Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC)
Pierce County, WA

Initial Findings from Quantitative and Qualitative Research

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This document was prepared by the Center for Social Innovation (C4) in Needham, MA for Pierce County Human Services and City of Tacoma Neighborhood and Community Services in Tacoma, WA

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Background

Racial inequity persists in the United States despite significant attention to this issue over past decades. Recent assessments of the contemporary racial dynamic suggest that racism has not declined but has instead become less overt.¹ One manifestation of the nation’s current racial realities is that people of color are disproportionately represented in the homeless population. Black people, in particular, are more likely to become homeless than people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Although Black people comprise 13% of the US population and 26% of those living in poverty, they account for more than 40% of the overall homeless population.² This suggests that poverty rates alone do not explain the over-representation of Black Americans in the homeless population. Furthermore, Black men remain homeless longer than White or Hispanic men.³

Homelessness reflects the failure of our social systems to serve people equally in housing, education, health care, and justice. The Center for Social Innovation (C4) launched Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC) in 2016 in response to overwhelming evidence that people of color were dramatically overrepresented in the nation’s homeless population—across the country and regardless of jurisdiction. The SPARC initiative focuses on using mixed methods research to identify how people are experiencing the accrual of systemic racism and to leverage that knowledge towards systems transformation. The purpose of this report is to present initial findings from our work with Tacoma/Pierce County, WA. Subsequent reports will pull data from across all SPARC communities to take a much more in depth look at specific components of our research, such as racialized experience of services, systems involvement, and employment. We look forward to sharing these national reports when they are complete.

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Executive Summary

Beginning in late 2016, the Center for Social Innovation’s SPARC initiative partnered with Pierce County Human Services (PCHS), the City of Tacoma, and other Tacoma/Pierce County service providers to amplify the issue of racial inequity and homelessness. This partnership included convening a town hall meeting, hosting a provider training, facilitating a planning session of community leaders, and collecting local data.

In the planning session of community leaders, stakeholders from the city and county homeless service organizations identified three “Structural Change Objectives” for our work to address racial inequity, including:

1. **Staff diversity and inclusion**, with careful attention to increasing the number of senior managers of color and board members.
2. **Economic mobility for people of color** so that people have opportunities to earn a living wage.
3. **Promoting fair housing** through, for example, policies that increase housing quality, ensure equitable access to housing for people with felony convictions, disregard source of income, and consider the role of racial equity in coordinated entry.

From December 5th to December 9th 2016, SPARC partnered with PCHS and other service providers in Tacoma/Pierce County, WA to collect qualitative and quantitative data that would elucidate the racial dimensions of homelessness in the area. Data collection included:

1. HMIS data from fiscal years 2012 to 2016.
2. Tacoma Housing Authority Data from 2014, 2015, and 2016.
3. An online demographic survey of homeless service providers.
4. Qualitative research including 24 individual interviews with people of color experiencing homelessness and 3 focus groups of providers, stakeholders, and consumers.

This report presents preliminary findings from these data sets. In the Discussion, we present promising directions for potential systems change and further research, and in the Recommendations, we outline potential short- and long-term action steps for the community. We also explore the links between the data and the three objectives identified by the community leaders.
Findings from Pierce County HMIS Data

Our analyses of HMIS data from Tacoma/Pierce County, WA Continuum of Care 2012-2016 projects ("project" is defined by its use in HMIS systems and typically refers to programs that target services to people experiencing homelessness) found that:

- Black/African American people represent the HMIS population at a rate of 26.3%, despite only making up 6.6% of the general population in this area.
- Examination of the destination and circumstances of clients at the time that they exit the HMIS system shows that the majority of clients (49.3%) exited the system into permanent housing, and 27% of that group exited into permanent housing with a subsidy.
- At the time of exit from the HMIS system, clients identifying as male were almost four times more likely to exit a project into homelessness than were females.
- Clients with a disabling condition were 64% less likely to become homeless after exiting the HMIS system.
- Clients who were veterans were over three times more likely to obtain permanent housing with a subsidy after exiting the project and almost three times more likely to obtain permanent housing without a subsidy.
- Being Black/African American was not a significant predictor of exiting the HMIS system into homelessness; however, Black/African Americans were statistically significantly more likely to exit into permanent housing with or without a subsidy than were Whites, with an increased likelihood of 19% and 18%, respectively.

Findings from Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) Data

Our analyses of Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) data from 2014, 2015, and 2016 on people who received Section-8 vouchers found that:

- Asian and Black populations had slightly higher percentages of moving into an apartment using a voucher compared to receiving one and not moving in (6.3% vs. 2.9% and 34.7% vs. 31.1%, respectively).
- People identifying with multiple races had a higher percentage of not moving in/not leasing (9.3% vs. 12.1%).
- People identifying as Hispanic had a higher proportion of not moving in than moving in (12.7% vs. 10.1%).
- Compared to Whites, Blacks were 19% more likely to move in.
- People who identified as Asian were more than two times (OR = 2.28) more likely to move in.
- In this sample of voucher recipients, there was a significant but unanticipated correlation between White racial group and income level and a significant correlation between Black racial group and income. Identifying as White was associated with lower income, while identifying as Black was associated with higher income.
Summary of Preliminary Qualitative Findings

- **Pathways into homelessness** for people of color are often characterized by:
  - Network impoverishment. There is no flexible money anywhere in a respondent’s social network, and as a result, there is less capacity in community-level safety nets. In other words, it is just not that the people we interviewed are experiencing poverty—it is that everyone they know is experiencing poverty, too.
  - Family destabilization. Families faced significant psychosocial stressors associated with poverty, substance use and mental health conditions, child welfare involvement, criminal justice system involvement, and trauma.

- **Barriers to exiting homelessness** for people of color are almost entirely systemic and can be broadly classed as:
  - Economic mobility. Respondents do not have difficulty finding jobs, but cannot secure jobs with adequate wages.
  - Eviction history, felony status, or credit score complications. These barriers were often co-occurring, either within one respondent or within a family, and respondents repeatedly noted that these barriers impeded their efforts to find employment and housing.
  - Issues with housing quality. This was both a barrier to exit and a factor precipitating homelessness; when people could no longer bear their current housing situation, they left, but then they found it impossible to find or be shown a new place that was any better.

Findings from Provider Survey

To support the community’s structural change objectives, we also conducted research on staff. Through an online survey, we collected data on the background of providers working in homelessness response programs and their self-reported desires for professional development. In addition, we sought to understand how people perceive the issue of race in service settings through semi-structured focus groups and interviews. Our analyses of an anonymous online survey of homeless service providers found:

- Of 166 Tacoma providers who completed an online survey, 78.2% identified as White, 9% identified as Black, 9.6% identified as more than one race, 1.9% identified as Asian, and less than one percent identified as Alaska Native, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander. Almost 7% percent identified as Hispanic or Latinx.4
- Of 43 administrators (including executive directors), 38 (88.4%) identified as White. No administrators or executive directors surveyed identified as Black.

The entirety of our provider needs analysis can be found in the Appendix (Tacoma Providers Diversity & Inclusion – Mixed Methods Findings).

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4 Latinx is a gender neutral term used in lieu of Latino or Latina.
Recommendations

Based on these data, preliminary recommendations include:

1. Design an equitable Coordinated Entry system.
2. Incorporate racial equity into funding and contracting.
3. Include racial equity data analysis and benchmarks into strategic planning.
4. Support organizational development.
5. Encourage anti-racist program delivery.
6. Promote ongoing anti-racism training.
7. Collaborate to increase affordable housing availability.
8. Explore innovative upstream interventions.
9. Investigate flexible subsidies.
1. Findings from Pierce County HMIS Data

For the preliminary analysis of Tacoma/Pierce County’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, the SPARC team identified an initial set of research questions:

1. How do the racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness compare to those in poverty and the general population?
2. How do racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to the number of homeless occurrences in the three-year period prior to program entry?
3. How do racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to the number of months an individual has experienced homelessness over the three-year period prior to program entry?
4. How do racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to “prior living situation” at program entry?
5. How do racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to “destination” at program exit?

1.1 Demographics and General Sample Characteristics

The following analyses used HMIS data from the Tacoma/Pierce County, WA Continuum of Care for fiscal year 2011 through 2016. Data from the projects funded by the Project for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) block grant were not included in this sample because PATH grantees transitioned to entering data into the Pierce County local HMIS in late 2016.

There were 23,155 de-duplicated clients in the analyzed dataset. As shown in Table 1.1, the participating clients were identified as nearly 50% female and 50% male, with a mean age at entry of approximately 27 years. The majority of clients were identified as either White (47.2%) or Black (26.3%); smaller proportions were identified as American Indian or Alaska Native (2.9%), Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (4.3%), and Asian (1.6%). Close to 17% (16.6%) of clients identified as more than one race, therefore they were assigned to the multi-racial category. In addition, almost 13% of clients were identified as having Hispanic/Latinx ethnicity.

The majority of the clients were identified as the head of the household (48.5%). A large proportion of clients (27.1%) were identified as a child of the head of household, and 19.3% were identified as an unrelated household member. Within this HMIS sample, 8.4% were veterans. Table 1.1 includes some of the client characteristics relevant to this study.
Table 1.1 Client Characteristics Enrolled in Tacoma/Pierce County, WA Continuum of Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Characteristics (N = 23,153)</th>
<th>Data Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years (mean)</td>
<td>27.18 (SD = 18.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing data</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to the Head of Household</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self (Head of Household)</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse or partner</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated household member</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do the racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness compare to those in poverty and the general population?

