regardless of their gender, race, nationality, family background, or the circumstances of their birth. But increasingly, Americans experience threats to opportunity arising from a lack of basic health, education, income, and other protections. These threats affect all Americans, as a lack of basic security weakens our community institutions and violates our nation's core principles and values. Moreover, these threats disproportionately affect groups who historically have been most vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization. These include women, communities of color, rural communities, immigrants, poor and working poor families, and others whose security is threatened on a daily basis.

This chapter reviews threats to the personal security of the nation's residents and assesses progress in providing a basic level of security that is necessary for opportunity. We define security of opportunity as a basic level of health, income, food security, and physical safety, below which no one should be allowed to fall if our nation remains committed to full opportunity. Specifically, we examine trends in income security (poverty, bankruptcies, and pension participation); health security (health status, health care access and quality, occupational safety, and housing); food security; physical safety (homicide, serious and violent crimes); and environmental security. Many of these same indicators are also used in domestic and international human rights reports, as they reflect the human rights community's consensus about the basic rights that are key to opportunity. Where data are available, we document national trends as well as data disaggregated by gender, race or ethnicity, immigration and citizenship status, and income or education level.

About the Data in this Chapter

The main data sources for this chapter include federal data on trends in health, poverty and economic security, food security, and criminal victimization; federal research reports published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Center for Vital Health Statistics, and other federal agencies; research published in peer-reviewed literature; and other research reports published by policy research organizations such as the Economic Policy Institute.

Where data are available, we summarize trends in measures of security over time. In addition, we review literature on the impact of selected measures on Americans' opportunities. As noted earlier in this report, there are several limitations of the data. Federal data collected prior to 1997 rarely include racial and ethnic groups other than whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. Further, these broad racial and ethnic categories often fail to adequately capture the diversity within U.S. racial and ethnic groups, which may vary considerably on the basis of immigration status or nativity,

primary language, cultural identification, and area of residence. A full assessment of opportunity should include a consideration of how opportunity varies along these dimensions. Where possible, we present subgroup information such as variations among Asian-American and Hispanic nationality groups.

Similarly, federal data are rarely disaggregated by both race or ethnicity and measures of social class or socioeconomic status. Yet the opportunity barriers for low-income whites may differ in important ways from those of better-off whites and some minorities. We encourage future analyses to examine how opportunity indicators differ by race or ethnicity and income, as well as their interaction.

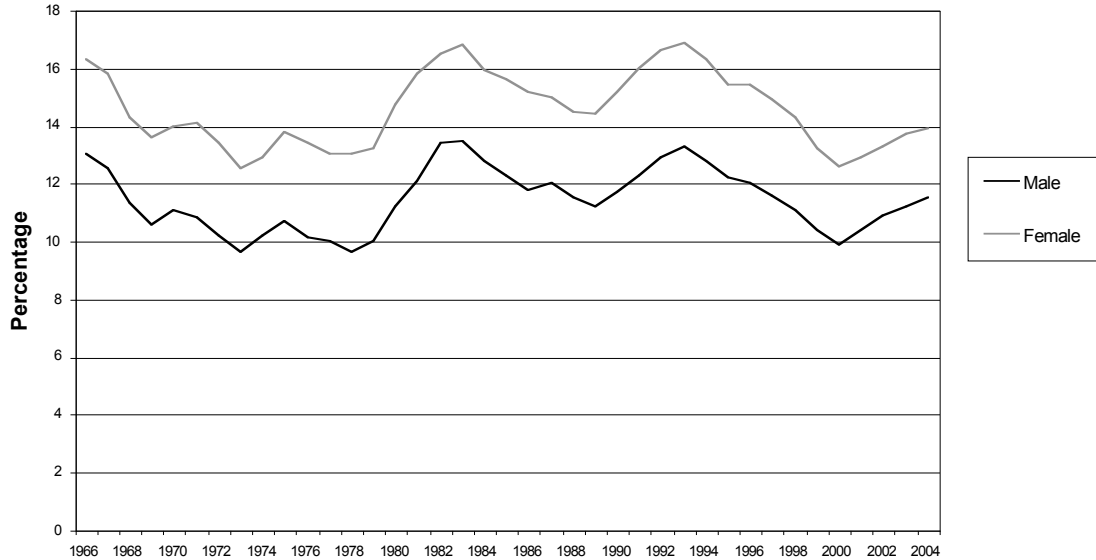
INCOME SECURITY

Poverty

Poverty remains a persistent threat to the security of millions of Americans. In 2004 nearly 37 million people--about one in eight U.S. residents--lived in poverty. More than one-third of these individuals are children under age 18.^{cclxi} Women, people of color, non-citizens, and people who live in urban and rural areas are disproportionately represented among the impoverished. These gaps have persisted for decades, but they narrowed after periods of progressive policies that focused on increasing economic opportunities for the working poor and creating more equitable employment practices (e.g., the Earned Income Tax Credit and federal minimum wage increases).^{cclxii} Disturbingly, however, these gaps have widened in recent years. This trend threatens to increase not only the number of Americans living in poverty, but also the economic gaps between men and women, racial and ethnic groups, new arrivals and old, and between those with higher levels of education and skills and those without them.

Gender Gaps in Poverty. The economic surge of the 1990s produced unprecedented job growth that helped to substantially reduce rates of U.S. poverty. But the gap in poverty between women and men has persisted, and overall poverty rates have since risen. Annually since 2000, between 22 percent and 27 percent more women than men have been among the ranks of the impoverished in the United States--a gap that, by and large, has not changed since 1966 (see Figure 7-1).^{cclxiii} For example, the percentage of women in poverty dropped to its lowest levels in almost thirty years in 2000, with about one in eight women living in poverty, but poverty rates among men that year dropped further, to slightly under one in ten.^{cclxiv}

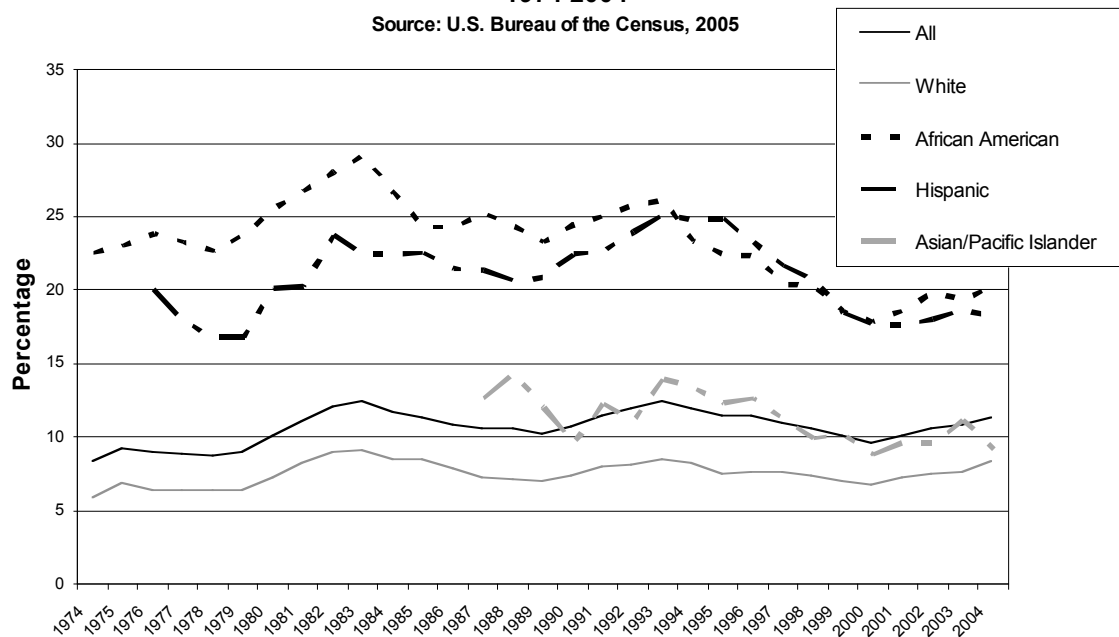
Figure 7-1. Poverty Rate by Gender, 1966-2004
 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2005



Racial and Ethnic Differences in Poverty Rates. The prosperity of the 1990s also led to a diminution of the racial and ethnic gap in poverty rates (see Figure 7-2). In 2000 the poverty rate among African Americans and Hispanics was a little over 2.6 times greater than that for white Americans, the smallest racial and ethnic difference in poverty rates between these population groups in more than three decades. Similarly, in 2000 the poverty rate among Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans was one-third higher than that for whites, the smallest gap between these groups in ten years. From 2001 to 2003, however, poverty rates for all racial and ethnic groups increased more dramatically than they did for whites, widening the racial poverty gap. This gap declined slightly in 2004 for all minority groups except African Americans.^{cclxv}

Figure 7-2. People (Age 18-64) in Poverty by Race or Ethnicity, 1974-2004

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005



Note: Data for Asian/Pacific Islander Americans is only available beginning in 1987.

Poverty among Children. Child poverty may pose the most significant barrier to opportunity for individuals, their families, and their communities. Not only are impoverished children and their families less likely to have material resources necessary for adequate nutrition, housing, and health care, they are also more likely (as detailed elsewhere in this report) to live in communities characterized by high rates of violence, instability, poor quality schools, and inadequate safety net resources.^{cclxvi} Children who live in conditions of poverty face multiple barriers to full participation in the economic, cultural, and political life of the nation. They face longer odds of economic mobility, are less likely to earn a high school or college degree, more likely to experience greater health problems later in life, and more likely to have children who will likely face the same economic circumstances as they did, repeating a generational cycle of poverty.

A large body of research demonstrates the importance of basic levels of health, housing, nutrition, economic, and physical security for children's development and educational and health outcomes. For instance:

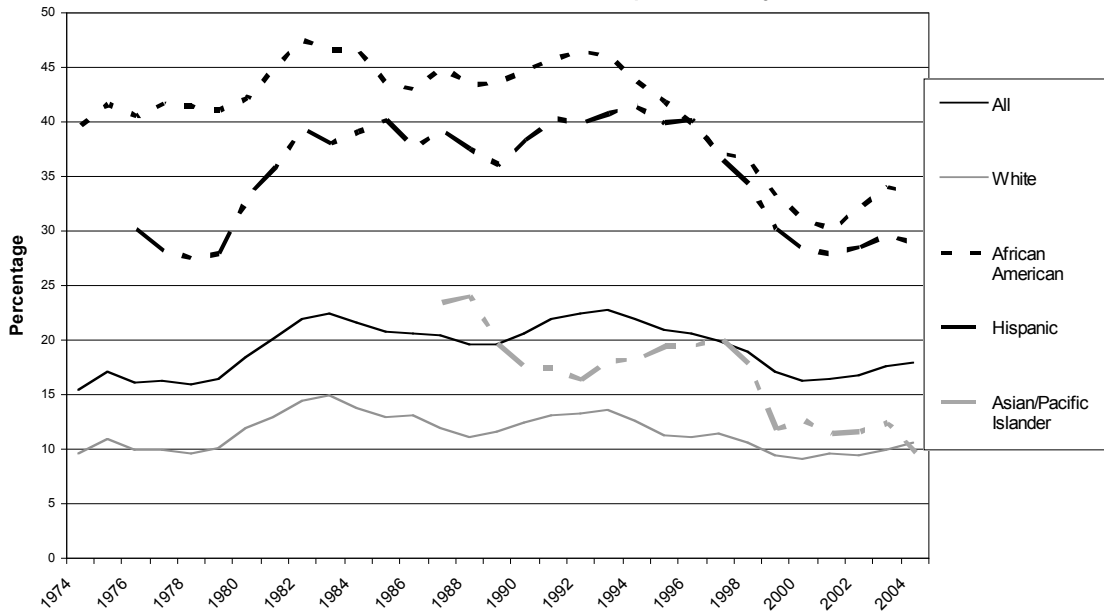
- Children who are undernourished during infant and toddler years are at greater risk for behavioral and neurological impairment, as well as cognitive delays. Similarly, undernutrition during pregnancy is associated with prematurity, low birth weight, and cognitive impairment, all of which are linked to poorer health and educational outcomes for children.^{cclxvii}
- Nearly one-third of uninsured children did not receive medical care in 2003, compared to 12.5 percent of insured children; uninsured children are ten times more likely than insured children to fail to receive needed medical care.^{cclxviii}

