



THE UNRELENTING CHALLENGE OF YOUNG BLACK MALE UNEMPLOYMENT

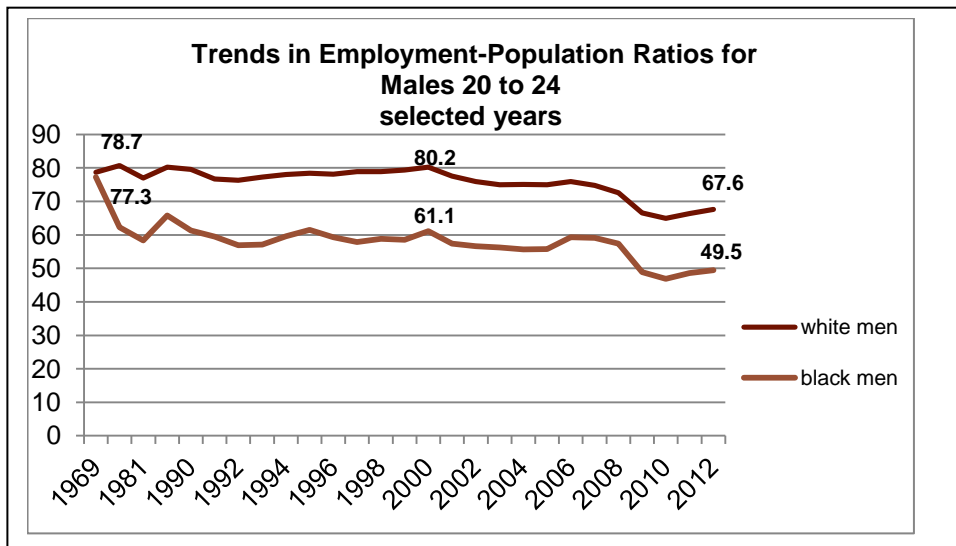
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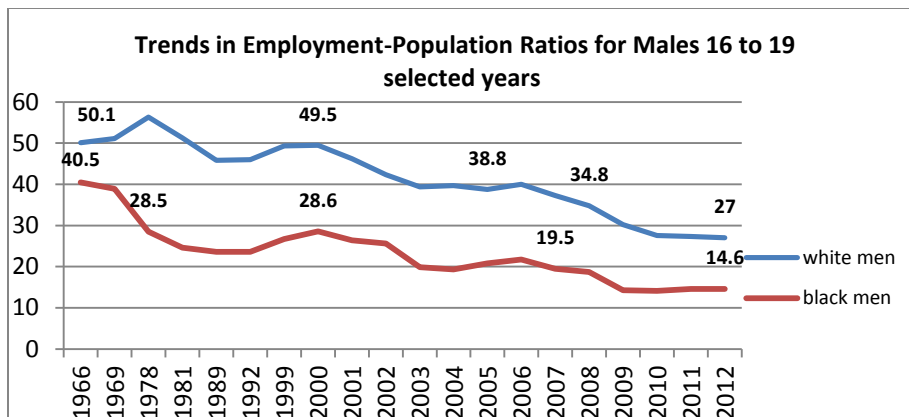
Today, young black men in many low income communities are finding themselves virtually locked out of employment opportunity. The confluence of poor schooling, low education attainment, lack of early work experience or career exposure, over-zealous arrests and incarceration, and employer reluctance to hire have rendered a substantial segment of black men unemployable very early in their adult life, with few options available to get back on track. There are 3 million black men age 16 to 24. Many of them are enrolled in school and doing well. But far too many are struggling. In 2011, there were 663,211 who were either a high school dropout, in school but overage, or incarcerated. Add to that number the thousands who graduated high school with insufficient academic skills for postsecondary labor market success and there is a substantial segment of this young black male population in need of additional education and labor market assistance. The facts and recommendations (along with the charts and graphs) below are taken from a soon-to-be-released CLASP publication, ***Feel the Heat! The Unrelenting Challenge of Young Black Male Unemployment: Policies and Practices that Can Make a Difference***

The Facts

1. The high unemployment situation of black males has been persistent and historically intractable. It has endured over decades. Work opportunities for black male teens have all but disappeared.

