

# RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Final Report | February 2024



**RACIAL  
EQUITY  
PARTNERS**



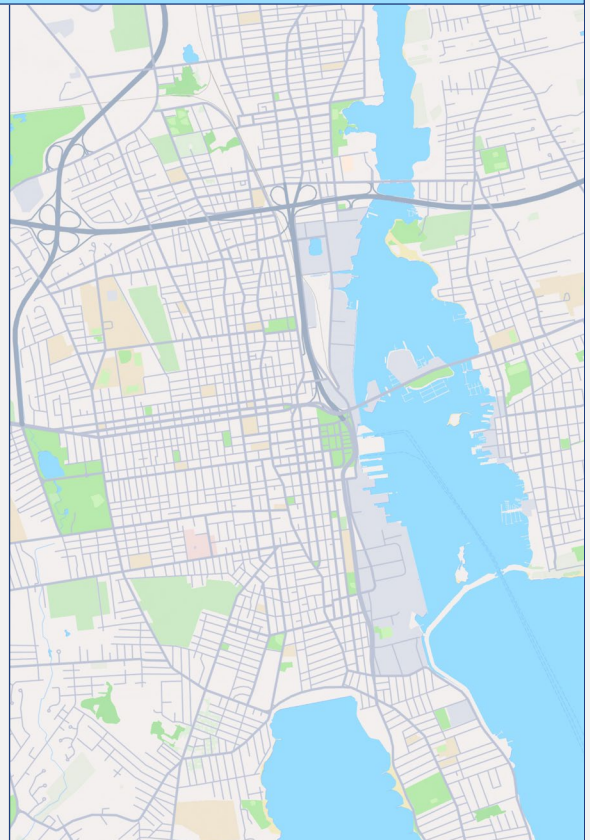
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NEW BEDFORD RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN		

*Across the United States, people of color—especially Black and Indigenous people—experience disparate rates of homelessness.<sup>1</sup> Policymakers, service providers, community advocates, and researchers collectively understand racial inequities in homelessness as the result of structural racism, and in turn agree that strategies to address homelessness should include approaches to advance racial equity.<sup>2</sup> At the local level, communities across the U.S. are conducting Racial Equity Assessments and using data and feedback gathered in those activities to inform Racial Equity Action Plans for their homelessness response systems.*

The Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) is the lead agency of the City of New Bedford’s Continuum of Care (CoC), also known as the Homeless Services Provider Network (HSPN). The HSPN is a network of providers and community stakeholders working together to prevent and end homelessness in the city. For several years, the OHCD and the HSPN have been examining the available data for potential racial disparities in who experiences homelessness, uses services, and the extent to which disparities in service outcomes may or may not exist. The HSPN also formed a Racial Equity Committee that raised awareness about the relationship between racial inequity and homelessness and started planning ways to ensure services are responsive to people of color.

With the benefit of CoC Planning dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) the HSPN and OHCD took a significant step in January 2023 to invest in this work by contracting with Racial Equity Partners (REP) to facilitate the following activities:

- 1** Establishing a Racial Equity Workgroup
- 2** Conducting a Racial Equity Assessment, guided by the Workgroup
- 3** Engaging in collaborative Racial Equity Action Planning



The initial section of this Final Report outlines findings from New Bedford’s Racial Equity Assessment beginning with a description of included assessment activities. This Assessment helped to guide Racial Equity Action Planning (strategy sessions), the results of which are documented and included in the second section of this Racial Equity Report.

## Assessment activities included:



**Community Survey.** In March 2023, an online survey was sent to the HSPN community, emphasizing outreach to front-line providers. There were 84 respondents with diverse roles.

See *Appendix A* for full Survey Respondent demographics data.



**Focus Groups and Interviews.** In April and May 2023, small group and one-on-one listening sessions were facilitated by REP consultants. These are listed below with number of participants in parentheses.

See *Appendix B* for Interview/Focus Group guides.

1. Youth Focus Group (3)
2. Youth Service Focus Group (4)
3. Family Focus Group (8)
4. Individual Focus Group (4)
5. Spanish-speaking Focus Group (4)
6. Frontline Provider Focus Group (8)
7. Executive Committee Focus Group (8)
8. Stakeholder interviews (3)



**Data Review.** Review of prior HSPN racial disparities reports, the 2023 PIT count, and service system dashboards for 2021-2022.

The assessment portion of this report summarizes the findings from these activities. Findings are organized into the following three main areas:

- 1. Acknowledging Racial Inequities in Homelessness**
- 2. Assessing the Homeless Services System**
- 3. Advancing Racial Equity in the CoC**

*The assessment ends with Recommendations and Guiding Questions to consider and to help inform the Action Planning phase.*

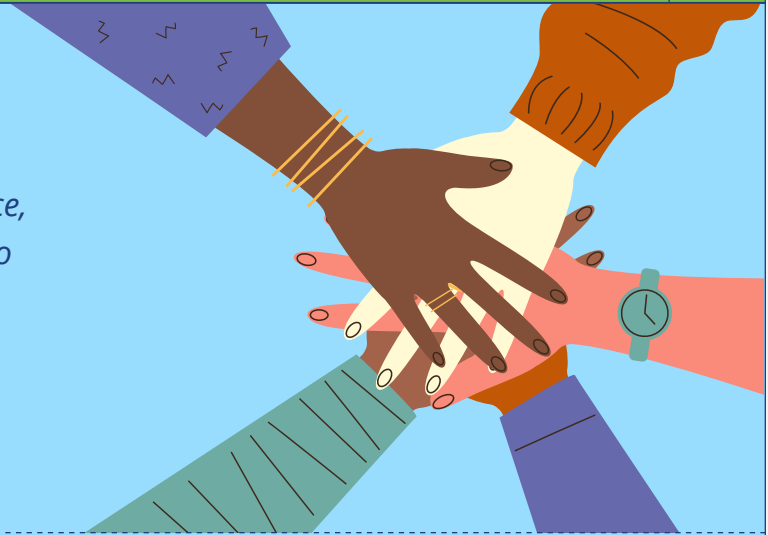
Before beginning this work, members of the Racial Equity Workgroup were asked to consider their goals. In working with Racial Equity Partners on assessment and planning, they hoped to:

- Learn and share.
- Improve the system.
- Be a better advocate in how we approach racial equity.
- Build on the work that the Racial Equity Committee had started.
- Better understand how we can remove barriers for folks in accessing/succeeding with supports.



The hope here is that this assessment and the action plan helps HSPN stakeholders and others in the community committed to advancing racial equity—meet these goals.

*For the purposes of consistent reference, this work will use the following terms to identify these groups:*

**BLACK**

includes African American, Black or Afro-Caribbean.

**INDIGENOUS**

American Indian or Alaska Native (Native American), and others native to their homelands in (e.g., Indigenous people of Central America).

**HISPANIC/LATINX**

includes Latinx, Caribbean, Central American, or South American.

**WHITE**

includes those who identify as White or White, Non-Hispanic.

**RACIAL DISPARITIES**

The term refers to race-based differences shown in data on resources, experiences, and outcomes.

**RACE-BASED DIFFERENCES**

are referred to as racial inequities, a term emphasizing how racial disparities result from unfair treatment, discrimination, and present and past racial injustice.

**RACIAL EQUITY**

refers to situations where disparities in resources, experiences, and outcomes are no longer associated with race.

**RACISM**

is understood as a system of advantage based on race. Racism is more than prejudice, hatred, or individual discrimination; racism includes systems, policies, practices, cultural beliefs, and values that support and protect the privilege and power of White people and harm people of color.

PART 1. ACKNOWLEDGING RACIAL INEQUITIES IN HOMELESSNESS

DATA ON RACE AND HOMELESSNESS

Nationally, Native Americans and Black people are consistently the most over-represented groups among people experiencing homelessness.<sup>3</sup> Although not consistently over-represented in national counts, Latino people also have very high homelessness rates, and some research suggests that the scope of Latino homelessness is underestimated.<sup>4</sup> A first step to understanding how racial inequities show up in local homelessness and homelessness assistance is to disaggregate the local data by race/ethnicity.

Each January, the New Bedford’s Street Outreach Team conducts the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count of people experiencing unsheltered and sheltered homelessness.

For several years, the PIT has shown that Black and Native American people are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, compared to their share of the total population and population in poverty, according to Census Bureau statistics.

*The Tables and Figure here display recent data.*

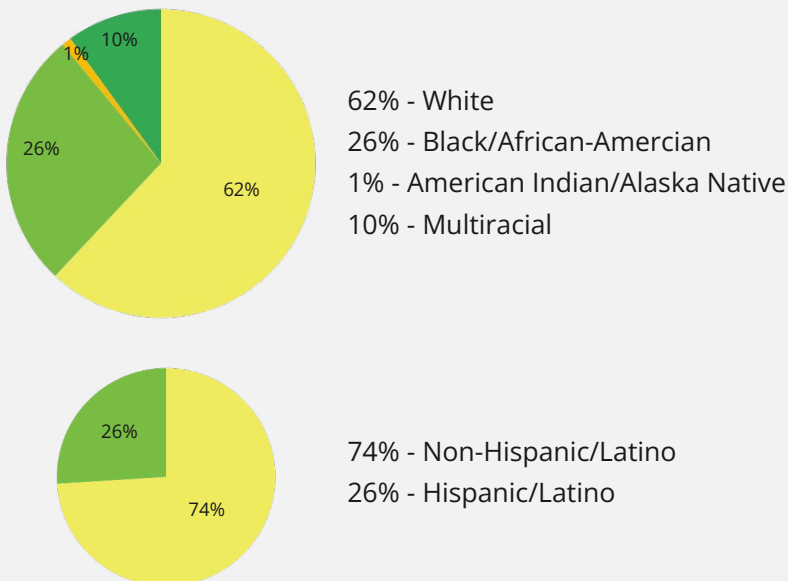


*Unfortunately, because different sources of data do not always capture metrics in the same way, data can easily overstate the proportion of one race over another.*

**As a case in point:** if one were to compare Black/African American Homeless figures collected during the PIT with Population figures sourced from the American Census Survey (ACS) depicted in the chart that follows, one might initially assume that this cohort experiences homelessness at a rate four times its share of the population. However, because population (and poverty) metrics do not break down race categories in the same way as the PIT, there is a significant number of people self-identifying one way in population reports and another in the PIT Count.

**More simply put,** if “Some Other Race” was captured by homeless data as it had been in the population and poverty data, the number attributable under Black homelessness would be much less than the 27% shown in the chart and would therefore be much less than the four times cited.

2023 Point-in-Time Count



*Bearing in mind the challenges with data noted and the importance of understanding that in context, for several years, the PIT has shown that:*

**Black and Native American people are overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness**

compared to the total population and population in poverty, though given discrepancies in data collection methodology, the extent to which this occurs within Black or African American cohorts is less than the percentages indicate.

**The share of Native American people experiencing homelessness is 5x their share of the population.**

In this case, despite the 5x disparity, the percentages reflect very small raw numbers of American Indian: the overall cohort is just 0.3% of the overall population of New Bedford, roughly 30 persons, as compared with the population of 0.8% of the homeless population, that being just 5 persons.

RACE	POPULATION	POVERTY	HOMELESS (2023)
<b>One race</b>			
White	60.6%	43.8%	62.0%
Black or African American	6.1%	7.7%	27.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	1.0%	0.8%
Asian	1.4%	2.6%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Some other race	19.1%	31.7%	Not an option
<b>Two or more races (Miltiracial)</b>	12.5%	13.3%	9.9%
<b>ETHNICITY</b>			
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	23.1%	31.3%	26.1%
Non-Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	76.9%	12.7%	73.9%

*Source: ACS 2022 1-Year; new Bedford CoC 2023 Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Sheltered and unsheltered homelessness (No response option for "Some other race" in HUD's data standards)*

### Varying Awareness of Race and Homelessness Data

Among service providers and administrators who participated in the assessment, several were not familiar with data on race and homelessness in the city. When REP's consultants shared that 26% of people experiencing homelessness in New Bedford identified as Black, more than one interview/focus group participant questioned the accuracy of the data. Perceptions may be influenced by people's specific work experiences. For example, an outreach worker supported individuals living unsheltered thought the percentage of Black people experiencing homelessness was even higher. On the other hand, someone providing supportive housing to individuals impacted by substance use disorders were more surprised by the data.

*These quotes show some of the varying perspectives based on specific work experiences →*

*"Right now, the majority of my residents are people that are Caucasian [White]...I don't know how the program was run before I came into my position. But I tried to open it up to everyone and anyone that is experiencing homelessness."*

-Service provider focus group participant

*"I'm surprised that number is that low, I actually would have thought it would have been higher, to be honest with you just working in this area...when I'm in these encampments, I'd say more like 90% of the people I interact with is a person of color. So I would say this number might not be accurately reflected in this area."*

- Street outreach service provider

Despite the data challenges noted, limited awareness of how race is related to homelessness in New Bedford can perpetuate disparities within the New Bedford homeless response system. If members of the community do not think racial disparities in homelessness are present, they could be less supportive of organizational, system, and policy changes that focus on racial equity.

Annually, racial disparities are documented in "Racial Disparities Summaries," produced by the City's Office of Housing & Community Development and recognized as an important step to raising awareness. However, disproportionality data was not included in several key documents and presentations for the system,<sup>5</sup> and sharing this data in several locations will help reach a wider audience.

