

How to Use This Tool

Understanding Racial Disparity in Your CoC

Each community has unique circumstances impacting homeless populations. The CoC Analysis Tool draws on Point-In-Time Count and American Community Survey data to facilitate analysis of racial disparities among people experiencing homelessness. Such an analysis is a critical first step in identifying and changing racial and ethnic bias in our systems and services.

How to Use the Tool

Select a CoC from the dropdown at the top of the Dashboard tab. The charts and tables will automatically populate with local and state data.

The first bar chart shows racial distributions for the selected CoC for all people living in poverty, people experiencing homelessness, and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. By comparing racial distributions between persons experiencing homelessness and persons experiencing poverty, we are able to identify racial disparities in homelessness that poverty alone cannot account for.

The bar charts also include the racial distribution for individuals in families with children who were experiencing homelessness. Note: for these individuals, the race data is based on the racial identity of the head of household. It is a proxy and may not accurately represent the racial identity of all household members.

The bar chart in the center and on the right show the racial disparities for youth and veterans experiencing homelessness, respectively.

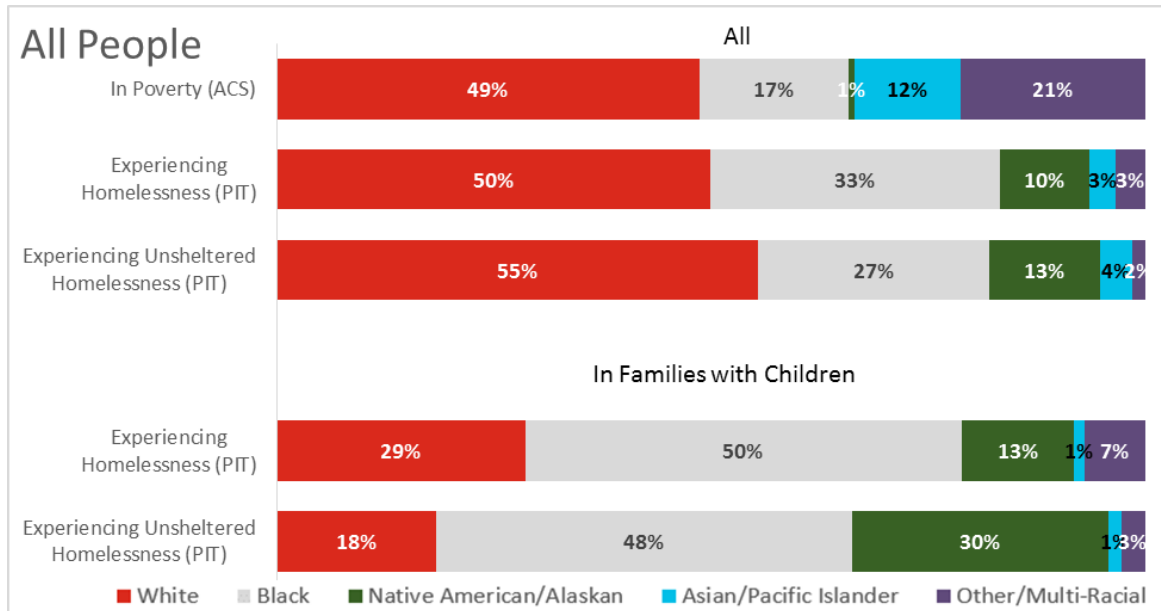
How to Read the Distribution of Race Chart

When reading the example chart in Exhibit 1, we see that 17% of all people living in poverty in the CoC identified as Black in the 2011-2015 American Community Survey. We also see that 33% of people experiencing homelessness in the Point-In-Time Count identified as Black. This demonstrates a large racial disparity in homelessness, beyond the impact of poverty alone. What other factors might contribute to this disparity?

Looking at families with children experiencing homelessness in this sample CoC, though we see that 29% of those living in poverty are white, only 18% of people in families with children that are experiencing homelessness are white.

Note: Race data for individuals in families is based on the racial identity of the head of household. It is a proxy and may not accurately represent the racial identity of all household members.

Exhibit 1. Example Distribution of Race Chart



Technical Notes

1. When you first open the document, select Enable Content in the yellow bar.
2. If you get a pop-up asking to make it a trusted document, select "Yes"
3. In order to best view the charts and tables on your monitor or for printing, you may need to adjust the zoom in the lower right corner of the Excel window.
4. Scroll to the right to view all three bar graphs and two data tables.
5. Percentages of 5% or less might be difficult to view in the charts at the top of the page, but can be referenced in the corresponding tables below.
6. If you see ##### instead of a number in a cell, widen the column until you can see the numbers.
7. Blank cells in the tables indicate that data is not available for that subpopulation.

Do Not...

1. Hide rows below 69 on the DASHBOARD tab. These are necessary for the charts.
2. Modify table cells on the DASHBOARD tab. Doing so will overwrite the formulas.

