

2009

Milwaukee Drilldown on African American Males

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Recommended Citation

Pawasarat, John, "Milwaukee Drilldown on African American Males" (2009). *ETI Publications*. Paper 35.
http://dc.uwm.edu/eti_pubs/35

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Milwaukee Drilldown on African American Males for the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board, Inc.

Profile of the African American Male Workforce: Milwaukee County

Monthly unemployment statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor do not include estimates for subpopulations by race/ethnicity, age or other demographics. The annual American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau is the primary federal source of demographics on the unemployed population by age, race, sex, education levels, and disabilities and offers a valuable tool for workforce planning.

Who's Employed

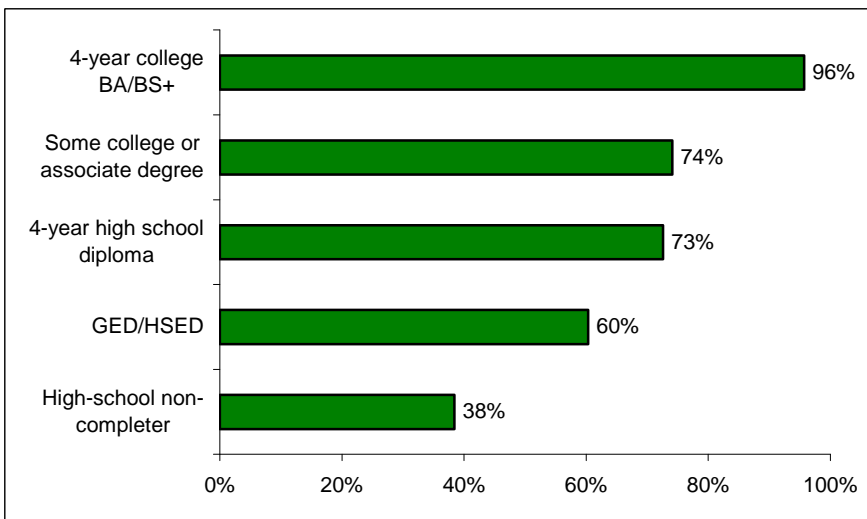
The ACS reported an estimated 48,420 African American males in the labor force from Milwaukee County in 2008. Of these, 40,482 (or 83.6%) were employed and 7,938 (16.4%) were unemployed and seeking for work. The 16.4% unemployment rate for African American males (ages 16 and above) is more than double the rates for white males (5.8%) and Hispanic males (8.1%), according to the 2008 ACS data.

Among African American males, the employment rate was highest for men of prime working age (i.e., ages 25 thru 54) where 87.6% were employed and 12.4% were unemployed in 2008. Unemployment rates were the worst for male teens and young adults in the labor force (39.5% and 37.1%)

Black Males, Milwaukee County	16-19	20-24	25-54	55-64	Ages 16+
Total Labor Force (ACS, 2008)	2,306	5,540	35,830	3,929	48,420
Employed	1,394	3,486	31,385	3,402	40,482
Unemployed	912	2,054	4,445	527	7,938
% unemployed	39.5%	37.1%	12.4%	13.4%	16.4%

High school and college graduates are far more likely to be in the labor force than GED/HSED holders and high school non-completers.

Labor Force Participation Rates by Level of Education (ACS, 2008)

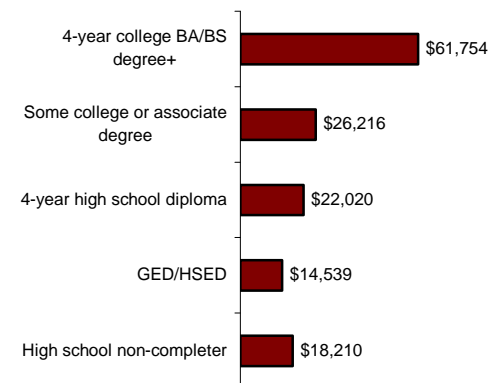


Unemployment Rates Reported for Milwaukee County by Race/Ethnicity and Gender (All Ages)

Unemployment Rates (ACS, 2008)	Males	Females
African Americans	16.4%	7.0%
Whites	5.8%	4.1%
Hispanics	8.1%	9.2%

Education matters. The highest average annual wage earnings were seen for African American men with four-year college degrees or more (\$61,754). Lowest average annual wages were seen for GED/HSED holders (\$14,539) and high school non-completers (\$18,210).

Avg. Annual Wages of African American Males by Schooling Completed for Workers No Longer Enrolled in School (ACS, 2008)



Transportation matters. The ACS census category of driving alone was used to estimate those with a vehicle and a driver's license. Workers with their own personal means of transportation showed higher employment rates and a broader labor market.

- African American males who drive alone to work were mostly employed, with 81% working full-time year-round.
- Only 59% of those not driving alone to work were employed full-time year-round.
- Average annual wages for those driving alone to work were almost 50% higher than wages of workers not driving alone to work.

