The Concentration of Household Income in the United States, 1967 - 2018

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A New Report from the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies at The Graduate Center, CUNY Studies How Has Income Distribution Changed in the United States

NEW YORK, December 9, 2019—The Graduate Center of The City University of New York’s Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies (CLACLS) has released a report on the changes in income distribution in the United States by race and ethnicity.

The report, titled “The Concentration of Household Income in the United States by Race/Ethnicity, 1967 - 2018” examines the trends in household income distribution and concentration by racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

The data published by the U.S. Census Bureau on historical patterns of household income distribution between 1967 and 2018 offer convincing evidence that inequality in the United States has been progressively getting worse. After a period of declining inequality from the aftermath of the Second World War through the 1960s, it is now apparent that income distribution has already returned to the pre-Great Depression era pattern of extreme concentration. These patterns are even starker when comparing racial and ethnic groups, where non-Hispanic blacks and Latinos earned considerably less than non-Hispanic white and Asian households even at the top of the income distribution hierarchy within each race/ethnic group.

Other key findings:

- Economic growth, which has been impressive in the period under consideration, did not result in rising household incomes across the social hierarchy. Between 1967 and 2018 the upper 5% of income-earning households experienced a 125% rise in real incomes using 2018 inflation-calculated dollars. This may be contrasted with the 31% increase in real incomes among the bottom 20% of all households.
The mean household income for the upper 5% of Asian households in 2018 was $526,475 dollars; for non-Hispanic white households it was $446,407 dollars. Wealthier households within the Latino community earned considerably less at a mean income of $321,678 dollars. For African-American households it was $250,249 dollars.

Contact Sebastián Villamizar-Santamaría, Director of Quantitative Research, for a PDF of the report at svillamizarsantamaria@gradcenter.cuny.edu.

About The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies
The core mission of CLACLS is to actively support and advance the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the U.S. in the doctoral programs of The Graduate Center, and to provide opportunities for Latino students at the Ph.D. level. CLACLS’s flagship program is the Latino Data Project, established in 2003 by Laird W. Bergad founding and current CLACLS director. Bergad is a distinguished professor in the Department of Latin American, Puerto Rican, and Latino Studies at Lehman College and with the Ph.D. Program in History at The Graduate Center. The Latino Data Project conducts detailed quantitative research on the Latino population of the United States and New York City metropolitan region, analyzing raw data files produced by the U.S. Census Bureau and other government agencies.

About The Graduate Center, CUNY
The Graduate Center of The City University of New York (CUNY) is a leader in public graduate education devoted to enhancing the public good through pioneering research, serious learning, and reasoned debate. The Graduate Center offers ambitious students more than 40 doctoral and master’s programs of the highest caliber, taught by top faculty from throughout CUNY — the nation’s largest public urban university. Through its nearly 40 centers, institutes, and initiatives, including its Advanced Science Research Center (ASRC), The Graduate Center influences public policy and discourse and shapes innovation. The Graduate Center’s extensive public programs make it a home for culture and conversation.