

Where Have African American Families Seen Significant Income Growth?

Income inequality remains a pervasive legacy across the country, with median income for African American families still about 17 percent lower than the national median, according to Census data. But that gap has narrowed over time, and in some U.S. counties, income among African American families has risen far faster in recent years than the overall growth in income in their respective counties and in the nation as a whole.

Between 2014 and 2019, median family income in the United States rose by 22.8 percent. But SJN has identified **35 counties in 19 states** where median income among African American families grew by at least one-and-a-half times the national rate, and also exceeded the overall county rate.

Six counties in Florida made the list, as did four each in Georgia and New York. Davidson County in Tennessee tops the list, with African American median family income jumping roughly 66 percent from 2014 to 2019, rising at nearly triple the national rate, and 77 percent faster than the county as a whole.

In two counties – **Cobb County in Georgia and Contra Costa County in California** – median income among African American families was lower than the national median for all families in 2014, but higher than the national median five years later.

The 35 counties are listed in [this spreadsheet](#), with columns showing the median income for African American families in 2014 and 2019, the percent increase between the two years, and, for comparison, the percent increase in median income for all families in the county, and all families nationally.

Data journalists refer to data as a tipsheet, a lead on a potential story, but not the story itself. Further reporting will be required to determine whether a specific policy or practice – by government or institutions or industry or organizations or individuals – drove the income growth in a particular county.

Take a look at the data for counties in your area and decide if it's worth digging in to see what's behind the numbers. And if you need help, contact our data specialist, Matt Kauffman, at matthew@solutionsjournalism.org.

Technical information: These data are based on one-year American Community Survey data from the Census Bureau for 2014 and 2019 (the most recent year for which data are available), and specifically from Tables B19113 and B19113B. The income figures are estimates based on a sample of respondents, and the list excludes counties where the margin of error for median income in either year was 20 percent or more of the estimated income. Note, however, that sampling errors still may diminish the size of – but are not likely to eliminate – the out-sized performance of African American families in the listed counties. (But note also that one-year ACS data is limited to larger counties, so this list generally favors more-populous regions of the country.)