New Jersey's Racial Disparities Across 17 Unique Systems and Measures

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There are significant racial disparities for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPoC) across multiple public systems in New Jersey due to historic and systemic racism and marginalization. BIPoC are overrepresented in crisis and institutional systems, like the homeless and justice systems, yet underrepresented in other areas that provide social benefits to vulnerable populations, including the mental health system. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the impact of these disparities as communities of color experience higher rates of infection and death as a result.[1]

Data is critical for advancing racial equity through public policy and practice. Existing racial and ethnic trends, disparities and inequities need to be tracked and transparent in order for communities and governments to be accountable in transforming systems to foster equitable and inclusive communities.

These disparities are a result of systemic failures and not individual ones, and therefore require systematic approaches to center equity for their undoing. New Jersey policy makers, advocates and the community at large must act boldly to undo structural racism and take an anti-racist approach to creating the policies and programs that lead to thriving and equitable communities. Communities of color and people with lived expertise must also be meaningfully included in conversations to reduce these inequities.

This document serves as a resource to support racial equity conversations across New Jersey's public systems and includes statewide racial disparities and recommendations to reduce disparities within the housing and adult justice systems; racial disparity data across 17 unique systems and measures in the state; and guidance on how to elevate racial equity in your work.

Disparities Index for Chronic Homeless[2]
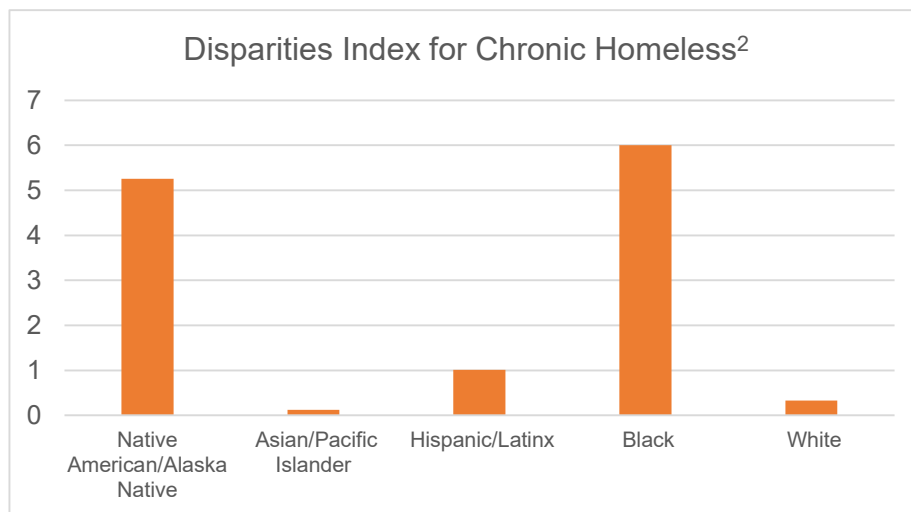
WITHIN THE HOMELESS SYSTEM, BIPOC HAVE STARKLY HIGHER OVER REPRESENTATION

In 2019, NJCounts found that the majority of people in shelters (51.5 percent) and who were homeless and unsheltered (49.4 percent) identified as Black or African American, while Black people only represent 13 percent of the state's population.[3] The graph to the left spotlights disparities calculated from CSH's Racial Disproportionality and Disparities Index

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[1] New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard, https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml; and Anna Flagg and Damini Sharma, "We knew communities of color in N.J. were hit hard by coronavirus deaths. New data shows how bad." *NJ.com,* published on Aug 22, 2020, accessed August 28, 2020, https://www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/08/we-knew-communities-of-color-in-nj-were-hit-hard-by-coronavirus-deaths-new-data-shows-how-bad.html.

[2] CSH's Racial Disparities and Disproportionality Index (RDDI) tool, analyzing demographic and homeless data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). For more information on the RDDI tool, please see page 4.

