



Homeless Crisis
Response System

2020 Racial Equity Report

Clark County, WA

Questions?

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A Note from CFTH Leadership

Council for the Homeless (CFTH) is pleased to release the 2020 Homeless Crisis Response System Equity Report for Clark County for the third year in a row. This past year has been challenging for our community in many ways. And, from the murders of George Floyd and Briana Taylor, to the extreme heat, snow storms, and wild fires made worse by climate change, to the almost incomprehensible and indescribable devastation caused by COVID-19, data remind us of a truth that can be hard to swallow: our neighbors of color continue to be harmed by the very systems that are supposed to be there to help. This is why CFTH continues to collect and assess data on the racial and ethnic identities of those whom we serve. As important as knowing who we serve is knowing who we don't serve, and this annual equity report is a critical step in identifying how to more effectively and efficiently end homelessness in our community.

Thanks to data collection and analysis over the last two years, the Continuum of Care has updated the assessment tool used to match those in our community who are most vulnerable to appropriate housing programs. Beginning January, 2020, Clark County began using the Clark County Assessment Tool (C-Cat), a localized vulnerability assessment tool that was collaboratively developed with housing partners, people experiencing homelessness and culturally specific partners. All partners sought to intentionally decrease inequities among those whom we serve. As a result, we've seen a significant decrease in the disparities in assessment scores between white heads of household and those of color. In turn, this has led to a smaller gap between the number of white households and households of color scoring into longer-term housing programs.

It is also important to note the impact of COVID-19 relief funds and programs on this data, especially in the area of rental assistance funds. A higher percentage of people and families of color rent their homes than white families. Though these data do not directly reflect how many families of color were able to stay in their homes as a direct result of the increased funds and moratorium, it is likely that at least some of the positive data around decreased racial disparities with regard to rapid re-housing may be a result of these efforts.

As our community reopens and reemerges in the coming months, let us take stock of the progress we've made toward addressing the racial inequities that exist within our communities. While we focus our intentionality on reconnecting with friends and neighbors, CFTH is also recommitting to our efforts addressing the racial inequities that exist within our communities, and we're looking forward to working alongside you in doing so.

Kate Budd
Executive Director

Siobhana McEwen
Advocacy and Equity Director

What is Racial Equity?

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Racial Equity is an outcome and a process.

As an outcome, racial equity is achieved when race no longer impacts, or even determines one's outcome, including their likelihood of becoming homeless. It occurs when every person has what they identify is needed to thrive no matter where they live or their racial identity.

As a process, racial equity is all about how policies and procedures are enacted and implemented. From recruiting and hiring practices, to the implementation of programs and approaches to partnerships, centering those most impacted by structural racism and breaking down barriers that stand in the way of accessing needed supports is vital.

In Clark County, members of the community who identify as Person(s) of Color (POC), especially those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and Micronesian or Polynesian are experiencing homelessness and housing insecurities at disproportional rates when compared to our neighbors who identify as white. This is due to a variety of factors, but can be linked directly to historical policies and practices that are rooted in racism. Though overt discrimination in lending policies, informal redlining, and rental policies is no longer legal, the data in this report illustrates people of different races do experience substantially different barriers when it comes to accessing stable housing. Acknowledging this, and remembering this fact when creating new policies, is key to addressing racism in how the Homeless Crisis Response System operates in the future.



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23% of the total population identified as people of color



