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Race and Ethnicity

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**Title**

The public opinion of African-Americans and Education

**Key words**

High dropout rates

African-American Students

Education

SAT

**Description**

This issue brief focuses on the poor public opinion of Africans and Education derived by lower test scores and high dropout rates in US high schools among African-American students.

**Key points**

- African-American students score the lowest on SAT exams (College Board).
- African-American students have the second to highest high school drop-out rates (US Dept of Ed.).
- There has been a direct correlation between family income and SAT scores.
- Factors of dropping out of high school identified by scholars are: low English language ability, poverty, length of residence in the US, the print environment, and family factors.

**Brief**

This issue brief sets out to review educational statistics to determine whether the public opinion, or stereotypes, of African-Americans poorly performing in our school systems is valid. If so, understanding this issue will be significant for both public officials and us as a society at large to change our policies in order to provide more academic resources for African-American communities and students. Such questions that hovers around executive educators are: What is

the underlying distinction between low-performing students like African-Americans and high-performing students like Asian-Americans? What can we do to motivate the students, increase the scores, and prevent high school dropouts of African Americans? What are the causes to such low performance?

*SAT gap.* Not only are African-American scores on the SAT far below the scores of whites and Asian Americans, but they also trail the scores of every other major ethnic group in the United States including students of Puerto Rican and Mexican backgrounds. In fact, American Indian and Alaska Native students on average score more than 104 points higher than the average score of black students. On average, Asian American students score 227 points, or 19 percent higher, higher than African Americans (JBHE). Africans Americans under-performs against all other races in all three portions of the exams: critical reading, composition writing and mathematics.

*Explanations of the SAT gap.* First, Sharp differences in family incomes are a major factor. Always there has been a direct correlation between family income and SAT scores. For both blacks and whites, as income goes up, so do test scores. In 2005, 28 percent of all black SAT test takers were from families with annual incomes below \$20,000. Only 5 percent of white test takers were from families with incomes below \$20,000. At the other extreme, 7 percent of all black test takers were from families with incomes of more than \$100,000 (JBHE). Second, Public schools in many neighborhoods with large black populations are underfunded, inadequately staffed, and ill equipped to provide the same quality of secondary education that is offered in predominantly white suburban school districts. Black students in predominantly white schools who study hard are often the subject of peer ridicule. They are accused of "acting white" by other blacks. This so-called ghetto chic in the form of peer pressure to shun academic pursuits undoubtedly has a dragging effect on average black SAT scores.

*Other reasons.* Black students may be subject to what Stanford psychology professor Claude Steele calls "stereotype vulnerability." Steele contends that black students are aware of the fact that society expects them to perform poorly on standardized tests. This added pressure put upon black students to perform well in order to rebut the racial stereotype in fact makes it more difficult for them to perform well on these tests. School administrators and guidance

counselors often believe that black students are less capable and less able to learn. They routinely track black students at an early age into vocational training or into a curriculum that is not college preparatory. Black students are rarely recommended for inclusion in gifted education, honors, or Advanced Placement programs. Once placed on the slow academic track, most black kids can never escape. By the time black students are juniors and seniors in high school, they are typically so far behind their white counterparts in the critical subject areas necessary to perform well on standardized tests that they have little hope of ever matching the scores of whites on the SAT.

*High School Drop-Outs.* In the last thirty years, Hispanics topped the charts with the highest high school dropout rates with the African-Americans trailing behind. African-Americans have shown drastic progress as it dropped nearly 10 percent since 1980. Despite the progress, African-Americans drop-out rates (18.3 in 2008) still nearly doubles the percentage of whites and Asian-Americans. The numbers in California are even more staggering with 41.3 % of black students not completing high school (latina lista) Some factors predicting dropout rates have, however, been identified: Low English language ability, poverty, length of residence in the US, the print environment, and family factors (Krashen, S.)

## Images

1.



<http://newsone.com/nation/newsonestaff1/get-a-degree-online-at-hbcus/>

2.

## SAT Critical Reading, Mathematics and Writing Mean Scores by Race/Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Groups	Critical Reading					Mathematics					Writing		
	2000	2009	2010	1-Year Change	10-Year Change	2000	2009	2010	1-Year Change	10-Year Change	2009	2010	1-Year Change
American Indian	482	486	485	-1	+3	481	493	492	-1	+11	469	467	-2
Asian	499	516	519	+3	+20	565	587	591	+4	+26	520	526	+6
Black	434	429	429	0	-5	426	426	428	+2	+2	421	420	-1
Mexican American	453	453	454	+1	+1	460	463	467	+4	+7	446	448	+2
Puerto Rican	456	452	454	+2	-2	451	450	452	+2	+1	443	443	0
Other Hispanic	461	455	454	-1	-7	467	461	462	+1	-5	448	447	-1
White	528	528	528	0	0	530	536	536	0	+6	517	516	-1
Other	508	494	494	0	-14	515	514	514	0	-1	493	492	-1
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-4</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>+2</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>-1</b>

Found from Collegeboard.com <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/sat/cb-seniors-2010/tables>

3. Status Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *The Condition of Education 2010* (NCES 2010-028), Indicator 20.

<i>Status dropout rates of 16- through 24-year-olds, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980-2008</i>						
Year	Total <sup>1</sup>	Race/ethnicity <sup>2</sup>				
		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
1980	14.1	11.4	19.1	35.2	—	—
1985	12.6	10.4	15.2	27.6	—	—
1990	12.1	9.0	13.2	32.4	4.9!	16.4!
1995	12.0	8.6	12.1!	30.0	3.9	13.4!
1998	11.8	7.7	13.8	29.5	4.1	11.8
2000	10.9	6.9	13.1	27.8	3.8	14.0
2001	10.7	7.3	10.9	27.0	3.6	13.1
2002	10.5	6.5	11.3	25.7	3.9	16.8

<b>2003</b>	9.9	6.3	10.9!	23.5	3.9	15.0
<b>2004</b>	10.3	6.8	11.8	23.8	3.6	17.0
<b>2005</b>	9.4	6.0	10.4!	22.4	2.9	14.0
<b>2006</b>	9.3	5.8	10.7	22.1	3.6	14.7
<b>2007</b>	8.7	5.3	8.4	21.4	6.1	19.3
<b>2008</b>	8.0	4.8	9.9	18.3	4.4	14.6

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2. <http://www.uncf.org/>