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Barriers and opportunities in the housing voucher program: The importance of race in the housing search process

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Abstract

Even though the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program’s overarching policy goal is to enable households to access a diverse set of neighborhoods, voucher households are concentrated in high-poverty and racially segregated neighborhoods, with nonwhite voucher holders disproportionately residing in such places. Across the country and in the Greater Boston metropolitan area, voucher recipients have limited access to higher-opportunity areas—neighborhoods that positively influence residents’ health and social and economic well-being. We analyze survey data of voucher-assisted families residing in both higher- and lower-opportunity neighborhoods across Greater Boston to explore how housing search factors such as information, preferences, and discrimination impact voucher holders’ search process and experiences while searching and, ultimately, where they use their vouchers. We find that while most voucher holders express a preference for similar types of neighborhoods—safe and economically mixed communities—household race, information and strategies used during the housing search, and discrimination by property owners and managers impact housing location outcomes. These outcomes vary significantly by race, with black families experiencing the greatest access barriers to higher-opportunity communities, regardless of the strategies they use. Finally, we discuss changes in housing policy and practice that can lead to greater access to opportunity for voucher-assisted families.

Introduction

Despite the explicit policy goal of providing low-income families the opportunity to live in communities of their *choice*, access to higher-opportunity neighborhoods across the Greater Boston metropolitan area remains elusive for families who receive mobile rental subsidies through the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP, also known as Section 8) and especially for families of color. In this brief, we introduce data from an in-depth survey of voucher-assisted families with children across the region to explore the factors that support and constrain moves to higher-opportunity neighborhoods, defined as those that are in lower-poverty census tracts with high-performing schools, proximity to economic opportunities, and access to a range of environmental factors that are protective for child and family health and well-being.¹ We examine the experiences of the housing search for voucher-assisted families—both those who found housing in higher-opportunity neighborhoods and those who did not—to understand the relative importance of neighborhood preferences and housing search strategies in the region.

We find that regardless of location outcomes, when looking for housing, families shared similar preferences for neighborhood characteristics. However, the process of looking for apartments, experience with housing providers and property owners, and location outcomes varied by race, with black families experiencing the greatest access barriers to diverse communities. Compared with other families, black families used more search strategies and sought out more apartments, but they had less success and experienced more discrimination during the search process, especially in higher-opportunity areas. On a positive note, however, voucher families of all races and

ethnicities who located in higher-opportunity areas expressed greater satisfaction with their neighborhoods for themselves and their children, reporting no greater difficulties in adjusting to new neighborhoods and neighbors than those who located in lower-opportunity neighborhoods.

Policy and Research Context

As the nation's largest directly subsidized housing program, the HCVP provides about 2.2 million low-income households with mobile vouchers that enable them to rent units in the private market. Voucher-assisted households pay approximately 30% of their income toward rent, and the voucher makes up the difference.² In contrast to traditional public or project-based housing, voucher participants select their housing unit and community of residence. As a result, those who receive voucher subsidies tend to reside in lower-poverty neighborhoods than those assisted through place-based programs and those without a housing subsidy.³ However, the still significant concentration of voucher holders in higher-poverty and racially segregated communities suggests that obtaining a voucher does little to expand families' access to higher-opportunity neighborhoods. In 2017, fewer than 14% of families with children receiving vouchers in the United States lived in low-poverty neighborhoods,⁴ and white households were nearly twice as likely as black households to live in such neighborhoods.⁵

Both a push for equality of opportunity and increasing recognition of the impact of neighborhoods on children's well-being motivate policy solutions to help desegregate voucher-assisted households. Litigation-based voucher mobility programs⁶ demonstrate that with assistance and support, HCVP families can and do move to higher-opportunity areas. Further, the Moving to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration program produced rigorous longitudinal findings showing significant positive impacts on children who moved to lower-poverty areas, and subsequent work quantified the impact of lower-poverty neighborhoods on life outcomes.⁷ This empirically compelling research joins a literature documenting the increasing polarization of communities by income and race, and the role that segregation plays in perpetuating inequality and disparities in life outcomes.