- Studies demonstrate that children who are exposed to at least one period of poverty have poorer health than children who never experience poverty. But longitudinal studies also show that children’s health status has a direct, negative relationship to the *duration of poverty*. In other words, the longer children live in poverty, the poorer their health.^{cclxix}

Racial and ethnic gaps in child poverty rates reached their greatest points in 1982 and 1992, when over 45 percent of African-American and 40 percent of Hispanic children lived in poverty, relative to 13.2 percent (in 1992) and 14.4 percent (in 1982) of white children (see Figure 7-3). Similarly, Asian-American and Pacific Islander-Islander children experienced higher poverty rates than white children. In 1987 and 1998, rates of child poverty among Asian-American and Pacific Islander-American children were more than twice those of white children. These gaps declined to their lowest levels in 2000 and 2001, at the end of the economic expansion of the 1990s. Since 2001, however, overall child poverty rates have increased, as have racial and ethnic gaps in child poverty, erasing many of the gains of the 1990s.^{cclxx}

Figure 7-3. Percentage of Poor People Under Age 18 by Race or Ethnicity

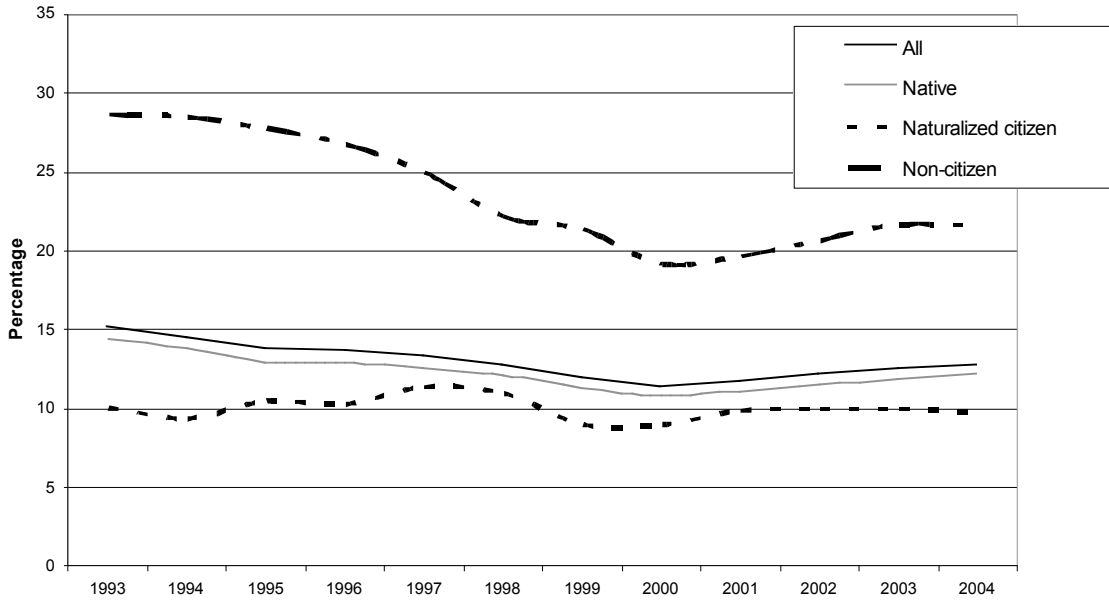
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2005



Note: Data for Asian/Pacific Islander Americans is only available beginning in 1987.

Poverty and Citizenship Status. The United States has long been considered a “land of opportunity” for newcomers. Data on poverty among native-born citizens, naturalized citizens, and non-citizens suggest that opportunity varies considerably by citizenship status. In 2003 non-citizens were twice as likely as naturalized citizens to live in poverty, although this gap has narrowed significantly since 1993, when the rate of poverty among non-citizens was nearly three times that among naturalized citizens (see Figure 7-4).^{cclxxi}

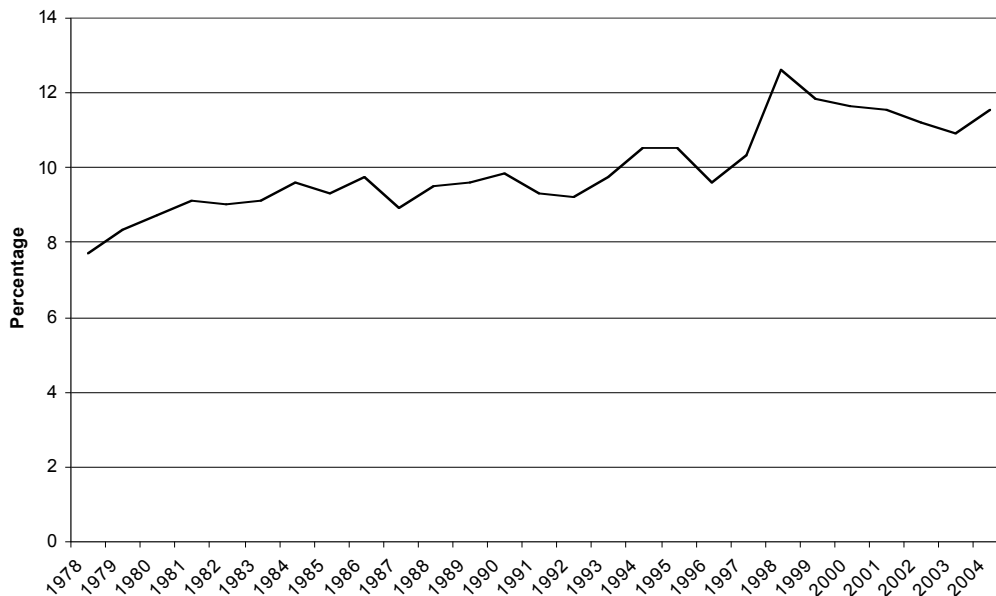
Figure 7-4. People in Poverty by Nativity, 1993-2004
 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2005



Workers Living in Poverty. In 2003 more than 24 million people who worked full- or part-time lived in poverty, and over one in ten impoverished individuals worked full-time.^{cclxxii} A parent who works full-time at the federal minimum wage to support a family of three makes \$5,000 under the poverty line.^{cclxxiii} And, as depicted in Figure 7-5, the percentage of full-time workers who fall below the poverty line has increased by 42 percent since 1978. The number of these workers has more than doubled since 1978, rising from about 1.3 million to almost 2.9 million workers in 2004.^{cclxxiv}

Figure 7-5. Year-round, Full-time Workers as a Proportion of All Poor People, 1978-2004

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2005



Bankruptcies

Personal bankruptcy, perhaps the most sensitive indicator of economic insecurity, has increased dramatically. More than 1.5 million people filed for bankruptcy in the United States in 2003. The rate of consumer bankruptcies more than tripled from 1980 to 2003, rising from fewer than 2 of every 1,000 adults to more than 7 of every 1,000 adults in 2003.^{cclxxv} These individuals are not merely people who have amassed high consumer or credit card debt. A recent study showed that half of all bankruptcies involve unpaid medical and health care debts. Among those whose medical bills contributed to bankruptcy, average out-of-pocket costs approached \$12,000, and three-quarters of these individuals possessed health insurance at the onset of illness.^{cclxxvi}

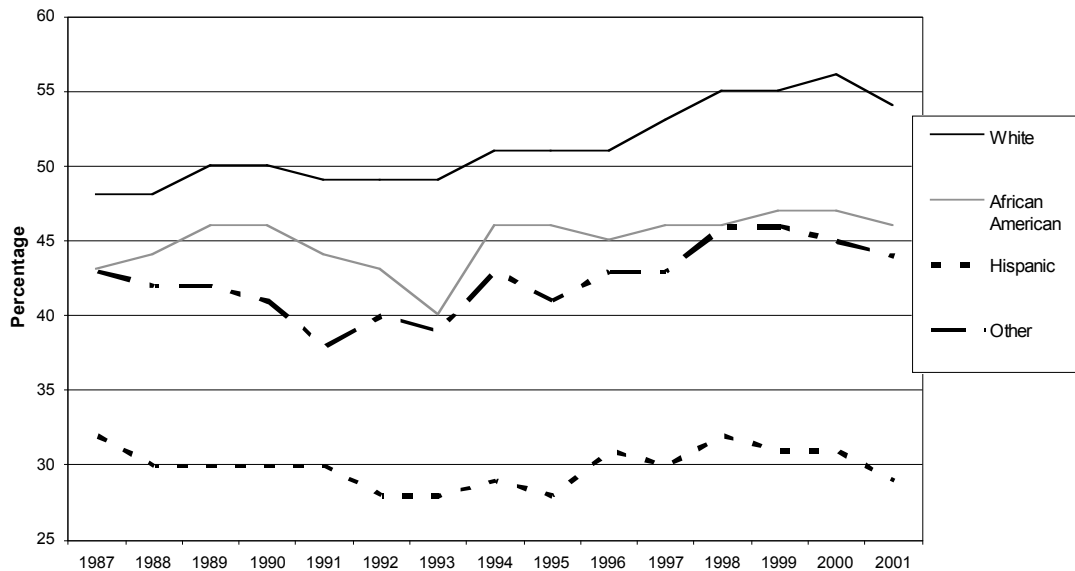
Pension and Retirement Security

A slightly growing number of American households can expect to retire and receive retirement income that is at least half of their current income, based on personal savings, pensions, and Social Security income. In 2001, 72 percent of households headed by someone age 47 to 64 expected to be able to retire with retirement income at least half of their current income, an increase of 2.3 percent since 1989. Yet less than half of the U.S. workforce (46 percent) is covered by employer-sponsored pensions, a decline of 4.7 percent since 1979.^{cclxxvii} And wide gaps in pension participation remain among demographic groups, gaps largely explained by differences in education, income, and types of employment. Women and minorities are less likely to be covered by an employer-sponsored plan.