### The Challenge of Colorblind Framings

Several homeless service providers expressed a viewpoint along the lines of, "we treat everyone the same." Social scientists have referred to these perspectives as "colorblind" frames, wherein people feel more comfortable ignoring race than thinking critically about how people might experience the world differently because of it. At least one person interviewed suggested that acknowledging racial disparities within the homeless system could create inequities [they said, "when we start to have so many questions regarding disparities, I think we create disparities"].

While serving all people who need assistance is critical, not examining and acknowledging trends in how racially marginalized subpopulations become homeless and are served by the system can lead to unrecognized gaps. On the other hand, when administrators and providers can view data with a racial equity lens, needs can be identified and addressed, and equity and progress can be celebrated.



### Other groups experiencing heightened risk of homelessness

Survey respondents were asked to describe other racial/ethnic groups who were at heightened risk of homelessness in the area, but whose experiences may not be observable (or not highlighted) through the categories available in the CoC's administrative data. Considering identities not represented by HUD's data categories may be especially important in a city like New Bedford, where more than 20% of individuals in the population identify as "Some other race." The significance of such differences between data collection cannot be overstated. People highlighted the following groups which represent people of different racial/ethnic identities, citizenship status, and other marginalized identities that intersect with race and may also put people at greater risk of homelessness:

- Cape Verdean individuals and families, who vary in how they identify their race
- LGBTQI+ populations
- Older adults
- Subgroups of Asian individuals and families
- Hispanic/Latino population and Central Americans, including migrants and those undocumented or still in the process to get their permanent residency or citizenship completed. Specifically, those identifying as Mexican, Mayan, Guatemalan, Haitian, Puerto Rican, Dominican.
- Insights from a Spanish-speaking focus group suggests that the numbers of Central American housing insecure people may be higher than what is reflected by the PIT count of Latinos because some people indicate "non-Hispanic/Latino." For example, one of the participants identified as being from "Maya Culture" and she does not select "Hispanic/Latino" because her native language is not Spanish, it is an indigenous Guatemalan language.

### CAUSES OF RACIAL INEQUITIES IN HOMELESSNESS: INTERCONNECTED AND COMPOUNDING EFFECTS OF STRUCTURAL RACISM

National research demonstrates that people of color, particularly Black and Native American people, are more likely to experience homelessness due historical and ongoing racism, discrimination, and exclusion.<sup>6</sup> To gather local insight and understand the perspectives of those in New Bedford, the survey and focus groups asked respondents to consider the causes of disproportionate rates of homelessness for Black people in the community.

Overall, survey respondents describe how they see racism across multiple, intersecting systems contributing to racial disparities in homelessness. The responses highlight how discrimination and barriers associated with race can make the structural conditions that drive homelessness for everyone (e.g., inability to afford available housing, barriers to economic mobility, and criminalization) even more detrimental to people of color.

*Below, we report on the key areas uplifted by community members who participated in the assessment: **systemic racism, housing and employment discrimination, criminal justice barriers, and cost of living and intergenerational poverty**. These areas highlight how structural factors push people of color into homelessness and make it harder to obtain stable housing after experiencing it.*

*Community perspectives on the causes of disparities in homelessness for Black people  
in New Bedford: Key themes and supporting quotes*

THEME	QUOTES (SURVEY RESPONDENTS)
<p><b>Systemic Racism</b></p> <p>Participants described how racial inequities in homelessness are the result of racism broadly, including both individual behaviors and institutional policies. They also described how racist policies and actions in the past impact people today, with little done to redress past harms and disadvantages. Examples from survey respondents include:</p>	<p>“...Past embedded in our society racial and ethnic disparities.”</p> <p>“I believe that people of color have been targeted by the government and given unequal access to education and basic rights.”</p> <p>“...I feel that systemic institutionalized racism is the root of the beast.”</p> <p>“I believe that Black people haven’t been given the same opportunities as other[s]...”</p>
<p><b>Housing and Employment Discrimination</b></p> <p>There was a specific emphasis on discrimination faced in the housing and job markets. Responses pointed to the way anti-Black stereotypes that permeate society lead landlords and other actors in the housing market to discriminate against Black individuals and families. In addition, people touched on lack of affordable childcare as a barrier for women of color seeking economic opportunity.</p>	<p>“Not receiving the same treatment or benefits, or being racially profiled and not qualifying for housing over a white person.”</p> <p>“Landlords not wanting to rent to Black people.”</p> <p>“Vouchers not being accepted.”</p> <p>“Disparities in hiring practices cause [disparities] in income, effecting ability to attend higher education in a constant cyclical cycle...”</p> <p>“...Lack of accessible childcare, lack of employment that accommodates single mothers”</p>
<p><b>Cost of Living and Intergenerational Poverty</b></p> <p>Rising housing costs, low wages, and insufficient social safety nets increase homelessness for all community members. However, racism and discrimination causes the impacts of these societal conditions to hit communities of color the hardest. E.g., in a tight rental market where landlords can easily find non-Black families to rent to, anti-black racial bias have a stronger relationship to homelessness. Historic and ongoing discrimination in the housing market has left Black families with fewer resources to fall back on when adverse circumstances arise.</p>	<p>“Bills. Inflation.”</p> <p>“Disproportionate poverty.”</p> <p>“Wealth gap.”</p> <p>“There is not enough affordable housing in this area.”</p> <p>Youth Spotlights: Youth of color with limited credit scores and work experience faced additional barriers to securing adequate housing—even when they could afford the rental cost.</p>

**Criminal Justice System Barriers**

We also heard people point to racial bias and disparities in the criminal justice system. Criminal justice disparities are a result of the systemic racism that also drives homelessness. At the same time, the barriers faced by people of color who are in contact with the criminal justice system further exacerbate their risk of homelessness (e.g., stigma and barriers to housing and employment).

Systemic racism and bias... especially law enforcement and the court system. This unfair treatment creates significantly more barriers for African Americans.”  
 “...lack of rehabilitation programs in jails/prisons.”  
 “Racial issues with landlords and CORI’s due to past arrests...”

**PART 2. ASSESSING THE HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM**

*This section examines how people of different racial/ethnic groups experience the homelessness response system, drawing on system data and qualitative feedback from survey, interview, and focus group respondents.*

**SYSTEM DATA**

**Program Use**

Data from the 2023 PIT Count and the CoC’s Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) can provide insights into how people experiencing homelessness are accessing services in New Bedford. The table below shows the race/ethnic composition of those who were included in the January 2023 PIT Count, showing subtotals for those in emergency shelter, transitional housing (TH), permanent supportive housing (PSH), and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

**A few key findings:**

- Nationally, research shows that **PSH is most effective in addressing homelessness long-term**, which means system assessment should pay careful attention to racial inequities in who is accessing it.<sup>7</sup>
- **More than half of people experiencing homelessness were in PSH**, showing that the HSPN is working hard to invest resources into interventions that house people experiencing homelessness.
- Compared to their share of the total, **Black people were a lower share of those in PSH and White people were a higher share** (similar to findings from the 2021 Racial Disparity Analysis Summary).
- **The share of Latino individuals in PSH reflects their share of the total PIT count.**
- **A much lower share of Latino individuals access TH** compared to their overall share of those experiencing homelessness, a finding also seen in the CoC’s 2022 Racial Disparity Analysis Summary.

## 2. FINDINGS

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Race/Ethnicity & PIT 2023 (% of subtotal)	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Supportive Housing	Unsheltered	Total Homeless
White	46.3%	67.1%	70.6%	62.7%	62.0%
Black	40.1%	21.5%	20.7%	26.9%	27.3%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Native American	0.4%	1.3%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian Other Pacific	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiple Races	13.2%	10.1%	7.6%	10.4%	9.9%
Hispanic / Latino (any race)	30.1%	13.9%	28.6%	11.9%	27.5%
Non-Hispanic / Latino (any race)	69.6%	86.1%	71.4%	88.1%	72.5%
Total Count	227	79	367	67	673

*Note: It may be important to note that for the 2023 PIT count, inclement weather meant that 30 people were in overflow shelter who may have otherwise been unsheltered.*

### Duration of Homelessness

We examined duration of homelessness using HUD's [Stella-P tool](#).<sup>8</sup> From Fall 2021 to 2022, average number of days homeless for all was 247 days. Black people had lower average days homeless (173 days), while White people (296 days) and Latino people (294 days) had higher. Data on days homeless is dependent on timely data entry and influenced by program types that have varying lengths of stay. Future assessments should continue examining this metric as the CoC becomes more familiar with the accuracy of the data, and the CoC may want to examine program-level data to distinguish between days homeless in emergency shelter and days homeless in TH or rapid-rehousing.

### Exit Destinations

Looking at "exit destinations" can help the CoC understand how well the system is helping people exit homelessness into stable housing situations. From Fall 2021 to 2022, 39% of people entered in HMIS left homelessness for a "permanent" destination (e.g., housing of their own, or a stay with family or friends that is permanent). Based on the data entered from this time period, 31% of Black clients/households and 28% of Latinos exited into permanent destinations, compared to 62% of White.

**Returns Homelessness**

From Fall 2021 to 2022, less than 1% of the individuals/ households who were “exited” from the system in the 12 months prior to that time period were then re-entered into the system as homeless. **This is how HUD defines returns to homelessness.**

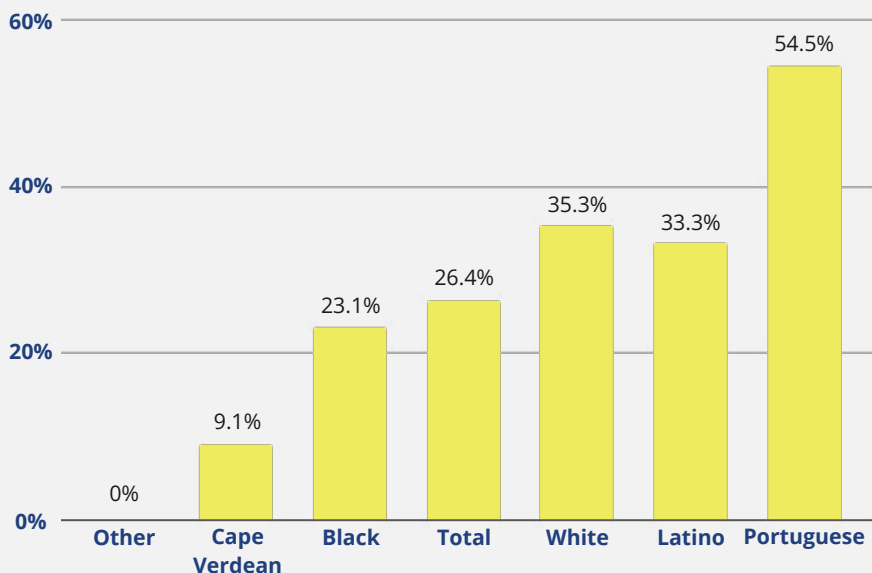
This data is limited in its reliability as a measure for people’s ongoing experiences with homelessness or housing insecurity, but based on the available data, the group with the highest returns to homelessness are people who identified as Black, Hispanic/Latino: 12% (4 people of 34); no other racial/ethnic category exceeded 4% returns.



*Future Research should continue to explore all three of these metrics and bring in other sources of data (including qualitative) to better understand whether shorter durations of homelessness for Black people is associated with positive housing outcomes, or whether Black people are more likely to experience episodic homelessness (shorter experiences, but greater returns to homelessness).*

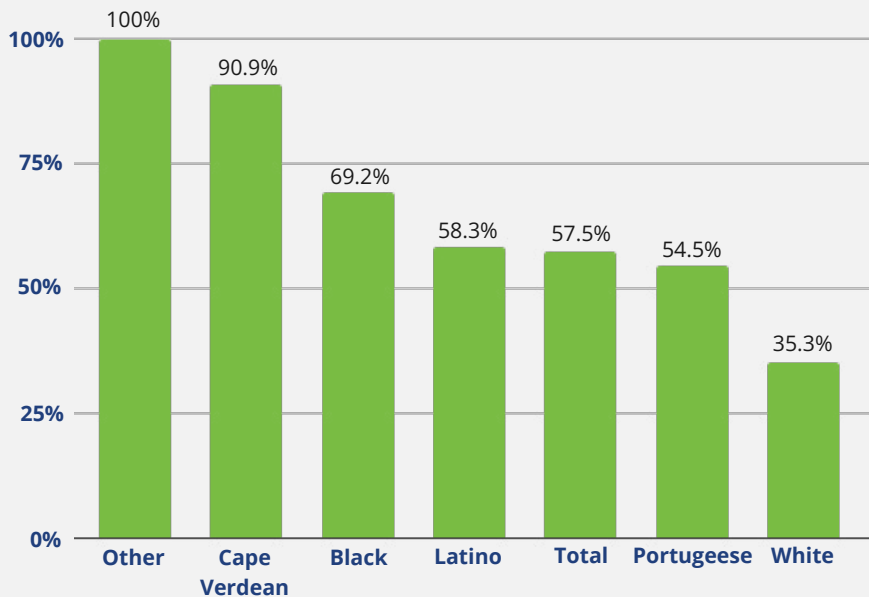
**COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON EQUITY IN THE HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE SYSTEM**

We asked survey participants (sample size of 84 responses) whether they think people of all racial/ethnic groups are treated equitably in the homelessness response system. The question asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement on a percent scale (0 to 100, strongly disagree to strongly agree). Responses varied, but the average response was 41—close to neutral but leaning towards disagree. We used responses to determine the share of participants who agreed (or, indicated greater than 60 on the scale) and examined results by race. Among Black, Cape Verdean, and ‘Other’ respondents (combined category for Asian and Native American, whose sample sizes were low), there was less agreement that people of all racial/ethnic groups are treated equitably in New Bedford’s homelessness response system. These findings support HSPN’s commitment to identifying potential barriers and working to advance equity.