Table 1.2 compares, for Pierce County, WA, the racial demographics of the total population, the population at 100% of the poverty level, the population at 50% of the poverty level, and the sample data extracted from HMIS over the past 6 years. Non-White (including multi-racial) racial groups were over represented in the analyzed HMIS sample compared to their proportions in the total population. White was the only racial group experiencing poverty at lower rates when compared to total population (74.8% of general population and 66.4% of those in poverty). While Black folks make up 6.6% of the total population in Pierce County and 9.3% of those in poverty, they make up 26.3% of the population using homeless services (emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing) from 2011 to 2016.
Table 1.2 Race of people experiencing homelessness compared to those in poverty, in the general population, and in HMIS – Pierce County, WA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race (alone)</th>
<th>Percent of Population</th>
<th>Percent of population at 100% poverty level, 2015</th>
<th>Percent of population at 50% poverty level, 2015</th>
<th>Total Duplicated Percent HMIS 2011-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and other</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more/other</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caution is required when comparing the different data sets depicted in Table 1.2. It is difficult to draw conclusions when comparing data regarding homelessness with Census data because the homeless population is often overlooked during Census counts. However, the consistent overrepresentation of Non-White racial groups, especially Black, in HMIS data, when compared to the population estimates, demands that we look closer at the services that seek to address the injustice of homelessness. For example, while the Black population represents 26.3% of this HMIS sample, they are only 9.3% of those in poverty and 6.6% of the general population.

**How do racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to the number of homeless occurrences in the three-year period prior to program entry?**

Table 1.3 shows the frequency of experiencing homelessness by race/ethnicity. Of all clients served by the project, 8,302 (35.9%) had records related to whether they experienced homelessness during the last three years prior to project entry. Of these clients 66.8% experienced one episode of homelessness within the last three years, 17.9% experienced two episodes of homelessness, 6.3% experienced three episodes, and 9% experienced four or more episodes. Black and American Indian or Alaska Native held the lowest percentages of single homeless occurrences (65.1% and 61.2%) and the highest rates of double homeless occurrences (20.0% and 24.1%, respectively). Moreover, American Indian or Alaska Native and White clients shared the highest rates of 4 or more experiences of homelessness in the past three years (10.6% and 9.7%). More analysis is needed to explain the similarities and differences of homeless frequency.
Table 1.3. Number of Times Homeless in the Past Three Years by Race (N = 8,302).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of times homeless in the past 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do the racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to the number of months an individual has experienced homelessness over the three-year period prior to program entry?

Table 1.4 shows the number of months homeless in the past three years for individuals at program entry, grouped in 1-4 months, 5-12 months, and more than 12 months. The majority of the client sample had been homeless 1-4 months (65.0%). Despite being overrepresented in the HMIS client sample, Black/African Americans were underrepresented in the group reporting having been homeless for more than 12 months, at 21.9% compared to 26.3% of the HMIS sample, while Whites were overrepresented at 52.9% compared to 42.2% of the HMIS sample.

Table 1.4 Number of Months Homeless in the Past Three Years (N=4,866)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black/AA</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>NHOP</th>
<th>AI/AN</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4 months</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12 months</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 12 months</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do the racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness relate to “prior living situation” at program entry and “destination” at program exit?

We also sought to understand the locations of clients prior to project entry and at final project exit. For the purposes of this report, “project” is defined by its use in HMIS systems. For this study, “project entry” is defined by the project entry for the de-duplicated client record, which represents the most recent record in the system. “Project exit” is defined by last exit in the sample for each individual where an exit location was identified as of CY 2016.

Table 1.5 shows the proportion of clients with various living situations before entry and after exiting a project. As shown in the table, the majority of clients were in a homeless living situation prior to project entry (60%). Approximately half of clients exited the project into permanent housing, with or without subsidy (13.5% and 35.8%, respectively). However, over a third left projects to a homeless or doubled up living situation (22.4% and 15.3%, respectively).
Table 1.5. Residence Prior to Project Entry and at Exit*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of residence</th>
<th>Prior to Project Entry (N = 20,752)</th>
<th>At Exit (N = 14,731)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless (Shelter + Street)</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Housing with subsidy</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Housing without subsidy</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized Care</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jail, Prison, or Juvenile Detention</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubled Up</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Setting</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Only those who had a record about prior residence were included.

Table 1.6 shows the proportion of clients with various living situations before project entry by racial category. As shown in the table, the majority of clients were in a homeless living situation across all racial categories (57.4% to 64.4%). Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaska Native groups shared the highest proportion entering a project from Homelessness (64%) while multi-racial group held the lowest (57%). Generally, locations where people were living prior to entering a project are roughly the same across racial demographics in this sample.

Table 1.6 Residence Prior to Project Entry by Race (N = 20,502)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Permanent Housing/ Renting with subsidy</th>
<th>Permanent Housing/ Renting without subsidy</th>
<th>Institutional care</th>
<th>Correctional facility</th>
<th>Doubled Up</th>
<th>Transitional setting</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.7 shows the proportion of clients exiting to various living situations at project exit by racial category. Comparably, there is much more variability in terms of exit locations by race than entry locations by race, particularly with regards to homeless and permanent housing exits. Exiting to a permanent housing situation is more common than exiting to a homeless situation across the board.
However, many more people exit to homelessness or to a doubled-up situation than to a permanent housing with a subsidy across all racial categories.

White and American Indian or Alaska Native racial groups shared the highest percentages exiting into homelessness (24.5% and 25.7% respectively), while Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander held the lowest rate (10.7%).

### 1.2 Predictors for Exit Destination

#### Predictors for Exiting into Homelessness

To examine the effect of race, ethnicity, and other factors on exiting into homelessness, multivariate logistic regression was conducted. As shown in Table 1.8, using White as a reference group, some race categories were found to have a statistically significant association with the outcome of exiting into homelessness. American Indian/Alaskan Native individuals were 22% more likely to exit into homelessness, and individuals identifying as Two or More Races were 20% more likely to exit into homelessness than were Whites. Age was statistically significant in the model such that for every year older there was a 1% increased likelihood of exiting into homelessness; a minimal effect size. Using female as a reference group, males were almost four times more likely (OR = 3.84, p<.01) to exit into homelessness. Presence of a disabling condition was also associated with exiting into homelessness: Clients with a disabling condition were 64% less likely to become homeless after exiting the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald χ²(1)</th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>2.447</td>
<td>.92 (0.83-1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>4.644**</td>
<td>1.22 (1.02-1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.138</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>0.92 (0.70-1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHOPI</td>
<td>-.227</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>3.741</td>
<td>.80 (0.63-1.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multivariate logistic regression was also run to examine the effect of race, ethnicity, and other factors on exiting into permanent housing with a subsidy. Compared to Whites, African Americans and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders were statistically significantly more likely to exit into permanent housing with a subsidy at rates of 19% and 28%, respectively. Age was not significant in the model. Compared to females, males were 39% less likely to exit into permanent housing with a subsidy. Having a disabling condition was not significant in the model. Veteran status was a predictor of exiting into housing with a subsidy, where veterans were almost 3 times (OR = 2.93, \(p<.01\)) to exit with a subsidy than were non-veterans (Table 1.9).

Table 1.9. Predictors of Exiting into Permanent Housing With A Subsidy Among Clients in HMIS System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>(\chi^2(1))</th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>7.743*</td>
<td>1.19 (1.05-1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>1.02 (0.82-1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-.213</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>1.608</td>
<td>.81 (.58-1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHOPI</td>
<td>.245</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>5.143**</td>
<td>1.28 (1.03-1.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>1.04 (0.87-1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.00 (0.85-1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.471</td>
<td>1.00 (0.99-1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.320</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>31.603*</td>
<td>0.72 (0.65-0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabling Condition</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>1.04 (0.91-1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Status</td>
<td>1.075</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>148.649*</td>
<td>2.93 (2.47-3.48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. OR = Odds Ratio. CI = Confidence Interval. 
*\(p<.01\). **\(p<.05\)

Predictors for Exiting into Permanent Housing/ Renting without Subsidy

Multivariate logistic regression was also run to examine the effect of race, ethnicity, and other factors on exiting into permanent housing without a subsidy. As Table 1.10 shows, compared to
Whites, African Americans and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders were more likely to exit into permanent housing without a subsidy, at rates of 18% and 21%, respectively, whereas individuals identifying as Two or More Races were 33% less likely to exit into permanent housing without a subsidy. Age was significant in the model such that for every year older, there was a 1% decreased likelihood of exiting into permanent housing without a subsidy; a minimal effect size. Compared to females, males were 38% less likely to exit into permanent housing without a subsidy. Having a disabling condition was not significant in the model. Veteran status was a predictor of exiting into housing without a subsidy, where veterans were almost more than 2 times (OR = 2.40, \( p < .01 \)) to exit without a subsidy than were non-veterans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald ( \chi^2 ) (1)</th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>17.250*</td>
<td>1.18 (1.09-1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>-.136</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>3.238</td>
<td>0.87 (0.75-1.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-.062</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.361</td>
<td>0.94 (0.77-1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHOPI</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>7.365**</td>
<td>1.21 (1.06-1.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>-.282</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>23.298*</td>
<td>0.75 (0.67-0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>48.459*</td>
<td>0.99 (0.99-0.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-.318</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>77.408*</td>
<td>0.73 (0.68-0.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabling Condition</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>1.598</td>
<td>0.95 (0.87-1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>193.873*</td>
<td>2.40 (2.12-2.71)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. OR = Odds Ratio. CI = Confidence Interval.

\*\( p < .01 \). \**\( p < .05 \)

1.3 Recommendations for Further Analysis

There are several additional explorations we suggest, both immediately and over time:

1) Further investigate trends in the pathways (entry and exit) for Black clients, looking at variations within the group identifying as Black.

2) Further investigate the experience of American Indian or Alaska Native populations, as they seem to consistently hold lower odds of exiting to permanent housing and the highest chances for exiting to homelessness.

3) Further explore possible disparities within the 16.37% of the population that identified with multiple races. It may be important to look at the differences within that group (e.g., do the experience of those that identify as Black and another race appear different than non-Black?)
2. Findings from Tacoma Housing Authority Data

In addition to HMIS 2011-2016 data for Pierce County, SPARC received and analyzed administrative data from the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) in order to add to our understanding of race, ethnicity, and housing. This data included demographic information on applicants that received a Section-8 voucher in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Within the sample were two subsamples (referred to throughout as “Move-In Status:"
- “Moved-In”: Applicants who moved into an apartment that accepted their voucher during those three years; and,
- “Not Moved-In”: Applicants who received a Section-8 voucher and had not moved in within 120 days (Rental Assistance side) and applicants who had met with staff in initial shopping but declined to move in on the Public Housing side.