African-American and Hispanic workers have lower levels of participation in pension plans than do whites, a gap that appears to be growing. From 1987 to 2001, pension plan participation among white wage and salary workers increased from 48 percent to 54 percent, while participation rates for African Americans increased only 3 percent during the same period, from 43 percent to 46 percent. Pension participation among Hispanics during the same period declined from 32 percent to 29 percent (see Figure 7-6).^{cclxxviii} These racial and ethnic gaps persist at lower- and middle-income levels, but narrow significantly between Hispanics and whites at the highest income levels. Relative to whites, African Americans have equal or higher levels of participation in employer-sponsored pension plans at upper- and middle-income levels. Pension participation is highest among public employees, and the racial and ethnic gap in pension participation is narrowest in this sector. More than two-thirds of Hispanic public employees, 70 percent of African-American public employees, and 78 percent of white public employees participated in an employer-sponsored pension plan in 2001. Conversely, the racial and ethnic gap in pension participation is greatest among employees in small- and medium-sized firms.^{cclxxix}

Figure 7-6. Percentage of Wage and Salary Workers Age 21-64 Who Participated in an Employment-Based Retirement Plan by Race or Ethnicity, 1987-2001

Source: Copeland, 2003

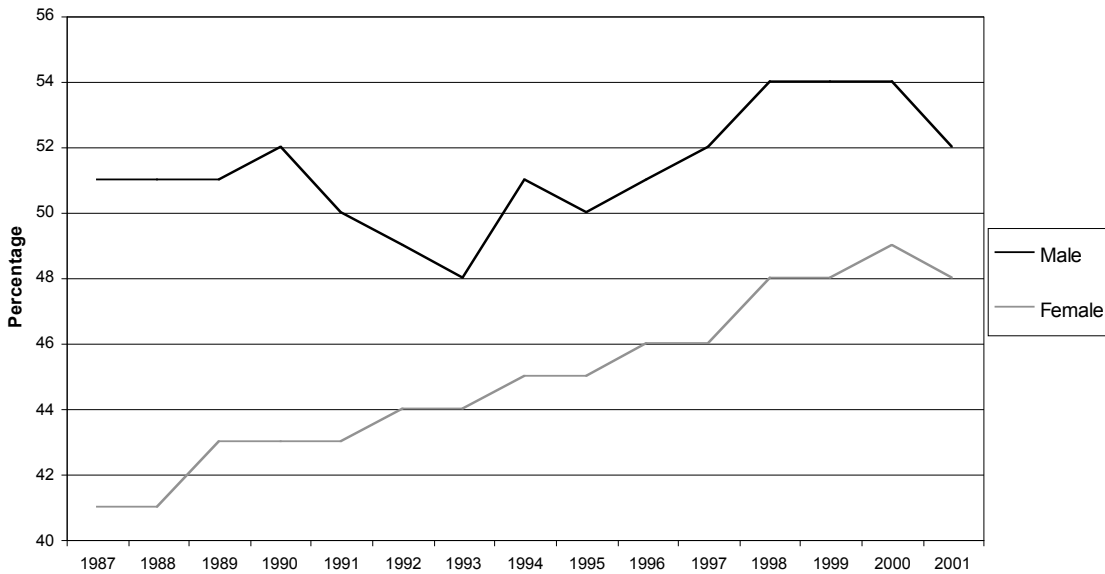


Women's rate of participation in employer-sponsored pension plans increased more rapidly than did men's between 1987 and 2001, from 41 percent to 48 percent. Men's rate of participation increased just one percentage point to 52 percent (see Figure 7-7).^{cclxxx} But part-time workers are less likely to be eligible for participation in employer-sponsored plans, and women are disproportionately employed as part-time workers. In 2001, 35 percent of older women reported that they worked too few hours to be eligible for employer pension plans, compared to 20 percent of older men. And older women

workers are less likely than older male workers to expect a pension from any source. Only about one-third of older men expected not to receive a pension, compared to 44 percent of older women.^{cclxxxix}

Figure 7-7. Percentage of Wage and Salary Workers Age 21-64 Who Participated in an Employment-Based Retirement Plan by Gender, 1987-2001

Source: Copeland, 2003



Among current retirees, the pension gap is particularly striking, reflecting the historical lack of opportunities for women and people of color to work in jobs that provide pension benefits. For example, almost half of male retirees in 2000 received a pension, compared to 30 percent of women retirees. And among those who received pensions, women’s pensions were half those of men--including women’s benefits received through their husbands’ pensions.^{cclxxxii} This gap in pension income contributes to higher rates of financial insecurity among older women, particularly older women of color.

HEALTH SECURITY

Health Status

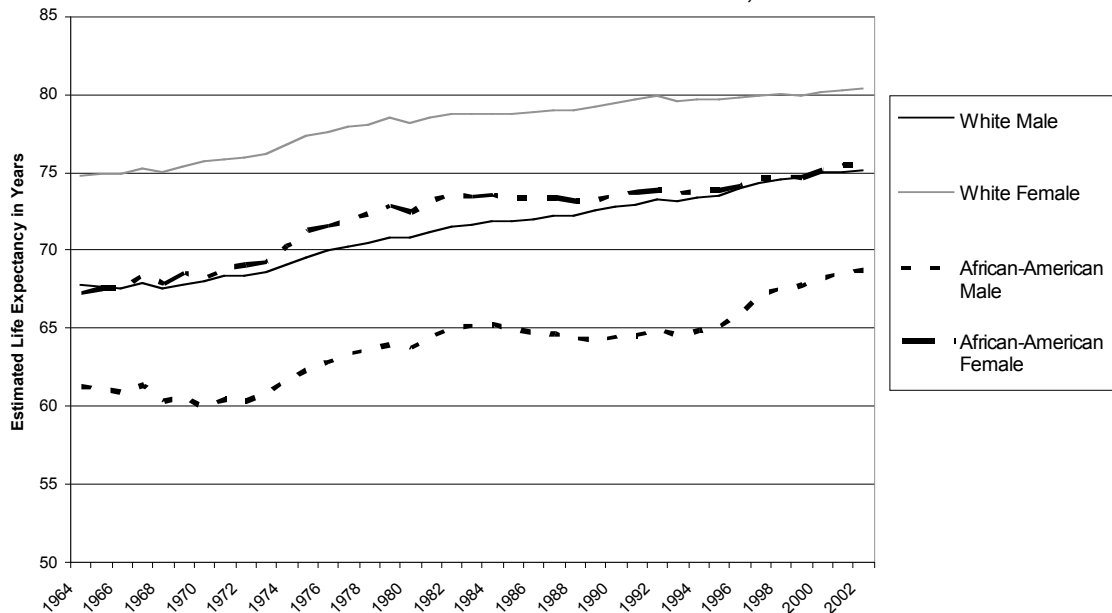
In the twenty-first century Americans are enjoying unprecedented longevity and good health. This is largely due to increases in wage and education levels, improvements in public health programs such as child immunization and smoking cessation, greater awareness of health risks and healthful behaviors, and better access to health care. But many groups experience poor health relative to national averages, and do not enjoy the same access to high-quality health care and health information as do more advantaged groups. Others who appear healthy based on national statistics may experience “hidden” health problems. For example, women live longer than men but experience greater

functional limitations and chronic health problems that can erode their quality of life.^{cclxxxiii} These health gaps weaken our security and diminish basic human rights and opportunities that Americans cherish.

Life Expectancy. Americans can expect, on average, to live longer today than at any other point in history. White women's life expectancy has crept above 80 years, and white men's and African-American women's life expectancy is now slightly over 75 years. But African-American women continue to trail white women in life expectancy, although these trends have narrowed slightly, and African-American men continue to face lower life expectancy than other groups, as their estimated life expectancy has yet to climb above 70 years. Moreover, African-American men have experienced two periods of significant declines in life expectancy, from 1962 to 1971 and from 1984 to 1990 (see Figure 7-8). Federal data on life expectancy among other racial, ethnic, and gender groups are not available, but given the growing size of these groups, future federal vital statistics reports should include them.

Figure 7-8. Estimated Life Expectancy at Birth in Years by Race and Sex, 1964-2002

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004



Mortality. Overall mortality has declined steadily in the United States over the last four decades, with the greatest declines occurring during periods when economic growth equitably benefited all income groups and when the overall population attained higher levels of education. One such period occurred shortly after World War II, when the G.I. Bill increased access to higher education for thousands of returning veterans.^{cclxxxiv} But for some groups mortality gaps persist and in some cases are increasing, despite overall gains in mortality. African-American men, for example, died at rates that were 32 percent higher than the national average for men in 2002. This gap is 7 percent higher

than the gap in 1980 (see Figure 7-9).^{cclxxxv} Similarly, mortality rates among African-American females have been consistently 25 percent higher than those for women overall. And despite the national trend toward declining mortality, not all groups benefited. American Indian and Alaska Native women, for example, experienced a 19 percent increase in mortality rates from 1990 to 1999, before those rates declined in 2000 (see Figure 7-10).^{cclxxxvi}

Figure 7-9. Death Rates for All Causes Among U.S. Males by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years 1950-2002

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005

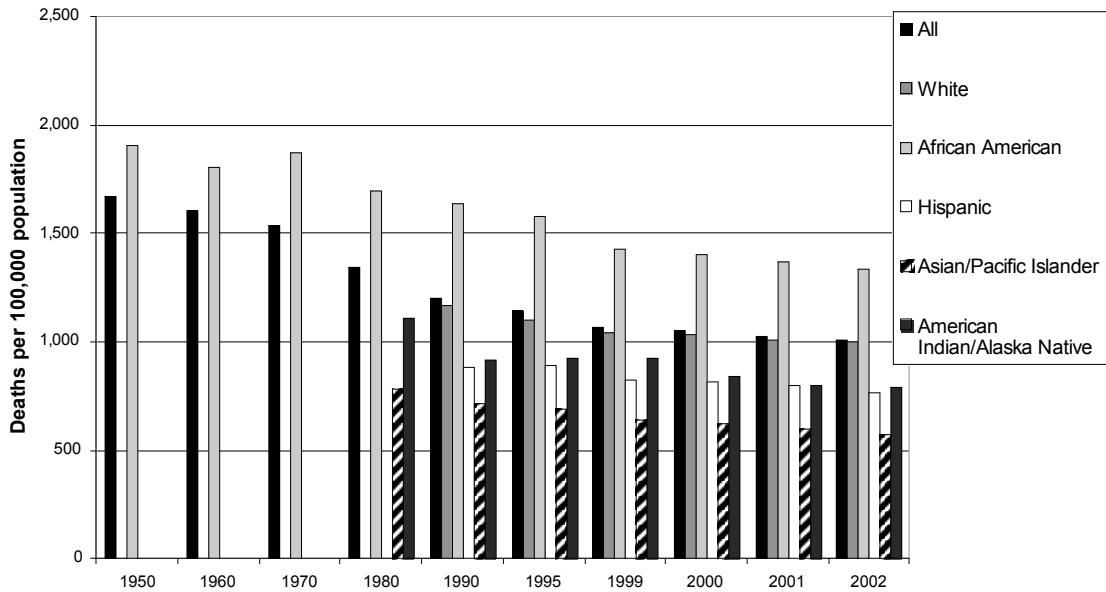
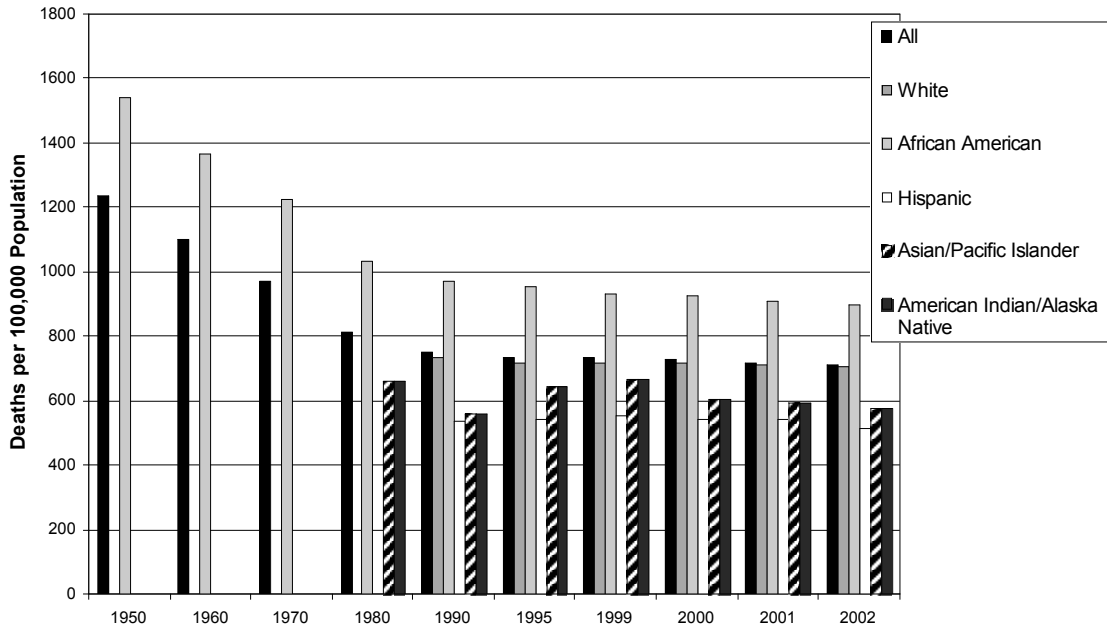


