



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

November 2, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-19
Youth Harm Initiative

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finding regarding Supplemental Appropriation #23-19 *Youth Harm Initiative* is inconclusive. There is insufficient detail about the activities involved with this Supplemental Appropriation (and data disaggregated by race and ethnicity) to conclude that those facing disproportionate risk for youth violence in Montgomery County are centered in proposed prevention and healing activities. In addition, approaches that advance racial equity and social justice must be trauma-informed and take care not to exacerbate the criminalization of poverty or other racial inequities that characterize an over representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the criminal legal system.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #23-19 Youth Harm Initiative is to allocate resources toward consistent youth violence prevention. Materials accompanying this request indicate an increase in violence across several measures, including an increase in homicides involving youth under the age of seventeen. In response, a multi-agency task force outlined a range of strategies and interventions to the county council in June 2022. This supplemental appropriation helps to move forward some of that work. It is not clear—from available information—which specific programs/activities will be funded with an amount of \$853,699. ORESJ is therefore limited in its ability to assess the extent to which specific activities consider and advance racial equity. Instead, this analysis will focus on the factors and principles that would enable the activities outlined in June 2022 to advance racial equity.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24. It is included among the list of adverse childhood experiences¹ and has long-term impacts on health and well-being. Youth violence can negatively affect young people across communities, but systemic health inequities and long-standing racial disparities (historical redlining and present-day bank lending²) have put many communities of color and youth at increased risk of violence. This is particularly true given that nationally, 61 percent of black non-Hispanic children and 51 percent of Hispanic children have experienced at least one ACE, compared with 40 percent of white non-Hispanic children and only 23 percent of Asian non-Hispanic children³. According to the CDC two groups, in particular, are at a greater risk for youth violence than others:

- Black or African American youth and young adults are at a higher risk for the most physically harmful forms of violence compared with White youth and young adults.
- Teens that are sexual minorities are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence than their heterosexual peers.

Factors that increase or reduce the risk of youth violence are evident at the individual, household, school, community, and societal levels. Researchers from a number of disciplines have documented the role of public health, economic opportunity, housing security, education, community spaces, and community-based organization in preventing violence⁴. Below is an excerpt from the CDC and Prevention Institute summarizing risk factors for youth violence:

Level of risk	Risk factor
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural norms that support aggression toward others• Media violence• Societal income inequality• Harmful norms around masculinity and femininity
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighborhood poverty• High alcohol outlet density• Community violence• Diminished economic opportunity/high rates of unemployment

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html#:~:text=Adverse%20childhood%20experiences%2C%20or%20ACEs,in%20the%20home%20or%20community>

² <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/a-new-community-safety-blueprint-how-the-federal-government-can-address-violence-and-harm-through-a-public-health-approach/>

³ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/prevalence-adverse-childhood-experiences-nationally-state-race-ethnicity#:~:text=Children%20of%20different%20races%20and,of%20Asian%20non%2DHispanic%20children>

⁴ <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/a-new-community-safety-blueprint-how-the-federal-government-can-address-violence-and-harm-through-a-public-health-approach/>

Level of risk	Risk factor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor neighborhood support and cohesion
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social isolation/Lack of social support • Poor parent-child relationships • Family conflict • Economic stress • Associating with delinquent peers • Gang involvement
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of educational achievement • Lack of non-violent social problem-solving skills • Poor behavior control/impulsiveness • History of violent victimization • Witnessing violence • Psychological/Mental health problems • Substance abuse

It's important to note that many of the risk factors listed in the table are shaped by structural racism that over time has resulted in dehumanizing policies, practices, and norms that disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, particularly BIPOC individuals with other non-dominant identities (such as LGBTQ+, disability, undocumented, etc).

Zeroing in on risk factors for which there are data at the local level, it is evident that in Montgomery County not all youth face the same risk for youth violence. For example, on risk factors like “neighborhood poverty”, “diminished economic opportunity/economic stress”, and “educational achievement”, Black and Latino youth are disproportionately burdened. See the data analysis section for more details.

