CENTER FOR HOMELESS INQUIRIES

Race and Ethnicity Among People Suffering Homelessness in Sacramento
An analysis of the incidence of homelessness and service provision

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes of the incidence of homelessness and the provision of homeless services by race and ethnicity in the Sacramento CoC. HUD requires that each CoC conduct such an analysis for the NOFA process. This report updates and expands on an analysis produced by Focus Strategies for the Sacramento Steps Forward in August of 2016.[1] The main findings are:

- Race does play a role in the incidence of homelessness, where Black, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian individuals are more likely to become homeless. These biases are not unique to Sacramento, and their causes are beyond the control of the Sacramento CoC. Nevertheless, awareness of these disparities is important for policy and planning purposes.
- In the provision of services by the CoC – assessments, assessment scores, and housing or shelter services -- small differences are found between racial and ethnic groups, though in all cases these difference involve a small percentage of clients (from <1 to 3%), and no racial or ethnic group is consistently disadvantaged by the discrepancies found in the data.
- Overall, the analysis finds no evidence of racial bias in service decisions. Further studies of the discrepancies identified may be warranted but there is limited room for reducing observed differences.

Criteria for Analysis

This memo examines the impacts of race and ethnicity employing two criteria: neutrality and conditional neutrality.

- **Neutrality.** A condition (e.g., homelessness) or benefit (e.g., housing is a PSH unit) is deemed to be distributed neutrally when the proportion of the population that has the condition or benefit of interest is the same as the population from which these individuals are drawn. For example, if 10% of all individuals known to the HMIS are Black and 10% of the individuals receiving PSH services are Black, then the provision of PSH is neutral in relation to a person being Black.
- **Conditional Neutrality.** A condition or benefit is deemed to be distributed conditionally neutrally when the proportion of the population that has the condition or benefit of interest is the same as the population from which these individuals who satisfy a certain condition. For example, if 15% of all individuals known to the HMIS and who were evaluated with a VI-SPDAT score indicating that PSH is appropriate are Black and 10% of individuals receiving PSH services are Black but then the provision of PSH is not considered conditionally neutral for eligible Black individuals.

The key metric to assess whether situations meet the neutrality or conditional neutrality criteria is the relative proportion ratio:

[1] Focus Strategies, *Sacramento Steps Forward Single Adult Community Queue and VI-SPDAT Analysis,* August 2016.

$$\rho_i / \rho_j$$

Where: p_i is the proportion of people in a race or ethnic category in the target group and,
p_j is the proportion of people in a race or ethnic category in the population from which the target group is drawn

A ratio of 1 indicates that the distribution of that race or ethnicity category is neutral. Ratios that exceed 1 indicate that race or ethnic group is over represented in the target population, while ratios of less than 1 indicate that the race or ethnic group is under represented.

Incidence of Homelessness

The incidence of homelessness is not neutral to race or ethnicity in Sacramento Count. See Figures 1 and 2. Blacks are almost four times more likely to become homeless than would be expected if their rate of homelessness matched the proportion of Blacks in the County. Similarly, American Indians and Native Hawaiians are more likely to be homeless. In contrast, Latinos are less likely to become homeless in Sacramento County.

Figure 1

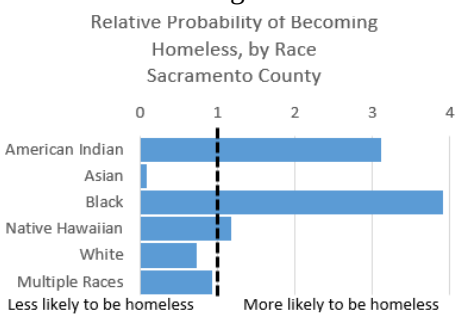
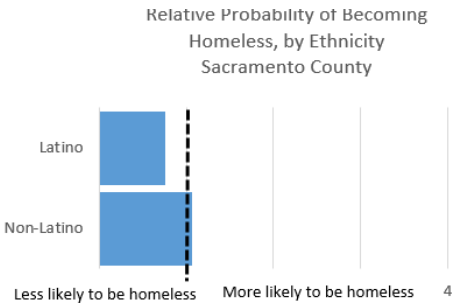