Figure 7-10. Death Rates for All Causes Among U.S. Females by Race/Ethnicity, Selected Years 1950-2002

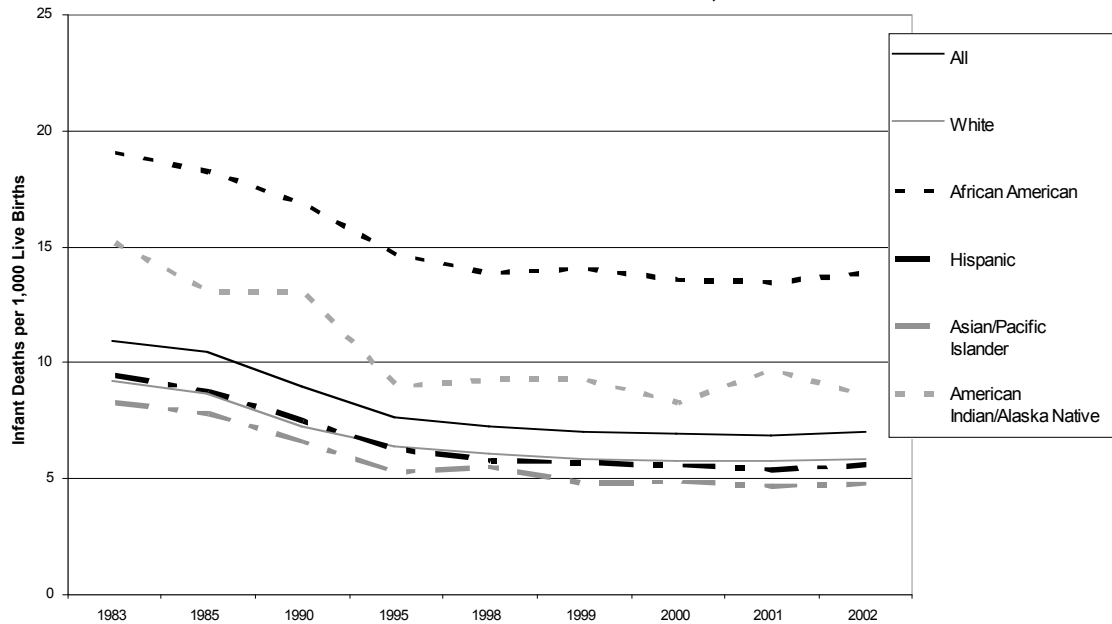
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005



Infant Mortality. Infant mortality has progressively declined in the United States, particularly during periods of economic growth that greatly reduced poverty, such as during the mid- and late-1990s. The nation has made strides in increasing access to prenatal care services and building healthier communities, but these gains still leave gaps among racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups (see Figure 7-11).^{cclxxxvii} African-American and American Indian infant mortality rates, for example, remain almost two and three times higher than those for whites, respectively, and lower income groups of all races have nearly double the mortality rates of those for wealthier groups.

Figure 7-11. Rates of Infant Mortality by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years 1983-2002

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2004



Physically Unhealthy Days. Today Americans are just as likely, and in some cases more likely, to feel sick for two or more weeks in a year than they were a decade ago (see Figures 7-12 and 7-13).^{cclxxxviii} The percentage of Americans who report being physically unhealthy for 14 or more days has increased slightly for almost all racial and ethnic groups since 1993, with the sharpest increase found among Native Americans and Alaska Natives.^{cclxxxix} Moreover, disparities between racial and ethnic groups in physically unhealthy days has not diminished. In 2003 almost 20 percent of Native Americans reported two weeks or more of unhealthy days, almost twice the rate of their white counterparts.

Similarly, almost 30 percent more women than men report two or more weeks of physically unhealthy days in a year, the same difference observed in 2003 as in 1993. This rate, however, is trending upward for both men and women (see Figure 7-13), suggesting that the gender gap in physically unhealthy days is not likely to diminish in the near future.^{ccxc}

Figure 7-12. Percentage of Respondents with 14 or More Unhealthy Days by Gender, 1993-2003

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005

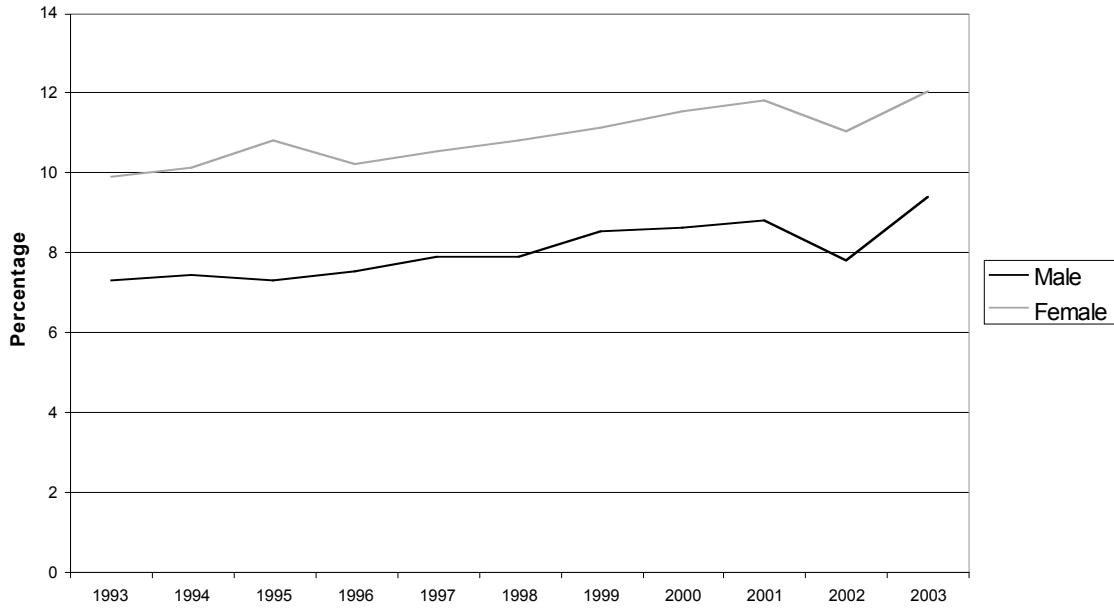
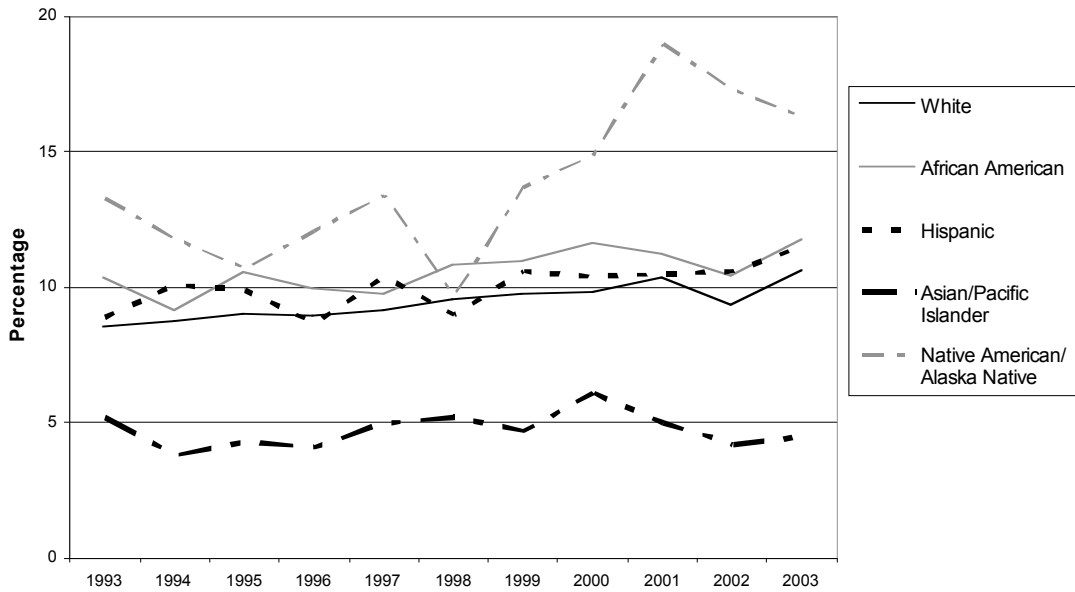


Figure 7-13. Percentage of Respondents with 14 or More Physically Unhealthy Days by Race and Ethnicity, 1993-2003

