



## Race, Work, and Opportunity in America

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### Background Information

In today's discussion, panelists will consider the relationship between race and work. What is the experience of Black workers in the United States, and what does it say about the efficacy of the American Dream? What are opportunities to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion through business, legislation, and organizing? Below we present background information to inform the discussion.

#### Employment

- The average unemployment rate for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2017 was 4.4% overall, 7.5% for Blacks or African Americans and 3.8% for Whites.<sup>1</sup> This is consistent with long-term trends showing that, in recent decades, Black unemployment has generally been twice as high as White unemployment.<sup>2</sup>
- Black workers are more likely to be unemployed across education levels.<sup>3</sup> Black workers are also more likely to be in involuntary part-time work than White workers, even when controlling for education, job skill, and industry of employment.<sup>4</sup>
- A field experiment found that Black applicants were less likely to be called back for a position than White applicants with the same credentials. Black applicants would have to search twice as long as White applicants to receive a callback or job offer. Additionally, a White applicant with a criminal record was more likely to receive a callback or job offer than a Black applicant with no record.<sup>5</sup>

#### Earnings

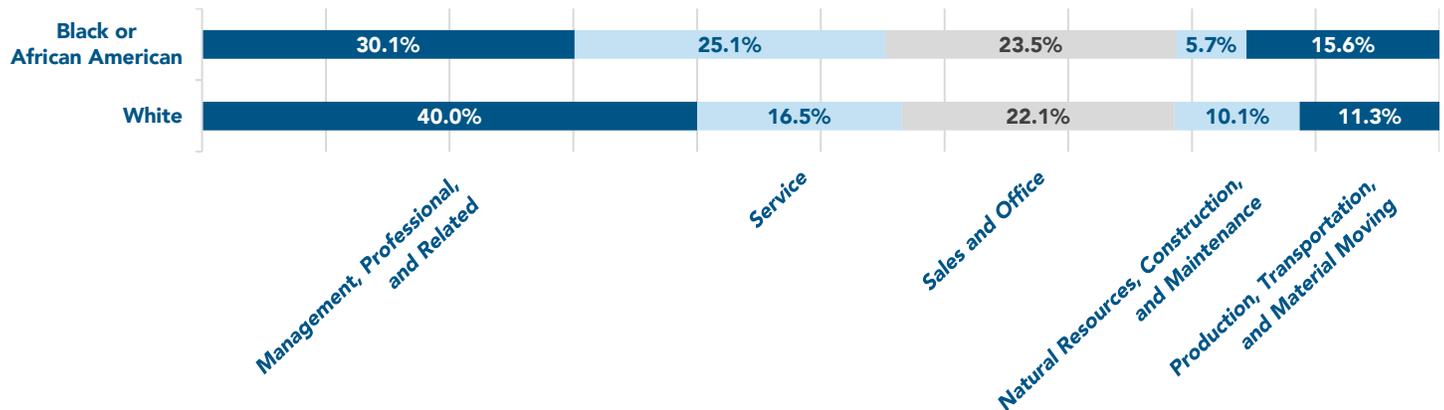
- In 2010, the median earnings of Black women were 90% of the median earnings of White women; and the median earnings of Black men were 68% of the median earnings of White men.<sup>6</sup>
- The real median income in 2015 was \$62,950 for non-Hispanic White households and \$36,898 for Black households.<sup>7</sup>
- Blacks who grew up in the bottom quintile of household income distribution had approximately a 50% chance of moving up during adulthood; compared to Whites, who had a 75% chance.<sup>8</sup>

Learn more at [as.pn/raceandwork](https://aspeninstitute.org/raceandwork)