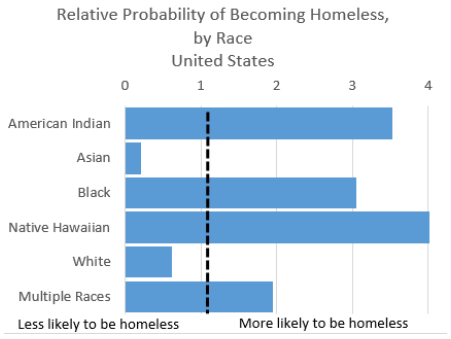
Figure 2

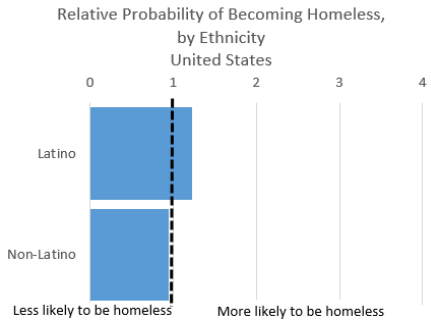


For race, the incidence of homelessness in Sacramento is similar to the patterns found in the United States as a whole. The one difference is that people identifying as having multiple races are significantly more likely to be homeless nationally, though in Sacramento they are slightly underrepresented. See Figures 3 and 4. Similarly, Latinos are over represented among the homeless nationally, while they are underrepresented in Sacramento.

Figure 3

Figure 4





Focusing on subpopulations that are more likely to become homeless decreases the magnitude of racial disparities. For example, looking at the probability of becoming homeless conditional on suffering from deep poverty, racial disparities persist but are much smaller. As shown in Figure 5, they disappear entirely for Native Hawaiians and for Blacks overrepresentation drops from being 4 times higher to about 2 times higher. Similar, though less significant, declines in racial disparities arise when one focuses on the population that suffers from disabilities. See Figure 6.

Figure 5

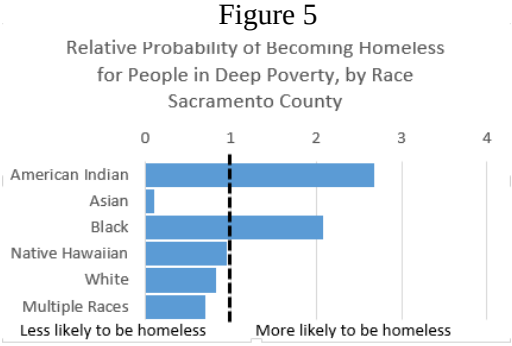
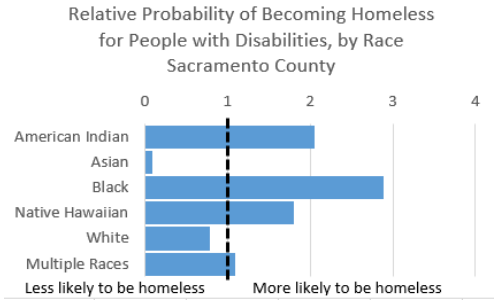


Figure 6



Provision of Services

While the incidence of homelessness is not under the control of the Sacramento CoC, the provision of services including assessments and the provision of shelter and housing are. This section examines the work of the CoC.

Assessments

The analysis of whether racial or ethnic status influenced the likelihood that a client received a VI-SPDAT assessment found either no differences or small differences.

We divided the population of individuals receiving help from the homelessness crisis system into 4 categories: 1) single adults, 2) families with children, 3) TAY, and 4) Veterans. For each category we performed a statistical test to determine whether the observed differences in race or ethnic categories could be attributed to random variation in assessment choices.

The results of the tests are summarized in Table 1, and the data tables are in Appendix 2. In no case does ethnicity impact the probability of a client receiving an assessment. In contrast, in 3 of the 4 tests of the effect of race, the differences are larger than what would be expected from random variation. Nevertheless, the effects are small. For example, for families with children a change in the assessment status of approximately 3% of the clients would eliminate any race-based differences.[2] Moreover, half of this discrepancy is due to the fact that African-American families are more likely to receive an assessment. For TAY and veterans changes in assessment status of 1% or fewer of the clients would eliminate race-based differences.