Policy stipulations, including the 1968 Fair Housing Act and, more recently, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule and HUD's 2017 Small Area Fair Market Rents regulation, underscore the expectation that housing practitioners work to actively reduce racial and economic segregation.⁸ The Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Act of 2018, which received bipartisan support, includes \$28 million dollars and will likely add more than a dozen new mobility programs to the 20 currently operating throughout the United States.⁹

While more effective programs to decrease segregation continue to be developed and debated, studies rarely incorporate information obtained directly from voucher recipients who have searched for and rented units in less segregated neighborhoods. The comparison of voucher recipients with different location outcomes is needed to understand the relative importance of various factors in constraining or broadening housing choices and outcomes for families with vouchers in the current housing climate.

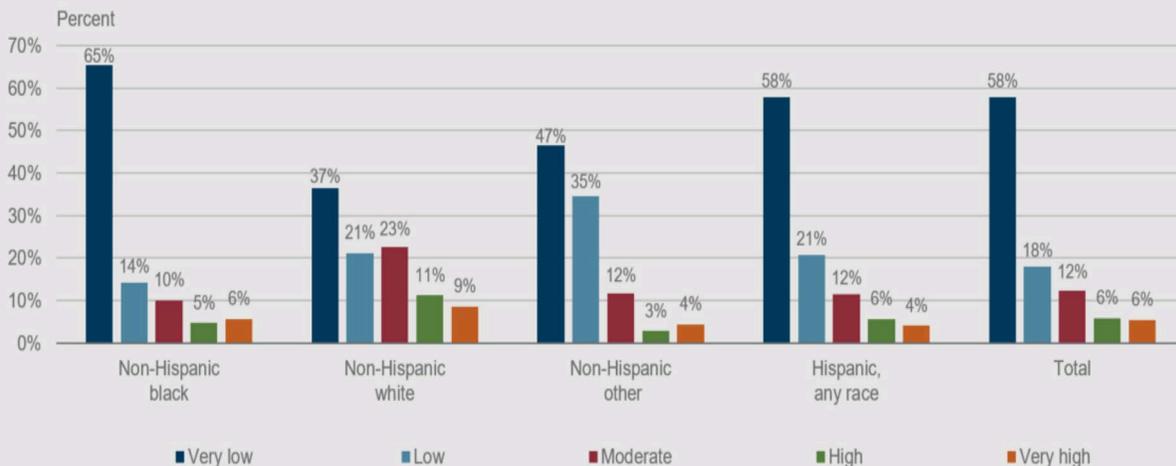
Regional Context

Greater Boston has a high level of income inequality, a large racial wealth gap, and increasing housing cost burdens, according to studies by both local and national researchers.^{10,11} Agencies that conduct formal assessments of impediments to fair housing and civil rights organizations have also identified segregation and discrimination as a root cause of deep disparities in access to quality-of-life opportunities.¹²

In 2016, The American City Coalition conducted a comprehensive analysis of the Boston Housing Authority’s (BHA) voucher population location outcomes in Greater Boston.¹³ One of the largest public housing authorities in New England, the BHA houses more than 58,000 people through the administration of more than 14,000 housing vouchers and more than 12,000 public housing units.

Consistent with national trends, the 2016 study showed that the majority of BHA voucher recipients in the region lived in lower-opportunity neighborhoods (76%), while 12% lived in “high” or “very high” opportunity areas. Findings on access to opportunity areas by race also echo national patterns: 20% of the white BHA voucher recipients lived in “high” or “very high” opportunity areas, but just 11% of black BHA voucher recipients lived in these areas. (See Figure 1.) Moreover, while BHA’s large administrative area includes 120 cities and towns across Greater Boston, nearly half (48%) of all BHA voucher holders lived in just three neighborhoods of the City of Boston: Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury.

Access to Opportunity Neighborhoods Across Greater Boston for Voucher Holders by Race



Source/Note: Authors own calculations/2016 Boston Housing Authority Voucher Recipients. The sample includes 8,476 BHA households. Excluded from this sample are households with vouchers that serve special populations (such as veterans only) or come with special services.

Research and Methods

To advance understanding of voucher holders' location outcomes in the Boston area, a household survey was conducted to explore voucher holders' perspectives and experiences and to assess how policies and practices, information, resources, and preferences influence family housing searches, neighborhood choices, and location outcomes. Previous research has established that voucher holders vary in their preferences, housing search strategies, and experience with landlords and property managers. Therefore, it is possible that this variation explains some of the differences in location outcomes. It is also possible that voucher holders with similar preferences and search strategies have very different experiences because of unobservable characteristics or discrimination in housing markets.