Therefore, prevention activities should target resources based on this disproportionality and be designed in ways that recognize and address the multiple underlying forces creating these risks: “addressing root causes of violence is critical to reducing high rates of violence in communities of color”⁵. In addition, research is clear that effective youth violence prevention must be trauma-informed. Repeated exposure to traumatic events increases the risk of youth violence⁶. Given the racial and ethnic breakdown of ACEs and the trauma that is known to emerge from these experiences, advancing racial equity in this work will be contingent on the strength of trauma-informed approaches. Further, care that is grounded in an understanding of the causes and consequences of trauma can promote resilience and healing, while reducing youth violence⁷. Monitoring the effectiveness of these activities should also include

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/fastfact.html>

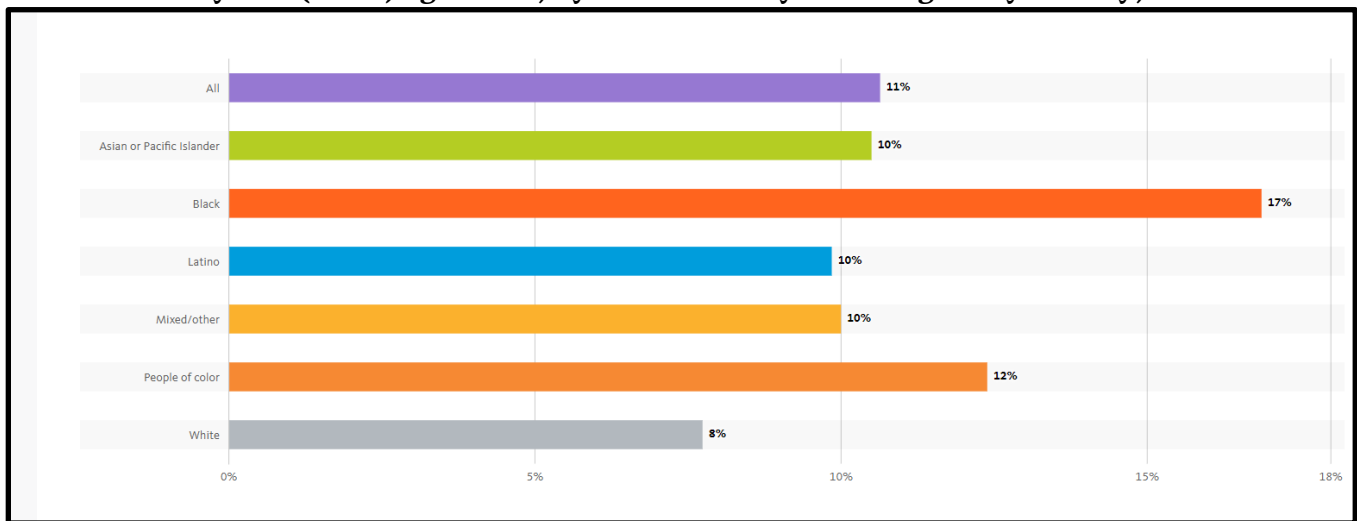
⁶ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention>

⁷ <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention>

disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and other relevant characteristics to best understand whether outcomes are improving for all youth, particularly those facing the greatest risks.

