



CONTACT

Ann Johnson
 Senior Director, ACT Rochester
 585.341.4361
ajohnson@racf.org

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Region Falls Far Behind State and Nation in Outcomes for Blacks and Latinos

ACT Rochester and Rochester Area Community Foundation have released a report that documents how the status of African Americans and Latinos in the entire nine-county Rochester region significantly lags their counterparts in New York State and nationwide. “Hard Facts: Race and Ethnicity in the Nine-County Greater Rochester Area” examines the substantial gaps in educational and economic outcomes among persons of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, based on data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (2011-2015) and the New York State Department of Education student assessments for 2016. For example:

Outcomes for African Americans and Latinos: The Region, State, and Nation			
INDICATOR	Nine-County Rochester Region	New York State	United States
Child Poverty Rate: African Americans	50%	33%	38%
Child Poverty Rate: Latinos	42%	34%	32%
Grade 3 English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency: African Americans	13%	31%	NA
Grade 3 English Language Arts (ELA) Proficiency: Latinos	19%	30%	NA
Grade 8 Math Proficiency: African Americans	4%	14%	NA
Grade 8 Math Proficiency: Latinos	5%	16%	NA
Median Household Income: African Americans	\$27,078	\$41,615	\$35,695
Median Household Income: Latinos	\$29,991	\$40,824	\$42,651
Poverty Rate: African Americans	36%	23%	27%
Poverty Rate: Latinos	34%	26%	24%
Homeownership Rates: African Americans	33%	31%	42%
Homeownership Rates: Latinos	35%	24%	46%

“Hard Facts” shows that the gaps are wide and individuals and families are affected throughout their lives and for generations to come.

- African American children in our region are more than four times as likely as whites to live in poverty, and Latino children experience poverty at a rate of more than 3½ times that of non-Latino white children.
- Dramatic academic achievement gaps among racial and ethnic groups are evident at every grade level.
- Median household incomes of African Americans in our region are less than half that of whites. For Latinos, salaries are only slightly more than half the level of non-Latino whites.
- Both African Americans and Latinos are less than half as likely to own their homes as their white counterparts.

“Unfortunately, these statistics have a demonstrable impact on the well-being of our neighbors in urban, suburban and rural areas, which contributes significantly to our low median incomes and higher poverty,” says Ann Johnson, senior director of ACT Rochester.

According to the report, researched and written by Ed Doherty, author of three previous reports on poverty, if local African American and Latino poverty rates mirrored the rates of these same groups in New York State as a whole, our region’s poverty rate would be considerably lower. For the City of Rochester, the poverty rate would be nearly 7 percentage points lower. Instead of its current rank as the 4th poorest city in the nation, Rochester would rank about 17th.

Johnson pointed to two other findings in the report that impede improving the quality of life in our community:

- The disparities negatively impact one of the largest sources of intergenerational wealth transfer — home ownership.
- The gaps between racial and ethnic groups are greater in the Rochester region than in the United States or New York State as a whole. This is not a city-suburb comparison. The nine-county area includes four cities, expansive suburban areas, numerous villages, and significant rural areas.

Data on race and ethnicity for the nine counties (Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates) has been available on the ACT Rochester website since its launch in 2009. Beginning in 2012, ACT Rochester has been tracking and reporting most of this data in tabular form (*see Appendix D of the report*).



“For the health of our region and its workforce, we cannot ignore these findings,” says Jennifer Leonard, president and chief executive officer of the Community Foundation. “In a week in which our nation has been seared by the ugliness of racism in the South, we must face the fact that our region too — once home to Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony — has systematically failed people based on their skin color or ethnicity.

“As we did with the poverty reports, ACT Rochester and the Community Foundation are urging awareness and action to address these deep disparities.”

The new report was funded by the Gannett Foundation and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund for Smart Strategy at the Community Foundation.

The report is available at ACTRochester.org and on the Community Foundation website at racf.org/Reports.

About the author

Now a consultant in private practice, Edward J. Doherty is the previous vice president for community programs at Rochester Area Community Foundation and the commissioner for environmental services of the City of Rochester. His ground-breaking poverty reports for ACT Rochester and the Community Foundation in 2013, 2015 and 2016 have helped focus the community’s attention on the City of Rochester’s high rates of child poverty, concentrated poverty, and overall poverty.

About ACT Rochester

Launched in 2009, ACT Rochester’s purpose is to change the culture of community problem-solving and associated decision-making through the use of credible, independent and timely data. This is accomplished when people LEARN about key issues, CONNECT with others in the community, and ACT to promote change.

Currently a community indicators program of Rochester Area Community Foundation, ACT Rochester provides an objective assessment of the nine-county region’s performance on key indicators of well-being. The website, a robust public utility at www.ACTRochester.org, creates a “one-stop shop” for data and analysis, with more than 100 indicators as well as links to more than 300 community initiatives and resources.

About Rochester Area Community Foundation:

Rochester Area Community Foundation, in partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, works to improve the quality of life for people who live in the greater Rochester region through its leadership and strategic grantmaking. Known as the steward of charitable funds and endowments, the Community Foundation connects donors with the region’s current and evolving needs. As a leading grantmaker, the Foundation focuses on two broad goals — creating an equitable community and strengthening our region’s vitality. The Community Foundation has distributed more than \$400 million in grants and scholarships since its founding in 1972. For more, visit www.racf.org.