

Seeing Structural Racism: Ithaca City and Tompkins County

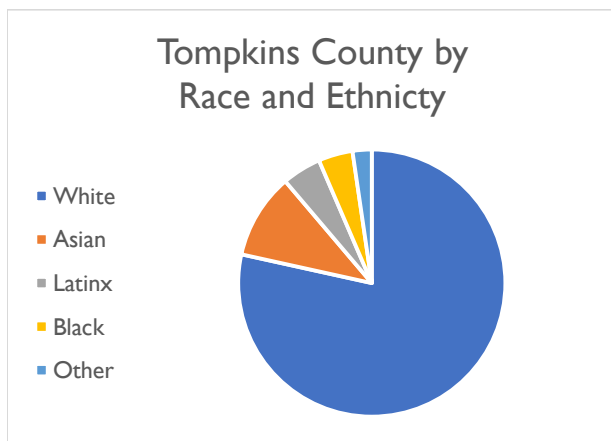
What is it? Structural racism is the **system-wide oppression** of people based on their skin color. It has a long history and is **deeply embedded** in our economic system and in the policies, practices, and cultural norms of our society. It reinforces patterns of social and geographic segregation, so the **groups it privileges rarely notice its existence**. In this report, we identify some of the local disparities and opportunity barriers that structural racism has created in Ithaca and Tompkins County. To avoid blaming the targeted groups, it is important to keep in mind that these disparities are the cumulative effect of hundreds of years of racist policies and structures of power. Further, the ways structural racism affects individuals within any single racial or ethnic category will vary widely depending on a multitude of factors including skin tone, income level, education level, and geographic location.

The full version of this report (see bottom line) has full source citations and data covering a broader range of racial and ethnic groups. We are still researching local criminal justice, transportation, and food system barriers and disparities. The resource section of the Tompkins County Structural Racism website (see bottom line) contains local actions steps anyone can take to challenge structural racism.

A Legacy of Racist Practices

- Genocide
- Slavery
- 3/5ths clause
- 13th Amendment
- Sharecropping
- Homestead Act
- Jim Crow laws
- Redlining
- Restrictive Covenants
- GI Bill
- Mass Incarceration
- Criminalization
- War on Drugs
- Police Brutality

Understanding our Population



Most of the racial and ethnic diversity of Tompkins County is concentrated in the City of Ithaca. Most of the City of Ithaca's black population resides in the Southside, Northside/West End and parts of the West Hill Neighborhoods. Recent gentrification has pushed many low-income families, disproportionately people of color, out of the City and into the Town of Ithaca and beyond.

Between 2000 and 2010, the black population in the City of Ithaca decreased by 3%, while the much smaller black population in the Town of Ithaca increased by 41%. The dispersal of black people from the neighborhoods where they were concentrated is seen by many residents as a cause for diminished cohesiveness and access to social resources in the black community.

Health and Life Expectancy

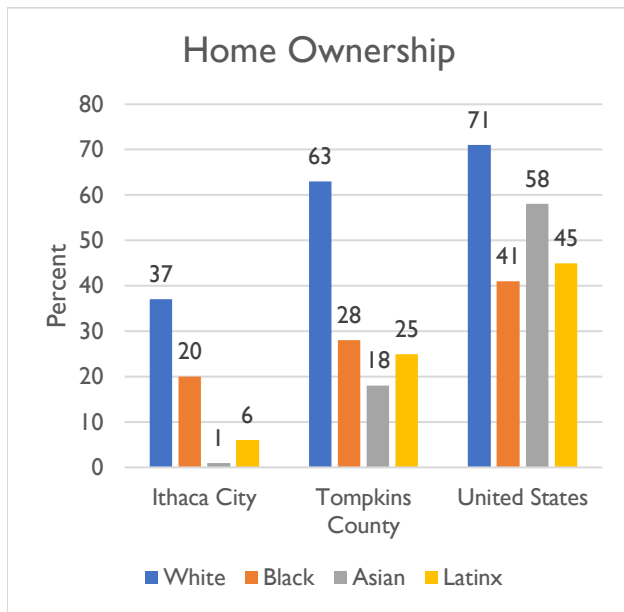
People of color in Tompkins County have significantly poorer health than white people. Black and Latinx people are almost twice as likely to die before age 75 than white people, and black babies are more than twice as likely to be born with low birth weight.

The negative effects of racism on health are many. Local people of color are more likely than white people to live in poverty, with less access to quality and preventative health care. They are less likely to own a car with which to get to medical appointments and less likely to have jobs with adequate sick leave or allowances for calling in sick. Just living in a racist society creates considerable stress for people of color, regardless of socioeconomic status. This stress is directly associated with poorer health.