*I personally think that people of all racial ethnic groups are treated equitably in our homelessness response system*  
(% Agree)

We also asked respondents to specifically consider whether race/ethnicity influences how people experience Coordinated Entry, Assessment, and Prioritization (hereafter, Coordinated Entry). Results indicate 57% agreement that race influences how people are treated in Coordinated Entry. People identifying as Black, Cape Verdean, and Other tended to indicate greater agreement, while White and Portuguese respondents were more likely to disagree or give a neutral response.



*I personally think race/ethnicity influences how people are treated in the system of coordinated entry, assessment, and prioritization.*

(% Agree)

### BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HOUSING & SERVICES FOR SUBPOPULATIONS

The people we spoke with and who participated in the survey highlighted how service system designs can exacerbate risk of homelessness for people of color in New Bedford. Primarily, responses suggest that programs and systems can improve their outreach, accessibility, and follow-through to support people in need and who are navigating the system. This section highlights specific barriers shared by members of subpopulations (Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Youth) and those who serve them.

#### Black People in New Bedford

Reflecting the data in Table 3, participants discussed how Black people are overrepresented on the streets and in emergency shelter and less likely to be in transitional or permanent supportive housing (PSH). One supervisor described how people leaving recovery programs and people living in public housing authorities have access to case management that individuals on the street do not, potentially making enrollment into the Continuum’s PSH programs harder for people unsheltered or in shelter. These differences may have a disparate impact on Black people; the following table highlights similar and additional ways Black people may experience gaps in the current system—highlighting lack of support and the lack of trust that results.

*Barriers to Accessing Housing & Services for Black People in New Bedford*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Inadequate Support</b></p> <p>Participants described an overall pattern where Black people facing homelessness and housing insecurity faced barriers to accessing resources that White people in similar economic situations were able to access. Mainly, they pointed to racial bias in the system, material disadvantages (like lack of access to technology), limited outreach, and inadequate support from providers.</p>	<p>“Not knowing where to get assistance, not having the resources necessary to gain assistance (technology)” (Survey Respondent)</p> <p>“We have case managers, but they are not really educated. It’s like you are telling them what to do, and they are just there to sign the papers.” (Single adult focus group participant)</p> <p>“I think the services that are in the city, some of them might be there, but you have to search for it, you have to find someone to help.” (Single adult focus group participant)</p> <p>“The people who can navigate our systems and qualify for benefits and get services are more likely to be White than Black, in the exact same situation. I don’t know if Bedford Housing falls into that category specifically, I just know that is the rule with housing generally in Massachusetts...I help people keep benefits, I prioritize people who are already in housing, who are already getting DTA and SNAP. So in many ways, I am helping out the White poor folks who got to access the system and the Black folks who that couldn’t access the system, they never even got into the front door...we have whole populations that we never even reach.” (Legal services provider)</p>
<p><b>Bias and Lack of Trust</b></p> <p>Respondents pointed to limited knowledge of resources available (suggesting the need for more outreach) and to lack of trust due to past negative experiences with the system (racial bias, lack of follow-through).</p>	<p>“Broadly, people saw that many Black people experiencing homelessness had lack of confidence that the system will help them.” (Survey Respondent)</p> <p>“I also think because of the judgements/stereotypes families of color also have given up in some aspects in regards to help and are just trying to figure it out on their own...” (Survey Respondent)</p> <p>“They’re not advocating for us. We advocate for ourselves, but I just felt like come on. Why do you have all these programs? And you know...we have a baby on the way. You guys have it, you guys just haven’t really opened the doors up for us. Y’all pick and choose who y’all help.” (Black father experiencing homelessness)</p> <p>Me [as a Black man], you know, they’re gonna be like, oh, have you ever been arrested? They want to know everything about me. You don’t even know me, but you want me to jump through all these hoops. I’m here, and I am doing all this, give me a chance...please give me a chance. I don’t need all these policies, I need somewhere to go. It’s hard for me to sleep.” (Single adult focus group participant)</p>

**Hispanic/Latino in New Bedford**

We also held focus groups with Spanish-speaking individuals and members of families. These interviews also highlighted access issues and lack of trust, with specific attention to how language, recent migration, and cultural differences created barriers to navigating the system and accessing resources. Many also highlighted biased treatment, from explicitly racist experiences to perceived lack of empathy.

*Barriers to Accessing Housing & Services for Hispanic/Latino People in New Bedford*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Bias and Lack of Empathy</b></p> <p>Hispanic/Latino participants described feeling judged and being treated with limited empathy, understanding, and patience. Experiences of bias and micro-aggressions often had to do with language.</p>	<p>You're treated in an offensive way, when one seeks help it's not only people working in private offices (real estate agency offices), it's those working in public offices as well... they treat us poorly if we don't speak English, and if we don't speak Spanish (because they speak the language of their indigenous community in Latin America)]." (Focus group participant) ["Un trato indignante- cuando uno va a pedir ayuda, inclusive con personas no solo privadas pero con trabajadores públicos- nos tratan mal- si no hablamos ingles y si no hablamos Espanol."]</p> <p>"There's indifference, very little empathy or patience in working with us." (Focus Group Participant)</p> <p>"Our worst sin is being Hispanic." (Focus group participant)</p> <p>"When trying to access services (of any kind), if you don't speak English there are assumptions made about your person, and threats to your safety made: "Callense! Llamamos a la policia o inmigracion..." [Be quiet! Or we're going to call the cops or immigration." (Focus group participant)</p>
<p><b>Language Barriers and Adapting to New Systems</b></p> <p>Hispanic/Latino participants described language barriers impacting their ability to understand and complete applications and understand lease agreements. The also described difficulty obtaining the needed paperwork and information</p>	<p>Housing applications are all in English, "nothing is in Spanish so we don't understand." (Focus group participant)</p> <p>"In Guatemala you don't have to do this, you don't apply for an apartment, provide proof of anything via paperwork, or pay a predetermined amount of money to obtain housing." (Focus group participant)</p>



**Lack of Knowledge of Homelessness Specific Resources**

Hispanic/Latino participants and staff who work at an agency serving them had very limited knowledge of the HSPN or how to access resources dedicated to people experiencing homelessness.

“You won’t see us, us immigrants sleeping on the streets because we’ll find a way. We’ll borrow money, we’ll not eat, 10 or 15 of us will live in one apartment, or in a living room....” (Focus group participant)

Spanish speakers participating in the Focus Group reiterated that they are housing insecure, possibly evicted at any moment, and while they are aware of rental assistance funds such as RAFT, they mentioned that the process takes a long time: “You call and then they don’t get back to you for three months!”

*Providers seemed not sure what homelessness-specific resources undocumented clients were eligible for, or even the best steps to take for documented clients at risk of or experiencing homelessness.*

**Youth and Young Adults**

Transitional-aged youth discussed the challenge of finding housing in New Bedford due to rising rents and the need to have a credit history. Focus groups, interviews, and survey results suggest that although there are limited shelter beds in the city in general, there are very limited beds for youth.

One focus group participant discussed the unmet need specifically for transitional aged woman without children. The city had a few dedicated housing beds for young men (Kilian’s House); however, one young woman shared that there wasn’t anywhere she could go. She had to alternate from staying at her mother’s house, couch surfing a friend’s apartments, and attempting to sublease apartments. She also highlighted the difficulty she faced on the rental market due to her sexuality:

*“I’ve seen plenty of apartments that are burned for like, like rooms renting? Well, me- I’m a female, and I’m a lesbian. They don’t want you there.”*

(Transition Age Youth Focus Group Participant)

**Importantly, since our interviews, Kilian’s House has announced it is transitioning to a scattered-site program for youth that is open to all genders.**

Ongoing assessment and community engagement should aim to understand how well these changes are meeting the needs of young people in the city.



We also talked with young people who were in foster care, and they were unaware of any programming that could help former youth in the foster care system.

The limited shelter options may have limited our ability to identify and meet with a wide range of young people experiencing homelessness in the city. Future efforts to engage youth and young adults experiencing and at risk of homelessness might consider the importance of engaging with the school system. Doing so will help the HSPN better understand the needs of unaccompanied youth, because, as one of our work group members mentioned, many of students experiencing homelessness would be considered unaccompanied— some are migrants staying with sponsors, rather than guardians, and others are youth born in the U.S. staying with relatives (but not in official, foster-care approved homes). Although the schools and HUD programs have different definitions of homelessness, ongoing engagement, and partnership between schools and the HSPN can support the system’s ability to understand the needs of youth of color experiencing homelessness, particularly those living undocumented.

As one person said:

*“In the New Bedford high school, they have 300 kids that were homeless, out of which 120 were undocumented Hispanics.” (Service Provider Focus Group)*



**Across the entire school district, 1,322 students were in shelter, motels, or staying temporarily with family/friends (doubled-up) during the 2019-2020 school year** (the latest publicly available data). Of these, 85% were doubled-up and 63.2% were Hispanic/Latino. The share of students experiencing homelessness who were Black was 13%, lower than the overall homeless count. However, public data does not indicate the racial/ethnic breakdown of sheltered vs. unsheltered vs. doubled-up students, and local level research might show that Black students are overrepresented among those who are experiencing sheltered or unsheltered homelessness.<sup>9</sup>

Data from schools may be able to support advocacy for new homelessness assistance resources or ongoing investment in shelter, housing, and services for young adults.

## Families

Families with children experiencing homelessness are served by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Livable Communities (EOHLC, formerly the Department of Housing and Community Development). This shelter system for families falls outside the HSPN, and the experience of how families navigate the state system was not a primary focus of the assessment. However, the stakeholders involved in the assessment highlighted how the bifurcated system creates difficulties for families and for providers who want to support them.

For example, one theme applied to families and may represent a gap in the overall homelessness response system: navigating administrative burdens and inconsistent support to get in the door. In other words, do families have the support they need to complete the Emergency Assistance (EA) application, and are there additional ways that the HSPN might be able to strategically leverage their programs and resources to support them? While the response to such a possibility requires additional discussion, members of the Workgroup felt that when/where there is good work happening in the city to support families navigating this system, it should be recognized, celebrated, and resourced.

Finally, there was a gap identified for youth (under age 18) with children who were not yet eligible for EOHLC services.

### Limited Shelter Beds

Barriers for people experiencing homelessness in New Bedford include:

- The decrease in housing affordable to low- and moderate-income families
- Too few shelter beds to meet peak demand
- Limited access to transitional and permanent supportive housing through CES

These realities lead those experiencing homelessness into substandard housing conditions, including unregulated private shelters, to sleeping in cars. For example, a focus group participant shared how limited housing options led him to use rental assistance to rent in a single-room occupancy building that caught fire in Spring 2023. This was a tragedy, and for some represented an ongoing feeling that safe, quality housing was often out of reach, despite support from HSPN providers:

*“It was a deathtrap—No fire extinguisher, no sprinkler, no exit door. The ladder in the back was nailed to the ground...the room consisted of what was a twin bed, no refrigerator, one little, small table with one chair. And that was it...They [a local public services agency] paid \$1,300 for us to move into that room with no access to nothing. What caused me to take that (room)? I got sick and tired of being sick and tired. I just took whatever.” (Single Adult Focus Group Participant)*

Focus group participants discussed using their Social Security resources to reside in a shelter that doesn't receive CoC funding and is not subject to the regulations and housing standards of the HSPN or HUD. Some clients and providers described negative experiences within the private pay shelters. Due to the lack of local, government-funded shelter beds, individuals may be more likely to experience programs and policies that do not align with HSPN and federal guidelines. For example, one family stated that they were asked to leave a religious-affiliated shelter due to being a lesbian couple.

One provider explained:

*“HSPN, you know is run by the book. And most of the agencies run by the book, there is an agency that they consider off the grid [redacted organization name]. And I use them exclusively almost because you cannot even get near the shelters with long waiting lists that are run by the city.” (Homeless Services Provider)*

## COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM

### Are there Inequities in Access to the CES system?

**The Coordinated Entry System (CES)** is a process for assessing people experiencing homelessness and referring them to appropriate assistance based on their strengths and needs. Although New Bedford's CoC began its efforts with Coordinated Entry in December of 2015, the development of this Racial Equity Assessment and Action Plan was concurrent with the introduction of a new CES for the New Bedford Continuum of Care operated as a program of Community Counseling of Bristol County (CCBC).

**Currently, the New Bedford CES is geared specifically to assisting those living unsheltered and on the streets as well as those in emergency shelters**, doing so in both English and Spanish. Those persons seeking assistance and in such situations would call the CES phone number and would, after being given options for other community resources depending on individual situations, be able to leave a message for the Coordinated Entry team. Regardless of whether an unsheltered or emergency sheltered client calls coordinated entry directly or the call comes from a case manager/other provider working with that client, CES can then undertake an assessment following the CoC's "CHAT" (Comprehensive Housing Assessment Tool) to assess vulnerability. When a service provider contacts the CES team to request referrals for a PSH placement, they are provided with a client referral. The agency then contacts the referred client and assesses them for their specific programs. After this conversation, service providers select one of the referred clients for their program and communicate this selection/housing offer to coordinated entry for its records.



