



Economic Review

A Strong Labor Market Has Narrowed Gaps in Participation and Employment between Black and White Non-College Men

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Black men without a college degree have seen especially strong gains in employment and wages during the pandemic recovery.

Black and Hispanic workers faced disproportionately larger declines in labor force participation than white workers during the pandemic-led recession. This gap appears consistent with previous recessions: the labor market outcomes of racial and ethnic minorities tend to deteriorate more than those of white workers during recessions, widening gaps in participation, employment, and wages during downturns. However, the labor market has since recovered, with employment rising above pre-pandemic levels. Have gaps in labor market outcomes between Black and white workers narrowed?

Didem Tüzemen and Deepak Venkatasubramanian document changes in the labor force participation and employment rates of prime-age individuals during the pandemic and subsequent recovery and find important differences across race and ethnicity groups. Specifically, they find that Black individuals have experienced the largest improvement in their labor market outcomes during the recovery, with especially strong labor force participation, employment, and wage gains for Black men without a college degree. These gains have led labor force gaps between white and Black men without a college degree to narrow.

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