

The 2008 edition of *Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook and Guide to Government Data* is the 19th edition of this annual reference publication. It is part of Information Publications' **American Profiles** series, which also includes *Asian Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook and Guide to Government Data* and *Hispanic Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook and Guide to Government Data*. While some information on Black Americans is provided in a variety of other reference sources, *Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook and Guide to Government Data* is a single-volume statistical reference devoted entirely to this important segment of the population.

The overall goal of *Black Americans* is to bring together a variety of diverse information into a single volume and present it in a clear, comprehensible format. It is not intended as a detailed research tool, but rather as a ready reference source that provides a statistical overview and guide to government data on Black Americans.

Black Americans contains an extensive collection of tables providing information on a wide variety of topics. With a few exceptions, each table presents data on the Black population, the White population, and a total for Americans of all races and ethnic groups. The purpose of this approach is not to advance a specific perspective about Black Americans, but to provide a context within which the tabular data can be more fully understood and evaluated.

Presenting data by race and ethnicity puts any publisher at risk of having its motives questioned. While some may view the presentation of such data with suspicion, or perceive a hidden agenda, Information Publications' intent is merely to serve as a reportorial resource, providing access to federal government information. This collection of sometimes difficult to find and hard to understand information serves students, business persons, reporters, social scientists, researchers, and others who need basic data about Black Americans.

The use of the term 'Black' requires some explanation, as it can be controversial. Black Americans have used a number of terms to name themselves, and in many circles, 'African-American' has replaced 'Black' as the preferred term. 'Black' is used here only because it is the word currently used by the federal government in gathering data. Federal usage has changed over the years, and as it continues to change, those changes will be reflected here.

Whether or not someone is identified as Black can also be a sensitive issue. For federal data-collection and statistical reporting purposes, being Black is based solely on self-identification: Black persons are those who say they are

Black (or, in some surveys, African-American or Afro-American).

The federal government considers 'Black' to be a racial group, similar to 'White,' or 'Asian.' However, Hispanic origin is not counted as a racial group. For almost all federal data collection programs, persons may be of any race *and* also of Hispanic origin. There are some exceptions, such as the US Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control, which count Hispanics separately from non-Hispanic Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites for some (but not necessarily all) types of data. As a general guideline, the majority of persons identifying themselves as Hispanic as well as a racial category for federal data collection purposes identify themselves as White, although there are persons who identify as both Black and Hispanic.

Organization

The main portion of this book has been divided into eight chapters:

Chapter 1:	Demographics & Social Characteristics
Chapter 2:	Vital Statistics & Health
Chapter 3:	Education
Chapter 4:	Government & Elections
Chapter 5:	Crime, Law Enforcement & Corrections
Chapter 6:	Labor, Employment & Unemployment
Chapter 7:	Earnings, Income, Poverty & Wealth
Chapter 8:	Special Topics

The tables in each chapter present a comprehensive review of available federal government statistical information on the Black population. Each table presents pertinent information from the source or sources in a clear, comprehensible fashion. The information selected for presentation was chosen for its broad scope and general appeal for a diverse group of readers.

The Sources

All of the information in *Black Americans* is either collected directly or re-published by US Government sources. Most of the federal information is from the US Bureau of the Census. Without question, the Census Bureau is the largest data-gathering organization in the nation. It collects information on an exceptionally broad range of topics, not only for its own use and for the use of Congress and the Executive Branch, but also for other federal agencies and departments. The reach of the Census Bureau is wider than most people realize. It encompasses the decennial Census of Population, the Current Population Survey, the Annual Housing Survey, and the American Community Survey. In cooperation with other agencies, the Bureau produces the Consumer Expenditure Survey, the National Crime Survey, the National Family Growth Survey, and many other surveys. The Census Bureau's role in so much of the federal government's data collection adds uniformity to the statistical information published by different agencies and makes the data easier to understand and use. In addition, because of the sheer volume of data it collects, many private data collectors have adopted some of its procedures and terminology, enhancing compatibility between private and public data.

Observant readers will note that the source of many tables found here is a Census Bureau publication, the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. There are several reasons for this. First, due to budgetary constraints and the huge amount of data collected, much of the information presented in the *Abstract* has never been previously published, or has only been published in part. Second, the *Abstract* presents data that is accessible to many different types of readers. As the preeminent federal data publisher, the Census Bureau has access to a wealth of raw data that it can aggregate and break down by details such as age, sex, race, or geographic region, using its own parameters for publication. Some data has only been published in very fine detail, and the *Abstract* provides an overview that is more accessible to more casual readers.

Types of Information

Data presented here is divided into two categories:

The first is complete count data. For example, questions asked of all Americans by the Census Bureau in its decennial census attempt a complete count of a given universe.

The second type of data is survey information. When surveying the entire population would be impractical or impossible, a subset of a population is

drawn to represent the entire population or universe. Data on housing units and money income are some of the items in this book based on this type of survey information. Of course, survey information is only as good as the survey itself, so the reader should always consider the accuracy and methods used by the original source. Survey methodology is not discussed here; interested readers should consult the original source materials for a detailed explanation of survey methodology. A full reference to each source appears in every table. Readers should also note that most data collected by government agencies (except for the short form of the Decennial Census) is based on a sample, and that data based on small numbers of individuals is considered statistically unreliable and not presented in the results. In these cases, a note appears in the table.

The Tables

This section details how the tables have been prepared and presented. Table titles are the first source of valuable information. For example:

<p>Table 2.02: Fertility, Births, and Birth Rates by Age of the Mother, 1990–2006</p>
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The table number contains the chapter number to the left of the decimal and the location of the table within the chapter to the right of the decimal. Thus Table 2.02 is the second table in Chapter 2. In general, information in tables and across each chapter is presented with the oldest, most general information first, followed by newer, more specific information.

