

RACE, ETHNICITY & HEALTH CARE

FACT SHEET

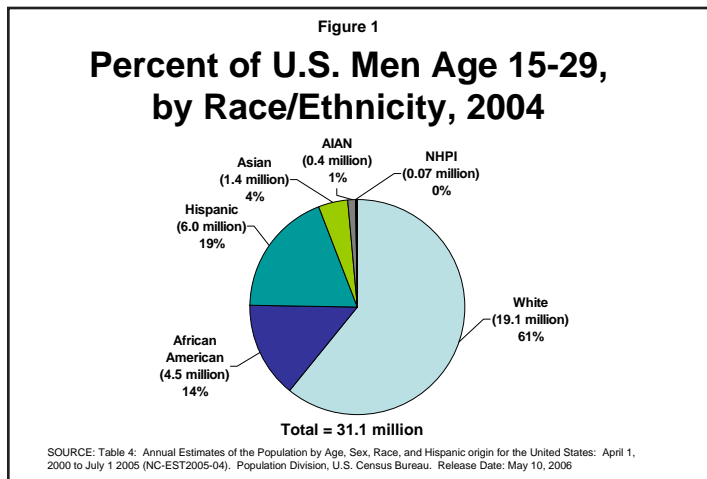
July 2006

Young African American Men in the United States

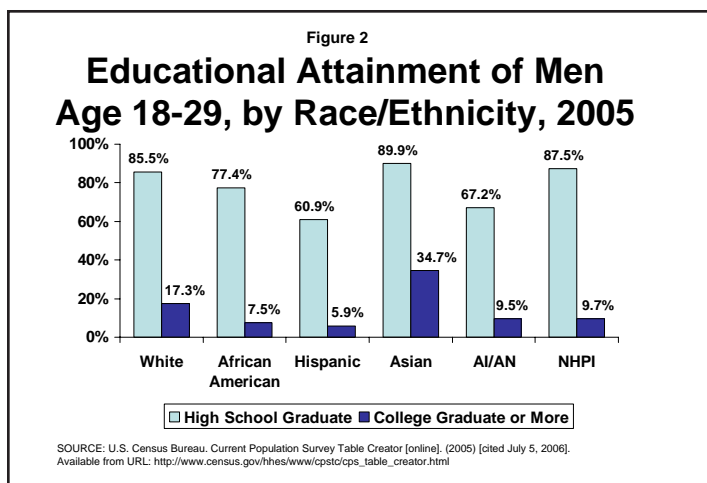
The experiences of young African American men differ in many ways from those of young men of other racial and ethnic groups; and yet are similar in other respects. This fact sheet, based largely on information collected from government sources such as the U.S. Census, National Vital Statistics System, and national surveys, examines the experiences of young African American men in education, employment, and the criminal justice system. It also compares how they fare in health coverage and health status with that of young men of other racial/ethnic groups.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS

In 2004, there were 4.5 million African American men between the ages of 15 and 29 living in the United States, about 14% of all men in this age group (Fig. 1).

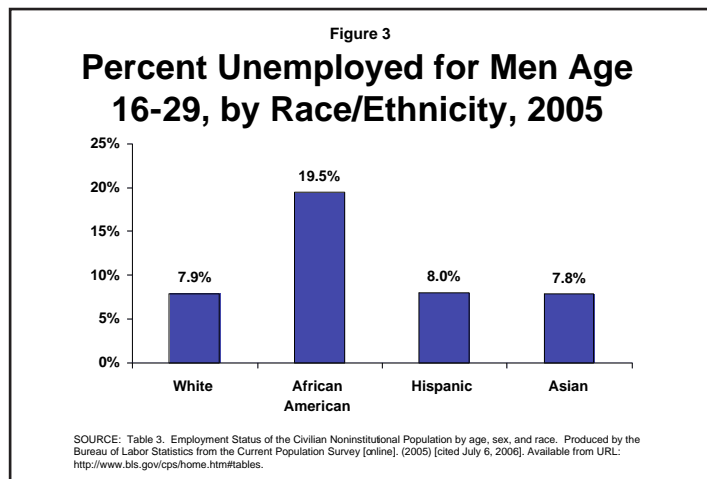


Fewer than 8% of young African American men have graduated from college compared to 17% of whites and 35% of Asians. Differences in income by educational level are well documented, as are racial and ethnic differences in income by educational level.¹ People with more education tend to have higher incomes, but in 2002 at every educational level, African Americans with the same education made less than whites. Young African American