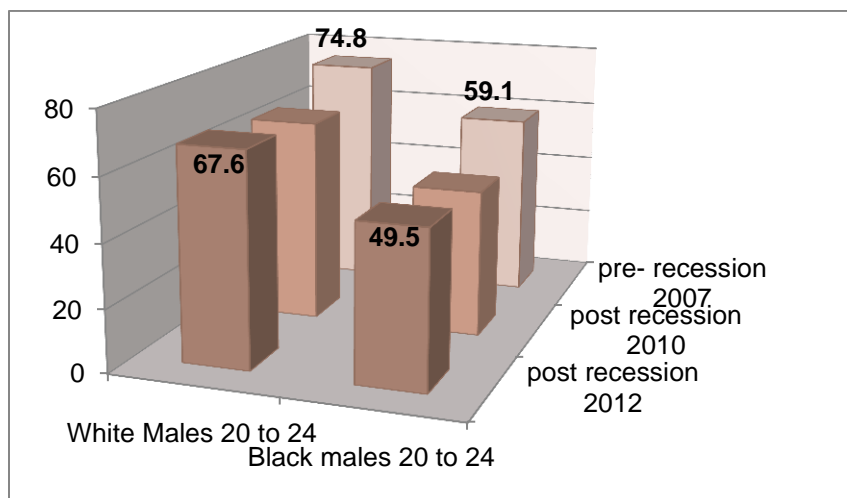


The federally funded summer jobs program was created in response to the civil unrest of the 1960s and for 30 years provided early work experience for low income youth. The loss of federal funding for summer jobs and other publicly funded youth development programs leaves young black men with few opportunities to develop employability skills and hone appropriate work behaviors.

