

LVPC's Equity Analysis Shows Racial and Ethnic Disparity Across the Region

Blacks and Hispanics or Latinos in the Lehigh Valley have far less access to wealth, housing, transportation or education than White residents, according to an LVPC Equity Analysis released June 25.

The statistical analysis shows that while Blacks don't benefit from the same access to opportunity as Whites, residents identifying as Hispanics or Latinos, who now make up 19% of the Region's population, by far have the least access to the necessities that are vital in determining quality of life.

The analysis, performed by LVPC Senior Community Planner Jillian Seitz and Chief Community Planner Samantha Smith, used 14 key data points that determine access to jobs, housing, transportation and education and analyzed them for all of the region's 145 census tracts. It serves as an update of the Region's first equity analysis, done by the LVPC in 2018.

"Our Hispanic or Latino community has grown exponentially over the last several decades, but it's become clear that they do not have access to many of the opportunities enjoyed by other community members," said Seitz, who also performed the 2018 analysis, among the first of its kind in the nation. "Income, poverty and homeownership are just a few of places we're seeing significant disparities."

The analysis, available at LVPC.org, includes a statistical snapshot of who has high access to opportunity – and who doesn't – including an interactive map that allows users to see how opportunity access differs between communities in the Region.

And while it shows areas of unequal access to opportunity within the region's three cities and many boroughs, it also demonstrates racial and ethnic disparity in virtually every corner of the region, providing a detailed statistical snapshot that can be a useful tool for area leaders to understand the context and makeup of specific neighborhoods where change might be necessary.

"Equity matters because we can't call ourselves a successful region if everyone doesn't have a chance to be successful," Smith said. "And conversely, inequity has a generational effect because it's not a one-time happening. It's passed from generation to generation."

The analysis uses the latest U.S. Census figures as its base, and as such has some complex data that compares both race and ethnicity. While designations such as Black,

White and Asian are racial terms because they're based on physical attributes and national affiliation, the terms Hispanic or Latino refer to ethnicity, based on culture and language spoken.

For each of more than 2,000 data points, the analysis gives ratings of very low, low, moderate, high or very high for people in every community in the Lehigh Valley.

Some of the figures of note in the latest analysis include:

- The Region has become more diverse. A population that was 99% White in 1970 is now 6% Black and 19% Hispanic or Latino.
- 38% of Hispanics or Latinos have a high or very high access to opportunity, while 79% of Non-Hispanic or Latinos have a high or very high access.
- While 36% of Hispanics or Latinos are homeowners and 41% of Non-Whites own homes, 76% of Lehigh Valley Whites own their own home.
- 52% of people without a high school diploma have high or very high access to opportunity, while 86% of people with a Bachelor's Degree have high or very high access.
- 26% of Hispanics or Latinos and 18% of Non-White live in poverty, while 7% of White residents live below the poverty line.
- Internet access is more dictated by income than race or ethnicity. The 87% of Whites with internet access is only slightly higher than the 85% of Non-Whites and 81% of Hispanics or Latinos with internet access. However, while 95% of people with incomes higher than \$75,000 have internet access, just more than half of people with incomes under \$20,000 have internet.
- 45% of people who speak English 'less than very well' have high or very high access to opportunity, while 73% of people who speak English 'very well' have high or very high access to opportunity.

The analysis will be updated as new data is available and will be expanded as data in other areas, such as environmental impacts, is analyzed. The full equity analysis is available at lvpc.org.

