Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Homeless Services

Springfield-Hampden County Continuum of Care

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This assessment compares rates of homelessness by race and ethnicity to the general population and the population living in deep poverty. It looks at outcomes for homeless services by race and ethnicity. It also examines outcomes by race and ethnicity for initiatives focused on ending chronic homelessness, homelessness among veterans, and youth homelessness.

Executive Summary

The Springfield-Hampden County Continuum of Care (CoC) has analyzed Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and U.S. Census data to determine the relationship between race/ethnicity and rates of homelessness and outcomes for those who receive homeless services in Hampden County, Massachusetts.

People of Color are Overrepresented in the Homeless Population

Local data indicates that people of color—especially African-Americans—are overrepresented in our homeless population.

- African-Americans make up 19.8% of people accessing homeless services in Hampden County, even though they make up only 7.8% of the general population in the county, and 13% of people living in deep poverty (defined as living at or below 50% of the federal poverty level).
- Latinx are also overrepresented in the homeless population. For this population, a big contributor to the overrepresentation is the large percentage of Latinx living in deep poverty in Hampden County. People who are Latinx are 22.3% of the general population, 52.8% of the deep poverty population, and 55.7% of the population experiencing homelessness.
- There is significant difference in the race/ethnicity of the individual homeless system versus the family homelessness system. African-Americans make up similar proportions of people in both systems. But Latinx make up 38.6% of people in the individual system and 61.1% of people in the family system. Whites are underrepresented in both systems, but significantly more so in the family system (16.5%) than the individual system (39.8%).

Outcomes by Race and Ethnicity

Overall, data indicates better outcomes for people of color in the homeless assistance system than for whites. The one notable exception to this is for street outreach, where whites had significantly higher rates of successful outcomes than African Americans or Latinx.

- African Americans and Latinx had slightly shorter lengths of stay in homeless services than whites. (Whites 158 days, African Americans 149 days, Latinx 137 days, Native Americans/Alaskan Natives 111 days, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander 111, Asian 184) While data indicates long stays for Asians, this population made up less than 0.5% of the total homeless population, so it is difficult to determine if data point is meaningful or due to a small number of outliers.
- Whites had the highest rate of return to homelessness after an exit to housing, at 9.55%. The rate for African Americans was 8.86% and 8.76% for Latinx.
- People of color in CoC-funded programs were more likely to increase income from employment and non-employment than whites.
- African Americans had the lowest rates of repeat homelessness, at 20.5% of homeless African Americans returning within two years. The rates for whites (22.6%) and Latinx (22.7%) were similar to each other and just slightly higher than African Americans. While rates of repeat homelessness were higher among Asian (25%), Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders (29.4%) and

Native Americans/Alaskan Natives (29.4%), these numbers were calculated based on extremely small portions of the overall sample size.

- For individuals contacted by street outreach, successful outcomes were significantly better for whites (95%) than for African Americans (73%) or Latinx (68%). Where the exit was from emergency shelter, safe havens, transitional housing or rapid rehousing, the reverse was true. Thirty percent of whites had successful outcomes, compared to 36% of African Americans and 51% Latinx.
- Whites, African Americans, and Latinx had about the same level of success in maintaining housing, 91-92%. The rate for the very small number of American Indians/Native Alaskans was 100%, and the rate for the very small number of Native Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders was 67%.

Subpopulations

The CoC uses by-name lists and regular case conferencing meetings to methodically work toward ending homelessness for chronically homeless, veterans, and youth aged 18-24. The CoC examined data from these efforts to see if there is evidence of disparities in outcomes by race or ethnicity.

- Among chronically homeless individuals, there are no large disparities by race and ethnicity, but Latinx on the list are slightly overrepresented in those housed in PSH. Whites are also the population that are most likely to be "lost" to coordinated entry (dismissed to "unknown" after lack of contact for 90 days), making up 50% of those with unknown destinations.
- Veterans who are African American or Latinx are housed at rates higher than their incidence among the homeless veteran population, but African Americans are less likely to be assessed than other races and are more likely to become lost to the system ("status unknown") than whites or Latinx. Both Latinx and American Indian/Native Indians are housed at rates higher than their incidence among the homeless veteran population.
- Homeless African American youth are overrepresented among those who resolve with housing. There is little disparity between the proportion of Latinx youth and that of Latinx youth who get housed. Whites are underrepresented among those housed.
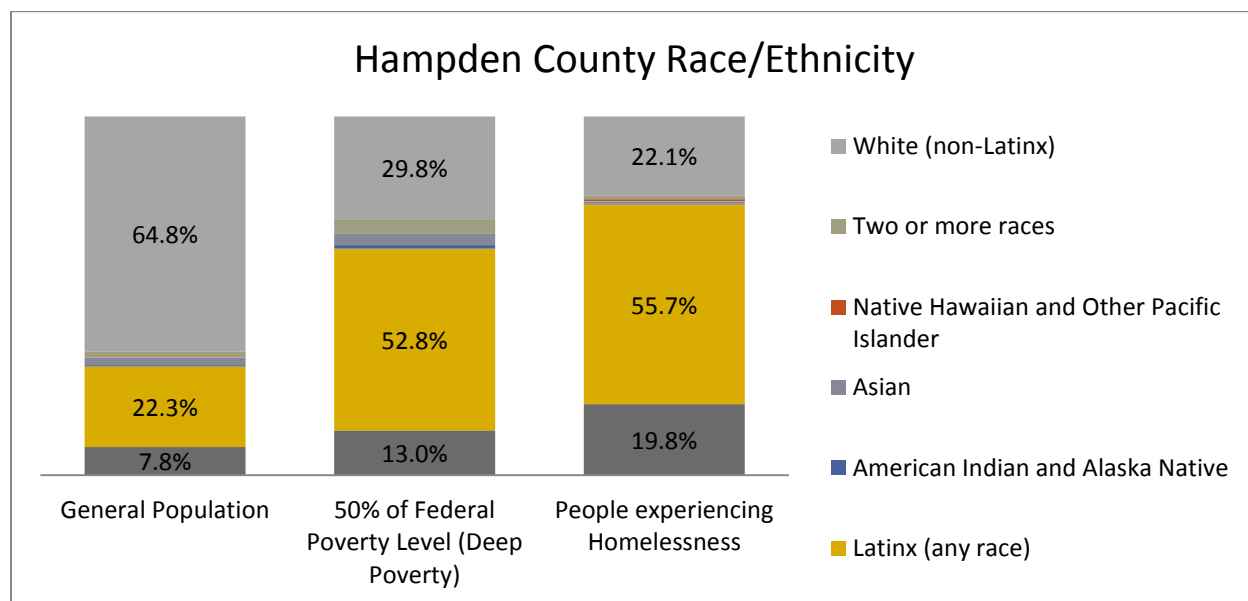
Background