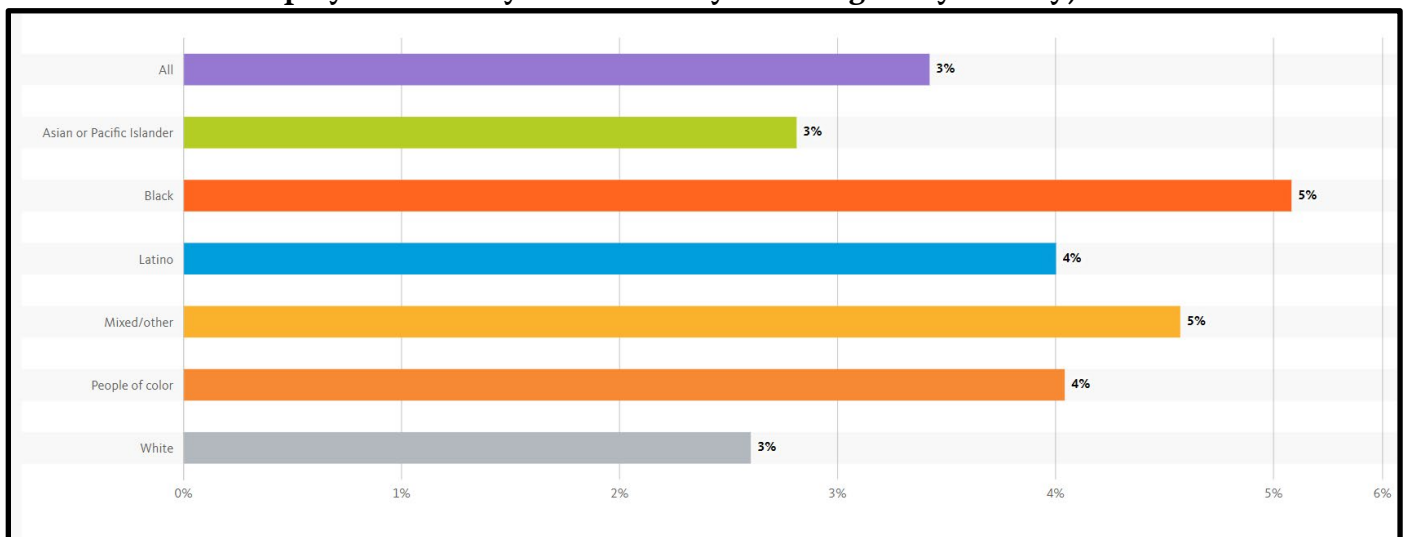
- III. **DATA ANALYSIS:** The data below illustrate that in Montgomery County, Black and Latino residents are disproportionately burdened by (a selection) of risk factors for youth violence— “poverty”, “lack of economic opportunity/economic stress”, and “educational attainment”.

Poverty rate (100%) age 18-24, by race/ethnicity in Montgomery County, 2019.



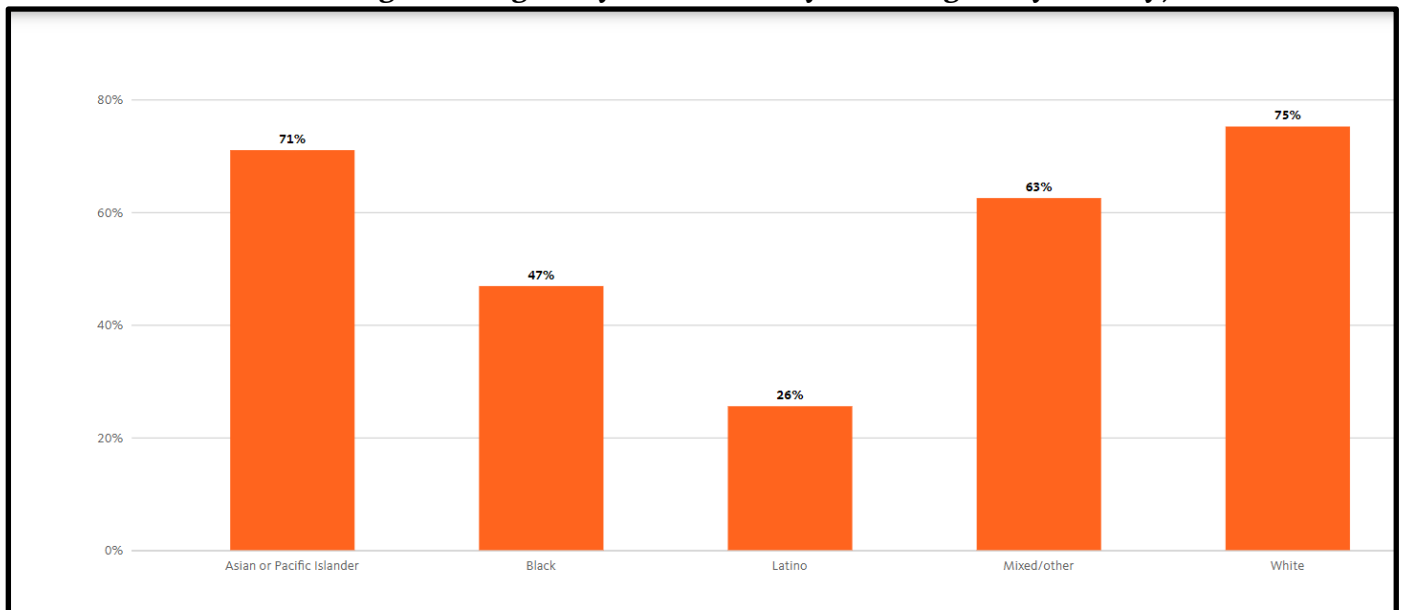
Source: National Equity Atlas. Poverty by age and race/ethnicity in Montgomery County.
<https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/poverty#/?breakdown=2&geo=04000000000024031&agecat01=3>