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005



Health Care Access and Quality

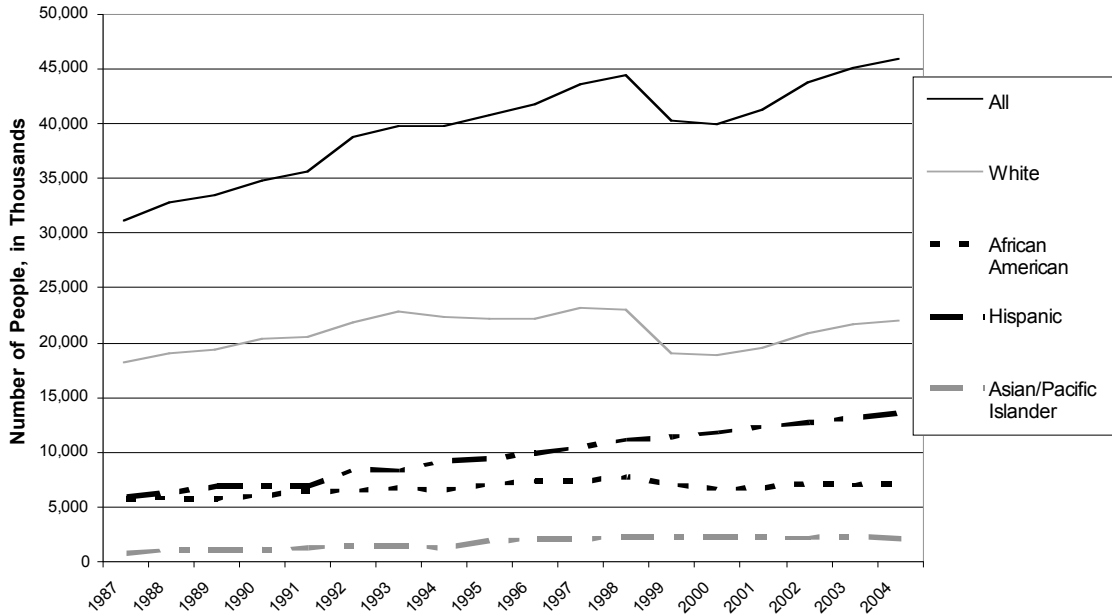
Access to Health Insurance. More than 45 million Americans lack health insurance, and more than 80 million Americans lacked health insurance for all or part of the last two years.^{ccxcxi} A lack of health insurance creates staggering costs, in human and economic terms, for the uninsured, for the insured, and for entire communities and their institutions. People who lack health insurance are less likely to receive preventive health services, thereby increasing their risk for preventable chronic and infectious diseases. Fewer hospitals and health systems can afford to provide indigent care, and the health care that the uninsured may receive is often of poor quality. The Institute of Medicine estimates that the aggregate annual cost of poorer health and shortened life spans attributable to uninsurance is between \$65 billion and \$130 billion.^{ccxcii} Nearly 80 million insured and uninsured Americans have experienced difficulty paying medical bills and/or have accrued debt related to medical care costs. More importantly, two-thirds of people who experience problems with medical bills or debt go without needed care because of cost--a rate three times that for people without medical care-related financial problems.^{ccxciii} A report by Families USA finds that in 2005 premium costs for private employer-provided family health insurance coverage rose by \$922 due to the cost of caring for the uninsured, while premiums for individual coverage cost an extra \$341 for the same reason.^{ccxciv}

Trends in the Number of Uninsured Individuals. The number of uninsured Americans currently stands at an all-time high, although it briefly had trended downward in the late 1990s before increasing at a rapid rate (Figure 7-14).^{ccxcv} The number of whites who were uninsured declined by 20 percent between 1997 and 1999, while the number of uninsured among other racial and ethnic groups increased steadily. The number of uninsured Hispanics more than doubled between 1987 and 2004, largely due to new immigrants, who were less likely to receive health insurance through an employer.

Perhaps more significantly, the percentage of U.S. families who receive health insurance coverage for the entire family has also declined, and an increasing number of families are relying on public sources of health insurance such as Medicaid or the State Child Health Insurance Program to provide coverage. This is the case even though one or more other family members may continue to receive employer-sponsored health insurance, and it is particularly true among families of color who work. Between 1999 and 2002, the proportion of Hispanic and African-American children covered by Medicaid living in a family where at least one member had employer-provided health insurance increased by 11.3 percent and 8.8 percent, respectively.^{ccxcvi} State and federal sources are therefore increasingly subsidizing health insurance for families who work.

Figure 7-14. Uninsured People in America by Race and Ethnicity, 1987-2004

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005

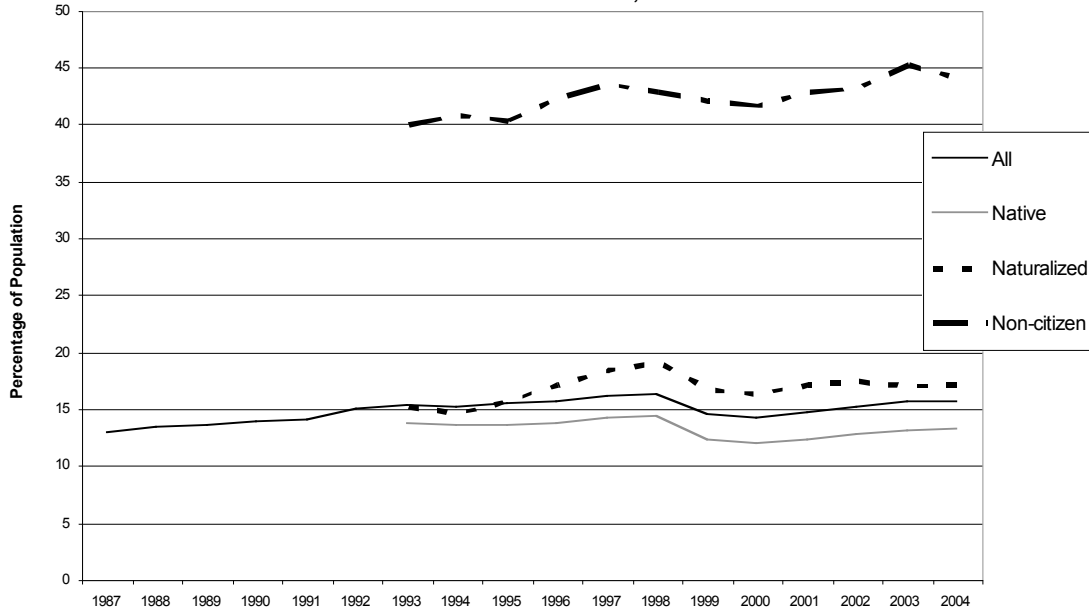


Racial and ethnic minority and immigrant communities are disproportionately uninsured. For example:

- While Hispanic children constitute less than one-fifth of children in the United States, they represent over one-third of uninsured children.^{ccxcvii} And among children in fair or poor health who lack insurance (nearly 570,000 children in 2002), over two-thirds are Hispanic.^{ccxcviii}
- More than 11 million immigrants were uninsured in 2003, contributing to one-quarter of the U.S. uninsured. The uninsurance rate among immigrants increased dramatically in the late 1990s, following the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which imposed a five-year limit on most new immigrants' ability to participate in public health insurance programs. Prior to and shortly following passage of the Act (between 1994 and 1998), immigrants accounted for about one-third of the increase in the number of uninsured individuals. Between 1998 and 2003 they accounted for 86 percent of that growth.^{ccxcix}
- Foreign-born people are 2.5 times more likely than the native-born to lack health insurance, a gap that remains unchanged since 1993 (see Figure 7-15).

Figure 7-15. Percentage of Uninsured People in the United States by Nativity, 1987-2004

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005



Regular Source of Health Care. Having a regular source of health care--a local physician, clinic, or health center--is important, particularly for individuals who are at risk for illness or injury. When patients are able to see a health care provider consistently, they are better able to build trusting relationships, ask questions, and give and receive information. Patients who lack a regular source of health care often report miscommunication, misdiagnoses, and greater frustration about their ability to receive needed care.^{ccc} The uninsured and underinsured, many racial and ethnic minorities, people who are not proficient in English, those who live in rural communities, and those who have low incomes are more likely to report not having a regular source of health care.^{ccci} This problem poses serious risks for personal health security, as well as for the health of communities as a whole.

Yet the regular-source-of-health-care gap among racial/ethnic and income groups is growing. Causes include the poor distribution of health care resources across communities, insufficient funding of public and safety-net health systems, and a dearth of culturally appropriate health care in some communities.^{cccii}

African Americans, Hispanics, and the poor and near poor (of all racial and ethnic groups) are more likely than white non-poor groups to face barriers to having a regular source of health care. But these gaps have increased since 2000. Over 42 percent of Hispanic poor and 37 percent of Hispanic non-poor people lacked a regular source of health care in 2001 and 2002, an increase of more than 30 percent and 18 percent, respectively, since 1995 and 1996. During this same period, the percentage of poor and near-poor African Americans and whites without a regular source of health care went

largely unchanged. But these groups were up to 75 percent more likely than non-poor African Americans and whites to lack a regular source of health care in 2001 and 2002. And the percentage of Hispanics from all income groups who lacked a regular source of health care increased between 1993 and 2002, despite a 15 percent decline over the same period in the ranks of white poor individuals who lacked a regular source of health care.^{ccciii}

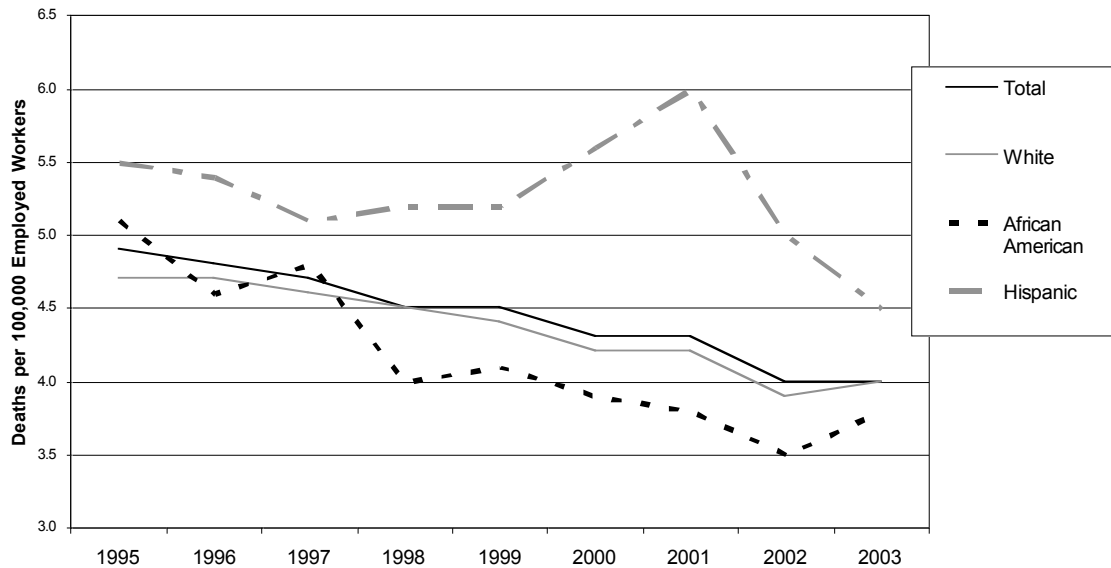
Reproductive Health Care. Publicly funded family planning clinics are an important means of expanding access to affordable sexual and reproductive health care in the United States. The Alan Guttmacher Institute estimates that more than 34 million U.S. women needed contraceptive services in 2002, nearly half of whom needed public services because of low income and/or other barriers to receipt of contraceptive care. Of these, only about 6.7 million women, or four in ten, were served in publicly funded clinics.^{ccciv} These clinics have experienced only a 2 percent increase in clients since 1994, despite modest growth in the number of publicly funded family planning clinics providing contraceptive services to eligible women.^{cccv} Public expenditures on contraceptives services totaled \$1.26 billion in 2001, almost completely reversing declines in public funding in the 1980s (adjusted for 2001 dollars).^{cccvi} Funding for public family planning services is severely threatened, however, by pending state and federal cuts in Medicaid programs; more than eight in ten family planning agencies receive Medicaid funding for contraceptive services. And in many states capacity is well behind need. Since 1980, thirty states have reduced their spending on contraceptive services.^{cccvii} In the last decade, a large number of states experienced a decline in met need or an increase in women in need living in counties without a publicly funded clinic.^{cccviii}

Occupational Safety

Many people of color, immigrants, and low-income families tackle some of the most dangerous jobs in America. They do so as a means of providing for their families and as a way to attain better, safer work ahead. But historically these groups have also faced higher rates of occupational injury and death, making the workplace a disproportionate threat to their security. Although overall rates of occupational injury and death have declined--the result of improved workplace health and safety policies enacted in the 1990s--Hispanics remain at greater risk for work-related death, as depicted in Figure 7-16.^{cccix} Hispanic workers face a 28 percent greater risk of workplace-related death than do whites, and they are at 42 percent greater risk than are African Americans.

