

Residential segregation and early childhood policy: Opportunities to increase equity



Photo credit: The Raising of America

Guiding questions

- How and why does residential segregation matter for early childhood policy?
- Segregation can feel like an issue that is “bigger than me” for ECE policymakers, researchers, practitioners, so are there actions that can be taken today under existing policies to increase equity?
- What are the limits to those actions and how could federal policies do more to offset inequities caused by segregation?

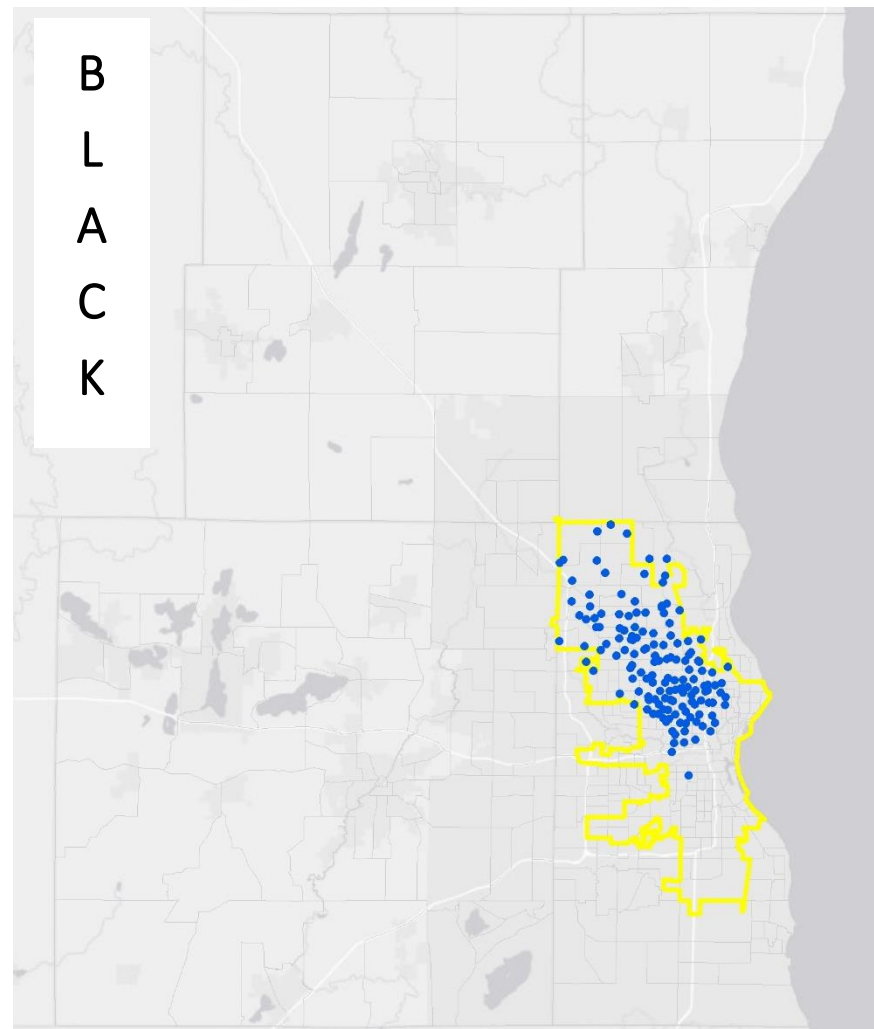
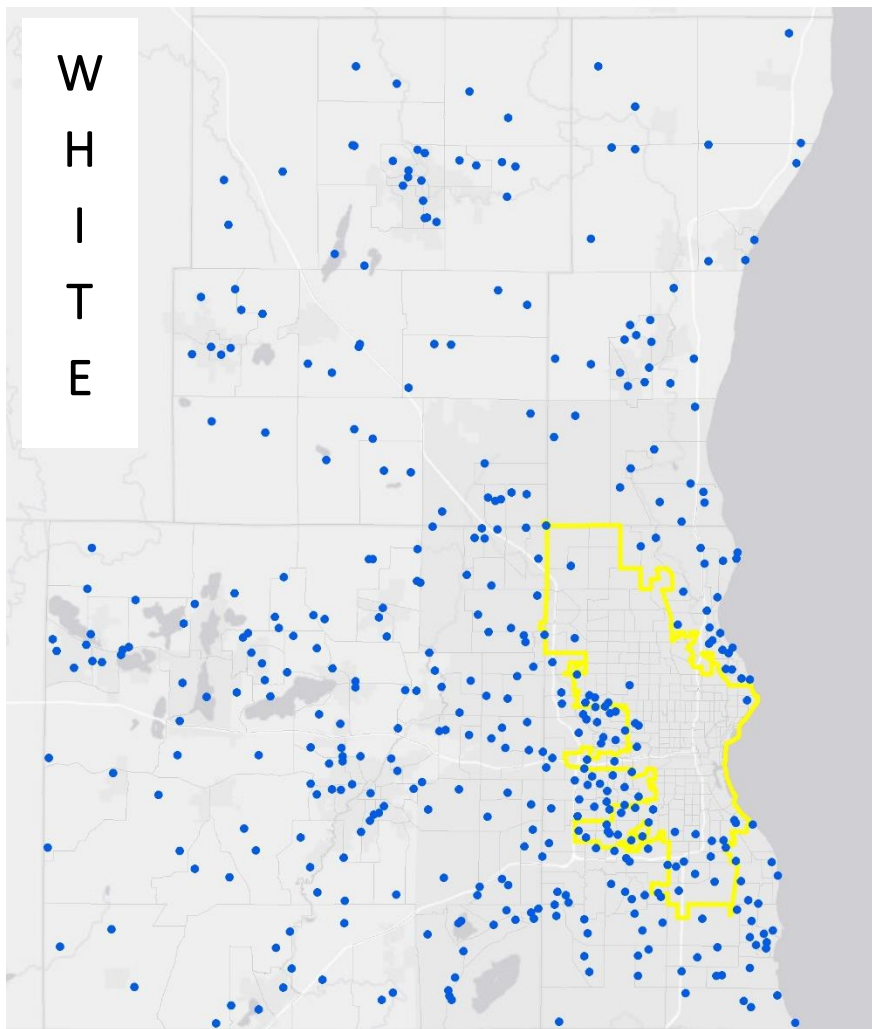
Agenda