The following questions framed this brief:

Do families who move to higher-opportunity neighborhoods differ from families that locate in lower-opportunity neighborhoods in terms of

- neighborhood or housing preferences or priorities?
- search strategies, experiences, and locations?
- barriers encountered during the housing search process?
- level of neighborhood satisfaction in their new community?

For this study, we drew a sample from the 2016 BHA administrative program data on voucher recipients, including household demographics, locations, and moving history. Addresses of voucher holders were geocoded and linked to census tracts and tract-level measures of neighborhood opportunity using the Child Opportunity Index (COI),¹⁴ a comprehensive measure of community-level resources known to be crucial for healthy child development and positive life outcomes. For the purposes of this brief, “higher-opportunity” areas include census tracts with COI scores of moderate, high, and very high, and “lower-opportunity” areas include those with COI scores of low and very low.¹⁵ Interviewers completed in-person surveys with 128 BHA voucher recipients who had children under age 18 in the household and who moved to their unit at some point in the past three years.¹⁶

Findings

Below we highlight the most relevant key findings. All findings presented are statistically significant ($p < .05$), unless noted otherwise. We present these findings and the corresponding data under the framework of the four sets of factors—listed in our research questions—that might differ between families who moved to higher-opportunity neighborhoods and those who moved to lower-opportunity areas. A discussion of our findings follows this section.

Differences in Preferences and Priorities for Neighborhoods and Housing

Some arguments suggest that individual preferences,¹⁷ drive disparities in location outcomes of voucher holders (e.g., a preference for neighborhoods populated predominantly by residents of similar racial or economic backgrounds or for locations that offer proximity to social support). This survey found no significant differences between voucher holders living in higher- and lower-opportunity areas in their ranking of the importance of 13 different neighborhood features.¹⁸ For example, families in higher- and lower-opportunity areas had identical top priorities during their housing search: to be in a safe affordable community.¹⁹ Both groups ranked being close to social services or friends and family among their lowest priorities. Additionally, the predominant preference among both groups was a mixed-income neighborhood. Higher- and lower-opportunity movers also had similar neighborhood racial preferences, with the vast majority preferring a mixed-race community.

Differences in Search Strategies, Locations, and Experiences

Another reason for differences in location outcomes may be that voucher holders vary in how and where they conduct their searches and in their experiences along the way. We used the data to explore how voucher holders differed in their search strategies, housing search locations, and contact with property owners, and whether differences were related to location outcomes.

Search Strategies

The survey asked about 12 different types of search strategies to explore their role in location outcomes.²⁰ Voucher holders in higher-opportunity areas were more likely than those in lower-opportunity areas to have used the Internet during their search (71% vs. 54%) and to have found their unit through the Internet (35% vs. 21%); voucher holders in lower-opportunity areas were more likely to have found their unit through family or friends (46% vs. 30%). Those using vouchers in higher-opportunity areas were also more likely to have found their unit through a real estate broker (13% vs. 9%). This pattern is consistent across racial groups; units in higher-opportunity areas were found more often via nonpersonal ties than via personal ties, such as family or friends.

In addition to uncovering the types of search strategies associated with different location outcomes, we also assessed the total number of different strategies households used during their housing search as an indicator of effort, time, and resources expended. We found that those living in both higher- and lower-opportunity areas used an average of three different search strategies. However, blacks, regardless of location outcomes, used the greatest number, averaging 4.1 strategies, compared with 3.6 for whites, 1.6 for Hispanics, and 2.4 for “other” racial groups.²¹ Blacks were significantly more likely than all other racial groups to employ nearly all search strategies, including accessing support from agencies such as the BHA (65% blacks vs. 38% non-blacks), Metro Boston Housing

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Partnership²² (43% blacks vs. 15% non-blacks), and the Metrolist²³ (31% blacks vs. 3% non-blacks). These results indicate that relative to whites, households of color used more strategies—and more diverse strategies—to search for housing, but these efforts less frequently led to households finding housing in higher-opportunity neighborhoods.