Discussion Questions for your CoC

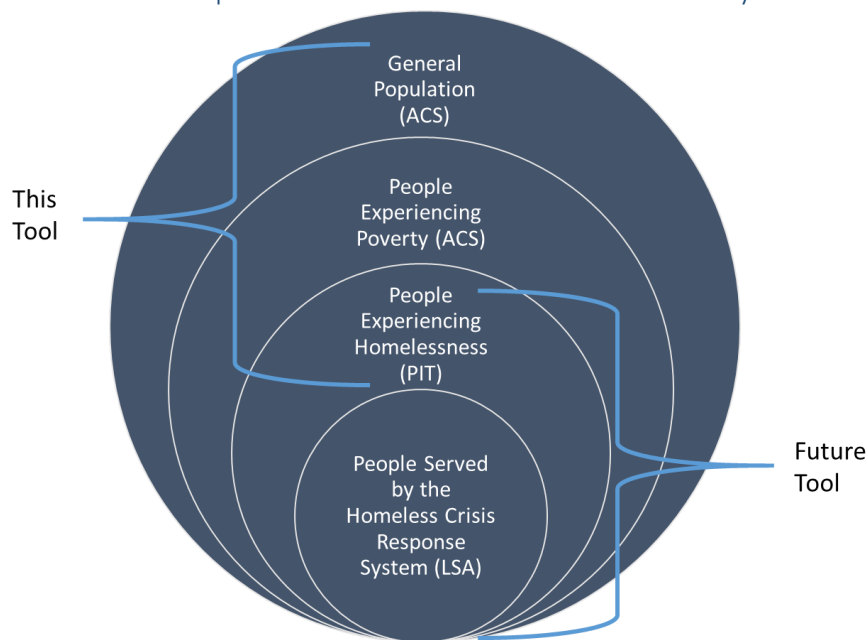
1. How does your CoC compare to state numbers. Are any racial groups over- or under-represented among the homeless population in your CoC?
2. Are there specific local or state conditions that might lead to these differences?
3. In PIT counts, are there significant differences between sheltered and unsheltered counts as far as over- or under-representation? Why might that be?
4. Are there differences between families and individuals in terms of racial distribution?
5. What does the youth data look like compared to all households? What about youth in families with children?
6. What about veterans in your community? What do you know about your own community that gives context to the data?

Coming Soon: A Deeper Dive

In 2018, the Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) will replace the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) as the primary mechanism for reporting demographic and system use data to HUD. The HMIS-based LSA report will provide detailed outcomes that will help you understand how effectively your CoC is serving communities of color. As depicted in Exhibit 2, future CoC Analysis tools will allow for a deeper assessment of racial disparities for different household types and population groups in three core measures:

1. The length of time people spend homeless and in the service system,
2. Successfully exiting homelessness to permanent housing, and
3. The degree to which households that are housed then fall back into homelessness.

Exhibit 2. Relationship Between the Current Race and Ethnicity Tool and Future Analyses



Additional Resources

- [NAEH: Racial Disparities in Homelessness in the United States](#)
- [USICH: How to Start Addressing Racial Disparities in Your Community](#)

Methodology Notes

Definition and Data Sources for Homelessness

The number of people experiencing homelessness represented in this tool is drawn from the 2017 Point-In-Time (PIT) Count data reported in the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to the U.S. Congress. PIT Counts are unduplicated 1-night estimates of sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations conducted by CoCs nationwide during the last week of January each year.

People who are experiencing **sheltered homelessness** are defined as "an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangement (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable

organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals," as defined at 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

People who are experiencing **unsheltered homelessness** are defined as "an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground," as defined at 24 CFR 578.3 of the Homeless Definition Final Rule.

For more information on homelessness definitions, see the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Defining Homeless Final Rule:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1928/hearth-defining-homeless-final-rule/>

PIT Count data is not perfect- methodologies vary place to place and year to year; the unsheltered count is particularly challenging. While some CoC PIT data may include duplication of households, it is more likely that PIT data is an undercount, due to not all homeless households being identified. Staffing, weather, and geography all have an impact on the data. In most communities there remains a need for improved data accuracy and increased cultural competence in outreach and engagement.

Nevertheless, PIT Count data is an important indicator to consider, and our best available estimate of rates of homelessness in a given community. More information on the PIT Count and AHAR can be found here: <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/>

Definition and Data Sources for Poverty and Race

Individuals are counted as being in poverty if they are part of a household whose total annual income is less than the poverty threshold. Threshold levels are set by household size, but are not adjusted by location. For this reason, the impact of poverty on housing affordability varies from community to community. For more information on how poverty is measured, see:

<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/about.html>

The racial distributions of people living in poverty are sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015 5-year estimates. The CoC estimates were determined from Block Group (BG) estimates along with a BG-to-CoC crosswalk, created based on ArcGIS mapping software. Except for total race-specific BG estimates, which were obtained directly from FactFinder's TIGER data, all other BG estimates were calculated from county-level percentages of the given category, by race, multiplied by total BG counts for the given category.

For example: **BG-level black people in poverty = County-level percent of people in poverty that are black * BG-level all people in poverty**

The Veteran CoC data comes from the ACS 2015 1-year estimates. More information about the ACS can be found here: [United State Census Bureau: American Fact Finder](#)

Race data for individuals in families is based on the racial identity of the head of household. It is a proxy and may not accurately represent the racial identity of all household members.

The race categories used in this analysis may not accurately reflect the racial identities and lived experience of individuals. The availability of this data, however imperfect, provides a starting place to examine racial disparities in each CoC.