The SPARC Tacoma/Pierce County team was especially interested in the racial demographics of 1) the population issued vouchers, 2) the population issued vouchers who then “Moved-In” or “leased up” using the voucher, and 3) the population issued vouchers but “Not Moved-In” or “leased up.” The analyses below begin to explore those questions. In addition to race, we investigated associations between move-in status and age, family composition, and income. Though it would have been valuable to include, THA does not collect information on race or ethnicity for applicants who are denied a voucher. In addition, data collection regarding reason for leaving an apartment is not consistent and thus was not included in the shared dataset.

2.1 Demographics and General Sample Characteristics

People who were issued vouchers and either moved in or not (Merged Group):

There were 9,501 participants in the combined sample (i.e., all people who were issued vouchers and moved in combined with those who were issued vouchers but did not move in). Nearly half of participants identified as White (47.7%). The rest of the sample was 34.2% Black, 5.8% Asian, 1.5% American Indian/Alaska Native, 8% Multi-Racial, and less than 1% Native Hawaiian. In addition, 11.4% of participants identified as Hispanic. The average age of the participants on the 1st of January 2016 was 28 years (M = 28.06, SD = 21.22). The sample was 60% female and 40% male. For comparison, Table 2.1 also includes the demographics of the 2011-2016 HMIS sample (an iterative brief should include only 2014, 2015, and 2016 clients for more accurate comparison).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 Comparison of Demographics, HMIS and THA Voucher Recipients
People who were issued vouchers but Not Moved-In

The racial demographics of those who were issued vouchers but did not move in was similar to the merged group described above. Race/ethnicity of this subsample was 46.8% White, 31.1% Black, 2.9% Asian, 2.1% American Indian/Alaskan, 5% Native Hawaiian, and 12.1% were multi-racial; 17.7% identified as Hispanic. The average age of these participants on the 1st of January 2016 was almost 27 years ($M = 26.73$, $SD = 26.73$). The sample consisted of 59.4% females.

Family Composition of those who were issued vouchers but Not Moved-In

Of those who were issued vouchers but did not move in, family composition data was available for 44.3% of participants. Single mothers and single adults with no children make up the majority of participants with available data. A large percentage of the data for families is missing (55.7%). This reality complicates further analysis of family composition and Section-8 voucher usage.

Table 2.2. Family Composition – Issued Voucher Not Moved-In

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Mother</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Father</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult partners with kid(s)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1635</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Composition by Move-In Status

All participants (i.e., all people who were issued vouchers and moved in combined with those who were issued vouchers but did not move in) were included in an analysis to compare family composition between the two different outcomes ($N = 4,167$). There were 5,334 cases with missing information on this variable. Within each family type, percentages of those moved in appear similar to those not moved in. The results of a chi-square analysis indicated that there were no significant differences between proportions of clients with different types of family structure, $\chi^2 (3, N = 4,167) = 3.24$, $p = .36$. 
### Table 2.3. Family Type by Moving In Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Type</th>
<th>Moving in status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moved-In</td>
<td>Issued Voucher but NOT Moved-In</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>2083</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of No Children</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Mother</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>1638</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Single Mothers</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Father</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Single Fathers</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult partners</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with kid(s)</td>
<td>% of Adult Partners with kid(s)</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total Count</td>
<td>3442</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>4167</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.2 Race and Ethnicity Distribution by Moving In Status

All participants (i.e., all people who were issued vouchers and moved combined with those who were issued vouchers but did not move in) were included in an analysis to compare the racial demographics of those who moved into an apartment and those who did not move in (N = 7,851). There were 1,650 cases with missing information on race. Ethnicity (Hispanic vs. Non-Hispanic) is also described, for which there was nearly complete data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant race</th>
<th>Moving in status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moved In</td>
<td>Issued Voucher but NOT Moved In</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>3186</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>3745</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of White</td>
<td>85.07%</td>
<td>14.93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>2310</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>2682</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Black</td>
<td>86.13%</td>
<td>13.87%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>457</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Asian</td>
<td>92.34%</td>
<td>7.66%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of American Indian/Alaskan</td>
<td>82.88%</td>
<td>17.12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>761</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Multi-Racial</td>
<td>81.08%</td>
<td>18.92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total Count</td>
<td>6656</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>7851</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>84.78%</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among all racial groups, Asian and Black populations had slightly higher percentages of moving in (92.3% and 86.1%, respectively), while those identifying as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander had the highest percentage of not moving in (100%). With regards to ethnicity, people identifying as Non-Hispanic had a higher proportion of not moving in (84.1%).

### 2.3 Predictors of “not moving in” after receiving a voucher

Further analysis was conducted to examine the variables associated with not moving into housing within 120 days after having received a voucher. In addition to race, we examined the effect of other demographics including gender and age, income, presence of disability, and family structure on the probability of experiencing that outcome. Results of multivariate logistic regression are presented in Table 2.5 below and indicated that some demographic characteristics and income level are significantly associated with not moving in.

Age was associated with not moving in. Age corresponds to the likelihood of experiencing this outcome in such a way that being 1 year younger increases the odds of not moving in by 1%. (It is interesting to note this while also noting the findings from the HMIS analysis that being one year older corresponded to a 1% increased likelihood of becoming homeless after exiting the project).

Compared to the participants who were Native Hawaiian and White (Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander individuals were also included in the reference group due to small sample size), Asians were two times less likely to not move in after receiving a voucher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald χ²(1)</th>
<th>OR (95% CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>-.195</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>3.274</td>
<td>0.82 (0.67-1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>1.23 (0.66-2.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-.807</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>7.940*</td>
<td>0.45 (0.26-.078)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>-.237</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>1.136</td>
<td>0.79 (0.51-1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>1.09 (0.79-1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>15.991*</td>
<td>0.98 (0.98-0.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Income Level

In order to explore the role of income, a nonparametric correlation analysis using Spearman’s correlation coefficient for nonparametric data\(^5\) was performed between the different racial/ethnic groups and income level. Both subsamples were included.

There was a significant correlation between White racial group and income level \((r_s = 0.073, p < .05)\) and a significant correlation between Black racial group and income \((r_s = 0.042, p < .05)\). However, the direction of the association was different. While identifying as White was associated with lower income, identifying as Black was associated with higher income. Other racial/ethnic categories were not associated with income level.

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3. Findings from Qualitative Data Analysis

The National Picture

As of December 2017, the SPARC team has launched research in five communities in addition to Tacoma/Pierce County: San Francisco, CA; Dallas, TX; Atlanta, GA; Columbus, OH; and Syracuse, NY. Across the country, the team has collected 148 oral histories and conducted 18 focus groups. While qualitative data are still being analyzed, the most prominent preliminary finding thus far is the widespread impoverishment among people of color. What we have noticed in every city is that people of color have few resources in their networks to draw on should something go wrong. We have begun to refer to this phenomenon as “network impoverishment.” Qualitative data from Tacoma/Pierce County evidenced this finding in similar ways.

The Tacoma/Pierce County Picture

The SPARC team collected 24 oral histories during one week in Tacoma/Pierce County in December of 2016. These histories were collected entirely from people of color who were currently experiencing homelessness. All respondents were recruited at sites of service delivery in Tacoma, although several respondents were unsheltered at the time of their interview. During the same week, the SPARC team also facilitated three focus groups—one for people of color experiencing homelessness, one for direct service providers of color, and one for community leaders in the housing and homeless services systems as well as adjacent systems.

In reviewing the oral history interview data, our approach was to allow themes and concepts to emerge organically from the transcripts rather than approach the data with any set hypothesis. This method is referred to as a Grounded Theory approach. A team of four reviewers went through each oral history transcript and developed thematic codes. The team used the NVivo software to code the transcripts and run analyses.

This initial report focuses on the findings related to pathways into homelessness and barriers to exiting homelessness. We have focused on these areas in order to identify potential intervention sites. Preliminary findings from these areas of analysis are:

Preliminary results indicate two main findings:

1. Pathways into homelessness are often characterized relationally—that is to say that featuring prominently inside almost every pathway into homelessness was a significant social dimension and recognition of depleted supports; and

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2. Barriers to exiting homelessness are almost entirely systemic and can be broadly classed as:
   a. Difficulty in finding employment that pays a livable wage,
   b. Eviction history or felony status limiting housing options, and;
   c. Lack of quality affordable housing to which people want to move.

For the purposes of this report, we drew on the three focus groups to add additional depth to the main findings from analysis of life history interviews. The focus groups allowed us a different format to hear from providers, community stakeholders, and families of color about pathways into homelessness and barriers to exit for people of color in Tacoma/Pierce County.

3.1 Pathways into Homelessness

The most significant feature of respondents' discussions of their pathways into homelessness is that their narratives demonstrated a striking social dimension. People did not come to experience homelessness solely through a lack of capital—they came to experience homelessness through fragile social networks. The fragility of these networks is marked by two main interacting, weak points: lack of capital and lack of emotional support. The following quote from an interview respondent typifies how lack of capital can strain social support:

**Interviewer:** You were experiencing housing and stability, and then you moved out on your own about four years ago?

**Respondent:** So what happen was like my mom -- like we stayed on the Hilltop and our house like burnt down. Really it got burned down. We don’t know how. But besides that, it really just got to a point where it was like, we stayed at my grandma’s house and it was like nine people in a two bedroom. So we did that for a few years, and then just now it got to a point where like I guess I had to sell drugs or whatever to get money so that’s what I did. Long story short I just felt like I just didn’t want to just live off my family knowing they don’t have nothing and try to work. I had a car broke down two months so kind of really just -- really didn’t help.

