



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

February 1, 2024

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) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #24-45  
Department of Health and Human Services Youth Safety Initiative Special Assistant  
(\$96,000)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that *Supplemental Appropriations #24-45 Youth Safety Initiative Special Assistant* has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice for youth in Montgomery County, particularly for youth identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) disproportionately impacted by violence. This supplemental funding for the Youth Safety Initiative aims to address gun violence and aggravated assault among youth in under-resourced areas with higher rates of crime, poverty, and resulting consequences. With effective implementation, the Youth Safety Initiative could create more equitable outcomes in safety, health, and opportunity for young Black and Latinx residents who currently experience disproportionate poverty, trauma, and criminal justice involvement due to systemic inequities. As the planning and coordination progress, information on planned outcomes, deliverables, and evaluation measures should be shared and evaluated regularly to ensure accountability and determine success in advancing racial equity.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #24-45 is to deploy resources to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) County Health Officer to contract special assistant services. The Special Assistant's work will support the Youth Safety Initiative (YSI), which was necessitated in 2022 due to increases in youth victimization and possession of

weapons.<sup>1</sup> The YSI is a collaboration between County Government departments, including DHHS, Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), Fire & Rescue, Recreation, CUPF, State's Attorney, as well as Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). County nonprofits, such as Identity, Collaboration Council, and others, are also partners in this effort. The Special Assistant will help expand coordination between these entities by providing program management support under the direction of the County Health Officer and Office of the County Executive. Tasks handled by the contractor will include administrative program management, research, monitoring and evaluation, data analysis, and report development.

- III. **ANALYSIS:** The County is centering a public health approach to address youth violence in the County through the YSI. Violence exposure is a Social Determinant of Health (SDoH), which the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines as the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes, including the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.<sup>2</sup> The influence of SDoH on an individual's health, well-being, and quality of life can contribute to wide health disparities and inequities.<sup>3</sup>

The YSI will include the development of a strategic action plan<sup>4</sup> and the preparation of short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for a systems approach to address youth violence. Through a public health lens, the YSI will:

- build cohesion across youth intersecting systems;
- adopt and implement cross-systems evidence-based practices; and
- track, monitor, and sustain intended results and outcomes over time.<sup>5</sup>

The application of a racial equity and social justice lens is also an aspect of the YSI. The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV) and DC Justice Lab developed a REIA to assist policymakers thoroughly examine policies with an equity lens, anticipate the

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<sup>1</sup> The Youth Safety Initiative, convened in the summer of 2022 by the Montgomery County Council and the County Executive, is a group comprised of various government institutions and provider organizations to develop a strategy to address the rise in gun violence, aggravated assaults, youth victimization and self-injury among the adolescent population in the County. In November of 2022, the Council approved a special appropriation providing funding for the launch and expansion of youth programming. Additionally, the County appropriated funds to secure a consultant to assist with the development of a robust and cohesive County-wide strategy to better address this need over the long term. Available at:

[https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=169&clip\\_id=17057&meta\\_id=168232](https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=17057&meta_id=168232).

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control. Social Determinants of Health at CDC. Available at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/about/sdoh/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> US Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2030. Available at: <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>.

<sup>4</sup> The County has contracted Rethink Everything to develop a strategic plan to address youth violence through Scaffolding A Cross-Systems Strategic Public Health Approach To Gun Violence Impacting Adolescents.

<sup>5</sup> [https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=169&clip\\_id=17057&meta\\_id=168232](https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=17057&meta_id=168232).

potential outcomes, and mitigate intended and unintended consequences.<sup>6</sup> The report and tool are informed by SDoH and tailored to the specific needs of gun violence prevention. The tool includes nine questions for policymakers to consider regarding gun violence prevention policies.<sup>7</sup>

- What are the stated objectives of the gun violence prevention policy?
- What is the context of racial inequity that informs the issue being addressed?
- What types of racial disparities could potentially result from the policy's design and implementation?
- Who are the specific communities that will be impacted by the policy?
- What, if any, data can be used to measure whether racial inequities could be reduced, perpetuated, or exacerbated by the policy?
- Can any potential racial inequities be avoided or mitigated without compromising the stated objective?
- Does the policy remedy existing racial inequities?
- Is the proposed solution to mitigate gun violence viable and sustainable?
- What methodologies can be utilized to evaluate the implementation, progress toward stated objectives, and any racialized impacts of the policy?

A joint committee of the County Council recently received an update on the YSI, juvenile crime and victimization data, and substance abuse.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, MCPD briefed the County Council Public Safety Committee on juvenile justice and crime statistics.<sup>9</sup> The presentation to the Joint Committee noted that juvenile crime represents a small portion of all crime in Maryland, and young people are more likely to be victims of violent crimes than perpetrators of violent crimes. Furthermore, research shows that individuals are “often caught in cycles of victimization, trauma, and retaliatory violence. For generations, policing and incarceration have been the primary means to address gun violence in underserved communities, and often these systems have perpetuated or exacerbated racial inequities”.<sup>10</sup> There is a need for non-carceral responses and interventions to youth violence in general, which is an intention of the YSI.