*While there is a standardized process for New Bedford's Coordinated Entry System, there are also practices that could perpetuate racial inequities in access to housing and services (i.e., barriers that disadvantage some and advantage others, with patterns associated with race/ethnicity).*

We identified two potential equity barriers in the CES process:

- **The CES eligibility tool is sometimes completed by phone.** Assessment tools requires individuals to answer sensitive questions about their health and wellbeing to a stranger. A phone call may not be the most effective tool to build rapport with individuals experiencing homelessness. A lack of rapport building could lead to incomplete responses to the tool's questions—especially questions concerning mental health, drug use, and addiction. Although phone may be accessible and preferred by some (e.g., as to not have to travel to a site), it may be important to provide and encourage people to complete the assessment in person, as they are able.
- **Service providers select their clients, which introduces the potential for bias.** The current process allows agencies to select their clients in order of priority after being referred through Coordinated Entry. Once a service provider receives a referral, they could interview a client and decide the person is ineligible for their program. A service provider could also prioritize serving clients they already know rather than interviewing unknown referrals from the CES without giving adequate opportunity to those identified as higher priority.

### Navigating the CES system

Interview and focus group participants discussed the limitations of CES. Participants shared they were unaware of how to access resources while facing homelessness and housing insecurity. Several participants with lived experience of homelessness received their orientation of services from other people experiencing homelessness. While some participants experiencing homelessness on the street discussed having case managers, several described gaps in their case managers' knowledge of resources.

Participants with experience of homelessness described their ability to get into a shelter in New Bedford as luck or due to their connection to an individual provider or advocate. Focus group participants discussed attempting to navigate their housing crisis alone and being turned away by homeless service providers—until they made a personal connection with a program supervisor or a well-connected advocate who helped them receive adequate housing services. While the sponsor was not always a case manager, the personal advocate helped participants complete their CES eligibility tool and often called homeless service agencies on their behalf.

This process of advocacy and support demonstrates the best of New Bedford homeless services staff, but it also highlights potential accessibility gaps within the CoC. Individuals experiencing homelessness for the first time, those who are detached or distrustful of local agencies, and those who may have a harder time forming close connections may be disadvantaged when seeking services through the Coordinated Entry System. Our other findings highlighted how people of color, particularly Black people, observe barriers to accessing services and experience mistrust of the system, suggesting that they may face barriers to successfully receiving services through CES.

### Perspectives from CES Team

When a member of the CES team was asked if there were any barriers for individuals accessing the coordinated entry system, the response was, "No, we serve every caller." Although it is an important value to serve everyone, the belief that there are no barriers does not align with other perspectives from providers and people with experience of homelessness who were interviewed. To improve the CES system, HSPN leaders should consider potential barriers to calling the hotline, completing the assessment, and, ultimately, receiving resources through the process.

*"I just made it into Sister Rose's place last night. Okay, so I am in that now. I have went there the right way. Try to get in there several times—close doors. But this particular lady knows the lady that runs the place...she sees me at Market Basket and said, 'Oh, I just heard that you're homeless? Well, I know this one person, she can help you.'"*

-Single Adult Focus Group Participant



Note: At the outset of the Consultant's work in devising this Assessment, Coordinated Entry was operated by Catholic Social Services (CSS). The program was turned over to Community Counseling of Bristol County (CCBC) and the CES, itself was revised in order to mitigate barriers shared here.

Based on the 2023 Housing Inventory Count, utilization rate of PSH units fell slightly below the 85% threshold for HUD (at 84%), highlighting the importance of reviewing and addressing gaps in the CES system so that beds do not go unused. All individuals should have equitable access to completing the process and being referred to appropriate programs.

**Importantly, as of Spring 2023, New Bedford CoC has been piloting a new assessment tool to support placement and prioritization.** In assessing vulnerability, the tool considers whether an individual is part of a historically marginalized population. The CoC is also hoping to improve data entry from Coordinated Entry into HMIS so that the impact of this new tool can be evaluated over time. Racial Equity Action Planning based on this assessment can help support this work and facilitate ongoing buy-in.

**WORKFORCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

**Race/Ethnicity**

Homelessness response systems across the U.S. are paying attention to how the race/ethnicity of the workforce, from frontline staff to leadership, reflects those using homelessness assistance programs. As part of this study, respondents were asked whether they thought the overall racial/ethnic composition of frontline staff and leadership/senior managers represents people served in New Bedford’s CoC.



**KEY FINDINGS**

**55%**

agreed, respondents identifying as White and Portuguese were most likely to see the workforce as representative of those served

**53%**

agree or strongly agree that frontline staff is representative. About 25% disagreed, while another quarter were not sure

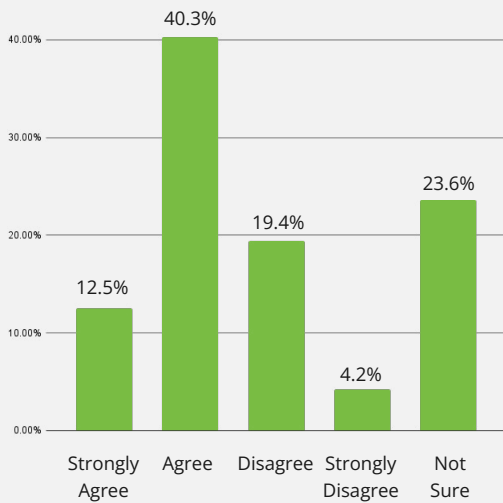
**40% and 62%**

of Black, Cape Verdean, and Latino respondents disagreed that frontline staff and leadership were representative compared to 18% and 41% of respondents who identified as White

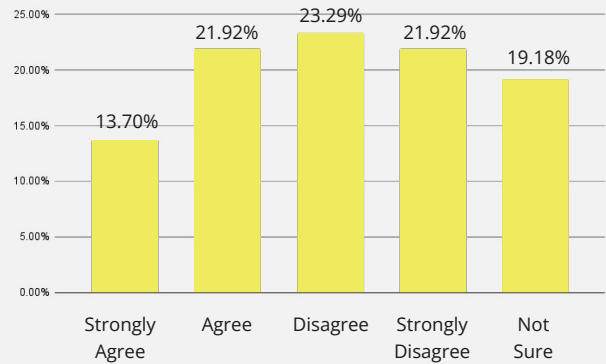
**Only 36%**

think that senior managers and leadership are racially/ethnically representative of people using services. About 1 in 5 respondents strongly disagreed that people in management and leadership roles were racially representative of people using services

**The race-ethnicity of the people served is reflected in the frontline staff of New Bedford's CoC**



**The race-ethnicity of the people served is reflected in the senior managers and leadership of New Bedford's CoC**



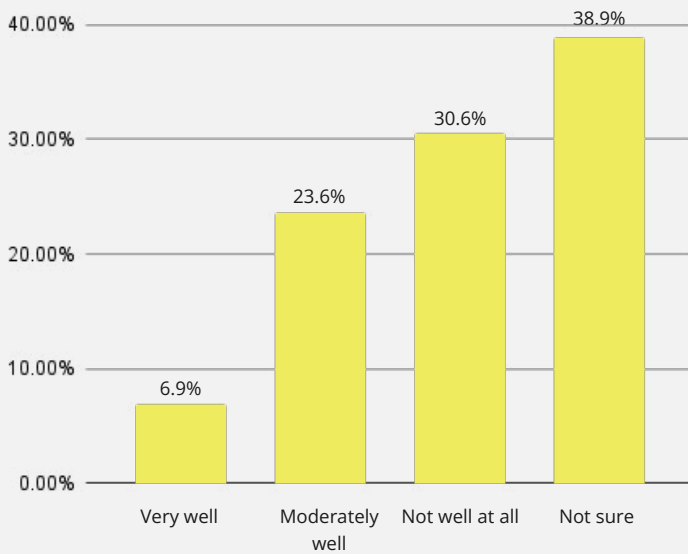
## People with Lived Experience

CoCs across the country are also working towards including more people with lived experience in the workforce and in governance. Because people of color are overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, efforts to increase the representation of people with lived experience often also increases representation of people of color, intersecting with racial equity goals. Respondents were asked to reflect on the HSPN's progress in this area.

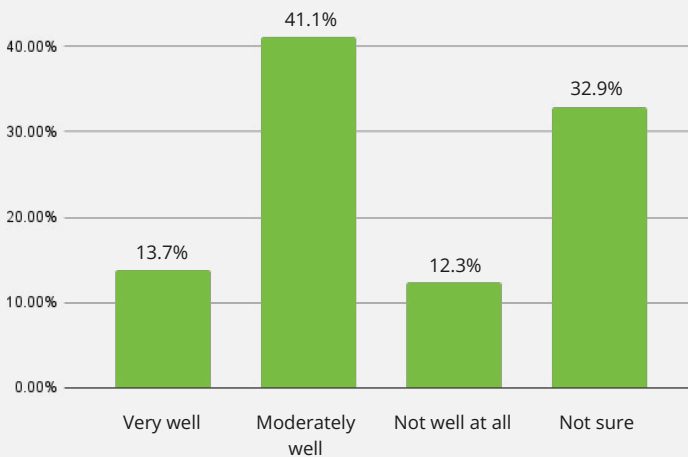
### Key findings:

- 14% believe the system is doing very well at including people with lived experience among frontline staff, but more (41%) assessed progress as moderate.
- In comparison, respondents see much less inclusion of people with lived experience among senior managers and leadership.
- Many respondents were not sure how to answer. Employees should not be forced to disclose past experiences, but we often see that when CoCs and member organizations make explicit that lived experience is valued (in policies, hiring, etc.), there is more awareness about those experiences.
- Respondents were also asked to indicate, on a percent scale, how much they agreed that the HSPN is "authentically including people with lived experience in policy and decision-making." Across survey respondents, the average answer was 41%.

**How well is our system including people with lived experience of homelessness among our senior management and leadership?**



**How well is our system including people with lived experience of homelessness among our frontline staff?**



Many focus group participants also believed that Black people, and other people of color, were inadequately represented in CoC organization’s leadership roles.



Focus group participants felt there was a glass ceiling for individuals who had a history of experiencing homelessness or were in recovery. One staff member shared how, often, supervisors praise people with lived experience for being great outreach workers or case managers, but rarely promote them to senior leadership.



Another participant stated that, in their experience, the few Black supervisors with relevant lived experience felt isolated and often experienced microaggressions in the workplace.

**Representation within HSPN Leadership**

Both CoC staff and leadership members interviewed stated that HSPN's racial and ethnic diversity did not represent the New Bedford Homeless population. HSPN leaders acknowledged a diversity gap within the Executive Committee. However, participants did not identify concrete initiatives to increase the number people of color on the committee. A few examples of reflections from both CoC staff members (not on the Executive Committee) and current Executive Committee members are below.



## Participant Perspectives on Lack of Diversity within the HSPN Executive Committee:

### CoC Staff Focus Group:

- *“We got the same people in positions in this city, that have been in these positions for 20 years, the same executive board. I've been in this organization for 12 years. We've got the same executive board over there. I get it. We want executives of organizations, but after a while, if our CoC board is made of these individuals, and nothing has changed—let's look at how that board is comprised.”*
- *If you look at the outreach teams, they have a nice little mix. But like [another focus group participant] said, as soon as you look at executive leadership, and CEOs, and all of those people, they don't look like the people that we serve. They don't have the lived experience...it's great to have a degree. [But] the lived experience is what our clients need to relate to. That's where they engage. That's what makes them feel comfortable. That's where they're going to open up. That's where they're going to trust you.*

### HSPN Executive Committee Focus Group:

- *I'm looking at our [HSPN Leadership] group here this morning, we seem to be very pale in nature. You know, and I think everybody here, at least, you know, that I'm aware of, it doesn't believe that we have any racist tendencies at all or anything else. And yet, we haven't identified somebody to add to our executive committee, that's a person of color.*
- *“So it's not an omission, on purpose, it's trying to get the agencies that are involved, that are doing the work that you know, and who are at the head, that's what we see here.”*

## PART 3. ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY IN THE COC

*This section describes perspectives from assessment participants on what the CoC can do to address potential equity issues in the system. It highlights what people see the HSPN doing well to advance racial equity already, what it could do better, and how to address the needs of specific groups who are at high risk of homelessness (residents who are Black, Cape Verdean, Latine, migrant and non-English speaking, and youth of color).*

### What's Working Well

First, we asked participants to consider what the New Bedford HSPN is doing well to advance racial equity. Comments highlighted efforts to provide training and professional development, creating new committees, inclusive staffing, reducing language barriers, and investing in programs that support individuals in overcoming barriers (Table 5).

