

Opinions

These numbers show that black and white people live in two different Americas

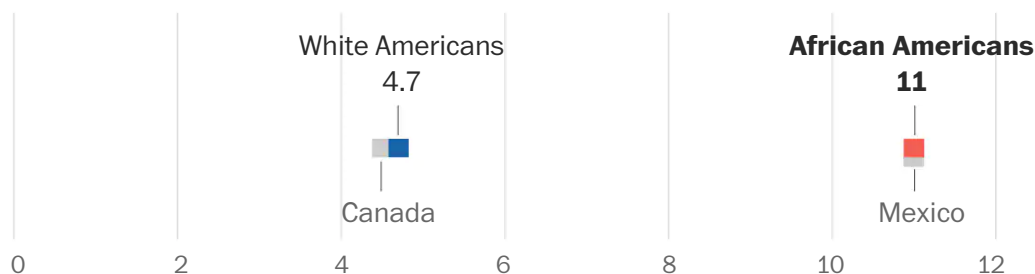
By **Sergio Peçanha**

JUNE 23, 2020



Numbers can help put American racism in perspective. And here is what the numbers say: The United States is a vastly different country, depending on the color of your skin. For African Americans, hardship begins before birth. The infant mortality rate for blacks, for example, is more than twice that of white Americans.

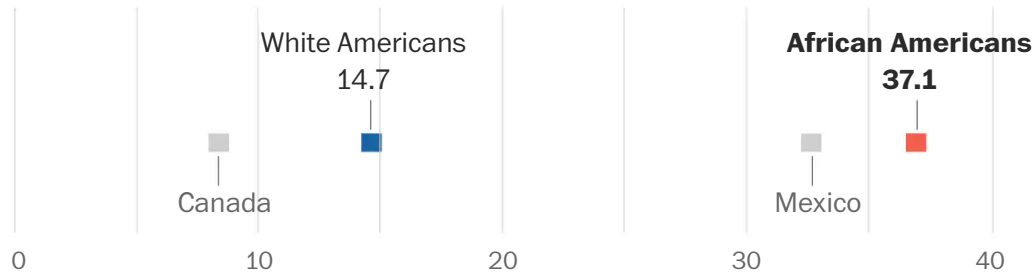
Infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017); World Bank via Federal Reserve (Canada and Mexico, 2018).

Black women are more likely to receive late, or no, prenatal care, and they also face nearly three times the risk of pregnancy-related deaths.

Maternal mortality rates per 100,000 live births

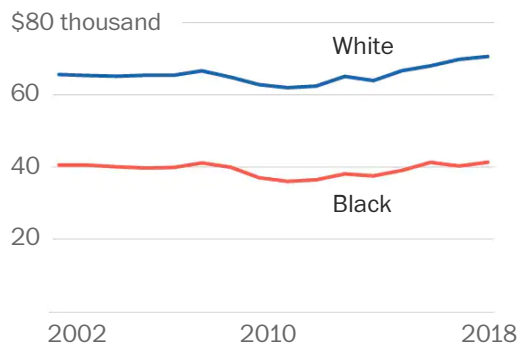


Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018); Statistics Canada (2018); Mexico's Health Secretariat (2017).

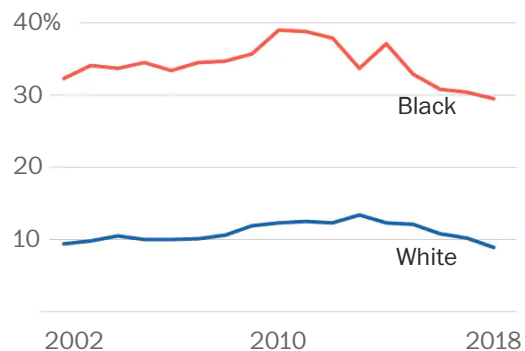
But infant and maternal mortality are only part of the health risks plaguing the African American community. Black Americans also suffer from higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, asthma and heart disease than white Americans. Research suggests that social determinants — conditions in the places where we live, work, learn and play — are important [drivers of health inequities](#), and that [racism itself](#) can harm health.

In this parallel reality, family income is much lower. The percentage of black children living below the poverty line is three times that of whites.

Median household income



People under 18 in poverty



Source: U.S. Census

It's not just income but employment itself: Blacks live in a country where the economy is always in recovery. Even though white Americans haven't seen an unemployment rate near 15 percent in decades, African Americans have seen it many times — about once a decade over the past 50 years.

Unemployment rate

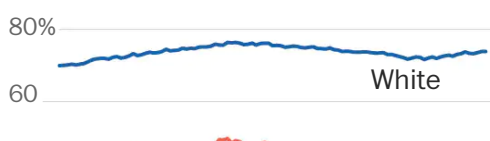


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics via Federal Reserve Bank

One form of discrimination believed to have cascading consequences is a practice known as “[redlining](#).” From the 1930s to the late 1960s, areas with sizable black populations were marked with red ink on maps used by banks to determine who was eligible to get loans. It was often impossible for residents of those areas to secure home mortgages. If they got loans, the interest rates could be prohibitive. The practice was banned more than 50 years ago, but a 2018 study found that [3 out of 4 neighborhoods](#) redlined 80 years ago continue to struggle economically today.

