

RACIAL DISPARITIES ASSESSMENT AND REPORT - 2023

Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless



Racial Disparity in People Experiencing Homelessness in the Midlands Area

Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH) is the federally designated Continuum of Care for 13-counties in the central Midlands of South Carolina. MACH is a network of advocates, service providers and funders with the mission of expanding capacity to address Homelessness within the South Carolina counties of Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Richland and York.

In 2023, MACH's Data and Evaluation Committee examined data on racial disparities in people experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this data review is to better understand the population served with housing and service programs and examine disparities in service delivery.

Review of MACH's Data

To complete the analysis, MACH reviewed data from US Census estimates, 2023 Point-In-Time count (PIT), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool provided by HUD, McKinney-Vento data, and calls to United Way's 211 system. The PIT count is an annual assessment of the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single day. The data allows communities to identify whether a person is an individual, a member of a family unit, or an unaccompanied youth. In addition, communities identify if a person is chronically homeless, indicating long-time or repeated homelessness and the presence of a disability along with demographic information. HMIS is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. The Racial Equity Analysis Tool is provided by HUD and designed to help CoC's identify racial disparities in the system. The tool is an overlay of the racial distributions of people living in poverty by race and ethnicity, age, and veteran status, sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015 5-year estimates, and the most recent PIT count data.

Findings

Racial Inequalities in Homelessness

As Table 1 and Table 2 below indicate, within the 13-counties of the MACH Continuum of Care, African Americans make up a little over 32% of the general population, but more than 65% of the individuals experiencing homelessness during the 2023 Point-In-Time Count. African Americans are also disproportionately overrepresented in families with children who are experiencing homelessness (general population 32%/experiencing homelessness 62%). Whites, Native American/Alaskans, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Other/Multi-Racial groups are all underrepresented in those experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population. When examining unsheltered homelessness in the 2023 PIT count, 100% of the families with children who were unsheltered were African American. This disparity persists even in comparison to the population living below the poverty line. In MACH's 13-counties, 43% of all individuals living below the poverty line are white and 49% are African American. When examining disparities in ethnicity, data indicates there is not a significant difference in the ethnicity of the total population and of those experiencing homelessness. There is a slightly lower percent of Hispanic or Latino individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to the overall population.

These disparities were confirmed when reviewing the 'CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool'. In MACH's data, 49% of all people living in poverty identified as black; however, among the people experiencing

homelessness during the 2023 point-in-time count 65.6% identified as black. Further, 64% of people in the 2023 unsheltered count were black. For families experiencing homelessness during the count 62% were black. These two data sources confirm Black/African Americans are overrepresented in the homeless population when compared to the general population.

Table 1. 2020 Population Estimates		
Total Population Race		
White	896,561	58.92%
Black or African American	495,841	32.59%
Asian or Pacific Islander	36,888	2.42%
American Indian and Alaska Native	6,926	.46%
Total Population Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	85,382	5.61%

Source: rfa.sc.gov

Table 2: 2023 Point-In-Time Count						
Race	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	% Sheltered	% Unsheltered	% Total
White	318	67	385	31.64%	33.50%	31.95%
Black or African American	663	128	791	65.97%	64.00%	65.64%
Asian	<10	0	<10	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian or Alaska Native	<10	0	<10	N/A	0.00%	N/A
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	<10	0	<10	N/A	0.00%	N/A
Multiple races	15	<10	N/A	1.49%	N/A	1.66%
Total	1005	200	1205	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Ethnicity	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	% Sheltered	% Unsheltered	% Total
Hispanic or Latino	36	<10	41	3.58%	2.50%	3.40%
Not Hispanic/Latino	969	195	1164	96.42%	97.50%	96.60%

Source: 2023 Point In Time Count

Disparities in Calls Seeking Homeless Services and Homeless Prevention

United Way's 211 connects people across South Carolina to health, human, and social service organizations. Overall, homeless services and homeless prevention assistance account for more than half the calls during the reported period. Calls related to homeless services refer to shelters, motel vouchers, and other services for people currently experiencing homelessness. Calls related to prevention services refer to a wider range of services aimed at assisting people who may be at-risk of homelessness, including financial assistance and legal support. These two categories combined accounted for 54% of all calls to 211 during fiscal year 2021, which is the most recent data available. The demographics of those calling for these two needs shows a disproportionate number of African Americans calling for assistance. For homeless services 48% of the calls were from those identifying as African American, compared to the overall population of African Americans being 32.5%. The disparities of calls for homeless prevention services was more dramatic. Sixty-eight percent of homeless prevention services were made by African Americans. This would be an indication there is a disproportionate number of African Americans who are at imminent risk of homelessness.