Figure 7-16. Occupational Injury Death Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 1995-2003

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2005



Housing

Safe, affordable, quality housing is another important dimension of security, yet adequate housing is increasingly difficult for even average wage earners to afford.

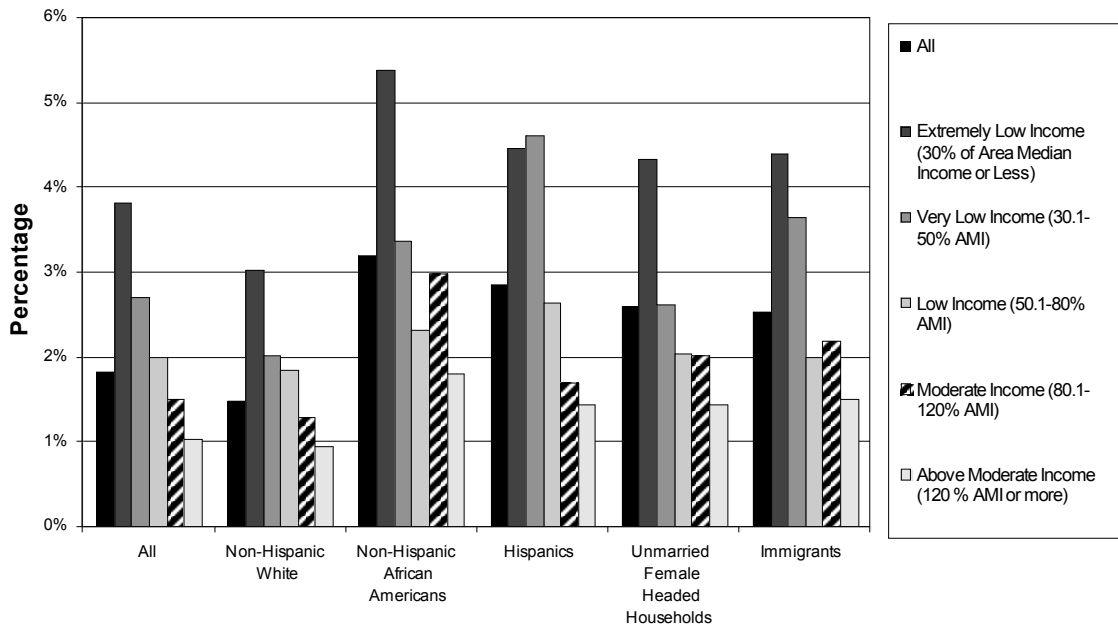
Federal standards define affordable housing as housing costs that do not exceed 30 percent of family income. Today, many families pay far more than this proportion of income for housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, U.S. workers must earn an average hourly wage of \$15.37 to afford the rental costs of a two-bedroom unit, yet the national hourly wage average is about \$14, and more than one-quarter of the population earns less than \$10 an hour.^{cccx} For families earning extremely low incomes--less than 30 percent of the median income in an area--the situation is even more dire:

- On average, families with extremely low incomes can afford to rent a two-bedroom house at fair market price in only nine U.S. counties, and in only four counties in the nation can a person working full-time at the minimum wage afford even a one-bedroom apartment.^{cccxi}
- Of the 4.4 million “working poor” households in the United States, nearly 60 percent pay more than half of their incomes for housing or live in dilapidated conditions. Nearly three in five of these households have children.^{cccxi}
- Working families that pay more than half of their incomes for housing are more likely than other working families to have trouble paying household bills, to lack health insurance, and to experience food insecurity.^{cccxi}

For groups such as female heads of households and families of color, affording a home is particularly difficult because of lower incomes and fewer mortgage lending options. Unmarried women are more likely than men of all age groups to spend more than half of their monthly income on housing. This is particularly true among women age 35 to 44, who are twice as likely as men to experience severe housing cost burdens.^{cccxiv} One-quarter of the nation’s single mothers spend more than half of their income on housing, compared to one in ten households headed by single fathers.^{cccxv} And, as discussed in the chapter on *Mobility*, rates of subprime home mortgage lending--characterized by higher interest rates and fees--are increasingly concentrated in low-income and predominantly minority communities, leading to rising default rates. From 1993 to 2001, for example, rates of subprime home lending increased severalfold in low-income and predominantly minority communities.^{cccxvi}

Some groups also face a greater likelihood of living in severely inadequate housing, defined by the Census Bureau as housing that has deficiencies in any of five problem areas, such as lacking hot water, heat, or electricity, or having significant upkeep problems. Low-income, unmarried female-headed, immigrant, and minority households experience a greater percentage of severely inadequate housing than higher income and white households. But gaps in rates of severely inadequate housing among racial/ethnic minorities, immigrants, and whites persist at all income levels, including households above moderate income (see Figure 7-17).^{cccxvii}

Figure 7-17. Percentage of Households with Severely Inadequate Housing, by Race, Ethnicity, and Income Level, 2003
 Source: Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2005



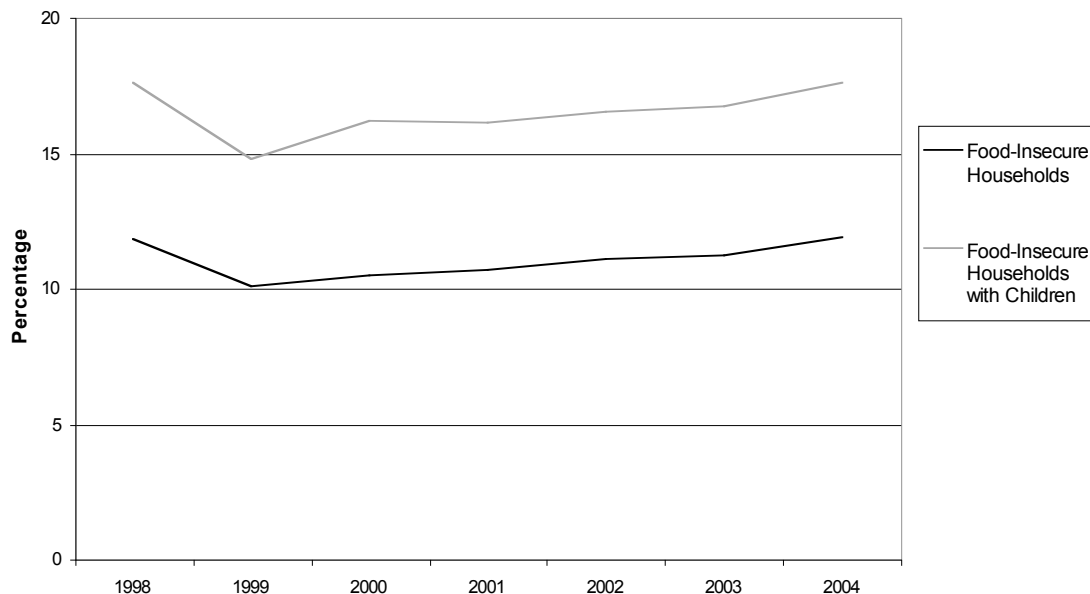
FOOD SECURITY

Having an inadequate supply of food and nutritional resources can greatly hamper opportunity, particularly among young children, whose early physical and cognitive development depends on access to nutritious food.^{cccxviii} Households characterized by food insecurity, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, are those that experienced uncertainty about adequately feeding all members of the family or were unable to acquire enough food because of a lack of funds or other resources at some time during the last year. These households avoid having one or more family member go hungry because they are able to participate in a federal food assistance program, receive emergency food from a community food pantry, “stretch” meals, eat less varied diets, and/or adopt other coping mechanisms.^{cccxi} But some households experience periods when one or more family member is hungry. In 2003 nearly 4 million families experienced food insecurity with hunger, the fourth straight year in which the number of families experiencing hunger increased.^{cccxx}

Federal data on rates of food insecurity are available only from the mid-1990s, and a change of methodology only allows a comparison of these rates from 1998 to the present. The percentage of families experiencing food insecurity has increased since 1999, but this percentage is below the rate of households reporting food insecurity at the first measurement point in 1998. Households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity than those without children. In 2003 nearly 17 percent of all U.S. households experienced food insecurity, while slightly over 11 percent of households without children experienced food insecurity (see Figure 7-18).^{cccxxi}

Figure 7-18. Rates of Food Insecurity by Household

Source: Economic Research Service, USDA, 2004



PHYSICAL SAFETY

Rates of homicide and other serious crimes are sensitive indicators of personal security. Overall rates of violent and serious crimes have declined over the last decade, coinciding with the economic boom of the 1990s and continuing through 2003.^{cccxxii} Homicide rates have declined dramatically since the 1970s.^{cccxxiii} Some communities, however, continue to experience high rates of violence. Communities with high rates of concentrated poverty, joblessness, dislocation, and minimal political power--more often than not, poor urban communities of color--continue to experience higher rates of serious crime and criminal victimization than do their white and higher income counterparts. Geographic, cultural, and linguistic isolation experienced by other marginalized racial and ethnic minority groups can contribute to insecurity from violence. And violence against women continues to be underreported and inadequately addressed by criminal justice policy and practice.

Homicide

Racial and ethnic disparities in female homicide rates have declined dramatically over the last thirty-five years. As shown in Figure 7-19, in 1990 African-American women were five times more likely than white, non-Hispanic women to be murdered. In 2002 this ratio declined to 3.6. Over this same time period, American-Indian or Alaska-Native women were usually twice as likely as white women to be homicide victims.^{cccxxiv}

For men, the racial gap in mortality due to homicide has been more persistent. In 1990 African-American men were more than eleven times more likely than white men to be killed; in 2002, this ratio declined to just under ten-to-one (Figure 7-20). Among Latino and white males, the homicide gap was about five-to-one in 1990; in 2002 Latino men were three times more likely than white men to die by homicide. And Asian-American and Pacific Islander-Americans have been consistently more likely than white men to die by homicide since 1990.^{cccxxv}

Figure 7-19. Female Death Rates From Homicide by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years 1950-2002

