



# SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: DISPARITIES IN THE SUNFLOWER STATE

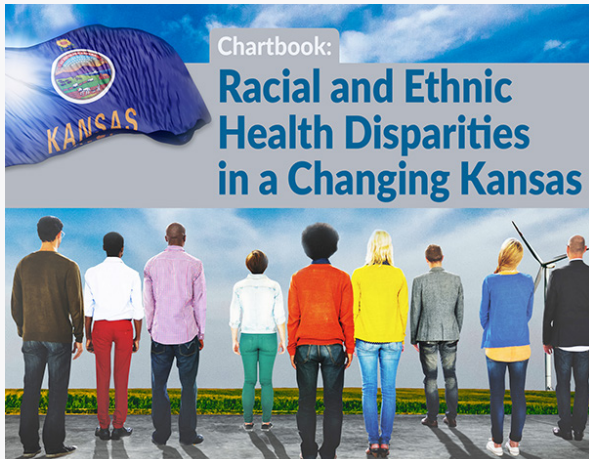
*Issue brief #1 in a series of three on health disparities in Kansas*

Research has shown that people with low socioeconomic status are more likely to experience poor health outcomes including shorter life expectancy, higher rates of low birthweight births, and higher infant mortality rates. It has also shown that people belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to experience low socioeconomic status than are non-Hispanic Whites. Understanding racial and ethnic disparities in socioeconomic status is an important first step in addressing those disparities and improving health outcomes for all Kansans.

This issue brief describes racial and ethnic disparities that exist in socioeconomic status in Kansas. It focuses on three measures of socioeconomic status—poverty, low educational attainment and unemployment. The brief originated from the *Chartbook: Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in a Changing Kansas*. Data are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011–2015).

## Poverty

Poverty has been linked to poor health outcomes. Individuals living in poverty are at a higher risk for exposure to adverse environments, stress and decreased access



Chartbook:  
**Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in a Changing Kansas**

In December 2017, KHI published the *Chartbook: Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in a Changing Kansas*. The purpose of the *Chartbook*—which describes the population of Kansas—is to provide data and charts to encourage conversations about health disparities, particularly those among racial/ethnic populations. This brief is the first in a three-part series on health disparities in Kansas exploring socioeconomic status, infant mortality and deaths by suicide.

to health care and other resources. They also are more likely to have other socioeconomic experiences that can impact their lives, including low educational attainment and higher unemployment.

## KEY POINTS

- ✓ Research has shown that people with low socioeconomic status are more likely to experience poor health outcomes.
- ✓ In 2015, one-quarter of both Hispanic (25.3 percent) and Black Kansans (25.3 percent) lived in poverty.
- ✓ Almost four in ten (38.7 percent) Hispanic Kansans age 25 and older did not have a high school diploma or GED in 2015.
- ✓ In 2015, non-Hispanic Blacks were more than twice as likely to be unemployed than non-Hispanic Whites (12.9 and 5.0 percent, respectively).

In 2015, 381,353 Kansans (13.6 percent) lived in poverty, which is defined as living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), or \$24,250 for a family of four in 2015. Of Kansans living in poverty, three in five (60.1 percent) were non-Hispanic Whites, one in five (20.9 percent) were Hispanics, Any Race, and one in ten (10.2 percent) were non-Hispanic Blacks. The rest were non-Hispanic Other/Multiple Race Kansans (8.7 percent).

Non-Hispanic White Kansans made up the largest share of those living in poverty in 2015, just as they made up the largest share of the overall Kansas population. Kansans belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups, however, were much more likely to live in poverty than were non-Hispanic Whites.

In 2015, one-quarter of both Hispanic Kansans, Any Race (25.3 percent) and non-Hispanic Black Kansans (25.3 percent) lived in poverty, compared to one in five non-Hispanic Other/Multiple Race Kansans (19.6 percent) and one in ten non-Hispanic Whites (10.6 percent) (*Figure 1*).

