

# Housing Choice Voucher Program

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The Housing Choice Voucher Program, commonly known as Section 8 vouchers, is the largest federal government program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Section 8 tenants pay approximately 30 percent of their income for rent and the local housing authority pays the difference up to the established payment standard based on HUD fair market rents. The participant may choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects. The program offers low income households the opportunity to obtain affordable, privately owned rental housing and to increase their housing choices. Between 2007 and 2010, the Section 8 Program provided over 2.5 million vouchers to Californians. This report reviews four years of housing choice data and is divided into three sections:

- General overview of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- Geographical distribution of vouchers and characteristics of voucher recipients in California. The section explains that the majority of recipients reside in metropolitan areas. In addition, the program serves mainly households with children and families with one or more members with at least one disability.
- Regional/county comparison of recipient families by race and ethnicity to the estimated number of very low-income families by race and ethnicity. This comparison serves as a proxy to determine if very low-income minority groups are receiving Section 8 assistance in adequate proportions. In California as a whole, the data indicates minority families are likely receiving an acceptable share of Housing Choice Vouchers. However, there are variations in the State's counties and not all protected groups fair equally.
- Analysis of whether Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are promoting housing integration in California. The data show that the program is not contributing to racial/ethnic housing integration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Housing Choice Voucher data was obtained as a special tabulation from HUD. No data provided for 2005 and 2006.

## Overview of Housing Choice Voucher Program

The success of the voucher program is often attributed to its flexibility.<sup>2</sup> Participants are not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects, but instead, are able to choose any rental unit that meets program requirements. Therefore, participants may select housing in neighborhoods where jobs or educational opportunities may be more plentiful. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. Further, because a family's housing needs change over time, the housing choice voucher program allows families to move without losing their housing assistance for reasons such as change in family size and job location. Families may move if they provide notification ahead of time, terminate the existing lease within the lease provisions, and find acceptable alternate housing.<sup>3</sup>

Local public housing agencies (PHAs) are the primary administrators of housing choice vouchers and therefore play an essential role in the delivery of housing assistance. The PHAs receive federal funds from HUD to administer the voucher program. In California, there are 107 PHAs that administer voucher programs. A listing of participating PHAs is available at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ca.cfm>.

A PHA determines a household's eligibility for a housing voucher based on family size and total annual gross income. The program is limited to U.S. citizens and specified categories of non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. "In general, the family's income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the county or metropolitan area in which the family chooses to live. By law, a PHA must provide 75 percent of its vouchers to applicants whose incomes do not exceed 30 percent of the area median income."<sup>4</sup> Median income levels are published by HUD and vary by location and family size. PHAs are required to verify family composition, income, employment, and assets. Vouchers are in high demand. Often, PHAs have long waiting lists of eligible families for program participation. Each PHA must establish waiting list procedures, and some have preferences to allow for homeless families, families paying more than 50% of their income for rent, or families involuntarily displaced to receive vouchers first.

A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the PHA on behalf of the participating family (HUD 2011). "The subsidy paid to the landlord, or housing assistance payment (HAP), is usually the difference between 30 percent of household income and the payment standard, which is set by statute and tied to the fair market rent (FMR)."<sup>5</sup> The household then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program. A family which receives a

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<sup>2</sup> Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), The National Leased Housing Association (NLHA), and Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA). 2002. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program: Making Housing Markets Work for Low-income Families. Online at: [www.phada.org/pdf/joint.pdf](http://www.phada.org/pdf/joint.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). 2011. "Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet." Accessed Online at: [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact\\_sheet](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet).

<sup>4</sup> HUD, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), Page 3

housing voucher can select a unit with a rent that is below or above the payment standard. The housing voucher recipient must pay 30% of its monthly adjusted gross income for rent and utilities, and if the unit rent is greater than the payment standard the family is required to pay the additional amount. Whenever a voucher recipient moves to a new unit where the rent exceeds the payment standard, they may not pay more than 40 percent of its adjusted monthly income for rent.<sup>6</sup>

A household that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program. This unit may include the family's present residence. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as [inspected and] determined by the PHA. Once a PHA approves the housing unit, the voucher recipient and the landlord sign a lease and, at the same time, the landlord and the PHA sign a housing assistance payments (HAP) contract that runs for the same term as the lease. The landlord who participates in the voucher program is required to provide “decent, safe, and sanitary housing to a tenant at a reasonable rent” and provide any services stated in the lease. The dwelling unit must pass the program's housing quality standards (HQS) and be maintained up to those standards as long as the owner receives housing assistance payments.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program has been successful in meeting its two major goals of: 1) housing low-income families and 2) expanding housing opportunity. However, despite the program's success and flexibility, there are issues with administering the program under its complex regulations and requirements.<sup>7</sup> Program success is dependent on the rental housing supply, fair market rents, and local landlords' participation. Tenant and landlord issues often arise regarding housing quality standards and housing discrimination. In some areas, there are not enough vouchers to meet the high demand while some other areas consistently underutilize their vouchers.<sup>8</sup> A 1999 HUD report stated that one of the longest waiting periods for Section 8 was in the City of Los Angeles at an average of 10 years. The City of Oakland's waiting period was four years while the national average waitlist is typically 22 months.<sup>9</sup> Long waiting periods for Section 8 vouchers are indications of the need for affordable housing. In periods of economic growth, millions of families still struggle to secure decent and affordable housing. In times of recession, rent subsidies provide crucial stability to families affected by job loss and uncertainty.

<h3>Geographical Distribution &amp; Characteristics of Recipients</h3>
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This section provides an overview of the distribution of vouchers and characteristics of participants in the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program. The data was obtained as a special tabulation from HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) through the Office of Policy Development and Research. Data is based on answers provided by

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<sup>6</sup> HUD. 2011. "Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet." Online at: [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact\\_sheet](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet)

<sup>7</sup> Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), Page 3.

<sup>8</sup> Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), page 26

<sup>9</sup> Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), page 22

voucher recipients and reported by PHAs on Form HUD-50058 “Family Report” used for various subsidized housing programs.<sup>10</sup> The analysis is based on renter years defined as the period when the voucher is in use. A family may use the voucher, and if they leave the program, the voucher may be used by another family.

### Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers

On average, the federal Housing Choice Voucher program serves more than 260,000 Californian families annually. The Greater Los Angeles Area receives the greatest share of housing vouchers (47%) but it also accounts for the largest share of California’s households (47%) and families (48%).<sup>11</sup> These patterns are consistent with research indicating a tendency for Housing Choice Voucher recipients to settle in the suburbs of larger metropolitan areas where it is easier for families to find participating landlords or for PHAs to use their vouchers.<sup>12</sup>

Table 5-1  
Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers and Family Households

	Share of Vouchers	Share of Households	Share of Families
Greater Los Angeles Area	47%	47%	48%
San Francisco Bay Area	18%	21%	20%
Sacramento	6%	7%	7%
San Joaquin Valley	10%	10%	10%
San Diego County/MSA	10%	9%	8%
Central Coast	5%	4%	4%
Northern California	3%	3%	3%
Central Southern California	0.20%	1%	1%
California Statewide	100%	100%	100%

\* 4 year average = [total vouchers between 2007 and 2010 renter years] / [4]

\*\* Household and family estimates are from the 2005-2009 5-year ACS.

### Characteristics of Households Served

Between 2007 and 2010, the majority of individuals served were children (under the age of 18) and the disabled (which may be of any age). On average, the Housing Choice Voucher Program serves more than half of million children and disabled individuals annually. About 90,000 elderly individuals (age 62 and older) are also served.

<sup>10</sup> The questionnaire instrument is available at: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/systems/pic/50058/pubs/>

<sup>11</sup> In Form 50058, the terms families and households are used interchangeably; however, the Bureau of the Census defines each differently.

<sup>12</sup> Covington, K., Freeman, L. and M. Stoll. 2011. “The Suburbanization of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients.” The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program.

**Table 5-2  
Characteristic of Household Members**

	Total	4-year Average	% of Total
Members in households	2,572,691	643,173	
Children, age 18 and under	1,021,649	255,412	40%
Elderly, age 62 and over	359,110	89,778	14%
Disabled*	1,037,365	259,341	40%

*\*Data is limited to the characteristics of 8 members and includes individuals of any age. Categories are not mutually exclusive, therefore percentages do not add up to 100.*

Approximately 48% of households served by the Housing Choice Voucher program are families with one or more members with at least one disability. Households with an elderly or co-elderly head of household account for 29% of recipients. Those with at least one child account for about 45% of recipient households in California.

**Table 5-3  
Type of Household Served**

	Vouchers	Families with Member(s) with at Least One Disability	HH with An Elderly Head or Co Head	Households with Children
Total	1,046,705	508,100	302,494	465,455
4-year Average	261,676	127,025	75,624	116,364
% of Total		48%	29%	45%

*\*Categories are not mutually exclusive. A household can fall into more than one category; therefore, percentages do not add up to 100.*

In metropolitan areas, the majority of recipients were households with children.<sup>13</sup> In non-metropolitan areas, the majority of recipients tended to be families with one or more members with at least one disability (See Figure 4). Map 1 shows counties with a majority of each household type.

**Table 5-4  
Counties with a Majority of Household Type by Metropolitan Classification**

	Non-Metro	Metro	Total
No Majority	0	10	10
Families with Member(s) with at Least One Disability	20	17	37
Households with Children	1	10	11
Elderly Households	0	0	0
Total	21	37	58

<sup>13</sup> Metropolitan and non-metropolitan are defined in HUD's Section 8 classification files: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il/il10/Section8.xls>

The following provides a picture of Housing Choice Voucher recipients by type of household in California's regions and counties:

**Greater Los Angeles Area:** About 47% of the State's voucher recipients resided in the Greater Los Angeles Area. Similar to the State, the majority of households served were families with one or more member with at least one disability (48%) and households with children (41%). The area served more elderly households compared to the State (33% versus 29%). With the exception of Imperial and San Bernardino Counties, there was little variation from the observed state pattern within the region. In these two counties, households with children accounted for 50% of recipients.

Similar to the state, the majority of recipients are Black or African American (36%), followed by Hispanics or Latinos and Non-Hispanic Whites (26%). Asian householders account for 11% of recipients while American Indians account for less than half-percent of households (0.3%).

**Bay Area:** Roughly 18% of housing voucher recipients resided in the Bay Area. Similar to the state, 43% of recipients in the Bay Area were families with one or more member with at least one disability. Also following the state trend, 43% of recipients were households with children and 28% of households had an elderly head or co-head.

**Sacramento:** Approximately 6% of voucher recipients resided in the Sacramento Area. The area served more families with one or more member with at least one disability than the state (57% compared to 49%, respectively). Almost half of recipient households had children (49%) and 22% of households had an elderly head or co-head.

**Central Valley:** The Central Valley's share of vouchers is about 10%. Compared to the state, the area served slightly fewer families with one or more member with at least one disability (43% compared to 49%) but significantly more households with children (61% compared to 44% for the state) and fewer elderly households (16% compared to 29%). Within the region, only San Joaquin County did not follow this trend, serving more families with a member with a disability (59%).

**San Diego:** About 10% of housing choice voucher recipients lived in the San Diego area. Mirroring the state trend, the majority of voucher holders were families with one or more member with at least one disability (52%), followed by households with children (44%), and elderly households (31%).

**Central Coast:** The Central Coast's share of housing choice vouchers was about 5%. The pattern in the area follows the State's: the majority of holders were families with one or more member with at least one disability (50%), households with children (44%), and elderly households (25%). Within the region, Santa Cruz County diverged from this trend. In this county, the majority of voucher holders were households with children (49%).

