

Study: Black-white IQ gap is narrowing

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A U.S. researcher says the gap in measured cognitive ability between blacks and whites has narrowed by a least 25 percent since 1972.

William Dickens of Washington's Brookings Institution, along with James Flynn, emeritus professor of political studies at New Zealand's University of Otago, say they analyzed nationally representative samples of blacks and whites on four different tests of cognitive ability.

On all four tests, blacks showed large gains relative to whites with results varying somewhat across the different tests. Pooling the results, the researchers find blacks have gained an average of 0.18 IQ points a year on whites from 1972 to 2002 for a total gain of 5.4 IQ points. Further, the scientists say blacks gained on whites at all points in the distribution of ability, with gains being only modestly lower for those in the top 10 percent.

The gains in cognitive ability have come during a time when blacks have made notable progress toward social and economic equality in some areas and suggest the possibility that further progress will bring further IQ gains, Dickens and Flynn said.

The findings appear in the October issue of the journal Psychological Science.

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