Table 1: Results of Tests for Differences in Having an Assessment

	Race	Ethnicity
Single Adults	No Difference	No Difference
Families with Children	3%	No Difference
TAY	<1%	No Difference
Veterans	1%	No Difference

Assessment Classifications

The VI-SPAT assessment is primarily employed to triage clients into one of three care levels: other social services, rapid rehousing, or permanent supportive housing. We tested whether these classification were affected by the race or ethnicity of the client. The results are summarized in Table 2 and the output tables are included in Appendix 3. No differences were found for the ethnicity of the client beyond what would be expected by random variation. For race, differences were found, though they are small, ranging between 3.3% of assessments to less than 1%.

Table 2: Results of Tests for Differences in Assessment Results

	Race	Ethnicity
Single Adults	<3%	No Difference
Families with Children	~3.3%	No Difference
TAY	<1%	No Difference
Veterans	1%	No Difference

The pattern of differences for African-Americans, the largest minority group in the HMIS is similar for all four subgroups. As summarized in Table 3, the proportion of clients that score in the PSH range and the Other Services range is slightly higher than expected given the number of African-American seeking help, while the proportion scoring in RRH range is lower than expected. The pattern is exactly the reverse for White clients.

[2] This figure is calculate by finding the smallest number of reclassifications from not being assessed to being assessed or vice versa, that produces results that are likely to be the result of random chance.

Table 3: Results of Tests for Differences in Assessment Results

	Other Services	RRH	PSH
Black	Higher Likelihood	Lower Likelihood	Higher Likelihood
White	Lower Likelihood	Higher Likelihood	Lower Likelihood

These differences, nevertheless are small, never varying much more than 3% from the overall proportion of clients who score in the PSH range. For example, 49.4% of all TAY clients score in the PSH range. In contrast, 52.6% of Black TAY and 45.1% of White TAY clients score in that range.

This pattern is slightly different than the pattern found by Focus Strategies in their 2016 report. They had found that Black single adults were less likely to score in the PSH range, but more likely to score in the RRH and other social services ranges. The magnitude of the difference in 2016, nevertheless, were similarly small. A change in 1% of the scores eliminates any trace of racial differences.[3]

Shelter and Housing Placements

The analysis of access to shelter and housing placements finds no biases by race. For two programs, TH and PSH, the differences in housing placements based on race can be accounted for by random variation. See Figure 7. There are statistically significant differences in access based on race for ES and RRH. Nevertheless, in only 2 out of 16 comparisons between the outcomes of Black, White and other racial categories do the Black or Other clients have a lower probability of accessing shelter or housing.

These results remain consistent if one examines access to housing conditional on having a VI-SPDAT score in the range that qualifies the client for that housing type.

The analysis of differences in housing placements by ethnicity found few statistically significant results. For families, TAY and Veterans, there are no statistically significant difference in accessing services. There are, in contrast, some differences for single adults. As shown in Figure 8, Latino clients are less likely than expected to access RRH and PSH. In contrast, they are more likely to access TH. While these differences are statistically significant, similar to other results, the observed difference involve only a small proportion of the housing placements made, about 1% of the decisions in each case.

[3] Focus Strategies had reported that "white people ***are much more likely*** to score for PSH than Black people." (p. 16 emphasis added). Nonetheless, the statistic that they reported did not account for the fact that Blacks constituted a smaller proportion than Whites in the sample they analyzed. Once one accounts for the smaller size of the underlying Black population, the magnitude of the racial disparities diminish significantly.