In March 2018, Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC), a project of the Center for Social Innovation, released the results of a mixed-method research study in six communities which had been designed to explore racial inequities in homelessness. The study found that African Americans and Native Americans were overrepresented in the homeless population as compared to the general population. The study found that this is not attributable only to the overrepresentation of these groups among people living in deep poverty (at or below 50% of the Federal poverty level). The level of homelessness among these populations exceeded the proportions of the populations living in deep poverty.

The study further found that the homeless services workforce is not representative of the people it serves, where whites are overrepresented, particularly among senior management positions.

This study has prompted the Springfield-Hampden County Continuum of Care (COC) to update its local analysis regarding racial and ethnic disparities in homeless services. The CoC conducted analysis in 2013 that indicated that homeless Latinos are least likely to access the CoC's transitional and permanent supportive housing. This conclusion is based on the much higher percentage of Latinos in the emergency shelter population versus the percentage of Latinos in TH and PSH. As a result of that analysis, the CoC conducted mandatory training for CoC providers regarding affirmatively furthering fair housing and emphasized the need for agencies to have bi-lingual staff available.

People of Color Overrepresented in the Homeless Population

While this study will focus on race and ethnicity of people served in CoC programs, it is important to recognize that local data confirms the SPARC study conclusion that people of color are overrepresented in the homeless population, and that this overrepresentation is not explained by rates of deep poverty.

Hampden County Race/Ethnicity

General Population: White (non-Latinx) 64.8%, Latinx (any race) 22.3%, 7.8%
50% of Federal Poverty Level (Deep Poverty): White (non-Latinx) 29.8%, Latinx (any race) 52.8%, 13.0%
People experiencing Homelessness: White (non-Latinx) 22.1%, Latinx (any race) 55.7%, 19.8%

Legend:
- White (non-Latinx)
- Two or more races
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- American Indian and Alaska Native
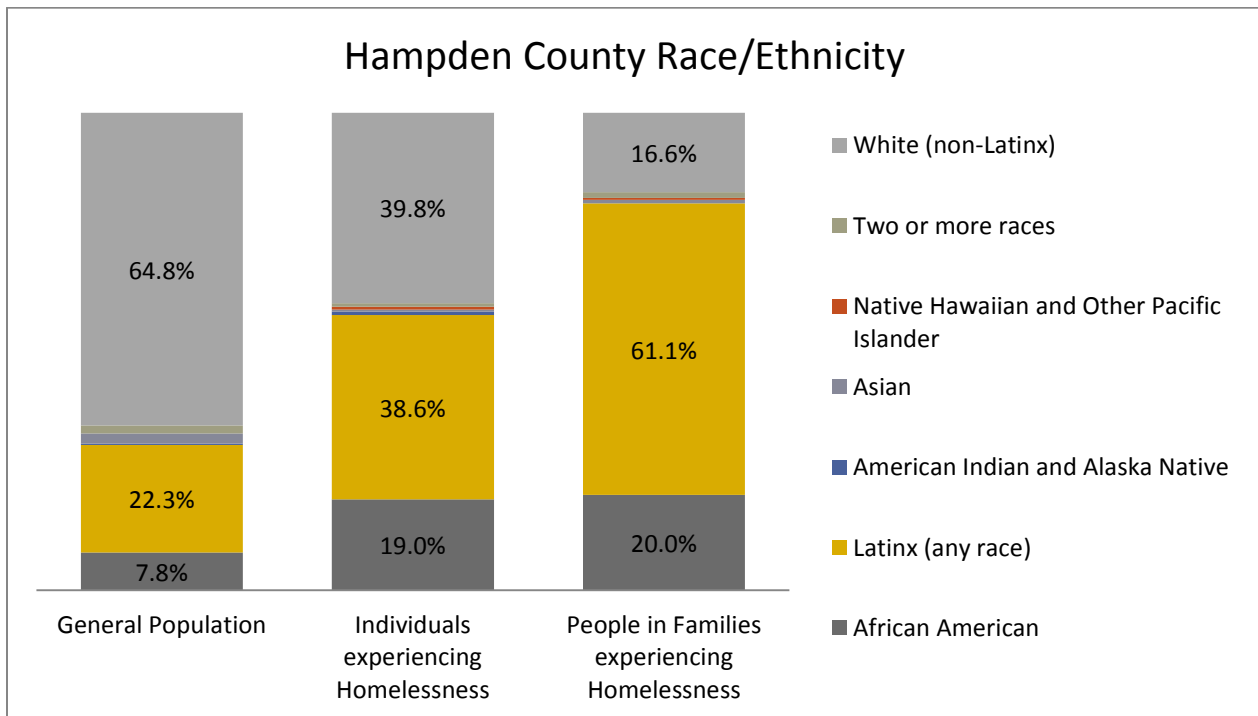- Latinx (any race)