The table title first presents the general topic of the table, followed by the detail presented about the general topic (e.g., the data is presented by age, sex, state of residence, marital status, etc.), and the years for which data is presented. In most cases, the tables retain the original terms used in the source material to make the book compatible with the original sources.

For most tables, the left-most column or columns show data for the Black population, the center column or columns show data for the White population, and the right-hand column or columns show data for all races.

Along the left margin of each table appears a column of line descriptors. Here, after a general heading, subgroups of the heading are shown. In general, counts and quantities appear first, followed by percentages, medians, means, rates, and per capita amounts.

Wherever available and appropriate, a time span of data is presented in or-

der to provide readers with a historical context for the information. However, readers should be cautioned that the years selected have been chosen from no special knowledge of the subject, nor to make any specific point. The fact that there has been an increase or decrease in a given indicator for the period displayed does not mean that the same trend will continue, or that it represents the continuation of a historical trend, or even that which appears to be a trend within this period actually is one. Many apparent changes are merely the result of an agency's redefining its terms: for example, many Census programs have different specifications for Black: 'Black,' 'Black Alone,' 'non-Hispanic Black,' and 'Black Alone or in Combination.' Programs sometimes change the definition that they use, and this may give the appearance of a real change in the population when there was none. For this reason, readers are advised to use caution when comparing figures across different time periods.

Table Notes

The bottom of each table contains three key paragraphs: Source, Notes, and Units. The **Source** paragraph lists the source of the data presented in the table. When more than one source was used, the sources are listed in the same order in which the data itself appears in the table. As all sources are government publications, the issuing agency is listed as the author. Citations provide the table number in the source from which the material was taken. An increasing number of sources are now available on the internet, and in many cases, only on the internet. For tables pulled exclusively from online sources, the URL is listed as the source, along with the date it was accessed.

The **Notes** paragraph includes pertinent facts about the data. One general note will apply to all tabular data: detail (subgroups) may not add to the total shown, due either to rounding or to the fact that only selected subgroups are displayed.

The final paragraph of a table, **Units**, identifies the units used, specifically stating that the quantity is millions of persons, thousands of workers, dollars per capita, etc. Readers are urged to pay special attention to the units when a median, mean, percent, rate, or a per capita amount is provided.

Guide to Sources

Black Americans also presents a complete guide to sources. Sources are listed by chapter and sorted alphabetically by the name of the publication, with the issuing department or group appearing next. Each entry gives a description of the source, including how it was used in the present volume and what in-

formation it might present for further research, as well as the online location where the data or report can be accessed.

The Glossary

This book contains definitions for any specialized terms that are needed to understand the data. The tables contain short, clear definitions with only as much background material as necessary to make a term understandable in a general sense. However, for many tables, when it is not possible to adequately define a term in the table notes, the glossary provides a full definition and serves as an important tool in using the tables.

Before drawing any conclusions from the data, it is absolutely vital to understand the meaning of all terms used in a table. Certain terms require some methodological background in order to accurately understand the material presented. The government not only has its own specialized, clearly-defined terms, but it also uses ordinary words in specialized ways. For example, there are real differences between a household and a family, a family and a married couple, the resident population and the civilian non-institutional population, a service industry and a service occupation, and an urban area and a metropolitan area.

Readers requiring detailed definitions and an understating of the technical and methodological detail should refer to the sources for more complete explanations.

The Index

Most key terms from the tables have been indexed. Readers should note that the index provides table numbers as opposed to page numbers.

A Suggestion on How to Use This Book

One way to use this book is by locating a subject of general interest in the **Table of Contents** and turning to that chapter. While the **Table of Contents** is detailed enough to narrow a search, and the index can speed access to specific items, sometimes paging through the dozen or so tables on a given topic uncovers unexpected information that can prove useful. It is just this type of serendipity that has led to the inclusion of some of the information in this book, and sometimes an unexpected find can greatly enhance a research project.

Disclaimer

Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook and Guide to Government Data contains thousands of pieces of information. Every reasonable precaution, along with a good deal of care, was taken in its preparation. Despite our efforts it is possible that some of the information contained in this book may not be accurate. Some errors may be due to errors in the original source materials, others may have been made by the compilers of this volume. An incorrect spelling may occur, a figure may be inverted, or similar mistakes may exist. The compilers, editors, typists, printers and others are all human, and in a work of this magnitude the possibility of error can never be fully eliminated.

The publisher is also aware that some users may apply the data in this book in various remunerative projects. Although we have taken reasonable, responsible measures to insure accuracy, we cannot take responsibility for liability or losses suffered by users of the data. No other guarantees are made or implied.

The publisher assumes no liability for losses incurred by users, and warrants only that diligence and care were used in the production of this volume.

A Final Word

As this book is updated on an annual basis, questions, comments, and criticisms from users are vital to making informed editorial choices about succeeding editions. If you have a suggestion or comment, be assured that it will be both appreciated and carefully considered. If you should find an error here, please let us know so that it may be corrected. Our goal is to provide accurate, easy to use, statistical compendiums that serve our readers' needs. Your help enables us to do our job better. If you know how this book could become more useful to you, please contact us.

The Editors
Information Publications, Inc.
2995 Woodside Road, Suite 400-182
Woodside, CA 94062
www.informationpublications.com
info@informationpublications.com
Toll Free Phone: 877-544-4636
Toll Free Fax: 877-544-4635