- Describe three key implications of neighborhood segregation for early childhood policy
 - Research Methods: Neighborhood data analyses
- Describe how our federal policies equip (or fail to equip) early childhood policymakers and practitioners to address inequities caused by neighborhood segregation
 - Research Methods: Policy research review of our major federal ECE policies
- Recommendations

What is residential segregation?

- Segregation is a form of **institutional racial discrimination** that has been reinforced over decades through exclusionary and discriminatory housing policies and practices (e.g. exclusionary zoning, redlining, racial covenants, steering).
- Segregation is an institutional, systemic issue that is outside of the control of any individual child or family, and it is not benign. It negatively affects children on the basis of their race or ethnicity, above and beyond other forms of vulnerability such as low family socioeconomic status.

What does segregation look like, and how bad is it?

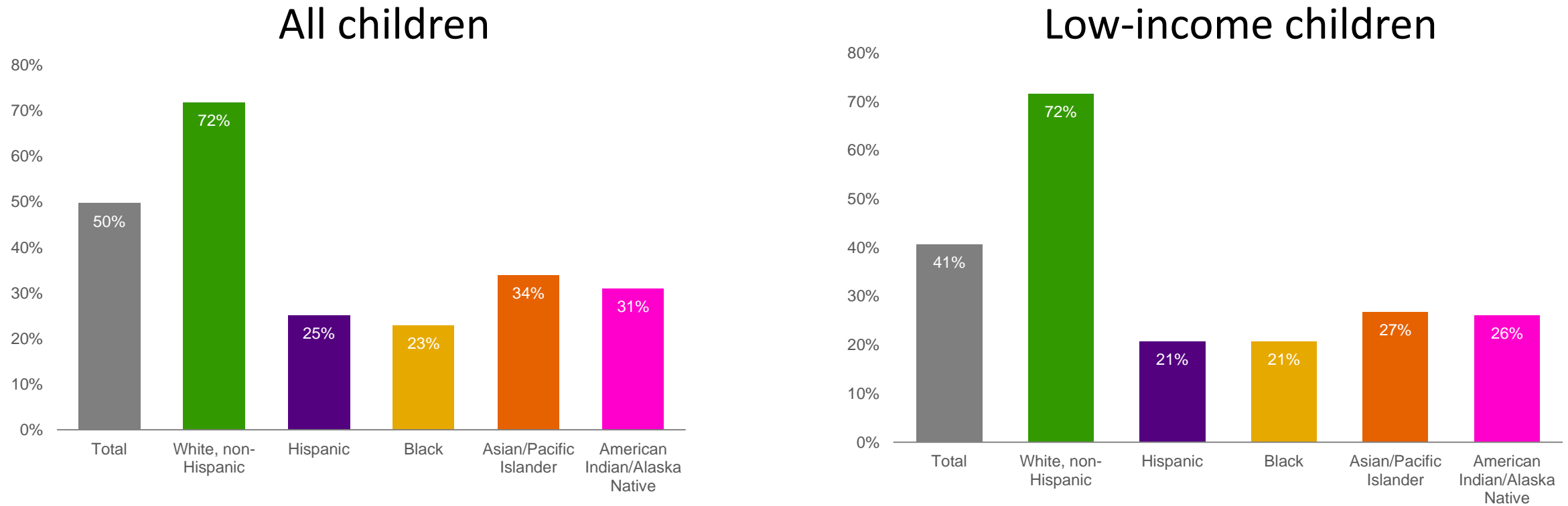


Milwaukee
Metro Area

1 dot=
500 children

Ok, but how segregated are low-income children?

Percent white in neighborhood



Finding 1 and Implication 1

- Finding 1: Even if we just look at low-income children, racial segregation is extreme.
 - It is a misconception that racial segregation is solely a function of economic differences that occur along racial lines
- Implication 1 for ECE policy: Segregated neighborhoods paired with ECE neighborhood feeder system leads to segregated early childhood programs
 - Urban Institute's research demonstrated the extent