Housing Search Locations

Location outcomes may also be the result of where voucher holders searched for housing. We found that higher-opportunity movers were three times as likely as lower-opportunity movers to have searched in a higher-opportunity neighborhood (100% vs. 33%) and more likely to have searched for housing outside of the City of Boston (64% vs. 37%).²⁴ Additionally, those who moved to higher-opportunity areas were significantly more likely to have searched for housing in neighborhoods they had never heard of than those who did not move to higher-opportunity areas (46% vs. 32%) and where they did not know anyone (39% vs. 21%).²⁵ Importantly, these patterns were found across all racial groups.²⁶

Some households that moved to lower-opportunity areas searched exclusively in lower-opportunity areas. Households of color and those with more children were significantly more likely to have conducted such searches: 39% of black families searched exclusively in lower-opportunity areas, compared with just 6% of whites. This suggests a link between *searching* in higher-opportunity neighborhoods and *moving* to such neighborhoods, and families of color and large families are less likely to conduct such searches.

Contact with Property Owners

Because voucher holders must obtain a lease from a property owner, location outcomes also depend on successful contact with property owners in the desired locations. Contact usually involves calls to property owners, viewing units, and completing applications. Higher- and lower-opportunity movers did not differ significantly in patterns of contact with property owners. Race, however, mattered with respect to the amount and type of contact with property owners, including unit viewings, and it mattered regardless of location outcome. White voucher holders had the greatest success with calls to property owners, viewing units, and completing applications. Black households had significantly lower viewing-to-call ratios: 66% of black's calls to property owners resulted in a unit viewing, compared with 81% on average for other racial groups. Fewer unit viewings for blacks may suggest differential treatment in the housing market, a finding consistent with national research that finds people of color are shown fewer apartments than equally qualified whites.²⁷

Differences in Barriers Encountered during the Housing Search Process

The concentration of voucher holders in lower-opportunity areas may be due to housing search barriers including discrimination based on income or race, voucher status, and landlord perceptions and experiences with the voucher program. Federal fair housing regulations prohibit discrimination based on race and other household characteristics, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston have source-of-income regulations (Chapter 151B) that prohibit discrimination based on voucher receipt (as a protected source of income). Still, a significant proportion of the survey respondents reported that they experienced discrimination during their search from property owners, management companies, brokers, and housing agencies based on their race and/or on their source of income (i.e., a voucher). More than seven in 10 respondents (73%) reported that one or more types of discrimination by property owners was either a “big problem” or “some problem” during their last housing search.

The responses suggest an intersection between voucher status and race. Voucher holders living in lower-opportunity areas reported significantly greater problems with racial discrimination during their last housing search than those residing in higher-opportunity areas (54% vs. 33%), a pattern found across all racial groups.²⁸ Yet black voucher holders who searched in higher-opportunity areas were more likely to report problems with landlords not accepting vouchers than other racial groups (80% vs. 57%).²⁹ Further, blacks who searched in and moved to higher-opportunity areas were significantly more likely to report at least one form of discrimination during their housing search than non-blacks (90% vs. 65%). Although the survey did not distinguish in which neighborhoods voucher holders experienced discrimination, and many households searched in multiple neighborhoods, the data suggest that black voucher holders experience greater challenges than other racial groups with regard to discrimination by property owners in higher-opportunity neighborhoods during housing search.

Differences in Neighborhood Satisfaction and Assessment of Quality of Life

While many voucher holders begin their housing searches with similar aspirations and priorities, those who locate in higher-opportunity areas are significantly more likely to realize their neighborhood preferences and goals—and they are happier with the quality of life in their communities. Families who located in higher-opportunity areas were no more likely than those who located in lower-opportunity areas to report that their children had difficulty adjusting to the neighborhood following their most recent move. Those living in higher-opportunity areas were much more likely than those in lower-opportunity areas to be “very satisfied” with safety, both in the daytime (86% vs. 51%) and at night (80% vs. 39%), school quality (84% vs. 46%), costs of living in the neighborhood (52% vs. 25%), neighborhood cleanliness (80% vs. 46%), and their neighbors (63% vs. 39%). Further, they were more likely to believe their neighborhood is a good place for their children

(87% vs. 55%) and aspire to stay in their current neighborhood for a long time (75% vs. 46%).