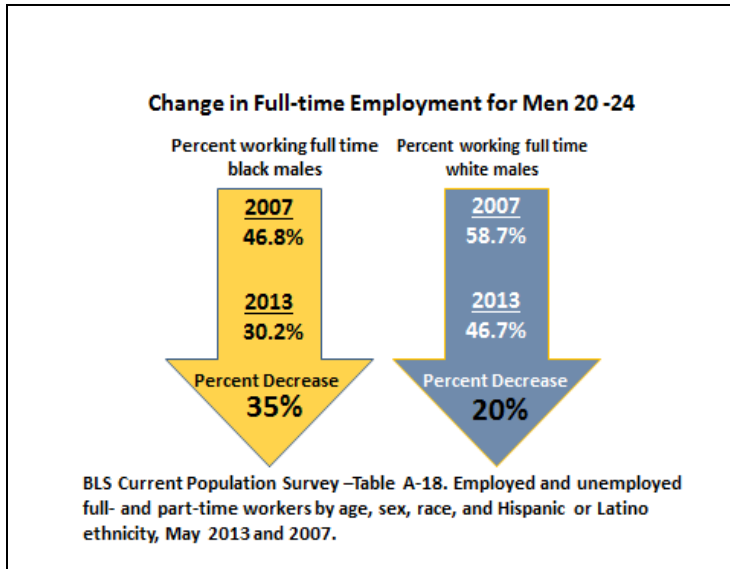


2. The “great recession” dealt a knock-out blow to young black men.

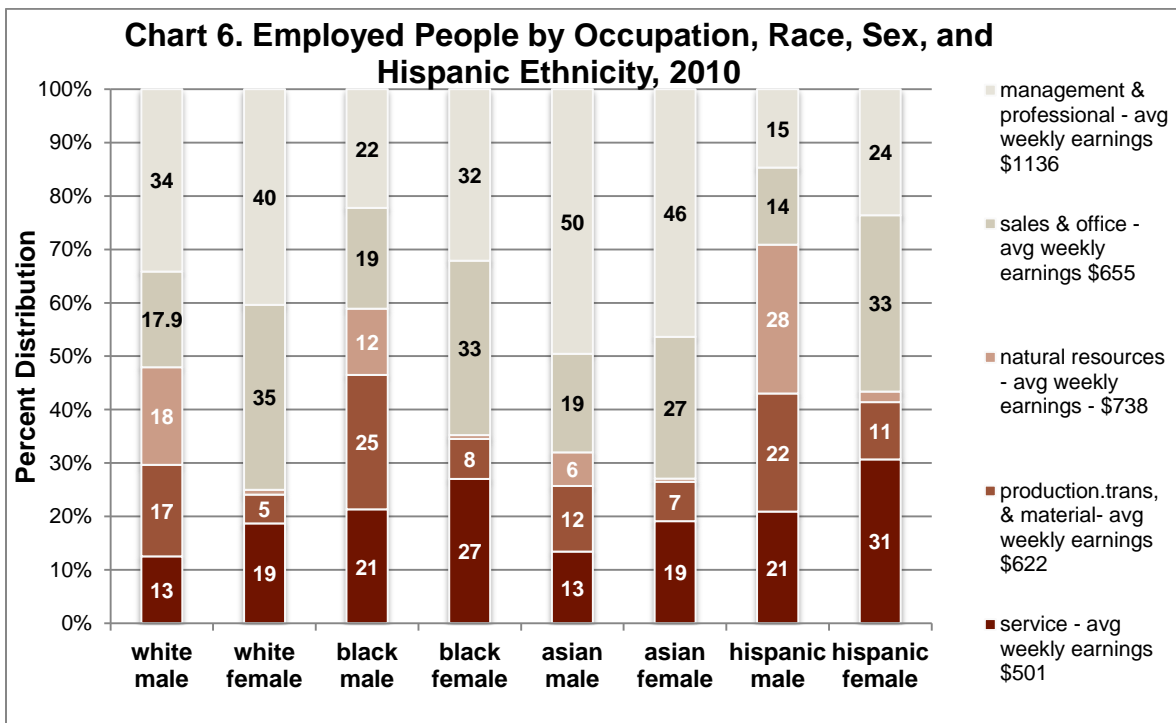
While all groups suffered during the recession, black men – in particular young black men – experienced a much lower rate of employment during the recession and much slower growth in employment post-recession.



In addition to lower employment rates, after the recession young black men were much less likely to be working full time than young white males.



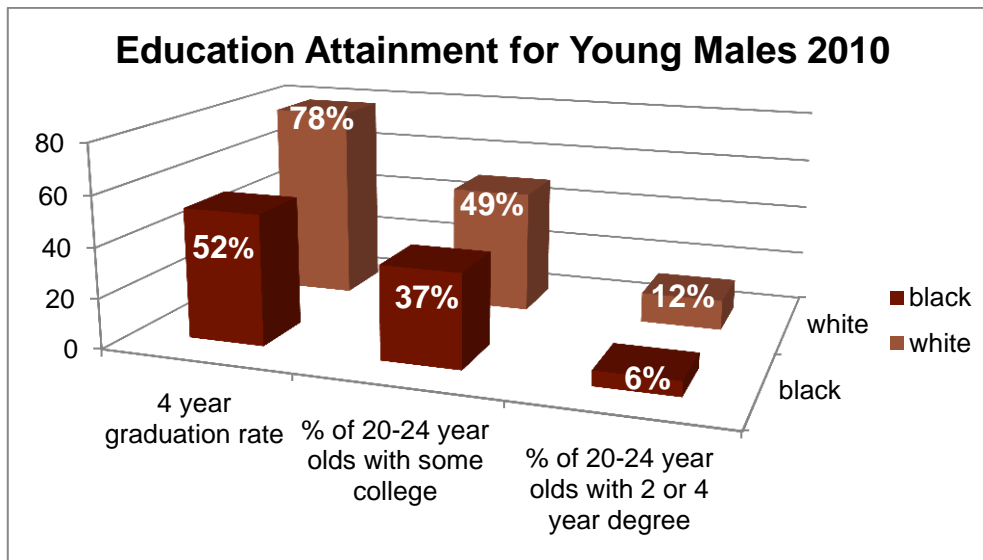
3. Black males, as well as Hispanic males, are over-represented in low-wage occupations and under-represented in professional and management jobs.