Figure 5-5

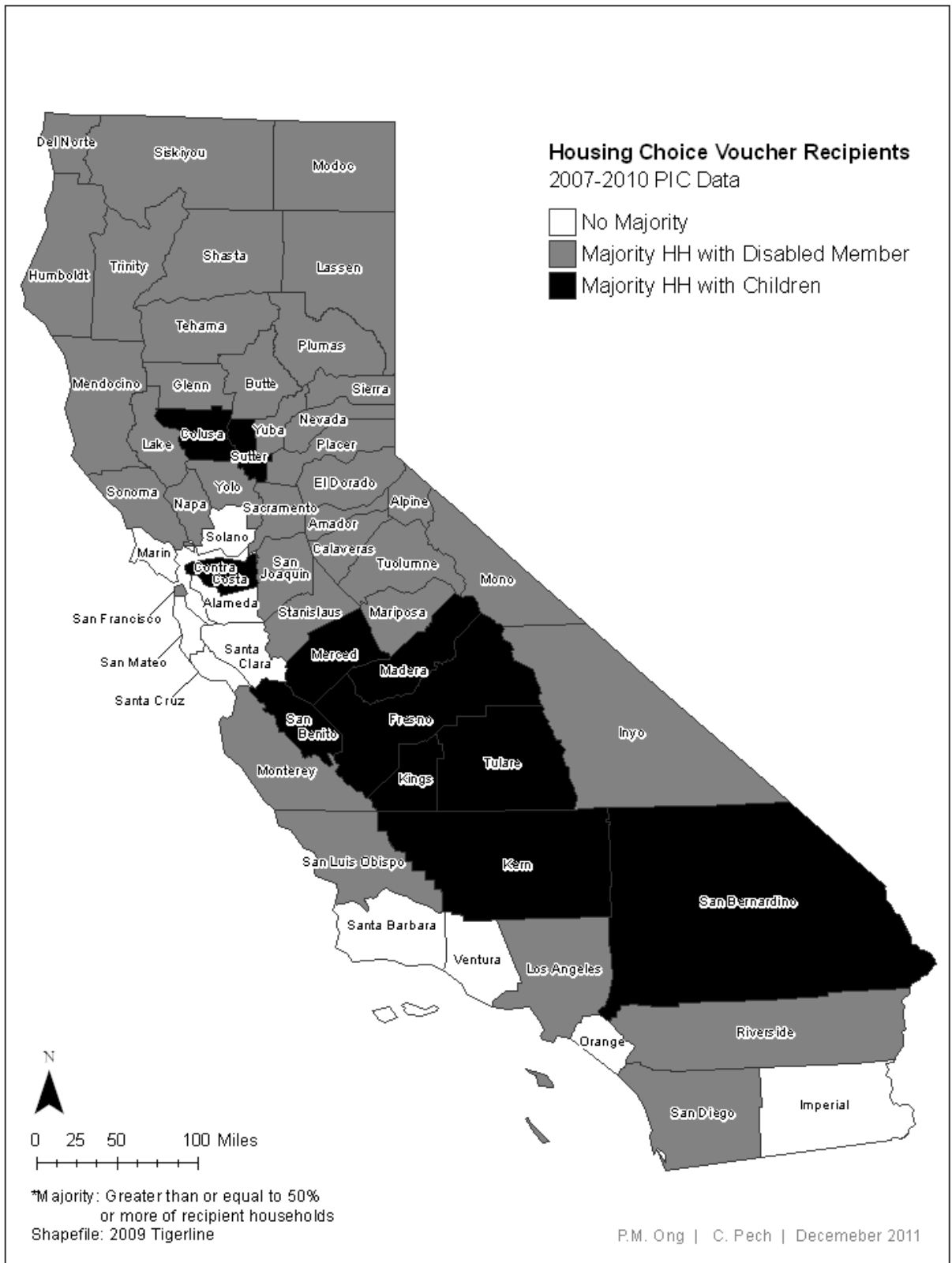


Table 5-6  
Household Types, 2007-2010 Housing Choice Voucher Recipients

	Total	Families with Disabled Members	Elderly Head or Co Head	With Children	Families with Disabled Members	Elderly Head or Co Head	With Children
Greater Los Angeles Area	492,646	236,343	164,584	202,125	48%	33%	41%
San Francisco Bay Area	192,816	89,051	54,596	82,896	46%	28%	43%
Sacramento	60,562	34,571	13,595	29,501	57%	22%	49%
San Joaquin Valley	107,786	45,952	17,184	65,759	43%	16%	61%
San Diego County	106,001	55,383	32,361	46,898	52%	31%	44%
Central Coast	54,606	27,072	13,570	23,934	50%	25%	44%
Northern California	30,401	18,597	6,154	13,602	61%	20%	45%
Central Southern California	1,845	1,151	448	707	62%	24%	38%
Total California	1,046,705	508,100	302,494	465,455	49%	29%	44%

**Northern California:** About 3% of voucher recipients resided in the Northern California Region. The region was consistent with the state: the majority of recipients were families with one or more member with at least one disability (61%), followed by households with children (45%) and households with an elderly head or co-head (20%). Within the region, there was little variation from this trend. In Lassen and Colusa Counties, households with children made up the largest share. In Sierra and Nevada Counties, the second largest group of recipients was elderly households.

**Central Southern California:** About 0.2% of voucher recipients resided in the Central Southern California Region. The region also mirrored the state's patterns. However, there were significantly more families with one or more member with at least one disability. Families with a disabled family member accounted for the majority of voucher holders (62%), followed by households with children (38%), and elderly households (29%). Within the region, Inyo and Mono Counties diverged from the trend. In these counties, the second largest shares of recipients were elderly households instead of those with children.

### Race/Ethnicity of Family Head

This section of the report compares the proportions of voucher recipients by race to their relative share of all families, families in poverty, and estimated number of very low-income (VLI) families. This comparison serves as a proxy to determine if eligible groups are receiving Section 8 assistance in adequate proportions. This comparison is referred to as fair-share utilization.<sup>14</sup> There are not enough data for a comparison of 'Pacific Islanders' and 'American Indian and Alaska Natives'; therefore the utilization analysis focuses on the largest racial/ethnic groups and minorities as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

