

Seeing Structural Racism: Ithaca City and Tompkins County

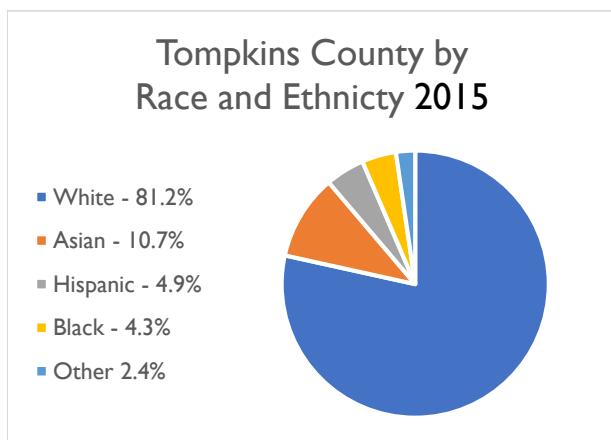
What is it? Structural racism is a set of elements within society that lead to harmful outcomes in some people's lives via the ordinary daily workings of society. These outcomes result from the accumulated history of racist oppression from slavery through Jim Crow, as well as from past and continuing discrimination in housing, jobs and other areas of life. Structural racism can persist and reproduce itself over the generations even if racism as a set of ideas disappears. Not understanding of the causes and extent of structural racism can lead to racial stereotyping or blaming the victims for the disparities. Fighting structural racism requires its own special skills and commitments beginning with attempting an understanding of its scope and intensity.

In this report, we identify elements of structural racism in Ithaca and Tompkins County that can be gathered on the internet. The full version of this report (see bottom line) has source citations and data covering a broader range of racial and ethnic groups. Appendix A contains possible local action steps. Appendix B has background for the legacy of racist practices listed here on the right. We are still researching local criminal justice and food system barriers and disparities.

A Legacy of Racist Practices

- Genocide
- Slavery
- 3/5ths clause
- 13th Amendment
- Sharecropping
- Homestead Act
- Jim Crow laws
- Redlining and 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 blacks 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

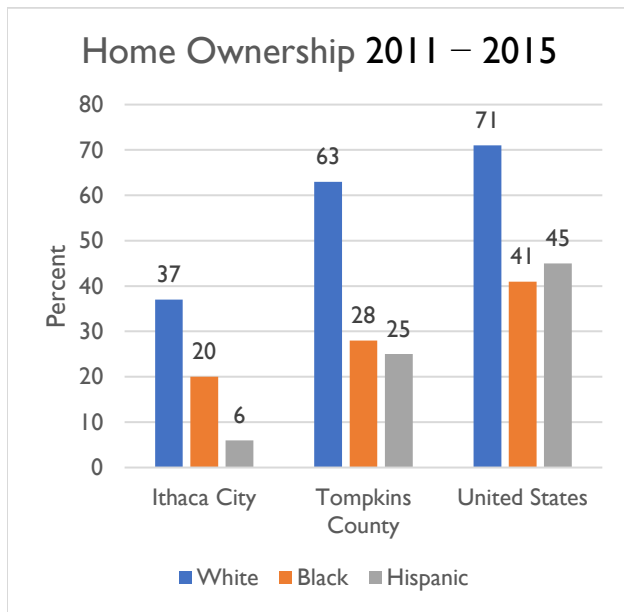
People of color in Tompkins County have significantly poorer health than whites. Blacks and Hispanics are almost twice as likely to die before age 75 than whites, and blacks are more than twice as likely to be hospitalized for diabetes.

The negative effects of racism on health are many. Local people of color are more likely than whites 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.

Tompkins County Health Data 2014

Premature Death Rate (before age 75) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hispanic - 71% • Black - 69% • White - 37% 	Percent Babies Born with Low Birth-Weight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black - 14% • Hispanic - 6% • White - 6%
Diabetes Hospitalizations (per 10,000) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black - 211 • White - 108 • Hispanic - N/A 	Asthma Hospitalizations (per 10,000) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black - 7 • White - 2.7 • Hispanic - N/A

Wealth and Home Ownership



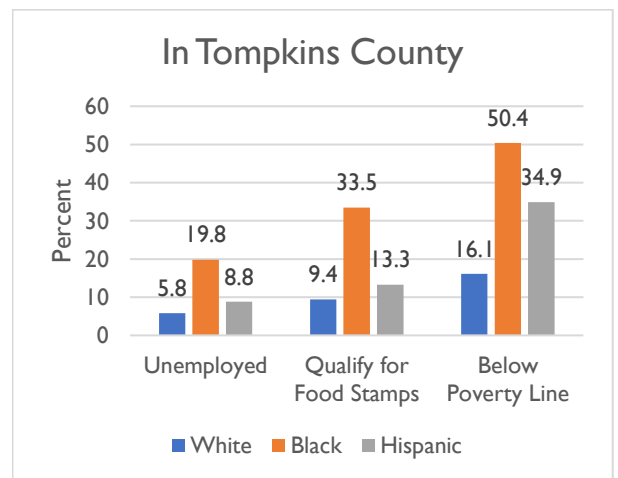
For most people, home ownership is the most important generator of wealth. Nationally, discriminatory lending policies have exacerbated the racial gap in home ownership. For example, from 1934 to 1968, the FHA “red-lined” black communities as “high-risk”, which resulted in only 2% of FHA home loans going to blacks. A recent study found that an equal home ownership rate would reduce the wealth gap between whites and blacks by 47% and for Latinos by 69%. In Ithaca, African-American home ownership is 54% that of whites.

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.

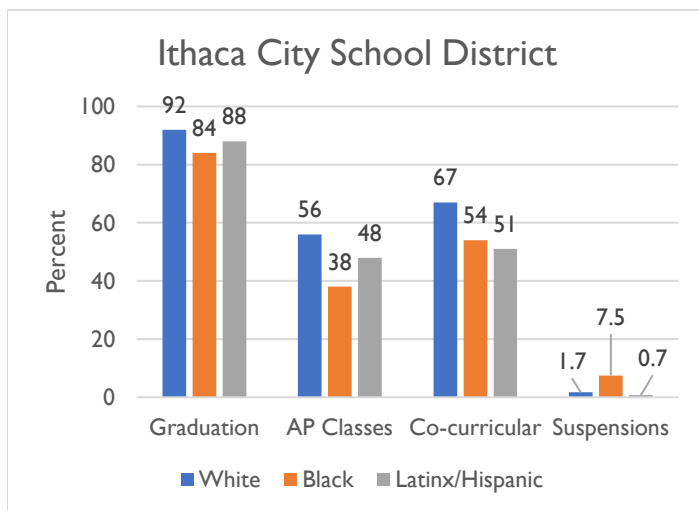
Income, Unemployment, and Poverty

Across all measures of financial well-being, Black and Hispanic families in Tompkins County fare worse than white families. Black households have less than half the income of whites and a 3.4 times higher unemployment rate (as of 2011-2015). The poverty rate for Black families is 3.1 times higher than White families and 2.2 times higher for Hispanic families.

For example, a 2014 Tompkins County survey shows that white janitors have a 23% income advantage over blacks 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 students has dramatically decreased from 23 points in 2012 (82 vs 59%) to 8 points in 2016 (92 vs 84%). 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/Hispanic 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.