

# RACE AND HOMELESSNESS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

JANUARY  
2020

People of color are dramatically more likely than their white counterparts to become homeless in the United States. Recent national research has shown that such racial disproportionality is not limited to any particular geographical area or region of the country, but instead that patterns of racial disproportionality play out in community after community across the country. Further, this is not simply an issue of poverty: people of color experience homelessness at rates significantly higher than the proportion of those living in poverty. Indeed, the legacy of historical and contemporary structural racism is at the root of who becomes homeless.

Against this backdrop, Destination: Home partnered with the national SPARC Initiative (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities) to examine the link between racial inequity and homelessness in Santa Clara County.

This project is a  
collaboration between



DESTINATION: HOME

&

**SPARC**

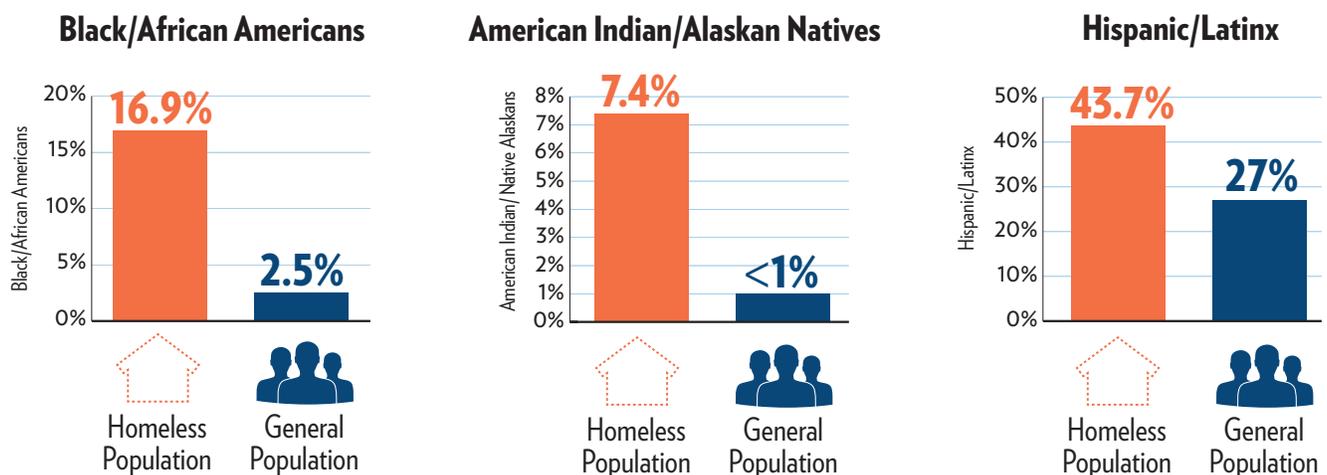
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## FINDINGS

### THEME 1: Disproportionately high rates of homelessness among specific racial/ethnic groups

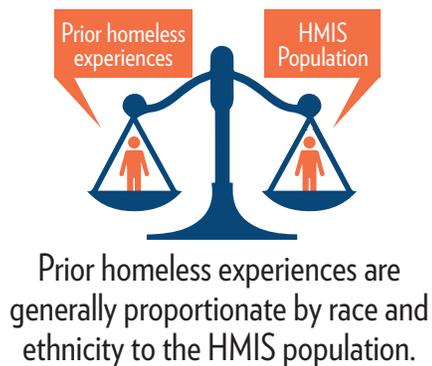
Overall, Santa Clara County is generally similar to other communities across the U.S.,  
with high rates of homelessness among people of color:



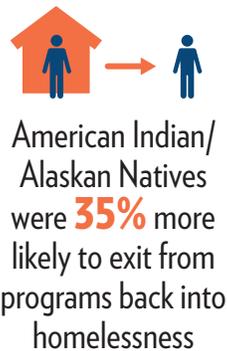
In contrast, **non-Hispanic** people and those who identify as **Asian/Asian American** are both significantly underrepresented in the homeless population.

## THEME 2: Racial/ethnic variation in experiences of homelessness

Our analysis found racial and ethnic disparities for some (but not all) HMIS data sets related to a person's homelessness experiences.



But..



When assessed for vulnerability and housing need, a higher percentage of Non-Hispanic/Latinx families (45.7%) are assessed as needing Permanent Supportive Housing than Hispanic/Latinx families (39%).



## THEME 3: Structural barriers, including lack of affordable housing and economic opportunity

Stakeholders across the community cited systemic and structural inequities as a significant driver of housing insecurity and poverty in people of color.



While housing affordability is an issue that affects people of all racial and ethnic background, people of color may be most severely impacted.



The persistent wealth gap and lack of economic opportunity put communities of color at risk of homelessness.



Disproportionately high rates of homelessness among people of color in the county mirror disproportionality in other systems.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Strategies to Address Racial Equity

1. Center and raise the voice of people of color who have experienced homelessness in the policy and program decisions of the supportive housing system.
2. Partner with the safety net system to better understand and address the systemic causes of poverty and inequity.
3. Adopt new housing and land use policies that help reverse longstanding housing disparities that have negatively impacted people of color.

### Values to Guide our Work

1. Integrate people of color with lived experience of homelessness in all program, policy, and funding decisions
2. Align racial equity work in the homelessness sector with other racial equity initiatives in Santa Clara County
3. Use a racial equity lens and data-driven decision making in the homelessness system and across other systems.