2011-2016 ACS; 2015-2017 AHAR

In Hampden County, people of color are 35% of the population, but make up 78% of the homeless population. Local data tracks the SPARC study in finding that African Americans are overrepresented in

the homeless population. The population of Hampden County is 7.8% African American, but the homeless population is 19.8% African American. The number of Native Americans in Hamden County is extremely small (345 people), but, unlike in the SPARC study, are not overrepresented in the homeless population.

In Hampden County, homelessness disproportionately affects people who are Latinx: 22.3% of the general population, but 55.7% of the homeless population are Latinx. This local finding is very different from the SPARC study findings—in the six SPARC sample cities, 17.2% of the population identified as Latinx, and 6.9% of the homeless population was Latinx.

As in the SPARC study, poverty alone does not explain the inequity for African Americans. The proportion of African American individuals experiencing homelessness exceeds their proportion of those living in deep poverty: African Americans make up 7.8% of the general population, 13.0% of the deep poverty population, and 19.8% of the population experiencing homelessness. Among the Latinx population, poverty explains more, but not all of the disparity. People who are Latinx are 22.3% of the general population, 52.8% of the deep poverty population, and 55.7% of the population experiencing homelessness.

In Massachusetts, there are completely different homelessness systems serving families and individuals. While the disparity for African Americans is about the same in the family and individual systems, the Latinx disparity is far more prevalent in the family homelessness system. For families, the disparity exceeds what would be expected based on poverty rates—52.8% in deep poverty and 61.1% experiencing homelessness. In contrast, people who are Latinx make up a larger percentage of the deep poverty population (52.8%) than the percentage of individuals without children experiencing homelessness (38.6%).

Hampden County Race/Ethnicity

	General Population	Individuals experiencing Homelessness	People in Families experiencing Homelessness
White (non-Latinx)	64.8%	39.8%	16.6%
Latinx (any race)	22.3%	38.6%	61.1%
African American	7.8%	19.0%	20.0%

Legend:
- White (non-Latinx)
- Two or more races
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Latinx (any race)
- African American

2011-2016 ACS; 2015-2017 AHAR

System Performance by Race/Ethnicity

The CoC measures and reports to HUD each year on several factors that assess its performance as a system in preventing and ending homelessness. This section looks at key measures by race and ethnicity.

Note that for all race/ethnicity System Performance Reports, the CoC ran the reports for: Non-Latinx Whites, African Americans, Latinx (all races), American Indians or Native Alaskans, Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders, and Asians. Because there are Latinx who are not white (for example, Latinx African Americans), the total number of people reported add up to more than 100%. The decision to handle the data this way enabled someone who is Latinx and a race other than white to be counted in two areas, because their experience in the homeless service and housing system would likely be influenced by both their race and their ethnicity.

The System Performance Measure reports have been produced for the period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. The sample is made up of 5142 people who were contacted through street outreach, or were in emergency shelter or transitional housing during this period. The sample does not include people who were homeless but did not have contact with these services.

White (non-Latinx)	1080
African American	1049
Latinx (any race)	2847
American Indian or Alaskan Native	9
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	18
Asian	21

