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We the
American...

Blacks

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Acknowledgments

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We, the **American Blacks**

Introduction

The 1990 census counted nearly 30 million Blacks, an increase of about 4 million from the 1980 census. Our population grew by 13 percent between 1980 and 1990, to about 12 percent of America's population. Although most of the growth in the Black population is due to natural increase, immigration from Caribbean and African countries also contributed significantly to our growth.

Our life expectancy is increasing and we are growing older, however, our median age continues to be about 6 years lower than that for the White population. Less than one-tenth of our population is 65 years old and over. Black women, like women in most population groups, tend to live longer than Black men.

We are located in all States, ranging from about 2,000 in Vermont to over 2 million in New York. Blacks are largely an urban people; most of us live in cities and in large metropolitan areas. The majority of us live in the 20 largest metropolitan areas of the Nation. More of us are buying our homes, especially in the suburbs.

Between 1980 and 1990, we made significant gains in educational attainment and college enroll-

ment. More Black women than Black men have completed college.

The number of Black households, especially female-headed Black households, has increased since 1980, in part because of the increase in divorce and separation rates. As a result, fewer of our children are being reared in two-parent households. Also, consistent with national trends, more of our men and women are choosing not to marry or to live alone.

A higher proportion of Black women than Black men are in the labor force; and there are now more Black females than Black males in the civilian labor force. The number of Blacks employed in professional jobs, such as lawyers, doctors, and engineers has increased.

The median income of Black married-couple families also improved and grew to 83 percent of comparable White families.

In 1989, our per capita income of \$8,850 was lower than the national per capita income of \$14,140. Poverty levels for Black persons and families were similar at the beginning and end of the decade, in part because of the effect of the recessions during the decade.

In 1790, we numbered about 760,000 and in 1990, we numbered nearly 30 million.

In 1790, when the first census was taken, Blacks numbered about 760,000. In 1860, at the start of the Civil War, the Black population increased to 4.4 million, but the percentage dropped to 14 percent from 19 percent. Most were slaves, with only 488,000 counted as "freemen." By 1900, our population had doubled and reached 8.8 million.

In 1910, about 90 percent of the Black population lived in the South but large numbers began migrating north looking for better job opportunities and living conditions. The Black population reached the 15 million mark in 1950 and was close to 27 million in 1980.

In 1990, the Black population numbered about 30 million and represented 12 percent of the total population, the same proportion as in 1900. The 13-percent population growth between 1980 and 1990 was one-third higher than the national growth of 10 percent.

In 1990, about one-third of the Black population was under 18 years old.

The median age of Blacks in 1990 was 28 years, up from 25 years in 1980. Black males had a lower median age than Black females. A smaller proportion of Black males than Black females were 65 years old and over. This reflects, in part, the higher mortality of Black males.

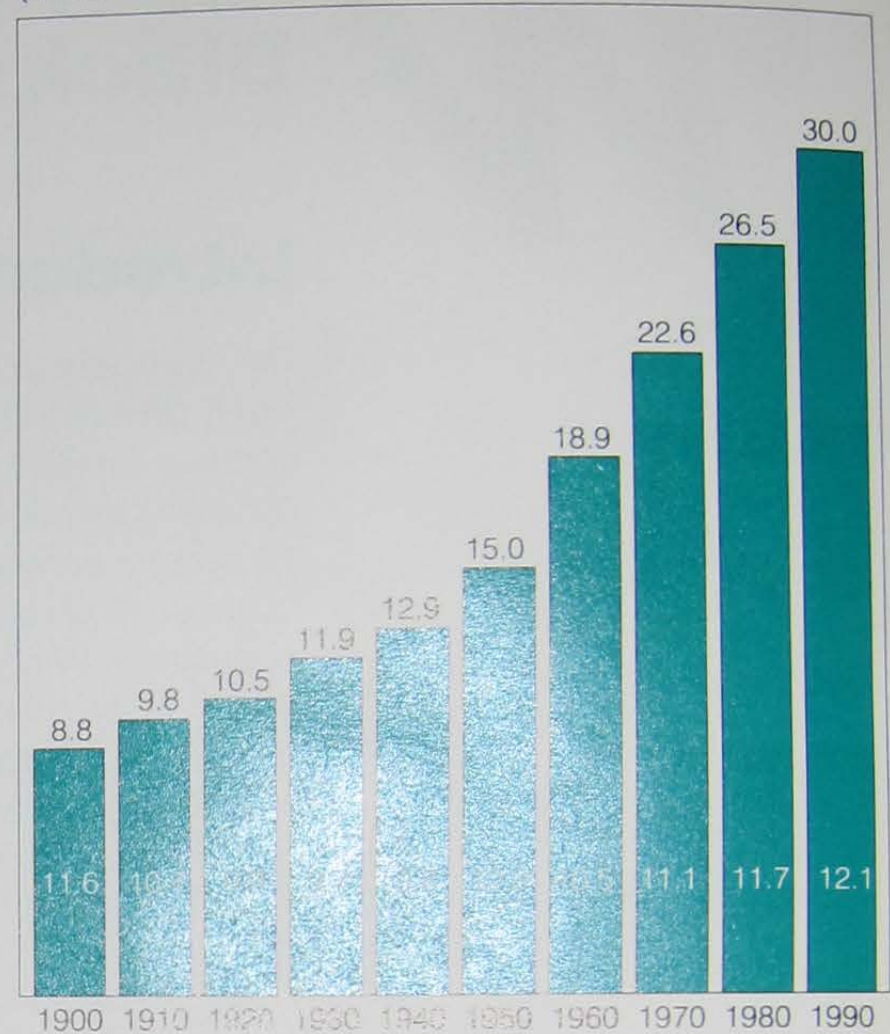
The Black voting-age population increased to 20.4 million in 1990 from 17.1 million in 1980.

About 47 percent of the Black population were male, and 53 percent were female.

The average life expectancy for a newborn Black baby in 1980 was 68 years, compared with 74 years for a White baby. By 1990, life expectancy for Blacks averaged 69 years, about 6 years less than that for Whites.

Figure 1.
Black Population: 1900 to 1990

(Millions)



Note: Numbers in bars represent Blacks as a percent of the total population.

Figure 2.
Age and Sex of the Black Population: 1990

(Percent)



Between 1980 and 1990, the number of Black persons 65 years old and over increased from 2.1 to 2.5 million.

Black women dominated the older age groups. In 1990, 62 percent of Black elderly persons were women, and only 38 percent were men.

The proportion of Blacks who were elderly grew from 7.9 percent in 1980 to 8.4 percent in 1990. In contrast, the elderly were a higher proportion among Whites; they were 14 percent in 1990, up from 12 percent in 1980.

Black elderly persons are located in all States of this country. The regional distribution of Black elderly persons was similar to the distribution of all Blacks in the United States—55 percent of the Black elderly were in the South.

In 1990, most of us live in metropolitan areas.

Nationally, 84 percent of the Black population lived in metropolitan areas in 1990, 57 percent in the central cities, and 27 percent in the suburbs (outside central cities).

In 1990, at least 95 percent of all Blacks in the Northeast, Midwest, and West regions lived in metropolitan areas. In contrast, only 72 percent of those in the South lived in metropolitan areas.