37% of all people experiencing homelessness identified as people of color



38% of all people accessing coordinated entry identified as people of color



40% of all people entering housing programs identified as people of color

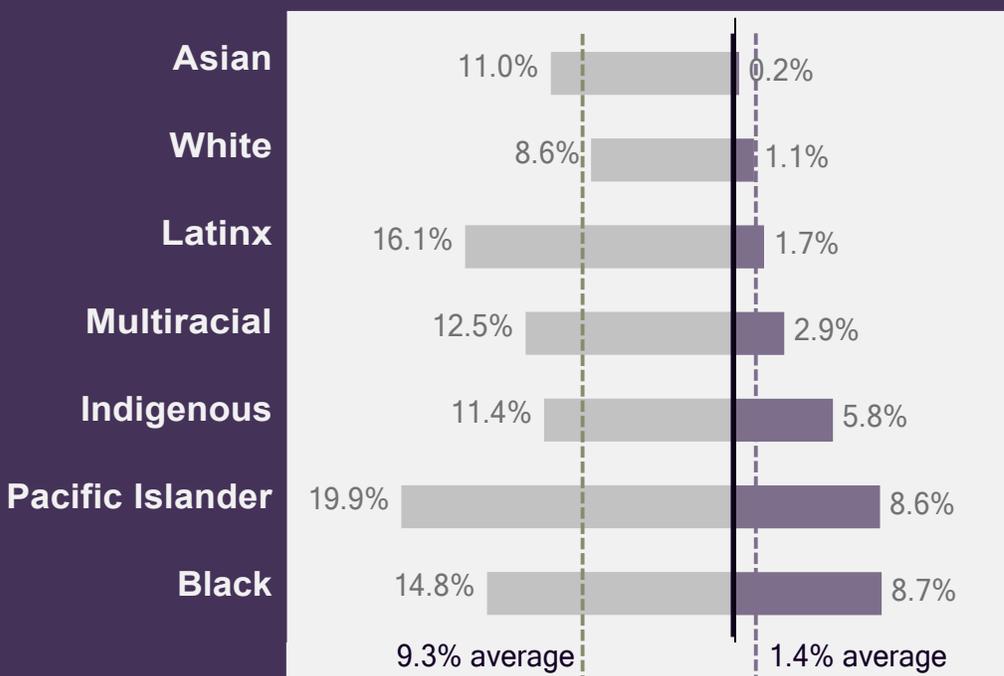


Since 2018, the racial gaps between the proportions of people needing assistance, requesting assistance, and receiving assistance have steadily shrunk. In 2020, the effects of efforts to create a more equitable assessment tool were seen as the gap closed and vulnerable populations were more accurately represented in every housing type.

Likelihood of Experiencing...

...Poverty

...Homelessness



People of color are significantly more likely to experience poverty and homelessness in Clark County. Data have demonstrated this since the first 2018 equity report, but in 2020 the assistance gap finally closed.

The dotted lines show the likelihood of the average person in Clark County experiencing these states; bars extending beyond the lines indicate greater vulnerability.



Green arrows indicate that 80% or fewer of expected households in this population were engaged, based on overall distributions.



Purple arrows indicate that 120% or more of expected households in this population were engaged, based on overall distributions.

	Single	Senior Single	Couple	Senior Couple	Single Parent	Two Parent Family	Unaccompanied Minor
Asian	—	✓	—	⤴	⤴	✓	—
Black	—	✓	✓	✓	⤴	⤴	⤴
Indigenous	—	—	—	⤴	⤴	⤴	
Multiracial	✓	✓	⤴	⤴	⤴	⤴	⤴
Pacific Islander	—	✓	—	✓	⤴	⤴	⤴
Unknown	—	✓	⤴	—	⤴	—	✓
White	—	—	⤴	⤴	—	—	✓
Latinx	✓	✓	⤴	—	⤴	⤴	⤴

Different populations experience homelessness differently. For example, the chart above shows that families of color in general are more likely to experience homelessness, which in turn means that children of color are more likely to experience homelessness than their white peers.