Length of Time Homeless

Length of Time Homeless measures the average number of days of homelessness during the measured one year of time.
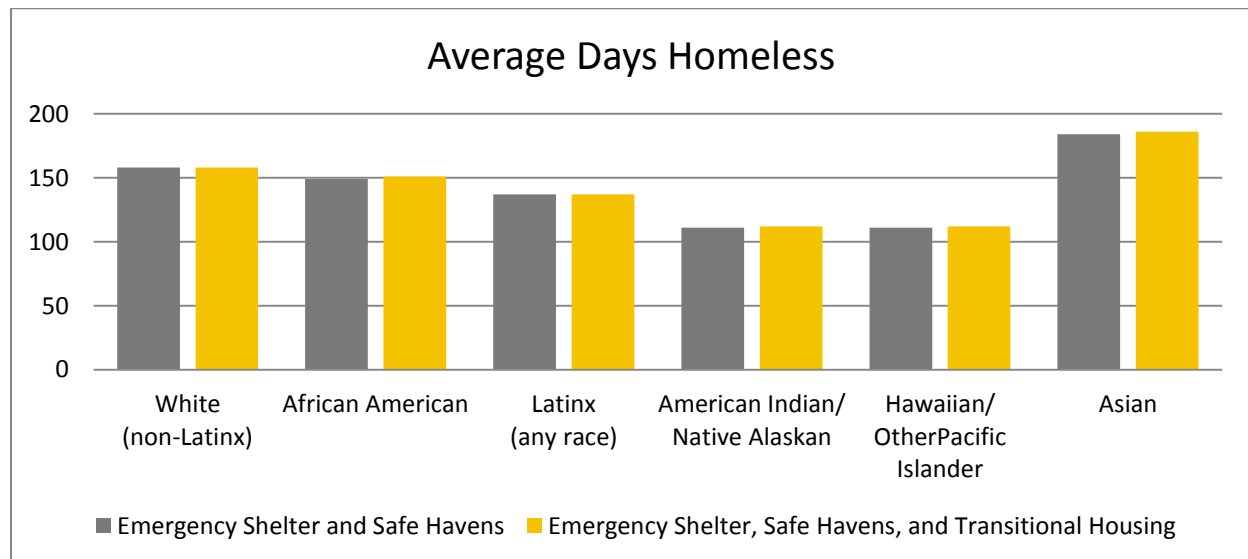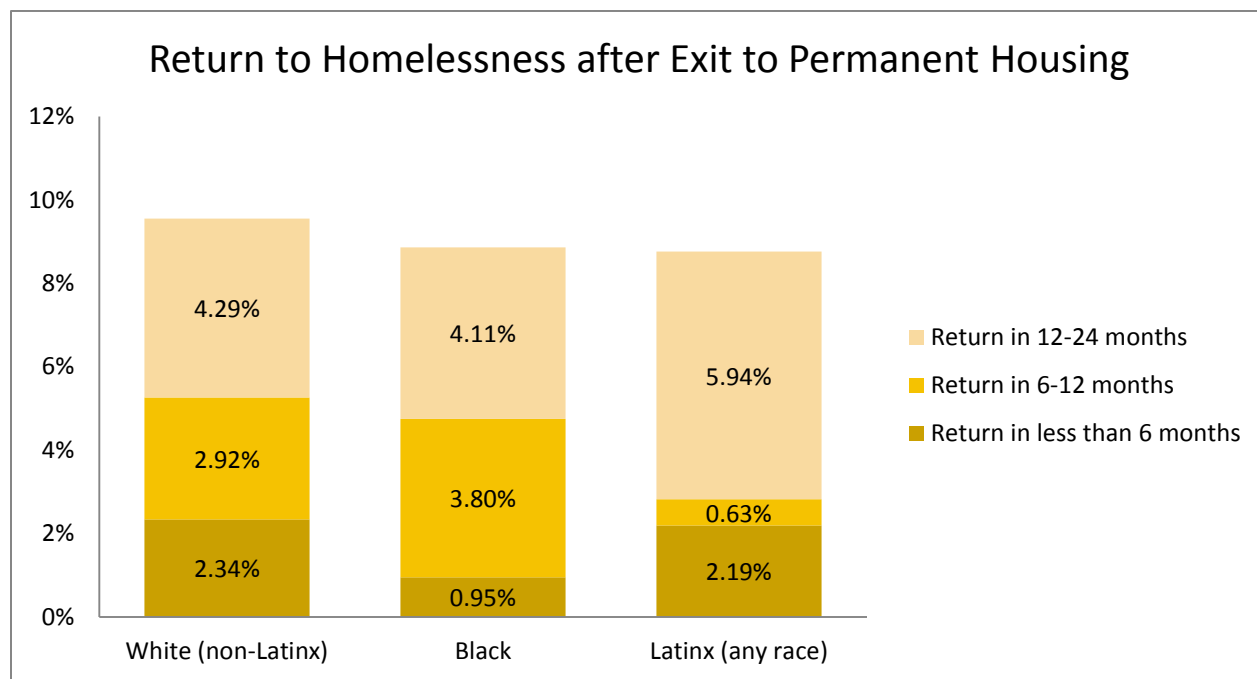

HUD System Performance Report, by Race and Ethnicity, for period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

African Americans (149 days) and Latinx (137 days) had slightly shorter average length of stay than whites (158 days). Asians had the longest average lengths of homelessness (184 days) but the number of Asians is very small—they are less than 1% of the CoC's homeless population.

Returns to Homelessness

This metric measures the number of people who exit homelessness to permanent housing and return to homelessness (as measured by re-entry into HMIS) during a two-year period.

Return to Homelessness after Exit to Permanent Housing

|	Return in less than 6 months	Return in 6-12 months	Return in 12-24 months
White (non-Latinx)	2.34%	2.92%	4.29%
Black	0.95%	3.80%	4.11%
Latinx (any race)	2.19%	0.63%	5.94%

HUD System Performance Report, by Race and Ethnicity, for period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

Whites had the highest rate of return to homelessness, at 9.55%. The rate for African Americans was 8.86% and 8.76% for Latinx. There were no returns to homelessness for Asians, American Indians/Native Alaskans, or Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders. The numbers of people experiencing homelessness in our geographic area are very small, so the potential population housed and possibly subject to returns to homelessness is extremely small.

The Measure for returns to homelessness includes how quickly the return happened—within 6 months, 6 to 12 months, and 12-24 months. While overall rates of return to homelessness were in a similar range, the time period for the return varied by race and ethnicity.

