

***Examining Unemployment Disparities:
Barriers to Employment in Duval County
Brief***

Prepared for the
Jacksonville Human Rights Commission

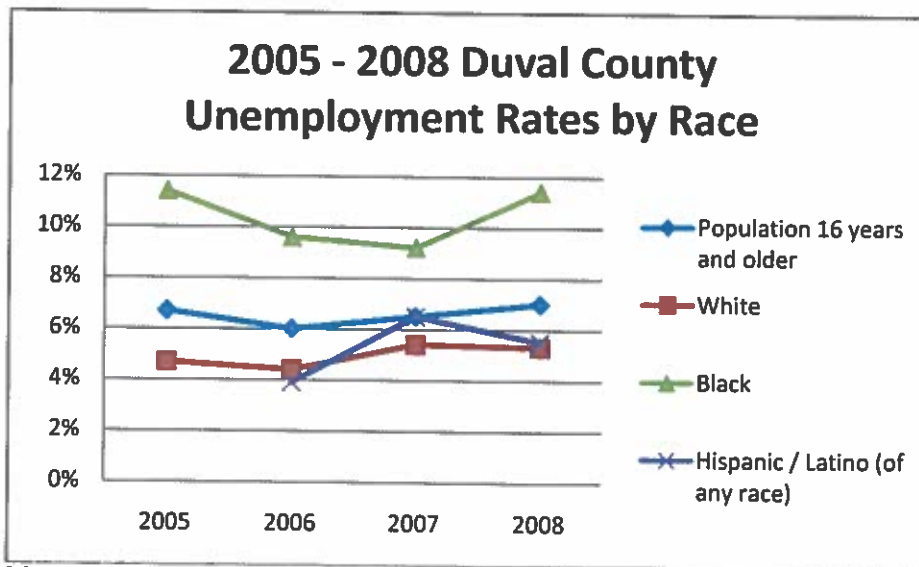
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At the request of the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission (JHRC), researchers at the Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives (CCI) examined the racial disparities in Duval County's unemployment rates and implemented an online survey to obtain local individuals' perspectives on their unemployment and / or employment experiences in order to better understand some of the underlying reasons for the disparities. Indeed, between 2005 and 2008, the Black population in Duval County experienced unemployment rates 42 to 70 percent higher than the overall county population (see Figure 1). Interestingly, while the U.S. Hispanic / Latino population suffers from above average rates, this does not appear to be the case locally where the rates are very similar to Whites during the three-year time span in which data are available.

Figure 1



NOTE: Unemployment rates for other racial groups were unavailable due to small numbers.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 - 2008 American Community Surveys

Researchers have pointed to various forms of discrimination as well as a lack of human capital, transportation issues, familial obligations, substance and alcohol abuse or mental health diagnoses as just a few of the many possible barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment.



Table 1

| Most Important Reason Why Not Working (Unemployed Respondents) | |
|---|----------------------|
| | Total (n=140) |
| No Jobs | 32.9% |
| Other | 12.1% |
| Need More Work Experience | 9.3% |
| Need More Education | 8.6% |
| Criminal Record | 7.1% |
| Transportation Problems | 6.4% |
| Age | 5.7% |
| Disability | 4.3% |
| Wages Too Low | 3.6% |
| Race | 2.9% |

Table 2

| Most Important Reason For Leaving Last Job (Unemployed Respondents) | |
|--|----------------------|
| | Total (n=140) |
| Fired, Laid-off, Temporary / Short-term Assignment Ended | 58.6% |
| Other | 15.0% |
| Problems with Boss / Co-Workers | 5.7% |
| Being Discriminated Against | 5.0% |



One of the female respondents expressed frustration over the catch-22 situation people without work experience find themselves in, “I’ve applied for several jobs but all seem to want more experience. How can I get experience if I can’t get a job?!”

Table 4

| Time Employed Since Turning 18 | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Unemployed Respondents (n=147) | Employed Respondents (n=103) |
| Most of the time | 53.7% | 78.6% |
| About three-quarters of the time | 20.4% | 13.6% |
| About half of the time | 13.6% | 4.9% |
| About one-quarter of the time | 5.4% | 1.0% |
| Hardly at all | 6.8% | 1.9% |

As seen in [Figure 2](#), employed respondents were more educated than their unemployed counterparts. The educational and work experiences disparities were reflected in the varying occupations previously held by the unemployed and those the working participants held at the time of the survey. While a majority of the employed subjects worked in “professional” fields such as office and administrative support and business and financial operations, the previous jobs of the unemployed respondents were more varied and included more “blue collar” occupations such as food preparation and serving related, construction and extraction, and building and grounds cleaning and maintenance management.



Discrimination appears to be perceived among the survey participants more so in the workplace, rather than when applying for a job. Again, this may be because discrimination is much easier to identify and witness once on the job. Unemployed and employed survey respondents reported workplace discrimination, primarily due to race / ethnicity, more in terms of promotions and raises than in tasks assigned and training opportunities (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5

| Perceptions of Discrimination Experienced at Current Job (Unemployed Respondents) | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| | Others Got Promotions or Pay Raises Faster Because of Your... (n=141) | Employer Gives You Certain Tasks Because of Your... (n=139) | Employer Withhold Training From You Because of Your... (n=141) |
| Race / Ethnicity | 21.3% | 11.5% | 5.0% |
| Age | 9.2% | 5.8% | 2.1% |
| Gender | 12.1% | 5.0% | 3.5% |
| Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity | 1.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Religion | 2.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| None of the Above | 70.2% | 82.7% | 93.6% |

Table 6

| Perceptions of Discrimination Experienced at Current Job (Employed Respondents) | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | Others Got Promotions or Pay Raises Faster Because of Your... (n=100) | Employer Gives You Certain Tasks Because of Your... (n=100) | Employer Withhold Training From You Because of Your... (n=91) |
| Race / Ethnicity | 30.0% | 15.3% | 11.0% |
| Age | 18.0% | 8.2% | 4.4% |



| | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------|
| Getting a Good Job Depends Mainly on Being in the Right Place at the Right Time | 71.2% (n=132) | 70.8% (n=48) |
|--|------------------|-----------------|

Presented with a variety of explanations for economic disparities between Blacks and Whites, discrimination was considered to be the most prescient concerns among survey participants. Indeed, roughly half of the unemployed respondents agreed with the statements that past and ongoing discrimination are major causes of economic disparities between Blacks and Whites (see Table 8). Employed participants looking for another job were even more likely than those not working to believe past and current discrimination are primary causes. The explanation least agreed upon by both groups of respondents was that Blacks do not have access to the education required to rise out of poverty. It is interesting to note that while past and current discrimination were the most often perceived reasons for racial inequality, almost half of all respondents agreed with the statement, “most blacks just don’t have the motivation or will power to pull themselves out of poverty.” Furthermore, Black unemployed respondents were as likely as their White counterparts to agree with this statement.

Table 8

| Causes for the Economic Gaps Between Blacks and Whites (Percent Strongly Agree / Agree) | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| | Unemployed Respondents | Employed Respondents Seeking Other Work |
| Past History of Discrimination That Will Take Time to Overcome | 48.3% (n=122) | 65.9% (n=44) |
| Ongoing Discrimination That is Still Occurring Today | 55.7% (n=122) | 59.1% (n=44) |
| Most Blacks Don't Have the Chance for Education That it Takes to Rise Out of Poverty | 27.9% (n=122) | 41.9% (n=43) |
| Most Blacks Just Don't Have the Motivation or Will Power to Pull Themselves Out of Poverty | 46.2% (n=121) | 46.5% (n=43) |