Source: Fox and Zawitz, 2004

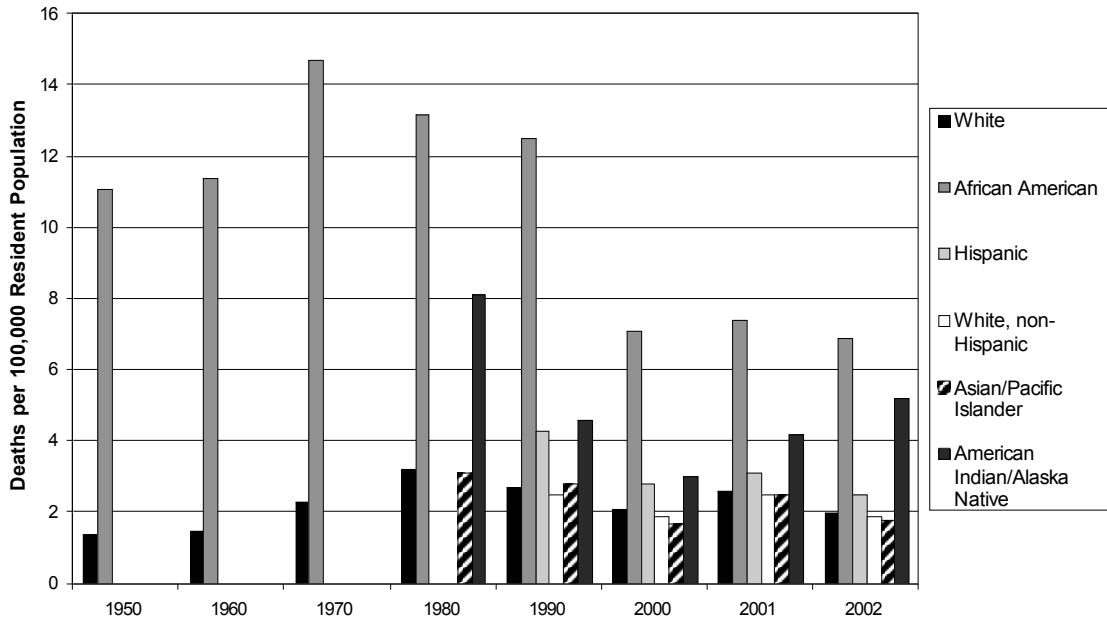
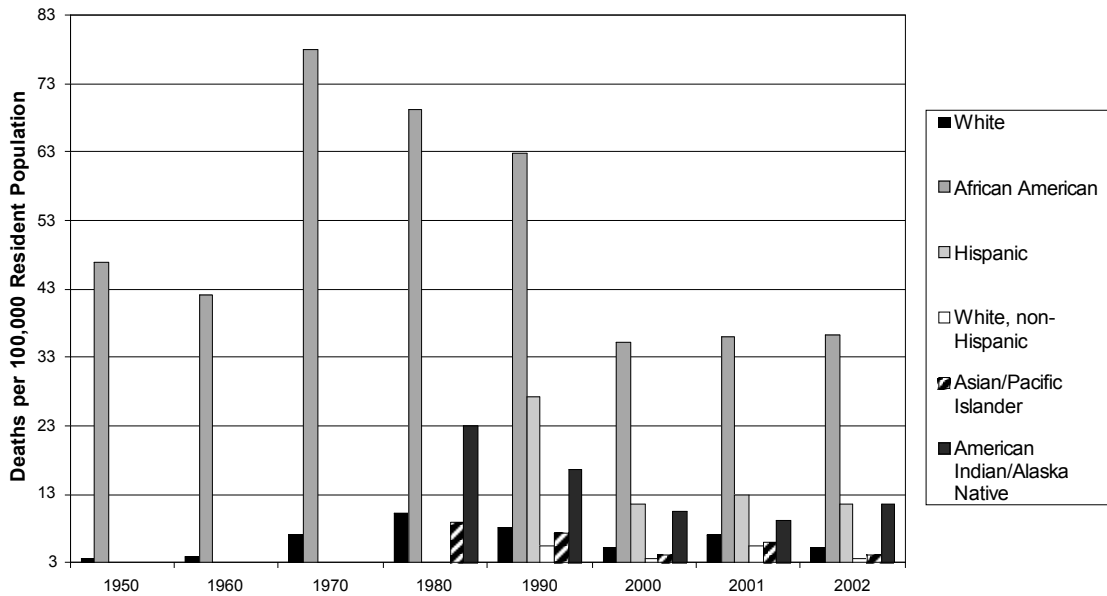


Figure 7-20. Male Death Rates From Homicide by Race and Ethnicity, Selected Years 1950-2002

Source: Fox and Zawitz, 2004



Violent Victimization

The downward trend in rates of violent victimization, which includes crimes such as rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault, has been steady for both men and women

and for all racial and ethnic groups. Rates of violent victimization are now less than half what they were in 1993, when the Department of Justice’s National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) was redesigned.^{cccxxvi} Since 1995 the NCVS sample has also declined as a result of the escalating costs of data collection. The declining crime rate, combined with sample reductions, has led to a diminished federal capacity to track victimization rates among racial and ethnic groups other than whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. Trends in victimization rates, as assessed by the NCVS, are presented in Figures 7-21 and 7-22.

Figure 7-21. Rate of Violent Victimization per 1,000 Persons Age 12 or Older by Gender, 1993-2003

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004

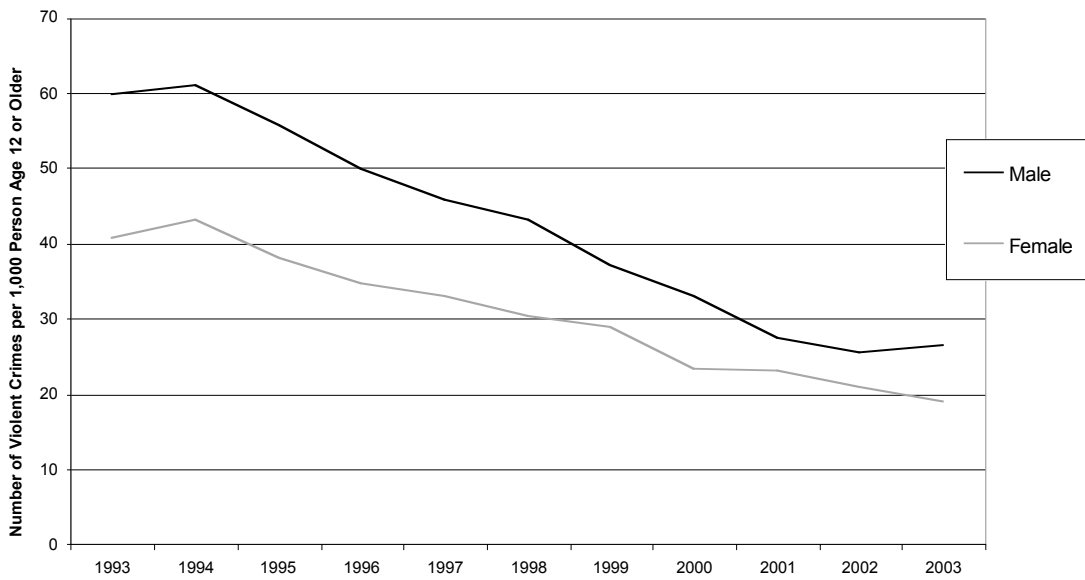
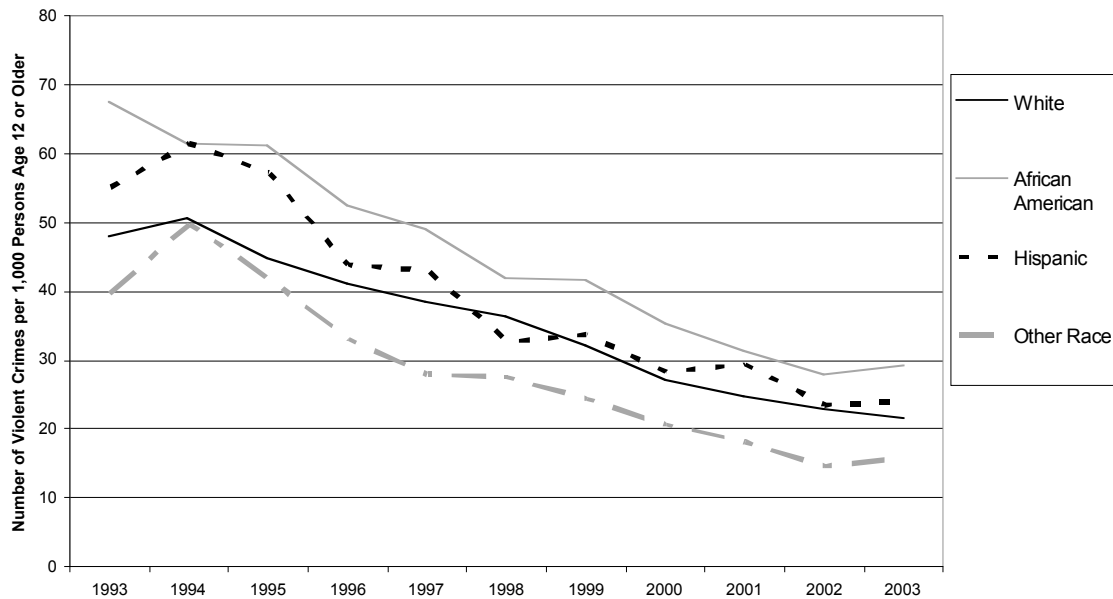


Figure 7-22. Rate of Violent Victimization per 1,000 Persons Age 12 or Older by Race/Ethnicity, 1993-2003

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 2004



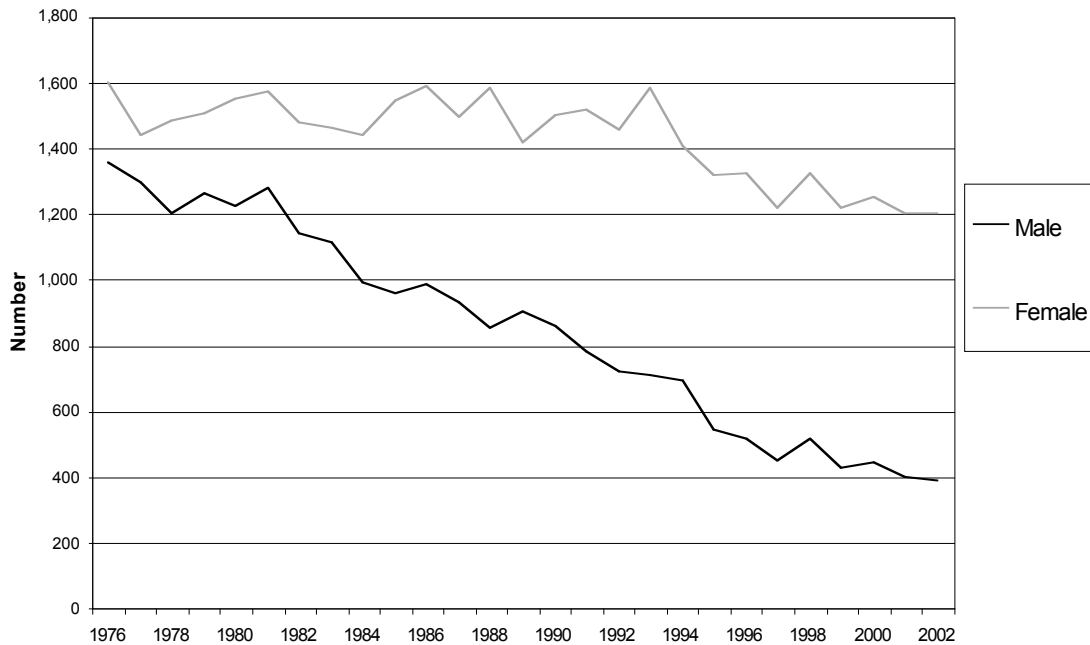
Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is pervasive, affecting more than 32 million Americans each year. Almost one-quarter of women and 7.6 percent of men in the Justice Department's National Violence Against Women survey reported that they had been raped or physically assaulted by a spouse, co-habiting partner, or date at some point in their lifetime.^{cccxxvii} Victims of IPV, however, are overwhelmingly women (85 percent). Domestic violence is the largest single cause of injury to women age 15 to 44 in the United States, constituting 20 percent of nonfatal violence against women in 2001.^{cccxxviii} Almost 5.3 million incidents of IPV occur each year among U.S. women age 18 and older.^{cccxxix} An estimated 1.5 million women annually are victims of rape or sexual assault by a domestic partner. Many are repeatedly assaulted, resulting in about 4.8 million intimate partner assaults per year.^{cccxxx} Women living in poverty, as well as American Indian/Alaskan Native, African-American, and Hispanic women are disproportionately at risk.^{cccxxxi}

Trends suggest that although rates of IPV are declining in some measures, women remain at risk for victimization. For example, the number of women who are victims of domestic homicide was more than three times higher than that for men in 2002. This gap is considerably larger than in 1976, when the female/male IPV-related homicide ratio was only about 1.2 (see Figure 7-23).^{cccxxxii} One-third of all homicides among women are the result of intimate partner violence, a proportion that has not changed substantially over the last three decades.^{cccxxxiii}

Figure 7-23. Homicide of Intimates by Gender of Victim, 1976-2002

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005



ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

Environmental insecurity occurs when communities disproportionately bear the burden of man-made environmental degradation, toxins in the built environment, and other environmental health hazards. These environmental insults include “physical, chemical, and biological pollution of the air, water, soil and biota.”^{cccxxxiv} The most common environmental hazards include lead, hazardous waste sites, and air pollution. Environmental risks harm residents of the communities that harbor them--directly in the form of health risks and indirectly in their effects on community property values, the tax base, and business climate.