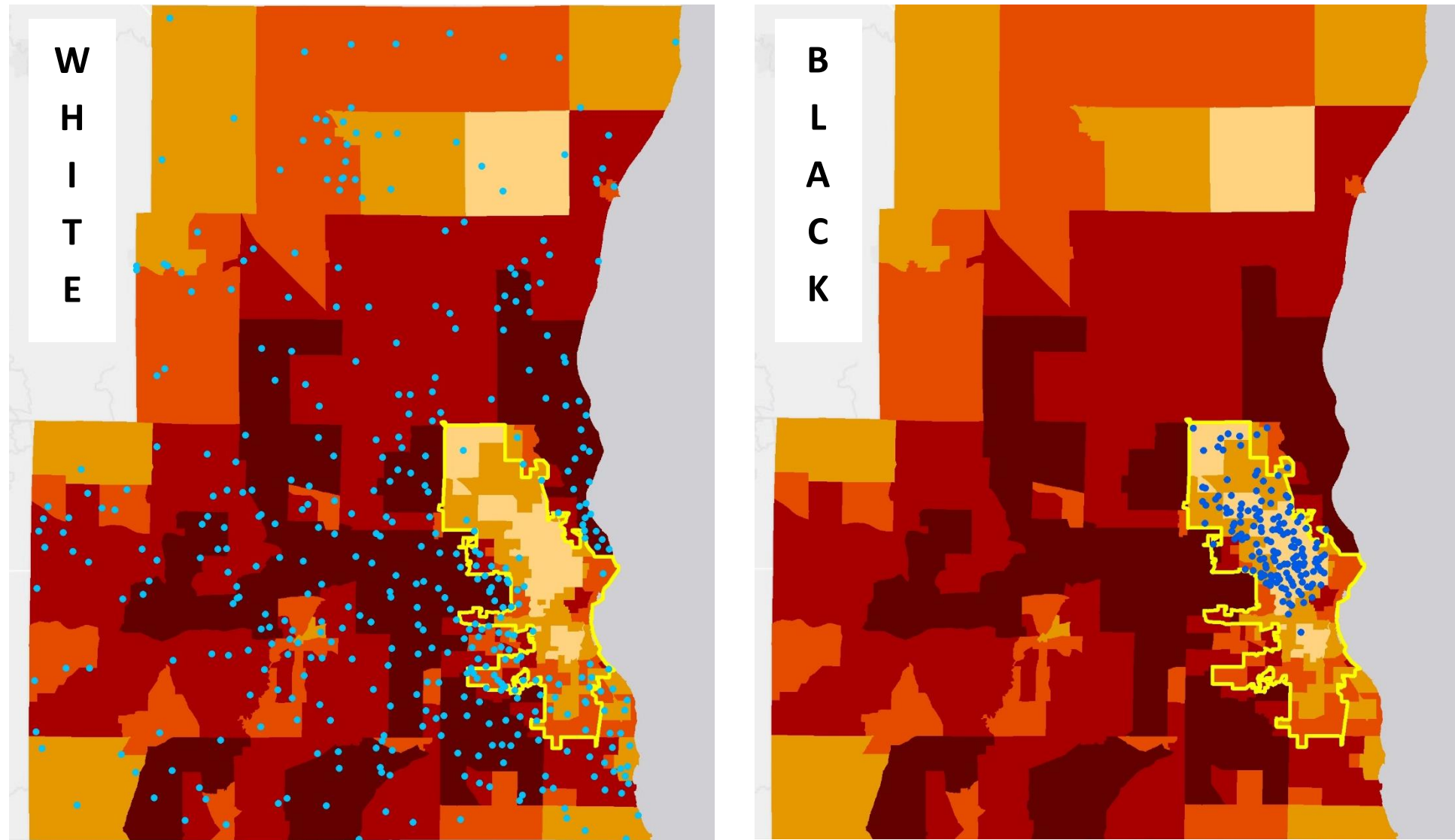
Is separate equal?

- Question: Do poor children live in poor neighborhoods?



