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“Is Black America Progressing?”

It is customary to assess progress periodically. In the table below, BlackEconomics.org considers 13 selected socioeconomic variables and related statistics for the past two decades. We interpreted the statistics and concluded that progress occurred (i.e., there was improvement from 2000 to 2020—light green rows) or that progress did not occur (orange rows).

Line No.	Selected Socioeconomic Variables for Black America*	Statistical Results		
		2000	2010	2020
1	Annual average population growth for the decade (percent change)	1.79%	1.20%	0.98%
2	Labor force as share of the population (percent)	45.78%	44.26%	45.37%
3	Employment as share of the population (percent)	42.32%	37.19%	40.19%
4	Holders of high school diplomas as percent of the population (percent)	22.99%	23.18%	22.83%
5	Holders of bachelor's degrees as percent of the population (percent)	6.09%	7.83%	11.29%
6	Incarcerated persons as percent of the population (percent)	2.40%	2.11%	1.31%
7	Number of Black banks (depository institutions)	48	33	20
8	Number of Black American business (millions)	1.2	2.6	3.4
9	Median household income as a share of national household income (percent)	70.65%	65.26%	69.02%
10	Mean household wealth (net worth) as a percent of national mean household wealth (percent)	19.14%	19.65%	19.03%
11	Percent of population at or below the poverty line (percent)	22.29%	28.74%	20.73%
12	Female life expectancy at birth (years)	75.1	78.0	75.7
13	Male life expectancy at birth (years)	68.2	71.8	68.0

*--Source data agencies are provided by line number: (1) US Census bureau (www.census.gov); (2) US Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov); (3) US Bureau of Labor Statistics; (4) National Center for Educations Statistics (www.nces.ed.gov); (5) National Center for Education Statistics; (6) US Bureau of Justice Statistics (www.bjs.ojp.gov); (7) Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Minority Depository Institutions Program (<https://www.fdic.gov/regulations/resources/minority/mdi.html>) (data are for 2001, 2010, 2020); (8) US Census Bureau (data are for 2002, 2012, 2018); (9) US Bureau of the Census; (10) US Federal Reserve Board (<https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scfindex.htm>) (data are for 2001, 2010, 2019); (11) US Census Bureau; (12) National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/index.htm>); and (13) National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

Five of the 13 variables reflect progress; the remaining eight variables do not. We acknowledge that 2000 represents the height of an economic expansion, while 2010 was a year of recovery from the 2008/9 “Great Recession” and 2020 suffered from the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also, we acknowledge that the 13 variables, while important, were selected somewhat arbitrarily. Therefore, readers are invited to use these results to determine from their perspective whether—and to what extent—Black America experienced progress over the past two decades.

B. Robinson
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