These problems disproportionately affect American Indians and African Americans, poor communities, and communities in the South.^{cccxxxv} Several studies demonstrate the greater prevalence of environmental degradation in marginalized communities, as well as their health effects. But no single study has systematically collected national data on the prevalence of environmental hazards and the demographic composition of the communities that unwillingly host them. It is therefore not possible to assess the nation’s progress in addressing this threat to personal security. Nonetheless, environmental inequity remains an important civil and human rights problem that poses a large barrier to opportunity.^{cccxxxvi}

Environmental risks arise from many sources. Municipal landfills, incinerators, hazardous waste treatment plants, and industrial waste storage and disposal facilities are some features of the built environment that contribute to environmental risks. Other

factors include elements of the transportation infrastructure such as those associated with placement of highways and bus depots near residences.^{cccxxxvii} Substandard housing also can contribute to environmental risks through residents' exposure to lead and asbestos, vermin infestation, and other health risks. And occupational hazards such as those faced by migrant workers who are exposed to known carcinogens in pesticides and herbicides or unsafe work conditions in illegal "sweatshops" remain widespread.^{cccxxxviii}

Evidence of environmental inequity is consistent across several large studies, but such studies have been limited. In 1983 the U.S. General Accounting Office found that three out of four off-site commercial hazardous waste landfills in the southeastern United States were situated in predominantly African-American communities. The United Church of Christ's 1987 study found that three in five African Americans and Hispanics lived in communities with abandoned waste sites. And in 2000, more than half of low-income public housing units were located within a mile of factories that produce toxic emissions.^{cccxxxix}

The impact of environmental hazards on health has been widely documented. A 1998 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services study found that poor children in urban and rural regions are more likely to have blood lead levels that far exceed federal standards.^{cccxl} African-American and Hispanic children suffer from higher rates of both lead exposure and asthma induced by air pollution. And the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that pesticide exposure causes between 10,000 and 20,000 illnesses a year among farm workers, and countless thousands of illnesses later in life.^{cccxli}

HOW CAN WE ENSURE SECURITY FOR ALL IN THE UNITED STATES?

A range of opportunity policies can enhance the security of our nation and its residents. The description of policy initiatives below is not meant to be comprehensive; rather, it provides examples of policies that can enhance security in many of the domains described above.

Poverty and Income Insecurity

Problems of poverty and income insecurity can be reduced by expanding a range of existing living wage, job training, child care, education, and temporary financial assistance programs; by developing programs that help lower income families to save and to acquire assets and financial skills; and by addressing structural inequality that allows poverty to persist and fester. Ways to reduce structural inequality include promoting mixed-income housing, encouraging regional planning to address inequality between urban and suburban jurisdictions, and supporting public transportation programs that reliably and efficiently help people who live in areas of high unemployment to commute to areas of high job growth and opportunity.

Expand Living Wage Laws. Living wage ordinances help to ensure that full-time minimum wage earners (70 percent of whom are adults) can support their families. Living wage laws have been enacted in more than seventy localities, ensuring that city or

county governments will not contract with businesses that pay workers wages less than what would be needed to live above poverty levels, given local economic conditions. Living wage standards range from a low of \$6.25 an hour in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to a high of \$12 an hour in Santa Cruz, California.^{cccxl}

Increase the Federal Minimum Wage. An increase in the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour would raise the wages of 7.3 million workers, and an additional 8.2 million workers would likely receive pay increases as a result of “spillover” effects. Such a hike would increase the real value of the minimum wage, which currently is about one-third of the average hourly wage, the minimum wage’s lowest value since 1949. Women and workers of color would reap the most benefit from a minimum wage increase, as would families with children. Low-wage workers who support families with children contribute to half of family earnings, on average, and 36 percent of workers who would be affected by a minimum wage increase to \$7.25 contribute 100 percent of their family's earnings.^{cccxl}

Help Low-Income Families Develop Assets. Policies that help poor and low-income families to develop long-term assets like savings accounts, homeownership equity, and savings for college education are gaining bipartisan support. These strategies shift the emphasis of poverty reduction strategies from solely providing cash assistance to helping poor and low-income families acquire resources necessary to achieve greater financial security. Several states are successfully experimenting with approaches that encourage asset development. These approaches include creating Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and state-level earned income tax credits, increasing homeownership programs, reducing or eliminating asset limits for public benefit programs, and implementing antipredatory lending measures. Evidence suggests that many of these strategies yield broader social and economic benefits, including increased educational attainment among children, greater levels of civic participation, and better health outcomes.^{cccxli} IDAs--matched savings accounts for low-income households--have been found to increase the likelihood that the poor will develop savings and assets, but they do not necessarily increase beneficiaries’ net worth.^{cccxlii} Nonetheless, when implemented with policies that protect the poor from predatory lending and improve beneficiaries’ knowledge of personal financial management, such strategies are promising means to allow low-income families to gain financial security.

Address Geographic Influences on Poverty. One of the greatest structural obstacles to reducing poverty is geography. Impoverished families often live in communities where a large percentage of other residents are also impoverished or subsist on low incomes. This geographic isolation increases the likelihood that poor families will live in substandard housing, face barriers to attaining job opportunities and commuting to communities where jobs are available, and have few options to access high-quality education. The federal Moving To Opportunity (MTO) demonstration program provides low-income families living in high-poverty neighborhoods with the option of relocating to mixed-income neighborhoods. A rigorous evaluation of the MTO program found that MTO yielded broad opportunity benefits for families that moved to mixed-income neighborhoods, including significant positive impacts on personal safety, housing quality,

adult mental health and obesity, teenage girls' mental health, school dropout rates, delinquency, and risky behavior.^{cccxlvi}

Health Insecurity

Health inequality and insecurity must be tackled by state and federal efforts to develop a universally accessible, comprehensive, and equitable health care system. The United States is the last modern, industrialized nation without a universal health care program. Health insurance coverage is primarily provided by employers, but as benefit costs rise employers are declining to offer coverage or are purchasing plans that require greater employer cost sharing. Health insurance coverage is increasingly unequal, disproportionately hurting those who need health care the most--racial and ethnic minorities, children, and lower income families. Less than half of low-wage workers have employer-provided health insurance from their own employer or a family member's employer, and female low wage workers are half as likely as male low-wage workers to receive health insurance from their employer.^{cccxlvii}

Federal programs such as Medicare, which is much more efficient than private plans because of its low administrative costs, should be expanded to include uninsured individuals. The ultimate goal would be to create a "Medicare for all" single-payer program that efficiently and equitably insures all Americans. Because Medicare is a federal program, subject to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (particularly Title VI, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, language status, and other factors), it contains mechanisms of accountability that can be expanded and enhanced to ensure that inequitable health care is addressed.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity should be eliminated by expanding existing state and federal food assistance programs such as food stamps and school lunch programs. The Food Stamp Program, for example, has successfully assisted millions of families that face food insecurity. The program currently feeds 17 million food stamp recipients, but benefits provide an average of 78 cents per meal, and program participation has declined 22 percent since 1996, in part due to tightened eligibility requirements. Yet an estimated 43 percent of those eligible for the program do not participate. Other federal programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program and school feeding programs provide for about 7.2 million pregnant low-income women and their infants and children each month. The National School Lunch Program serves more than 27 million meals daily.^{cccxlviii} A recent study found that children who benefit from federal safety net programs such as food stamps, WIC, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families have better health status, less food insecurity, and show less evidence of undernutrition than comparable children who are not enrolled in these programs.^{cccxliv} Expanding program eligibility, easing the enrollment process, and expanding outreach activities to enroll eligible families will help to ensure that avoidable health, education, and behavioral problems linked to poor nutrition and food insecurity among children will be avoided.

Moreover, local, state and federal governments should ensure that all communities have access to high-quality, low-cost nutritious foods by creating incentives for major grocery chains and other commercial food vendors to set up stores in areas with few such resources. High-poverty urban and rural communities are less likely than higher income areas to have full-service grocery stores or supermarkets, and are more often served by smaller, independent stores that do not or cannot offer high-quality, low-cost foods, particularly fresh produce. Residents of low-income communities are more likely to face transportation barriers that restrict their access to low-cost, high-quality foods that are more commonly available in supermarkets.^{cccl} Several local jurisdictions have established public-private partnerships to bring supermarkets to underserved areas. For example, the city of Rochester, New York, which experienced an 80 percent decline in grocery stores in the 1970s and 1980s, used public resources (the Federal Enterprise Community Zone program, the Community Development Block Grant program, and other sources) to attract a major supermarket chain to open stores in the city. This move provided jobs, greater economic growth, and improved access to healthful, low-cost foods for urban residents.^{cccli} More recently, Pennsylvania awarded a \$500,000 grant to help establish a supermarket in the Yorktown section of Philadelphia, part of a broader initiative to support the development of supermarkets and other food retailers in urban and rural communities that lack adequate access to supermarkets.^{ccclii}

Personal Security and Safety

Protection against crime and violence should be enhanced by adopting proven criminal justice policies that focus on prevention and do not rely solely on incarceration as an “after-the-fact” approach to deterring crime. Community policing, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and other crime prevention programs have proved effective in reducing low-level criminal activity before it escalates. Fundamentally, however, rates of crime and violence are linked to broader opportunity problems within some communities, such as high unemployment rates, insufficient job training, and community dislocation. To the extent that crime and violence reflect a lack of opportunity, many of the other opportunity policies described here and elsewhere are likely to contribute to a decline in crime rates.

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Mobility

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^{xxxiiii} Data on Asian Americans was first tracked in 1990, Hispanic data was first tracked in 1972. Census data on race before 1970 focused primarily on whites and African Americans. Citizenship was not tracked by the Census for any groups until 1976. The distinction between white and white non-Hispanic was not made until 1978.

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