The important thing to note about this quote is that it demonstrates a key function of the fragility of the networks in the communities that are being impacted. The respondent is clear that they have been able to stay with people before—provided that they were able to support some of the (increased) costs of the household. This is a pattern that appears over and over again in the data. People are not unwilling to double up, to take people in and/or to live in another person’s home—but they do not have the resources to accommodate the additional consumption of food and household goods. Our team has begun to refer to this as network impoverishment. There is no extra money anywhere in the network so, as a result, there is no flexibility in community-level safety nets. In other words: it is just not that our respondents are experiencing poverty—it is that everyone they know is experiencing poverty too. For example, one respondent had this to say:

Like a lot of it, it’s really a support system. If you don’t have that like support system, like I talked to a classmate, she’s from Senegal, and she told me in her country, homeless people is rare to find out there because they believe that no matter what the person has done they don’t believe in putting them on the streets. Unless it’s like harmful, you know. Unless the person is just too mentally out of it, to a point where the family knows he could end up snapping and hurting them. But if it’s just failure, or whatever the case may be, they don’t believe in putting them out on the streets. And they will go through the whole
family tree that’s around until, you know. So, I just notice like my support system within my family was not as tight and that played a big role, you know. The family that don’t reach out and stuff because they’re dealing with the way the system has affected them long-term. And, you know, it’s not—I know it’s not their fault.

Again, we see that family is there but seen as an unreliable support because members are dealing with their own instability. This respondent reveals that they do not blame their family for this lack of capacity to help (“I know it’s not their fault”), but sees the barriers that everyone, in their own way, are up against.

One provider shared with us in a focus group that they were seeing members of families/social networks experiencing concurrent episodes of homelessness:

Generational poverty. I’m seeing a lot more families coming into this shelter. Meaning first the cousin comes in, then the cousin comes in and sees if there is an empty room open, so she calls her sister. And then her sister comes in, and then we have the mom calling. And the only reason we know this is because of caller ID. So, we know oh, the mom is calling and we’re like, you know, so we’re seeing a lot of that.

These preliminary findings suggest upstream intervention sites that are community based and about stabilizing these fragile networks through necessary infusions of capital—either through targeted subsidies, flexible emergency funding, or policies that better facilitate pooling of income. However, this doesn’t address the long-term needs of the community regarding livable wages and sustainable avenues of income—which are addressed in a subsequent section of this report.

It is important to note that strains on social support are often deep and damaging. Family disintegration played a prominent role in a significant number of respondent histories. These narratives were commonly organized around systems involvement, with child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice featured prominently. Another core competence that often triggered or complicated system involvement was the presence of mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders. These four brief quotes from different respondents highlight this trend:

**Respondent 1:** No I didn’t want to be there [home]. It was a bad, bad place for me. And then I joined the gang and ended up addicted to drugs. I got shot six times and the doctor put me on pain pills and then my life started spiraling out of control even more.

**Respondent 2:** Well you know, growing up being Native American, the fact is you got a very large tribe. You’re really never in a house that isn’t packed. There’s ten of you in a three bedroom, that’s just the way we grow up. We just take care of our family. There’s a lot of alcoholism, drug use, all that stuff that comes involved in that, because when you’re depending on a bunch of people like that, a family in a house, somewhere along the way a couple of them fall off the wagon.

**Respondent 3:** My first son, I have six kids...going on six kids. But my first son - his parents. But they were alcoholic potheads, so, the whole house was always covered, like the walls were so covered in smoke. They were yellow, like you can just wipe the (inaudible) off the walls. So, we really never stayed inside, we were always outside. We only slept in our room when it was time to go to bed.

**Respondent 4:** I grew up with my parents being addicted to drugs so that essentially was a big reason why I was homeless as a child as well, and they weren’t really around. It was more just me. Like, it was pretty bad.
As the team continues to analyze the data, questions include what capacity, if any, do individuals in them have to respond to the levels of stress they are being exposed to. Due to multigenerational trauma and poverty, respondents and their families may have limited access to resources or emotional capacity to respond to highly stressful situations without engaging in suboptimal coping strategies. When considering how to engage in family stabilization, it is important to think about how to engage people in systems of support that do not create further structural barriers or difficulty, such as an open case with child protective services or encouraging doubling up with connections whose substance use may create an unhealthy and unsustainable living situation.

3.2 Barriers to Exiting Homelessness

In some ways, analysis of the barriers to exiting homelessness offers little surprising information. However, it does confirm what has long been suspected. Disproportionate burden of felony status, credit score complications, and eviction history appear to be the most significant hurdles for people of color who have experienced homelessness in Tacoma. An additional hurdle appears to be underemployment, employment discrimination, and issues with housing quality.

The following quote from the client focus group highlights the issue of eviction history:

I’ll be 57 next month and from my early 20s until, I don’t know, anyway I was a corporate travel agent, okay? I did corporate travel for, I worked for American Express, I worked for Delco travel, but I did that for 18 years. And now I look at myself and I’m homeless. I’ve had surgery, I’ve had part of my left lung removed at the back. And now I look at myself and it makes me angry because now it’s hard for me to get an apartment. I just received Section 8 and I’m still having a hard time getting an apartment because some dive of a landlord, you know slumlord, gave my brother an eviction notice which he never received. So we’re going to get this apartment and boom, it pops up. So now instead of an apartment, we were waiting for 4 months because it was being built, so now it’s finished and we find out that there’s an eviction on my brother’s record.

Another respondent’s comment highlights the intersection of the burden of both an eviction and a criminal record:

Respondent: And he told us in, like, January that he didn’t want to renew the lease. He just wanted us to move out because he had already lowered the rent by, like, $200 and he just didn’t want to do it anymore. And so he actually sold the house after we moved out. Um, but that’s how that happened because prior to that I had, we had, evictions and then he, my husband, has a criminal background, so, um, it’s hard for us to find people to work with us and stuff like that. So when I got my taxes this year, I paid off my eviction so I could try to move but that didn’t help. It didn’t help at all. I paid it off, and still nobody cares.

Interviewer: Hmm. Because -- so even though you don’t owe, you still have it on your record?

Respondent: Yeah, but then it’s like, well, if -- you’re damned if you and you’re damned if you don’t. Or you’re stuck in between a rock and a hard place, because -- um, I paid off the eviction, but now I don’t make enough money, or my income is not adequate enough for the criteria for the rent, you know?

Respondents are aware of the way their eviction or criminal records get in the way of their housing and employment goals, and for some this felt self-defeating. This quote reflects how these barriers wear on people’s internal motivation and willingness to try:
Like because I have a felony on my record and like apartments too, you know. Like sometimes I feel like, “Dang” because my felony’s going to come up, this is not going to work. They’re going to—I’m background check’s going to come up. This won’t work, you know. And I try to avoid stuff like that. Like my biggest thing is rejection. I hate to be told no. You know what I’m saying? And just when I get told no my feelings get hurt, you know. They get crushed like I been stepped on and I don’t like that. You know what I’m saying? So, that’s the only thing is when my barriers—my barriers come, I, you know. This felony, or court stuff, or stuff I’ve got to do with the legal system and then I’ve got to go and try to like go to a professional person for help. And they tell me, “Well, this is not going to work because your background check came up and it”—“I’m like, “Dang”, you know. So I try to avoid working, but I can’t avoid working. I need a job. You know what I’m saying?

The respondent’s experience is typical of many of our Tacoma/Pierce County interviewees. Most people reported some system involvement that complicated access to housing, and discouragement that despite their efforts, there were things they could not fix. However, what is important to note about this respondent’s narrative is it highlights the dual difficulty people experiencing homelessness have in accessing both housing and employment due to systemic barriers. This narrative was common.

Additionally, there were many histories of chronic underemployment—that is people who had long job histories but none of them paid adequately or provided full time hours. Common routes of employment were warehouse workers, sanitation/maintenance, and food service. The following respondent’s work history typifies this chronic underemployment:

Well, um, it was, like, I been homeless since June 3rd, and then, um, how I got homeless is everything was going fine. I was working at Wal-Mart, like, it fit the perfect -- all the good hours and everything. I was Associate for the fitting room, and then they started hiring, like, a whole bunch of people for the holiday. So they, um, in the fitting rooms, they probably make -- you’re only supposed to have, like, at least 5 to 10 people. They had, like, 25. So that in order to give everybody hours, they took, like, my hours. I had 40 hours a week to two days and I have to pay bills and everything, you know? So after it kept getting worse and worse, I just stopped working and was on call. So then I went on TANF. So when I got on TANF, you can’t work and be on TANF. So it was, like, the TANF was way more than, you know, me working.

The above respondent made the decision to stop working and go on TANF because her income would be greater. A number of respondents were on supplemental income of some kind, and depended on those sources while expressing a desire and preference to work. The above respondent continued:

And, like, I’m willing to do everything. Like, and you can find jobs. Like, I filled out multiple applications. Like, but at the time, it’s, like, if you’re the TANF is helping. Like, this income -- this is a guaranteed income, you know, and if I’m going to get a part-time job that’s only going to give me a certain amount of hours, I’m going to stick with it, you know, the TANF. But as soon as you get any type of job, like, UPS. I never worked for UPS at all. They just -- I went through [REDACTED] and then signed the application, and they supposedly hired me. And then they filled out a sanction because I was working. I was, like, I’ve never went there not one time; not one time. So then they had to go through all the extra stuff, call them, they never answer their phone. But then they, in my favor, just cut it off and now I’m back on there. But I’m really trying to get a job. I’d rather work then to just go through what I’m going through at DSHS.
Respondents discussed the extent to which services helped them secure employment that paid a wage they felt they could live off of. People noted a lack of diverse options and lack of follow-through from internal staff and external resources. The below quote highlights one person’s frustration:

**Respondent:** And it’s just like, that makes no sense. So, it’s just ridiculous. People have to live. And then another thing that drives me insane, like, when I hear, like, people say, “oh we’re trying to help people get jobs and we’re coming in, like, with resources to get jobs and stuff like that,” -- oh. “The kind of jobs that we’re offering to help people get are this and this, and this, maybe.” You know, but who -- not everybody wants to go into that field, so --

**Interviewer:** So they’re really narrow options?

**Respondent:** Very narrow. And it’s like, okay, so if I can’t or don’t want to go into that field then what am I supposed to do? Where do I get help from? You know what I mean? So, it’s just like --

**Interviewer:** What’s the job you have now?

**Respondent:** Um, right now -- well, I was working at AMPM before my husband got sick, but I took a leave of absence. Um, and I was thinking about going back, but I have a job interview with Macy’s on Friday. But I really wanna open my own business. So that’s kinda where we’re at, in between there somewhere.

