

Research Brief

THE STATE OF BLACKS IN NEW MEXICO: THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY AS REFLECTED BY THE “DATA HUB”

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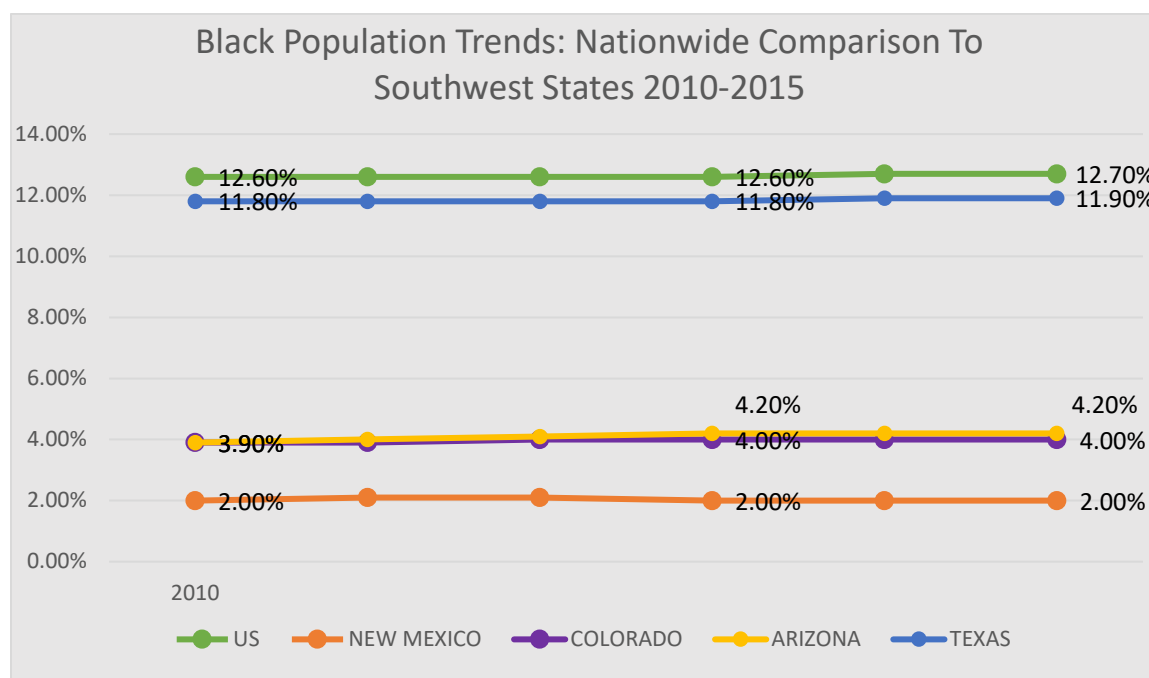


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Background

Research focused on racial and ethnic inequalities in New Mexico is generally contextualized differently from similar work with a national focus due to the unique demographic profile of the state. New Mexico was the first state in the nation to reach majority-minority status, this standing is driven by the large Hispanic or Latino population (47%) coupled with its Native American community (which constitutes 10.2% percent of the state's population). The African American community in New Mexico represents a more modest 3.1% of the state's overall population when calculated as single or mixed race, only 2.3% if narrowing to single-race. As the figure below illustrates, this is significantly lower than the national average of 12.7% (13.9% if mixed race is included), and lower than other states in our region. Therefore, unlike the rest of the nation where racial inequalities are largely discussed within a Black-White paradigm, here in New Mexico the dominant narrative centers on a Brown-White paradigm.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American and American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2008-14