Unemployment rate by race/ethnicity in Montgomery County, 2019



Source: National Equity Atlas. Unemployment in Montgomery County.
<https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Unemployment#/?geo=04000000000024031>

Percent with BA degree or higher by race/ethnicity in Montgomery County, 2019

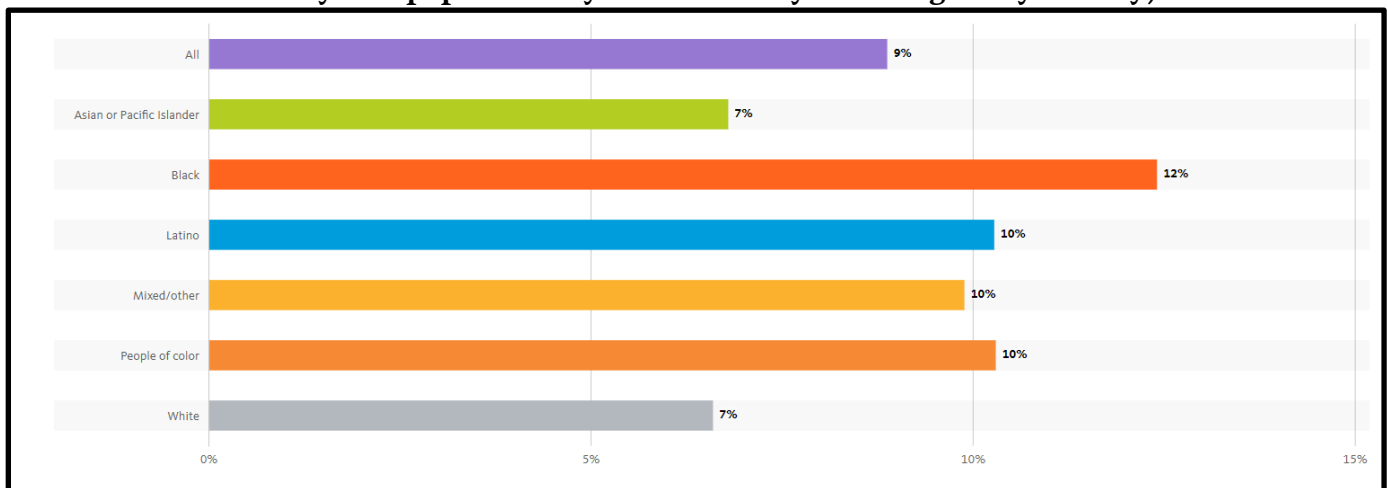


Source: National Equity Atlas. Educational Attainment in Montgomery County, 2019.

<https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Educational-attainment#/?geo=04000000000024031>

In addition to the disproportionality of the above risk factors, the percent of disconnected youth by race and ethnicity shows that larger percentages of Black and Latino youth (ages 16-24) are out of school and out of work compared to other races and ethnic groups. The following table illustrates this disparity.

Disconnected youth population by race/ethnicity in Montgomery County, 2019



Source: National Equity Atlas. Disconnected Youth in Montgomery County, 2019.

https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Disconnected_youth#/?geo=04000000000024031

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnership, Office of the County Executive
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services