[3] NJ Counts, Monarch Housing Associates, 2020. For more information, see: https://monarchhousing.org/2019/09/23/the-visible-racial-disparity-in-the-u-s-homeless-population/

(RDDI), where a score above one signifies overrepresentation and a score of 1 denotes underrepresentation.
To understand the scope of homelessness in New Jersey, we must first understand the role of structural racism and its manifestations within both the long history and contemporary disproportionate rates of homeownership and renting. Starting in the 1930s, government-sponsored real estate maps outlined Black communities in red to signify neighborhoods that were deemed too risky for lending institutions issuing federally-insured mortgage loans. This practice, known as redlining, is a root cause of why many of New Jersey's communities remain segregated today. The current refusal of many municipalities to abide by the 1975 Mt. Laurel court decision which ruled affordable housing must be developed throughout the state equitably, coupled with predatory lending practices, continues this redlining legacy and contributes to the affordable housing crisis.

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice's "Erasing New Jersey's Red Lines" has additional background on this, along with recommendations for policy makers to take action on, including having the Attorney General open statewide investigations into housing discrimination and predatory lending and for the state to develop a lockbox fund to meaningfully and deeply invest resources into increasing homeownership in redlined communities.[4]

Although Native Americans are a smaller population than other racial and ethnic groups in New Jersey (representing 0.1 percent of the state's population but 0.6 percent of the state's homeless population[5]), they are an important demographic who are overrepresented in public systems. There are three Tribes recognized in the State of New Jersey, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribe, the Powhatan Renape Nation, and the Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation. The New Jersey Commission on American Indian Affairs is a primary liaison between the tribes and the state government, and this Commission also works with additional Tribes that have not yet been recognized. Whether Tribes can receive federal and state funding that other municipalities receive is dependent on whether and how the Tribe is recognized. There has been centuries of struggle with Tribes receiving and keeping federal and state recognition, including New Jersey's Tribes. Acknowledging that none of the Tribes are federally recognized can explain some of the disparities that are reflected in the homelessness and other systems.

It is important to recognize there are other reasons contributing to high homeless rates for BIPOC that stem from structural racism, ranging from lack of access to mental health care (see the New Jersey mental health disparity indices on page 3), significant health care disparities[6], to overrepresentation in the justice system.

New Jersey Disparity Index for Prison[7]
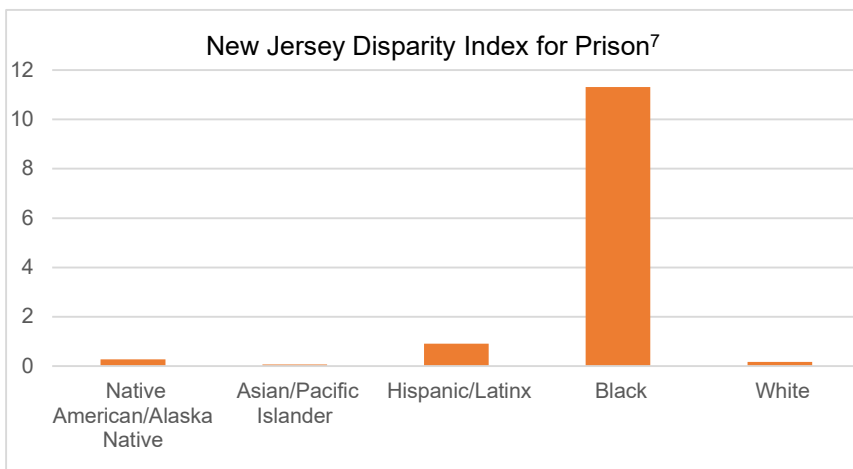
NEW JERSEY'S PRISON SYSTEM HAS THE HIGHEST BLACK/WHITE RACIAL DISPARITY IN THE NATION