Discussion and Implications for Practice

Even though the HCVP does not place restrictions on where vouchers can be used, only a quarter of BHA voucher households live in a moderate- or higher-opportunity area, and a disproportionate number of those families are white. In our survey of voucher holders, comparisons between households living in higher- and lower-opportunity neighborhoods challenge the assertion that preference alone drives families to predominantly live in lower-opportunity neighborhoods: both groups had nearly identical preferences for safe, mixed-income, mixed-race areas like those found in higher-opportunity neighborhoods. Nor is it simply an issue of supply: analyses show that there are many more voucher-affordable units in low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods than there are voucher holders in the Boston area.³⁰ While not all voucher households want to live in higher-opportunity areas, housing agency staff and counselors can be confident that there is a supply of housing and an unmet demand among voucher holders to reside in higher-opportunity neighborhoods in Greater Boston.

Complex factors lead some households to locate in higher-opportunity neighborhoods and others in lower-opportunity areas, yet this complexity suggests multiple opportunities for practical intervention. Voucher holders vary in their search strategies, including the sources of information used in the housing search, locations and neighborhoods searched, and the intensity and experiences of their search processes. Consistently across racial groups, voucher holders found units in higher-opportunity areas more often through nonpersonal ties than personal ones. Thus, in addition to providing more housing search assistance, housing agency staff might encourage voucher holders to broaden their search techniques and search for housing outside of their immediate interpersonal network. Housing agencies might also increase opportunities by conducting landlord outreach in higher-opportunity neighborhoods that are not typically included in the lists created exclusively for voucher-assisted households.

Further, households' search locations influence their location outcomes: those who moved to higher-opportunity areas were more likely to have searched in higher-opportunity neighborhoods. Importantly, these patterns were found across all racial groups. Yet households of color were significantly more likely to have searched for housing exclusively in lower-opportunity neighborhoods. Some research suggests that knowledge of where to search—familiarity and consideration of diverse places—is limited in part by patterns of neighborhood segregation.³¹

Since voucher holders will only find housing in higher-opportunity areas if they search there, training on implicit bias and discrimination may help housing agency staff and counselors anticipate that information and search locations may be shaped by past experiences with and/or perceptions of discrimination as well as the barriers families may face in their current housing search. More information about neighborhoods, in addition to unit availability, can be shared with voucher holders when they are considering a move or conducting a housing search.

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Regardless of where they searched, black and white voucher holders differed in important ways in their search strategies and experiences, and these may have important implications for location outcomes. First, relative to whites, black households used more strategies—and more diverse sources—to locate a unit, but their housing searches were more likely to result in securing a rental unit in a lower-opportunity location. Landlords and brokers also returned fewer calls and showed fewer units to black voucher holders than to whites. Fewer unit viewings for blacks suggest differential treatment in the housing market, a finding consistent with national research that finds people of color are shown fewer apartments than equally qualified whites. Such treatment could help explain voucher holders' disparate outcomes.

Practitioners could make strides against discriminatory behavior by conducting more housing audits and following the guidelines of the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule. While voluntary at this point, it outlines how public housing agencies can assess barriers to fair housing and set plans to overcome them. Several studies have found that voucher holders in areas with source-of-income protections are more likely to succeed in using their vouchers, particularly when combined with greater enforcement efforts, while public housing authorities may be able to use more of the vouchers they administer overall.³²

While many voucher holders began their housing searches with similar aspirations and priorities, those using vouchers in higher-opportunity areas are significantly more likely to realize their neighborhood preferences and goals. Families who used their voucher to locate in a higher-opportunity area reported that they were happier with their quality of life and that their neighborhoods were good for their children and places in which they plan to live for a long time. Housing agencies could disseminate these positive findings to voucher holders and other housing and human service agencies that serve voucher recipients. Personal stories and access to mentors of successful higher-opportunity movers could be shared in person during briefings and in other formats such as videos and websites.

