An Equity Profile of the Kansas City Region
Introduction

Why equity matters now

The face of America is changing. Our country’s population is rapidly diversifying. Already, more than half of all babies born in the United States are people of color. By 2030, the majority of young workers will be people of color. And by 2043, the United States will be a majority people-of-color nation.

Yet racial and income inequality is high and persistent. Over the past several decades, long-standing inequities in income, wealth, health, and opportunity have reached unprecedented levels, and communities of color have felt the greatest pains as the economy has shifted and stagnated.

Strong communities of color are necessary for the nation’s economic growth and prosperity. Equity is an economic imperative as well as a moral one. Research shows that equity and diversity are win-win propositions for nations, regions, communities, and firms. For example:

- More equitable nations and regions experience stronger growth.¹
- Companies with a diverse workforce achieve a better bottom line.²
- A diverse population better connects to global markets.³

The way forward: an equity-driven growth model.

To secure America’s prosperity, the United States must implement a new economic model based on equity, fairness, and opportunity.

Metropolitan regions are where this new growth model will be created. Regions are the key competitive unit in the global economy, and the level where strategies are being incubated that bring about robust job growth that is linked to low-income communities and communities of color.

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Introduction

What is an equitable region?

Regions are equitable when all residents – regardless of their race/ethnicity/nativity, neighborhood of residence, or other characteristics – are fully able to participate in the region’s economic vitality, contribute to the region’s readiness for the future, and connect to the region’s assets and resources.

Strong, equitable regions:

• Possess economic vitality, providing high-quality jobs to their residents and producing new ideas, products, businesses, and economic activity so the region remains sustainable and competitive.

• Are ready for the future, with a skilled, ready workforce, and a healthy population.

• Are places of connection, where residents can access the essential ingredients to live healthy and productive lives in their own neighborhoods, reach opportunities located throughout the region (and beyond) via transportation or technology, participate in political processes, and interact with other diverse residents.
Introduction

Equity indicators framework

The indicators in this profile are presented in four sections. The first section describes the region’s demographics. The next three sections present indicators of the region’s economic vitality, readiness, and connectedness. Below are the questions answered within each of the four sections.

**Demographics:**
Who lives in the region and how is this changing?
- Racial/ethnic diversity
- Demographic change
- Population growth
- Racial generation gap

**Economic Vitality:**
How is the region doing on measures of economic growth and well-being?
- Is the region producing good jobs?
- Can all residents access good jobs?
- Is growth widely shared?
- Do all residents have enough income to sustain their families?
- Is race/ethnicity/nativity a barrier to economic success?
- What are the strongest industries and occupations?

**Readiness:**
How prepared are the region’s residents for the 21st century economy?
- Does the workforce have the skills for the jobs of the future?
- Are all youth ready to enter the workforce?
- Are residents healthy?
- Are racial gaps in education and health decreasing?

**Connectedness:**
Are the region’s residents and neighborhoods connected to one another and to the region’s assets and opportunities?
- Do residents have transportation choices?
- Can residents access jobs and opportunities located throughout the region?
- Can all residents access affordable, quality, convenient housing?
- Do neighborhoods reflect the region’s diversity? Is segregation decreasing?
Demographics
Demographics

Highlights
Who lives in the region and how is it changing?

• The Kansas City region is moderately diverse and becoming more diverse, with growing representation from all major racial/ethnic groups except non-Hispanic whites.

• The region has experienced rapid demographic change over the past several decades, with its share of people of color increasing from 16 percent to 27 percent since 1980.

• Diverse communities, especially Latinos and Asians, are driving growth and change in the region and will continue to do so over the next several decades.

• The people-of-color population is growing rapidly in every county within the region, doubling or nearly doubling in four of nine counties since 2000.

• There is a large and growing racial generation gap between the region’s mainly white senior population and its increasingly diverse youth population.

People of color:

27%

Diversity rank (out of largest 150 regions):

#79

Share of population growth attributable to communities of color since 2000:

67%
Demographics
A moderately diverse region

Twenty-seven percent of residents in the Kansas City region are people of color, including many different racial and ethnic groups. The Latino population is predominantly of Mexican ancestry (80 percent). Despite its relatively small share of the overall regional population, the Asian population is quite diverse; large groups include Asian Indian, Chinese/Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Korean.