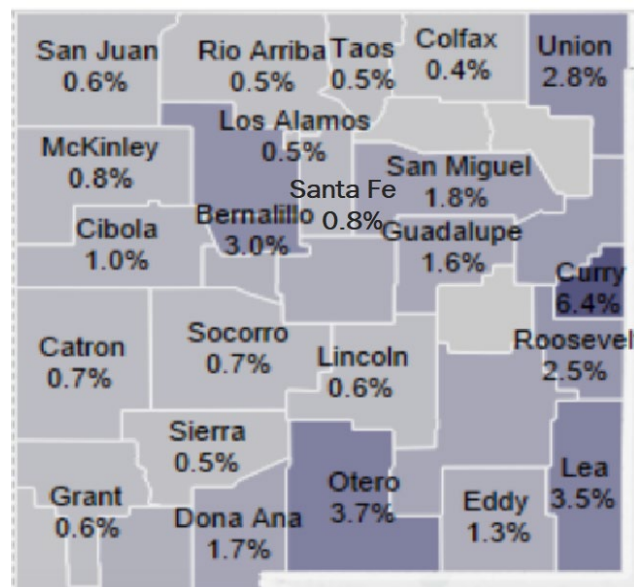
This can lead to less focus on the African American community, a community that faces many disparities in important outcomes. The recent release of the [Data Hub](#) provides the ideal data to address this limitation. The [New Mexico Office of African American Affairs \(OAAA\)](#) recognizes that data analytics is integral to the process of improving the economic conditions and empowerment of the African American community. The OAAA therefore collaborates with researchers who can help collect, interpret and improve our ability to visualize the data available for analysis of Blacks in New Mexico. The [Data Hub](#) represents a key collaboration with UNM, as the [Center for Education Policy Research \(CEPR\)](#) helped build the Data Hub webpage and underlying data visualization, and the RWJF Center for Health Policy will assist in the creation of several policy briefs utilizing the data.

Demographic Profile

Although African American New Mexicans are only roughly 3% of the state's population, as the map below shows, there is important variation across the state. Curry County in the eastern segment of the state has the highest ratio of African Americans with 6.4% while Bernalillo County, the state's most populous county, has 3% African Americans. The African American population has also risen slightly over the last seven years, rising from 2.9% in 2008 to the 3.1% we see now. The stability of the Black population in New Mexico is driven largely by the youthfulness of the community, as the median age of the African American community is 34 compared to 49 for non-Hispanic whites in New Mexico. This means that half of the Black population in New Mexico are under the age of 34 and therefore of the millennial generation. This significant difference in age is very similar to the national age difference between Blacks and non-Hispanic whites (42 for Whites/33 for Blacks), and has major implications for education policy, a topic we will analyze in a future brief.

The youthfulness of the Black population in New Mexico ensures longevity for this population, but also highlights the need for millennial focused communications for any programming targeting the Black community. This will include investing in the use of social media and ideally directly engaging the youth in this effort to ensure that programming and policy interventions to address inequalities are in line with this segment of the overall population's needs and interests.

Black Population in New Mexico by County (2015)



Source: New Mexico Office of African American Affairs DataHub, 2015

The State of Black New Mexico Economically

The primary goal of this initial brief is to utilize the data available in the Data Hub to analyze how the Black population in New Mexico fares economically, utilizing the depth of data available in this new resource and making comparisons to other racial and ethnic populations in

New Mexico whenever possible. In summary, we find that the Black community in New Mexico trails non-Hispanic whites in essentially every major economic category in New Mexico, and in many cases the Hispanic population as well. These economic inequalities are critically imperative to identify, as the economic well being of a community has significant ramifications for all other outcomes we will examine in this brief series, including education, health, and incarceration rates.

One of the most commonly cited indicators of economic well-being is median household income, as this data point tells us a lot about how a community is doing relative to others in the same state. The median income for African American households in New Mexico in 2014 was \$37,773, slightly lower than the \$38,236 for Hispanic households, but significantly lower than the \$53,422 for White, non-Hispanics in New Mexico or \$55,988 for Asian American households. Consistent with most economic indicators available in the Data Hub, American Indian households face the greatest disparity in New Mexico, with a household income of \$31,592.

When we compare Black household income in New Mexico to the national estimate of \$35,481, we see that Blacks in New Mexico fare a bit better than Blacks across the nation. Similar to what we saw with population density, there is also significant variation in household income across the state for African Americans. As is the case for the state overall, Black household income is the highest in Los Alamos county (\$88,333), with similarly high-income levels in Sandoval county, the home county for the city of Rio Rancho (\$71,628). Conversely, Black household income is incredibly low in Guadalupe county (\$5,000), the low for the Black population in New Mexico. This is reflective of the urban/rural divide in New Mexico, as similar to Native Americans in the state, many Blacks in New Mexico are living in impoverished rural areas of New Mexico. This is somewhat distinct from the national narrative regarding inequalities in income facing Blacks, which tends to focus on the plight of the inner city. However, we do see that in the most urban environment in the state, Bernalillo County, the Black household income level is \$35,139, significantly lower than the overall household income for the county at \$47,481.

The percentage below the poverty level of a population is another strong indicator of a community's overall economic well-being, particularly in New Mexico where the poverty rate is among the highest in the nation at 20.6%. Similar to the pattern for median income, 21.8% of Blacks in New Mexico live below the poverty level, five percent lower than the national average for Blacks of 27%. There is a lower percentage of Blacks living below the poverty level in New Mexico than either Hispanic (25.5%) or American Indian New Mexicans (34.6%), however Blacks fare much worse than non-Hispanic whites, with 13.4% or Asian Americans at 12.3%.