Figure 7: Relative Proportions for Access to Shelter and Housing, by Race

* Denotes Statistically Significant Differences

Figure 7a: Emergency Shelter

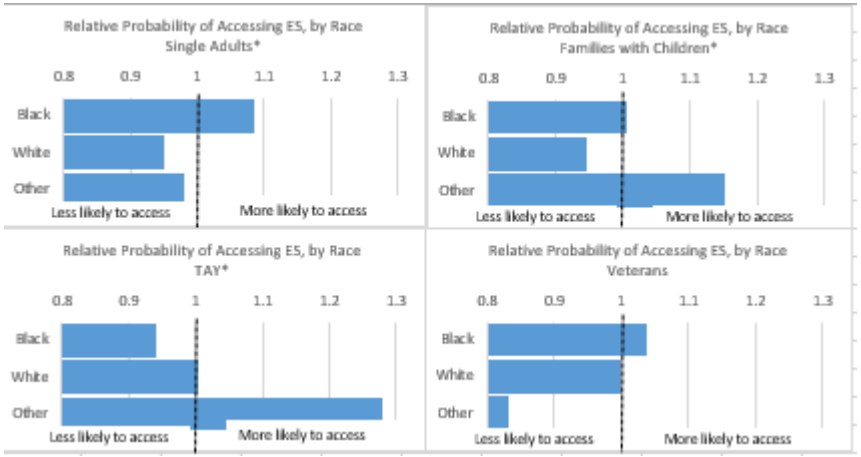


Figure 7b: Rapid Rehousing

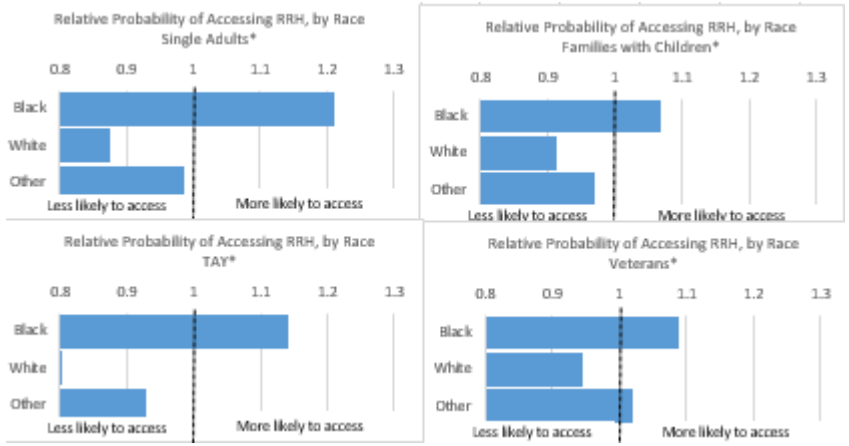


Figure 7c: Transitional Housing

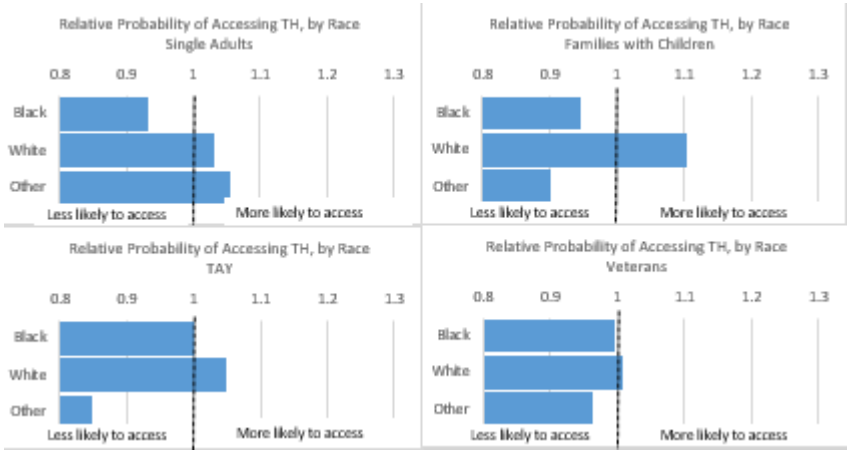


Figure 7d: Permanent Supportive Housing

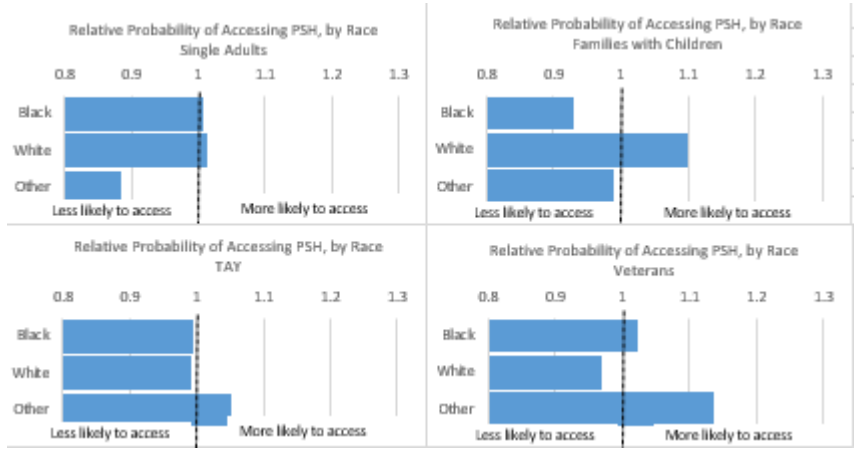
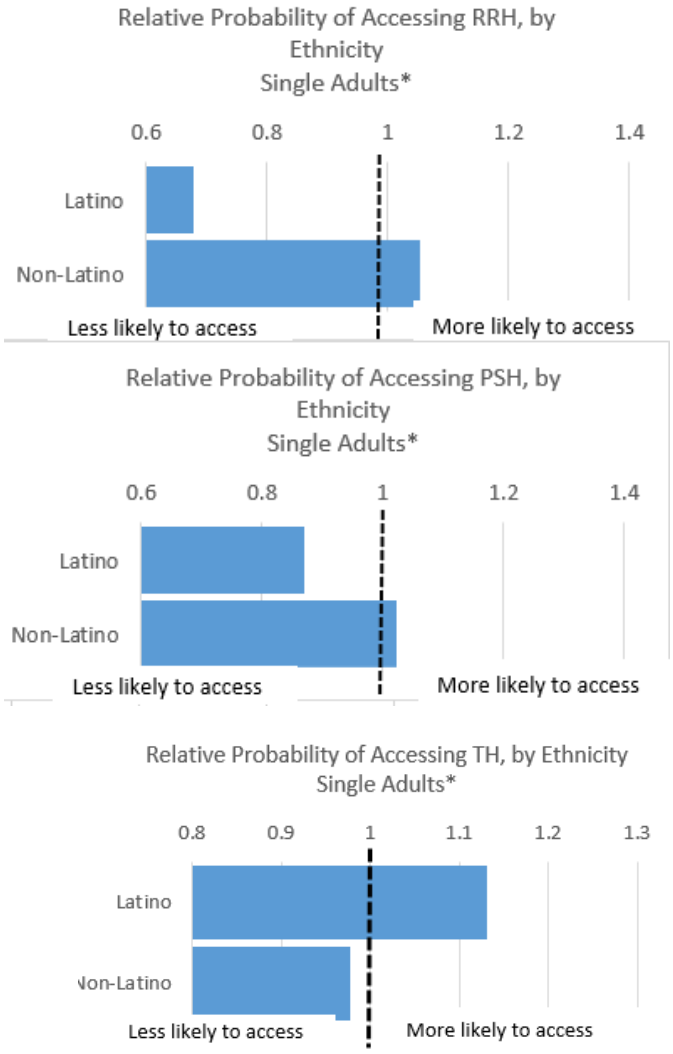


Figure 8: Relative Proportions for Access to Shelter and Housing, by Ethnicity

* Denotes Statistically Significant Differences



Conclusion

Race does play a role in the incidence of homelessness, where Black, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian individuals are more likely to become homeless. These biases are not unique to Sacramento, and their causes are beyond the control of the Sacramento CoC. Nevertheless, awareness of these disparities is important for planning purposes.

A close analysis of the role of race and ethnicity in the provision of services by the Sacramento CoC does find instances in which race or ethnicity does result in differences in service provision. Nevertheless, in all of these cases the differences are small, involving only 1-3% of clients. Moreover, the results do not indicate any systematic bias against any particular racial or ethnic group.