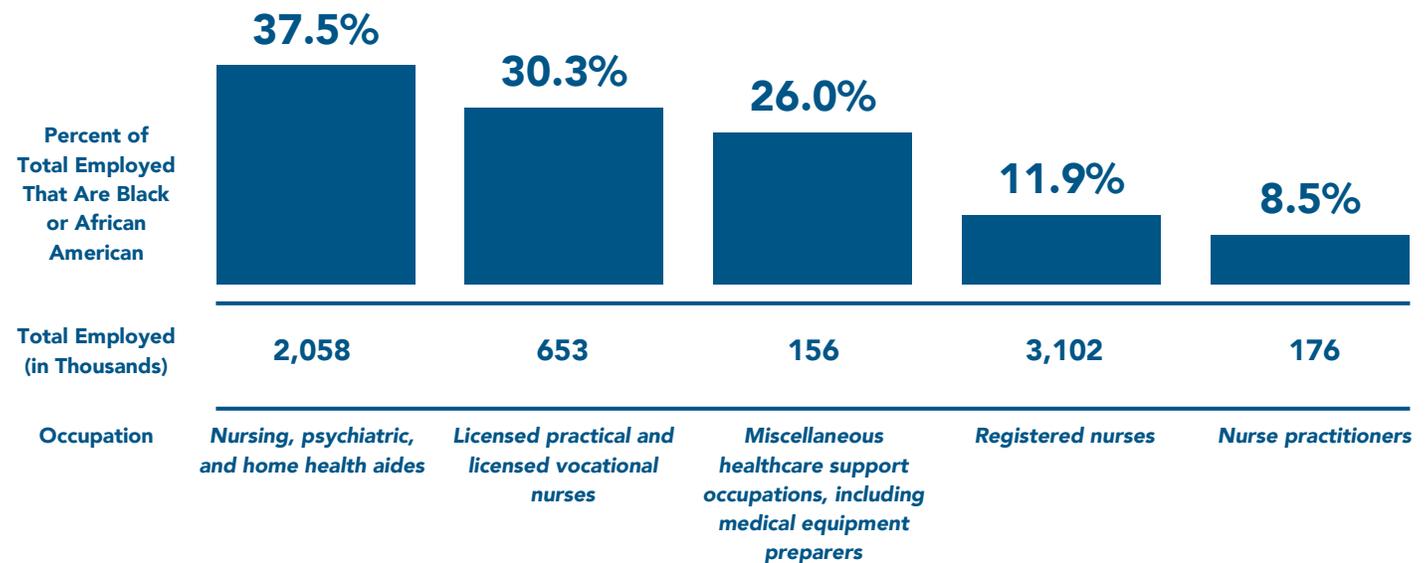
## Occupation

- Black or African Americans are 11.9% of workforce, but overrepresented in occupations that frequently offer low wages.<sup>9</sup> For example, Black or African American workers make up 16.8% of service occupations, which offer median weekly earnings of \$523, but only 9.1% of management, professional, and related occupations, which offer median weekly earnings of \$1,188.<sup>10</sup>

## Employed Persons by Occupational Category, Percent Distribution, 2016<sup>11</sup>



## Occupational Spotlight: Nursing



Notably, more than 30% of LPN/LVNs are Black or African American, compared to only 11.9% of Registered Nurses, and 8.5% of Nurse Practitioners.<sup>12</sup> This also results in earnings disparities, as LPN/LVNs' average annual wage is \$44,840, whereas RNs' average annual wage is \$72,180 and NPs' average annual wage is \$104,610.<sup>13</sup>

## Resources from Our Panelists

Kevin Stainback and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, *Documenting Desegregation: Racial and Gender Segregation and the Private-Sector Employment Since the Civil Rights Act*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2012.

Ryan P. Haygood and Demelza Baer, "Bridging the Two Americas: Employment and Economic Opportunity in Newark and Beyond," New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, May 2017, online: [njisj.org/the\\_new\\_jersey\\_institute\\_for\\_social\\_justice\\_releases\\_a\\_new\\_report\\_that\\_seeks\\_to\\_bridge\\_dr\\_kin\\_g\\_s\\_two\\_americas](http://njisj.org/the_new_jersey_institute_for_social_justice_releases_a_new_report_that_seeks_to_bridge_dr_kin_g_s_two_americas).

Debra Plousha Moore, "Winning with Diverse Teams: Advancing Organizational Results," LinkedIn Pulse, October 16, 2015, online: [linkedin.com/pulse/winning-diverse-teams-advancing-organizational-debra-plousha-moore/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/winning-diverse-teams-advancing-organizational-debra-plousha-moore/).

Andrea Flynn, Susan R. Holmberg, Dorian T. Warren and Felicia J. Wong, *The Hidden Rules of Race*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

The National Black Worker Center Project's *Working While Black* is an initiative to change the narrative about the causes of and solutions to the Black job crisis by projecting a nuanced view of the nature of Black worker lives: the challenges they face and how to address them through individual efforts and collective action. More information at: [nationalblackworkercenters.org/working-while-black/](http://nationalblackworkercenters.org/working-while-black/).

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## References

<sup>1</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2017 data from US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, "E-16, Unemployment rates by age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity [Percent]," Household Data, Not Seasonally Adjusted, Quarterly Averages, Last Modified: October 6, 2017, [bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee\\_e16.htm](https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpsee_e16.htm).

<sup>2</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2015," *BLS Reports*, Report 1062, September 2016, [bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2015/home.htm](https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2015/home.htm).

<sup>3</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2015." See especially Table 6: Employment Status of People 25 Years and Older by Educational Attainment, Gender, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, 2016 Annual Averages, [bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2015/home.htm#table6](https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2015/home.htm#table6).

<sup>4</sup> Justin Young and Marybeth Mattingly, "Underemployment among Hispanics: the case of involuntary part-time work," *Monthly Labor Review*, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2016, [bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/underemployment-among-hispanics.htm](https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/underemployment-among-hispanics.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Devah Pager, Bruce Western, and Bart Bonikowski, "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment," *American Sociological Review*, 2009, 724(5), 777-799. [scholar.harvard.edu/files/bonikowski/files/pager-western-bonikowski-discrimination-in-a-low-wage-labor-market.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/bonikowski/files/pager-western-bonikowski-discrimination-in-a-low-wage-labor-market.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Colin Peterson, C. Matthew Snipp, and Sin Yi Cheung, "Earnings," in "State of the Union: The Poverty and Inequality Report," Special Issue, *Pathways Magazine*, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica L. Semega, and Melissa A. Kollar, "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015," *Current Population Reports*, US Census Bureau, P60-256(RV), US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2016, [census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Florencia Torche, "Intergenerational Mobility," in "State of the Union: The Poverty and Inequality Report," Special Issue, *Pathways Magazine*, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> 2016 data from US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity," [bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm).

<sup>10</sup> 2016 data from US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, "Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Detailed Occupation and Sex," Household Data, Annual Averages, [bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm).

<sup>11</sup> 2016 data from US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, "Employed Persons by Occupation, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Sex [Percent Distribution]" Household Data, Annual Averages, [bls.gov/cps/cpsaat10.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat10.htm).

<sup>12</sup> 2016 data from US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, "Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity," [bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm).

<sup>13</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, "May 2016 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates United States," [bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm).