

The State of Black Chicago

Executive Summary

To remain a relevant, vital source of support for Black families and communities, the League routinely examines the economic, environmental, political and social factors that impact the life experiences of Black people in Chicago. The 2019 **State of Black Chicago** aims to provide a broad picture of Chicago's Black residents and, specifically, to examine racial inequities in education, employment, housing, health, justice and more.

Our analysis of more than 10 sources of data found that the landscape of opportunity for Black residents of Chicago continues to be hampered by the intersection of structural racism, money, and power—factors that have led to longstanding inequities in key areas that affect quality of life. For instance, we cannot ignore the role that mass incarceration has played in severely limiting the opportunities of entire communities. Nor can we ignore the lasting effects of segregation, combined with underinvestment in segregated Black communities, which has resulted in opportunity deserts for Black Chicagoans or what we conceptualize as the *“social determinants of opportunity.”*

The full report includes data from local organizations, national surveys and research reports. It also includes insights from our Program Directors on what's needed to lift barriers to opportunity for their clients, along with summaries from our Research and Policy team on the League's efforts to advance more equitable policies at the local and state levels.

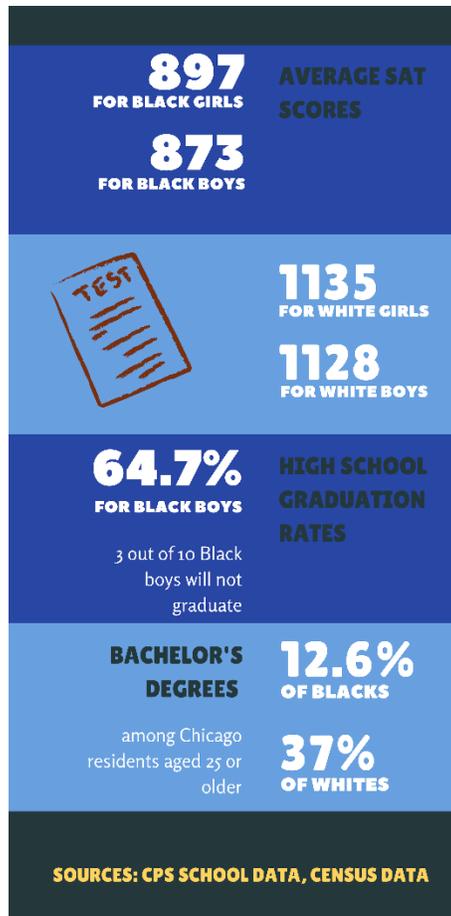
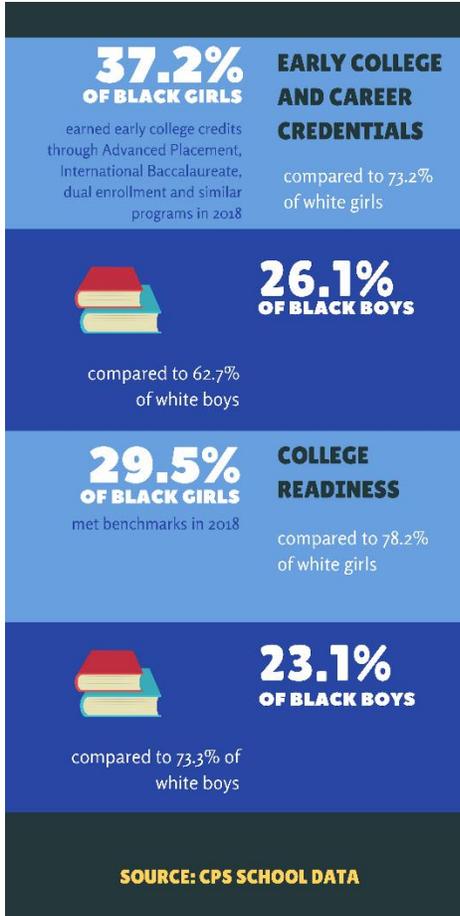
Key high-level statistics:

- Black residents are 31% of Chicago's population
- 27 of Chicago's 77 community areas are predominantly Black
- The median household income for the 27 predominantly Black community areas ranges from a low of \$14,287 in Riverdale to a high of \$48,161 in Calumet Heights. Most Black community areas have household incomes of \$24,000 to \$30,000.

Racial Disparities:

To highlight racial disparities, this summary focuses on the city's Black residents, compared to White residents. The full **2019 State of Black Chicago** report with expanded data tables and information can be found online at chiul.org/reports. (beginning on June 11)

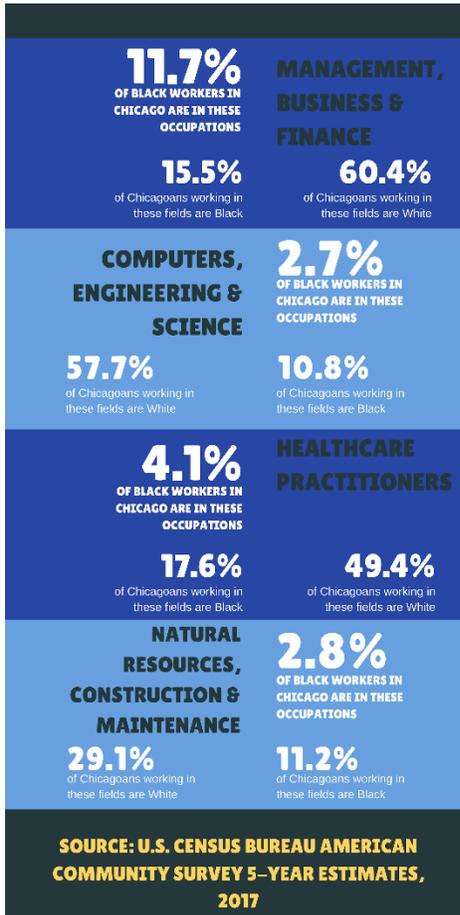
Education



A student's high school experience and exposure to programs and services is the foundation for the college and career pathways they will pursue following graduation. African American students have worked hard to close achievement and experience gaps in recent years, but there is still much work to be done at the district and systems level.

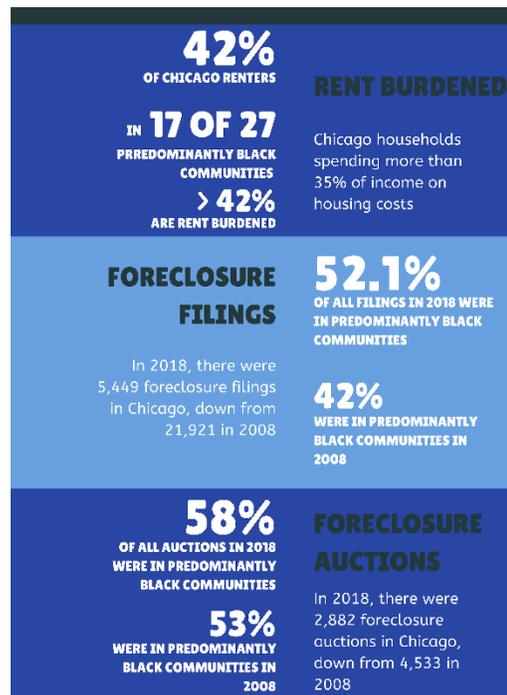
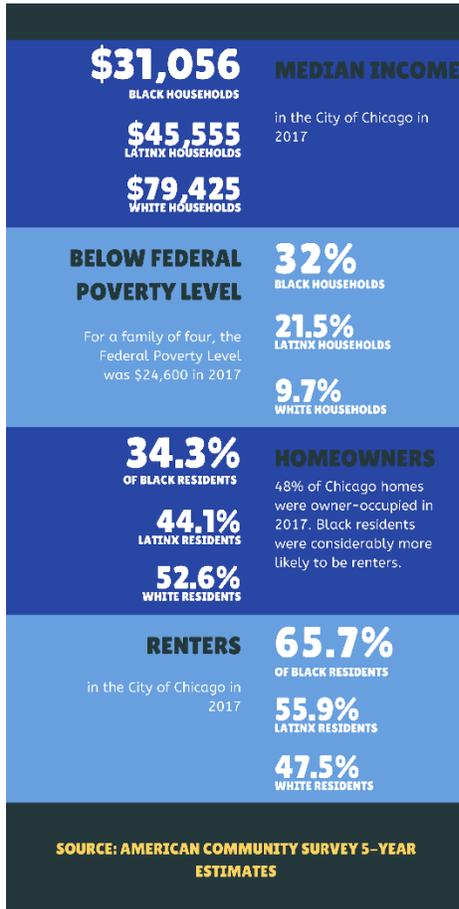
Beyond high school, just 12.6% of Black Chicagoans hold bachelor's degrees and just 8.5% hold advanced degrees.

Employment and Entrepreneurship



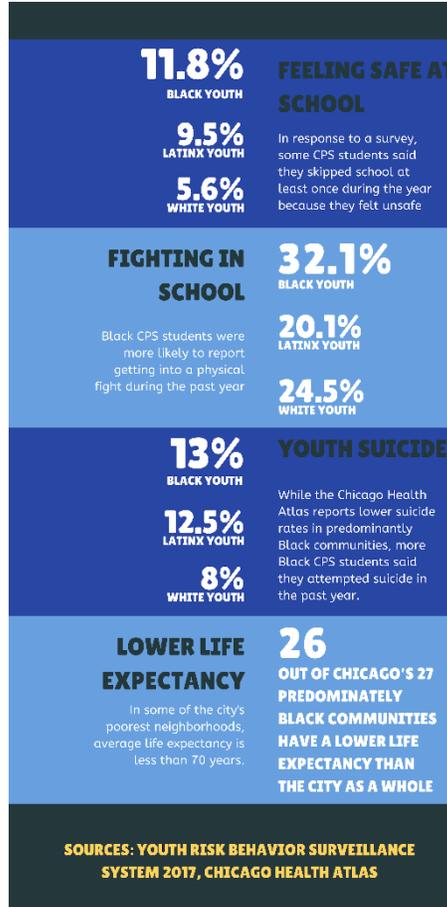
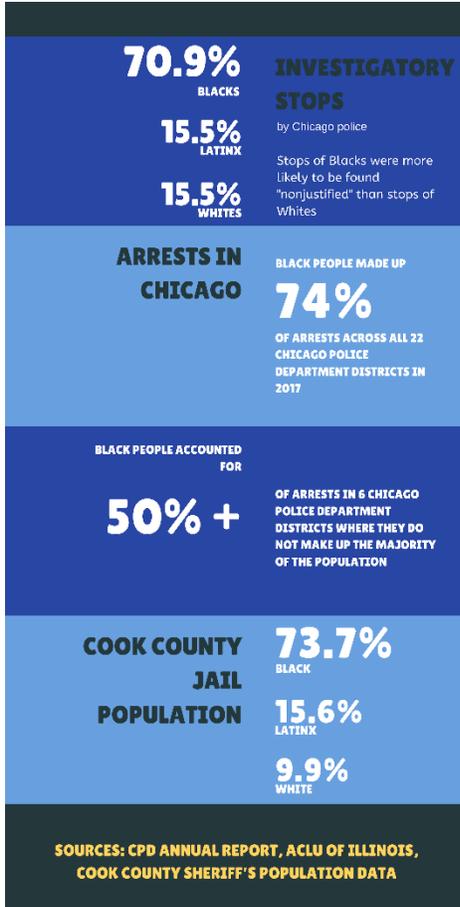
Since 2010, employment and labor force participation increased for all population groups citywide. However, the double-digit unemployment rate experienced by African-American workers—nearly four times the rate of whites and twice as high as Latinx individuals—remains a considerable concern. For entrepreneurs, Chicago-specific data is difficult to find; however, general findings for the state of Illinois provide a high-level snapshot on the state of Black entrepreneurship.

Housing and Income



The foundation on which family and household stability rests is shelter and income. While many African Americans in Chicago have seen their economic status improve in recent decades, far too many families are still trapped in a cycle of poverty and economic inequity.

Health and Justice



Health, poverty and criminal justice are often intertwined in a diverse, urban city like Chicago. The criminalization of substance use, mental health and disabilities has led to mass incarceration in communities and enhanced penalties and zero tolerance policies in schools. Many Black youth and adults are subject to economic, environmental and social factors that reduce their quality of life and make it more difficult to become productive, thriving residents of Chicago.

Leadership



Diversity in C-suite leadership and on boards enables organizations to tap into a broad and comprehensive spectrum of skills and experiences. For a city where Black and Latinx residents each account for roughly one-third of the population, Chicago has some work to do.

Civic Engagement



On May 7, 2019, the Chicago Urban League released an issue brief on the 2020 Census entitled, “Money and Power: The Economic and Political Impact of the 2020 Census on Illinois.” A key finding of the brief is that Black Americans are the most undercounted racial group in the U.S. A Census undercount in Illinois would lead to a decrease in the federal funding that sustains more than 100 critical programs across the state, as well as the loss of one or more seats in the U.S. Congress.

What’s Needed to Shift the “Social Determinants of Opportunity” and Advance Progress for Chicago’s Black Residents

We recognize that both short-term programmatic and long-term policy changes will be needed to truly advance opportunities for Black Chicagoans. There will always be a need for direct services to help people facing barriers in their current lives. However, these must be accompanied by broader social changes brought about by policy and advocacy aimed at disrupting structural racism, mass incarceration and longstanding segregation and disinvestment.

Education:

- Equitable distribution of resources for Chicago classrooms
- Increased financial assistance for college students and their families
- Socioemotional support for students

Employment:

- Exposure to emerging careers in fast-growing fields such as technology, clean energy and healthcare for Black Chicagoans, many of whom live in opportunity deserts
- Increased commitment from employers to close the opportunity gap

Entrepreneurship:

- Greater access to mentors and other sources of knowledge to bring opportunities to Black Chicagoans
- More partners and resources—at all levels—to drive economic development in underinvested communities

Housing and Income:

- Stronger legislation that protects low-income borrowers
- More “truly affordable” affordable housing across the city
- Financial education: Learning about finances needs to begin at the middle-school level

Health & Justice:

- Comprehensive mental health and health resources for disinvested communities
- Long-term approaches that address the root causes of violence and mass incarceration

Leadership:

- Organizations must expand their line of sight to hire more diverse leaders. When board or executive roles open, organizations must be deliberate in hiring diverse talent.
- Organizations must embrace processes that reward truly inclusive practices. Ensuring that hiring managers understand that inclusiveness is being measured and that it matters is essential to more diverse organizations.