Further analysis of assessment practices and housing placements may be warranted, though there is limited room for reducing racial or ethnic differences.

Appendix 1 Data:

The data for this analysis is taken from 4 sources

1. HMIS -- All clients with active enrollments between Jan. 1 2016 and Nov. 11, 2018.
2. 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year PUMS files for Sacramento County, author calculations
3. 2017 American Homelessness Assessment Report (national homelessness by race and ethnicity)
4. National 2017 5-year ACS Estimates from American Fact Finder[4] (national population by race and ethnicity)

[4] The race categories in the Census differ somewhat from the categories employed in the HMIS. Most importantly, the Census Bureau allow respondents to identify as "Some other race", and in the 2012-2016 PUMS five-year estimates over 7% of the respondents checked that category. There is evidence that this category is frequently employed by individuals who identify as Latino, but without further information we recode those responses as missing data.

Appendix 2: Data Details on Groups Being Assessed

Single Adults

Race	VI-SPDAT Assessment? 0	1	Total
American Indian	0	398	398
	0.00	100.00	100.00
Asian	0	215	215
	0.00	100.00	100.00
Black	10	4,803	4,813
	0.21	99.79	100.00
Native Hawaiian	0	183	183
	0.00	100.00	100.00
White	12	8,002	8,014
	0.15	99.85	100.00
Multiple Races	1	504	505
	0.20	99.80	100.00
Total	23	14,105	14,128
	0.16	99.84	100.00

Pearson chi2(5) = 2.0196 Pr = 0.846

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Assessment? 0	1	Total
Latino	1	2,053	2,054
	0.05	99.95	100.00
Non-Latino	22	12,196	12,218
	0.18	99.82	100.00
Total	23	14,249	14,272
	0.16	99.84	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 1.8863 Pr = 0.170

Families with Children

Race	Assessed? No	Yes	Total
American Indian	22	88	110
	20.00	80.00	100.00
Asian	18	32	50
	36.00	64.00	100.00
Black	409	2,154	2,563
	15.96	84.04	100.00
Native Hawaiian	19	63	82
	23.17	76.83	100.00
White	410	1,411	1,821
	22.52	77.48	100.00
Multiple Races	61	231	292
	20.89	79.11	100.00
Total	939	3,979	4,918
	19.09	80.91	100.00

Pearson chi2(5) = 40.9169 Pr = 0.000

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Assessment? No	Yes	Total
Latino	159	751	910
	17.47	82.53	100.00
Non-Latino	790	3,249	4,039
	19.56	80.44	100.00
Total	949	4,000	4,949
	19.18	80.82	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 2.0867 Pr = 0.149

TAY

Race	VI-SPDAT Assessment? No	YES	Total
American Indian	10	44	54
	18.52	81.48	100.00
Asian	5	25	30
	16.67	83.33	100.00
Black	191	1,517	1,708
	11.18	88.82	100.00
Native Hawaiian	5	35	40
	12.50	87.50	100.00
White	109	985	1,094
	9.96	90.04	100.00
Multiple Races	38	185	223
	17.04	82.96	100.00
Total	358	2,791	3,149
	11.37	88.63	100.00

Pearson chi2(5) = 12.9479 Pr = 0.024

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Assessment? NO	YES	Total
Latino	64	516	580
	11.03	88.97	100.00
Non-Latino	294	2,307	2,601
	11.30	88.70	100.00
Total	358	2,823	3,181
	11.25	88.75	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 0.0343 Pr = 0.853

Veterans

Race	VI-SPDAT Assessment? NO	YES	Total
American Indian	5	43	48
	10.42	89.58	100.00
Asian	6	18	24
	25.00	75.00	100.00
Black	123	754	877
	14.03	85.97	100.00
Native Hawaiian	7	25	32
	21.88	78.13	100.00
White	183	1,311	1,494
	12.25	87.75	100.00
Multiple Races	19	70	89
	21.35	78.65	100.00
Total	343	2,221	2,564
	13.38	86.62	100.00