Our suburban population grew by 29 percent between 1980 and 1990, reaching about 7 percent of the Nation's suburban population.

Over one-half of the Black population lived in the South in 1990 — a proportion that has not changed since 1970. The Midwest and Northeast each had 19 percent Black, and 9 percent lived in the West.

Between 1980 and 1990, the Black population growth rate was highest in the West and lowest in the Midwest.

Figure 3. Black Persons 65 Years Old and Over by Sex for the United States and Regions: 1990

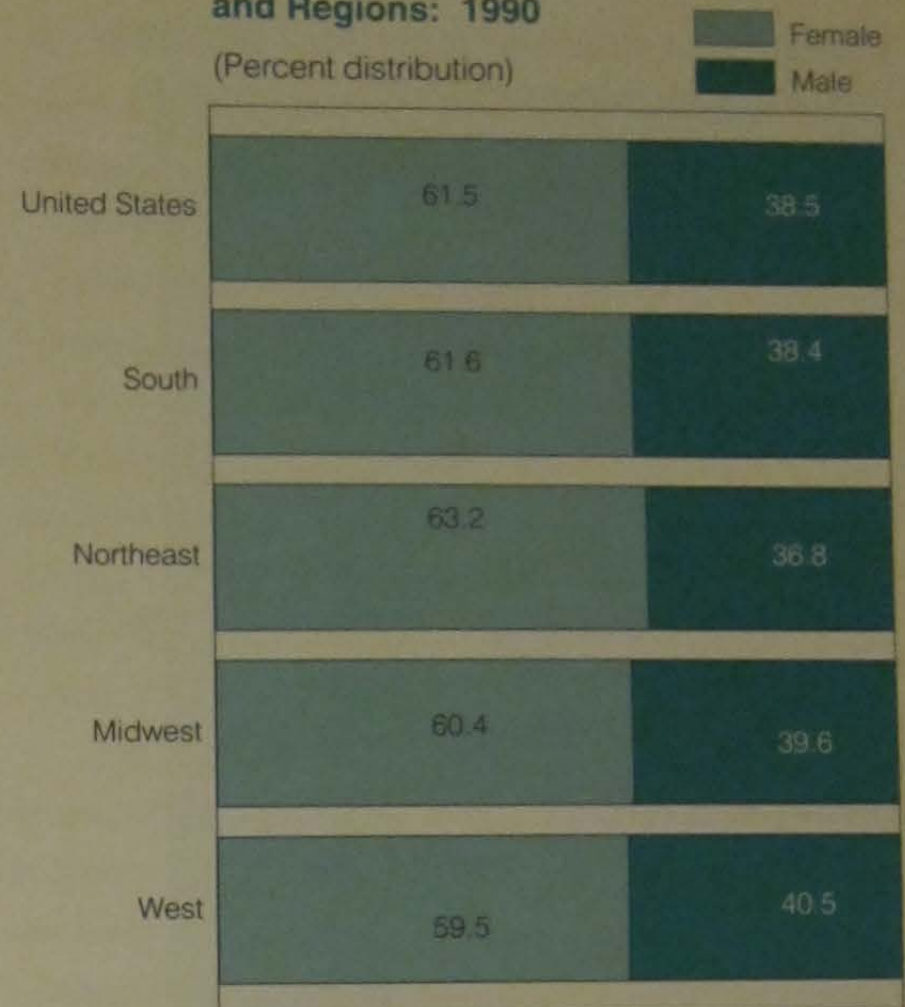
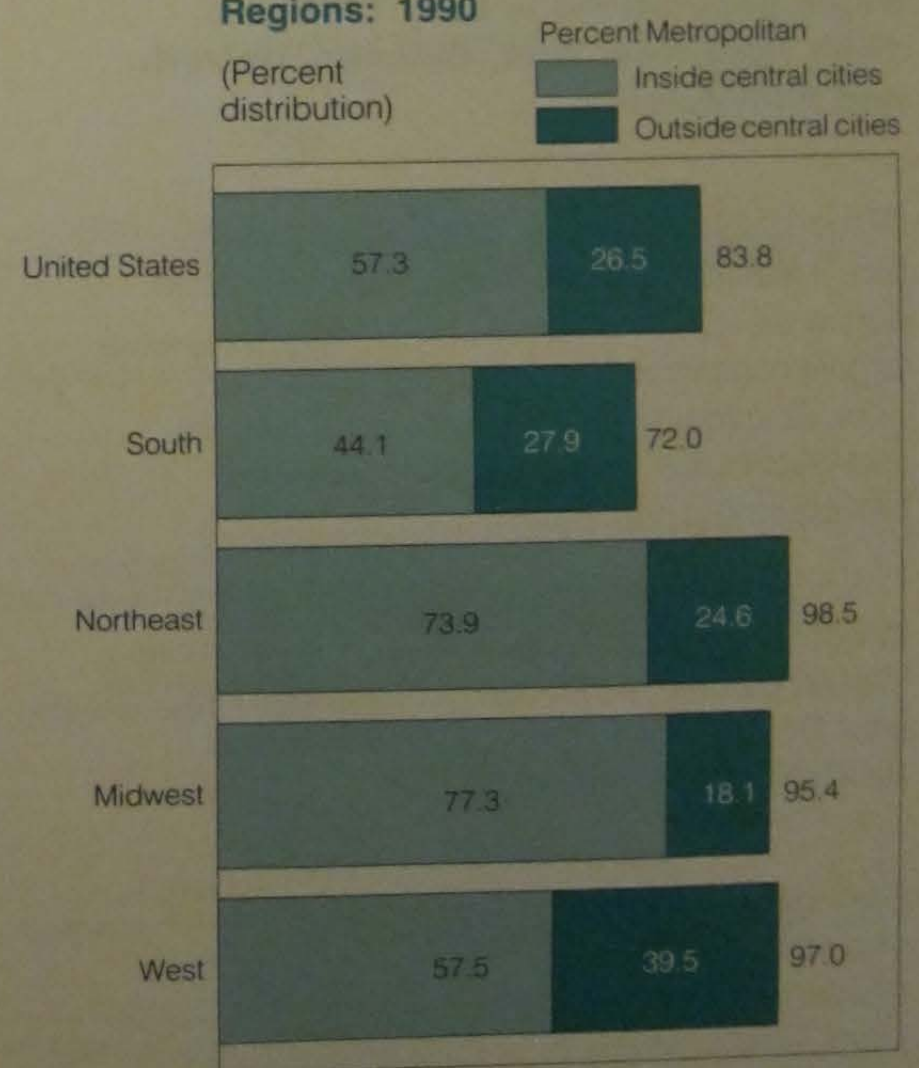


Figure 4. Black Population in Metropolitan Areas for the United States and Regions: 1990



Many of us live in the Nation's largest metropolitan areas.

In 1990, about 40 percent of the Black population resided in just 10 consolidated metropolitan statistical areas (CMSA's) and metropolitan statistical areas (MSA's), nearly the same proportion as in 1980.

Seven of these 10 metropolitan areas were also among the 10 most populous in the Nation.

Blacks represented 20 percent or more of the total population in 4 of these 10 metropolitan areas. For example, Blacks represented 27 percent of all persons residing in the Washington DC, MSA. Although the 10 metropolitan areas were scattered across the country, 5 were located in the South.