ORESJ has written previously on the Youth Safety Initiative and the impact of youth violence, specifically regarding programs targeting BIPOC and low-income children. Our full analysis can be found in the following REIAs.

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<sup>6</sup> Racial Equity Framework for Gun Violence Prevention. Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence and DC Justice Lab. 2022. Available at: [https://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/EFSGV\\_REIA\\_Framework.pdf](https://efsgv.org/wp-content/uploads/EFSGV_REIA_Framework.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> IBID.

<sup>8</sup> [https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=169&clip\\_id=17057&meta\\_id=168232](https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=17057&meta_id=168232)

<sup>9</sup> October 30, 2023 – PS Committee Briefing Juvenile Justice, Crime, and Public Safety Issues

[https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=169&clip\\_id=17006&meta\\_id=166737](https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=17006&meta_id=166737)

<sup>10</sup> John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Community Violence Intervention.

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/departments/health-policy-and-management/research-and-practice/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/solutions/strategies-to-reduce-community-gun-violence>

- I. #23-19 Youth Harm Initiative  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-19.pdf>
- II. #24-2 Summer and After School Youth Safety Program  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-2.pdf>

As mentioned earlier, the County is taking a public health, as well as a data-driven, approach to addressing juvenile crime, which does not rely solely on incarceration.<sup>11</sup> As such, there is a need for greater data disaggregation by race and ethnicity. Portions of the REIA for SA #23-19-Youth Harm Initiative are below for convenience, which highlights disparities facing Black and Latino youth. The REIA also underscores the need to disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, and other relevant characteristics to best understand whether outcomes are improving for all youth, particularly those facing the greatest risks.

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- I. **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 experiences<sup>12</sup> 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 lending<sup>13</sup>) 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

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<sup>11</sup> [https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=169&clip\\_id=17057&meta\\_id=168232](https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=17057&meta_id=168232)

<sup>12</sup>

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

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/a-new-community-safety-blueprint-how-the-federal-government-can-address-violence-and-harm-through-a-public-health-approach/>

Asian non-Hispanic children<sup>14</sup>. 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 who 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 organizations in preventing violence<sup>15</sup>. 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"> <li>• Cultural norms that support aggression towards others</li> <li>• Media violence</li> <li>• Societal income inequality</li> <li>• Harmful norms around masculinity and femininity</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood poverty</li> <li>• High alcohol outlet density</li> <li>• Community violence</li> <li>• Diminished economic opportunity/high rates of unemployment</li> <li>• Poor neighborhood support and cohesion</li> </ul>
Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social isolation/Lack of social support</li> <li>• Poor parent-child relationships</li> <li>• Family conflict</li> <li>• Economic stress</li> <li>• Associating with delinquent peers</li> <li>• Gang involvement</li> </ul>
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of educational achievement</li> <li>• Lack of non-violent social problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Poor behavior control/impulsiveness</li> <li>• History of violent victimization</li> <li>• Witnessing violence</li> <li>• Psychological/Mental health problems</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/prevalence-adverse-childhood-experiences-nationally-state-race-ethnicity#:~:text=Children%20of%20different%20races%20and,of%20Asian%20non%2DHispanic%20children>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/a-new-community-safety-blueprint-how-the-federal-government-can-address-violence-and-harm-through-a-public-health-approach/>

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”<sup>16</sup>. In addition, research is clear that effective youth violence prevention must be trauma informed. Repeated exposure to traumatic events increases the risk of youth violence<sup>17</sup>. 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 violence<sup>18</sup>. Monitoring the effectiveness of these activities should also include 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.

- II. **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”.