*What specific things is the New Bedford HSPN doing well to advance racial equity?*

THEME	QUOTES
<b>Creation of equity-oriented committees</b>	<p>"I know many agencies are having a BIPOC committee where people discuss their issues and barriers."</p> <p>"The Social Equity Committee is trying to look at new ways [at advance equity]."</p>
<b>Efforts to increase inclusion/representation in the workforce</b>	<p>"Bringing more people in to work that look like the populations they serve."</p> <p>"We have tried to hire bilingual staff."</p>
<b>Language and translation</b>	<p>"Making interpretation and translations a priority to be able to help/understand in their native language."</p> <p>"Increase in translation services."</p>
<p><b>Individual-level supports</b>                      Services that help people of color overcome structural barriers to housing</p>	<p>"Programs and opportunities with phased levels of support as folks gain and maintain new skill sets whether in financial literacy, job training support, education, etc."</p> <p>"Funding programs for housing options, programs adding case management help to navigate through needs and struggles..."</p> <p>"The city itself is not doing anything, despite programs trying to advocate and help minorities obtain higher education, vocational skills, and obtain housing."</p>

It's worth noting that several respondents were uncertain how to answer this question, either writing "unsure" or "unknown." Furthermore, some respondents took this opportunity to express dissatisfaction with current efforts to address racial equity. For example, respondents said:

- *"A lot of talk no action."*
- *"There are none because the system in place is run by those who are causing the barriers."*
- *"Collecting data and discussion does nothing to resolve without action."*

With REP's support, the HSPN is working to collect data and have important ongoing discussions, but also to follow those strategies with clear action to improve people's experiences and outcomes.

### HOW TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

*This section discusses the ideas respondents had for how the CoC/New Bedford could better serve those in need of homelessness assistance in the city. Ideas build off the areas discussed in Parts 1 and 2 [barriers people groups that are associated with race/ethnicity] and offer concrete ideas for improvement. Several of these ideas included outreach to existing organizations that serve various communities. See Appendix C for a list of suggested community partnerships from survey respondents.*

**Black people in New Bedford**

First, the Consultant asked about how to better serve Black people in New Bedford. Ideas fell in the areas of community outreach, ongoing assessment and community engagement, designing programs based on people’s expressed needs, supporting the workforce through racial equity related professional development, expanding the representativeness of the workforce, and engaging in upstream advocacy.

*How can our programs and CoC better serve Black people experiencing homelessness?*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Community Outreach</b> Try new things, like outreach to the faith community, schools, and other organizations bringing Black people in the city together.</p>	<p>“Beyond emails that most homeless do not have access to... be intentional about reaching out to and encouraging houses of faith in the Black community.”</p> <p>“Make certain churches that black people attend know about all the resources available to them”</p> <p>“Talk to the community organizations that serve these populations specifically.”</p> <p>“...making sure all in the schools are aware of the programs.”</p>
<p><b>Community engagement</b> Ask Black people experiencing homelessness for input.</p>	<p>“Involve them in the conversations, ask THEM what they need in order to better provide for themselves.”</p> <p>“Ask the people what their barriers and needs are. Engage them in the process of changing the narrative and outcomes.”</p> <p>“Bring them to the table to directly discuss their barriers.”</p> <p>“Possibly creating a weekly/monthly support group to address concerns and speak of recourses. Create a public forum and flyers to raise more awareness of discrimination and lack of support.”</p>
<p><b>System navigation</b> Improve the Coordinated Entry System</p>	<p>“Improve referral process to PSH partners.”</p>
<p><b>Workforce</b> Antiracism education for providers</p>	<p>“Continue to educate others (landlords, property management companies, other providers) can be helpful.”</p> <p>“More cultural sensitivity and awareness”</p> <p>“Train staff to address unconscious bias”</p> <p>“Understanding and admitting to racial bias.”</p> <p>“Provide continuous RE professional development.”</p>

<p><b>Workforce</b> Hire more people of color</p>	<p>“Recruit more people of color to be service providers.” “Hire more people who are part of primarily effected communities. This will be build trust and develop community connections.”</p>
<p><b>Advocacy</b> Participate in advocating for more housing and educating upstream systems, including housing actors.</p>	<p>“Constantly work on expanding housing stock” “More affordable housing!” “Continue to educate others (landlords, property management companies, other providers) can been helpful.”</p>

**Cape Verdeans in New Bedford**

Next, questions were asked about better serving Cape Verdean people. Many responses were similar to those for the former question (better serving Black people). The following chart highlights those that were more unique to the needs of the Cape Verdean community, specifically. These included addressing language barriers, promoting culturally affirming services, and considering specific ways to do outreach to Cape Verdeans in the city.

*How can out programs and CoC better serve Cape Verdean people experiencing homelessness?*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Address language barriers</b></p>	<p>“Translations, interpreters, documentation in Portuguese/spoken Kriolu.” “All agencies need to be open to walk in clients and speak Crioulu as well as have translated documents.” “More bilingual outreach workers.”</p>
<p><b>Cultural awareness/ increasing cultural competency</b></p>	<p>“Being CV, I know that pride is a cultural norm. Breaking down barriers with conversations about accepting help and also not being reliant on helping in the long term.” “Understand the cultural differences between Cape Verdean-born and American-born citizens.” “More cultural sensitivity and awareness.”</p>
<p><b>Community Outreach</b></p>	<p>“Present to Cape Verdean groups that are already established in the community.” “Outreach and let them know what services are available to them.” “I think more word out in the community so not just liaisons know the information and supports available.” “Working with individuals in the community who are engaged with this population. Going to the folks who represent the Cape Verdean population and asking what their needs are. Building supportive programs that meet their needs.”</p>

**Hispanic/Latinos in New Bedford**

Third, the Consultant asked about better Hispanic/Latino people. Again, responses pointed to:

- improving access to resources and system navigation,
- training for providers,
- and increasing the representation of the workforce.

People uplifted language needs and community outreach, and, unique to this group, highlighted the importance of support with immigration and access to legal services.

*How can out programs and CoC better serve Hispanic/Latino people experiencing homelessness?*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Address language barriers</b></p>	<p>"... offering classes for language barriers, so that [it] would be easier for them to be able to complete paperwork."</p> <p>"Have support which includes 1-1 systems navigation in their language."</p> <p>"More help with access to resources in their language."</p> <p>"All agencies need to have translation services available"</p> <p>"We can have more literature in other languages, diverse staff that are bilingual."</p>
<p><b>Community Outreach</b></p>	<p>"Outreach and let them know what services are available to them."</p> <p>"Send mailers in Spanish to this population of through immigration services to indicate services available."</p> <p>"...do a MUCH better job of letting Hispanic/Latino people know about the resources that already exist. Allow north end and south end residents to have more access to programs that are now centered downtown."</p> <p>"Better outreach and education to cultural community leaders..."</p> <p>"...Attend community events where they will be present"</p>
<p><b>Help with immigration status</b></p>	<p>"Helping with immigration status..."</p> <p>"Help with immigration services, language, educ. of rights &amp; resources..."</p>

**Improving Language Access for All**

Considering the importance of language inclusion for both Cape Verdean and Hispanic/Latino individuals and families, participants were asked for specific feedback on how to increase language accessibility.

*How can our programs and CoC increase language accessibility?  
Please share any specific ideas you have for improving language inclusion.*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Hiring people who speak the languages of those experiencing homelessness</b></p> <p>Ideas for improving hiring include outreach to existing organizations, employing people with lived experience, and incentivizing language skills through employee compensation.</p>	<p>“Promote hiring of certified/fluent/native speakers in clients’ language.”</p> <p>“I think your housing specialist should always have an in-person translator available with them instead of using an online service. Having an in-person translator makes the person feel more heard...”</p> <p>“Hire outreach staff who culturally identify and qualified people who are fluent in Creole, Portuguese, Spanish. Outreach to cultural centers within the city as well as churches/religious organizations who may have people willing to volunteer to assist staff with translation/cultural barriers. Create peer support staff who can also interact/translate with people from these backgrounds.”</p> <p>“Individuals on the committees that speak different languages, build capacity via community health workers, leverage relationships with Health Department &amp; GNBCHC who have access to multiple languages...”</p> <p>“Hiring staff that speak the language which includes a language incentive in the salary.”</p> <p>“Access to translators, hire at a more equitable rate...”</p>
<p><b>Language education</b></p> <p>Both for staff to increase their language abilities and for those experiencing homelessness who do not speak English to help advance their English skills.</p>	<p>“Allow people who are going to be working with these populations the opportunities to learn how to speak their native language – incorporate funds for training of learning a new language into agencies budget.”</p> <p>“If something was offered for non-profit workers to learn conversational Spanish or Portuguese, I know a lot of people [would] sign up.”</p> <p>“Free language classes.”</p> <p>“Have trainings that teach different languages regularly.”</p> <p>“Offer more classes to learn English, or for the general public to learn Spanish..”</p> <p>“Provide ESL classes free of charge for all age groups.”</p>

**Translation**

Invest in translation devices as a back-up to person-to-person communication and provide more materials in different languages. Key documents from HSPN are translated in Spanish and Portuguese (e.g., the 2023 Street Sheet), but additional languages and expanded translation may be important.

- “If unable to hire a variety of staff, get a translational device.”
- “At my previous agency we had a translator service that could be used over the phones.”
- “Increase access to translators perhaps through a phone line where interpreters are staffed.”
- “More materials in dominant languages.”
- Webpages and all publications should be in at least four languages: [English], Espanol, Portuguese, and Cape Verdean Kriolu...”
- “We need Sheet Streets in additional languages.”

**Youth and Young Adults**

The young adult participants with whom the Consultant talked wanted access to more housing, education, and workforce development opportunities. The following table highlights what survey respondents (mostly individuals working in homeless service programs) felt the CoC should do to improve its ability to support young people in New Bedford. Ways to improve community outreach was key, as it was for other groups, and respondents also suggested specific ways to improve supportive services

*How can our programs and CoC better serve youth/young adults of color experiencing homelessness?*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Community outreach</b></p> <p>Partner with schools, other city/state departments, and other non-profits that serve youth.</p>	<p>“...regular communication with the organizations that support the youth.”</p> <p>“Outreach and let them know what services are available to them.”</p> <p>“Presentations at schools.”</p> <p>“Work closely with the youth groups in the community and schools along with social services.”</p> <p>“Talk with educators, youth leaders, etc.”</p> <p>“Outreach to youth departments.”</p>
<p><b>Improve supportive services</b></p> <p>Ideas considered how schools might support youth at risk of homelessness and highlight how service organizations can help young people achieve economic stability.</p>	<p>“Employment opportunities. Financial literacy training.”</p> <p>“Job training in their neighborhood.”</p> <p>“Work programs, resources to help them get started, mentors, opportunities to learn money management.”</p> <p>“Create more programs at local schools to engage students in a variety of areas: education, volunteer ops in the community, recreation, etc. Provide support groups and more counseling.”</p> <p>“Engage in peer support volunteers who might also have experienced homelessness...”</p>

**More youth shelters and city services.**

Address the lack of shelter beds. Implementation of these recommendations should balance investment in shelter and supportive housing, and ensure housing is responsive to the needs of youth of color.

“We need more than one youth shelter.”

“More youth housing options. More rooming houses and youth shelters such as Kilian house.”

“The city has nothing for young adults who are homeless except judgement. A new provider and services are needed for youth because they are not served in the city.”

“Bring DCF to the table to assist with unaccompanied youth that may need a bed or home.”

“Increase shelter capacity.”

“Offer more housing and support to agencies focusing on youth, especially youth of color.”

**More engagement and collaborative planning.**

Finally, this assessment only touched the surface of youth’s needs and ideas that stem from lived experience. Respondents gave more ideas for collaborative planning.

“Special taskforce, assessment and gap analysis.”

bring them to the table to discuss their challenges

“A collaborative team to host at the place where they are and allow them to lead the discussion and share their ideas; conduct several Youth Forums in different parts of the city; invite a youth to be a member of HSPN.”

**HOW TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE WORKFORCE**

**Improving Representation in the Workforce**

Respondents were asked how the CoC can continue to improve efforts to hire, support, and advance a diverse workforce. Responses included hiring more staff who have experienced homelessness and putting people of color in leadership positions.

- *“Hire staff of all backgrounds. Leadership isn't diverse...[and it's the] same leadership reflected wherever you go.”*
- *“Higher inner-city staff to offset staff that has no personal experience/lived experience in living check to check or not being able to pay rent this month so we have to eat less. Be open to their ideas.”*
- *“Hiring young adults that have experienced homelessness as a youth or young adult.”*

People had numerous suggestions for how member organizations can work to increase diversity among staff and leadership. These centered around revising job requirements, hiring people with lived experience, and promoting and supporting leaders of color.



*How do you think our CoC member organizations can improve the diversity of staff and leadership?*

THEME	QUOTES
<p><b>Hiring efforts</b> Consider new recruitment models</p>	<p>“Search harder for diverse candidates. Network with other organizations.”</p> <p>“Go into high schools, community colleges, and colleges to explain the job and needs.”</p> <p>Workgroup members discussed how changing the education requirements for some jobs would help with hiring more Central American individuals.</p>
<p><b>Promotion and professional development efforts</b> Support and uplift staff of color into leadership</p>	<p>“Promote individuals who reflect those in the community as well as those from the community.”</p> <p>“Allow them to lead and advocate. They are not represented in leadership. If they have leadership capacity, they are not recognized. There are barriers in leadership for people are color that are similar to the homeless barriers.</p> <p>“Allow them to have an actual role and not just presence to look good and listen to them by allowing them to speak.”</p>
<p><b>Compensation</b> Ensure adequate pay and work satisfaction to reduce burnout</p>	<p>“Increase financial incentives.”</p> <p>“Make sure that staff are taking care of themselves, this field can be a burnout, hire people that are empathetic... and leadership should support their team.”</p>
<p><b>Organizational Culture</b> Improve white staff's ability to contribute to inclusive and equitable organization</p>	<p>“Create an atmosphere of inclusion and equity in the organization.”</p> <p>“Continuing to hire qualified staff/leadership who are not only diverse, but also truly believe in the diversity of our families... many "white" leaders who have the "savior" or "poor thing" mentality when it comes to our families, we need leaders who truly do not think they are better than any single family... who value the culture and diversity our families have to offer”</p>

### Improving Representation in Planning/Governance

Most participants did not dig deeply into recommendations for increasing the representation of people of color or people with lived experience into the HSPN leadership. This may be an important part of ongoing planning. Moreover, it may be important for the HSPN to consider what group/entity is responsible for leading racial equity work.

