



## Executive Summary

### Achieving Equity: Achieve Escambia 2020 Community Report

**December 2020**

Achieve Escambia's latest community report, **Achieving Equity**, examines a set of 45 indicators impacting education, health, and a career-ready workforce in Escambia County, Florida. The 2020 report measures the gap between the Black population and the white, non-Hispanic population to highlight disparities between the two and look for ways to reduce them.

The full report is available on the Achieve Escambia website, [www.AchieveEscambia.org/Data](http://www.AchieveEscambia.org/Data).

Throughout the report, the racial disparities are stark. Economic outcomes for people of color show that they are more likely to rent, be part of the working poor, live in poverty, or face unemployment. Indicators related to youth preparedness—specifically the rate of youth disconnection, juvenile incarceration and in-school performance—foreshadow that the situation is not likely to improve without significant sustained intervention.

The report is clear that (1) people of color in Escambia County are not accessing the same opportunities as the white, non-Hispanic population, and (2) the situation has been largely stagnant over the past few years, with a few isolated pockets of improvement.

## KEY FINDINGS

The main findings of the research reflect the latest data from publicly available sources including the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and state sources such as the Florida Department of Education, Florida Health Charts and Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Highlights include:

- **Homeownership**: In the short term, Escambia County's 19%-point gap between white (65%) and Black (46%) homeownership affects housing stability for these families. But the real danger is in the long term. Homeownership disparities impact the accumulation of wealth from one generation to the next. Today's lag in Black homeownership is a direct result of years of unfair policies and discrimination. Nationally, there is a nearly 30%-point gap between white and Black homeownership.
- **Child Poverty**: Black children in Escambia County are more than three times as likely to be living in poverty compared to white children. The poverty rate for black children under 18 is 39%, compared to 13% for white children.
- **Income**: On average, white households earn more than \$20,000 more than Black households. White median household income is \$55,100, compared to \$34,500 for Black households.
- **In-school Performance**: When studying indicators in public education, keep in mind that the Escambia County school district racial breakdown is 47% white; 35% Black; 8% Hispanic; 8% multiracial; and 2%

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Asian. Compared to the population as a whole, Black students are disciplined more and promoted less than their white peers. Black students made up 64% of disciplinary infractions, compared to 25% of white students, in the 2018-2019 school year.

- Juvenile Arrests and Disconnected Youth: Escambia County now ranks #3 in juvenile arrests out of all 67 counties in Florida, an all-time low. Broken down by race, the most recent data from 2019 shows that Black youth comprise 74% of total arrests among juveniles ages 10-17. The racial disparity in juvenile arrests also shows up in the rate of disconnected youth, or “opportunity youth,” defined as youth ages 16-24 who are not employed and not working. One in 5 Black young adults in Escambia County are disconnected, compared to one in 10 white youth.
- Inexperienced Teachers: Teacher equity indicates the extent to which students, in particular students of color, are assigned uncertified or inexperienced teachers. In the 2018-2019 school year, 54% of inexperienced teachers worked in “high minority schools” in Escambia County, defined as schools with a minority membership in the state's top quartile, compared to 31% of inexperienced teachers in “low minority schools.”
- Health Equity: The health data shown in the report provides a clear picture of the challenges Escambia County families are experiencing. The starkest racial disparities in health outcomes can be seen in:
  - Births to single mothers (40% of births to single white mothers compared to 81% single Black mothers)
  - Low birthweight (8% of white infants weighed less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces at birth compared to 15% of Black infants)
  - Infant mortality (5 out of every 1,000 white infants born in 2019 died, compared to 14 Black infants)

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

We must seize this opportunity to intentionally reignite our economy in ways that build bridges and scaffolding to lift up our most vulnerable youth and families. In his opening letter to the report, Achieve Escambia Leadership Council Chair Mark T. Faulkner, president and CEO of Baptist Health Care, reflects on the gravity of the education, health and economic disparities affecting everything from infant mortality to life expectancy. Across schools, jobs, housing, transportation, criminal justice – and certainly health care – institutional and structural racism has shaped systems that underserved people of color.

Since its inception in 2016, Achieve Escambia has been a partnership organization with a desire to create a pathway to opportunity paved by the values of equity, inclusion, student success and innovation. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, this mission has become even more urgent. As Faulkner states, the pandemic's disproportionate toll on communities of color is no surprise. Well before COVID-19, we have known that there are long-standing racial inequities in the social determinants of health including poverty, healthcare access, nutrition, housing conditions and more.



In terms of solutions, Faulkner writes, “We have a responsibility to act on our pledges for equity and opportunity. As this report shows, we have much work to do. It will not be easy. But the silver lining of this moment is that it has made the social inequalities in our community, our region and our country so starkly visible in ways that are very difficult to deny.”

Several efforts are under way to dedicate the resources to put equity into practice and continue the foundational and transformative work developed across the Achieve Escambia partnership. These include:

- Escambia Children’s Trust: With 61% of voter approval, the Children's Services Council ballot referendum passed on November 3, 2020. The Escambia Children’s Trust will sustainably fund child and youth services that close many of the equity and opportunity gaps noted in this report. The needs assessment to be completed in 2021 will complement the ***Achieving Equity*** report.
- Achieve Healthy EscaRosa: In the coming year, Achieve Healthy EscaRosa is supporting a coordinated approach to addressing the immediate challenge of COVID-19 among minority populations in our community and the longer-term root causes of racial disparities that adversely impact vulnerable populations. In partnership with the UWF Haas Center, Achieve Escambia will be launching a regional equity dashboard in 2021 that (1) emphasizes the importance of public health and wellness; (2) defines a community-wide goal of reducing disparities in health outcomes; and (3) outlines a path forward to reduce these disparities.
- Inclusive Development Network: The Pensacola Inclusive Development Network is a partnership with a “prosperity plan” based on a vision for a future where everyone has an opportunity to advance economically. Achieving this vision will take reskilling displaced workers, educating workers in new skills and technologies, and committing to the long-term work of reducing equity gaps among four vulnerable groups, including those with low to no skills; those with a high school diploma or less; those who have had an interaction with the criminal justice system; and the lower income 16- to 24-year-olds not regularly in school or work commonly called “opportunity youth.”
- The 32505 Project: A bright spot in Escambia County is the work under way in partnership with numerous organizations including the school district, providers, and the UWF Public History Program to reduce disparities in the 32505 ZIP code, where several outcomes are improving at the population level, including median income and overall poverty, and within 5 elementary schools, where 3rd-grade reading scores are on the rise.

Measuring what matters, identifying effective practices, aligning resources and being committed to continuous improvement are necessary actions for the achievement of better outcomes for Escambia County youth and families. To learn more about Achieve Escambia, and read past community reports, visit [www.AchieveEscambia.org](http://www.AchieveEscambia.org).