Employment and Income Growth for Persons in CoC Programs

The Employment and Income Growth measure identifies persons who have increased employment or non-employment income between enrollment in the program and a later assessment.
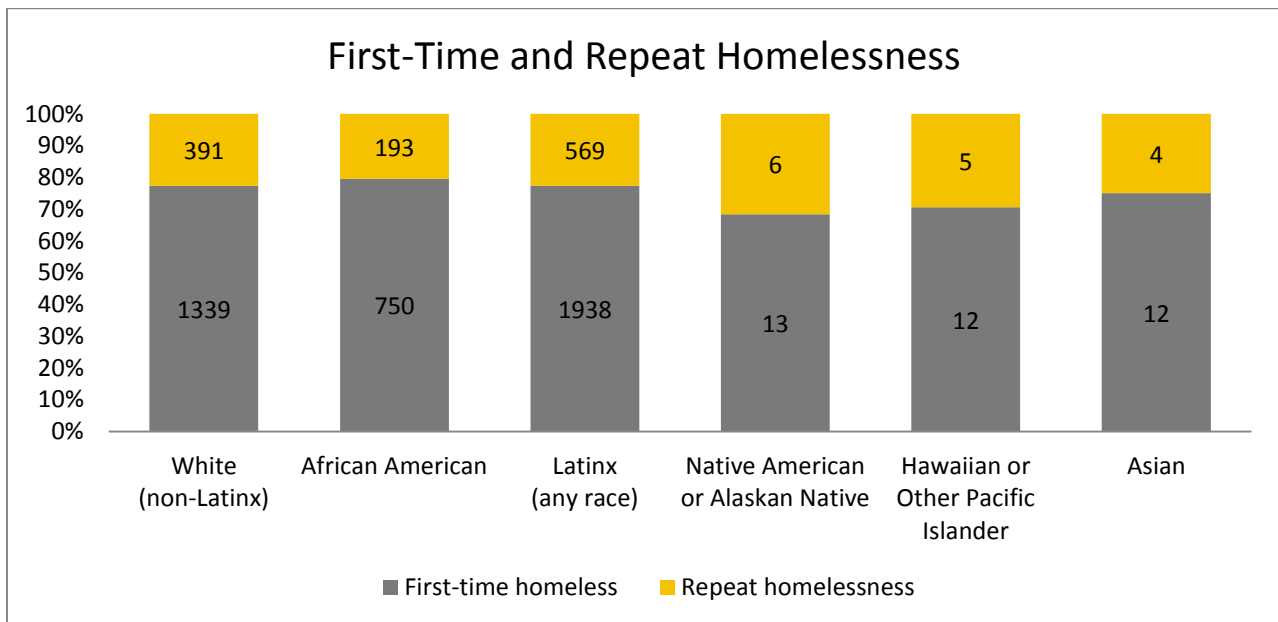
Employment and Income Growth
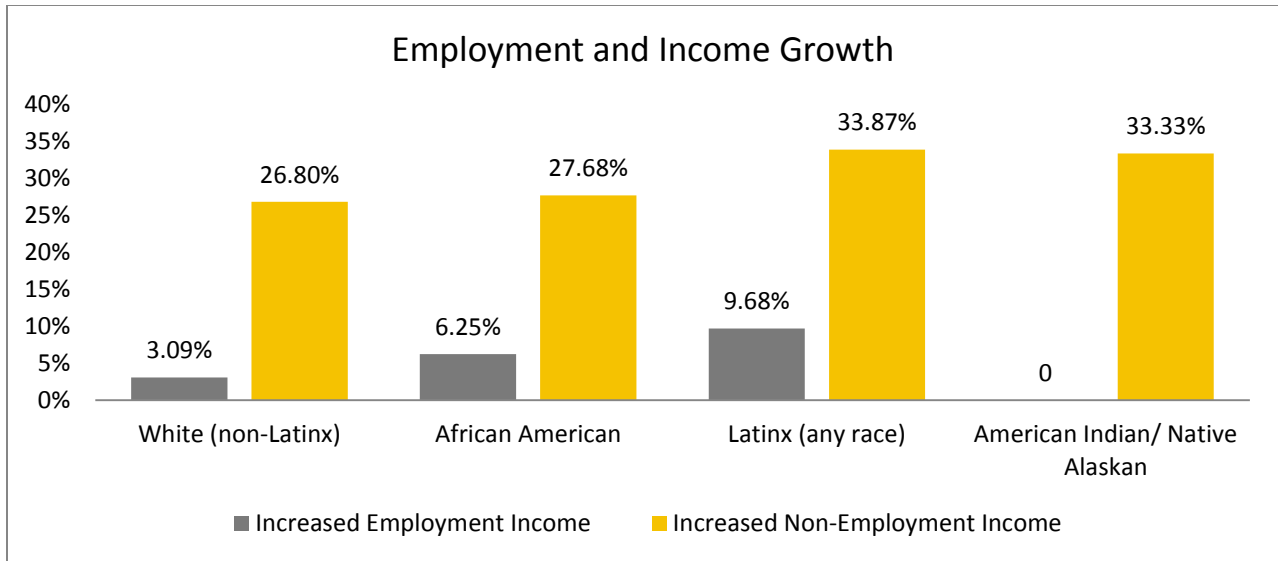
HUD System Performance Report, by Race and Ethnicity, for period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

People of color did better on this measure than whites. Latinx people had the highest rates of increases in both employment and non-employment income. American Indians/Native Alaskans had the next highest rate of increase in non-employment income, but no increase at all in income level. African Americans fell in between Latinx and Whites in both employment and non-employment income. There were no Asians in enrolled in CoC Programs who had an entry assessment and a later assessment, so the Asian race is not reported for this measure.

