Black Male Teens: Moving to Success in the High School Years

A Statistical Profile
A Statistical Profile of African-American Young Men in High School

As African-American students begin 9th grade, 62 percent of them expect to attain at least a bachelor’s degree.¹ However, only 18.5 percent of Black men between the ages of 25–29 reached that goal in 2012.² Too many young Black men drop out of high school and never have the opportunity to attend college. Clearly, American high schools are not meeting their aspirations. This statistical profile seeks to explore the circumstances in which many young Black men find themselves, the inequities in schools that reinforce other structural inequalities rather than ameliorate them and the consequences for those students for whom the high school years are not a success.

At previous symposia, ETS and the Children’s Defense Fund have analyzed the obstacles and opportunities for young Black boys at birth, through their first years of school and into the middle school years. For young Black men at the high school level, we see the cumulative effects of years of unequal opportunity, expanding achievement gaps and unsupportive systems. High school, for many of them, represents their final chance at formal education. Among the young Black male students who do graduate, far too many are unprepared for the rigors of college work or the skills necessary for career opportunities.

We hope the alarming statistics presented in this profile will help motivate and empower policymakers, educators, communities, parents and young people to change both the circumstances and outcomes of young Black males. Our nation can ill afford to continuously lose talented students and our future leaders because we failed to act.

There are 1,752,867 young Black men, ages 15–19, living in the United States.

Context and Circumstances

Neighborhood Poverty
Over the course of childhood, two out of three Black children (66 percent) born from 1985 through 2000 were raised in neighborhoods with at least a 20 percent poverty rate, compared to just 6 percent of White children.


Disabilities
Black students represent 21 percent of students with disabilities (served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), but 44 percent of students with disabilities who are subject to mechanical restraint.


Gifted and Talented
Black children comprise 19 percent of the students attending schools offering gifted and talented programs, but only 10 percent of the students enrolled in those programs.


Residential Instability
Research conducted in Chicago indicates that 75 percent of highly mobile students (defined as four or more moves over a two-year period) were African American.


Suspensions
In data representing 85 percent of students in public schools, Black students comprise 18 percent but represent 46 percent of those students suspended more than once and 39 percent of those expelled.


Neighborhood Safety
Black male high school students are twice as likely as their White peers (8 percent versus 4 percent) to report that they did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey.


School Poverty
18 percent of Black secondary school students attend high-poverty schools, compared to 2 percent of White secondary school students.


Computer and Internet Access
89 percent of Black children ages 8–18 have access to a computer, 78 percent have Internet access and 55 percent have high-speed Internet access versus 94 percent, 88 percent and 61 percent for White children.


Violence
In 2010, there were over 3.5 more White males ages 15–19 than Black males of the same age. 114 White young men were killed in gun homicides, while 903 Black young men lost their lives in gun homicides.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, accessed via CDC Wonder Database.

Dropout Factories
25 percent of the nation’s African-American students attend dropout factories (high schools where 12th-grade enrollment is less than 60 percent of 9th-grade enrollment four years earlier), compared to only 5 percent of White students.

Inequities in School

**Advanced Curricular Offerings**
Less than a third of high schools serving the most Hispanic and African-American students offer calculus and only 40 percent offer physics, compared with 55 percent and 66 percent of schools with the lowest Black and Hispanic enrollment.


**Teacher Diversity**
Less than 2 percent of our nation’s teachers are African-American males.


**Per Pupil Spending**
Schools with 90 percent or more students of color spend $733 less per student per year than schools with 90 percent or more White students.


**Teacher Experience**
15 percent of teachers in K–12 schools with the highest Black and Hispanic student populations are in their first or second year of teaching, compared to 8 percent in schools with the lowest Black and Hispanic populations.


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**Teacher Certification**

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<tr>
<th>Predominantly White HS</th>
<th>Predominantly Black HS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math teachers with Math degree</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math teachers without Math degree</td>
<td>8%</td>
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In high schools with a student population that is at least half Black, 25 percent of math teachers do not have a college degree in math and are not certified to teach math. For predominantly White schools, this figure is 8 percent.

Educational Outcomes

College Preparation
Upon graduation in 2004, 30 percent of Black males met the minimum college preparation curriculum. Only 1 percent of Black males met the criteria of finishing an advanced curriculum, while 40 percent of White males completed the minimum preparation curriculum and 5 percent met the advanced requirements.

Notes: Advanced Preparation Curriculum requirements include: (1) four credits in English; (2) four credits in mathematics; (3) four credits in science; (4) four credits in social sciences; (5) three credits in foreign language; and (6) one credit in AP® or IB® exams. Minimum Preparation Curriculum requirements include: (1) four credits in English; (2) three credits in mathematics; (3) three credits in science; (4) three credits in social sciences; and (5) two credits in foreign language.


Dropout and Achievement
More than one third of all dropouts are lost in 9th grade. Secondary students at the lowest 25 percent of achievement are 20 times more likely to drop out of high school.


Graduation Rates

<table>
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<th>Graduated in 4 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Males</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Males</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>78%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

52 percent of Black males who entered 9th grade in the 2006–07 school year graduated in four years, compared with 78 percent of White, non-Latino males and 58 percent of Latino males.


SAT® Scores
In 2009, the average SAT® scores of Black males were lower than those of White males in critical reading, mathematics and writing. The gap between White and Black students taking the SAT test was 104 points in critical reading, 120 points in mathematics and 99 points in writing.


ACT® Scores
The average ACT® scores of Black students were lower than those for White students in English, mathematics and reading. In 2009, the gap between White and Black students was six points in English, five points in mathematics and six points in reading.


Reading
In 2009, the average National Assessment of Educational Progress score for young Black men in 12th-grade reading was 261 compared to 289 for young White men.

Consequences of Dropping Out

Lost Productivity
Over the course of his or her lifetime, a single high school dropout costs the nation approximately $260,000 in lost earnings, taxes and productivity.


Lost Earnings

The average dropout can expect to earn an annual income of $20,242, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That’s $10,386 less than the typical high school graduate and $36,424 less than someone with a bachelor’s degree.


Unemployment
While the national unemployment rate stood at 8.1 percent in August 2012, joblessness among those without a high school degree measured 12 percent. Unemployment among Black men, ages 18–24, was 30 percent in January 2010.


Incarceration
In 2009, researchers at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University found that 9 percent of male high school dropouts, ages 16–24, are incarcerated or in detention. For young Black male dropouts of the same age, that number is 23 percent.


Longevity
College graduates can expect to live at least five years longer than individuals who have not finished high school.