The region’s population is 27 percent people of color
1. Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity, 2010

- White
- Black
- Latino, U.S.-born
- Latino, Immigrant
- API, U.S.-born
- API, Immigrant
- Native American and Alaska Native
- Other or mixed race

A diverse Asian population and predominantly Mexican-ancestry Latino population
2. Latino and Asian Populations by Ancestry, 2006-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>119,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other Latinos</td>
<td>30,552</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150,243</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Asian/ Pacific Islander

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>12,434</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese or Taiwanese</td>
<td>7,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>6,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>4,115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>3,856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other Asians</td>
<td>9,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43,956</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: IPUMS; U.S. Census Bureau. 2006-2010 IPUMS data adjusted to match 2010 census results.
Demographics

People of color are driving growth throughout the region

Rapidly growing communities of color can be found in nearly every county in the region. The people-of-color population has more than doubled since 2000 in many block groups in Clay, Johnson, and Jackson Counties. While the people-of-color population in Cass County grew quickly (116 percent), these maps show how that growth is concentrated in several of the region’s block groups. Growth in communities of color is slower in Ray County, which is 95 percent white, and in Kansas City’s urban core, where the people-of-color population is already large.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Geolytics.
Note: To more accurately visualize change, block groups with a small populations (50 or fewer people in either 2000 or 2010) were excluded from the analysis. Excluded block groups are shaded in white.
Demographics

The region will continue to diversify

Kansas City will continue to grow more diverse into the future, at a rate that is similar to that of the past few decades and about the same as the nation as a whole. When the nation as a whole becomes majority people of color around the year 2043, about 42 percent of the Kansas City region’s residents will be people of color.

The share of people of color is projected to increase through 2040

12. Racial/Ethnic Composition, 1980 to 2040

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Woods & Poole Economics.
Demographics
The region will continue to diversify
(continued)

In 1980, Kansas City did not have a single county that was majority people of color. Now, Wyandotte County is majority people of color. By 2040, Jackson County is expected to become majority people of color and Johnson County will be more than 40 percent people of color.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Woods & Poole Economics.
Demographics

A growing racial generation gap

Nationwide, the racial/ethnic profiles of young and old are diverging, with the youth population increasingly diverse while the senior population remains largely white. This “racial generation gap” can be measured as the difference between the share of people of color among young and old. The racial generation gap may negatively affect the region if seniors do not invest in the educational systems and community infrastructure needed to support a youth population that is more racially diverse.

Today, 36 percent of Kansas City’s youth (under age 18) are people of color, compared to 15 percent of the region’s seniors (over age 64). This 21-percentage point gap is more than double what it was in 1980.

The region’s communities of color are much more youthful than its white population. The median age of Latinos, for example, is 13 years younger than the median age of whites.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.
Note: Gap value may not equal the difference in percentages shown due to rounding.
Economic vitality
Economic vitality
Economic resilience through the downturn

Kansas City’s economy showed signs of resilience during the economic downturn. Despite a sharp rise in Kansas City’s unemployment rate, it never reached the height of the national average and it dropped faster than the national average since 2009.

However, according to recent data from the Brookings Institution, the regional economy has not done as well since the end of the recession. As of March 2013, the Kansas City-Overland Park-Kansas City, MO-KS metro area ranks in the bottom half of the 100 largest regions (76th) in its economic recovery, based on measures of employment, unemployment, GRP, and housing prices.

Below-average unemployment during the recovery
19. Unemployment Rate, 1990 to 2011

Economic vitality

High unemployment in urban communities of color and outer communities

Knowing where high-unemployment communities are located in the region can help the region’s leaders develop targeted solutions. One in four of the region’s unemployed residents live in the 20 percent of neighborhoods where at least 60 percent of residents are people of color. Concentrations of unemployment can be found in communities of color in Jackson and Wyandotte counties. Clusters of unemployment can also be found in outlying cities like Leavenworth, Olathe, Bonner Springs, and Richmond, and in Miami County’s rural areas.

Clusters of unemployment can be found in Jackson and Wyandotte Counties’ communities of color and in rural areas

22. Unemployment Rate by Census Tract and High People-of-Color Tracts, 2006-2010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Areas in white are missing data.

Note: One should keep in mind when looking at this map and other maps displaying a share or rate that while there is wide variation in the size (land area) of the census tracts in the region, each has a roughly similar number of people. Thus, a large tract on the region’s periphery likely contains a similar number of people as a seemingly tiny tract in the urban core, and so care should be taken not to assign an unwarranted amount of attention to large tracts just because they are large.
Declining wages play an important role in the region’s increasing inequality. After adjusting for inflation, wages have declined or stagnated for the vast majority of Kansas City’s workers over the past three decades. Wage decline for lower- and middle-income workers has been slightly lower in the region than the nation overall, and wage increases for higher earners have also been below the national average. Wages fell 6 percent for the bottom half of workers, while wages increased 13 percent for workers in the 90th percentile (i.e., the top 10 percent of earners).