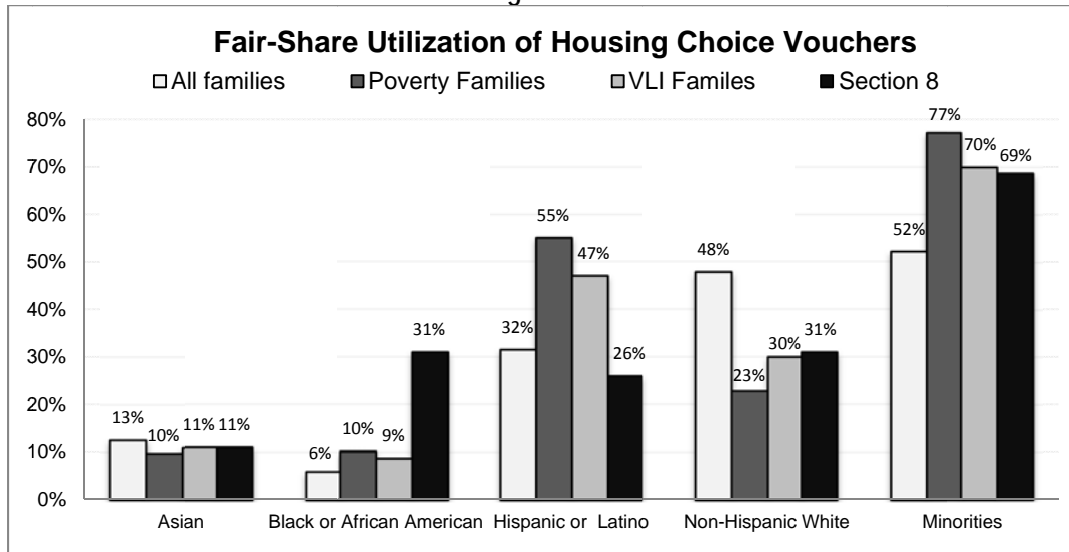
<sup>14</sup> General methodology used to derive the estimated number of very low income families can be found in Appendix

<sup>15</sup> For the Section 8 vouchers, the race/ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive. Blacks, for example, do not include Hispanic Blacks. For the family categories, the data is from the 2005-2009 5-year ACS in which the race/ethnicity categories are NOT mutually exclusive and Hispanics can be of any race. Minority families are all those that do not have a Non-Hispanic White head of family [Total Families – Non-Hispanic White Families = Total Minority Families].



The figure below indicates the majority of Housing Choice Voucher recipients in the State were families with a ‘Non-Hispanic White’ head of household, followed closely by ‘Blacks or African Americans’ (about 31% of families each). The second largest group of recipients was ‘Latino or Hispanic’ (26%), followed by ‘Asians’ (11%). ‘American Indians’ received about 1% of vouchers. Minorities as a whole received about 69% of housing choice vouchers.

Figure 5-7



**Fair-Share Utilization among Minority households**

In California, about 70% of VLI families were minority households which accounted for 77% of families living in poverty. Their share of vouchers (69%) is roughly equal to their share of VLI families, which suggests that minorities as a whole were likely well represented among voucher recipients. However, their share of vouchers was below that of the percent of families living in poverty (77%). These observed patterns are likely due to the large number ‘Black or African American’ families that received vouchers and the high percentage of ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families that were living in poverty.

‘Black or African American’ families accounted for approximately 6% of families in the State and their share of VLI families and poor families was slightly higher than their share of all families (9% and 10%, respectively). However, ‘Blacks and African American’ households accounted for 31% of all Section 8 voucher recipients.

About 32% of California families were ‘Hispanic or Latino’. ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families accounted for 47% of VLI families and 55% of families living in poverty. Despite the apparent need, they received only about 26% of housing choice vouchers. This indicates that in California as a whole, ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families were not well represented among Housing Choice Voucher recipients.

‘Asian’ families accounted for approximately 13% of California’s families; and, in general, were less likely to live in poverty, be VLI, or receive a housing choice voucher

when compared to other minority families. The proportion of ‘Asian’ families living in poverty is approximately 10% and they account for 11% of VLI families. ‘Asian’ families may not have received an adequate share of housing choice vouchers as their share of vouchers (10.7%) was about half-percent below their proportion of VLI families (11.2%).

‘Non-Hispanic White’ households accounted for the largest share of total households (48%) and Housing Choice Vouchers recipients (31.3%, a tenth of a percent more than ‘Blacks or African Americans’). About 23% of households living in poverty are ‘Non-Hispanic White’ and these households account for 30% of VLI families.

Table 5-8  
Families by Race/Ethnicity, 2007-2010 Housing Choice Voucher Recipients

	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic White	Total Minority*
Greater Los Angeles Area	1,434	53,500	1,267	179,357	128,916	128,171	364,475
San Francisco Bay Area	1,665	31,149	1,050	67,093	30,676	61,183	131,633
Sacramento	807	7,101	199	21,077	7,743	23,635	39,927
San Joaquin Valley	1,199	7,633	302	31,554	39,491	27,607	801,179
San Diego County	602	10,060	403	22,822	35,212	36,902	69,099
Central Coast	490	854	138	3,039	25,957	24,128	30,475
Northern California	1,389	1,591	93	1,124	2,195	24,009	6,392
Central Southern California	70	5	3	18	143	1,606	239
Total California	7,656	111,893	3,455	326,101	270,340	327,529	719,446

Race/ethnicity categories for Housing Choice Voucher data are mutually exclusive

\*\* Metro/ Non-metro classification files for Section 8 may be found here: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/datasets/il/il10/Section8.xls>

Table 5-9  
Fair Fair-Share Utilization for Total Minority Families By Region

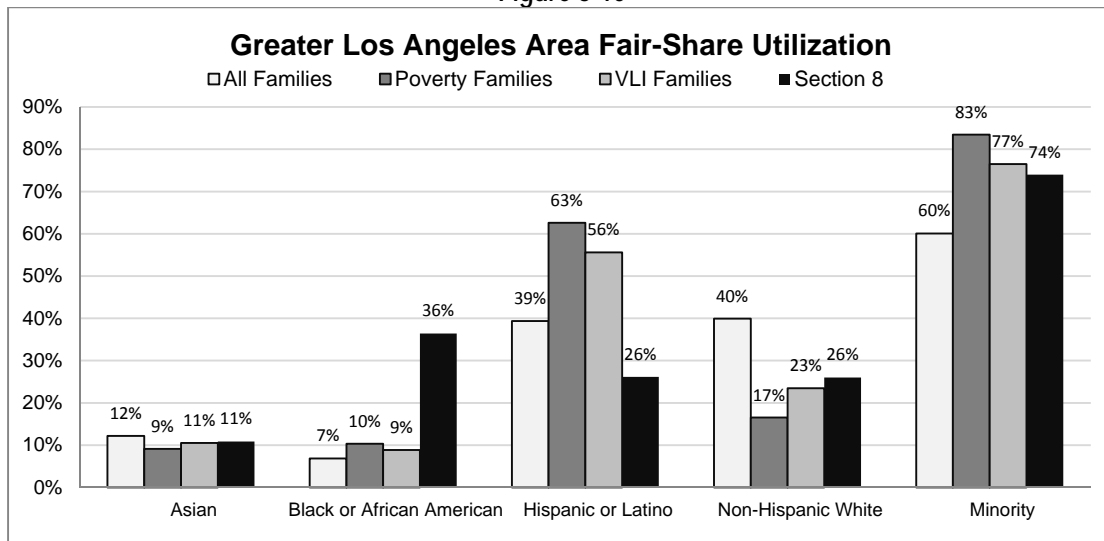
	Total	HHS Below FPL	HHS VLI or below	Sec.8 recipients	Minority HHS	Minority Below FPL	Minority HHS at or below VLI	Minority Sect. 8
Greater Los Angeles Area	2,392,524	357,796	878,979	91,119	60.1%	83.5%	76.5%	74.0%
San Francisco Bay Area	818,580	78,465	272,699	32,908	50.2%	75.7%	67.3%	68.3%
Sacramento	198,401	27,606	62,529	9,232	36.1%	60.5%	51.8%	61.0%
San Joaquin Valley	466,974	102,722	158,338	20,045	53.7%	78.7%	71.3%	74.4%
San Diego County/MSA	300,946	39,801	110,284	17,275	62.0%	73.1%	62.0%	65.2%
Central Coast	120,550	17,065	42,674	7,620	58.9%	70.2%	58.9%	55.8%
Northern California	44,930	8,848	14,811	1,598	24.5%	30.5%	24.5%	21.0%
Central Southern California	6,554	888	1,693	60	17.3%	25.1%	17.3%	13.0%
California Sum of Counties	4,349,459	633,191	1,542,055	179,856	69.5%	77.2%	69.5%	68.7%