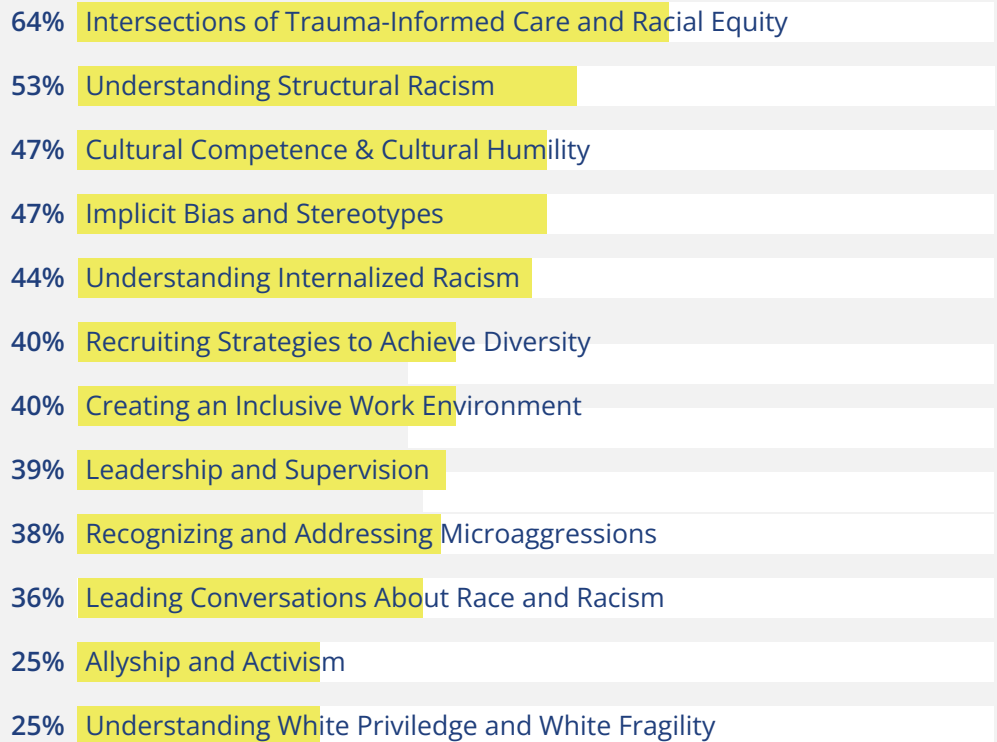
One member of the Workgroup said,

*“We do great job of planning, getting key people in the room, energy, but strategy is missing input from folks who are most impacted.”*

**Providing Professional Development**

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their interest in training related to racial equity. Results suggest that providers and other community members are ready to engage in this work. The most-desired topics were fundamental knowledge and skills trainings, including the intersections of racial equity to trauma-informed care and understanding racism (structural racism, implicit bias, and internalized racism). There was also substantial interest in trainings to improve organizational cultural and increase diversity in the workforce. More than a third wanted training to lead conversations about race and racism.

*What are your goals and desires for professional development related to diversity, equity, and inclusions. Which of these topics would you personally most like to have some training on? (Select top 5)*



Finally, survey respondents were asked to reflect on the challenges for reducing racial inequities in New Bedford. Many comments reflected the factors driving racial inequities in homelessness (e.g., lack of affordable housing, overall racism in the community, and challenges to garnering political support) which may feel intractable at times. Others pointed to areas the HSPN has control, including leadership (a call for more diversity at the top and leadership that leads the way on these issues), communication (a call for raising “awareness that there are racial inequities”), and exemplifying a culture of honest, critical dialogue (giving people “a voice within their organization”).

From conducting this work, the Consultant characterized New Bedford’s CoC as being small, but with a robust, dedicated network of resources and people working to address homelessness. Still, like most urban areas in the U.S., there are gaps in the system, and members of the community are identifying how those gaps may exacerbate inequities for people of color. As one person on the Workgroup said during planning the assessment, “We work really well in crisis, but [we] want to put more efforts into the ongoing, long-term work” to address homelessness in the city.

Based on the Assessment findings, the following **Key Questions & Initial Recommendations** are offered to support this ongoing planning—with racial equity at the center. With Black and Native people somewhat overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, and Latinos (especially immigrants) facing increasing housing insecurity, these efforts are urgent and important.

During the next phase of work, the Racial Equity Workgroup and other stakeholders joined the Action Planning by discussing these questions, bringing in questions of their own, and determining what goals and activities the HSPN will initially embrace within its first **Racial Equity Action Plan**. This process included how the HSPN will monitor progress and challenges.

### KEY QUESTIONS

1. Who should be holding/leading this work moving forward?
2. What educational activities can help support stakeholder knowledge, skill, and confidence related to talking about race and racism in the context of homelessness in New Bedford?
3. How can outreach and information about services better reach Black residents?
4. How can/should the CoC incentivize organizations to assess and advance organizational-level equity goals (e.g., service disparities, experiences of discrimination and microaggressions, and workforce inclusion?)
5. What goals does the community have for increasing the power of people of color and people with lived experience of homelessness to make decisions about homelessness response planning? (i.e., representation in HSPN governance, organizational leadership)
6. How does the feedback from the Assessment illuminate strengths and weaknesses of the Coordinated Entry System, and given more recent changes, what work still needs to be done?
7. What program and policy changes can help undocumented individuals and families get the supports they need?
8. Is the system responsive to the needs of youth of color? If not, what can we do?
9. Are there partnerships with other systems that can be started or enhanced to help address or prevent homelessness for people of color?
10. What role should OHCD, the HSPN, and its member organizations play in advancing advocacy efforts to help stem the tide of homelessness and its racial disparities? (E.g., advocating for affordable housing, enforcement of Fair Housing, and better paying jobs?)
11. What role should OHCD, the HSPN, and its member organizations play in creating a leadership pipeline that reflects the demographics of the individuals experiencing homelessness?

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**01 Determine who will be responsible for ongoing accountability to racial equity assessment and planning.**

This might include reinstating the Racial Equity Committee of the CoC, or it may look like something else (e.g., with broader stakeholder engagement beyond the HSPN membership; working group members expressed a desire to integrate their efforts into broader efforts to advance health equity in New Bedford). To sustain this work, the HSPN may have to support and incentivize new leadership.

**02 Identify ways to improve system navigation.**

**03 Engage in ongoing evaluation of the Coordinated Entry System.**

Consider whether assessment scores differ by race/ethnicity, and are these differences associated with differences in prioritization, referral, and service uptake?

**04 Identify ways to improve system navigation.**

**05 Annually examine differences by race/ethnicity across system data,**

including experience of homelessness, length of stay in and exits from PSH, and returns to homelessness from RRH. If disparities exist, explore why.

**05 Create a multiyear plan**

for provider antiracism training and proactively ensure that trainings speak to the unique demographic context of New Bedford (e.g., the role of Portuguese identity and other blurred racial-ethnic identities boundaries).

**06 Determine goals to improve representation**

at the leadership level. Propose a plan for increasing the diversity of the HSPN Executive Committee and supporting organizations in hiring and promoting leaders that share identities with those served.

**07 Determine initial steps to engage in advocacy or collaborative governmental planning**

related to upstream solutions. E.g., is there a role the HSPN can play in increasing political will to address racial inequities in the city and improve opportunities for people in poverty?

Beginning in January 2023, the New Bedford Homeless Services Provider Network (HSPN) launched an effort to examine racial disparities in homelessness in the city and explore how to advance racial equity in the community's response to homelessness. The effort has been guided by a Racial Equity Workgroup of the HSPN and supported by consultants from Racial Equity Partners (REP). A community-wide assessment process included the perspective of people of color experiencing homelessness, providers working in the homelessness response system, and other key stakeholders in the community. Analyses of an online survey, in-person and virtual interviews and focus groups, and administrative data are summarized in a Racial Equity Assessment Report. The Racial Equity Workgroup then worked with REP to create a Racial Equity Plan informed by the Assessment.

*The table below describes the Racial Equity Plan. This plan represents a vision for short and long-term racial equity work for the Continuum of Care. In addition to representing a vision and strategy, it should be used as a working document: it can be updated as efforts move forward and as action steps, owners, and progress measure are refined.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC GOAL	ACTION STEP(S)		OWNERS (Implementation Team)	PROGRESS MEASURE(S)
	<i>What are the specific actions that are necessary for us to see progress on this strategy?</i>		<i>Who will own this action?</i>	<i>What is different within the HSPN/City of New Bedford because of this specific action step? How will we know we did it?</i>
<b>1. Racial Equity Leadership, Accountability, and Commitment</b>  The HSPN will create a standing Racial Equity Committee with the organizational power and resources to shepherd HSPN equity work forward and facilitate the capacity-building process for HSPN member organizations.	A.	Vote to establish a standing Racial Equity Committee (REC) of nine members that consists of the following interest-holders: 1. At least (2) executive committee members 2. At least (3) people with lived expertise in homelessness 3. At least (2) members from the HSPN Network 4. At least(3) members from the local community organizing/community advocacy groups that focus on anti-Black and anti-racist initiatives	HSPN Executive Committee	Meeting minutes and the requisite policy/procedures documents archive the vote and establishment of the committee.
	B.	Develop a signatory statement of shared values regarding the importance of addressing racial disparities within the homeless response system and organizations committing to ensure the success of the HSPN racial equity committee through, for example, active participation in REC training, resource sharing, and adoption of REC recommendations.	OHCD/ HSPN Executive Committee	A statement of values has been drafted and shared widely, and signatories have voluntarily signed on.
	C.	Recruit Racial Equity Committee members who align with action Step 1a criteria [After step (a) is complete]	OHCD/ HSPN	An REC with group composition outlined in 1a criteria is convened.

	D.	<p>Establish a REC Charter that includes a clear mission, vision, value statement, meeting cadence, and scope of influence.</p> <p>(Note: Workgroup sees the REC mission as serving as a racial equity advisory board/"champion" for the work of the HSPN but emphasizes that they cannot shepherd the work forward without support and engagement from other parties, including OHCD and the HSPN Executive Committee. Further, the Workgroup suggests that the REC includes in its mission a commitment to tracking the progress of the recommendations in this document.)</p>	REC	A charter is drafted and posted on the HSPN website or another location where CoC policies and procedures are archived and shared
	E.	Adopt the REC Charter into HSPN official governance structure.	HSPN Executive Committee	
<p><b>2. Improving Partnerships</b></p> <p><b>2.1 The HSPN will improve existing partnerships</b> by creating clear communication pathways that foster continued engagement and collaboration by eliciting feedback, sharing relevant data, and supporting community building between members.</p>	A	Elicit and collect feedback from partners/ potential partners (e.g., meet with representatives from Schools, Faith Communities (and others) do ask: what supports do they want to see (e.g., communication, collaboration)?	HSPN Executive Committee & REC (once reestablished)	Partners report better connections with the HSPN, have clarity on HSPN scope of work and mission, and can identify goals that the HSPN network/member organizations have for improving the partnership.
	B	CEDC: Begin with outreach and discussion on what improved partnership may look like. Implement an activity that reaches the community they serve.	TBD	CEDC reports better connections with the HSPN, and an activity was held to provide information and resources to the community they serve.
	C	Set clear goals and expectations after reviewing feedback with partners/ stakeholders (both existing and new), including timelines for each effort.	TBD	A document summarizing feedback from specific partners, with corresponding goals, by end of 2024.
<p><b>2.2 The HSPN will increase the number of partnerships</b> with organizations that directly and indirectly support clients experiencing homelessness - by centering organizations that serve people of color and by creating structures that foster clear communication, process transparency, and engagement.</p>	A	Using the System Mapping activity that was developed by the Workgroup as a starting point, HSPN will prioritize outreach for organizations serving people of color (especially those with undocumented status).		Two new partnerships initiated by 2024
B	Outreach will begin with meetings or surveys for new organizations, in order to gauge interest and capacity.			
C	An HSPN sponsored Service Agency Fair will be held to begin to build connections with existing and new service organizations.			

**3. Representation at the leadership level**

The HSPN will increase the racial/ethnic and lived experience representation in leadership positions across the network.

