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“A Black American Educational Attainment Bulletin: An Updated Forecast”

In 2011, BlackEconomics.org analyzed and forecasted out to 2050 seven important Black American economic variables in a monograph entitled [53](#): Population, employment, income, entrepreneurship, educational attainment, criminal justice, and health. This bulletin on educational attainment follows up that analysis in consideration of Black America’s future.

“Do Nothing” forecasts for educational attainment (average years of schooling (AYS) for those 18 years of age and older) from 53 were:¹

	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Black American AYS (years)	12.79	13.30	13.83	14.83	14.96

We prepared AYS estimates for 2011-2020 using data from the US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics’ *Digest of Education Statistics (Digest)*, which are based on US Department of the Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Survey*.² The *Digest* provides data on the “Number of persons 18 years and over, by highest level of educational attainment, sex, race/ethnicity, and age.” The data are classified by multiple levels of education. We assigned years of education to the levels of education and applied related person shares (i.e., the proportion of total persons 18 years and older who attained various levels of education). We extrapolated the 2020 AYS to 2050 using the average annual percentage change in AYS for 1994-2020 (0.0039%). The revised 2020-2050 AYS forecasts are presented below.

	2020	2030	2040	2050
Black American AYS (years)	13.30	13.83	14.38	14.95

The updated forecasts mirror closely the original forecasts. The forecasts show that by 2050 the average Black American over 18 years of age will have attained nearly 15 years of schooling, which is equivalent to being one-year shy of having attained a bachelor’s degree.

These estimates are provided with a cautionary note: Despite the hysteretic pressures that will be imposed on educational systems to sustain the status quo, evolving information technologies, potential future health pandemics, and general economic transformations are likely to modify/disrupt educational systems and metrics that are used to measure educational attainment over the next 30 years.

¹ The “Do Nothing” forecasts assumed that Black Americans would not adopt any policies or actions to modify our 2010 modus operandi through 2050.

² Statistics from the *Digest of Education Statistics* are available at <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/> (Ret. 122021).