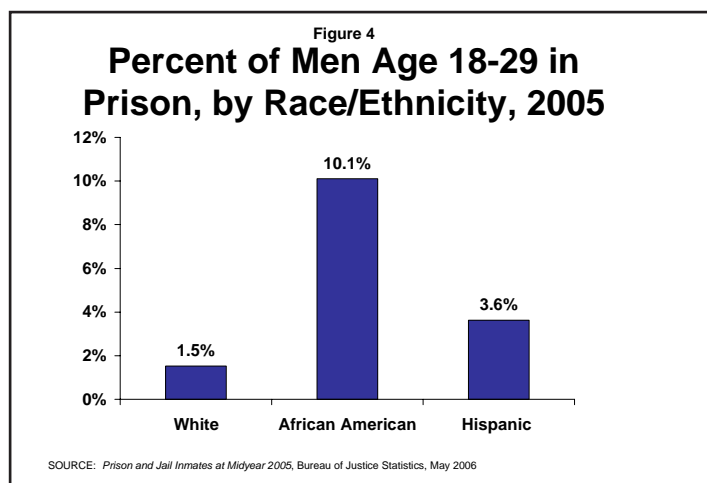


men are more likely than Hispanics and American Indians to graduate from high school, but are less likely to graduate than whites and Asians (Fig. 2). Less than 45% of white, African American and Hispanic male high school graduates between the age of 16 and 24 are enrolled in college compared to 68% of young Asian high school graduates.²

The unemployment rate for young African American men is over twice the rate for young white, Hispanic and Asian men (Fig. 3). In addition, fewer African American men between the ages of 16 and 29 are in the labor force compared to white, Hispanic and Asian men in the same age group. Over 20% of young African American men live in poverty compared to 18% of Hispanic, 12% of Asian and 10% of white men.³

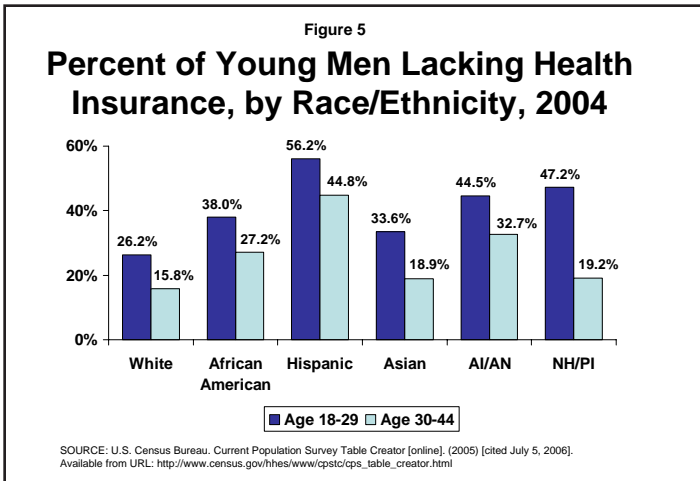


African American men are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. The percentage of young African American men in prison is nearly three times that of Hispanic men and nearly seven times that of white men (Fig. 4). While African American men represent 14% of the population of young men in the U.S., they represent over 40% of the prison population.⁴ This figure does not include the number of young men on parole.