Unemployment in New Mexico is higher than the national average and currently stands at 6.2%. When we look at variation by race we see that 11.7% of African Americans are unemployed in New Mexico, which is higher than all other racial and ethnic groups with the exception of American Indians (19.0%), who consistently trail all other groups across most economic indicators. In contrast to other measures of economic well-being, the unemployment rate for Blacks in New Mexico is lower than the national rate of 7.8% for Blacks.

Finally, we explore home ownership rates for African Americans relative to other racial and ethnic populations in New Mexico. Home ownership is a marker of economic and residential stability and correlated with many other measures of social well-being. Blacks in New Mexico are more likely to own a home (43.9%) than Blacks nationally (41.2%), but much less than New Mexicans of other racial and ethnic groups. Whites in New Mexico have the highest home ownership rate at 71.1%, 64.8% of Hispanics own their home, and just over 60% of both Asian American and American Indians in New Mexico own their homes. Thus, Blacks are 20%-30% less likely to own homes than any other racial and ethnic group in New Mexico.

Homeownership in our view is the most important area revealed in our data analysis, as depressed homeownership is a strong indicator of limited asset building and investment which drastically limits potential financial growth for Black families in the state. This is an area where policy interventions could make a substantial impact, and fortunately, there are models from other states that can be implemented. For example, the African American Alliance for Homeownership in Oregon provides a robust set of resources for the African American community in that state regarding the homeownership process, including coaches to walk folks through the process of buying their first home.¹ This organization also provides an annual home ownership fair intended to be a “one-stop-shop” for African American families interested in becoming a homeowner. We would recommend that the Office of African American Affairs consider leading a long-term initiative that would engage both the private and public sector in creative approaches to increase the Black home-ownership rate in New Mexico.

Conclusions and Future Briefs

Data provides insight into the economic issues facing New Mexico’s African American children, families, and communities, enabling us to ask better questions about the challenges we face. This new tool called the Data Hub is essential for surmising the adverse effects of economic disparities among African Americans, and to help us prioritize where to invest limited resources to address the inequalities within the Black community in New Mexico.

This initial brief highlights the power of the Data Hub for future research and provides a demographic profile of the African American population. In summary, the Black population in New Mexico comprises a smaller percentage of the state’s population in New Mexico than Blacks nationally or in neighboring states. However, the Black community in New Mexico is significantly younger than non-Hispanic whites in the state, yielding slight but steady increases in population density in the future. As this brief illustrates, the relatively small population of the Black community can result in overlooking inequalities that face the population. We begin our short series of briefs drawing on this data source with economic well-being, as it is one of the best indicators of how well a population is faring in a state, and is highly correlated with other important outcomes.

Our analysis of the data available in the Data Hub reveals that the standing of the Black community economically is complex, as Blacks tend to have better economic outcomes in New

¹ <http://www.aaah.org/about-us>

Mexico than Blacks do nationally. However, a narrow focus on comparing the standing of Blacks in New Mexico to national numbers would mask some important inequalities facing the African American community in New Mexico, as Blacks lag behind Whites in essentially every indicator of economic well-being in the state. Furthermore, in many cases the Black community in New Mexico fares worse than Asian Americans and Hispanics as well. This contradiction emphasizes the need for the rich data that is available through the Data Hub tool which will provide multiple vantage points to assess how the Black community is faring across multiple outcomes. We believe that the inequality facing the Black community in New Mexico in regard to home ownership is the most important finding from this initial brief, and fortunately an area where progress can be made relatively quickly. Improving the homeownership rates for Blacks in the state could dramatically increase intergenerational wealth in the Black community and improve the overall well-being of this population. We therefore strongly suggest more concentrated effort to identify challenges associated with home ownership for the African American community in New Mexico with future research. Lastly, we propose further initiatives to implement home-owning education programs and to expand special financing programs for younger families.

The RWJF Center at UNM team will continue to draw from this invaluable resource to analyze the state of Blacks in New Mexico regarding health, education, and criminal justice over the next two months with an eye toward proving legislators and other policy makers with the information required to improve the lives of the Black community in the state with sound and data driven policy decisions.

Sources

American Community Survey, 2014 1-YR Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau. Tables DP05, S1903, B25003, B25003 B-I, S2301, B17020 B-I.