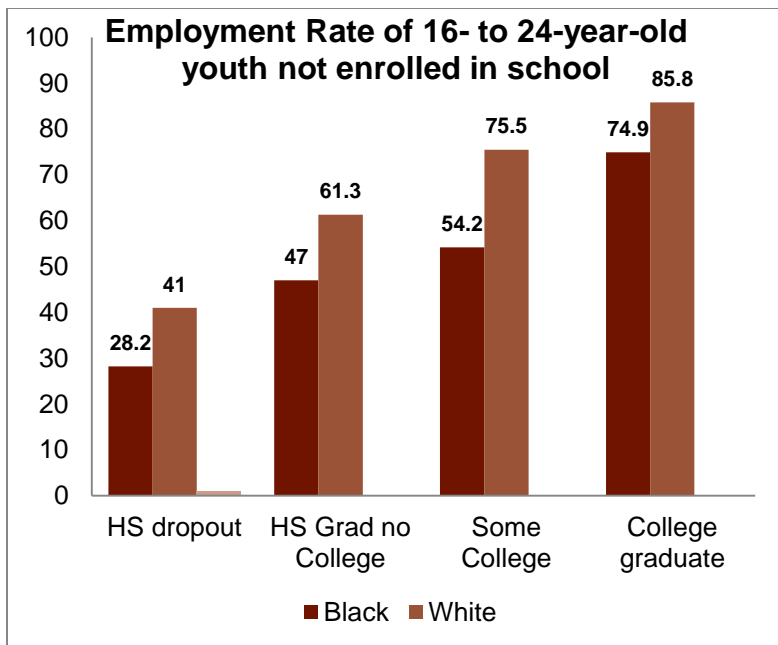


Nearly 50% of black males who are employed work in the two occupational clusters with the lowest wages. This concentration of black men in the two lowest wage occupation categories has been unchanged for 20 years. While there has been an increase since 2000 in the proportion of black men in management and professional occupations (from 20% to 23%), it is still substantially below all other groups except Hispanic males.

4. Despite substantive education gains since 1970 in high school completion and college enrollment for young black males, they still lag substantially behind their white male counterparts in educational attainment.

College enrollment for young black men doubled from 16% in 1970 to 33% in 2012, but on key education outcomes that impact labor market competitiveness – such as college completion – young black men lag behind. While employment rates increase with educational attainment the disparities between labor market outcomes for black and white youth persist. It should be noted that white high school dropouts are employed at a higher rate than black high school graduates and white youth with no college are employed at higher rates than black youth with college.





5. The criminal justice system is delivering a crippling blow to employment prospects for young black men

- Black men 18 and 19 years of age were imprisoned at more than nine times the rate of white males.
- Black men 20 to 24 were imprisoned at more than seven times the rate of young white men.
- When surveyed 60% of employers indicated they would not hire an ex-offender.
- Studies show that increased availability and accessibility of criminal background data is associated with worse labor market outcomes for ex-offenders.

From Focus Group Interviews with Young Black men

The vicious cycle – “If you’re straight out of high school then of course you don’t have any experience and if you don’t have any experience they aren’t trying to give you a job.”

Can’t hide the skin color or the tattoo – “Being black...Appearance is a huge factor, I’m 6’4 and black - and people are intimidated.”

Expanding Horizons - “I wasn’t even thinking about a GED or getting a job, I was trying to figure out how to survive. But I knew that I didn’t want to go back to jail ... Once I started attending the program, I realized that there were so many more opportunities here beyond just getting my GED.”

Policies and Practices that Can Make a Difference

1. Leveraging leadership and public will at all levels to acknowledge and embrace this challenge and work in concert to effect long-term solutions.
2. Setting high expectations for our public systems that touch these young men and of our

educational funding streams to adequately prepare and steward young black men to high academic achievement and labor market preparedness.

3. Investing in aggressive outreach and dropout recovery efforts to reconnect those who have fallen outside the labor market mainstream to supported education and training pathways to labor market opportunity.
4. Investing in job creation, subsidizing employment opportunities in the public and private sector, to provide early work experience to youth in economically distressed communities and to restore work as a norm for adolescent and young adult development. The experience with the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund and the ARRA Summer Jobs, each of which put more than a quarter of a million people to work, demonstrate the capacity of states and local areas to manage this at scale.
5. Building the community support systems to provide the mentoring, education support, connections to resources, and other supports necessary to keep young men on positive paths.
6. Replacing harsh school discipline policies and zero-tolerance arrest policies and practices with developmentally appropriate strategies that put youth on positive pathways. Expanding the state and local efforts curtailing the indiscriminate use of criminal background checks to deny employment opportunities to a large number of black men.
7. Working in tandem with business and industry to build pipelines that connect youth from low-income communities to good jobs in growing sectors of the local economy. Creating a Human Capital Investment Fund associated with every major publicly funded infrastructure project that would provide the resources for industry to work with communities to build such pipelines.