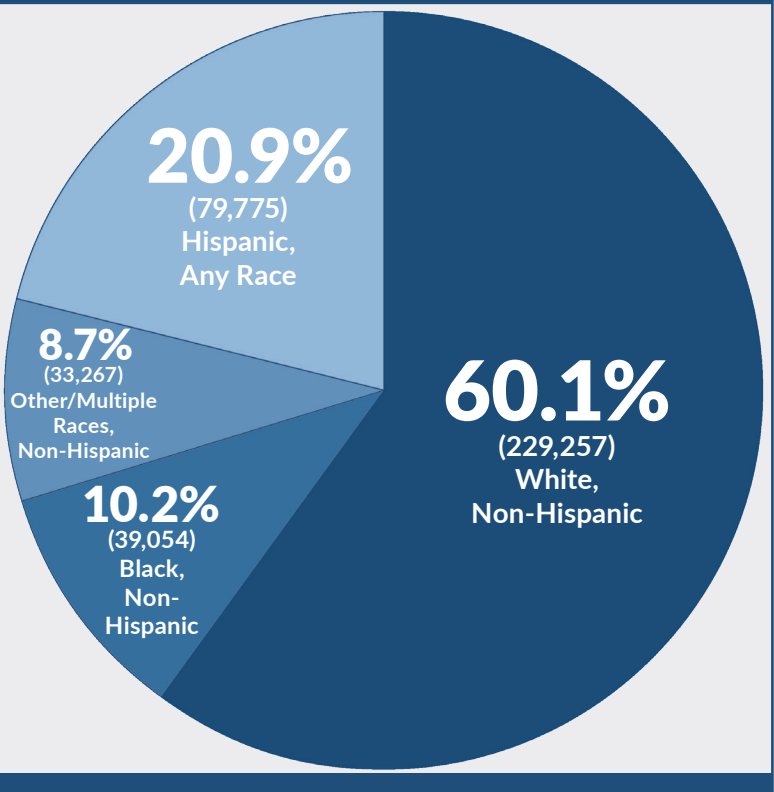
## Low Educational Attainment

In 2015, 182,906 Kansas adults age 25 and older (9.8 percent) had low educational attainment, meaning they did not have a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED). Of those, more than half (53.8 percent)

### Poverty in Kansas in 2015

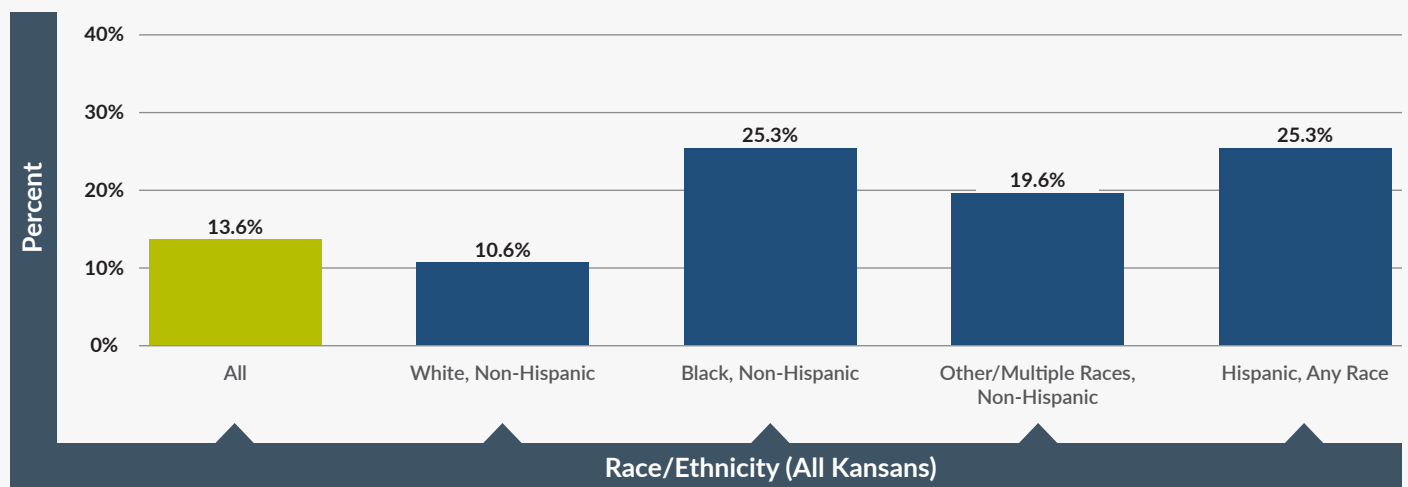
# 381,353

Kansans living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level



were non-Hispanic Whites and almost one-third (32.7 percent) were Hispanics, Any Race. The rest were non-Hispanics, Other/Multiple Races (6.8 percent) and non-Hispanic Blacks (6.7 percent).