<p><b>A</b></p>	<p>Review CoC governance policies and procedures and embed equity measures, including diversity metrics, in leadership representation.</p>	<p>OHCD/ HSPN/REC</p>	<p>Where applicable, diversity metrics have been added to policies/procedure documents that determine the composition of decision-making entities for the CoC.</p>
<p><b>B</b></p>	<p>Specifically, set targets to increase HSPN Executive Committee diversity, including race/ethnicity and lived experience (determine baseline and set metrics). Add designated CoC Board seats that are reflective of the communities being served, if needed. Consider goals for subcommittees, as applicable.</p>	<p>OHCD</p>	<p>Policies and procedures for electing the Executive Committee are updated to include goals that are ambitious but also realistic.</p>
<p><b>C</b></p>	<p>Engage communities in how a nomination and election process for a designated seat may be implemented.</p>	<p>OHCD/REC</p>	<p>Partners understand how to be more involved in the HSPN and how the Executive Board election/selection process works.</p>
<p><b>D</b></p>	<p>Evaluate a need for changes to HSPN committee work structures for accessibility (timing, technology, childcare, transportation, compensation).</p>	<p>OHCD/HSPN/ REC</p>	<p>Survey existing members on needs and preferences. Outreach to potential members, including people with lived experience, to better understand their needs/facilitators for involvement.</p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p>Establish a Lived Experience Advisory Committee, centering populations with lived expertise, people of color, and youth, to support shared decision-making from communities served (e.g., youth/young adults with lived experience).</p>	<p>OHCD/HSPN</p>	<p>Within one year of adopting this plan, an advisory group of people with lived expertise is established.</p>
<p><b>F</b></p>	<p>Ensure structures for compensation for participation in governance committees.</p>	<p>OHCD/HSPN</p>	<p>Compensation structures in place for people with lived experience participating in CoC governance.</p>
<p><b>G</b></p>	<p>Work with existing community programs to assess how leadership development/pipeline strategies could support leadership development in the HSPN (i.e., collaborate/learn from other efforts going on in the community regarding leadership development).</p>	<p>OHCD/REC</p>	<p>Communicate with community partners leading this work to assess potential collaboration and/or lessons learned.</p>

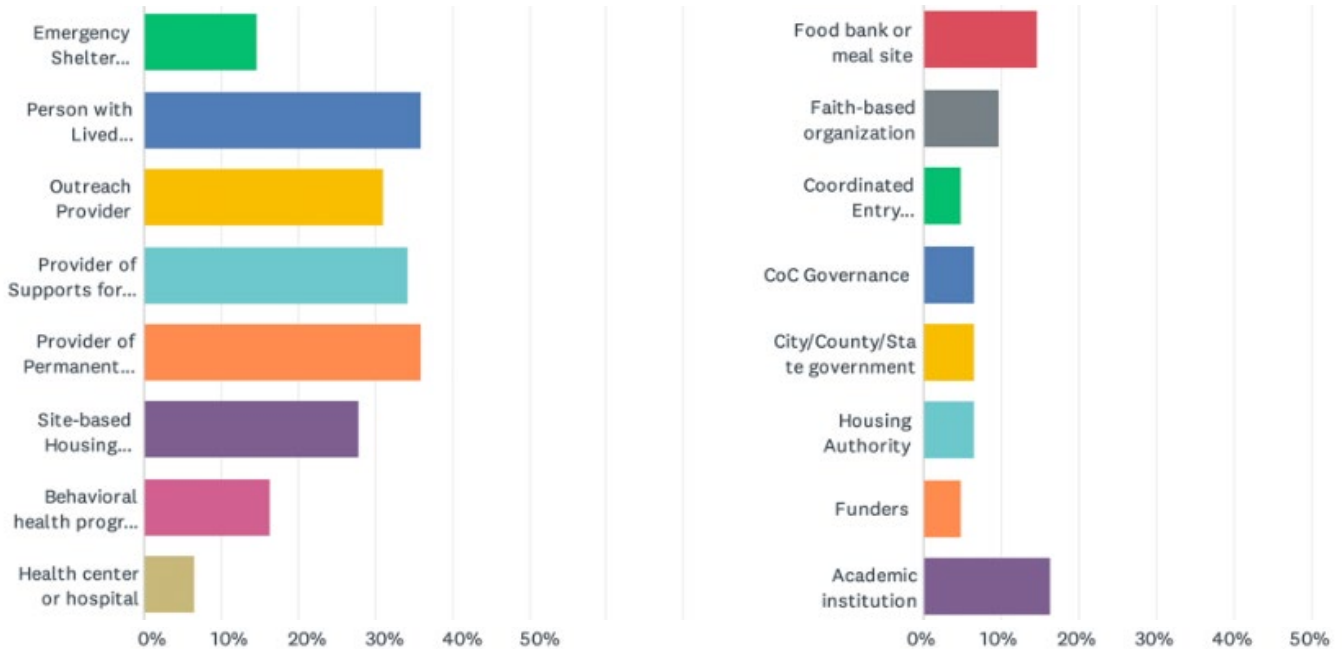
<p><b>4. Examining the Data</b></p> <p>The HSPN will incorporate racial equity into all homelessness system data and reporting (as the data allow) and increase ongoing assessment of service use and outcomes by race/ethnicity.</p>	A	Include disaggregated data by race/ethnicity in primary PIT count reports.	OHCD	Data on racial/ethnic subpopulations are presented in the primary NBHSPN PIT report, presentation, and 'major takeaways' documents.
	B	Determine and implement a process for ongoing evaluation of Coordinated Entry assessment data, centering racial equity (examining scores, referrals, placement data disaggregated by race/ethnicity).	OHCD and CE provider	A report evaluating CE data is presented to the HSPN membership annually, with data on scores, referrals, and placement disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
	C	Determine and implement a process for ongoing evaluation of system data more broadly (entry, exit, duration), centering racial equity. Importantly, examine placement into housing and returns to homelessness by race/ethnicity from different housing interventions.	OHCD	The annual racial disparities reports are continued, and elements are added as needed.
	D	Review data from 4c as a Racial Equity Committee and facilitate discussion with the broader HSPN.	OHCD/REC	REC reviews each annual racial disparities report (produced by OHCD) and helps present the findings to the HSPN.
	E	Explore ways to improve data collection on race/ethnicity with attention to the nuanced ways people in New Bedford identify (e.g., Central Americans who identify as Indigenous or other non-Hispanic categories, Cape Verdeans of partial African ancestry who do not identify as Black or African American).	REC/OHCD/ community partners	TBD - Example: New race/ethnicity questions (informed by community partners) are piloted in one program.
<p><b>5. System Navigation</b></p> <p>5.1 The HSPN will establish a user-centered and culturally responsive virtual resource hub that allows the general public and service providers to learn about and gain access to housing, health, and anti-poverty resources.</p>	A	Conduct a comprehensive community resource audit that leverages the knowledge of service providers, community-based organizations, and people with lived experience to ensure homegrown community-based organizations are represented. (See <a href="#">Mural</a> )	OHCD/HSPN	Existing resource lists are updated
	B	<p>Redesign HSPN website or create a resource depository (e.g. <a href="#">WIN App</a>) to allow individuals to search for resources categorically. The resource contains accessible information (no jargon) for the purpose of providing clarity of services and contacts for both providers and clients.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might live in the HSPN website</li> <li>• Ensure equity of information sharing (language access by providing input in multiple language)</li> </ul>	OHCD/HSPN	<p>First, opportunities for resourcing a new depository are explored.</p> <p>Ultimately, success of this goal is seen by community members understanding where to go to learn about existing resources, and feeling like information is readily available and equitable.</p>



	C	Leverage a Lived Experience Advisory Committee (See 3e) to guide design and implementation of site.		
5.2 The HSPN or partner will establish a pilot housing navigation program targeting clients from historically marginalized racial groups.	D	Consider how to include developing a pilot housing navigation program in planning for the HSPN or one of its partner organizations (this is the initial step)	OHCD/HSPN	First, opportunities for resourcing and managing a program are explored. Ultimately, results of pilot are used to inform the implementation of navigation resources in the community.
<b>6.Meeting the needs of immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented</b> Increase the HSPN's effectiveness at serving immigrants through improving language inclusion, workforce competencies, and community outreach.	A	Conduct a review of HSPN providers' (and, ideally, city departments) approach to translation (written and verbal) and communicate the results to uplift best practices and highlight areas for improvement.	REC/ OHCD/ HSPN	A document summarizing translation approaches of providers (70% participation) alongside recommendations (e.g., increasing budgets for translation).
	B	Present the idea of staff language incentives to the HSPN's Executive Leadership to identify opportunities and barriers -- for existing staff and in relation to recruitment and hiring.	REC	First, idea of staff language incentives is presented at HSPN meeting, reactions are documented, and REC determines next steps. Ultimately, greater multilingual staff are reported by HSPN providers.
	C	Invite community partners with expertise in the needs of migrants, particularly those from Central America, to provide training to HSPN service provider organizations on the population's needs, culturally responsive services, and program eligibility.	REC	Relationships with 2 partners have been strengthened through recurring meetings (e.g., 1x a quarter) and well-attended trainings 2x a year.
	D	Provide ongoing, accessible, multi-language materials on HSPN resources to organizational partners serving the immigrant community (aligns with System navigation, 5b, digital resources).	OHCD	New digital resource materials are in multiple languages. Note: The Workgroup articulated this long-term goal: OHCD is seen as a model for providing services and implementing best practices for service provision for immigrants.

Q22 Please select all that describes your affiliation with the Homeless Service Providers Network (HSPN). What type of organization/expertise do you represent? [check all that apply]

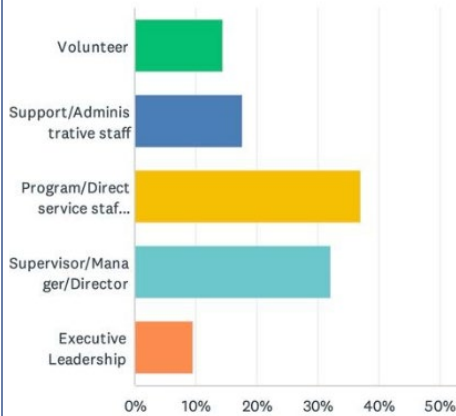
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Emergency Shelter Provider	14.75% 9
Person with Lived Experience	36.07% 22
Outreach Provider	31.15% 19
Provider of Supports for Daily Needs for People who are Unsheltered	34.43% 21
Provider of Permanent Housing or Permanent Supportive Housing or Rapid Rehousing	36.07% 22
Site-based Housing Provider program	27.87% 17
Behavioral health program provider (Including Residential Detox)	16.39% 10
Health center or hospital	6.56% 4
Food bank or meal site	14.75% 9
Faith-based organization	9.84% 6
Coordinated Entry Administration	4.92% 3
CoC Governance	6.56% 4
City/County/State government	6.56% 4
Housing Authority	6.56% 4
Funders	4.92% 3
Academic institution	16.39% 10
Total Respondents: 61	

Q23 What best describes your role in the organization? [check all that apply]

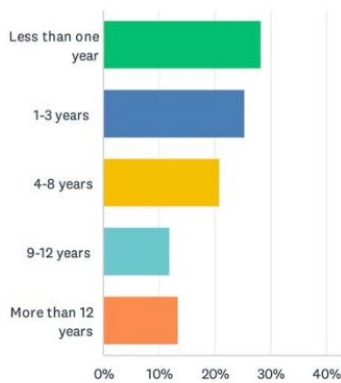
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Volunteer	14.52% 9
Support/Administrative staff	17.74% 11
Program/Direct service staff (non-supervisory)	37.10% 23
Supervisor/Manager/Director	32.26% 20
Executive Leadership	9.68% 6
<b>Total Respondents: 62</b>	

Q24 How long have you worked with the HSPN, in any related role?

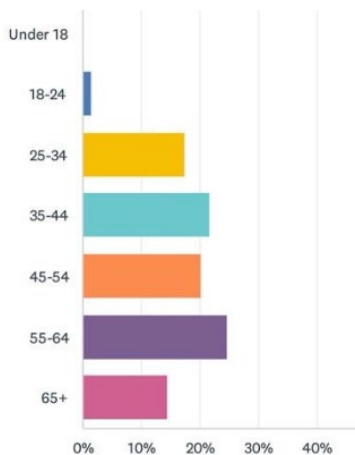
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than one year	28.36% 19
1-3 years	25.37% 17
4-8 years	20.90% 14
9-12 years	11.94% 8
More than 12 years	13.43% 9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67</b>

Q25 What is your age?

