

Segregation

Historical Overview

The neighborhood conditions in which many Americans live today were created neither by chance nor individual choice. Intentional social processes designed to separate African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and others away from Whites formed the historical basis of a unique system of racial apartheid. The system was reinforced by statute, judicial decree, official government policy, as well as overt and covert real estate practices. Over time, the system produced generations of residential racial segregation which, to this day, help explain the spatial and racial patterns of disparate funding formulae and unequal access to housing, schools, parks, roadways, critical infrastructure, and even health care services across neighborhoods. The powerful legacy of segregation is the continuing pattern of unequal resources and opportunities. The absence of resources and opportunities in some neighborhoods is what leads directly to poorer health and earlier death in those neighborhoods relative to others.

The American system of racial segregation operated at multiple levels. First, the law allowed certain races and ethnicities to settle only in defined areas of towns and cities. Second, banks commonly refused to grant loans for the purchase of homes in certain areas based on racial/ethnic composition. This practice, known as redlining, helped define the racial and ethnic makeup of neighborhoods. Beginning in the early 1930s, the practices of the federal Home Owner's Loan Corporation legitimized the redlining practices by lenders and home insurance agents. Finally, long after racial restrictive covenants on land were ruled unconstitutional, realtors engaged in racial steering to keep non-Whites away from White neighborhoods. They also played active roles in block-busting, or encouraging White owners to sell by giving the impression that African Americans were moving into the neighborhood.

Such policies and practices systematically denied people of color homeownership opportunities while expanding them for lower income Whites. Exclusionary policies and practices were so widespread and well documented that the federal government acknowledged in 2000, “[f]or many years, the federal government itself was responsible for promoting racial discrimination in housing and residential policies.”¹ While these policies are no longer sanctioned and the federal government has taken affirmative steps to end residential segregation and housing discrimination, inequalities in access to quality, affordable housing and profound disparities in homeownership between Whites and people of color persist.

What Research Tell Us

No Home Ownership, No Wealth for Generations

Investment in homeownership has been the primary long-term strategy to build wealth in the United States and we know that wealth is one of the strongest determinants of health.^{2,3} Moreover, homeownership supports inter-generational wealth—assets that are passed from parents to children, ensuring continued and improved access to opportunities. Over time, home values in segregated and politically neglected neighborhoods have stayed stagnant or decreased relative to other communities and have resulted in wider disparities in wealth.

Wealth is the primary portal through which people access a variety of critical social and material benefits—high quality education, employment, housing, childcare, recreational opportunities, nutrition, medical care, and safer and cleaner neighborhoods. African-American and Latino households have less than 10 cents for every dollar in wealth owned by White households.⁴ Approximately one-third of African-American households and one-quarter of Latino households have zero or negative net wealth.⁵ Nationwide, the percentage of Whites who own their homes is about 75%, whereas homeownership rates for African Americans and Latinos is about 47%.⁵ These racialized patterns of wealth distribution are consistent from community to community across the United States, including Alameda County.

Segregation, Concentrated Poverty, and Multiple Health Problems

Where there is high segregation, there are also pockets of high poverty. As with wealth, the spatial concentration of poverty has also increased sharply in the United States. Between 1970 and 1990, the percentage of poor Americans living in neighborhoods with 20% to 40% of people living in poverty increased from 38% to 41%, and the proportion living in neighborhoods of

over 40% poverty increased from 17% to 28%.⁶ While this trend reversed itself somewhat between 1990 and the boom year of 2000, there was still much higher concentrated poverty in 2000 than in 1970 or 1980.⁷

Segregation is what inextricably ties neighborhood to health. Important health outcomes can be predicted largely on the basis of neighborhood of residence, or place. Above and beyond the effects of race/ethnicity and poverty, living in racially segregated neighborhoods has been associated with higher infant mortality,⁸⁻¹⁰ overall mortality,¹¹⁻¹³ and crime rates.¹⁴

There are many reasons for these health differences. Freeways and heavily traveled roadways frequently run through low-income neighborhoods, disproportionately exposing residents to noise and air pollution. Politicians and policy-makers frequently assign undesirable land uses such as power plants and factories, sources of toxins, and bus yards to low-income communities of color.¹⁴ Residents of these communities do not receive the same level of municipal services as those in more affluent neighborhoods. Neighborhoods of high income, more educated and more politically savvy residents have more access to lawmakers and other avenues of influence than the poor neighborhoods.^{5,16} In addition, access to transportation, quality affordable housing, adequate parks and recreational opportunities, and grocery stores is often very limited in poor communities. These same neighborhoods generally have more than their share of poorly funded schools and student populations with high dropout rates.