The cities with the most populous Black populations in both 1990 and 1980 were New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia.

Of the 10 cities with the largest Black population, 5 gained population and 5 lost population during the 1980's. New York City had the largest numerical and percentage increase, while Chicago decreased by about 9 percent and Washington, DC lost about 11 percent between 1980 and 1990.

In 5 of these 10 cities, Blacks represented more than 50 percent of the total population. They were Detroit, Washington, DC, New Orleans, Baltimore, and Memphis.

Among the 100 cities with the largest Black populations, the city with the highest proportion of Blacks in both 1980 and 1990 was East St. Louis, Illinois, where 98 percent of its residents were Black.

Figure 5.
Ten Metropolitan Statistical Areas With the Largest Black Population: 1990

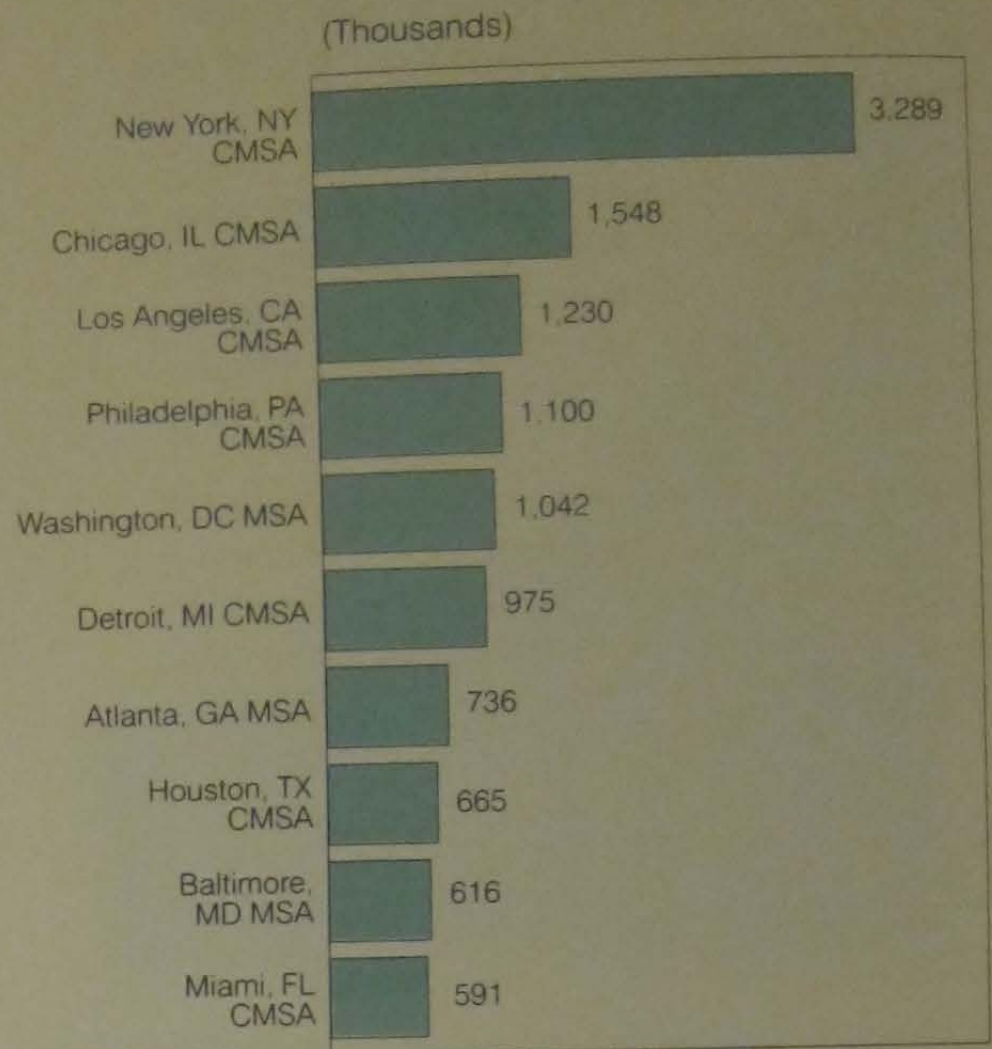


Figure 6.
Ten Cities With the Largest Black Population: 1990



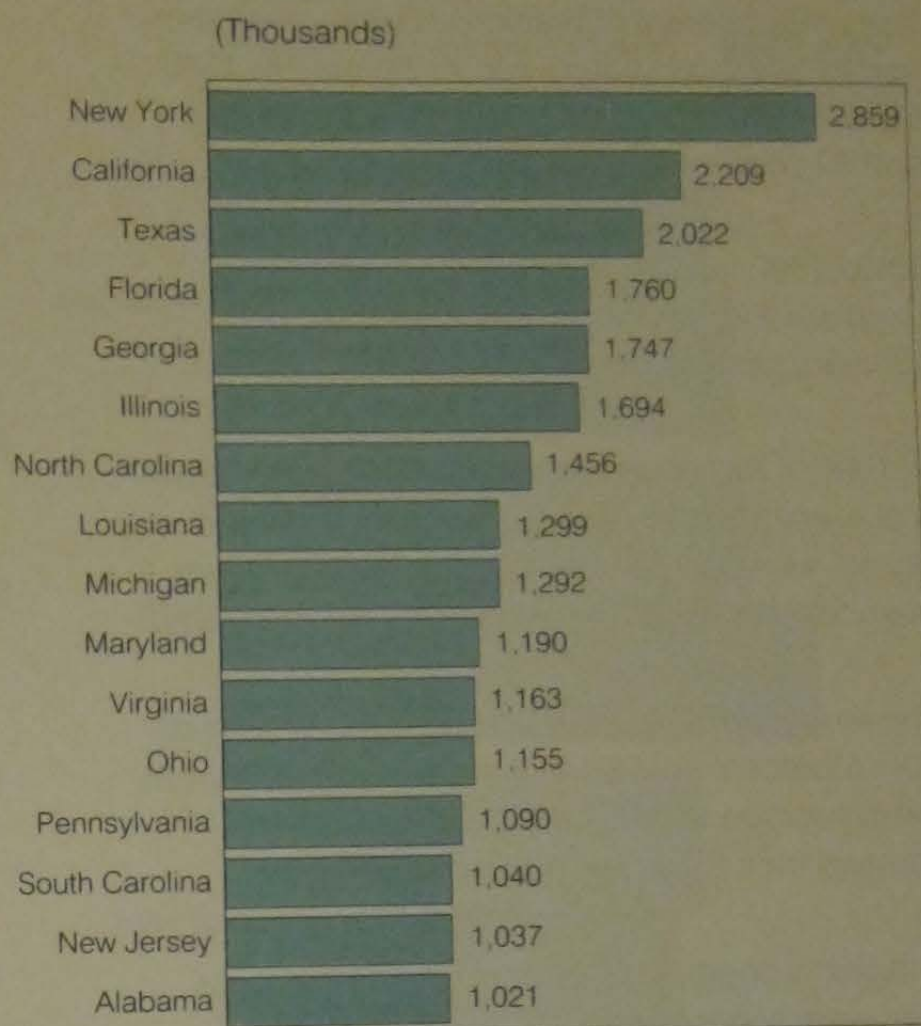
In 1990, our population was 1 million or more in 16 States.