Notes: Source: 2005-2009 5year ACS. VLI estimates were tabulated using data from ACS. Sect 8 race/ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive. Section 8 data 4-year average is: total number of receipts divided by 4. The percent share is not affected by using average or total.

The following provides a picture of Housing Choice Voucher recipients by race/ethnicity and fair-share utilization in California’s regions:

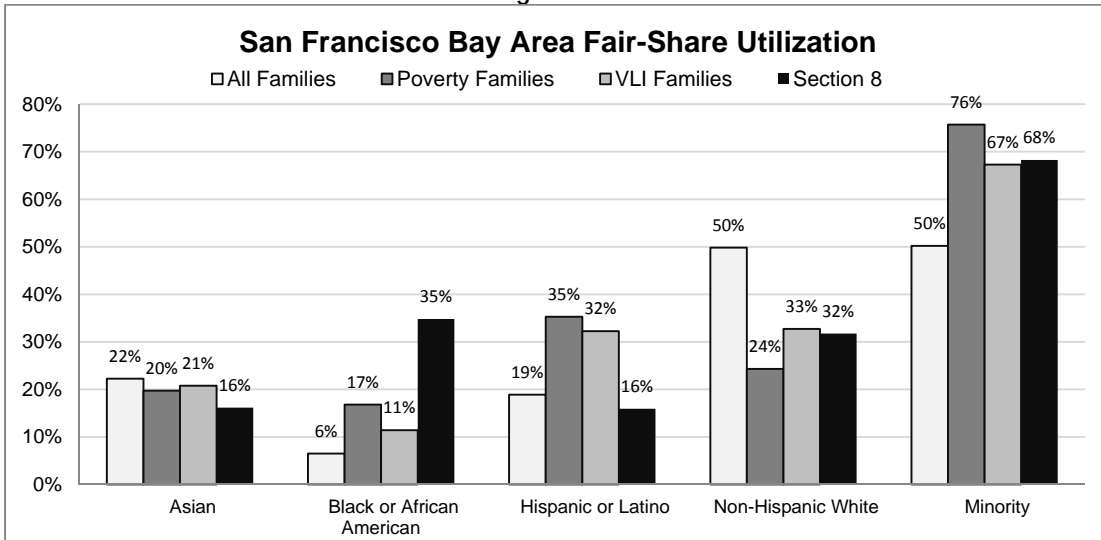
**Greater Los Angeles:** Similar to the State, the majority of Housing Choice Voucher recipients were ‘Black or African American’ families (36%), followed by ‘Hispanics or Latinos’ and ‘Non-Hispanic Whites’ (26%). Even though ‘Black or African American’ families received the largest share of vouchers within the region, this group accounted for only 9% of VLI families. The majority of VLI families are ‘Hispanics or Latinos’ (56%), a much larger proportion than those that were voucher recipients (26%). ‘Non-Hispanic White’ and ‘Asian’ families made up 24% and 11% of VLI families respectively.

Figure 5-10



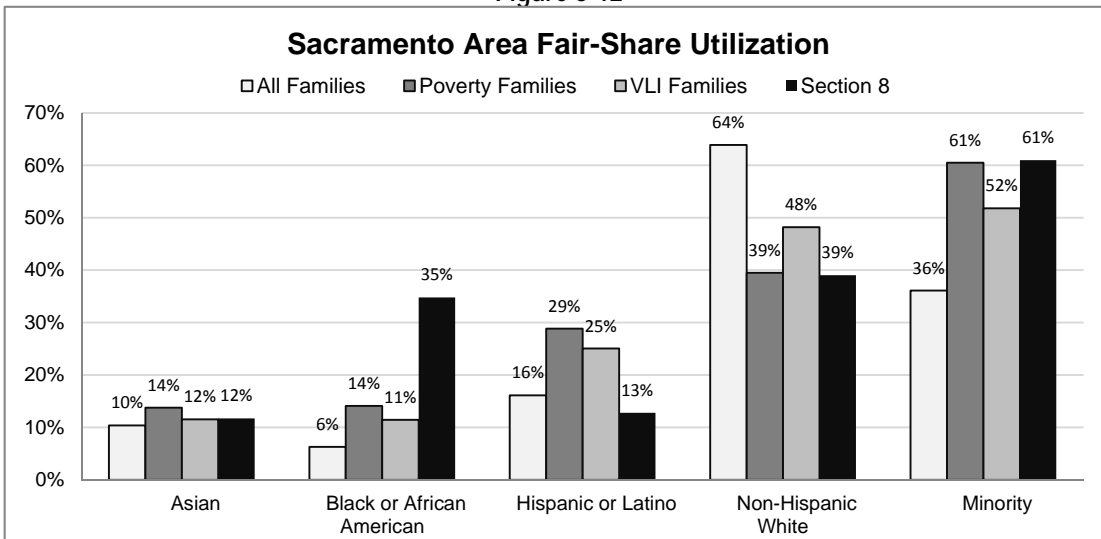
**Bay Area:** The majority of voucher recipients in the Bay Area were Black or African American and Non-Hispanic White families (35% and 32% respectively), similar to the proportion of recipients for the State as a whole. ‘Black or African American’ families accounted for a considerably smaller proportion of VLI families (11%) but received the greatest share of vouchers. ‘Asian’ and ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families accounted for larger proportions of very low-income families (21% and 32%, respectively) than those who received vouchers. Thirty-three percent of VLI families were ‘Non-Hispanic Whites’, roughly on par with their proportion of voucher recipients.

