

Issue Brief: European Americans and Socio-Economic Status

Key Words

European Americans, whites, population, socio-economic status, income, education, crime

Description

This issue brief details the socio-economic status of European Americans relative to minorities. This status is established in terms of income, educational rates, and incarceration rates. It also notes the prediction of the change in U.S. population—specifically the increase in the Latino population.

Key Points

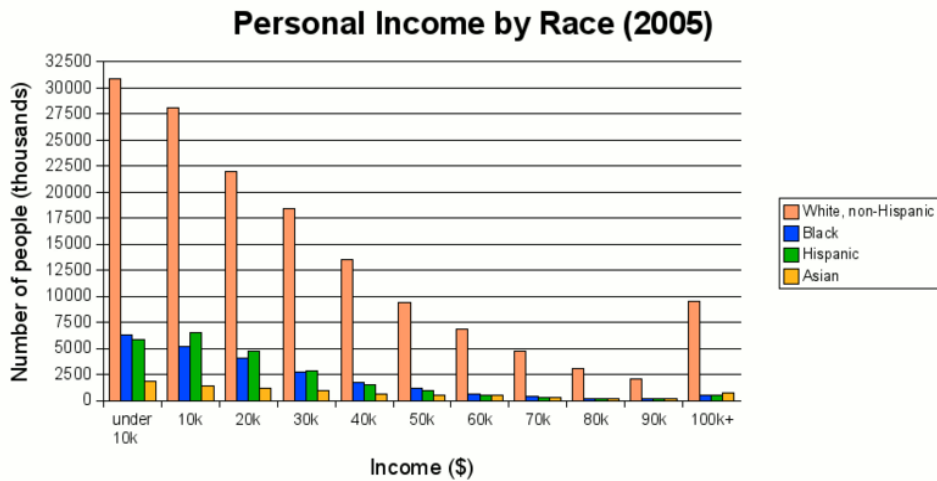
- The United States Census classifies all European Americans under the umbrella category of white. According to the U.S. Census, white refers to anyone with origins stemming from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- Whites make up a majority of the population with 75.1%
- Whites are overrepresented in higher income brackets and educational levels compared to the national average. They are underrepresented in incarceration rates compared to the national average.
- It has been predicted that whites will no longer make up a numerical majority by the year 2050.

Brief

Three major determinates of socio-economic status are income, educational level, and criminal record. Those with higher income and educational levels and small or nonexistent criminal records have more favorable socio-economic statuses. In general, whites have better socio-economic statuses than ethnic minorities. The racial category white encompasses all people of European descent and people of Middle-Eastern and Northern African descent.

European Americans make up 75.1 percent of the American population but are statistically underrepresented in the lower economic brackets and overrepresented in the higher economic brackets. For the economic bracket of 10,000 dollars and under, a total 44,500 people fall into that category. Of those 44,500 people, whites make up 69.66 percent of them. For the economic bracket of 100,000 dollars and over, a total of 13,700 people fall into that category. Whites make up 87.59 percent of those people. Although whites are overrepresented in the highest and lowest income brackets, Asian

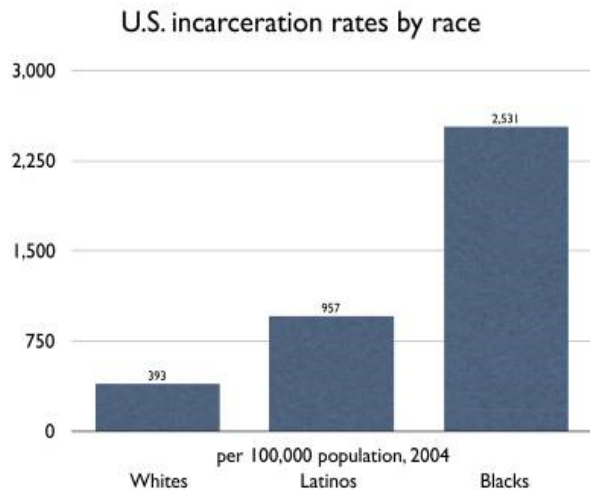
Americans have the highest median income.



The educational level an American has completed also factors into socio-economic status.

Those that have completed higher level of education tend to have higher socio-economic statuses. The percentage of whites that have completed at least a Bachelor's degree is 33 percent. This is above the national average of 22 percent. However, this 33 percent is less than the average for Asian Americans (about 53 percent). It is also important to note that higher educational levels correlate with higher income levels and higher income levels in turn correlate with higher education levels.

Income and educational level can influence socio-economic status positively but there are factors that can negatively influence socio-economic status as well. Having a criminal record negatively affects socio-economic status. Of the entire incarcerated population, whites make up less than 1 percent. In comparison, minorities make up a disproportionately high percentage of this incarcerated population.



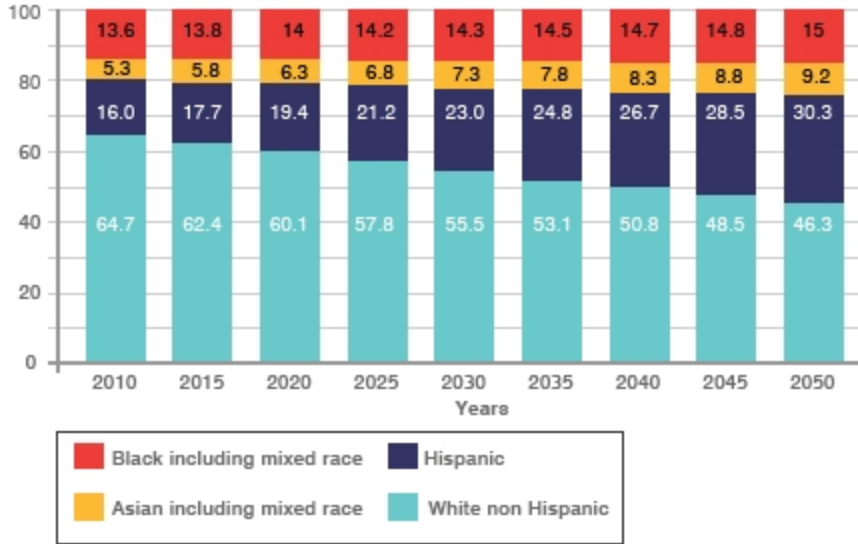
Prison Policy Initiative

Although whites are overrepresented in terms of high income and educational levels and underrepresented in terms of criminal record, the fact that whites make up a majority of the national population is also important in itself. However, the United States population demographic seems to be changing. Immigration has been on the rise, especially in the Latino population. The U.S. Census has predicted that by the year 2050 whites will no longer be a majority (50 percent or more) due to a general increase in aggregate population and a dramatic increase in the Latino population. This decrease in the white population and increase in the Latino population could possibly manifest itself into a greater socio-economic status for Latinos. While this possible increase in the Latino population can lead to an increase in political representation, this does not necessitate a decrease in socio-economic status for whites. The Latino population is on the rise but most Latinos identify themselves as white in terms of race (not ethnicity). In addition, the definition of white according to the U.S. Census has become progressively more inclusive than it was in the past and this could skew population predictions if the term white expands even more.

Traditionally whites have had higher socio-economic statuses than ethno-racial minority groups. However, an increase in the rate of Asian-Americans with higher educational degrees and an influx of Latino immigrants may jeopardize the white stronghold in America.

US POPULATION PROJECTIONS TO 2050

Percentage by race and Hispanic origin



SOURCE: US Census Bureau

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