

The Impacts of the Recession on African Americans

By [Global Research](#)

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Whites are still America's preferred people. Blacks are still America's bottom dwellers. Hispanics are shadowing blacks but still maintaining their advantage - economically speaking.

Algernon Austin, a director at the Economic Policy Institute says, "when white America is in a recession, black America is in an economic depression."

Unemployment is one set of numbers that reveals these harsh realities.

In its monthly report, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) announced massive jobs losses and emphasized the severity of the crisis by noting that more jobs have been lost in the past four months than during the entire span of this recession.

However, the number of jobless whites is still anchored below the national average. Black unemployment exceeded the national average before America admitted being in a recession and has since soared into the double digits.

Economists and researchers, such as Alexandra Cawthorn, of the Center for American Progress, claim that even in a good economy twice as many blacks are jobless.

The current recession, however, has revealed suspicious trends that are not easily covered by blanket statistics or blanket explanations.

Black Males and Teenagers Get Double Thrashings

Cawthorn admits although the recession has taken its toll on most Americans "black men have felt its effects particularly hard."

A study conducted by Mark Levine of the Center for Economic Development reveals the dismal predicament.

In Milwaukee, Buffalo and Detroit, more than 50% of black men lacked jobs. In Milwaukee, this rate "is almost three times higher than the rate for whites," Levine said.

Education is a common explanation for white preference, but Levine countered this excuse by noting that while black high school and college graduation had increased, employers were still closing their doors to blacks.

Even in Washington, a city with a black majority, Levine found that a third of black men were unemployed.

“The crisis of black male joblessness pervades urban America,” he said.

Algernon Austin presented a similar case for black youth, who are also finding themselves burdened by race. “For teens overall, the employment rate last year was the lowest since World War II... but for black teens it was abysmal.”

Normally, class is a major determining factor in the teenage job market, Austin explains. The more well-off families are, the more likely their children are to be hired, “but last summer, even white teens from impoverished families had higher employment rates than middle-class black teens.”

Putting Hispanics in the mix

America’s recession has also hit hispanics particularly hard. However, comparing their jobless rates with that of blacks shows that hispanics maintain a clear advantage.

In Milwaukee, for example, Levine found that black males also had higher jobless rates than hispanics. “Almost three times as high,” according to his study.

The Pew Hispanic Center compounded the bad news for blacks with their study, which divided hispanics into two groups – foreign-born and native.

While everyone seems to have suffered during the recession, Pew revealed that one group gained. “Among major racial and ethnic groups, only native-born hispanics added jobs in the past year.”

Rakesh Kochhar, Associate Director of Research at Pew, claims that these gains are “principally a function of demographics.” Since native-born hispanics are the fastest growing segment of the labor force, they logically have increased chances of getting available jobs.

Although Pew’s analysis did not calculate how many in the “foreign-born” group were illegal, Pew acknowledges that about one-third of the immigrant workforce is ‘unauthorized’.

That the high rate of hispanic unemployment is represented by immigrants means that not only are blacks the least preferred employees when compared with fellow Americans, but blacks are also second-class to immigrants who in large part are not even legally entitled to jobs.

The BLS warns that the employment situation is not expected to get better any time soon, and those that are most affected by this crisis will have the slowest recovery.

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