2014 Tompkins County Health Data

| | |
|---|---|
| Premature Death Rate (before age 75) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latinx - 71% • Black - 69% • Asian - 47% • White - 37% | Percent Babies Born with Low Birth-Weight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black - 14% • Asian - 7% • Latinx - 6% • White - 6% |
| Diabetes Hospitalizations (per 10,000) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black - 211 • White - 108 • Asian - N/A • Latinx - N/A | Asthma Hospitalizations (per 10,000) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black - 7 • White - 3 • Asian - N/A • Latinx - N/A |

Wealth and Home Ownership



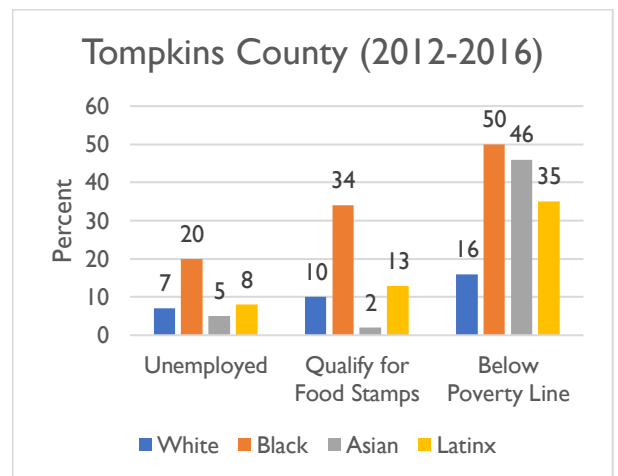
For most people, home ownership is the most important generator of wealth. Nationally, discriminatory lending policies have exacerbated the racial gap in home ownership. For example, from 1934 to 1968, the FHA “red-lined” black communities as “high-risk”, which resulted in only 2% of FHA home loans going to black people. A recent study found that an equal home ownership rate would reduce the wealth gap between white and black people by 47% and for Latinx people by 69%.

Rental housing accounts for 73% of City of Ithaca housing. College student renters, generally subsidized by parents, loans, and/or financial aid, drive up the cost of renting in Ithaca which causes lower-income people – disproportionately people of color – to move elsewhere. Working in Ithaca but living outside the city increases commute time and, often, transportation costs, resulting in negative consequences for work, access to healthcare, and community engagement.

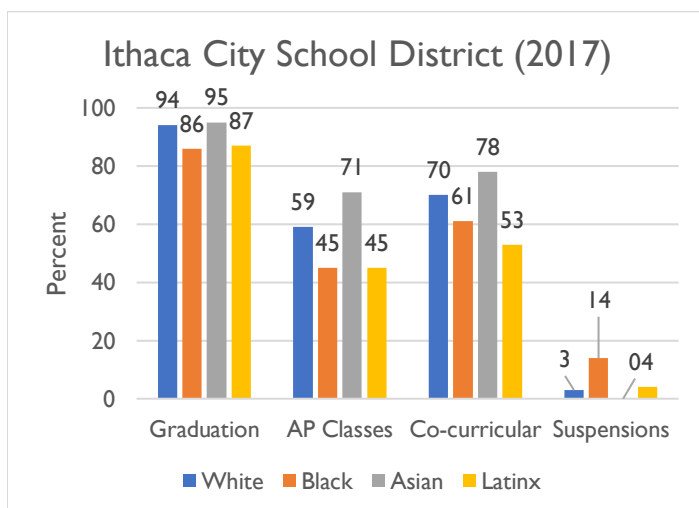
Income, Unemployment, and Poverty

Across all measures of financial well-being, Black and Latinx families in Tompkins County fare worse than white families. Black households have less than half the income of white households and a 2.9 times higher unemployment rate (as of 2012-2016). The poverty rate for Black families is 3.1 times higher than White families and 2.2 times higher for Latinx families.

For example, a 2014 Tompkins County survey shows that white janitors have a 23% income advantage over black janitors and white secretaries have a 75% advantage. Poverty rates in our area appear to be high due to the large college student population. However, even using the number of households that qualify for “food stamps” as an alternative indicator, the poverty rate for Black Ithaca residents is 1.9 times that of whites.



Education



The graduation rate gap between white and black Ithaca high school students has dramatically decreased from 23 points in 2012 (82 vs 59%) to 8 points in 2017 (94 vs 86%). Other indicators, however, show persistent disparities in various areas of achievement and school engagement.

Suspension rates for secondary students have decreased for all students, but black students are still considerably more likely to be suspended. Black and Latinx students are less likely to enroll in AP classes and to be involved in co-curricular (aka extra-curricular) activities. National evidence consistently suggests that disparities in suspension rates and tracking into AP classes and co-curricular activities are associated with teachers’ race-based assumptions about students.