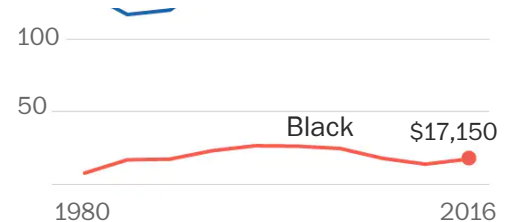
Home ownership is directly linked to wealth and, for centuries, blacks were essentially blocked from it. Underpaid or unable to buy a home, a large part of the black community remains unable to gain access to the main way that whites have achieved wealth and middle-class stability. As a result, the net worth of white households is now [10 times greater](#) than black households.

Home ownership rate



Median net worth of a family

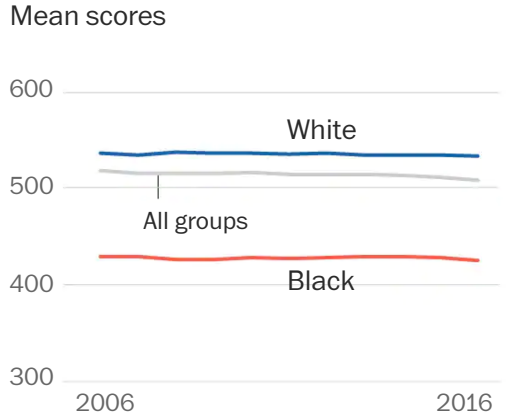




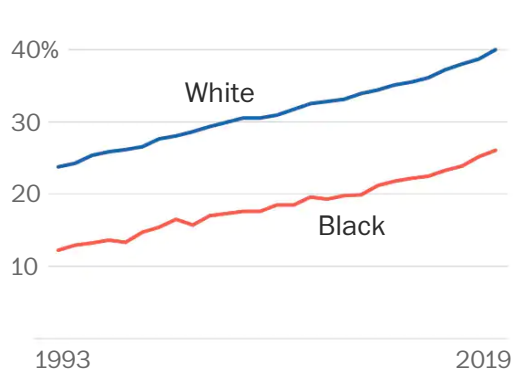
Source: U.S. Census, Federal Reserve Bank, 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances

In the United States, school quality is linked to neighborhood wealth. An [analysis](#) by the nonprofit EdBuild found that schools in mainly white neighborhoods received \$2,200 more per student than nonwhite schools in the school year 2015-2016. This economic segregation correlates to educational outcomes.

Math SAT scores



People 25 and older who went to college



Note: Population 25 and older who completed four or more years of college.
Source: College Board; U.S. Census.

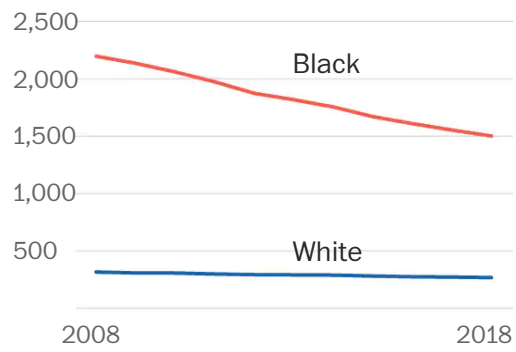
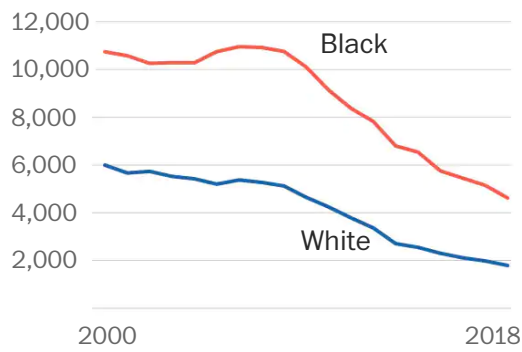
In addition to growing up poorer and without access to mortgages and equal educations, black children are also much more likely to be arrested. Even though there has been improvement in the past few decades, the trend persists: Incarceration rates of African Americans in general remain 5.6 times greater than of white Americans. Black people are about 12 percent of the U.S. population, but [one-third](#) of the inmate population.

Arrests of minors aged 10 to 17

Per 100,000 people

Adult incarceration rate

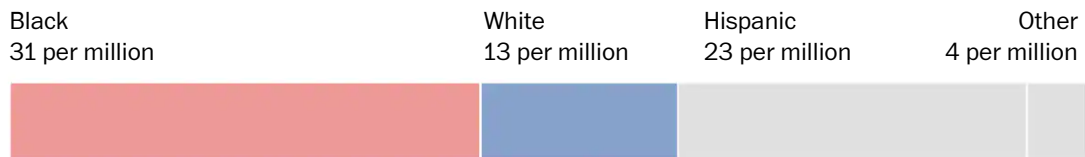
Per 100,000 people



Source: U.S. Department of Justice

The long list of discrepancies comes together on fatal encounters with the police: Blacks are killed by the police at more than twice the rate of whites.

Rate of police killings



U.S. population



Source: The Washington Post's database of police shootings since 2015.

The bottom line is clear. Here's how the numbers add up: Whites live in one America and blacks live in another.

Sergio Peçanha is a visual columnist at the Opinions desk of The Post. Follow on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#).

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