**Interviewer:** What are the options that people usually have?

**Respondent:** Nursing, and then, like, contract work like, um, construction. Um, I feel like there’s a third one, but I can’t think of what it is. Security or something like that.

Finally, one respondent who made good income and had few barriers (no criminal record or eviction) expressed frustration with the way program policies forced him to toe a thin line that got in the way of program success:

**Interviewer:** That’s cool. Is there anything else that you would like to see in terms of changes around programs or services that help folks?

**Respondent:** Well I think in general, for all homeless people, they should take a look at some of their programs and re-write the things that you need to qualify, such as the amount of income you make or the current situation you’re in. Seems to me that help is more aimed toward people who have plenty of barriers and 20 walls to jump and climb, when it makes no sense to me that you would do that. If you want to help with homelessness I would start with people who are helping themselves already. The less barriers you have, the better.

While this person’s response lacks a perspective on the experience of those with multiple barriers, his frustration comes from the fact that despite having a job, he still cannot afford a quality apartment for his family or make enough to get out of homelessness.

Many respondents were currently employed while making use of homelessness response services and either currently in shelter or living on the land. This has program implications about the use of funds for ‘job readiness’ programs. Most respondents had significant work history and did not seem to have difficulty securing employment—they had difficulty securing employment with a living wage. This suggests revisiting two core components of job readiness:

1. If the issue is not employment but employment with an adequate wage then perhaps the curricula need to be targeted towards enhancing people’s skills re: industries that are in demand (a code academy for example).
2. With regard to job readiness in general, whether or not those program dollars could be better spent merely supplementing the wages of underemployed people experiencing homelessness. This would require much finer program analysis.

It is worth noting that a few respondents cited that where they feel they face racial discrimination the most is in obtaining employment and housing. Respondents repeatedly made it clear that while sometimes in the world of service provision racialized bias seemed nuanced or difficult to track, it was more apparent in housing and employment. The quotes below are exemplary of this experience:

**Interviewer:** Okay. Do you think racism or discrimination has affected your experience being homeless?

**Respondent:** I know what to expect now. You know, I know what to expect. I know that I am probably going to get discriminated against so I have to adapt, so like I have to put my stuff in a locker and then go for an interview for a job somewhere which I know I am probably going to get discriminated against, I am not even hired anyway. I have to do all these things because I can't go with all my stuff there. I can't go with my shabby clothes because I know dark-skinned brother in a homeless look is very frowned upon.

**Interviewer:** Do you want to give me some examples [of racism]?

**Respondent:** Um, some of my examples are, um - um, working - working - working around - um, how can I say it? Um - outside of my African American self, working around others was difficult. A lot of racism there. A lot…. It was - it was - It was hard, um, working, um, as a African American. It was really difficult for me. But I hung in there.

Another thread that arose in several respondent narratives was that folks felt hard pressed to find **quality affordable housing.** This was both a barrier to exit and a factor precipitating homelessness; when people could no longer bear their current housing situation, they left, but then they found it impossible to find a new place any better. The following quotes from one respondent, a father staying in a family shelter with his wife and two kids, exemplify this trend:

**Respondent:** It just seems like a struggle that you just get sucked into, and it really, really sucks. I kind of put my family in this situation. We actually have a Section-8 voucher. I was self-employed before. I was running my own landscape company, and I was in King County, in Covington. But we had what we referred to as a slum lord, and I just refused to continue my lease with her. After paying as much as I could out of pocket for hotels, this is where we ended up. And like I said it just sucks, really really bad, and we're finding it harder and harder to find a place. The last people we talked to, they were like, "Oh you guys are staying at the [REDACTED]? I'm sorry you probably don't qualify." But it's like they know nothing about us. I got a van that I pay $80 a month on, my rent before we were here was $1594 a month, I was running my own business, and I don't make pennies, I make good money. So it's like the second we landed in there, people come off and change their minds, and like I said they have no idea. They don't know who I am. They don't know what I do. They don't even know how we ended up here. It's like we ended up here to, I thought, to better my family's situation. This is a stepping stone to find a place, being that we had the Section 8 voucher and all that, but it's been like a shot in the foot...

**Interviewer:** Is this the first time that you've been homeless?

**Respondent:** It's not. It's not. I mean it's the first time that I put myself in this situation, but she was born in a homeless shelter. That's why I said it took a lot to get what we had, to straighten my life up and realize what I needed to do. And honestly the first time it was my fault too because I wasn't doing nothing. I was one of those people that wanted to take from the empty pot. I was clawing for nothing until she was born, he was really little and she was born and I was like, "I can't do this anymore," and I realized that. I wasn't drinking no more, I stopped putting myself first and putting my kids first, and that's what
makes it so hard being here now because by choice we’re here. And now I think I made the wrong choice. I think we should’ve just lived in a crappy house with a landlord who wasn’t doing nothing, cost myself money, wouldn’t take money off the rent when I fixed things, had to constantly go get mold paint to take the mold down. Maybe my kids are better off like that than they are now. It is what it is now.

These questions of employment access and housing stock are intimately tied to larger questions regarding gentrification and access to desirable neighborhoods. These issues are especially important in the case of people with prior criminal justice system involvement, living with substance use disorders, or families with children. The ability to live in desirable neighborhoods related to the ability to avoid violence, exposure to drugs, and quality educational opportunities. As we look to create opportunities for folks to exit homelessness it will be critical to continue to link these strategies with larger efforts to break cycles of intergenerational poverty and create and/or maintain mixed-income neighborhoods with quality housing stock.
4. Discussion: Promising Directions

The sections above report SPARC’s initial quantitative and qualitative findings on the experiences of homelessness of people of color in Tacoma/Pierce County. The qualitative themes emerged from the data independent of the Structural Change Objectives selected by the community’s SPARC working group. As mentioned in the Executive Summary, Tacoma/Pierce County community leaders chose to focus on three areas of structural change:

1. **Staff diversity and inclusion**, with careful attention to increasing the number of senior managers of color.
2. **Economic mobility for people of color** so that people have opportunities to earn a living wage.
3. **Promoting fair housing** through, for example, policies that increase housing quality, ensure equitable access to housing for people with felony convictions, and consider the role of racial equity in coordinated entry.

The research summarized in this report helps guide this work and suggests additional areas for short- and long-term action. For example, respondents discussed different levels of satisfaction and comfort receiving services at existing programs. Rather than working on equalizing access to well-resourced programs, our data support the importance of increasing resources and capacity in programs that already serve majority people of color (and are often the service settings where respondents felt most comfortable). Additionally, while the initial HMIS analyses showed a similar rate of people of color entering housing with subsidy as were experiencing homelessness, the limitations of the data set (e.g., high rate of missing data and inconsistency in data collection across programs) are enough that the county should continue advancing efforts to track housing outcomes by race at the program, city, and county level. The stories we heard repeatedly demonstrated that the network impoverishment of communities make homelessness seem inevitable. In this context, how best does the community strengthen these networks? What are the necessary investments to build assets in communities of color? How do the city and county return economic mobility to some of its most disenfranchised citizens? How does that work flow through an anti-racist lens so that it is strengths-focused and empowerment-based rather than paternalistic? How do systems interact to effectively serve people with medical and mental illness?

As the community begins to discuss how best to respond to the tasks related to furthering the work of an interagency equity plan and affirmatively furthering fair housing, it will be important to consider the ways in which the larger community (and perhaps stakeholders that have not been previously engaged) might be brought to the table.

A key question becomes how to mobilize the community—what will get them to say, ‘no more’? As we begin to mobilize community partnerships, and perhaps form new ones, it might also be important to revisit some of our core concepts with regard to homelessness. The SPARC team has begun to think about the possibilities with regard to how flexible subsidies could be used in combination with services to stabilize people in community rather than having them fall into the shelter population. In order to do this, we would need to, in some ways, have a much more nuanced understanding of what vulnerability looks like and what the appropriate response would be. Populations at risk might be identified through strong collaboration with other systems, including child welfare, education, healthcare, and criminal justice.
As the work moves forward it may be essential to create more accurate understandings of how people come to experience homelessness and use that understanding to delineate greater levels of nuance. For example, it may matter whether someone’s mental health concerns were the cause of homelessness or if they have been exacerbated or brought on by the experience of homelessness—not simply to further impress on people the importance of housing first models but rather because there may be a substantive difference in the service needs of populations’ different inflow patterns.

This work creates exciting new pathways for research and potential intervention. It is our hope that we can continue to support these efforts along with our community partners, including Tacoma/Pierce County.

As we continue to explore the data from this initiative, we are aware that a number of research questions deserve increased attention. In the next section, we discuss the implications of our findings and highlight potential areas of future research on race and homelessness. In the final section, we pull out a concrete list of recommendations.

4.1 Economic Mobility for Communities of Color

Economic mobility is clearly a pillar of ending homelessness, but remains elusive in many communities. As was detailed in the qualitative section of this report, respondents often had a rich job history, but had a great deal of difficulty securing employment that would pay a living or housing wage. Barring a significant shift in federal or state policies regarding minimum wage, it is unlikely that our current workforce development approach will be sufficient to end homelessness. Simply put, if someone comes to experience homelessness while working for minimum wage, transitioning to a different minimum wage job will not make a substantial difference in their life.

The SPARC team has begun to examine in greater detail what respondents had to say about their employment history and employment search. One area requiring more in depth analysis is employment discrimination. Unsurprisingly, respondents have repeatedly reported experiencing interpersonal racism over the course of their job searches. They have also discussed the role of systemic racism in preventing them from attaining career-track jobs, reporting, for example, inequitable access to education or skill development (including vocational training).

As we continue to investigate concrete and immediate steps that we could take in order to drive change in our communities, the SPARC team has begun to look more closely at the way communities spend workforce development dollars. A potential direction to take workforce development would be to reduce the size of cohorts moving through programs and intensify the skills being acquired. For example, rather than moving 150 people through a soft skills development program it might be more beneficial to move 20 people through a UX design code academy that is connected to a job placement possibility at several design or technology firms.