The Risk of Re-Segregation of Schools

Residential segregation perpetuates school segregation. While gains were made in the desegregation of African American students in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, a movement toward re-segregation of both African American and Latino students since 1990 has been documented nationwide. A series of Supreme Court decisions, the most recent of which came in June 2007,

have rolled back desegregation plans, including voluntary ones, now making it unconstitutional to take race into account in addressing school segregation.^{17,18}

The racial and ethnic composition of the United States is shifting and becoming more diverse. The proportion of Whites has declined, and in many areas of the country Whites no longer are a majority. In the West, for instance, the percentage of White students declined

from 59% in 1990 to 45% in 2005, while the percentage of non-White groups increased (with the exception of American Indians). The largest growth in the West has been among Latinos, who grew from 25% in 1990 to 38% in 2005.



As student populations of color grow relative to White populations it is imperative that through our policies we”

“transform diversity into an asset for all children and society, rather than continuing to separate children in a way that harms both those excluded from better schools and White students in those schools who are not being prepared for success in multiracial communities and workplaces of the future.”¹⁹

Despite an increasingly diverse population, schools continue to be segregated by race and class, particularly in the inner cities. This is due in part to an increase in the number of poor children of all races and in part to a large migration of African American and Latino middle class families to the suburbs. The net result is

concentrated poverty in many urban schools. These are the same schools that have low student achievement, less-experienced teachers, fewer course offerings, less competition, less stable enrollment, and lower graduation rates. Racial segregation of schools continues to be strongly linked to unequal educational opportunities (see Education section).

In 2003-2004, 29% of the nation’s White public school students (K-12) attended Title I schools (where 40% or more of students are eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meal Programs). In stark contrast to this, 71% of African American students and 73% of Latino students attended such public schools nationally.²⁰

A Look at Alameda County Racial Segregation

Residential segregation in Alameda County may be measured in two ways—dissimilarity and entropy. Dissimilarity is the proportion of a county population that would have to move in order for each neighborhood to have the same percentages of each group as has the county overall.²¹ This measure ranges between 0.0 (complete integration) and 1.0 (complete segregation). Entropy measures the difference of each neighborhood from the county’s racial/ethnic composition, which is greatest when each racial/ethnic group is equally represented in each neighborhood.⁶ Entropy also ranges between 0.0 (when all neighborhoods have the same composition as the county) and 1.0 (when each neighborhood contains only one racial/ethnic group). The two segregation indices are shown in Table 1 (page 36) for Alameda and neighboring Bay Area counties.

Bay Area counties have a multigroup dissimilarity index²² that ranges between 0.285 in Sonoma County (the lowest segregation) and 0.431 in San Mateo County (the highest segregation). Alameda County’s dissimilarity index is relatively high at 0.396, suggesting that Alameda County is one of the more segregated

Table 1: Segregation Indices for Bay Area Counties

	Alameda	Contra Costa	Marin	Napa	San Francisco	San Mateo	Santa Clara	Solano	Sonoma
Multigroup dissimilarity	0.396	0.381	0.339	0.287	0.397	0.431	0.384	0.295	0.285
White entropy	0.190	0.188	0.155	0.063	0.167	0.217	0.176	0.109	0.082
AfrAmer entropy	0.263	0.242	0.285	0.188	0.259	0.167	0.045	0.097	0.051
Latino entropy	0.128	0.141	0.198	0.079	0.175	0.188	0.197	0.046	0.101
Asian entropy	0.135	0.073	0.028	0.135	0.147	0.182	0.130	0.134	0.041

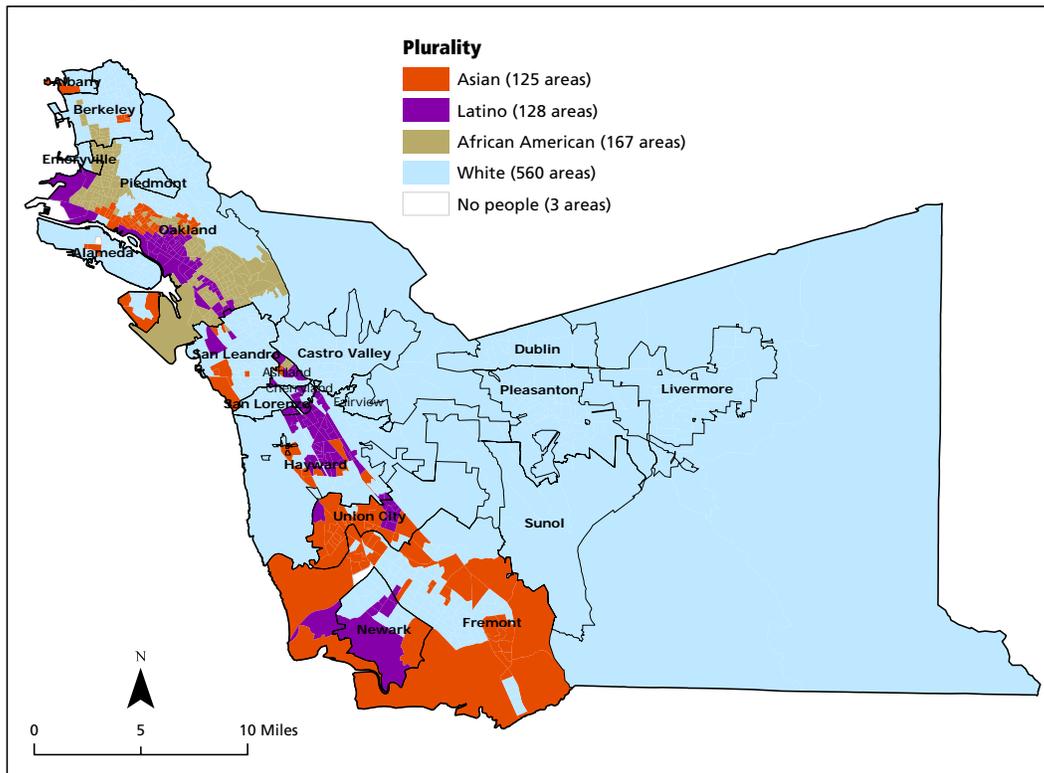
Source and Notes: Calculated at the census tract level with data from Census 2000.