→ Answer: Much more likely to be “yes” if you are Hispanic or Black

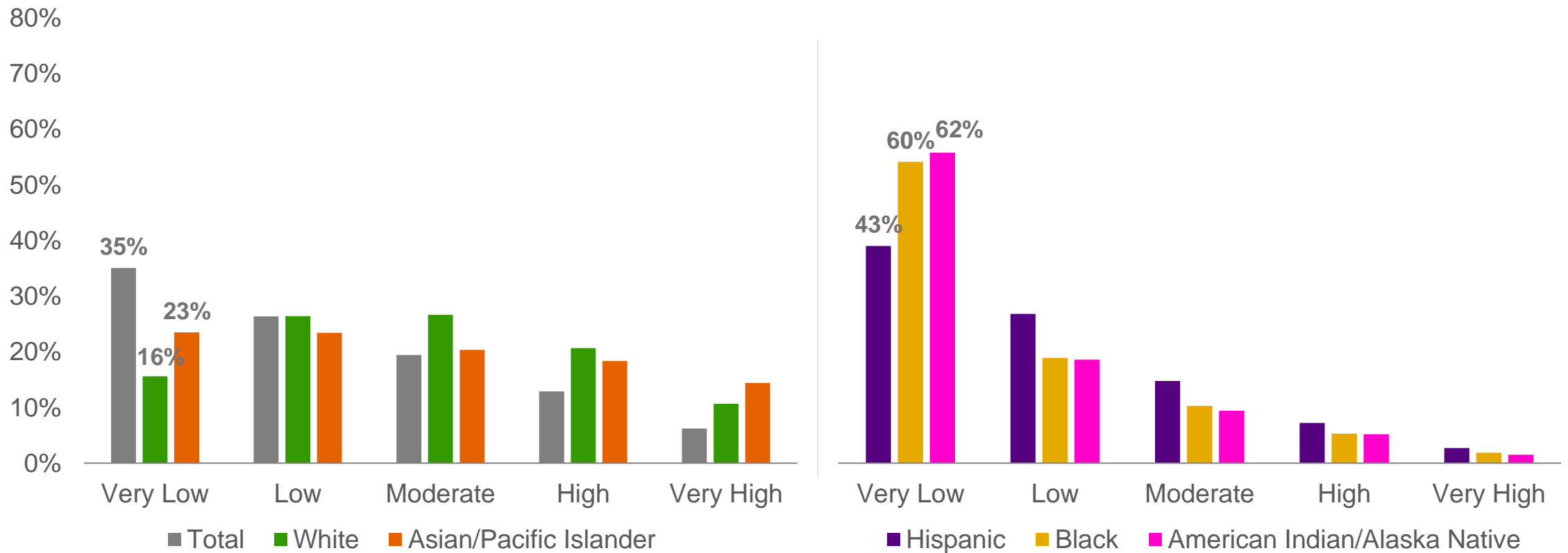
The Opportunity Divide: Separate is not equal



As colors get darker, opportunity levels get higher | Data for your area at diversitydatakids.org

The Neighborhood Opportunity Racial Divide

% of low-income children by neighborhood opportunity level



Children ages 0-4 with family income below 200% of the federal poverty level.

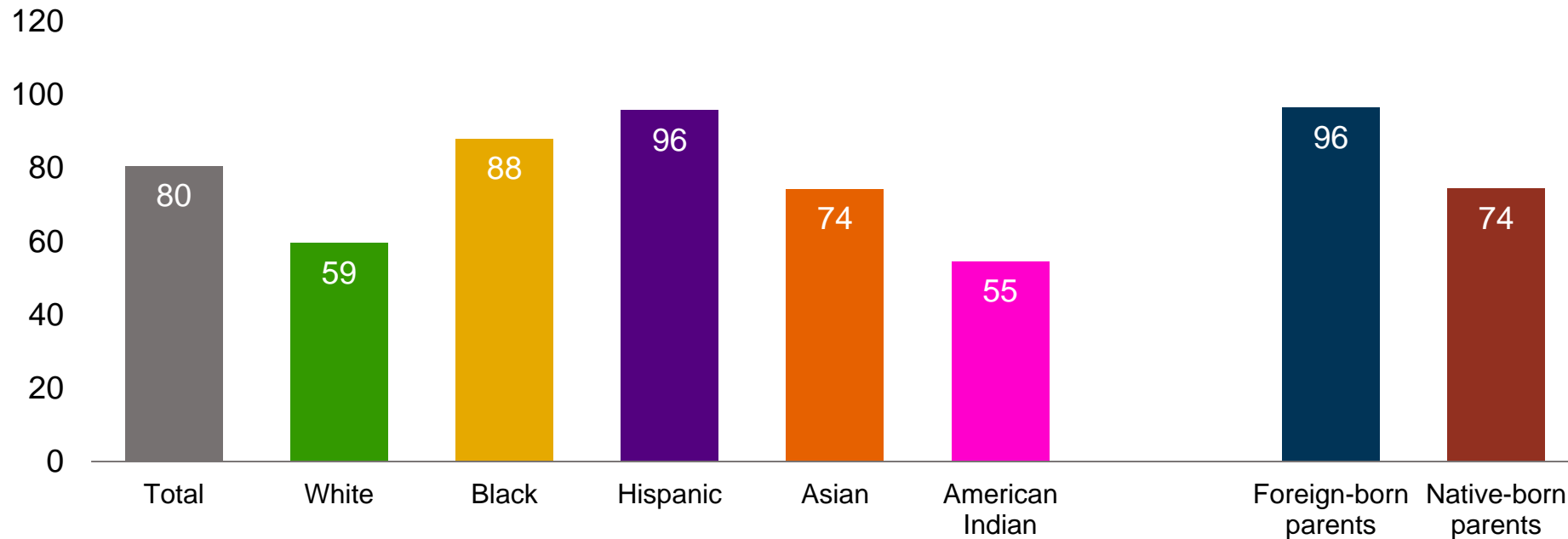
Source: diversitydatakids.org calculations of American Community Survey, 2013-2017, 2010-2014, and the Child Opportunity Index 2.0.