Pearson chi2(5) = 11.9938 Pr = 0.035

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Assessment? NO	YES	Total
Latino	38	198	236
	16.10	83.90	100.00
Non-Latino	307	2,034	2,341
	13.11	86.89	100.00
Total	345	2,232	2,577
	13.39	86.61	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 1.6503 Pr = 0.199

Appendix 3: Appendix 2: Data Details Assessment Outcomes

Single Adults

Race	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
American Indian	26	109	82	217
	11.98	50.23	37.79	100.00
Asian	11	53	58	122
	9.02	43.44	47.54	100.00
Black	367	1,085	1,106	2,558
	14.35	42.42	43.24	100.00
Native Hawaiian	19	43	30	92
	20.65	46.74	32.61	100.00
White	313	2,224	1,679	4,216
	7.42	52.75	39.82	100.00
Multiple Races	23	134	117	274
	8.39	48.91	42.70	100.00
Total	759	3,648	3,072	7,479
	10.15	48.78	41.08	100.00

Pearson chi2(10) = 130.8433 Pr = 0.000

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
Latino	121	474	445	1,040
	11.63	45.58	42.79	100.00
Non-Latino	644	3,182	2,652	6,478
	9.94	49.12	40.94	100.00
Total	765	3,656	3,097	7,518
	10.18	48.63	41.19	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 5.5829 Pr = 0.061

Families with Children

Race	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
American Indian	10	19	39	68
	14.71	27.94	57.35	100.00
Asian	10	2	15	27
	37.04	7.41	55.56	100.00
Black	503	195	886	1,584
	31.76	12.31	55.93	100.00
Native Hawaiian	19	7	16	42
	45.24	16.67	38.10	100.00
White	236	253	562	1,051
	22.45	24.07	53.47	100.00
Multiple Races	39	30	101	170
	22.94	17.65	59.41	100.00
Total	817	506	1,619	2,942
	27.77	17.20	55.03	100.00

Pearson chi2(10) = 91.3260 Pr = 0.000

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
Latino	142	90	288	520
	27.31	17.31	55.38	100.00
Non-Latino	676	421	1,340	2,437
	27.74	17.28	54.99	100.00
Total	818	511	1,628	2,957
	27.66	17.28	55.06	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 0.0415 Pr = 0.979

TAY

Race	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
American Indian	5	9	9	23
	21.74	39.13	39.13	100.00
Asian	1	4	7	12
	8.33	33.33	58.33	100.00
Black	176	205	423	804
	21.89	25.50	52.61	100.00
Native Hawaiian	1	6	7	14
	7.14	42.86	50.00	100.00
White	67	227	241	535
	12.52	42.43	45.05	100.00
Multiple Races	18	32	47	97
	18.56	32.99	48.45	100.00
Total	268	483	734	1,485
	18.05	32.53	49.43	100.00

Pearson chi2(10) = 50.9178 Pr = 0.000

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
Latino	56	89	131	276
	20.29	32.25	47.46	100.00
Non-Latino	216	394	606	1,216
	17.76	32.40	49.84	100.00
Total	272	483	737	1,492
	18.23	32.37	49.40	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 1.0456 Pr = 0.593

Veterans

Race	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
American Indian	2	10	8	20
	1.72	1.92	1.95	1.91
Asian	1	3	4	8
	0.86	0.57	0.97	0.76
Black	55	156	148	359
	47.41	29.89	36.01	34.22
Native Hawaiian	0	3	7	10
	0.00	0.57	1.70	0.95
White	57	334	227	618
	49.14	63.98	55.23	58.91
Multiple Races	1	16	17	34
	0.86	3.07	4.14	3.24
Total	116	522	411	1,049
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(10) = 22.1837 Pr = 0.014

Ethnicity	VI-SPDAT Classification OSS	RRH	PSH	Total
Latino	10	35	34	79
	8.55	6.70	8.23	7.51
Non-Latino	107	487	379	973
	91.45	93.30	91.77	92.49
Total	117	522	413	1,052
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 0.9786 Pr = 0.613