counties in the Bay Area. From the entropy indices, it can be seen that African Americans are the most segregated within Alameda County, with an entropy of 0.263. Historically, African Americans were much more segregated, as entropy in 1970 was 0.513.

Map 3 illustrates racial/ethnic plurality—the race/ethnicity that has the highest proportion of people, but not necessarily the majority—for each Census block group in the county. The geographic concentration of racial/ethnic groups reflects historical segregation and more recent immigration patterns in the county. Be-

fore World War II, African Americans were confined to West Oakland; during the war, the rising numbers of immigrant workers found housing in East Oakland. Asian immigrants were confined to Chinatown in Oakland, and they were later allowed to move to the China Hill area. More recently, Latinos have settled in Fruitvale and parts of Hayward and Newark, while Asians have moved to Fremont and Union City. We find high concentrations of these groups in these areas today.

Map 3: Racial/Ethnic Plurality, Alameda County

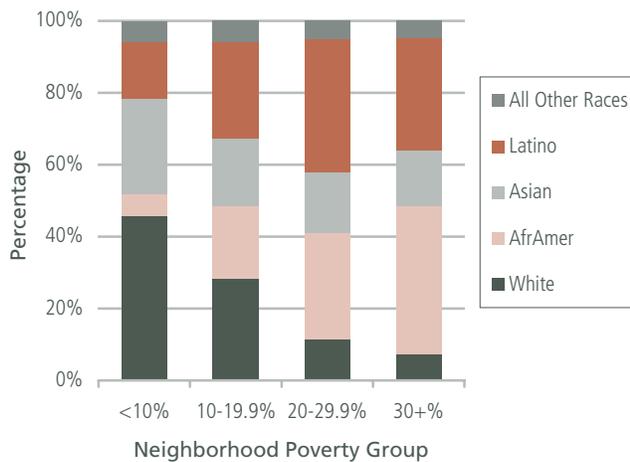


Source: Census 2000.

Economic Segregation and Poverty

As explained earlier, a consequence of racial segregation is economic segregation. In Alameda County, Whites are the largest group in the lowest poverty neighborhoods.^a In contrast, African Americans are the largest group by far in the highest poverty areas. The percentage of Whites and Asians is lower with increasing neighborhood poverty, while the reverse is true for African Americans (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Racial/Ethnic Composition of Neighborhood Poverty Groups, Alameda County, 2006

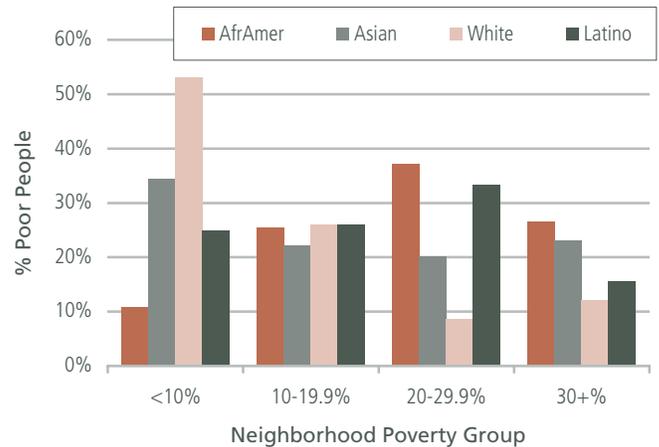


Sources: DOF, ABAG Projections 2007, Claritas, Census 2000.