## Persons Homeless for the First Time

The measure of Homeless for the First Time looks at first time versus repeat homelessness. There was little difference on this measure among whites, African Americans and Latinx.

HUD System Performance Report, by Race and Ethnicity, for period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

Exits from Homelessness and Retention of Permanent Housing

This performance measure includes three different ways to measure success toward achieving and retaining permanent housing. The different measures had different levels of disparity by race and ethnicity.
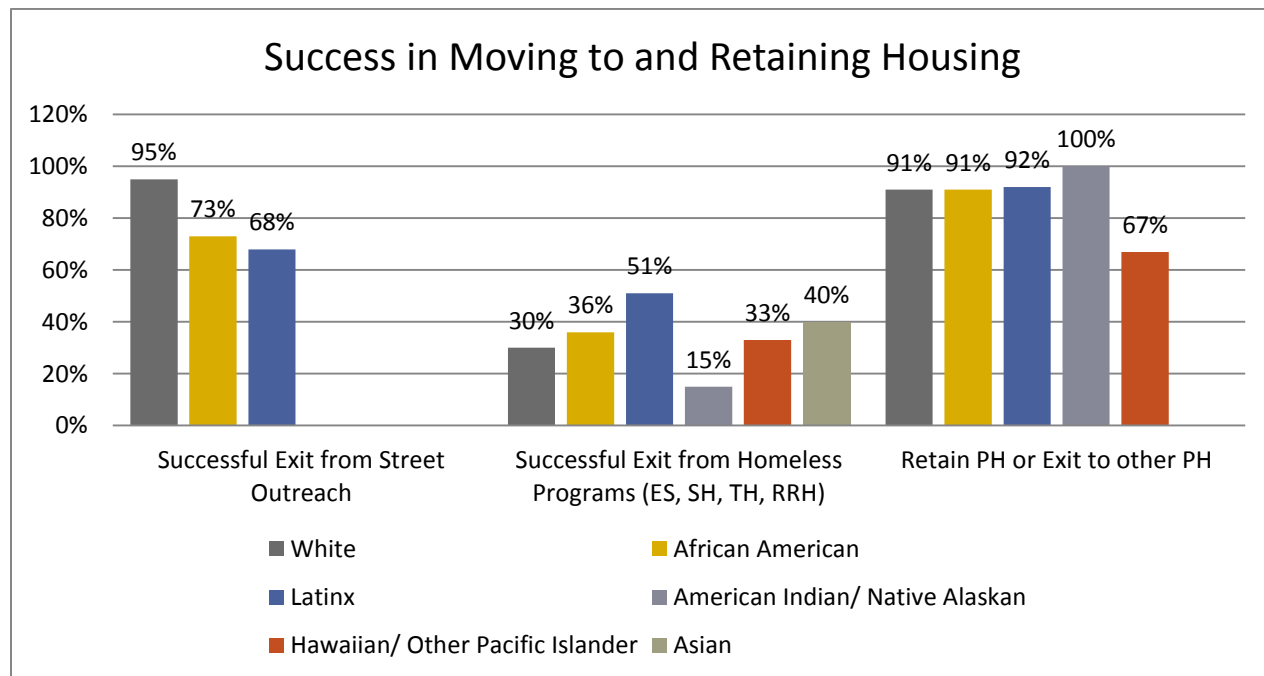
Success in Moving to and Retaining Housing

HUD System Performance Report, by Race and Ethnicity, for period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

The first metric is successful exit from homelessness for people engaged by street outreach. This is one area where people of color had markedly different outcomes than whites. While 95% of whites had successful outcomes, only 73% of African Americans and 68% of Latinx experienced successful outcomes. No American Indian/Native Alaskan, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Asian was engaged by street outreach.

The second metric is whether people in temporary living situations (emergency shelter, safe havens, transitional housing and rapid rehousing) had successful outcome. For this measure, Latinx had the highest rate of success, at 51%; African Americans had 36% success, and whites had 30% success. The number of American Indians/Native Alaskans is small, but this population had the lowest success rate of all races, at 15%.

The third metric is for those who are in permanent housing, and measures whether they have remained or, if they left, exited to other permanent housing. All races and ethnicities except Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander had success rates over 90%. The rate for Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders was 67%.

Analysis by Population

The CoC has focused special initiatives, including the use of by-name lists, for chronically homeless individuals, veterans, and youth aged 18-24. The CoC has examined data for each of these populations to understand the impact these initiatives on populations by race and ethnicity.