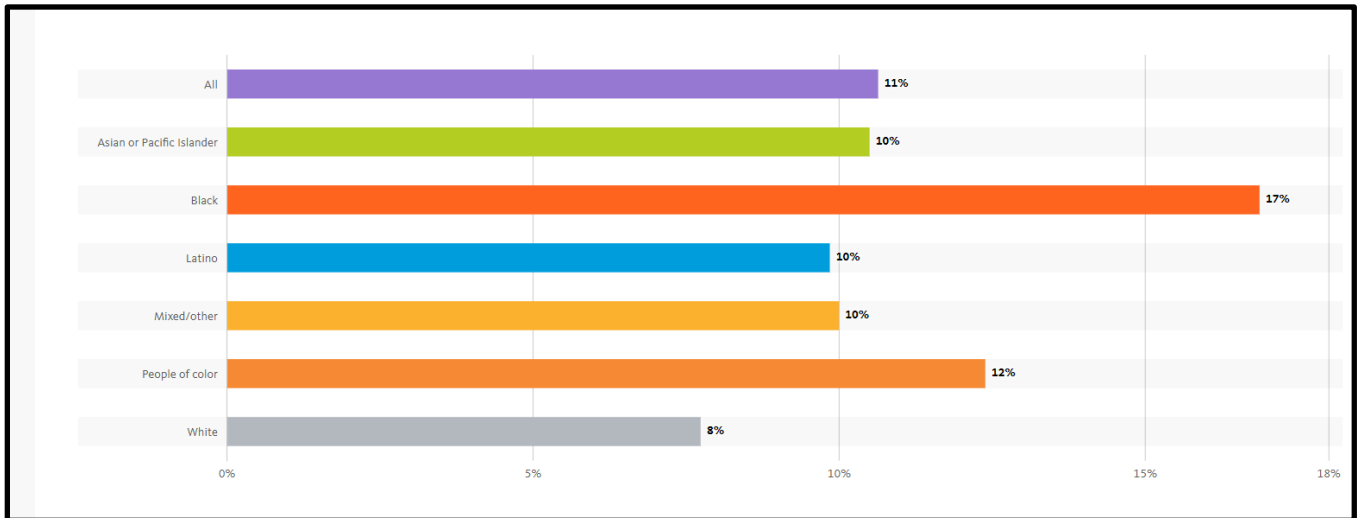
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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/fastfact.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention>

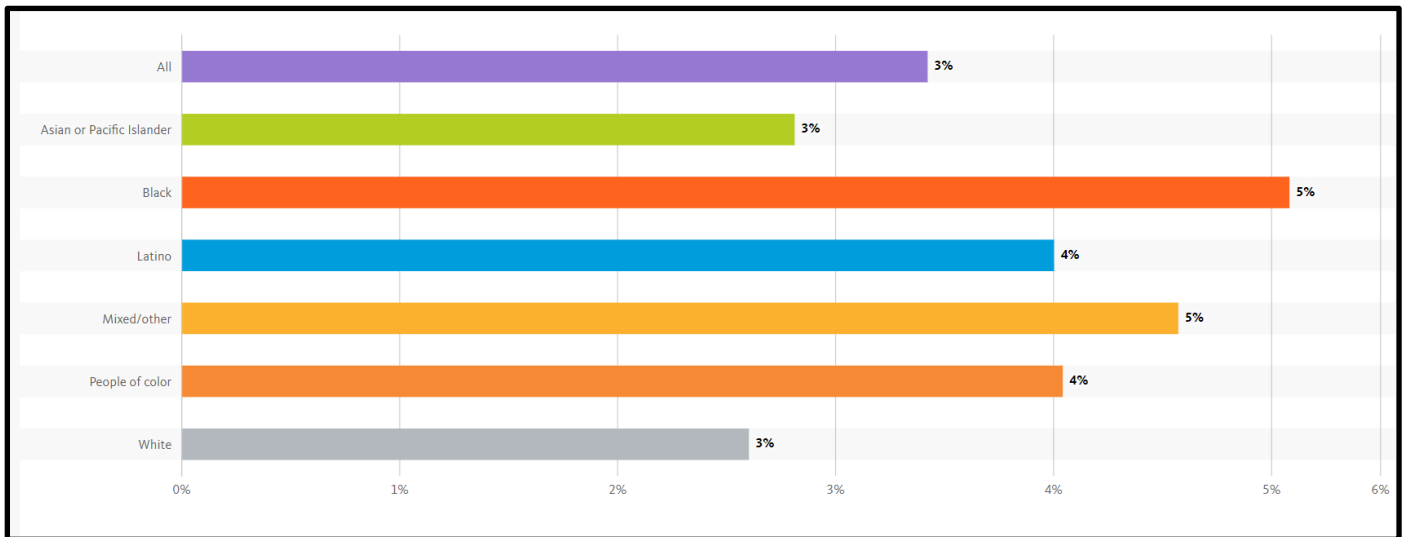
<sup>18</sup> <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/violence-prevention>