Figure 12 shows a slightly different picture and a particularly important one when thinking about health inequities. Poor people living in poor neighborhoods experience a double disadvantage. Living in a poor household in a high-poverty neighborhood means having very few personal opportunities and few community resources. In contrast, living in a poor household in an affluent neighborhood is less likely to have the same negative consequences because there are more shared resources and opportunities to influence community conditions. In Alameda County, poor people and people of color are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods. Figure 12 shows the distribution of poor people by neighborhood poverty level. For

instance, only 10% of poor African Americans live in low-poverty neighborhoods (<10% poverty), while the majority (63.7%) live in high-poverty neighborhoods: 37.2% in neighborhoods of 20 to 29.9% poverty, and 26.5% in neighborhoods of 30% or greater poverty. In contrast, over half (53%) of Whites who are poor live in neighborhoods with less than 10% poverty.

Figure 12: Percentage of Poor Residents by Race/Ethnicity Living in Neighborhood Poverty Groups, Alameda County, 2006



Sources: DOF, ABAG Projections 2007, Claritas, Census 2000.

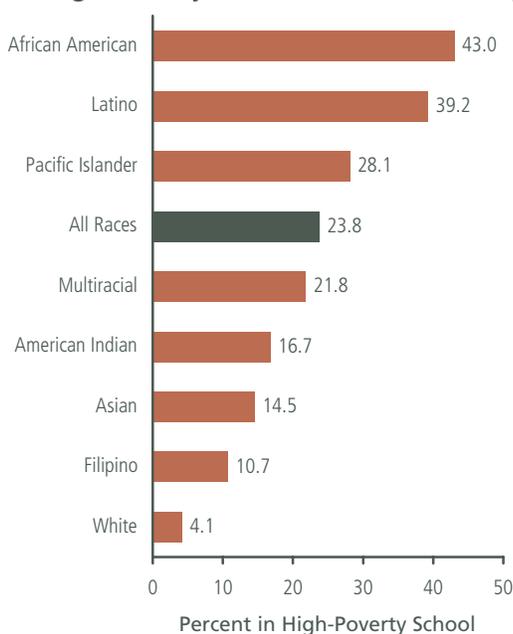
Segregation in Alameda County Public Schools

Alameda County is racially and ethnically diverse, with people of color comprising over 60% of its total population and 75% of its public school population. As a result, the large majority of children in Alameda County public schools attend schools where over half of students are non-White. Many schools in the county, however, are racially segregated, and the schools that are the poorest tend to be the most segregated. In Alameda County, 23.8% of all K-12 public school students attend high-poverty schools (schools where 60% or more of the students are enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal Program). Figure 13 shows that

a. Neighborhood poverty is defined by the percentage of persons in a census tract living below the federal poverty level. In Census 2000, the 1999 federal poverty level was \$17,029 (\$20,444 in 200[^]) for a family of 4. Census tracts with less than 10% of residents living in poverty represent low neighborhood poverty. Census tracts with 30% or more of residents living in poverty represent high neighborhood poverty.

43.0% of African American children, 39.2% of Latino children, and 28.1% of Pacific Islander children attend high-poverty schools. In contrast, only 4.1% of White children attend such high-poverty schools, which is one-tenth the percentage of African Americans. High-poverty schools tend to have less experienced teachers, fewer course offerings, less competition, less stable enrollment, low student achievement, and lower graduation rates (see Education section).

Figure 13: Percentage of K-12 Students Enrolled in High-Poverty Schools, Alameda County



Source: California Department of Education, 2007-2008.

Data to Action: Policy Implications

Neighborhood conditions have been created neither by chance nor choice. Historical segregation practices account for today's patterns of racial/ethnic and income segregation. Restrictive covenants ensured that certain race/ethnicities were allowed to settle only in prescribed areas. Through redlining, banks denied loans for the purchase of homes in neighborhoods of color, and realtors participated in keeping non-Whites away from White neighborhoods. Today's residents in poor neighborhoods have limited access to reliable transportation, quality affordable housing, adequate

parks and recreational opportunities, full-service grocery stores, clean air, quality child care and schools and social cohesion. Municipal services are less responsive than those in the better-off neighborhoods.

The legacy of historical racism and segregation is that poor people of color tend to live in poor neighborhoods. The cumulative effect of multiple problems and stressors takes a heavy toll on their health and well-being. Clearly there is a need for more equity in the distribution of and access to resources between poor and rich areas. A few policy goals implied by this need include the following:

- Systematically track and report social and economic opportunities at the neighborhood level.
- Improve unequal neighborhood conditions in segregated neighborhoods, especially schools, parks, and location of undesirable land uses.
- Institute systems to track governmental infrastructure spending by neighborhood in order to track inequities.
- Reduce low-density-only zoning to make more homes affordable in more areas.
- Support inclusionary zoning policies.
- Implement the Environmental Protection Agency's environmental justice directives including Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations).

Many more relevant policy suggestions appear in the following sections of this report.

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