Blacks were represented in every State in 1990, from about 2,000 in Vermont to 2.9 million in New York, and 16 States had 1 million or more Blacks in 1990. These 16 States were home to 80 percent of the Black population.

Four States, New Jersey, Maryland, South Carolina, and Alabama, reached 1 million between 1980 and 1990. Six of the 10 States with the largest Black populations were in the South.

California and Texas joined New York as the only States with Black populations exceeding 2 million.

Figure 7.
States with a Black Population of 1 Million or More: 1990



In 1990, we were better educated and more of us were staying in school.

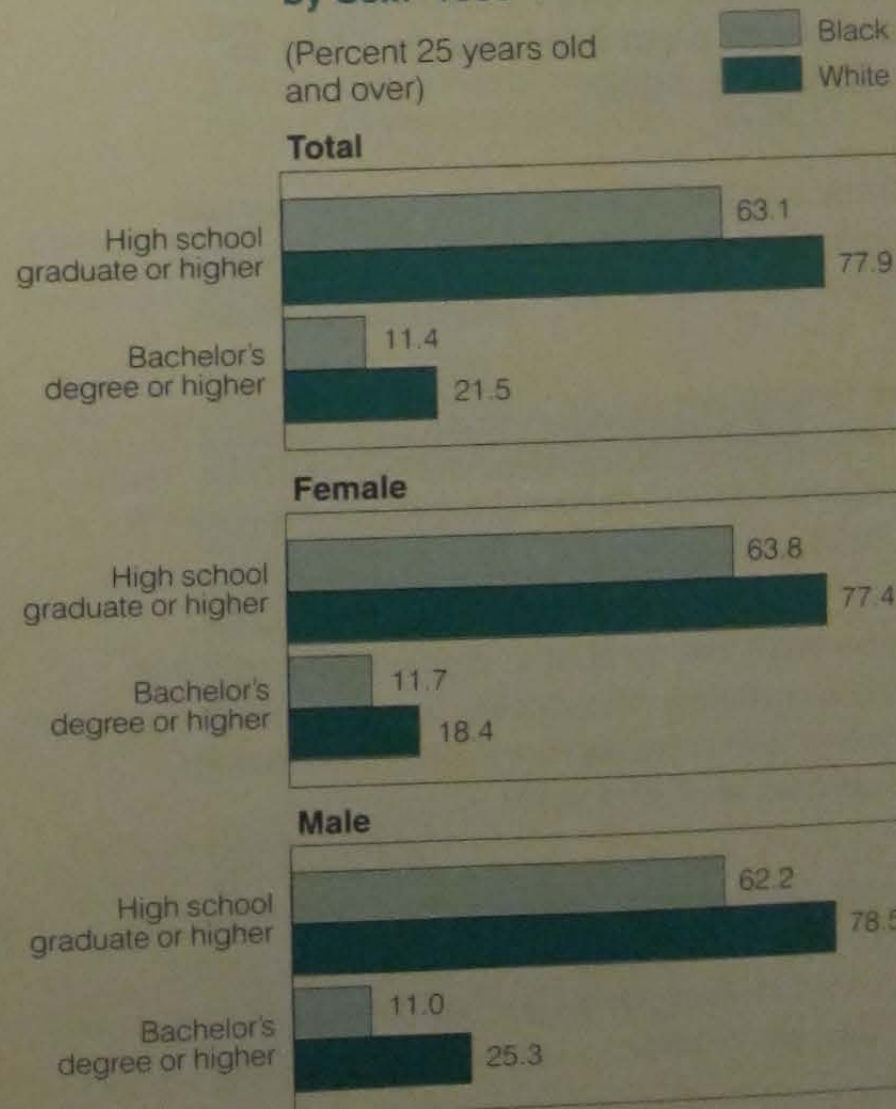
The proportion of Blacks 25 years old and over completing high school rose from 51 percent in 1980 to 63 percent in 1990. In 1940, only 7 percent of Blacks 25 years old and over had completed high school. Among the Black population, a slightly higher proportion of females (64 percent) than males (62 percent) had completed high school.

The high school dropout rate for Blacks declined from 16 percent in 1980 to 14 percent in 1990.

In 1990, 2 million Blacks were enrolled in college, 1 1/2 times the number in 1980. Twelve percent of Black females and 11 percent of Black males 25 years old and over had at least a bachelor's degree in 1990.

Eleven percent of Blacks, compared with 22 percent of Whites had earned at least a bachelor's degree in 1990. The corresponding figures for 1980 were 8 percent and 17 percent, respectively.

Figure 8.
Educational Attainment by Sex: 1990



Greater proportions of us are postponing marriage or not marrying at all.

Forty-four percent of Black men were never married in 1990, compared with 41 percent in 1980. For Black women, the figures were 38 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

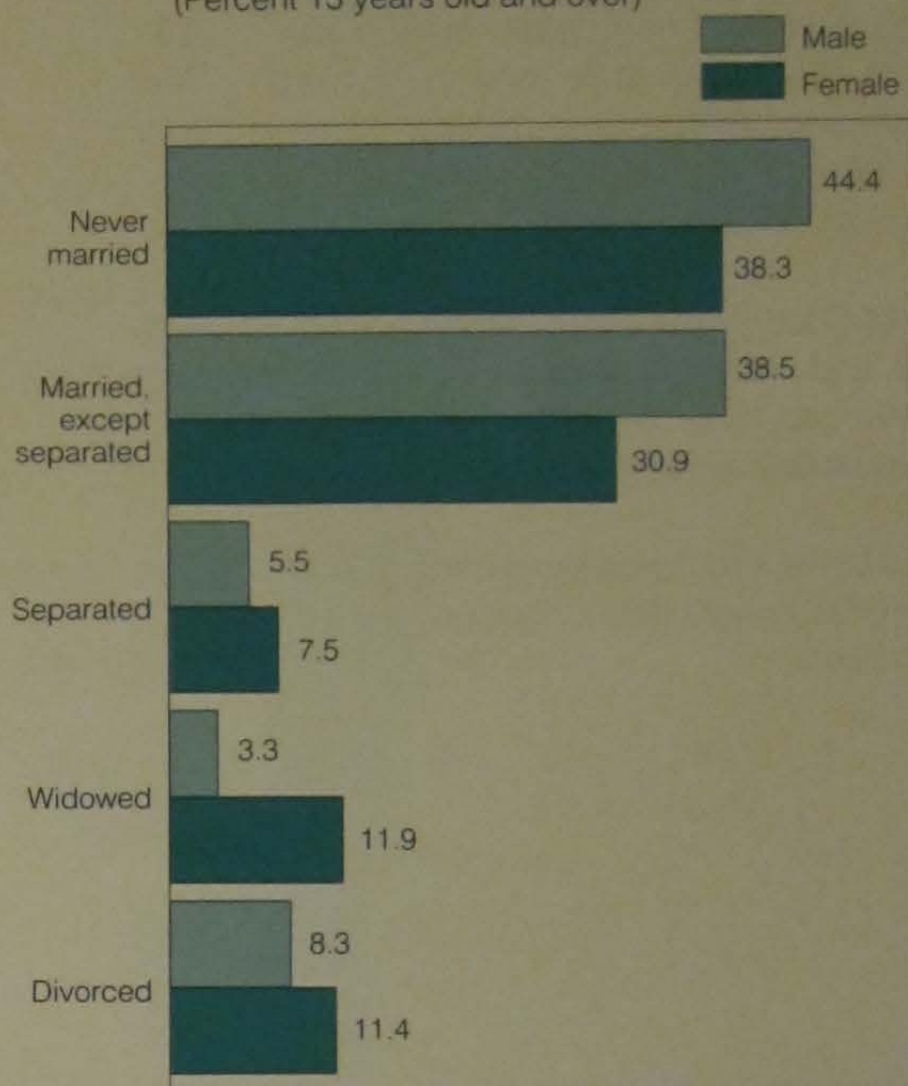
Since 1980, there has been a 27 percent increase in the number of young Black adults 15 years old and over who never married.

