

# Poverty Speaks: Racial Disparities

A report by The Center for Community Solutions

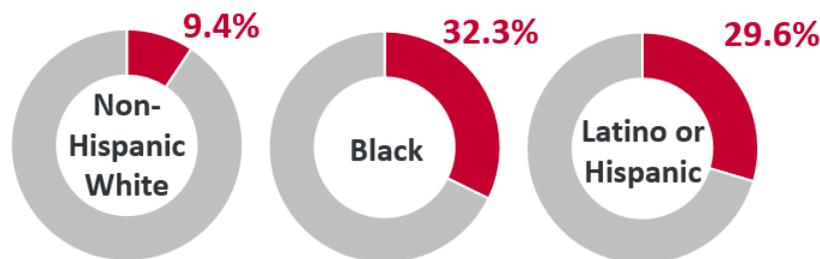


Cleveland is the second poorest large city in the United States, yet policymakers and community leaders rarely have the opportunity to hear from large numbers of people who live at or near the poverty level. The Center for Community Solutions and The Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland (CEOGC) have collected new information directly from low-income residents of Cuyahoga County about the issues and challenges they face. This report is the fourth in a series that will examine the results of the survey and its implications for Cuyahoga County.

## In Cuyahoga County, poverty disproportionately impacts people of color.

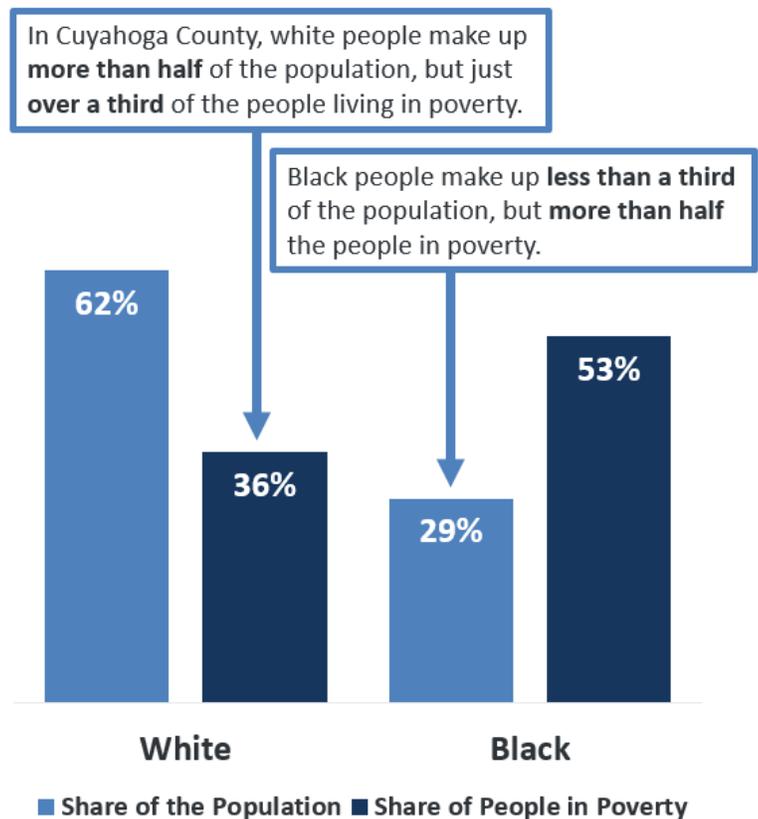
In 2017, nearly one-in-five people in Cuyahoga County lived in poverty. But poverty is not distributed evenly. Black people were more than three times as likely to be living below poverty as white people. **On nearly every economic measure, people of color fare worse than whites in Cuyahoga County.**