Source: IPUMS. Universe includes civilian noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64.
Economic vitality
Higher poverty and working poverty for people of color

More than one out of every four of the region’s African Americans and Latinos live below the poverty level – compared to about one in 14 whites. Poverty is also higher for people of other and mixed racial background, Native Americans, and Asians.

Latinos are much more likely to be working poor compared to other groups, with rates that are six times those of whites. African Americans also have an above average working poverty rate. Whites have the lowest rate of working poverty.
Economic vitality

Education is a leveler but racial economic gaps persist

In general, unemployment decreases and wages increase with higher educational attainment. But at every education level, people of color have worse outcomes than whites.

Among college graduates, unemployment levels are more than three percentage points higher and wages are more than $3/hour lower for people of color compared to whites. The unemployment rate for African Americans with less than a high school degree is nearly triple that of their white counterparts. Latino unemployment rates are comparable with those for whites, with the exception of Latinos with less than a high school degree, who have the lowest unemployment among all groups.

Source: IPUMS. Universe includes the civilian noninstitutional population ages 25 through 64.

Source: IPUMS. Universe includes civilian noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64.
Economic vitality
Identifying high-opportunity occupations

Understanding which occupations are strong and competitive in the region can help leaders develop strategies to connect and prepare workers for good jobs. To identify “high-opportunity” occupations in the region, we developed an “occupation opportunity index” based on measures of job quality and growth, including median annual wage, wage growth, job growth (in number and share), and median age of workers. A high median age of workers indicates that there will be replacement job openings as older workers retire.

Job quality, measured by the median annual wage, accounted for two-thirds of the occupation opportunity index, and growth accounted for the other one-third. Within the growth category, half was determined by wage growth and the other half was divided equally between the change in number of jobs, percent change in the number jobs, and median age of workers.

Note: Each indicator was normalized as a cross-occupation z-score before taking a weighted average to derive the index.
Economic vitality

Identifying high-opportunity occupations

(continued)

Once the occupation opportunity index score was calculated for each occupation, occupations were sorted into three categories (high-, middle-, and low-opportunity). The average index score is zero, so an occupation with a positive value has an above-average score while a negative value represents a below-average score.

Because education level plays such a large role in determining access to jobs, we present the occupational analysis for each of three educational attainment levels: workers with a high school degree or less; workers with more than a high school degree but less than a BA; and workers with a BA or higher.

All jobs
(2011)

High-opportunity
(32 occupations)

Middle-opportunity
(21 occupations)

Low-opportunity
(18 occupations)

Note: The occupation opportunity index and the three broad categories drawn from it are only meant to provide general guidance on the level of opportunity associated with various occupations in the region, and its interpretation should be informed by an examination of individual metrics used in its calculation, which are presented in the tables on the following pages.
Economic vitality

Access to high-opportunity jobs by race/ethnicity/nativity

Examining access to high-opportunity jobs by race/ethnicity and nativity, we find that whites and immigrant Asian/Pacific Islanders (APIs) are most likely to hold high-opportunity jobs and Latino immigrants are by far the least likely to be in these occupations.

Differences in education levels play a large role in determining access to high-opportunity jobs (and this is examined next), but racial discrimination, work experience, social networks, and, for immigrants, legal status and English language ability are also contributing factors.

Latino immigrants and blacks are the least likely, and whites and Asian immigrants the most likely, to hold high-opportunity jobs

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; IPUMS. Universe includes the employed civilian noninstitutional population ages 25 through 64. While data on workers are from the MARC 9-county region, the opportunity ranking for each worker’s occupation is based on analysis of the Kansas City Core Based Statistical Area as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.
Readiness
Readiness
An education and skills gap for people of color

According to the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, by 2018 35 percent of Missouri’s jobs and 38 percent of Kansas jobs will require an associate’s degree or above. Although 43 percent of the region’s population currently have that level of education, there are large differences in educational attainment by race/ethnicity and nativity. Only 29 percent of US-born Latinos, 26 percent of African Americans, and 11 percent of Latino immigrants have at least that level of education.

While not shown in the graph, people of every race/ethnicity/nativity except Latino immigrants improved their education levels since 1990. Despite this progress, Latinos and African Americans, who will account for an increasing share of the region’s workforce, remain less prepared for the future economy than their white counterparts.