In 1990, a higher proportion of Black men, nearly 4 of every 10, than Black women, about 3 of every 10, were married. In addition, four times as many Black women as Black men were widowed.

The proportion of divorced Black men increased from 6 percent in 1980 to 8 percent in 1990, while the proportion of divorced Black women increased from 9 percent to 11 percent.

A larger proportion of Black women than Black men were separated.

Figure 9.
Marital Status of Blacks by Sex: 1990
(Percent 15 years old and over)



The number of Black families increased from 6 million in 1980 to 7 million in 1990.

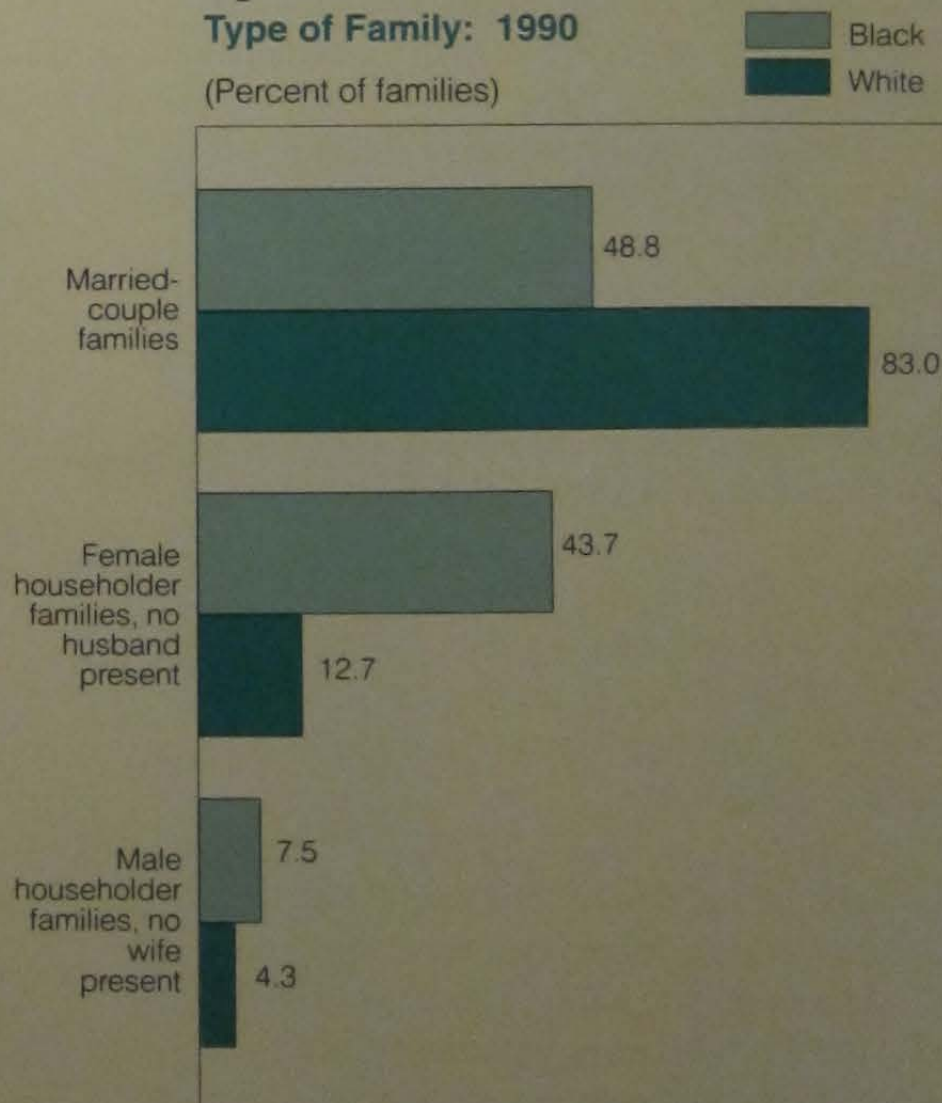
Nearly one-half of Black families were married-couple families compared with more than four-fifths of White families.

Our families are not as large as they used to be. The average number of persons per family dropped from 3.7 persons in 1980 to 3.5 persons in 1990.

Since 1980, the number of Black male and Black female nonfamily households (persons living alone or with someone unrelated) increased by 25 percent and 30 percent, respectively.

Single parents have become more common. More than half of Black children under 18 years old lived in one-parent families in 1990, up from 47 percent in 1980.

Figure 10.
Type of Family: 1990
(Percent of families)



We were less likely than Whites to participate in the labor force in 1989.

Of the 21 million Blacks 16 years old and over, 63 percent were in the labor force in 1989, 2 percentage points below the 65 percent rate for both the White and total populations.

Sixty-seven percent of Black males 16 years old and over were in the labor force in 1989 compared with 75 percent of White males.

The proportion of Black women in the labor force increased from 53 percent in 1979 to 60 percent in 1989. Their participation rate was higher than that for White women.

In 1979, the Black unemployment rate was about twice that of Whites. Ten years later, our unemployment rate was more than twice that of Whites, 13 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

In 1990, we numbered 13 million in the labor force.

In 1990, 6.8 million Black women and 6.2 million Black men were in the civilian labor force. More Black men than Black women were in the Armed Forces.

A smaller proportion of Black men than Black women were managers and professionals. Larger percentages of Black women also worked in technical, sales, and administrative support and in service occupations than did Black men.

However, a larger proportion of Black men than Black women were employed as operators, fabricators, and laborers; in precision production, craft, and repair jobs; and in farming, forestry, and fishing occupations.