21% of white people experiencing homelessness were children



30% of Black people experiencing homelessness were children

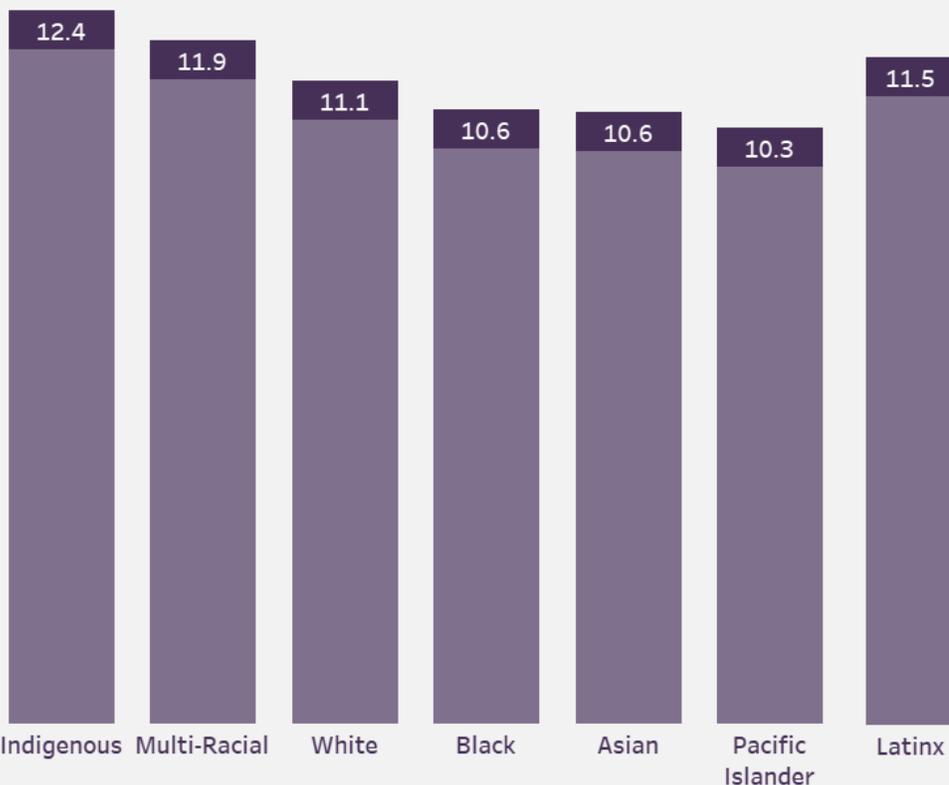
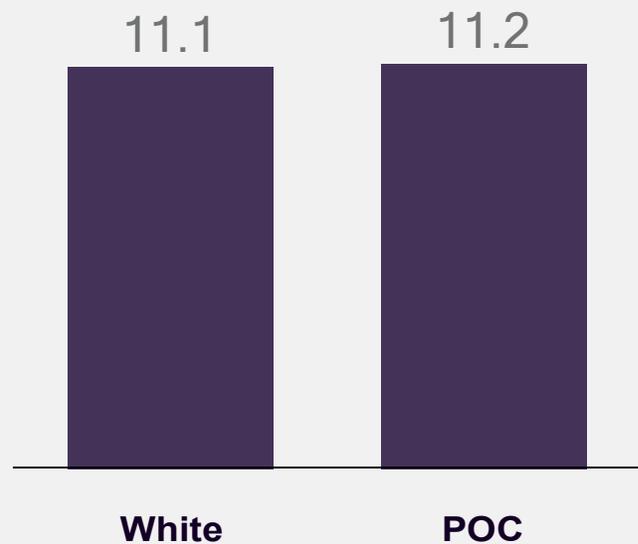


45% of Pacific Islanders experiencing homelessness were children

The staff at the CFTH Housing Solutions Center, Clark County's coordinated entry, connects people who are experiencing homelessness with shelter and housing programs. In order to match the most vulnerable members of our community with appropriate housing resources, trained staff conduct a housing eligibility screening. Prior to January 15, 2020, Clark County used a nationally-utilized common assessment tool to measure vulnerability. With a focus on creating a more racially equitable assessment, Clark County transitioned to a locally and intentionally developed tool that has helped decrease racial inequities within our system.

Looking at average assessment scores for heads of household entering coordinated entry since implementing the local assessment tool, there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of white people and those of people of color.

Average Assessment Score



In 2019, white people were the highest scoring racial group with an average vulnerability assessment score of 146% of the lowest-scoring group, Pacific Islanders. After implementing the new tool, Indigenous people are the highest scoring group at only 120% of the lowest-scoring group. The gap between white people and the lowest-scoring group shrank to only 8%, a fraction of the former tool's gap.

Rapid re-housing, or RRH, is an intervention designed to help individuals and families quickly exit homelessness, return to housing in the community, and remain housed for the long-term. The core components of RRH are housing identification, move-in and rent assistance, and rapid re-housing case management and services. RRH rental assistance generally lasts from six months to two years, and clients become tenants with their own lease while in program.



