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A Strong Labor Market Has Narrowed Gaps in Participation and Employment between Black and White Non-College Men

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Black men without a college degree have seen especially strong gains in employment and wages during the pandemic recovery.

Black and Hispanic workers faced disproportionately larger declines in labor force participation than white workers during the pandemic-led recession. This gap appears consistent with previous recessions: the labor market outcomes of racial and ethnic minorities tend to deteriorate more than those of white workers during recessions, widening gaps in participation, employment, and wages during downturns. However, the labor market has since recovered, with employment rising above pre-pandemic levels. Have gaps in labor market outcomes between Black and white workers narrowed?

Didem Tüzemen and Deepak Venkatasubramanian document changes in the labor force participation and employment rates of prime-age individuals during the pandemic and subsequent recovery and find important differences across race and ethnicity groups. Specifically, they find that Black individuals have experienced the largest improvement in their labor market outcomes during the recovery, with especially strong labor force participation, employment, and wage gains for Black men without a college degree. These gains have led labor force gaps between white and Black men without a college degree to narrow.

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Didem Tüzemen is a Senior Economist in the Economic Research Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City and the Executive Director of the Kansas City Research Data Center (KCRDC). Ms. Tüzemen joined the department in July 2011 after earning her Ph.D. in economics from the University of Maryland, College Park. She also holds a B.S. degree in physics and a M.A. degree in economics from Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey. Ms. Tüzemen's main areas of research are macroeconomics, labor economics, and health economics.



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I joined the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City in July 2022 after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where I completed a B.S. in Economics and Statistics in May 2021. Additionally, I worked as a Risk Analyst in the Independent Testing and Validation department at Wells Fargo in Charlotte from June 2021- June 2022. Currently, I am working with [Didem Tuzemen](#), [Jose Mustre-del-Rio](#) and [Andrew Glover](#) with their research and policy work in labor economics. Being a research associate at the Fed has enabled me to engage with economic research and policy relevant to my interests, collaborate with accomplished economists and develop the essential data analysis skills to conduct cogent research. Moreover, the collaborative relationship I maintain with my economists has only further allowed me to become a better researcher and programmer, while also informing me on how to best pursue graduate studies.