New Jersey's prison system has the highest Black and white racial disparity in the nation.[8] Black adults are 12 times more likely, and Latinx adults six times more likely, than white adults to be incarcerated.
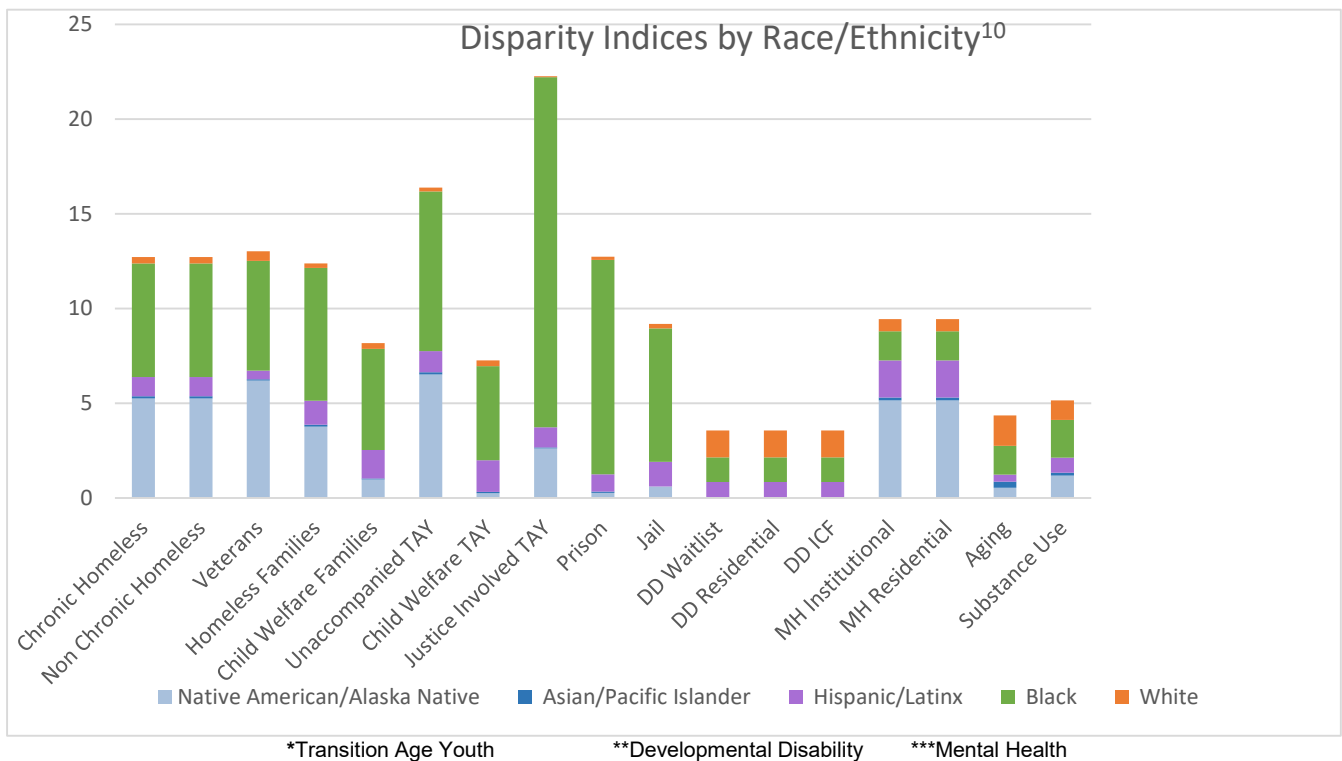
[4] New Jersey Institute for Social Justice: Erasing New Jersey's Red Lines, 2020.
[5] NJ Counts, Monarch Housing Associates, 2020.
[6] Margret Koller et al. "Building a Cultural of Health: A Police Roadmap to Help All New Jerseyans Live Their Healthiest Lives." *Rutgers University and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,* 2019.
[7] CSH's RDDI tool, analyzing demographic and jail data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics Jail Census, respectively. For more information on the RDDI tool, see page 4.
[8] Sentencing Project, The Color of Justice: The Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons, 2016.

The disproportionate rate of incarceration among Black and Latinx people only further compounds the existing challenges individuals, their families, and communities must navigate. People who are incarcerated are ten times more likely to be homeless than the general population and disproportionately suffer from co-occurring medical conditions, addiction, and trauma. And yet there are significant challenges to accessing appropriate treatment and care while incarcerated. Health systems within jails and prisons are cut off from the greater health care system in communities; Medicaid funding is cut off once a person is incarcerated beyond 30 days and the state and municipalities that run facilities must come up with their own funding to appropriately staff and invest in medical supplies. It was a bad situation before COVID and, as reentry navigation often requires in-person appointments to access resources like a driver's license, the situation has only gotten worse.