Exited to Housing



Exited to Other Destination



Exited to Homelessness



Lost Contact

In 2019, households headed by people of color were much more likely to be exited from a rapid re-housing program due to loss of contact. In 2020, fewer exits occurred due to loss of contact for all racial and ethnic groups, and there was not a significant difference along any racial lines.

Every racial group except Indigenous people had a higher percentage of positive exits in 2020 than in 2019. While resources and assistance improve every year, it is likely that some of this increased success was related to the eviction moratorium that kept homelessness from recurring for many households in 2020.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing, or PSH, is an intervention that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of people who are chronically homeless and the most vulnerable. The services are designed to increase quality of life, including building independent living and tenancy skills and connecting people with community-based health care, treatment and employment services.



Still In Program



Exited to Housing



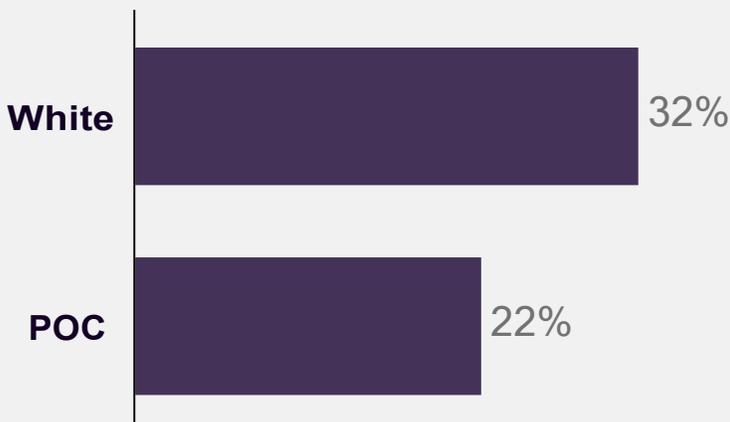
Exited to Other Destination



Exited to Homelessness



Lost Contact



In 2020, the gap between average assessment scores for newly assessed people closed. However, white heads of household continued to represent a disproportionate percentage of our PSH entries at 32% compared to the 22% of new coordinated entry enrollments that identified as people of color.

Homelessness prevention is short-term rental assistance to help people who are currently housed retain their housing. It is much easier to keep people housed in an existing situation than it is to help them move into new housing, so this is an intervention with very high success rates.

Clark County was able to provide this assistance to a drastically increased number of households in 2020 due to additional federal funds distributed through the major COVID relief bills.