Who's Unemployed

Most of the 7,938 **unemployed** have had recent work experience. Two-thirds of the unemployed black males of prime working age (25 thru 54 yrs.) had worked within the past 12 months. The remaining third had not held jobs for over a year – and in some cases for over 5 years.

Last Employment Held by Unemployed African American Males (ACS 2008)					
	16-19	20-24	25-54	55-64	Total
Worked within the last 12 months	145	722	3082	105	4,054
Last worked, 1-5 years ago	616	829	878	162	2,485
Last worked over 5 years ago, or never worked	151	503	485	260	1,399
ALL Unemployed	912	2,054	4,445	527	7,938
Percent of Total					
	16-19	20-24	25-54	55-64	Total
Worked within the last 12 months	16%	35%	69%	20%	51%
Last worked, 1-5 years ago	68%	40%	20%	31%	31%
Last worked over 5 years ago, or never worked	17%	24%	11%	49%	18%
ALL Unemployed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Who's Not in the Labor Force

Milwaukee County U.S. Census data have been misused locally to create a new category of “jobless” rates for black males by including 23,431 males ages 16-64 not in the labor force, leading many in the job training community, newspaper reporters and others to believe that African American males are unemployed at rates of a headline-producing 50% rather than the actual reported ACS Census Bureau rate of 18.3% for males ages 16-64 in the City of Milwaukee for 2008.

A fourth of the so-called “jobless” African American males identified as NOT in the labor force are students. (81% of teenage students are “jobless.”) According to ACS, 2/3 of African American males NOT in the labor force are students; adults receiving social security, SSI or retirement income; and self-reported disabled persons not seeking employment.

Census Bureau Unemployment Rates for Ages 16-64 Compared to Local “Jobless” Reports

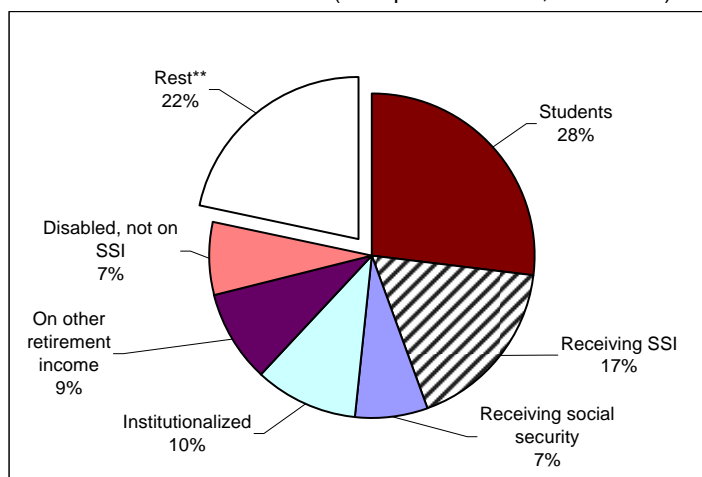
Black Males (16-64)	Unemployed (ACS 2008)	“Jobless”
City of Milwaukee	18.3%	47.4%
Milwaukee County	17.8%	47.7%
Milwaukee MSA	17.6%	47.1%

In addition to the unemployed, locally produced “jobless” statistics include students not looking for work; persons on SSI and social security; other disabled, retired, institutionalized; and persons with no labor market history, resulting in a five-fold increase in the population.

There are several serious drawbacks for workforce planners in including non-labor force participants in the “jobless” statistic.

First, it promotes a stereotype of African American males in Milwaukee as neither working nor even willing to look for employment. Second, the statistic diverts attention of workforce investment planning away from the needs of active job seekers and underemployed workers to persons not in the workforce. And finally, it creates an unachievable (and undesirable) target for employment initiatives: seeking full employment of teenage students, disabled workers now receiving SSI and other income support, and retired workers on social security.

Characteristics of 23,431 African American Males Ages 16-64 NOT in the Labor Force (unduplicated count, ACS 2008)



**Of particular concern are the 5,105 African American males who were not looking for work, were not students or institutionalized, did not report disabilities, and did not report income sources of social security, SSI or retirement payments. The labor market history of this population was examined to determine when (or if) they had last been employed.

- 734 of the 5,105 held employment within the last 12 months.
- 1,274 had not been employed in the last 12 months but had shown employment some time in the last one to five years.
- The remaining 3,097 had not been employed in over five years, or had never been employed.

As the Employment & Training Institute has consistently cautioned, institutional data sources from the unemployment insurance files, state corrections system, drivers' licensing, Department of Regulation & Licensing, DWD ASSET system, and income maintenance and Wisconsin Shares files should be used to identify actual populations of African American males in need of workforce services.

For more info, see the *Drilldown on African American Male Unemployment and Workforce Needs (UWM Employment & Training Institute, December 2009)* at www.eti.uwm.edu.