**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=0400000000024031&agecat01=3>

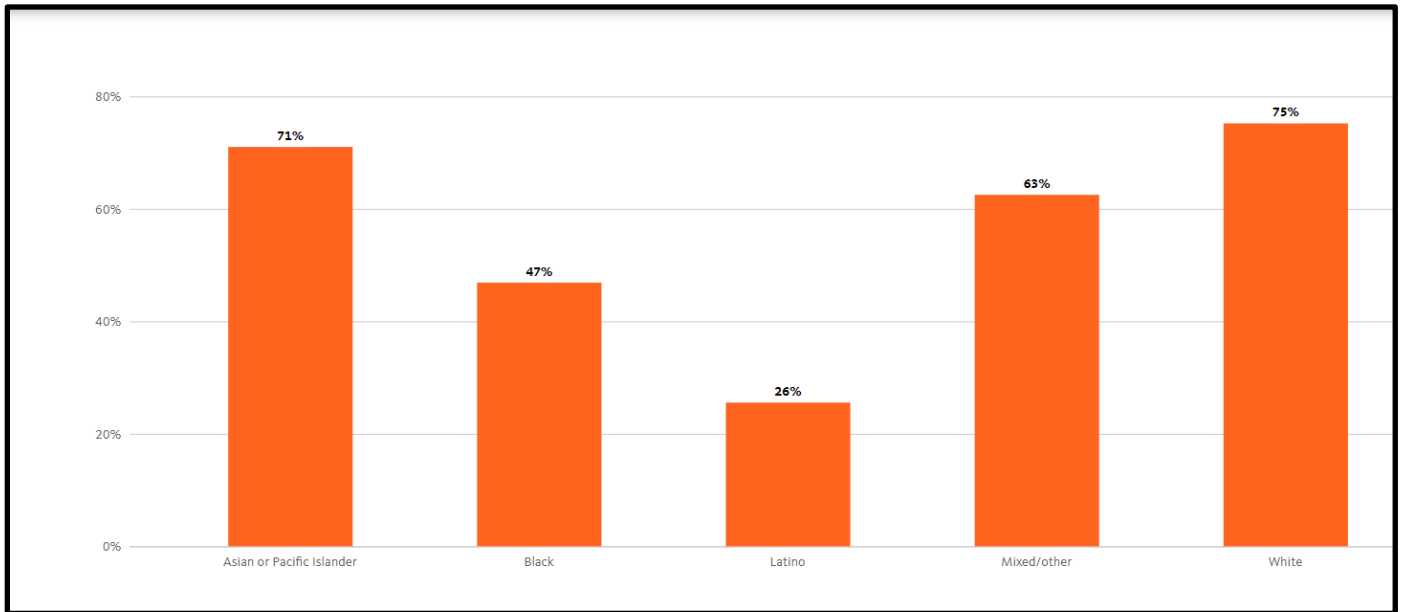
**Unemployment rate by race/ethnicity in Montgomery County, 2019**



**Source:** National Equity Atlas. Unemployment in Montgomery County.  
<https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Unemployment#/?geo=0400000000024031>



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

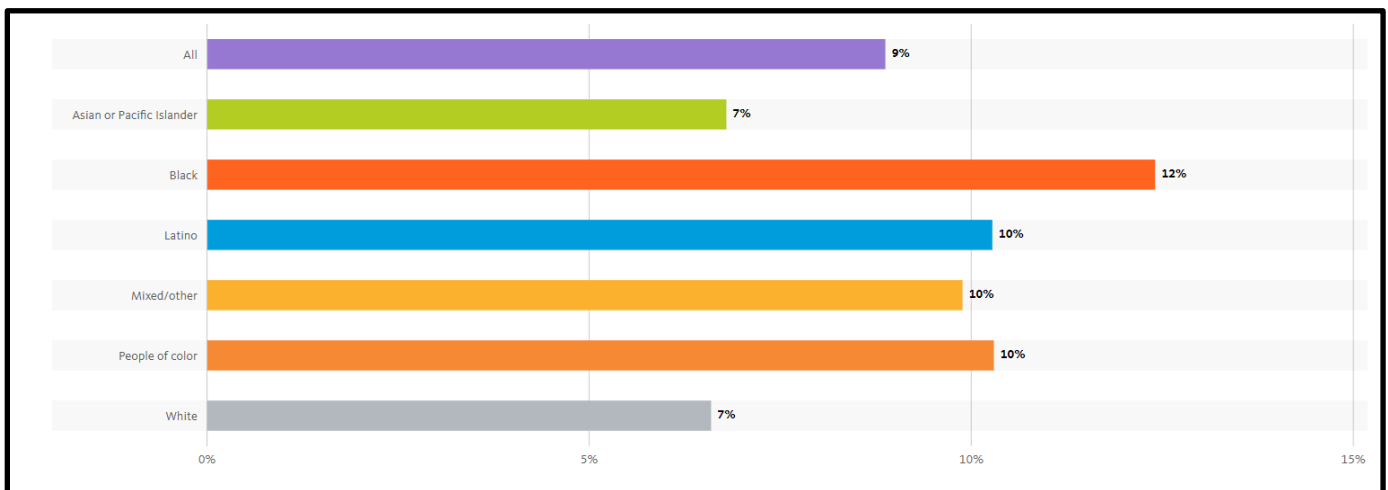


**Source:** National Equity Atlas. Educational Attainment in Montgomery County, 2019.

<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](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Disconnected_youth#/?geo=04000000000024031)



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