Additionally, as mentioned above, it will be important to think about what economic stabilization looks like. Our findings point to upstream intervention sites that are community-based and focused on stabilizing fragile networks through necessary infusions of capital—either through targeted subsidies, flexible emergency funding, or policies that better facilitate pooling income.
Finally, we should consider how soft skill development programs are frequently constructed around behavioral norms for professional conduct that have been established and advanced by White people. What does it mean to engage a 17-year-old Black person in a program that essentially tells them that their way of interacting the world is the wrong way?

These kinds of questions are important to consider in the construction of workforce development programs but also with regard to the ways in which we consider advancing staff of color on our teams. As we examine why certain staff members do or do not advance an important consideration must be whether or not they are being passed over because they are not cultural matches with senior leadership. As one respondent stated, "Senior managers want to know that the people around them will think like them and respond to situations the same way that they would. Sometimes it seems like they don't choose Black staff or staff of color to advance because they don't think we're enough like them culturally."

As we continue to break down the ways in which interpersonal and structural racism exacerbate each other, it could be helpful for programs to engage in honest dialogue about how personal bias might be enabled by structural factors. In the case of supporting people of color in their job search, it might be understanding a person’s context and giving second chances, rather than saying, “They’ve had three weeks to get an interview and they still haven’t.” In regards to staff of color, it might mean re-working job descriptions rather than saying, “I'm not promoting them because they don't have a B.A.—not because they’re Black.”

4.2 Upstream and Downstream Stabilization

Our qualitative data suggest that destabilizing factors often occur well before people come to experience homelessness. Upstream stabilization may be best achieved through the development of short-term flexible subsidies. People do not always need large amounts of money, or even money that is dedicated specifically towards housing or utilities. Many respondents expressed having initial difficulty with a non-rent related financial burden. Common examples have been car repairs or food. However, without the money to pay for these non-housing areas, a crisis can rapidly develop. Respondents who cannot pay for their car repairs may be unable to get to work and subsequently lose their jobs, or those who cannot afford food for the whole household may kick adolescents or emerging adults out of the house in order to free up resources for the very young or very old.

Stabilizing these households who are on the precipice requires immediate infusions of capital. However, these subsidies have to be uniquely flexible to cover a wide range of one-time needs. This might represent expanding discretionary spending so that community members at risk of becoming homeless have access to it. Moreover, prevention approaches need to be shared among all sectors working with low income folk, so that everyone is preventing crises that lead to housing loss.

Spending models of this kind have existed for many years in the faith community. It is not uncommon for churches to step into exactly the need that is being described. Unfortunately, network impoverishment affects faith communities as well. As the broader community has less
extra money, there is less ability to ‘take up the collection plate’ in order to meet someone’s needs in crisis. In order to address the hemorrhaging of people of color into the population experiencing homelessness it will be necessary to replenish (or establish) these kinds of community level safety-nets.

Downstream stabilization focuses on securing families or individuals in housing units that they move into after exiting the homelessness response system. In these cases, two things need to be evaluated:

1. Does doubling up make sense?
2. What supports would be necessary in order to facilitate successful family reunification (for people of all ages)?

With regard to doubling-up, we need to begin to ask whether or not (middle class, White) norms of how housing needs to function make sense for all. Communities of color that have a history of living inter-generationally or with other close family or friends may protect against homelessness. Frequently, respondents would discuss being moved into housing on a time limited subsidy knowing that they would not be able to afford the housing once the subsidy ended. We believe this situation to be one of the key drivers of the rapid cycling phenomenon seen within family homelessness. The young women of color typically heading these households are not able to secure an income that will offset the loss of the subsidy, so they rapidly come to experience homelessness again. It is possible that this is process may be improved by encouraging providers to let clients direct the housing outcomes. Additionally, if subsidies were adjusted to be shallower, but longer, and families exiting the shelter were encouraged to pool their subsidies and live together, this may provide enough time to stabilize and locate employment. As these options are explored, it will be important to advocate against the “cliff effect,” or policies that cut or lessen benefits as incomes increase, so that despite new income families end up further behind.

In addition to economic stabilization, encouraging living together allows for new networks of social support to be entrenched. Moving in this direction may help encourage supportive relationships within communities that are very frequently missing large numbers of people due to the continued predatory involvement of the criminal justice system.

This method could also assist with stabilizing youth, who could potentially return home but had not (and had no plans to) because they had been thrown out for being unable to contribute to household expenses. When subsidies can assist with rent payments or food in a meaningful way, it may be possible to negotiate their return to a stable living situation.

Finally, many respondents also expressed that family reunification was not possible for a variety of reasons, not all economic. Frequently these reasons involved significant social stress that may have begun with money, but these problems are not solved simply by subsidizing the return; the mistrust and anger that developed was real and often overwhelmed any desire to return to a stable living situation. In order to successfully facilitate reunification (and stabilize people downstream, e.g. after they had been re-housed) it will be important to provide ongoing services in the form of family therapy and other counseling in order to help heal social ruptures. While people are often able to mend these bridges on their own, the support to do so is often lacking. In order to re-house people (especially youth), we must treat their grievances not as temper tantrums but as real obstacles standing between them and a home.
4.3 Hispanic/Latinx

Existing literature frequently refers to the “Latino paradox” with regard to the idea that the Hispanic/Latinx population in the U.S. shares risk factors for homelessness with the Black population, but they are underrepresented, not overrepresented, among people experiencing homelessness. Despite this discussion in the literature, we have increasing reason to suspect that these theories are based on inaccurate reporting and weak methodology for counting people experiencing homelessness. Emerging from our research is the finding that in communities that have more intentional outreach to Hispanic/Latinx communities, numbers tend to trend upwards towards overrepresentation.

Hispanic/Latinx individuals are 9.9% of the general population in Pierce County, 19.1% of those in poverty, 15.1% of those in deep poverty, and 12.9% of individuals counted within the HMIS system. Hispanic/Latinx folks are slightly overrepresented in the homeless population compared to the general population, but “underrepresented” compared to their population in poverty. This may suggest that some housing insecure individuals are avoiding service engagement or accessing supports in other settings (e.g., faith communities, extended family). While reasons for this are still poorly understood, one driving factor may be that some Hispanic/Latinx individuals are traveling in ‘mixed-doc’ groups. This refers to the varying immigration status of the members of the family/group. Some members may be documented, but the entire group avoids service connection for fear of engagement by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement or other law enforcement agencies. In our nation’s current political climate, such avoidance is likely to intensify.

Our preliminary research suggests the need to focus our attention in meaningful and immediate ways on reaching out to Latinx communities. This will require deliberate cultivation of Spanish-speaking outreach teams made up of members of the communities that they hope to engage. Ideally, these teams would have preexisting relationships that they can leverage to build trust. Additionally, programs might begin to take steps to segregate documentation and immigration status from other components of a client’s file and hold it on a “need-to-know” basis, similarly to how HIV/AIDS information is managed under HIPAA. While this policy change would not have a legally enforceable edge, it would be a step towards building trust with clients regarding whether or not their immigration status will be shared with other staff—and to what extent the circulation of that information puts them at potential risk. Moreover, we might begin to more carefully identify what services we actually require immigration or citizenship information in order to activate. A number of services that may currently request this information may in fact not actually require that it to report to funders or screen individuals in or out of services.

By limiting requests for information regarding documentation status to only those services that absolutely require it and putting strict firewalls around that information, we may begin to have better engagement with Hispanic/Latinx communities experiencing homelessness. With better engagement will come a more accurate understanding of rates of homelessness, characteristics, and needs.

4.4 Trans* People of Color

Our current understanding of the needs of trans* (used here to refer to all trans, gender-expansive, gender-fluid, or non-binary individuals) people experiencing homelessness is similarly
limited. While the SPARC team has been lucky enough to engage a number of trans* youth and some trans* adults in our research, we are very far from being able to characterize patterns in trans* experiences of homelessness. While we expect that social rejection and stigma play a role in pathways into homelessness, we do not yet have enough information to suggest appropriate structural interventions.

One obstacle in the way of researching trans* experiences of homelessness is inconsistent administrative data. While there’s a great deal of anecdotal evidence around trans* people experiencing homelessness at greater rates, there’s still a dearth of data on trans* individuals in service systems. Because of this, we are left with an inaccurate understanding of how many trans* individuals are in need of service, and we are not able to estimate rates of disproportionality across race and gender identity. We advise programs to work diligently to capture sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (SOGIE) data so that policy decisions can be more informed.

Finally, it is important to track requests that trans* clients are making of systems. While the SPARC team will continue to analyze the available data, we believe that the best resource available to programs and systems leaders are the voices of people who are currently utilizing services. By creating a way to track (and document responses to) requests or complaints that come from trans* clients, systems can use the knowledge that’s already there while waiting for better research to emerge.
5. Recommendations

There are numerous actions Tacoma/Pierce County, led by Pierce County Human Services (PCHS) and the City of Tacoma Neighborhood and Community Services (CTNCS), can take now and plan to take in the future. SPARC’s recommendations include:

1. **Design an equitable Coordinated Entry system.** Coordinated Entry organizes the Homelessness Response System with a common assessment and a prioritization method. This directs clients to the appropriate resources and allows for data-driven decision making and performance-based accountability. Continual review of data from this process for racial disparities can assess whether housing interventions are sufficiently provided to people of color who come into contact with the system. Examination of the data can also help pinpoint additional intervention need. Coordinated Entry is at the root of Pierce County’s response to homelessness, and racial equity should be at the root of Coordinated Entry.

2. **Incorporate racial equity into funding and contracting.** Funders should consider how to infuse a race explicit lens into its contracting, requiring that programs report how their work will address issues of racial equity. Specifically, it is useful to develop criteria in which racial equity is part of the evaluative process for scoring funding proposals. Funders can also play a role by evaluating the racial diversity of agency leadership. Finally, they should encourage agencies to periodically conduct internal program and policy reviews that examine disparities in outcomes based on race.

3. **Include racial equity data analysis and benchmarks in strategic planning.** As Pierce County and Tacoma set goals around program development, expanding housing capacity, and making more housing placements, the system should be measuring impact by race and ethnicity. It will be vital to look at how race and ethnicity relate to returns to homelessness. Additionally, it may be helpful to use a formal racial equity tool in organizational decision making. All major organizational decisions, whether explicitly about race or not, should be analyzed through an internal racial equity tool that will highlight potential negative consequences to communities of color.