Chronically Homeless

The CoC maintains a by-name list of chronically homeless individuals, which is a consolidated list used to fill all vacancies in permanent supportive housing. People are placed on the list when HMIS records indicate they meet the standard for chronic, or when a provider indicates that a person should be on the list based on what is known about the person's time unsheltered or in out-of-area shelters. The list is prioritized by length of homelessness and level of service needs, as measured by the VI-SPDAT. At weekly multi-agency case conferencing meeting, housing navigators strategize about housing options for people on the list.
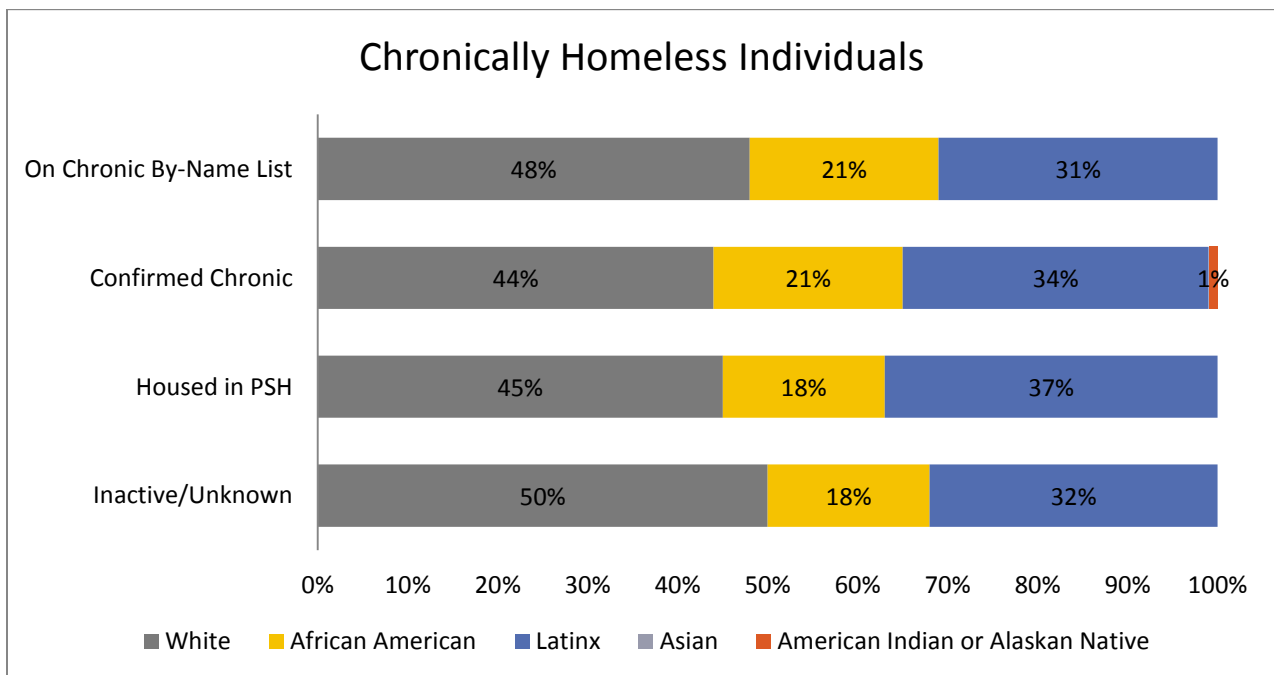

Analysis of HMIS Data for Period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018

Between July 2017 and June 2018, the CoC had a total of 243 people with race/ethnicity identified come on or off the chronic by-name list. There are no large disparities by race and ethnicity, but Latinx on the list are slightly overrepresented in those housed in PSH. Whites are also the population that are most likely to be "lost" to coordinated entry (dismissed to "unknown" after lack of contact for 90 days), making up 50% of those with unknown destinations.