Finding 2 and Implication 2

- Finding 2: Low-income Black and Hispanic children are much more likely to face the ‘double burden’ of family poverty *and* low neighborhood opportunity than low-income White and Asian children
 - The likelihood of facing *multiple* barriers is not equal by race
- Implication 2 for ECE policy:
 - High-quality ECE is intended to buffer against the barriers low-income children face, creating a more level playing field
 - Federal ECE policies recognize *family* poverty as a central factor, but not neighborhoods
 - A family-centric lens is incomplete for addressing racial inequities

Neighborhood availability of Head Start varies by race

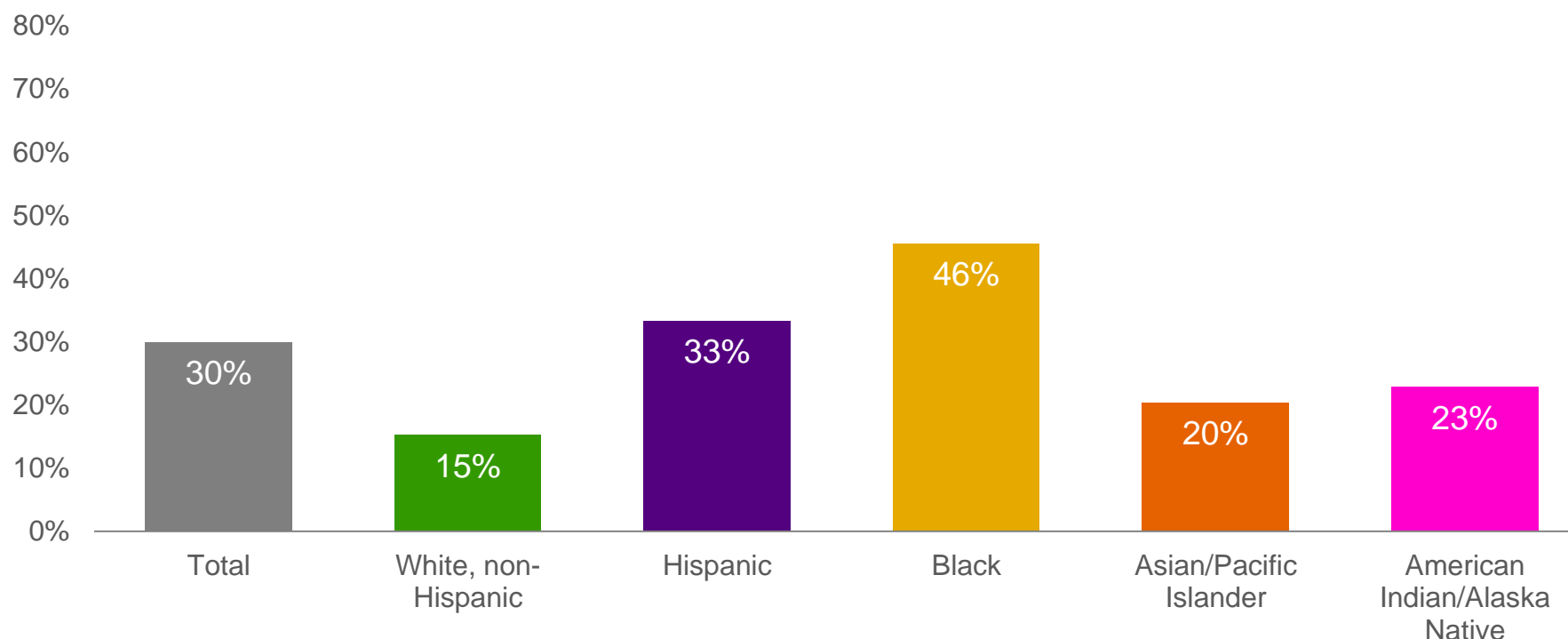
Average number of Head Start eligible children per center in neighborhood, 2019