Figure 5-11



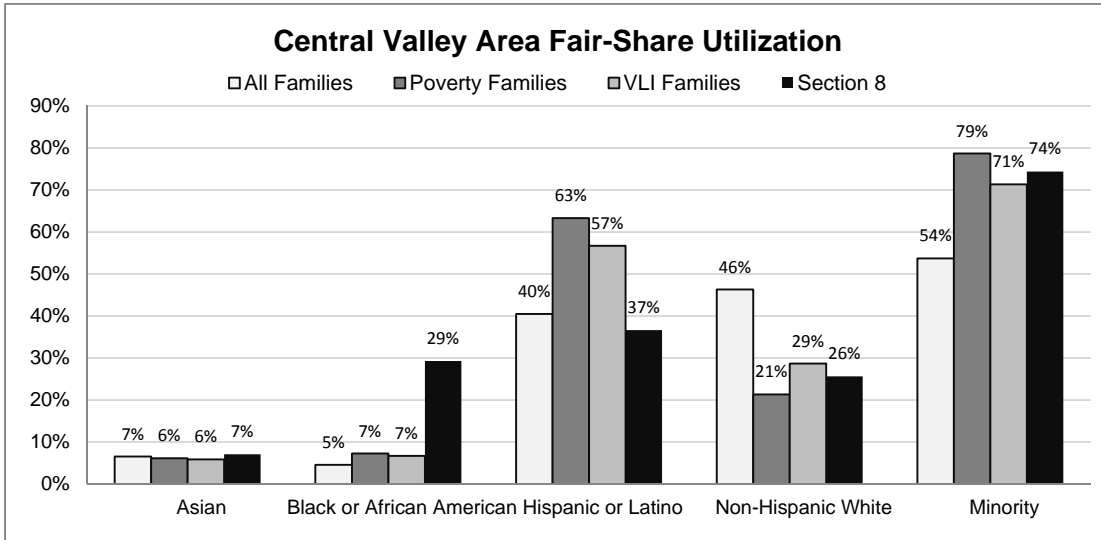
**Sacramento:** ‘Non-Hispanic White’ and ‘Black or African American’ families comprised the majority of voucher recipients (39% and 35% respectively). About 13% of recipients were ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families, a share substantially lower than their proportion for the State. Although ‘Black or African American’ families accounted for a considerable proportion of voucher recipients, they only represented 11% of VLI families in the Sacramento region. Conversely, ‘Non-Hispanic White’ and ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families comprised 48% and 25% of VLI families, respectively.

Figure 5-12



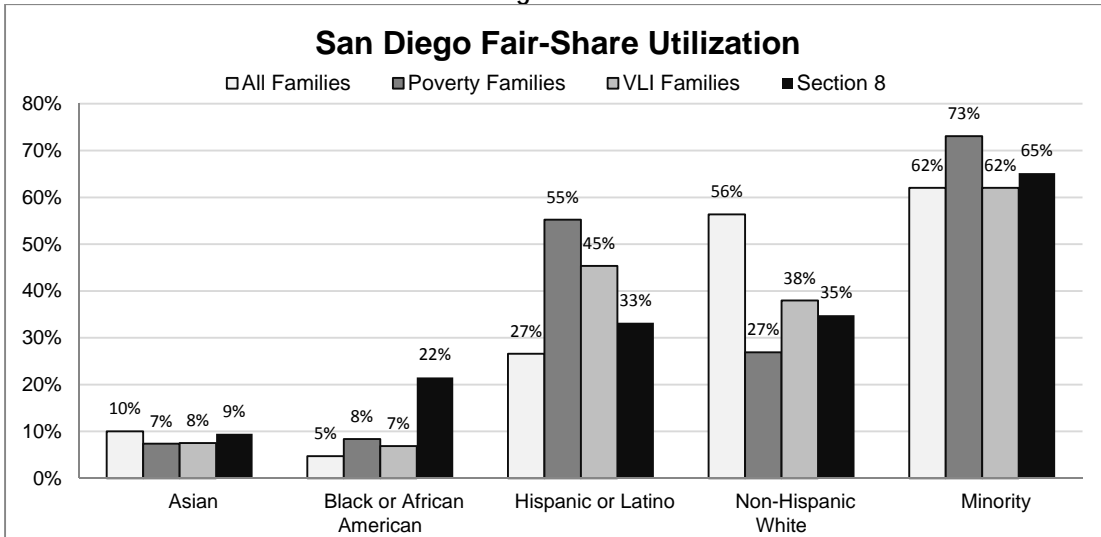
**Central Valley:** In the Central Valley, ‘Hispanic or Latinos’ accounted for the largest share of vouchers (37%), and made up a majority of VLI families (57%). ‘Black or African American’ families accounted for only 7% of VLI families. ‘Non-Hispanic White’ and ‘Asian’ families received vouchers at similar proportions to their share of very low-income families (29% and 6%, respectively).

Figure 5-13



**San Diego:** Similar to the State, the majority of voucher recipients were ‘Non-Hispanic White’ and ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families (35% and 33%). ‘Black or African Americans’ accounted for 22% of recipient families, which is lower than the State proportion. ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families accounted for the largest proportion of VLI families in San Diego at 45%, which was higher than their share of voucher recipients. The next largest proportion of VLI families was ‘Non-White Hispanic’ families (38%), which was also higher than their share of vouchers. ‘Black or African American’ families accounted for 22% of recipients while only 7% of VLI families were ‘African American or Black’.