Disparities for Youth

It is an unfortunate reality that many people experiencing homelessness are under the age of 18; some are members of families experiencing homelessness, while others are youth experiencing homelessness and on their own. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (hereafter referred to as The McKinney-Vento Act), reauthorized in 2015 by Title IX, Part A of the, "Every Student Succeeds Act" (42 U.S.C. & 11431 et seq.), is a Federal law that addresses the educational needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Because family shelter capacity is limited and many shelters will not allow adolescents boys to shelter with their families, most families with children and youth in homeless situations stay temporarily with other people, in motels, or substandard housing. These situations are very unstable, often unsafe and overcrowded, and put children, parents and youth at-risk of abuse and/or trafficking. The impact of these more hidden forms of homelessness is just as negative as experiencing homelessness on the streets or in shelters. In the 13 counties served by MACH there were over 2,400 youth experiencing homelessness based on McKinney-Vento. Fifty-six percent of the students experiencing homelessness are African American. The number of African American students experiencing homelessness is significantly higher than the overall percent of African American students in the counties served by MACH.

Service Provision

The providers within the CoC provide services like Homeless Prevention, Rapid Rehousing, and Permanent Supportive Housing. For homeless prevention services provided across the 13 counties 76% of the individuals who received those services identified as African American and 27% white. As it relates to permanent housing, 75% of those who have been housed through Rapid Rehousing are African American and 66% housed through Permanent Supportive Housing identified as African American. These numbers indicate that homeless service providers in MACH do not have any disparities in the services offered. These services match the demographics of those seeking services and housing.

Research in Racial Disparities

In September 2016, The Center for Social Innovation launched SPARC (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities) to understand and respond to racial inequities in homelessness. Through research and action in six communities, SPARC has begun a national conversation about racial equity in the homelessness sector. March 2018, the [Center for Social Innovation](#) released SPARC's Phase One Study Findings.

SPARC's report found key domains influencing homelessness for people of color identified through oral histories collected across the study's communities:

- Economic mobility – Lack of economic capital within social networks
- Housing – Unavailability of safe and affordable housing options
- Criminal Justice – Involvement in the criminal justice system, especially felonies, creating on-going challenges with employment and housing
- Behavioral Health – Experiencing higher rates of traumatic stress, mental health, and substance use.
- Family Stabilization – Involvement in the child welfare system

Strategies to Better Understand Data and Improve Services

The [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) identified, in an October 2017 policy article, strategies communities were implementing to better understand data and implement policies to improve access to housing and services for all people.

Strategies Identified:

- Use demographic data from the most recent census to map the racial profile of their community and then compare it to HMIS data to understand who is experiencing homelessness at disproportionate rates in their community
- Report on staff and board diversity compared to population experiencing homelessness and develop diversification goals
- Develop data-driven goals for including people of color with lived experience of homelessness into planning efforts
- Analyze data to determine if equitable permanent housing outcomes are being achieved and identify if there are ethnic or racial groups who are less likely to be exiting to permanent housing
- Integrate person-centered data to build out an understanding of service utilization patterns and the connection between those patterns and housing placements and/or other outcomes; use these data points to inform planning and resource allocation
- Map the points of entry and precipitating causes of homelessness and assess whether there are significant differences among people of color
- Geographically map where people experiencing homelessness live, work, or spend their time to ensure that place-based investments in outreach, services, and housing opportunities are equitably reaching people of color

- Identify systemwide goals to drive progress toward equity and identify data points to measure progress toward those goals
- Regularly review data, assess impact, and refine and strengthen strategies and activities

Recommendations for MACH

Since the initial disparities assessment that was completed in 2019, MACH has made efforts to help address disparities. There has been an effort to ensure the MACH Board of Directors has equal representation of people of color, related to the 13-county demographics. In addition, MACH has initiated trainings in cultural competency and monitored HUD funded CoC and ESG funded projects on their efforts to mitigate racial disparities in the provision and outcomes of homeless assistance. Through the systematic review of existing data and the literature on evidence-based methods to address disparities, the following strategies are recommended for adoption or to be continued to encourage a homelessness system that is more representative of the community served:

- By the end of 2025, complete a survey of all MACH partners to gauge diversity in leadership, review equal access policies, and explore how people of color are involved in planning.
- Annually, the MACH Membership and Training Committee will host cultural competency training for MACH members that includes content on underlying, systemic issues contributing to racial disparities in housing.
- By the end of 2025, monitor HUD funded CoC and ESG funded projects on their efforts to mitigate racial disparities in the provision and outcomes of homeless assistance.
- Annually, review data to assess trends in housing and homelessness related to disparities in access to services and those exiting to permanent housing, to minimally include an examination of racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ+.

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