→ Points to the potential that lower neighborhood availability presents a systemic barrier to access for Hispanic, Black, Asian and immigrant children

Unequal “triple threat” of family poverty, low neighborhood opportunity, and low Head Start availability

% of poor 3-4 year olds in very low opportunity neighborhood with no Head Start



→ Intersecting family poverty, neighborhood opportunity, and Head Start availability gives a more complete picture of racial inequities

Finding 3 and Implication 3

- Finding 3: Another consequence of residential segregation is that Hispanic and Black children, in particular, are the most likely to live in neighborhoods that are not only low opportunity but that also lack the presence of key federally supported early childhood programs, such as Head Start
- Implication 3: Federal ECE policies can increase racial equity by targeting children facing the triple threat of family poverty, low neighborhood opportunity, and low availability of high-quality ECE (who are disproportionately Black and Hispanic)

Federal ECE policy levers to increase equity

Federal policy review findings

- Head Start Performance Standards, community wide strategic planning and needs assessment
- Early Head Start Opportunity Zone provisions
- CCDF:
 - Equal access provisions
 - Contracts
 - Tiered/differential reimbursement
 - Targeted supply-building strategies
 - Priority groups; subsidy prioritization and allocation

Federal ECE policy levers to increase equity

Federal policy review findings (continued)

- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):
 - Title I preschool
 - Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 (PDG B-5)
- Title V Maternal and Child Health Programs
 - Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

But, the ECE regulatory structure is weak for using neighborhood approaches to increase equity

Key finding of the policy review:

- While there are many openings, neither neighborhood-based nor explicitly racial equity-focused approaches are *required*

Recommendations for strengthening the Federal ECE regulatory structure

- Make ‘children facing high neighborhood risk’ a priority group in Head Start and CCDF
- Add “fair access” provisions to Head Start and CCDF that explicitly monitor and address racial inequities
- Require neighborhood measures in Preschool Development Birth through Five Grant Needs Assessments and Head Start Performance Indicators
- Break down the silos: Support cross-agency visioning, planning, and coordination opportunities to support comprehensive neighborhood early childhood systems

Next steps

- Help ECE policymakers and practitioners “see their systems”
 - We need systematic national analysis of neighborhood level access to high-quality, federally supported ECE programs and resources
 - We need federal data infrastructure and tools to support neighborhood focused ECE planning and monitoring
- Strengthen the regulatory structure now so that the COVID-19 rebuilding process requires neighborhood-focused approaches that explicitly address issues of racial equity

diversitydatakids.org


data for a diverse and equitable future

Early Childhood Income, Work and Family Neighborhoods



Until every child thrives, every day,
everywhere.

Mobilizing data for equity

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