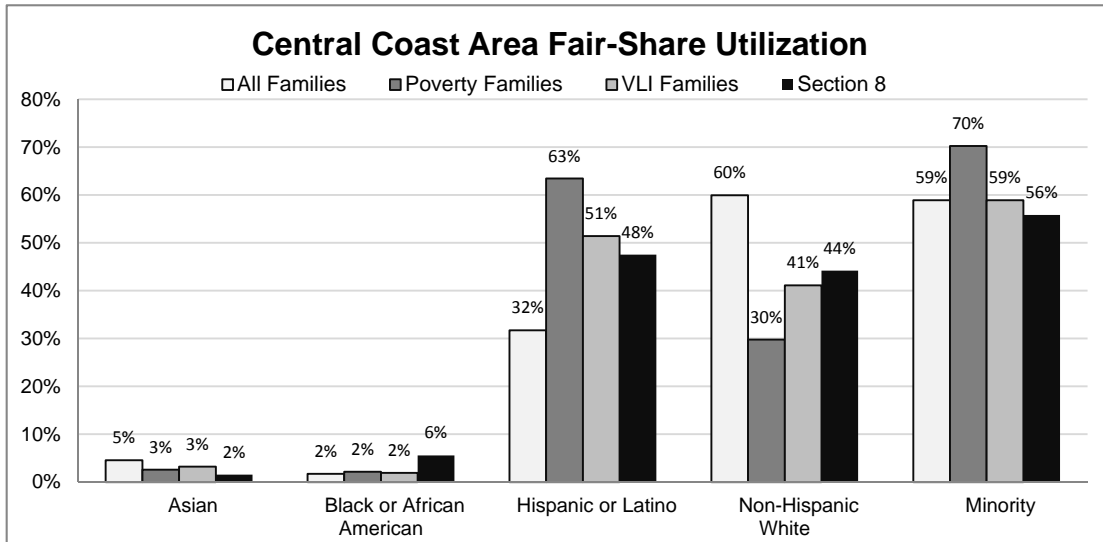
Figure 5-14



**Central Coast:** The majority of voucher recipients in the Central Coast were ‘Hispanic or Latino’ and ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families, 48% and 44% of recipients respectively. These proportions were higher than those for the State as a whole. ‘Black or African American’ and ‘Asian’ families were both less represented in comparison to the State distributions, comprising 6% and 2% of voucher recipients respectively. About half of

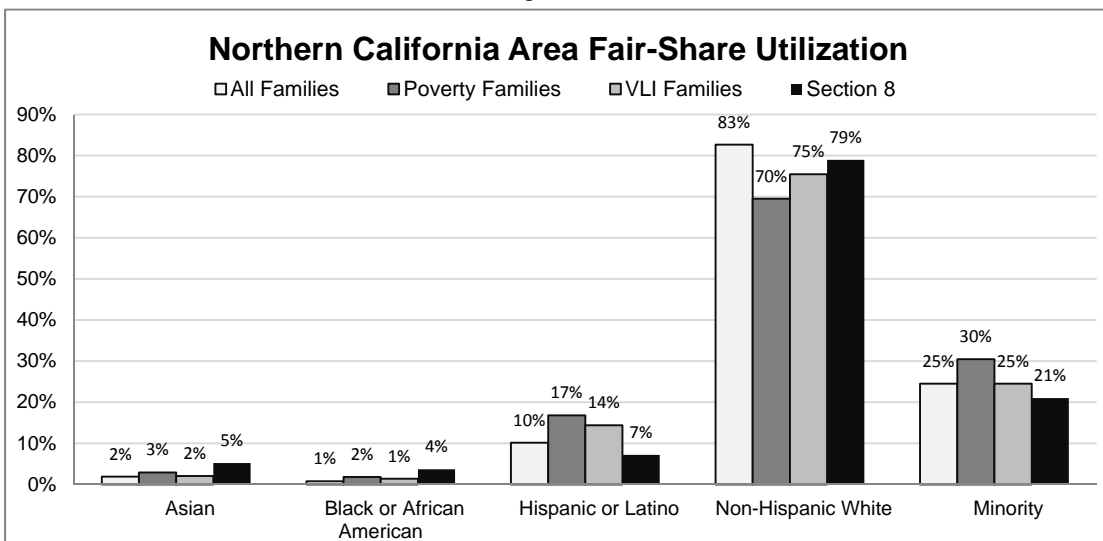
VLI families in the Central Coast are ‘Hispanic or Latino’, which was similar to their proportion of voucher recipients. ‘Non-Hispanic Whites’ accounted for 41% of VLI families in the region, smaller than their share of recipients. ‘Asian’ families accounted for 3% of VLI families. ‘Black or African American’ families accounted for 2% of VLI families, lower than their share of recipients.

Figure 5-15



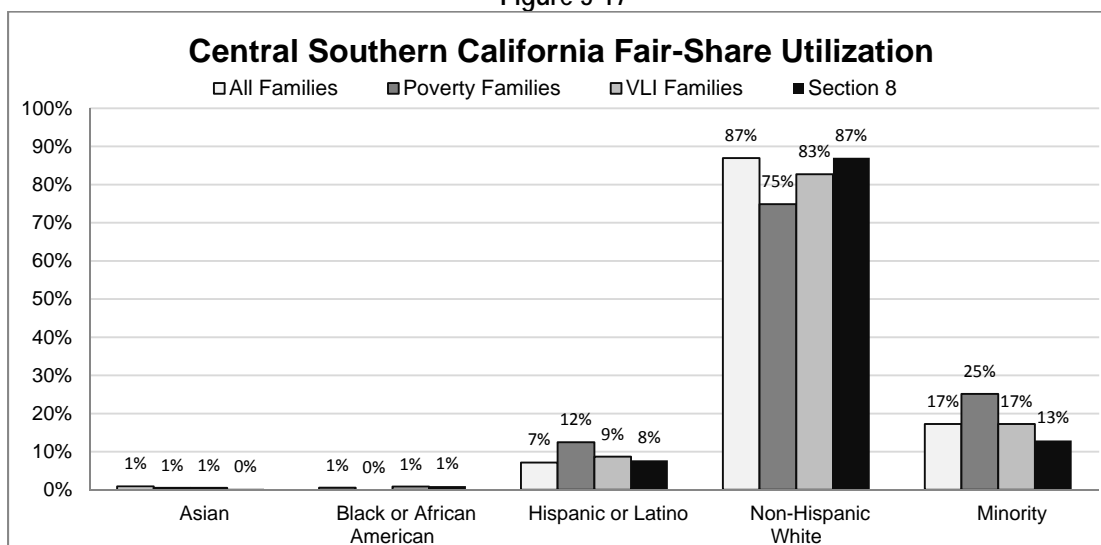
**Northern California:** Most voucher recipients in Northern California were ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families (79%), representing a much higher rate than the State proportion. ‘American Indian’ families also had a higher proportion of recipients compared to the State, accounting for about 5% of recipients in the region. About three-quarters of VLI families in Northern California were ‘Non-Hispanic White’. Conversely, ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families accounted for 14% of VLI families, which was twice their share of vouchers. The proportions of VLI families for ‘Asian’ and ‘Black or African American’ families were lower than their share of housing choice vouchers (1% and 2%, respectively).

