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An Anatomy of Racial and Ethnic Trends in Male Earnings

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Abstract:

Progress in narrowing black-white earnings differences has been far from continuous, with some of the apparent progress resulting from labor force withdrawal among lower-skilled African Americans. This paper builds on prior research and documents racial and ethnic differences in male earnings from 1950 through 2010 using data from the decennial census and American Community Surveys. Emphasis is given to annual rather than weekly or hourly earnings. Treatment of imputed earnings greatly affects measured outcomes. We take a quantile approach, providing evidence on medians and other percentiles of the distribution. Black male joblessness rose to over 40% in 2010, the median black-white earnings gap being the largest in at least sixty years. The experience of black men contrasts with that of Hispanic men during the last decade, who exhibited earnings growth similar to white men. Black men are being left behind economically, a process exacerbated by weak labor market conditions.

Text: See [Discussion Paper No. 6766](#)

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