Percent Below Poverty, Cuyahoga County, 2017



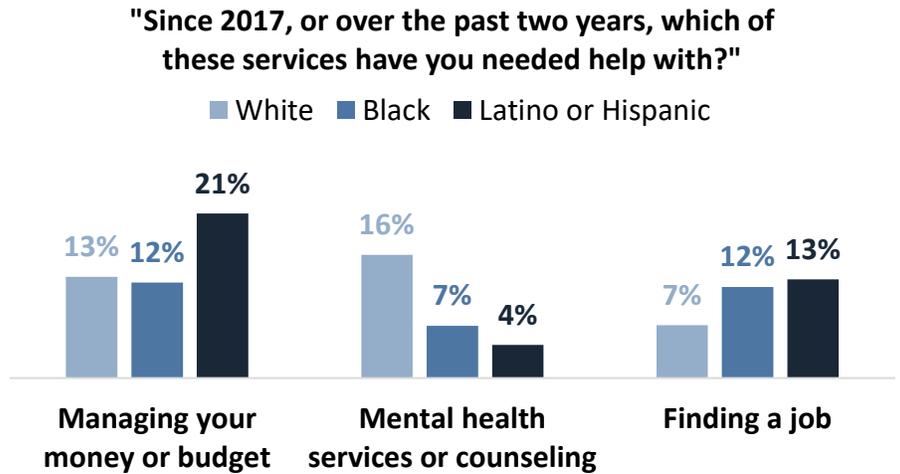
For example, in the Cleveland Metropolitan Area, median income for white residents is 2.1 times that of black residents, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. That means that **on average, Black workers earn \$0.46 of every dollar that white workers earn in our region.** Unfortunately, the disparity between the median income of Black households and white households is increasing, having grown nearly 80 percent in Cleveland since 2010 from just under \$6,000 to nearly \$10,500 today. The disparity in earnings between races in Cuyahoga County as a whole is even greater.

The respondents to our poll targeting Cuyahoga County residents with household incomes below \$25,000 were evenly split between people who identified themselves as non-Hispanic white (43 percent) and non-Hispanic Black (44 percent), with the rest identifying as Latino or Hispanic (6 percent) or multiple races or other (7 percent). **We found several statistically significant differences between respondents from various races.**



## Black and Latino or Hispanic Cuyahoga County Residents were significantly more likely than Whites to experience problems, including in some areas which could help break generational cycles of poverty.

Both Black and Latino or Hispanic residents were about twice as likely as white resident to have needed help finding a job in the past two years. When looking for work, people of color were more likely to have difficulty finding a job with convenient hours. Twenty-eight percent of Latino or Hispanic residents and 18 percent of Black residents said they had serious problems with the cost of transportation to work or school in the past year, compared to less than 10 percent of white residents. These factors could contribute to the fact that, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the unemployment rate for Latino or Hispanic workers in Cuyahoga County is about twice as high as that for non-Hispanic white workers, and **Black workers are three times more likely than their white peers to report being unemployed but actively looking for work.**



Mental health services or counseling was the only area where significantly more white people reported needing help than people of color. This is in line with research from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) which found that people of color were less likely to receive mental health care, despite the fact that mental illness is about as prevalent in minority and white populations. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) identifies several possible reasons for this disparity, including a lack of information and misunderstanding about mental health, reluctance and inability to access mental health services, and provider bias and inequality of care. Therefore, it is possible that just as many Black and Latino or Hispanic residents needed this help, but were more reluctant to admit it to survey recorders.

People of color, especially those who are Hispanic or Latino, were more likely to be forced to make at least one trade off because they don't have enough money. The most common was having to choose between food and transportation. Although numbers were smaller, Black residents were three times as likely as white residents to report that they had to choose between food and education. **Educational attainment is often seen as a solution to poverty, yet our survey suggests that Black residents may not be able to take advantage of available opportunities because they must focus on more basic needs.**

**More Black and Latino or Hispanic people in Cuyahoga County had to choose between FOOD and other necessities such as:**



**EDUCATION**



**TRANSPORTATION**



**CHILDCARE**

Cleveland is the only large city in the U.S. where more than half of children are living in poverty. That makes it even more concerning that **we found racial disparities in some areas which could help break cycles of poverty**. Several studies have shown that children who participate in high-quality early care and education programs have improved education and health outcomes well into adulthood. Significant investments in Cuyahoga County have been made to grow high-quality preschool programs. Unfortunately, we found that Latino or Hispanic people were significantly more likely to report having to choose between food and childcare than non-Hispanic white people. In addition, one in every 14 Black residents said they had to take their child out of childcare because of cost, compared to less than 2 percent of white residents.

Parents of color, both Black and Hispanic, were also significantly more likely to say they were unable to find the help they needed for childcare. Not having childcare was also a much more common barrier for people of color when they sought help for other problems, with Black people twice as likely and Hispanic people three times as likely to report this issue as white people. In fact, one-third of Hispanic or Latino respondents reported that not having childcare was a problem when they sought help at least some of the time.

Eliminating or reducing racial disparities in poverty and related issues will require intentional responses from government, funders, and service providers.

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*These and other findings come from an online and phone poll of county residents conducted by Baldwin Wallace University for The Center for Community Solutions. The poll was targeted toward people below or just above the federal poverty line. Fifty-seven percent of the 434 respondents reported a household income of less than \$25,000. Our mixed-methods approach yielded results with a five percent margin of error at the 95 percent confidence interval.*



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