Lastly, the research findings highlight the need to develop local housing mobility programs to help lower the barriers voucher holders face in moving to higher-opportunity neighborhoods. According to a recent report by the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, “the growing recognition that place matters and that families deserve a real choice in deciding where to live has led to the creation of comprehensive assisted housing mobility programs designed to improve low-income families’ access to opportunity neighborhoods.”³³ Several housing mobility programs have had success in reducing administrative burdens that landlords indicate are an important consideration in deciding whether to rent to a family with a voucher.³⁴ Although Greater Boston is not among the 24 metropolitan areas (and 200 housing authorities) that are required by HUD to adopt Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs), any metro area and housing authority may voluntarily adopt SAFMRs in order to expand housing opportunities for voucher recipients in higher-cost, lower-poverty neighborhoods. Programs in areas with competitive rental markets have seen success in adopting SAFMRs when implemented in combination with landlord and tenant education about the policy.^{35,36}

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While access to higher-opportunity neighborhoods across Greater Boston remains elusive for low-income families—and particularly families of color who receive mobile rental subsidies through the HCVP—there are encouraging signs. HUD’s 2019 Mobility Demonstration program is the first large-scale national program in 27 years, and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development is implementing its first-ever voluntary housing mobility program, Supporting Neighborhood Opportunity in Massachusetts (SNO Mass).³⁷ The Greater Boston metropolitan area is rich in academic resources, health leaders, government and policy advocates, and civic organizations committed to equity and social justice—a region well equipped to develop solutions that ensure that all low-income families can exercise fair housing choice in the years ahead.

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Endnotes

¹ In this brief, “higher-opportunity” neighborhoods are defined using the Child Opportunity Index developed by the Kirwan Institute at Ohio State and researchers from the diversitydatakids.org project at Brandeis University.

² The specific amount is based on the metropolitan area Fair Market Rent set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

³ Sard, B., Rice, D., Bell, A., & Mazzara, A. (2018). *Federal Policy Changes Can Help More Families with Housing Vouchers Live in Higher-Opportunity Areas*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/federal-policy-changes-can-help-more-families-with-housing-vouchers-live-in-higher>

⁴ The term “low-poverty” is generally applied to areas where fewer than 15% of the people in the area are living below the poverty line. Research shows that poverty-associated social problems begin to appear once the neighborhood poverty rate hits 15% to 20%. (See <https://www.cbpp.org/research/creating-opportunity-for-children>.)

⁵ Sard, B., Rice, D., Bell, A., & Mazzara, A. (2018).

⁶ These were created in response to government policies that contributed to residential segregation and include Boston’s Skinner Program, Chicago’s Gautreaux, and the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership.

⁷ De Souza Briggs, X., Popkin, S.J., & Goering, J. (2010). *Moving to opportunity: The story of an American experiment to fight ghetto poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press; Chetty, R., Hendren, N. & Katz, L.F. (2016). “The effects of exposure to better neighborhoods on children: New evidence from the Moving to Opportunity experiment.” *American Economic Review*, 106(4), 855–902.

⁸ Miles, D., Samuels, B., & Pollack, C. (2017). “Leveraging housing vouchers to address health disparities.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(2), 238–240.

⁹ See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5793>.

¹⁰ Acevedo-Garcia, D., et al. (2016). *The Child Opportunity Index: Measuring and mapping neighborhood-based opportunities for U.S. children*. Retrieved from http://www.diversitydatakids.org/files/Library/Child%20Opportunity/COI%20Report%20Final%20207_29_16.pdf

¹¹ For example, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council highlights income inequality in the Boston metropolitan area in the [State of Equity 2017 Update](#). The Brookings Institution identified Boston as the city with the highest level of income inequality in the nation in a [2014 report](#). Although the region is becoming more diverse, economic segregation and inequality is growing. [The Color of Wealth in Boston](#), a 2015 report published jointly by Duke University, the New School, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, highlights the large differences in assets and debt held by white and nonwhite households in Boston. [The Costs of Segregation](#), a 2017 study by the Urban Institute and the Metropolitan Planning Council, included a national review of 100 metropolitan areas and a Chicago case study on segregation trends and highlighted the individual costs, to African Americans in particular, as well as the significant economic losses for entire regions as a result of residential segregation.

¹² For example, Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (Commonwealth of Massachusetts), Boston Assessment of Fair Housing (City of Boston), Fair Housing and Equity Assessment for Metropolitan Boston (Metropolitan Area Planning Council), and Equity, Access, and Opportunity Report Card (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Boston Chapter).

¹³ Curley, A. M. & Weismann, G. (2016). *An emerging portrait of BHA voucher holders: Opportunities and challenges for housing mobility*. Unpublished report, The American City Coalition, prepared for the Boston Housing Authority. (Available from authors on request.)

