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New Report Documents Persistent Economic Disparities Facing Black Men and Boys

Report examines education, employment, earnings, household financial security and economic mobility

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — July 30, 2026 — Black men and boys in the United States face persistent economic disparities in education, employment and household wealth, according to a new research brief released today by the John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership at Virginia State University, in partnership with the Virginia Alliance for Black Men and Boys (VABMB).

“The Economic State of Black Men and Boys in the United States” is the first in what the Institute says will be an annual series tracking a set of specific, sourced indicators on Black men’s economic standing. The brief was released at the inaugural BlackPrint Leadership Institute, a full-day leadership program for young men held at the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center in Charlottesville.

The brief reports that the Black unemployment rate stood at 6.6 percent in June 2026, the highest among the four racial and ethnic groups presented in the BLS monthly summary table. The report finds that, in the cited Economic Policy Institute analysis, Black men were the only race-by-gender group examined whose employment-to-population ratio showed a substantial decline from the first quarter of 2025 to the first quarter of 2026. The employment-to-population ratio measures the percentage of the relevant civilian population that is employed.

“Communities cannot solve what they do not measure,” said Dr. Wes Bellamy, Executive Director of the John Mercer Langston Institute. “This report establishes a baseline for accountability — not only for government, but for universities, employers, nonprofits, and all of us who care about the future of Black men and boys.”

Bellamy said the report is meant to create accountability by first establishing agreement on where things stand today, so that data — not assumptions — drives the investments and decisions that follow.

Among the report’s other findings:

- Black men and boys numbered approximately 22.7 million in the United States as of 2025, roughly 49 percent of the estimated 46.2 million people who identify as Black alone, according to Census Bureau population estimates.

- Black men working full time earned a median of \$1,039 per week in 2025 — about 77 cents for every dollar earned by White men, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.
- Black men represented approximately 26 percent of total HBCU fall enrollment in 2022, compared with approximately 38 percent in 1976, even as Black male enrollment across all degree-granting institutions nationally declined approximately 22 percent between 2010 and 2022.
- In the 2022 Survey of Consumer Finances data used in the report, Black families had a median transaction-account balance of approximately \$2,200. Approximately 43 percent of Black families owned their homes, compared with approximately 73 percent of White families.
- Approximately 30 percent of unemployed Black men had been out of work for 27 weeks or longer, according to a May 2026 analysis of federal labor data — a higher share than for unemployed men in other racial and ethnic groups examined.

Institute leadership estimates that it and its partners generated more than 10,000 engagement touchpoints with Black men and boys and other community stakeholders over the period described. This is an approximate count of interactions, not unique participants. These engagements occurred in settings including national conferences, Black male achievement convenings, barbershops, community basketball courts and parks. The engagements informed the report’s framing and recommendations but were not used to generate its national statistical findings.

The report closes with six priorities for institutions to act on, ranging from treating Black male college enrollment and persistence as a measured institutional responsibility, to investing in evidence-aligned literacy instruction modeled on Mississippi’s statewide reading gains, to targeting services directly at workers who have been unemployed 27 weeks or longer.

“The young men participating in BlackPrint today represent possibility,” Bellamy said. “This report helps explain the landscape they are inheriting, while the Institute is designed to equip them to change it. Research without leadership accomplishes little. Leadership without research lacks direction. We believe both are essential.”

“Nobody is coming to save us,” Bellamy said. “What this requires now is institutions willing to be measured against it.”

The full 22-page research brief, including complete data tables, sourcing and methodology, is available at vsu.edu/sola/departments/political-science/political-science/john-mercerc-langston-institute.php.

About the John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership

The John Mercer Langston Institute for African American Political Leadership is housed at Virginia State University and works to advance African American political leadership and civic engagement through research, education and community partnership.

About the Virginia Alliance for Black Men and Boys

The Virginia Alliance for Black Men and Boys (VABMB) is a statewide partnership working to improve outcomes for Black men and boys in Virginia across education, employment, health and civic life.

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