4. **Support organizational development.** Many agencies that provide human services are at a critical point of self-examination. As we continue to unpack the impact of systemic inequity on the populations we serve, the time has also come to investigate the organizational practices, structures, and cultures of serve settings that unconsciously perpetuate inequity for those same communities. Despite agencies’ best intentions to promote equity and justice, many have a long way to go before their internal practices, staff and leadership teams, resource allocation, facilities, and strategic planning reflect and advance these goals. However, promising practices exist and can be leveraged and tailored to organizations that are ready to do the work. PCHS and CTNCS can support agencies by providing resources to do this work and by disseminating tools and strategies.

5. **Encourage anti-racist program delivery.** SPARC’s findings suggest that programs that are strengths-focused, empowerment-based, and trauma-informed, rather than paternalistic, will best serve people of color experiencing homelessness. Programs will need to look internally to answer questions about whether or not they are inadvertently replicating systems of disenfranchisement. Performing internal systems audits and looking at program
output data by race and ethnicity for disproportionality can help target the work. These philosophies might also play a key role in inter- and intra-agency equity plans.

6. **Promote ongoing anti-racism training.** Government and nonprofit staff will benefit from continuous training on the intersection of race and homelessness, on bias, and on strategies to confront racism within their work. Building off of Recommendation 2 (Support Organizational Development), PCHS and CTNCS can host inter-agency trainings and support trainings for individual agencies. While organizational development focuses on structural change to organizations, training can focus on interpersonal skills—both for working with clients and for working with our colleagues.

7. **Collaborate to increase affordable housing availability.** As the community begins to discuss how best to address homelessness through a racial equity lens, it will be necessary to discuss how people experiencing homelessness could be moved into desirable units and neighborhoods by working with landlords and developers to address certain communities’ ongoing discomfort with low-income housing. While the availability of housing was outside of the bounds of this report, there is a need to look more deeply at the rate of production of new housing units, subsidy amounts to stabilize people within units now available, and the enforcement of housing quality.

8. **Innovative upstream interventions.** Homelessness is not inevitable. The data in this report suggest that it may be possible to stabilize people well before they become homeless by identifying pathways and providing support early. Preventing homelessness is a key component of achieving the county’s goals, and the community is making efforts to improve its upstream services and homelessness prevention efforts. PCHS and CTNCS should continue focusing on areas where it can have the biggest impact, including targeted eviction prevention for people at risk of homelessness. Prevention also means working with the criminal justice, child welfare, and public health systems to reduce the number of people exiting into homelessness from programs and institutions within those systems. Finally, PCHS and CTNCS must continue working to reduce the number of people in its housing programs that return to homelessness.

9. **Investigate flexible subsidies.** Many financial crises start as non-rent related. For many of our research participants, initial needs were for food, car repair, or bills. This suggests that for some people, flexible subsidies could be used to avert crises that spiral into homelessness. Short-term interventions of this kind can prevent or end homelessness quickly and connect people to other systems and resources, such as employment, health care, child care, and a range of services to support greater stability. It may offer a range of one-time assistance, including eviction prevention, legal services, relocation programs, family reunification, mediation, move-in assistance, and flexible grants to address issues related to housing and employment.
6. Conclusion

While this is preliminary analysis and additional work is needed, this research opens up provocative new ways to think about homelessness and what we might do to bring it to an end in America. Among all of this work, it is vital to keep in mind our context in the U.S. and maintain a historical perspective. As one respondent said to us:

**Respondent:** And the system was set up to, for White people to succeed and not to experience homelessness I always say that like my husband he is White and his aunt in North Dakota passed away I said Oh! Yeah, he is going to be getting a check and he said why. I said because every White person back, back home or whatever has a farm and the family sells the farm because of the homestead settlement act that White people, whenever an old White person passes away you guys are going to get a check. And the check came and he was like I didn’t know you knew that. I was like no the system is set for you, you think like this just happened to you, this didn’t just happen and so there is so many barriers and this. Like I remember the first time I learned about like Redlining covenants, the GI Bill with housing, all of that, and my eyes just open and I was just like people don’t even know like to how hard it is to step over this, jump over this, duck under that and all that like there is a whole pattern that they’ve been keeping from us so that we don’t succeed and we don’t know why we we’re failing, why we can’t step up and get into this, why our families don’t have homes like we didn’t grow up in homes and we grew up in apartments or we grew up in public housing and all of that, I was like people just knew. It would help us at least to be able to maneuver it, it’s not going to get rid of it, but at least to be able to maneuver and side step.

This work begins to paint a much clearer picture of the ways people are and are not able to “maneuver and side step.” However, it will be the work of communities across the country to begin the work of responding to these deep deficits.

We recognize that equity based work should not be confined to specific initiatives, but rather should be the lens through which all of the work flows. As communities develop equity approaches, they do not happen in isolation, limited to one program or one response. Instead, racial equity models need to be widely spread across systems and sectors.

We look forward to working with community leaders across the cities engaged in SPARC to continue to develop and hone the skills of equity implementation. Our hope continues to be that we will someday be a nation that does not strive towards equity but has realized the vision of having these values sit at the core of what we do.
7. Appendix

7.1 Homeless Service Provider Diversity & Inclusion

Every day, our nation puts the complex problem of solving homelessness into the hands of individual providers doing the work. Successfully recruiting, hiring, training, and supporting the homeless service workforce is key to ending homelessness. Because the goal of SPARC is to fight homelessness by improving outcomes for people of color, an important question is: What are the characteristics of a workforce that best serves people of color? Advancing racial equity in programs may mean ensuring that people working in agencies, from the front desk to the boardroom, reflect the race and ethnicity of the people they serve.

In order to learn more about the race and ethnicity of people working in housing and homeless service programs, SPARC and Pierce County Human Services administered an anonymous online survey. The survey was sent through e-mail and was open to respondents for approximately two months (January and February 2017). Participation was voluntary, and we received responses from 166 providers. Results of the survey are described below and suggest a preliminary picture of how the race and ethnicity of agency staff relate to service type, role, education, and lived experience with homelessness. Survey results are described below, followed by a few quotes from focus group participants that shed additional light on the subject of provider race and ethnicity.

Race and Ethnicity

In the sample of Pierce County providers (n=166), 78.2% identify as White, 9% as Black, 9.6% as more than one race, 1.9% as Asian, and less than one percent as Alaska Native, American Indian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Eleven providers (6.7%) percent identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Additionally, 78.8% identify as female, 18.6% as male, and 0.3% as another gender category (Table 3.4).

Table 7.1. Respondent Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race: What is your race?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Native or American Indian</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question 156
Skipping question 10

Table 7.2. Respondent Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity: Are you Hispanic or Latino?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, not Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question 163
Skipping question 3

---

Age, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Table 7.3, 7.4, and 7.5 show the gender, age, and sexual orientation of providers who responded to our survey. To protect participant anonymity, subgroup values of less than 5 are not reported. For this reason, sexual orientation is not broken down by race, and additional data for people who identify as Asian, Alaska Native or American Indian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander is not reported.

Age: The age range of survey respondents is 23 to 77 years and the mean age is 45 years. Age of staff did not appear to differ by race in this sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>More than one race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>31-64</td>
<td>24-77</td>
<td>23-65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender: Survey respondents were majority female (78.8%), with a similar proportion of female to male within subsamples of White staff, Black Staff, and those identifying with more than one race.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>More than one race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.6%)</td>
<td>(28.6%)</td>
<td>(17.2%)</td>
<td>(20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(78.8%)</td>
<td>(71.4%)</td>
<td>(79.5%)</td>
<td>(80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.3%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sexual Orientation: The majority of respondents identify as straight or heterosexual (78.4%), with approximately 9% identifying as Gay or Lesbian and another 9% as Bisexual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gay or Lesbian</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight or heterosexual</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to answer</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else (please specify)</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered question</td>
<td></td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped question</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Variables by Race

In addition to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation, we asked providers to identify:

- The type of program at which they work;
- The population with whom they work;
- Their role/position in their agency;
- Their level of education;
- The length of time they have worked in homeless services;
- Whether they have experienced homelessness themselves.

**Type of program at which they work.** Many surveyed providers work at programs that offer mental health care, permanent housing, emergency shelter, and outreach. For program types selected by more than 10 respondents, we include percentages in Table 7.6, below (Note that this reporting only includes people who identify racially as Black, White, or more than one race, due to the risk of identifying those within the small sample of other racial groups). Of those who work in mental health care (n=64), 78.7% are White, 11.5% are Black, and 9.8% are more than one race—a distribution that reflects the racial breakdown of all respondents (78.2% White, 9% Black, and 9.6% more than one race). Of those who work in emergency shelter (n=34), 82.4% are White, 8.8% are Black, and 8.8% are more than one race, also reflecting the racial group breakdown of the total sample.

Table 7.6 Type of Organization by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization (note: participants could select all that apply)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black frequency (% of org. type selections)</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>More than one race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency shelter</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3 (8.8%)</td>
<td>28 (82.4%)</td>
<td>3 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional housing</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3 (14.29%)</td>
<td>17 (80.95)</td>
<td>1 (4.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent housing</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3 (8.3%)</td>
<td>31 (86.1%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voucher distribution</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept vouchers in exchange for housing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup kitchen</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile food program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health care</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health care</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7 (11.5%)</td>
<td>48 (78.7%)</td>
<td>6 (9.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and/or drug program</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2 (18.2%)</td>
<td>9 (81.8%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3 (13.64%)</td>
<td>19 (86.36%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-in center</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role/position in their agency. Respondents were asked to select a job category best reflecting their position in their current agency, and Table 7.8 shows the results of that question. The survey was able to reach people at all levels of organizations, from direct care staff with no supervisory role to executive directors. Case managers (n=36) and administrators (n=29) are the majority of respondents. Notably, administrators in the sample are 86.2% White and executive directors are 100% White.