¹⁴ The COI includes 19 indicators across three core areas: quality educational settings, health and environment, and social and economic environments. COI scores are ranked within metropolitan areas using quintiles to identify five categories of neighborhood opportunity (very high, high, moderate, low, very low).

¹⁵ This categorization of higher- and lower-opportunity areas represents the top 60% and bottom 40% of census tracts in Metro Boston, as ordered according to the COI.

¹⁶ The sampling frame included approximately 1,900 voucher holders currently leasing in the Greater Boston metropolitan area that met the following criteria: (1) traditional, relocation, or Skinner voucher holder (the Skinner Voucher Program is a court-ordered voucher program that began in 2003 and was created as a result of litigation brought by the Boston NAACP against HUD for racial discrimination in the allocation and placement of BHA housing); (2) at least one child (or minor under age 18); and (3) moved into current unit between 2014 and 2017. The survey respondent sample is representative of the selection criteria. The analysis suggests the survey achieved distribution across locations in and outside of the City of Boston and locations with varying levels of neighborhood opportunity. In order to gain insights into the experiences and housing search processes of households that used vouchers in higher-opportunity areas, these households were oversampled for the survey. Thus, just over half of the respondents in the sample (54%) currently reside in higher-opportunity areas

and 45% live in lower-opportunity areas. This sampling method depended on the voucher holder's current neighborhood context, not their origin neighborhood context.

¹⁷ For a discussion of this argument and the evidence refuting it, see Krysan, M., Couper, M.P., Farley, R. & Forman, T.A. (2009). "Does race matter in neighborhood preferences? Results from a video experiment." *American Journal of Sociology*, 115(2), 527-559.; and Krysan, M., & Crowder, K. (2017). *Cycle of segregation: Social processes and residential stratification*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

¹⁸ The 13 factors, listed in order of overall rank from most to least important to the housing search, were (1) to be in a safe community; (2) to have affordable rent; (3) to move away from violence, gangs, or drugs; (4) to find an apartment that I liked; (5) to be in a convenient location; (6) to get a bigger or better apartment; (7) to be in a place with better schools for my children; (8) access to public transportation; (9) to be close to health care services; (10) to be near job opportunities; (11) to be near my job; (12) to be close to social services I use; and (13) to be nearby to family or friends.

¹⁹ An average of 98% of both groups indicated that two factors—safety and affordable rent—were "very important" during their last housing search.

²⁰ Strategies include family/friends, Internet, newspapers, real estate broker, BHA, Metro Boston Housing Partnership, MetroList, stabilization/shelter worker, housing help at social service agency, MassHousing Access Registry, and Fair Housing.

²¹ Differences are statistically significant.

²² After the survey was implemented, this agency changed its name to Metro Housing Boston.

²³ This is a list of income-restricted properties that are funded with City of Boston sources or listed voluntarily by property owners.

²⁴ Higher-opportunity movers also searched in more neighborhoods outside the city (1.5% vs 0.8%) and movers to lower-opportunity areas searched in more neighborhoods within the city (1.5% vs. 0.9%). Differences are statistically significant.

²⁵ Differences are statistically significant.

²⁶ Some patterns were more pronounced for some groups. For example, 40% of black respondents living in higher-opportunity areas had searched in neighborhoods they had never heard of, compared with 29% of those in lower-opportunity areas; and 30% of Hispanic respondents living in higher-opportunity areas searched in communities where they did not know anyone, compared with just 9% in lower-opportunity areas.

²⁷ For recent studies of discrimination against voucher recipients, see <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/ExecSumm-Landlord-Acceptance-of-Housing-Choice-Vouchers.pdf> and <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Urban-Landlords-HCV-Program.pdf>

²⁸ For example, 35% of black families and 33% of non-blacks living in higher-opportunity areas reported problems with racial discrimination during their search, compared with 50% of blacks and 59% of non-blacks in lower-opportunity areas.

²⁹ Differences between blacks and non-blacks in lower-opportunity areas (60% vs. 69%) were not statistically significant.

³⁰ Mazzara, A., & Knudsen, B. (2019, January 3). *Where families with children use housing vouchers: A comparative look at the 50 largest metropolitan areas*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/where-families-with-children-use-housing-vouchers>

³¹ Krysan, M., & Crowder, K. (2017). *Cycle of segregation: Social processes and residential stratification*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

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