Homeless Veterans

The CoC's by-name list of veterans is used to make sure that veterans are screened for eligibility for veteran-specific programs and referred to resources targeted to the population. Veterans are added to the by-name list when they indicate veteran status during an HMIS intake, or otherwise identify themselves as having military experience to an agency. Staff at multiple agencies assess veterans with the VI-SPDAT and assist them in locating their DD-214 (discharge papers) to determine eligibility for veteran-specific programs.
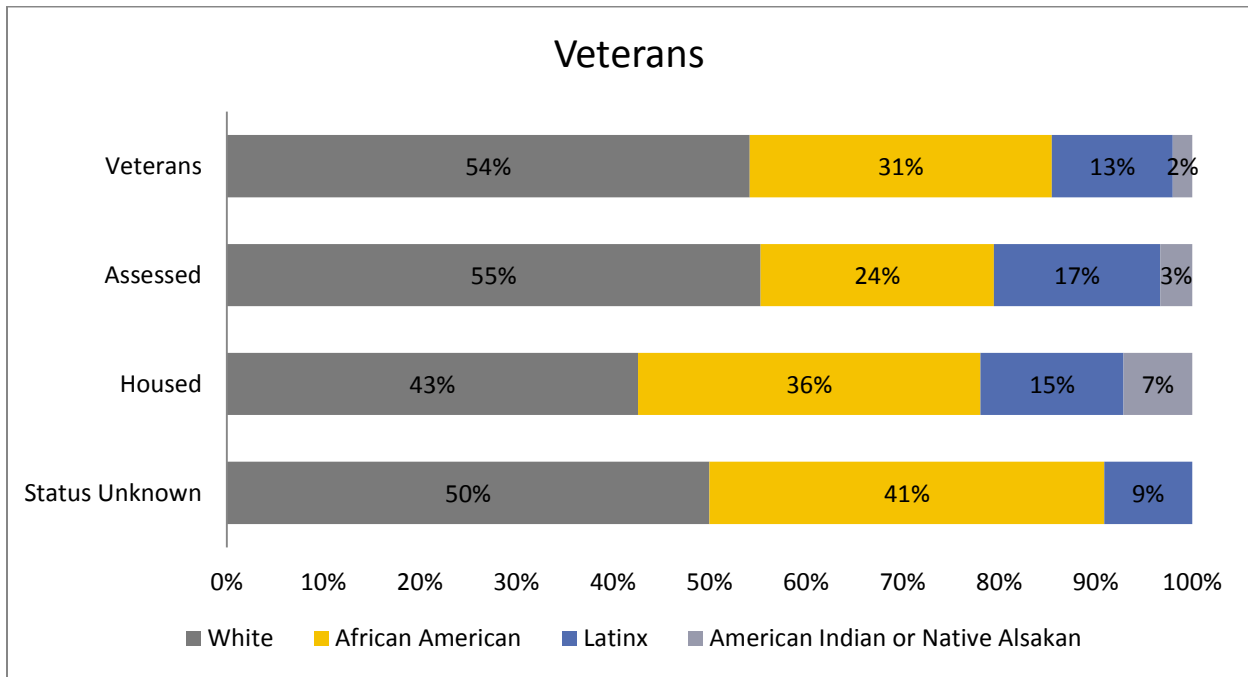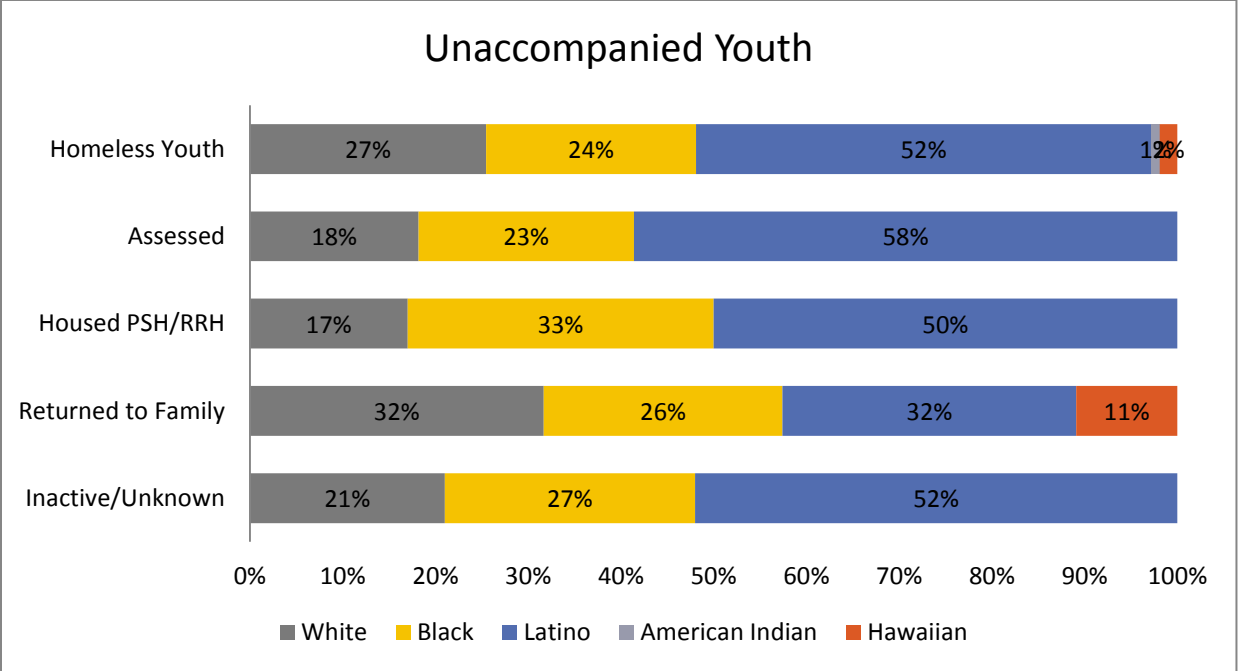

Veterans who are African American or Latinx are housed at rates higher than their incidence among the homeless veteran population, but African Americans are less likely to be assessed than other races and are more likely to become lost to the system ("status unknown") than whites or Latinx. Both Latinx and American Indian/Native Indians are housed at rates higher than their incidence among the homeless veteran population.

Homeless Youth

The CoC's initiative to use a by-name list for youth aged 18-24 is newer than the initiatives for chronically homeless individuals and veterans. The CoC has begun reliably using the by-name list and assessing youth in spring 2018.

The analysis in this section includes the 165 non-parenting unaccompanied youth who accessed services during the period July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. Parenting youth, who are served by a different system and not part of this initiative, are not included. Of the 165 youth, CoC programs completed assessments for only 24% (40 youth). Some youth who were housed did not have assessments done.

Unaccompanied Youth

	White	Black	Latino	American Indian	Hawaiian
Homeless Youth	27%	24%	52%	1%	2%
Assessed	18%	23%	58%		
Housed PSH/RRH	17%	33%	50%		
Returned to Family	32%	26%	32%		11%
Inactive/Unknown	21%	27%	52%		

Legend: ■ White ■ Black ■ Latino ■ American Indian ■ Hawaiian

The homeless youth subpopulation includes higher proportions of African Americans and Latinx than the general population of homeless individuals. The individual homeless population is 20% African American and 39% Latinx. In contrast, the individual unaccompanied youth population is 24% African American and 52% Latinx. Another overall point to note about the youth population is that higher percentages of whites, African Americans, and Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders return to housing with family, while a much smaller proportion of Latinx do so.

Homeless African American youth are overrepresented among those who resolve with housing. There is little disparity between the proportion of Latinx youth and that of Latinx youth who get housed. Whites are underrepresented among those housed.

There is not much disparity by race or ethnicity among the proportions of youth that become inactive, or leave to unknown locations.