Figure 11.
Labor Force Participation Rates by Sex: 1989

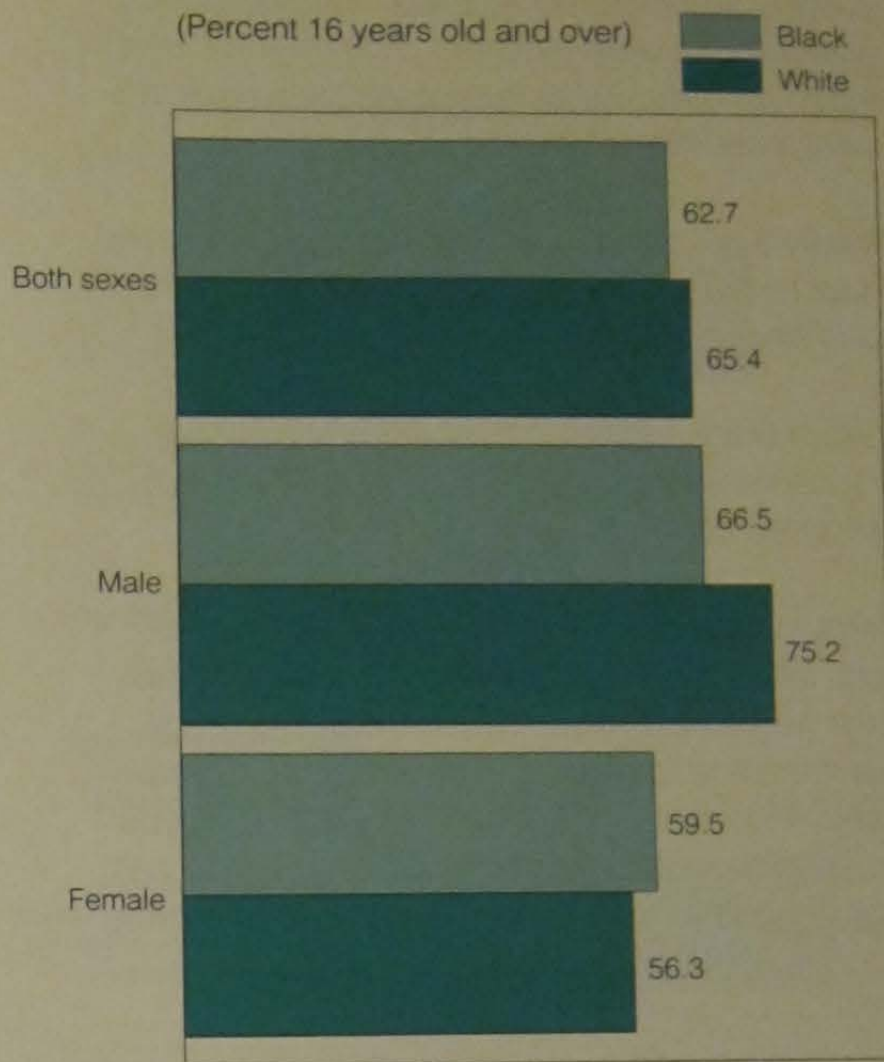
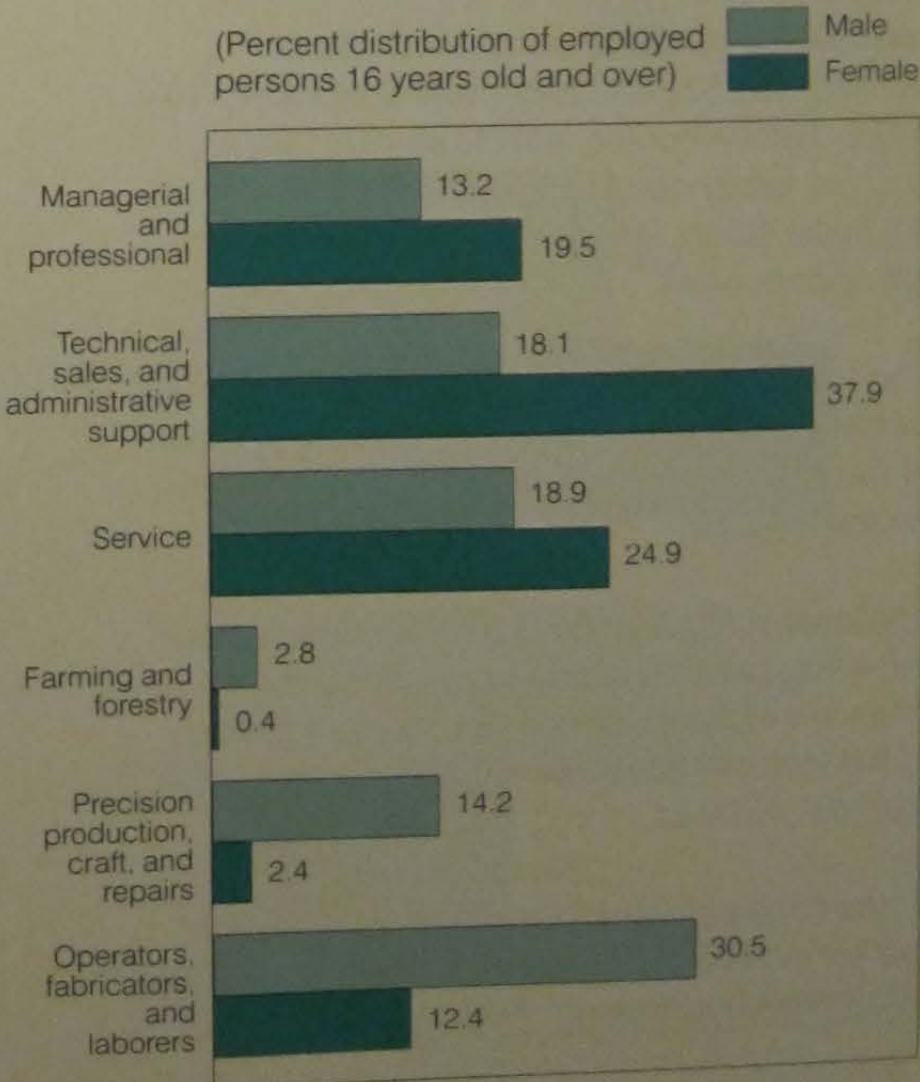


Figure 12.
Major Occupations for Blacks by Sex: 1990



We were heavily concentrated in certain jobs.

In 1990, 22 percent of all Black managers and professionals were teachers. The majority of both Black male and Black female teachers were elementary school teachers.

Nearly 3 out of every 10 Black females employed in technical, sales, and administrative support jobs were cashiers, secretaries, and typists.

Half of Black females employed in service occupations were nursing aides, orderlies and attendants, cooks, janitors, and cleaners.

Thirty-one percent of Black males were operators, fabricators, and laborers. Of these, 30 percent were truckdrivers, assemblers, and stock handlers and baggers. Within service occupations, 45 percent of Black males were employed as janitors and cleaners or as cooks; and 12 percent as guards and police, except public service.

Our income reflects our education, our job opportunities, and our family composition.

In 1989, the median income for all Black families was \$22,430 and it was about \$21,110 in 1979. Family income reflects several factors, such as family composition, the number of workers in the family, educational attainment, and job opportunities.

The 1989 median income for Black families maintained by women was only \$12,520, 37 percent of the \$33,540 median income for Black married-couple families.

The large number of Black families maintained by women with no husband present and the often low incomes of these families contributed to the lack of improvement in the median family income of Blacks.

Thirty-three percent of Black families had one worker in 1989, 37 percent had two workers, and 13 percent had three or more workers.