Table 7.8 Respondent Role in Agency by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role (note: participants could select all that apply)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black frequency (% of staff in that role)</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>More than one race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct care staff (not including supervision responsibilities)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 (11.1%)</td>
<td>16 (88.89%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct care staff with supervision responsibilities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3 (17.7%)</td>
<td>12 (70.6%)</td>
<td>2 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach specialist</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>1 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case manager</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5 (13.9%)</td>
<td>26 (72.2%)</td>
<td>5 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator (not including executive director)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25 (86.2%)</td>
<td>4 (13.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive director</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>13 (100.00%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3 (10.7%)</td>
<td>22 (78.6%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Select all that apply)</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education level. We chose to break down education level within each racial group, so the percentages in Table 7.9 display the proportion of people within a racial group who selected a certain level of education. For example, 14.3% of Black providers surveyed are high school graduates, compared to 1.7% of White providers. Most respondents have a bachelor’s degree or master’s degree.

Table 7.9 Respondent Education by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black frequency (% of racial group at that education level)</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>More than one race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15 (12.4%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3 (21.4%)</td>
<td>5 (4.1%)</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3 (21.4%)</td>
<td>34 (28.1%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate school</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9 (7.4%)</td>
<td>2 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6 (42.9%)</td>
<td>53 (43.8%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Length of time they have worked in homeless services. Table 7.11 reports length of time in the field of homeless services. Percentages reflect the proportion of each racial group with a certain duration of experience. For example, a greater proportion of Black and multi-racial staff have been in the field for less than one year, 21.4% and 20%, respectively, compared to 12.3% of White staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work experience</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>More than one race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>21 (13.9%)</td>
<td>3 (21.4%)</td>
<td>15 (12.3%)</td>
<td>3 (20.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one year, less than 5</td>
<td>56 (37.1%)</td>
<td>4 (28.6%)</td>
<td>48 (39.3%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years, less than 10</td>
<td>34 (22.5%)</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
<td>26 (21.3%)</td>
<td>6 (40.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>40 (26.5%)</td>
<td>5 (35.7%)</td>
<td>33 (27.1%)</td>
<td>2 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lived experience with homelessness. Each of the provider surveys in SPARC cities includes a question about lived experience of homelessness. As shown below, 47 (or about one third) of the 151 Black only, White only, or multi-racial respondents indicated that they had previously experienced homelessness in their lifetime. While the majority of staff with an experience of homelessness are White (33 of 47), it is key to note that the Black and Multi-Racial groups had higher rates of lived experience (near 36% of Black staff and 47% of Multi-Racial staff, compared to 27% of White staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previously experienced homelessness</th>
<th>Yes n (% of racial category)</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47 (31.1%)</td>
<td>109 (72.2%)</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5 (35.71%)</td>
<td>9 (64.29%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>33 (27.05%)</td>
<td>89 (72.95%)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one race</td>
<td>7 (46.67%)</td>
<td>8 (53.33%)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings and Qualitative Accounts

The anonymous survey described in this report is limited to 166 providers that responded to our online survey through e-mailed requests to participate. The sample was neither random nor complete, but may provide a helpful understanding of a certain sample of providers working in housing and homeless services in Pierce County at the start of 2017. What stands out is that:
• Of the 166 providers who completed the online survey, 78% identify as White, 9% as Black, and about 10% as more than one race. This breakdown is similar to the total population, but does not reflect the demographics of the population of people experiencing homelessness (more than 26% Black, 47% White, and 16% two or more races, Table 1.1).

• When moving up in an agency, the under-representation of providers of color increases: Of 43 administrators (including executive directors), 38 (88.4%) identify as White. No administrators or executive directors surveyed identify as Black.

Qualitative data from our interview and focus groups may add deeper understanding to this preliminary survey. For example, in the focus group of providers of color, a few participants comment on their experiences in predominately White organizations, as well as organizations that appear to get Whiter as you “move up” within them.

So then they started to move me up in the organization, but as I moved up in the organization I noticed that it became Whiter and Whiter and Whiter until it was all White. And then there was me, right. So when you said the other day about you being the, you’re the Black girl from, you know I was the Black guy from...in a leadership position. And so it was that, but what I learned through all of that being homeless--I've been homeless on three different separate occasions and so I understand now why God put me through the stuff that I had to go through. So that I was able to help people on a sincere level not just a level of superficial, hovering above, saying you do that, it was a matter of you know what here let me show you how to do this.

This provider alludes to the difficulty or discomfort of being the only person of color at the leadership level of their organization. They also reflect on the strengths they feel they are able to bring to their job because of their lived experience, while at the same time commenting that the White administrators or board members around them may not have the same experience to pull from. This person appears to view the style of some White organizational leaders as “hovering above” people they serve, whereas the respondent feels like they can relate to people on a personal, practical level.

A second person touched on the experience of being the only person of color in their level at their organization. They were also able to see their strengths and ways to use their “tokenism for good.”

So this may be wrong but this is how I've gone about it is that I have used my tokenism for good because when someone puts you in that place, to them you are representing every person of color, I am representing every one. So if I see something and I am like, “this is not okay, this is racist, this we need to change this service model, we need to do this,” they don’t feel comfortable telling me no.

While this particular provider was empowered to make changes in their organization, it is worth reflecting on the experience of having to represent “every person of color,” and the difficulty of having that position. The experience would vary depending on the individual differences of the person serving in that role.

Another person started listing possible solutions that their agency hopes to implement.

We have a whole little bunch of plans that includes like remodeling agencies to be inclusive and welcoming to everybody of culture, providing leadership opportunities to direct service staff,
prioritizing direct service staff for internal promotions, when it happens especially those of color. We are going to mandate that person of color, multiple people of color, sit on the executive board, because there is none right now. We’re re-evaluating pay across the agency looking at people of color, we have already prioritized personal life experience, but what we are finding is that HR is not wanting to pay them as much as they are paying people with degree to do the exact same work so just kind of standing up and saying...

There are little and big changes programs can make to begin to move the needle on disproportionate staffing patterns. This participant’s approach includes re-evaluating pay structure, internal promotions, and instating more people of color to the board.

Through analyses of the oral histories of people of color experiencing homelessness, we hope to inquire about the potential ways provider race affects how clients experience services.

7.2 Entry and Exit Location Groupings

We grouped HMIS data fields for situations at entry into the following categories for our analyses:
We grouped HMIS data fields for destination at project exit into the following categories for our analyses:

1. **Homeless (Shelter + Street)**
   - a. Place not meant for human habitation
   - b. Emergency Shelter (including motel/hotel with voucher)

2. **Permanent Housing/ Renting w/ subsidy**
   - a. Rental by client with VASH subsidy
   - b. Rental by client with other ongoing subsidy
   - c. Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons
   - d. Owned by client with ongoing subsidy

3. **Permanent Housing/ Renting w/o subsidy**
   - a. Rental by client with no ongoing housing subsidy
   - b. Residential project/halfway house with no homeless criteria
   - c. Owned by client with no ongoing subsidy

4. **Institutionalized Care**
   - a. Long-term care facility or nursing home
   - b. Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center
   - c. Foster care home or foster care group home
   - d. Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility
   - e. Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility
   - f. Mental health/psychiatric, physical health, substance use treatment, foster care

5. **Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility**

6. **Doubled Up**
   - a. Staying or living with friends
   - b. Staying or living with family

7. **Transitional setting**
   - a. Transitional Housing for homeless persons (including youth)
   - b. Safe Haven
   - c. Hotel/Motel (no voucher)

8. **Other**
   - a. Other (True Other; i.e., response option was labeled “Other”)

9. **Missing data** (not included in analysis)
   - a. Client doesn’t know
   - b. Client refused
1. **Homeless (Shelter + Street)**  
   a. Place not meant for human habitation  
   b. Emergency Shelter (including motel/hotel with voucher)

2. **Permanent Housing/ Renting w/ subsidy**  
   a. Rental by client with VASH subsidy  
   b. Rental by client with other ongoing subsidy  
   c. Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons  
   d. Owned by client with ongoing subsidy

3. **Permanent Housing/ Renting w/o subsidy**  
   a. Rental by client with no ongoing housing subsidy  
   b. Residential project/halfway house with no homeless criteria  
   c. Owned by client with no ongoing subsidy

4. **Institutionalized Care**  
   a. Long-term care facility or nursing home  
   b. Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center  
   c. Foster care home or foster care group home  
   d. Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility  
   e. Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility  
   f. Mental health/psychiatric, physical health, substance use treatment, foster care

5. **Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility**

6. **Doubled Up**  
   a. Staying or living with friends (permanent)  
   b. Staying or living with family (permanent)  
   c. Staying or living with friends (temporary) (Option at Exit only)  
   d. Staying or living with family (temporary) (Option at Exit only)

7. **Transitional setting**  
   a. Transitional Housing for homeless persons (including youth)  
   b. Safe Haven  
   c. Hotel/Motel (no voucher)

8. **Other (clarify this is exit)**  
   a. Other (True Other; i.e., response option was labeled “Other”)  
   b. Deceased

9. **Missing data (not included in analysis)**  
   a. Client refused  
   b. Data not collected  
   c. No exit interview completed
### 7.3 Oral History Interview Participant Characteristics

**(n=24)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity (In their own words)</th>
<th>Sexual orientation</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Children (and available information on ages and gender)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>White, Puerto Rican, Greek</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Yes 1 daughter, 7 months old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Gave a son up for adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>'I’m an African American. Actually I’m a Brown American.'</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 son, 2 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Black &amp; Hispanic</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 daughter, not in her custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Native Puyallup</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>Pansexual</td>
<td>Yes, husband has been incarcerated for 7 years</td>
<td>5 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>“Married once”</td>
<td>Yes 3 children; one daughter, one son, and one deceased son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Black (but also sometimes says Caucasian, Native and Virgin Island black.)</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 children; Boy age 9, boy age 4, girl age 2, girl age 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Puerto Rican/Native American</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 boys: &quot;Nine and a half, they’re all boys. Four, and 19 months.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Race/ Ethnicity</td>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Children (and available information on ages and gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Had been married</td>
<td>3 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Black (but when asked at one point, &quot;I'm American.&quot;)</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Had been married</td>
<td>2 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Had been married</td>
<td>1 son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Married once, separated</td>
<td>“I have two boys from my first marriage and they are 25 and 21”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>