

Black History Month: Facts and Figures

The History of Black History Month

Black History Month began in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. In that year, historian Carter G. Woodson and Minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by peoples of African descent. Known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the group sponsored a national Negro History week in 1926.

Post 1960s, Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month on many college campuses. President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 43,213,173 African Americans/Blacks in the U.S., as of 2016
- African Americans/Blacks make up 13.3% of the total US population
- The District of Columbia had the highest percentage of African American/Blacks (50.6%), followed by Mississippi (38.2%).
- Median age for African Americans/Blacks in 2015, 33 years, compared to median age of 37 for total U.S. population

EDUCATION

- Since the landmark case of Brown vs. the Board of Education in 1955, African Americans/Blacks have significantly increased their high school graduation rates, and college attainment rates.
- Public high school 4 year graduation rates 2015-16: African American = 76.4%, White = 88.3%, US Total = 84.1%
- 2016 high school completion rates (diploma or equivalency program): African American/Black = 91.1%, White = 95.2%, US Total = 91.7%
- 3 Fields of study with most bachelor's degrees 2015: African American = 39,189 (Business), 24,915 (Health professions), 16,152 (Social sciences/history)
- African American/Black women earned more than half of all science and engineering degrees completed by African Americans/Blacks, surpassing their male counterparts.
- There are currently more than 100 Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) in 19 states.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Percent of Total Bachelor's (BA/BS) and Master's (MA/MS) degree earned by African Americans/Blacks:

	BA/BS '15	MA/MS '15	BA/BS '16	MA/MS '16
Total	21.3%	5%	22.7%	5.2%
Males	17.6%	2.5%	20.4%	3.9%
Females	24.6%	7.2%	24.9%	6.3%

HEALTH

- 61% of African Americans age 50-64 have high blood pressure
- 23% of African Americans/Blacks age 50-64 have diabetes
- The leading causes of death for African Americans/Blacks age 65 and older (heart disease, cancer, and stroke) have been decreasing since 1999
- 43% of African Americans/Blacks age 35-64 are obese compared to 36.4% of Non-Hispanic Whites.

HOME OWNERSHIP

- Homeownership rates have fallen for African American/Black households: In 1994, 42.3% of these households owned their homes; in 2016, 41.3% were homeowners.
- For African American/Black households, 47.3% were homeowners in 2000; that number decreased to 41.2% in 2015.

EMPLOYMENT/INCOME

- Approximately 18 million African Americans/Blacks are in the labor force, either working or actively seeking employment. 2.8 million are between the ages of 16 and 24, and 2.8 million are 55 years or older.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the share of jobless African Americans/Blacks in the labor force fell to 7.1%, the lowest level since April 2000. It was 1.5 percentage points down from a year ago, and it helped create the smallest gap between Non-Hispanic White and African American/Black employment on record.
- Among African American/Blacks, the median household income was \$44,100 in 2015, compared to \$75,100 for Non-Hispanic Whites in 2015.
- More than 20% of the African American/Black working population over 16 years old are employees of the federal, state, or local government, which is just over 5% higher than the national average.
- A much smaller percentage of African Americans are self-employed (3.6%) than the national average of 6.2%.

CAREERS

- Although African Americans/Blacks comprise 13% of the nation, they account for only 4% of the physician workforce.
- In major law firms, only 3% of associates and less than 2% of partners are African Americans/Blacks.
- In academic institutions, 6% of all faculty are African American/Black.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Over 2.5 million business are owned and operated by African Americans/Blacks (2015)
- Only 4% of those business have paid employees; most African American/Black business owners are solo business owners
- African American/Black-owned businesses accounted for 34.8% of all businesses in the District of Columbia, which led the nation; followed by Mississippi with 27.7%, and Georgia with 27.6%.

VOTING

- Overall, 87% of African American/Black voters identify with the Democratic Party, compared with just 7% who identify as Republican.
- The African American/Black voter turnout rate declined for the first time in 20 years in a presidential election, falling to 59.6% in 2016 after reaching a record-high 66.6% in 2012.
- With Barack Obama on the ballot in 2012, the African American/Black voter turnout rate surpassed that of whites for the first time.

REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS

- The 115th Congress (2017) has 47 African Americans in the House and 3 in the Senate
- The 114th Congress (2016) had 46 African Americans in the House and 2 in the Senate
- The 113th Congress (2015) had 43 African Americans in the House and 1 in the Senate
- When the 92nd Congress took office in 1971, there were 12 representatives in the House and 1 senator