Figure 1. Percent of People Living in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Kansas, 2015



Note: Other/Multiple Races includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Race populations that are not of Hispanic Origin. Hispanic is of any race.

Source: KHI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011–2015).

Kansans belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups were more likely to have low educational attainment than were non-Hispanic Whites (Figure 2). Almost four in ten (38.7 percent) Hispanic Kansans, Any Race did not have a high school diploma or GED in 2015, compared to non-Hispanic Other/Multiple Race Kansans (13.8 percent), non-Hispanic Blacks (12.6 percent) and non-Hispanic Whites (6.4 percent).

## Unemployment

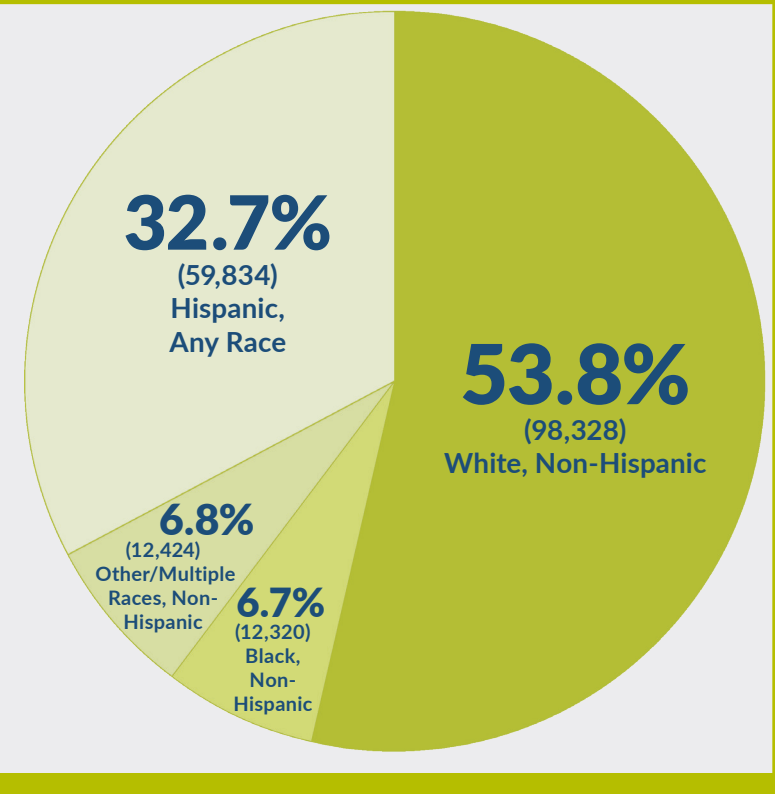
An estimated 88,454 Kansans in the civilian labor force (5.9 percent) were unemployed in 2015. As defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the civilian labor force includes those age 16 and older who are not military personnel, federal government employees, retirees, handicapped or discouraged workers, or agricultural workers. Two in three (66.6 percent) unemployed Kansans in 2015 were non-Hispanic Whites, 13.6 percent were Hispanics, Any Race, 11.3 percent were non-Hispanic Blacks and 8.6 percent were non-Hispanic Other/Multiple Race Kansans.

In 2015, non-Hispanic Blacks were more than twice as likely to be unemployed than were non-Hispanic Whites (12.9 and 5.0 percent, respectively). Other racial/ethnic groups also were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be unemployed; 9.7 percent of non-Hispanic Other/Multiple Race Kansans were unemployed as were 8.1 percent of Hispanics, Any Race (Figure 3, page 4).