There are wide gaps in educational attainment
45. Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity/Nativity, 2006-2010

Source: IPUMS. Universe includes all persons ages 25 through 64.
Readiness

More youth are getting high school degrees, but Latino immigrants are more likely to be behind

High school dropout and nonenrollment rates have improved considerably for the region’s white, African American, and Latino immigrant youth over the past two decades, but not for its U.S.-born Latino youth. Overall, Kansas City’s youth of color are still less likely to finish high school, and its immigrant Latinos have particularly high rates of dropout or non-enrollment, with more than one in three lacking and not pursuing a high school degree.

Educational attainment has improved across the board for whites and blacks, but not for Latinos since 1990

Source: IPUMS.
Readiness

Many youth are disconnected from work or school

While trends in the pursuit of education have been mostly positive for youth of color, the number of “disconnected youth” who are neither in school nor working is on the rise. Of the region’s almost 27,000 disconnected youth in the region, 51 percent are white, 30 percent are African American, 14 percent are Latino, and one percent are Asian. As a share of the youth population, African Americans have the highest rate of disconnection (23 percent), followed by Latinos (19 percent), whites (9 percent), and Asians (7 percent).

After a considerable decrease during the 1980s, the Kansas City region has seen a slow and steady increase in the number of disconnected youth since 1990. The increase since 2000 has been from white and Latino youth.

Source: IPUMS.
Readiness
Health challenges among communities of color

African Americans suffer from high rates of obesity, asthma, and diabetes. People of other or mixed racial backgrounds have above average obesity and very high asthma rates. Seven in 10 of the region’s African Americans are overweight or obese. People of other or mixed racial background have the highest asthma rates at 16 percent, almost double the regional average. Whites fare about average on all measures, while Asians and Latinos show better than average marks across the board.

African Americans face above-average rates of obesity, diabetes, and asthma

52. Adult Overweight and Obesity Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2006-2010

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Universe includes adults ages 18 and older.

53. Adult Diabetes Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2006-2010

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Universe includes adults ages 18 and older.

54. Adult Asthma Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2006-2010

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Universe includes adults ages 18 and older.
Connectedness
Connectedness

Highlights
Are the region’s residents and neighborhoods connected to one another and to the region’s assets and opportunities?

- Residential segregation is declining faster in the region than in the United States overall. Latinos, however, are increasingly isolated from other groups.

- Communities of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. More than 8 percent of the region’s people of color live in high-poverty tracts compared to less than 1 percent of whites.

- Kansas City is overwhelmingly auto dependent, with 83 percent of residents driving alone to work, ranking the region 27th among the largest 150 metro areas.

- Communities of color have higher housing burdens, especially for those who are renters.

- Food deserts are clustered around Kansas City, MO, and suburban areas to the south in Jackson County, which are predominantly in communities of color.

Percent of people of color living in high-poverty tracts: 8.4%

Percent of whites living in high-poverty tracts: 0.9%

Share of renters who pay too much for housing: 44%
Connectedness

Concentrated poverty a challenge for communities of color

The share of high-poverty neighborhoods (with poverty rates of 40 percent or higher) in the region increased from 1.3 to 2.9 percent since 1980. People of color are much more likely to live in these neighborhoods than whites: 8.4 percent of people of color live in high-poverty tracts compared to only 0.9 percent of whites. In neighborhoods with the highest shares of people of color (60 percent or more), the average poverty rate is about 30 percent, compared to 8 percent for all other neighborhoods and 11 percent for the region overall.

As the maps illustrate, almost all of the high-poverty neighborhoods in the region coincide with areas that are predominantly people of color, stretching south of the urban core to Grandview, and they have significantly higher poverty rates than surrounding areas.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Areas in white are missing data.
Connectedness

Low-income people of color are more likely to rely on the region’s transit system to get to work

Income and race each play a role in determining who uses Kansas City’s transit system to get to work. Very low-income African American residents and those of other or mixed race are most likely to get to work using public transit, but their use of transit declines rapidly as incomes rise.

Households of color are also much less likely to own cars than whites. Across the region, 96 percent of white households have at least one car. African Americans are the most likely to lack a vehicle, with only 82 percent having at least one car.

Given the high reliance on transit for low-income people of color, it is important that the transit system provide good connections to jobs, but according to an analysis by the Brookings Institution, while 89 percent of the region’s low-income residents live near a bus stop, buses only serve 26 percent of low- and middle-skill jobs.
Connectedness
Communities of color are more likely to be carless

Although the vast majority of households have access to at least one vehicle, car ownership varies across the region. Neighborhoods with relatively high shares of zero-vehicle households are found not only in the urban core of Kansas City, but also at the region’s periphery. Carlessness is also particularly high in areas with high concentrations of people of color, mostly stretching south from Kansas City, Missouri, to Grandview.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Areas in white are missing data.
Implications?
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