Figure 13. Selected Occupational Groups for Blacks by Sex: 1990

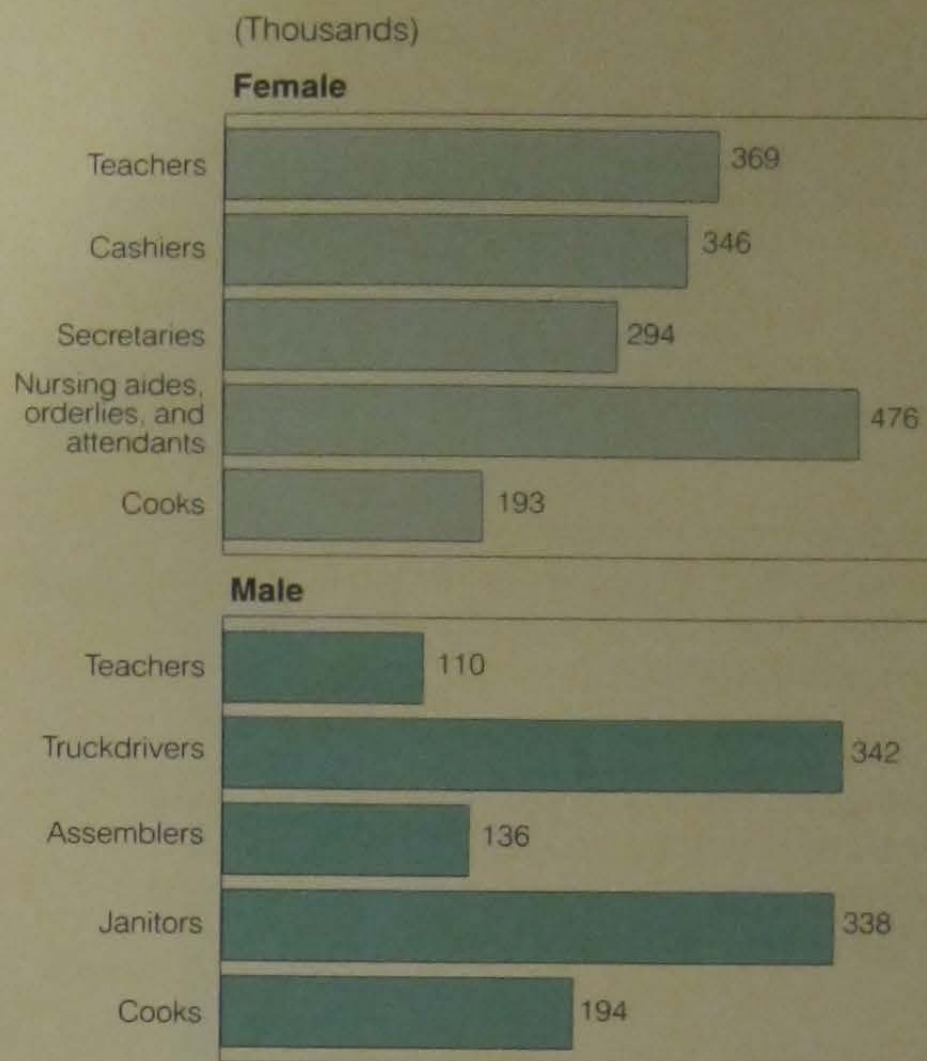
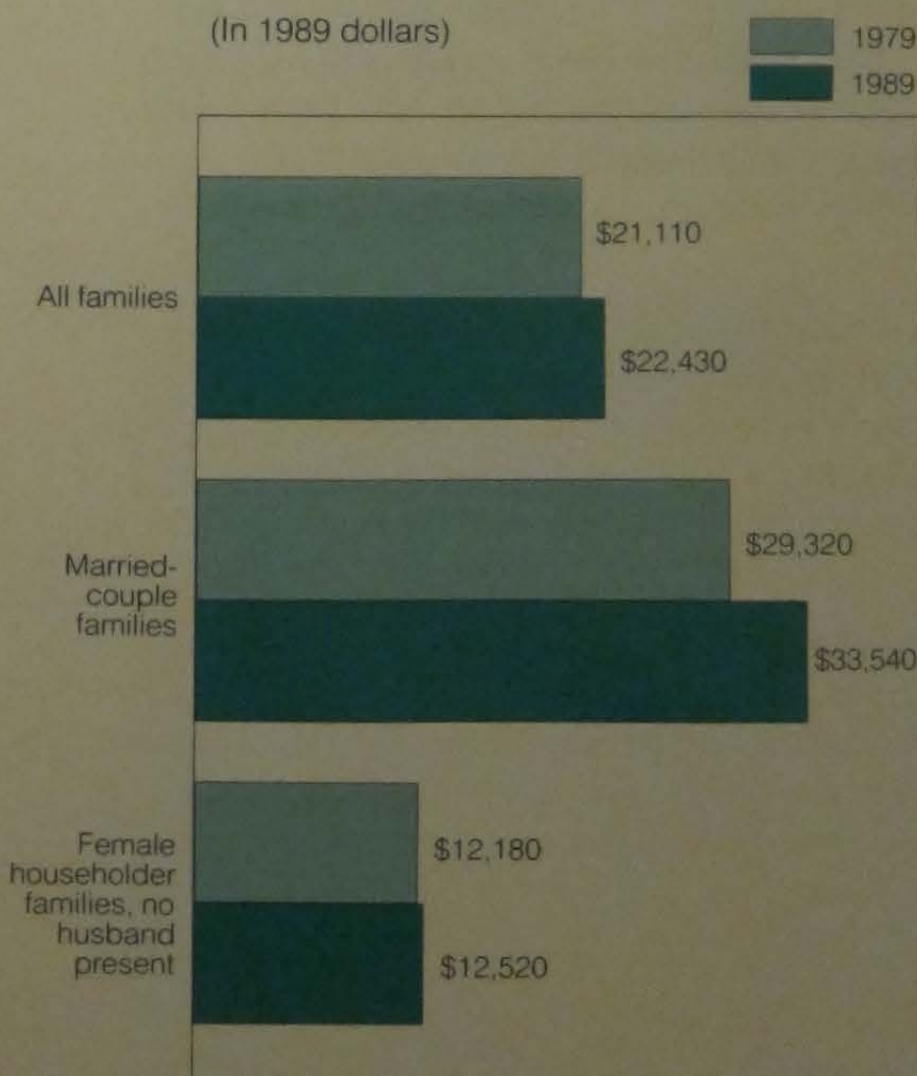


Figure 14. Median Family Income by Type of Family for Blacks: 1979 and 1989



Our poverty rates improved only slightly between 1979 and 1989, from 29.9 percent to 29.5 percent.

We made significant progress in several areas during the past decade, but partially due to recessions, our poverty rates from 1979 to 1989 declined by less than half a percentage point.

In 1989, 8.4 million Black persons were poor, compared with 19.0 million Whites. The poverty rate for Whites was 10 percent in 1989 and 9 percent in 1979.

About 2 million, or 26 percent, of all Black families had money incomes below the poverty level in 1989.

In 1989, 45 percent of Black female householders and 11 percent of married-couple families were poor. These family types accounted for 94 percent of all poor Black families. The corresponding figures for White families were 23 percent and 5 percent.

Note: The Federally defined poverty level does not include noncash benefits such as housing, food, and medical assistance.