The New Jersey Reentry Corporation has a deep understanding of these challenges and has [recommendations](#) on how treatment for mental health, addiction (including Medication Assisted Treatment) and physical health care can be expanded, as well as reducing legal barriers and providing better opportunities for education, employment and safe and affordable housing.[9]

UNDERSTANDING RACIAL DISPARITIES ACROSS SYSTEMS AND TAKING ACTION

In the disparity graph below, Black people are overrepresented in 17 systems and measures, Hispanic/Latinx people are overrepresented in ten systems and measures, Native American people are overrepresented in nine systems and measures, and white people are *underrepresented* in 13 systems and measures. The Hispanic/Latinx populations are underrepresented across many systems and there may be several explanations for this, including insufficient data collection and New Jersey's relatively high undocumented workforce.

Disparity Indices by Race/Ethnicity[10]

*Transition Age Youth   **Developmental Disability   ***Mental Health

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[9] New Jersey Reentry Services Commission: Barriers, Best Practices, and Action items or Improving Reentry Services, 2019.
[10] CSH's RDDI tool. Within the [state's general population](#), Black people represent 13 percent while Native American and Alaska Native people represent just 0.1 percent. White people represent 55 percent, Hispanic/Latinx people represent 21 percent, Asian people represent 10 percent, and multiracial people represent 2 percent of the state's population.

WHY DATA IS CRITICAL FOR RACIAL EQUITY

All of the disparity graphs within this document use CSH's Racial Disparities and Disproportionality Index (RDDI), a tool created to support multi-sector partnerships that design and sustain change grounded in equity that have long been hampered by system-level data silos. For transparency and accountability, it is important to have data that calls attention to racial trends, disparities and inequities that are often masked by aggregated data. For example, it is common for a Department of Correction to report on who is in their custody, perhaps by race and ethnicity. But rarely do you see racial trends being provided for recidivism trends or on who is accessing post-secondary education programs and reentry housing.

Thus, data is the guide but not the destination. The RDDI tool calls attention to those most impacted and disproportionately represented across crisis systems, allowing anyone to compare over and underrepresentation of different racial and ethnic groups across 17 unique systems and measures in New Jersey, as well as compare them to the other 49 states, to help ground ongoing racial equity work. All of the data is publically sourced, allowing for the information to be downloaded into graphs or excel files to use for any document or publication on which your organization or office may be working.

This is also a call to action: at a systems level New Jersey must move beyond silos and aggregated data to inclusive and disaggregated data in order to address inequities with purpose and center race equity. As individuals we must ensure racial and ethnic data is collected, reported, and used to inform our programs and the outcomes we pursue.

INTEGRATING RACIAL EQUITY INTO YOUR WORK

In reviewing this information, including the data provided in the RDDI tool , requires us to examine:

- How racial/ethnic data is tracked and used at your organization, as well as in the New Jersey public systems for which your work is focused?
- Are BIPoC, as well as people with lived experience, represented on meaningful decision-making bodies, including oversight boards and leadership positions (including management) within your organization or work?
- How can the experiences and perspectives of communities of color guide the needed strategies to mitigate racial disparities and reduce overrepresentation in public systems?
- What are ways the RDDI could be used to supplement existing work you are doing (grant applications, etc.)?
- How can my organization put this data into action for real impact for all people of New Jersey?

THE RACIAL DISPARITIES AND DISPROPORTIONALITY INDEX (RDDI) TOOL

The RDDI looks at 17 unique systems and categories and measures whether a racial and/or ethnic group's representation in a particular public system is proportionate to, over, or below their representation in the overall population (proportionality).

CSH's Index can be viewed as the likelihood of one group experiencing an event, compared to the likelihood of another group.

An index of 1 signifies equal representation, an index below 1 signifies underrepresentation, and an index above 1 signifies overrepresentation in a particular system.

The tool takes into account both the system and state's demographic info. For example, when comparing the Black versus white jail index scores, it includes both the Black and white populations within the jail systems as well as their populations in the general public.

For more detailed information on the RDDI, including data sources, limitations and comparing New Jersey to other states, please visit www.csh.org/data.

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