Prevention



Exited to Housing



Exited to Other Destination

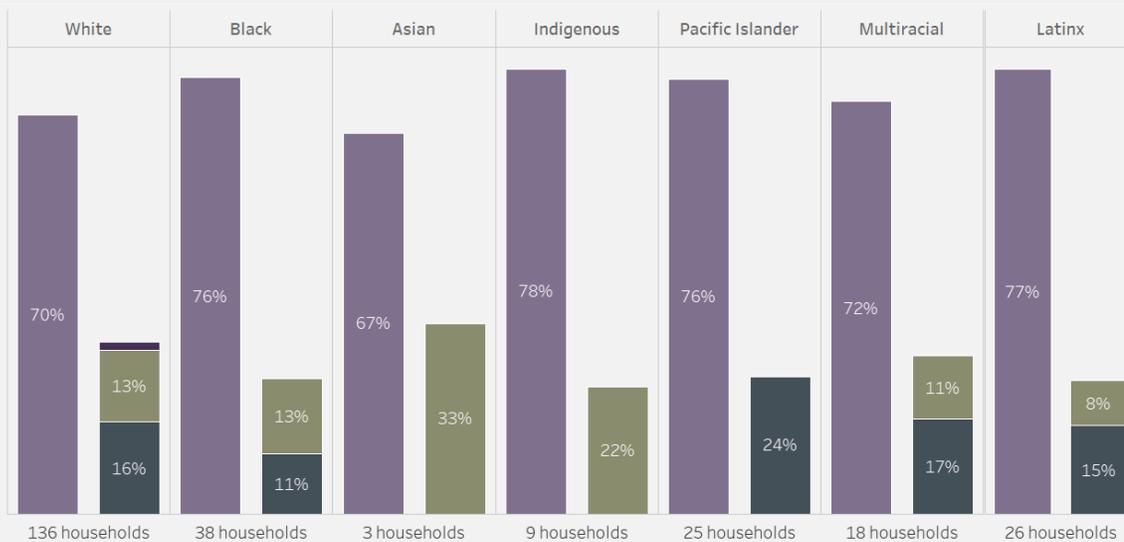


Exited to Homelessness



Lost Contact

Diversion



Diversion is a light-touch, partnership between individuals and staff with a focus on stable housing. The program recognizes not every person or family experiencing homelessness needs the same level of support. In diversion, people are supported in identifying their strengths and resources and addressing their barriers to housing through creative problem solving. This preserves the most intensive interventions for those people who need more supports.



Emergency shelters and street outreach programs reported only 5% and 2% of all people they entered in programs respectively were Pacific Islander, but 14% of all people entered in diversion identified as Pacific Islander (this is more comparable to the prevention rate of 16% than other homelessness-focused programs).

In Clark County, the Pacific Islander community experiences homelessness differently than some of our other populations, and **these percentages are a good indication that diversion helps stabilize people in this community outside the traditional engagement avenues, and should continue to receive support.**



In 2019, only 18% of all heads of household entering PSH identified as a person of color. In 2020, this increased to 21%. The increase is worth celebrating, but it is still far below the 32% of all heads of households entering programs for resolving homelessness that identified as persons of color. (RRH is much higher-34% of their entering heads of household were POCs)

The racial gap for heads of household entering PSH needs to continue to be monitored.



Domestic violence (DV) can happen to anyone, and people in vulnerable circumstances are at higher risk of DV. **All housing programs should be prepared to offer additional supports as needed.**

In 2020, DV was the third most commonly cited reason for homelessness for white heads of household entering programs at 13% of those reporting a cause, while it was the second most commonly reported cause for Black and Latinx heads of household at 17% and 16%, respectively. Also, 19% of responding LGBTQ+ heads of household reported DV as the primary cause of their homelessness.

Continuing to increase culturally humble and specific DV advocacy, focused services and programs is important.



There has been positive feedback about the automation and electronic sorting of the rent assistance processes. It has made it easier to serve more people in a more timely manner than would otherwise be possible.

Can this type of technological advancement or automation be expanded to help in other areas, especially related to increasing racial equity?



People of color accounted only for 20% of all adults entering transitional housing, but they accounted for 32% of all heads of household entering programs for individuals who are homeless. Several transitional housing programs operate outside coordinated entry, which historically increased program diversity.

Strengthening the connections between non-county funded transitional housing and coordinated entry is needed to shrink this gap.



Most individual program types have fairly equitable outcomes for people regardless of whether they are able bodied or have a physical disability, but at a systemic level (all program types viewed together) these people are less likely to exit to a permanently housed situation.

As we close racial equity gaps, it is important to monitor other equity lenses--including regarding ability--to make sure that whether someone is able to access housing is as unaffected as possible, by their capabilities.



The adoption of the Clark County Assessment Tool (C-CAT) resulted in a reduction of the gap between people who are white and populations of color entering into housing programs.

Moving forward ongoing review of the assessment is needed, and **further disaggregation of the racial and ethnic diversity of community members who are homeless** is vital. Many unique racial and ethnic identities are encompassed within each broad category and the system should be able to track if those identities are disproportionately harmed by its structure.



The racial differences in rates of childhood homelessness is vast (45% of Pacific Islanders experiencing homelessness were children, compared to just 21% of white people).

Ensuring that housing programs are accessible to families (especially families with multiple children) is needed to help lower the number of children in the community who are experiencing homelessness.



As long as there are disparities in the numbers of families and individuals of color who experience homelessness and poverty compared to the numbers of white families and individuals, there is reason to **prioritize supporting our neighbors of color**

This includes **creating trauma-informed, culturally specific programing and services, prioritizing and allocating funding and resources, and centering the voices and needs of our neighbors of color** in our efforts to dismantle and disrupt the cycle and system of homelessness.