Over 4 million of us owned our own homes in 1990.

The number of homes owned by Blacks increased from 3.7 million in 1980 to 4.3 million in 1990.

By 1990, 43 percent of Blacks lived in homes they either owned or were buying, compared with 68 percent for Whites. The proportion of Black homeowners has remained relatively stable over the past 20 years.

The median value of our homes in 1990 was \$50,700, compared with \$80,200 for White homeowners. The median value of Black homes was about 56 percent of the White median home value in 1980, but grew to 63 percent in 1990.

Seventy-two percent of Blacks residing in rural areas owned their own homes compared with 40 percent of urban Blacks.

Inside metropolitan areas, 41 percent of Black householders were homeowners, compared with 59 percent of those outside metropolitan areas.

Seventeen percent of Black housing units were occupied by a person 65 years old and over compared with 23 percent of White housing units.

Figure 15.
Poverty Rates for Black Persons and Families: 1989

(Percent)

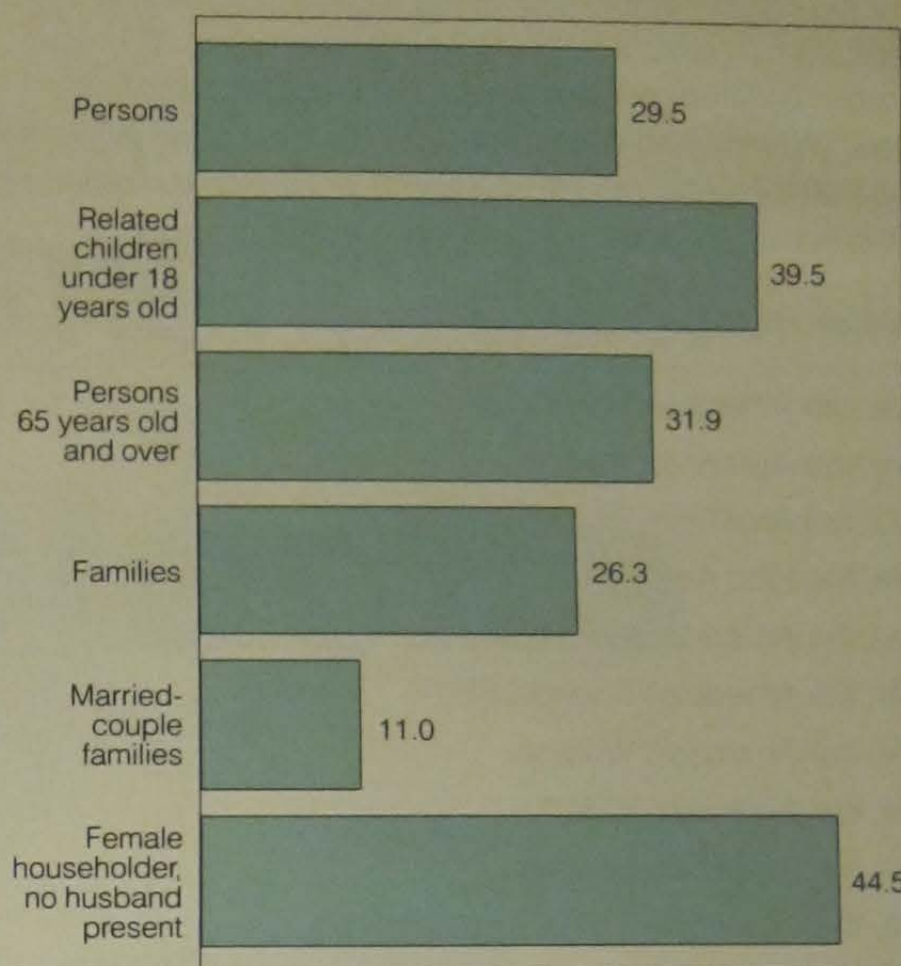
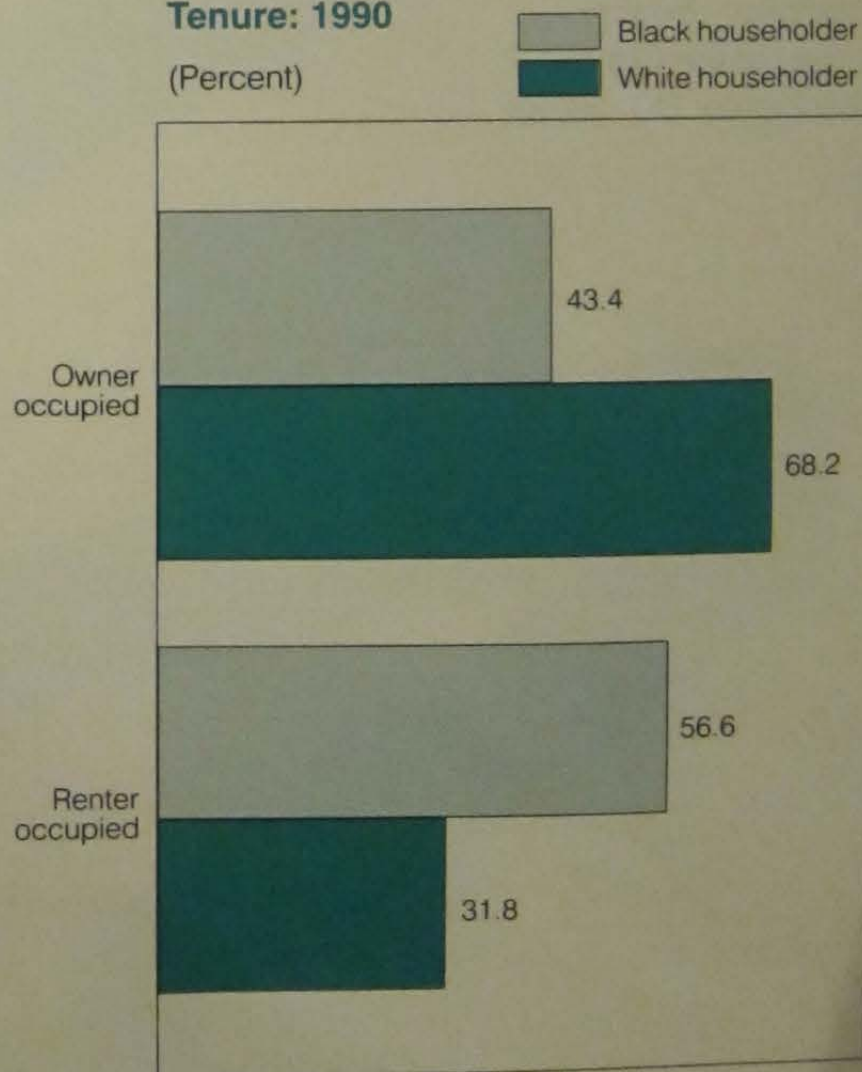


Figure 16.
Tenure: 1990

(Percent)



Information in this report is based on the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. Estimated population and housing unit totals based on tabulations from only the sample tabulations may differ from the official 100-percent counts. Such differences result, in part, from collecting data from a sample of households rather than all households. Differences also can occur because of the interview situation and the processing rules differing between the 100-percent and sample tabulations. These types of differences are referred to as nonsampling errors.

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