## Low Educational Attainment in Kansas in 2015

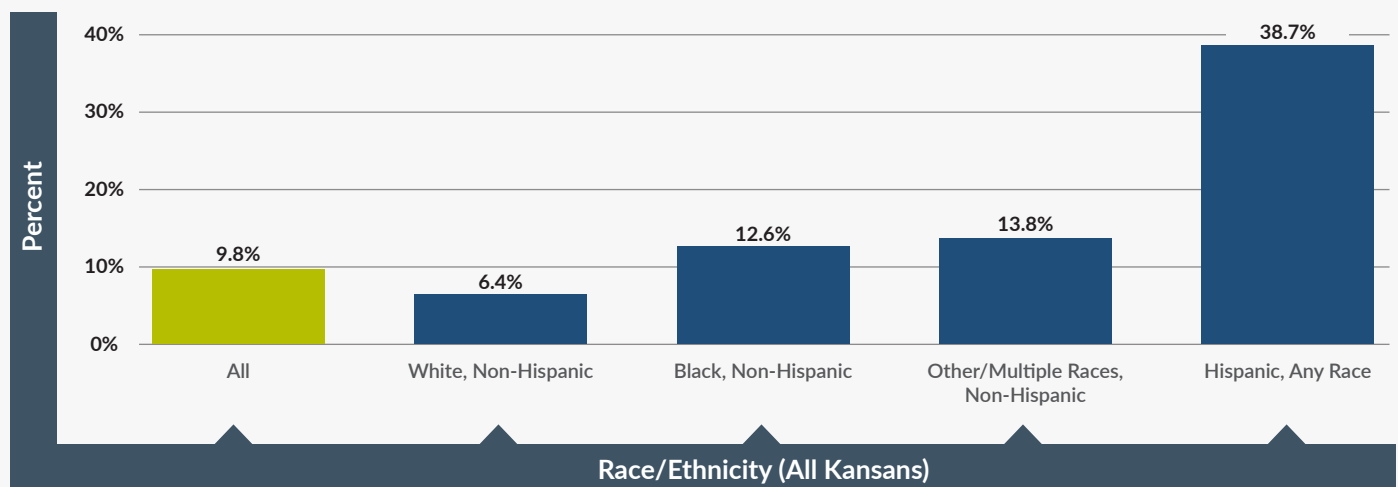
# 182,906

Kansas adults age 25 and older did not possess a high school diploma or GED



While Hispanics, Any Race had a considerably higher rate of low educational attainment in 2015 than did other racial/ethnic groups, they were slightly less likely to be unemployed compared to other Kansas minorities.

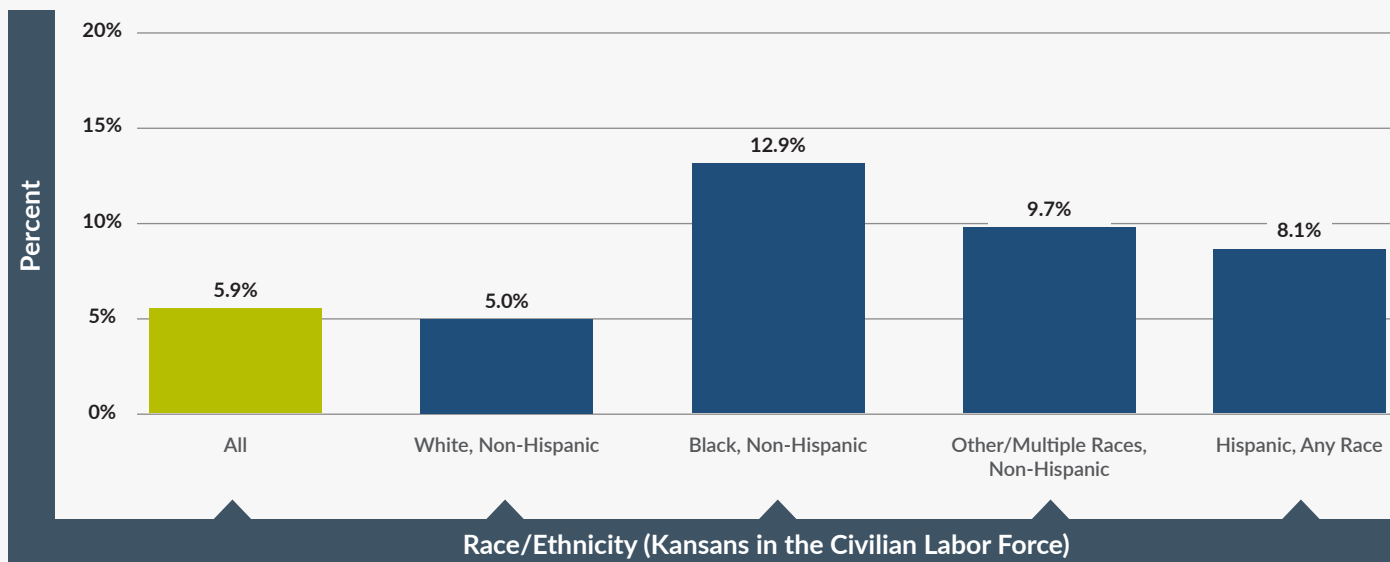
Figure 2. Percent of Adults (age 25 and older) with Low Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity in Kansas, 2015