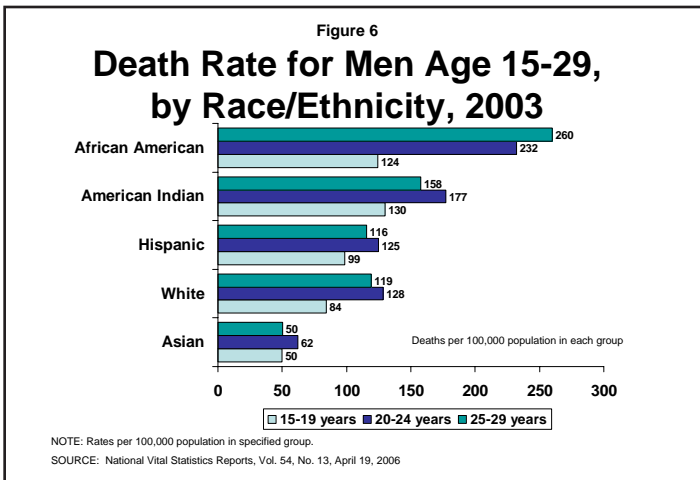


HEALTH COVERAGE AND STATUS

Nearly 4 out of 10 young African American men lack health insurance. The percentage of uninsured African American men, while higher than that of whites, is lower than that of Hispanics, American Indians and Native Hawaiians (Fig. 5). Young men, regardless of race or ethnicity, are more likely to be uninsured than any other age group. Health insurance is important to a person's overall health. People without health insurance are more likely than those with health insurance to delay needed care, less likely to fill prescriptions, and more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage when they do finally seek care. They are also less likely to have a usual source of care.

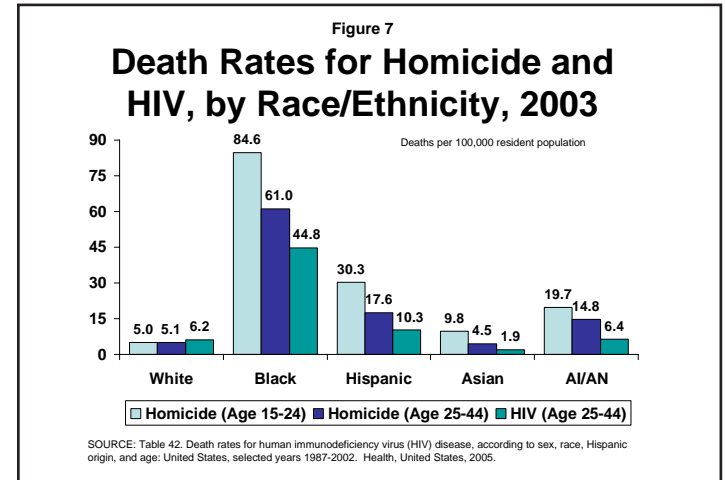


Young African American men die at a rate that is at least 1.5 times the rate of young white and Hispanic men, and almost three times the rate of young Asian men (Fig. 6). While the death rate drops for men ages 25 to 29 for most groups, it continues to rise among African Americans.



The leading causes of death for all young men ages 15-29, regardless of race or ethnicity, are unintentional injury (e.g. car accident, firearm, or drowning), suicide, and homicide. For young African American men, more deaths are caused by homicide than any other cause. Additionally, HIV is the sixth leading cause of death for young African American and Hispanic men, yet for other racial groups, HIV is not among the top 10 causes of death.⁵

The homicide death rate for young African American men is three times the rate for Hispanics, the population group with the next highest homicide mortality rate (Fig. 7). Although the rate declines for older African American men, death rates for homicide among African American men ages 25-44 are still 3 times that of Hispanics and American Indians of that age group. Homicide rates also are higher than the HIV death rate for African American men ages 25-44.



The higher death rates experienced by young African American men mask some of their healthier behaviors. For example, African American men between the ages of 18 and 24 are less likely than white men to be current cigarette smokers (21% vs. 33%), a major risk factor for lung cancer.⁶

CONCLUSIONS

The 4.5 million African American men ages 15 to 29 represent 14% of the U.S. male population of that age and 12% of all African Americans in the U.S. Their high rates of death, incarceration, and unemployment, and relatively low levels of college graduation rates raise concerns for African American families and the nation's economy. The contribution of social factors to the health problems of young African American men deserves further attention than thus far received. By documenting the extent of the problem and by examining the factors associated with the lives of young African American men who avoid problems and lead successful lives, policymakers will be better equipped to develop and implement solutions.

Sources

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4. Harrison PM and Beck AJ. Prisoners in 2004. *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin*. October 2005.
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6. Table 65. *Health, United States 2005*. National Center for Health Statistics. Additional copies of this publication (#7541) are available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org.