Figure 5-16



**Central Southern California:** About 87% of voucher recipients in Central Southern were ‘Non-Hispanic White’, a proportion much higher than that of the State. ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families were the next highest proportion at 8%, which was much lower than the state percentage. Similar to the proportion of voucher recipients, ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families accounted for 83% of VLI families in Central Southern California. ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families comprised about 9% of VLI families, while “Black or African American” and ‘Asian’ families accounted for about 1% of VLI families each. Thus, the representations of voucher recipients are roughly on par with the composition of VLI families in this region.

Figure 5-17



**Housing Choice Vouchers & Integration**

This section of the report assesses whether Housing Choice Vouchers are promoting racial/ethnic housing integration or contributing to segregation. The spatial analysis is based on where Housing Choice Voucher recipients resided and whether they resided in Census tracts where their race or ethnic groups were over- or under-represented.<sup>16</sup> Due to data limitations, this analysis cannot be reproduced for State CDBG-eligible jurisdictions as Census tract data does not overlap with jurisdictional boundaries.

Figure 5-18 shows that about 67% of minority housing choice voucher recipients were used in areas where minority households were over-represented. This pattern is also apparent for ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families: about 58% of ‘Hispanic or Latino’ recipients resided in areas where they were over-represented. To a lesser extent this pattern also applies to ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ families, which also tended to reside in areas where they are over-represented (47% and 48%, respectively). Very few minority Housing Choice Voucher recipient families resided in areas where they were under-represented,

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 11 of the AI for analysis and methodology used to determine areas of over- and under-representation by race. Racial composition of a census tract was compared to that of the county and used a 10% or greater threshold. For example, if Asians account for 20% of families in a census tract but only account for 5% in the county, then they are over-represented in that tract.

particularly ‘Blacks or African American’ families where only 2% of voucher recipients resided in areas where they were under-represented. Of ‘Non-Hispanic White’ recipient families, a large share lived in areas where they were neither over- or under-represented (43%). These observations may suggest that Housing Choice Vouchers are not contributing to furthering racial/ethnic housing integration within jurisdictions.

Table 5-18  
Segregation/Integration Analysis of Housing Choice Vouchers

	Asians	Blacks	Hispanics	NHW	Minorities
Over Represented Census tracts	47%	48%	58%	31%	67%
Neither	48%	50%	33%	43%	24%
Under Represented Census tracts	5%	2%	10%	27%	9%

*Tabulated by authors from 2005-2009 5-year ACS*

‘Black or African American’ and ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families are disproportionately dependent on housing choice vouchers while ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families are disproportionately living in poverty and in need of housing assistance. It is very difficult to obtain subsidized housing in California, as evidenced by the long waiting lists for the Housing Choice Voucher program. Furthermore, families who receive assistance are likely to remain in the program for many years. Therefore, the large number of ‘Black or African American’ and ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families receiving housing choice vouchers may be a reflection of shifts in California’s demographic composition. As the number of ‘Black or African American’ and ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families has declined in the State, the number of ‘Hispanics or Latino’ families has increased. At the same time, it is likely that ‘Black or African American’ and ‘Non-Hispanic White’ families have remained in the program and thus account for a larger number of Housing Choice Voucher recipients.

Aside from demographic shifts, ‘Hispanic or Latino’ families may be less willing to apply for Housing Choice Vouchers due to their immigration status even when there are eligible individuals in the family. Lack of information networks may also explain their low participation. This may also apply to Asian families.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- In California, the federal Housing Choice Voucher program assists more than 250,000 families and one million individuals each year.
- Between 2007 and 2010, the majority of voucher recipients were families with one or more members with at least one disability (48%).
- Most California voucher recipients during this period are in the race/ethnicity categories of ‘Non-Hispanic White’ or ‘Black or African American’.
- The majority of minority housing choice voucher recipients reside in areas where they are over-represented.



Minority families as a whole are receiving an acceptable share of Housing Choice Vouchers. However, minorities are more likely to live in poverty, have very low-incomes, and reside in Census tracts where they are over-represented. This may be a reflection of the willingness of landlords to accept vouchers, a desire by recipients to live close to family and to those that form a part of their social networks. Immigrants may also want to live in areas that are of their cultural and linguistic background. Discrimination and economic barriers also contribute to limiting choice. Determining the validity and relative influence of the various factors would require considerable additional research beyond the current scope of work but is something that may be explored in the future.

## **Appendix I**

### **Methodology for Estimating Very Low-income Families**

The estimated very low-income family (VLI) is a very conservative approximation of families that were eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers or in the target population at the time of the ACS surveys (2005-2009). The distribution of VLI by race/ethnicity was tabulated using HUD's 4-person VLI family income cutoff for each county (or region with multiple counties). These cutoffs were applied to 2005-09 5-year ACS county data to first estimate the proportion of each family income category that fell into the VLI category (all, none, or some interpolated fraction where the VLI cutoff is within the category). The resulting factors were used as a weight for each racial/ethnic group to estimate how families many were VLI.

We compared the VLI results with other distributions, including race/ethnicity for all families and race/ethnicity for families below the federal poverty line. This comparison allowed us to determine that the VLI estimates seem reasonable. However, caution should be taken when interpreting results for the smaller counties, as these are likely to have smaller samples sizes; therefore, data may have larger margins of statistical error and data may not available for some groups, particularly Blacks and occasionally Asians. See appendix tables for counties with zero families in one or more minority groups.

Further, the ACS time frame (2005-2009) does not exactly match that of the HUD voucher data (2007-2010). It is assumed that demographic shifts occur over long periods of time and therefore, the comparison is still reasonable.