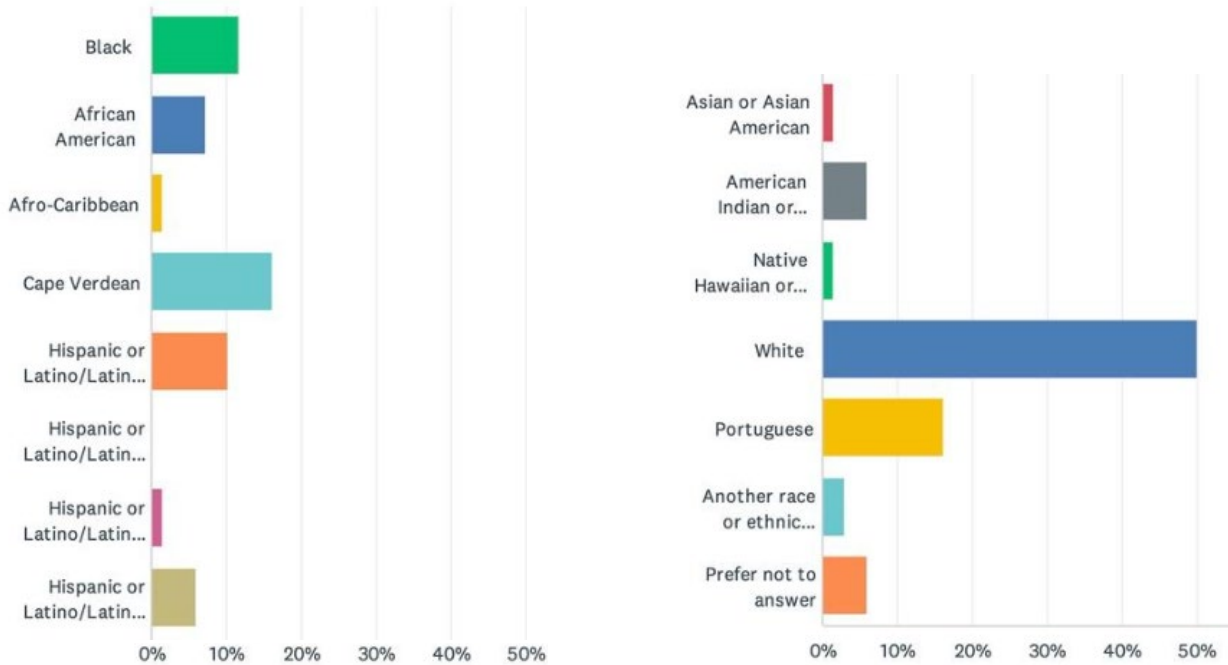
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.00% 0
18-24	1.45% 1
25-34	17.39% 12
35-44	21.74% 15
45-54	20.29% 14
55-64	24.64% 17
65+	14.49% 10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>

Q26 How would you describe your racial/ethnic identity? (please select ALL that apply)

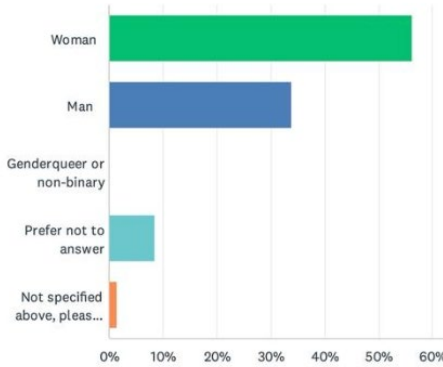
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Black	11.76%	8
African American	7.35%	5
Afro-Caribbean	1.47%	1
Cape Verdean	16.18%	11
Hispanic or Latino/Latinx (Caribbean)	10.29%	7
Hispanic or Latino/Latinx (Central American)	0.00%	0
Hispanic or Latino/Latinx (South American)	1.47%	1
Hispanic or Latino/Latinx (Other group)	5.88%	4
Asian or Asian American	1.47%	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	5.88%	4
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1.47%	1
White	50.00%	34
Portuguese	16.18%	11
Another race or ethnic identity	2.94%	2
Prefer not to answer	5.88%	4
Total Respondents: 68		

### Q27 What is your gender identity?

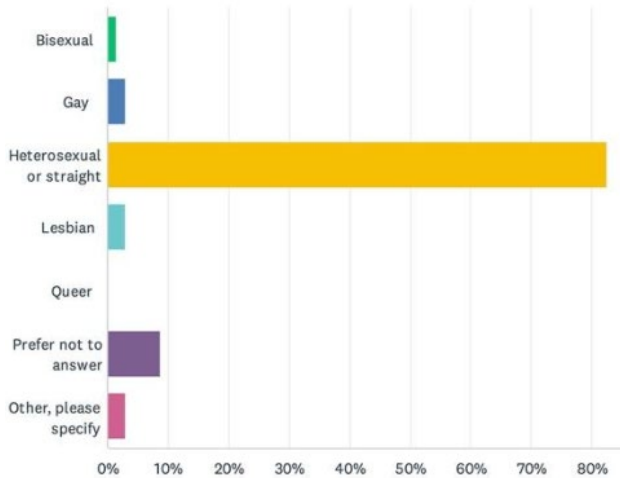
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Woman	56.34% 40
Man	33.80% 24
Genderqueer or non-binary	0.00% 0
Prefer not to answer	8.45% 6
Not specified above, please specify	1.41% 1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>

### Q29 What is your sexual orientation?

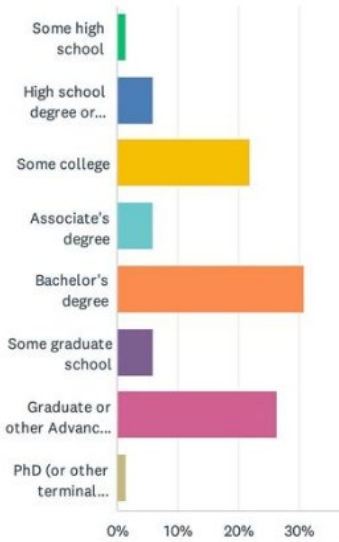
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Bisexual	1.45% 1
Gay	2.90% 2
Heterosexual or straight	82.61% 57
Lesbian	2.90% 2
Queer	0.00% 0
Prefer not to answer	8.70% 6
Other, please specify	2.90% 2
<b>Total Respondents: 69</b>	

Q30 What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

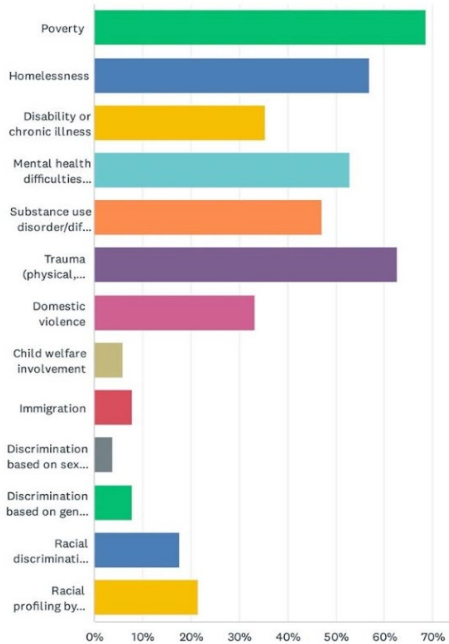
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Some high school	1.47%	1
High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	5.88%	4
Some college	22.06%	15
Associate's degree	5.88%	4
Bachelor's degree	30.88%	21
Some graduate school	5.88%	4
Graduate or other Advanced Degrees	26.47%	18
PhD (or other terminal degree)	1.47%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>68</b>

Q31 We want to better understand how our workforce represents lived experience. Do you have personal lived experience with any of the following? Check all that apply.

Answered: 51 Skipped: 33



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Poverty	68.63%	35
Homelessness	56.86%	29
Disability or chronic illness	35.29%	18
Mental health difficulties or illness	52.94%	27
Substance use disorder/difficulties	47.06%	24
Trauma (physical, mental, emotional)	62.75%	32
Domestic violence	33.33%	17
Child welfare involvement	5.88%	3
Immigration	7.84%	4
Discrimination based on sexual orientation	3.92%	2
Discrimination based on gender identity	7.84%	4
Racial discrimination in housing	17.65%	9
Racial profiling by law enforcement	21.57%	11
<b>Total Respondents: 51</b>		

*REP provided the focus group participants with some background on the racial equity initiative and assessment work, followed by introductions. The following questions, co-designed by REP and the Workgroup, guided the conversation.*

**Individuals with Lived Experience (Adjusted, as Needed, For Youth and Families):**

1. As a person in New Bedford utilizing housing service, what has been your overall experience?
2. Has navigating the New Bedford homeless services process to find stable housing been easy? If not, why?
3. What programs and/or services intended to support and assist people experiencing homelessness have you found the most challenging to use? What were the challenges?
4. As people who use (or have used) social services around housing supports in New Bedford, how would you describe your interactions with service providers? Do you have positive interactions with case managers and the staff you interact with?
5. How has the homeless service provider network connected you to educational or employment opportunities to ensure your stability?
6. Could you provide an example of a connection that has been helpful?
7. In New Bedford, Black people represent 7% of the total population but 26% of people experiencing homelessness. What do you think are some causes of these disparities?
8. Do you think there is a connection between racism and homelessness in New Bedford? If yes, how would you describe it?
9. In some communities, accessing homeless services can be difficult for some people due to language barriers, residency challenges, and/or cultural barriers. Are these issues that show up in New Bedford?
10. What advice do you have for the leadership and staff in HSPN about homeless program services?
11. How could they improve their services to advance racial equity and better support people experiencing homelessness?

**Service Providers:**

1. In New Bedford, Black people represent 7% of the total population but 26% of people experiencing homelessness. What do you think are some causes of these disparities?
2. Do you think there is a connection between racism and homelessness in New Bedford? If yes, how would you describe it?
3. Do you think your organization is doing an effective job serving Black people experiencing homelessness?

4. Is there more your organization and HSPN could do to close the racial disparity gap that exists in New Bedford homeless population?
5. Are there other subpopulations (for example, non-English speakers, the Latino community, Cape Verdean community, etc.) in New Bedford that are overrepresented homeless population or under-supported in the homeless services system?
6. What are the unique challenges they face when attempting to access services?
7. What do you think about the level of racial/ethnic diversity in leadership across the homelessness response system in your organization?
8. Does your leadership racial/ethnic diversity align with individuals you serve in New Bedford?
9. If yes, how did your organization accomplished the alignment? If no, why do you think there isn't racial/ethnic alignment?
10. What advice do you have for the leadership in HSPN when it applies to racial equity in the sector?

**Similar questions guided the HSPN Executive Committee Focus Group, with the addition of:**

1. What can the CoC/City/ and other larger governance entities do to help advance racial equity to better serve Black and Latino populations experiencing homelessness?
2. Is there more the HSPN could do to close the racial disparity gap that exists in New Bedford homeless population?



*Survey respondents suggested the following groups as potential partners for the HSPN. (This list is de-duplicated).*

- Adrian Ventura
- Boys and Girls Club New Bedford and Fall River
- Business owners
- By city-wide invitation, conduct a forum for conversation with all residents, faith community, all agencies of New Bedford government, service providers (like a town hall)
- Cape Verdean Association
- CCIT
- CEDC
- Cultural centers
- DEAF Inc.
- Faith based community (especially culturally specific churches such as Union Baptist and Bethel AME)
- GNBCHC
- I am not sure how involved you are in community centers such as the Boys and Girls Club etc... churches and local worship facilities, DYS and the jail/prisons, as well hospitals and community health centers
- IAC
- Immigration Offices/Immigration Assistance
- Leadership Southcoast
- LGBTQ groups
- Local police departments
- Maritime Academy (regarding equitable recruitment and access to a career choice)
- NAACP
- NB Health Department
- Neighborhood Associations
- NorthStar
- PAACA
- REI: Racial Equity Institute
- Schools:
 

*“I know there is probably some amazing community partnerships doing amazing things that all families would benefit from especially our families of color, but it seems like only some schools are aware so it would be great for all to have better understanding of what the community has to offer so then we can really drill down on to what more might be needed.”*
- Steppingstone
- The HSPN should do a better job networking with all churches especially those who are non-English speaking--of which these churches exist in double-digit numbers
- Veteran services
- YWCA

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2. National Racial Equity Working Group. (2020). Statement of shared values on racial equity and homelessness. <https://nrewg.org/our-shared-values>  
Homelessness Policy Research Institute. (2021). 2021-2022 HPRI research agenda: Moving toward an anti-racist system for preventing and ending homelessness in Los Angeles. Author. [https://hpri.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/HPRI-Research-Agenda\\_FINAL\\_3.17-1-1.pdf](https://hpri.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/HPRI-Research-Agenda_FINAL_3.17-1-1.pdf)  
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3. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022). The 2022 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to Congress Part 1: Point-in-time estimates of homelessness in the United States. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.
4. Conroy, S., & Heer, D.. (2003). Hidden Hispanic homelessness in Los Angeles: The “Latino paradox” revisited. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25, 530-538.
5. NBSPN 2022 Point in Time Report, NBSPN 2023 Point in Time Presentation, NBSPN 2023 Major Take-Away Document, NBSPN 2023 Infographic.
6. E.g.: Olivet, J., Wilkey, C., Richard, M., Dones, M., Tripp, J., Beit-Arie, M., ... & Cannon, R. (2021). Racial inequity and homelessness: findings from the SPARC study. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 693(1), 82-100.; Fowle, M. Z. (2022). Racialized homelessness: A review of historical and contemporary causes of racial disparities in homelessness. *Housing Policy Debate*, 32(6), 940-967.; Shinn, M., & Khadduri, J. (2020). *In the midst of plenty: Homelessness and what to do about it*. John Wiley & Sons.
7. Gubits, D., Shinn, M., Wood, M., Brown, S. R., Dastrup, S. R., & Bell, S. H. (2018). What interventions work best for families who experience homelessness? Impact estimates from the Family Options Study. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 37(4), 835-866.; Shinn, M., & Richard, M. K. (2022). Allocating homeless services after the withdrawal of the vulnerability index–service prioritization decision assistance tool. *American Journal of Public Health*, 112(3), 378-382.
8. HUD tool using visualization of CoC data to illustrate how households move through the homeless system and highlight income disparities. Information available at: <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/stella-and-system-modeling/#Stella-P>
9. REP analyzed data for New Bedford School District using data provided from EdFacts Data Files: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>

LEARN MORE OR GET INVOLVED

**Homeless Service Provider Network (HSPN)**

[www.nbhspn.com](http://www.nbhspn.com)

**Office of Housing & Community Development (OHCD)**

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