Note: Other/Multiple Races includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Race populations that are not of Hispanic Origin. Low educational attainment is defined as having less than a high school diploma or GED.

Source: KHI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011–2015).

Figure 3. Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity in Kansas, 2015



Note: Other/Multiple Races includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Race populations that are not of Hispanic Origin.

Source: KHI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2011–2015).

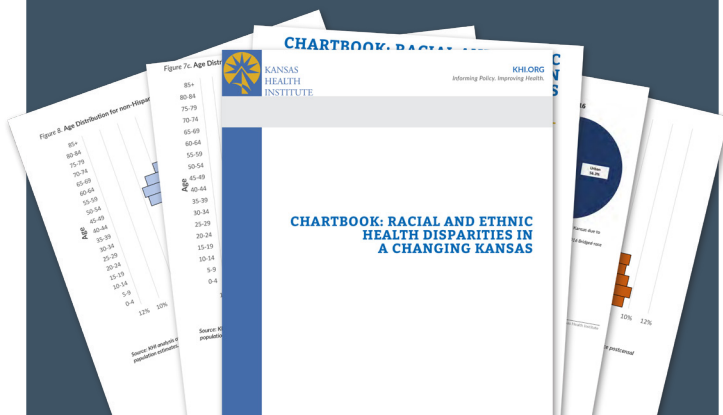
## Conclusion

Demographic distribution of poverty, low education and unemployment provides contextual information to better understand socioeconomic disparities in Kansas. In 2015, Kansans belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups were more likely to live in poverty, have low educational attainment, and be unemployed than were non-Hispanic Whites.

Socioeconomic status is a complex combination of factors—including income, education and occupation—that can have a strong influence on a person's daily life. Living conditions, financial security and the ability to obtain health insurance can all be impacted by a person's socioeconomic status. Identifying racial and ethnic disparities in socioeconomic status is an important first step to address disparities that put some populations at greater risk of poorer health outcomes.

## CHARTBOOK: Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in a Changing Kansas

Stay tuned for the next two installments in this series on *Disparities in the Sunflower State* addressing *Infant Mortality* and *Deaths by Suicide*. As they are published, the entire series of three briefs, along with KHI's *Chartbook: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in a Changing Kansas*, will be available at [khi.org](http://khi.org).



### ABOUT THE ISSUE BRIEF

This brief is based on work done by Lawrence John Panas, Ph.D., D. Charles Hunt, M.P.H., and Wen-Chieh Lin, Ph.D. It is available online at [khi.org/policy/article/18-07](http://khi.org/policy/article/18-07).

### KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE

The Kansas Health Institute (KHI) delivers objective information, conducts credible research, and supports civil dialogue enabling policy leaders to make informed health policy decisions that enhance their effectiveness as champions for a healthier Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multiyear grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, KHI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization based in Topeka.

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