



AFFH Community Engagement Results

August 1, 2017




Community Engagement Plan

- Community Survey
- Stakeholder Survey
- Stakeholder Meeting and Info Session
- Outreach Events
- Community Meetings
- Focus Groups and Small Presentations
 - SHC shelter, Parent Info Center, ESL Classes, etc.



The Community Survey

- Total 128 responses
- Paper and online versions
- Translated into Spanish and Portuguese (not Haitian Creole)
- 65% renters, 35% owners (does not include homeless population)
- 29% were 62+, 0% respondents were age 18-24
- 69% Female, 31% Male
- 85% White
- Many long-time residents
- 17% live in publicly supported affordable housing



Do you feel that there are any differences in access to decent housing based on the following? Check all that apply.

Receipt of Govt assistance: 66

Race: 62

Disability: 59

Familial Status: 58

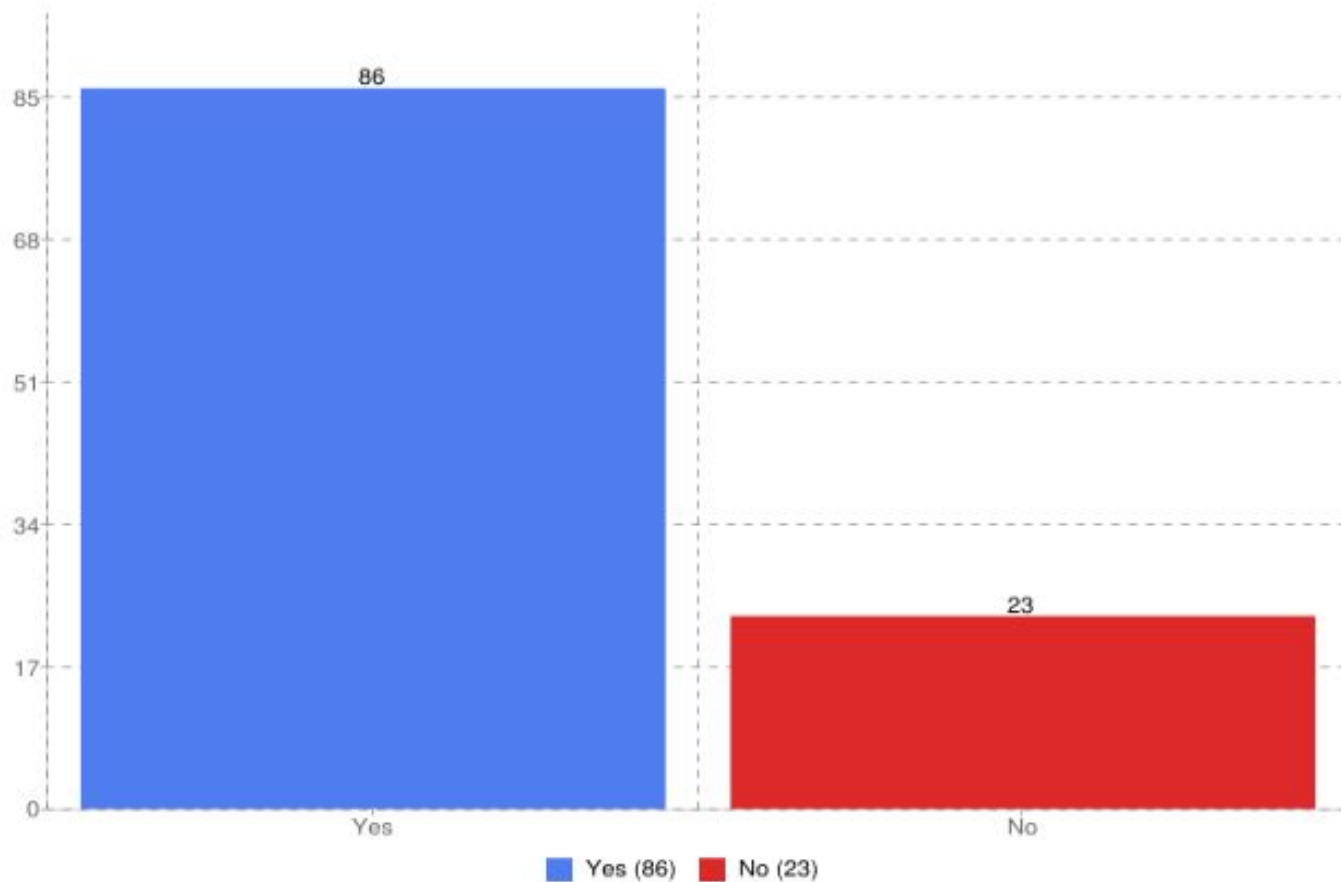
Ethnicity: 42

Age: 35

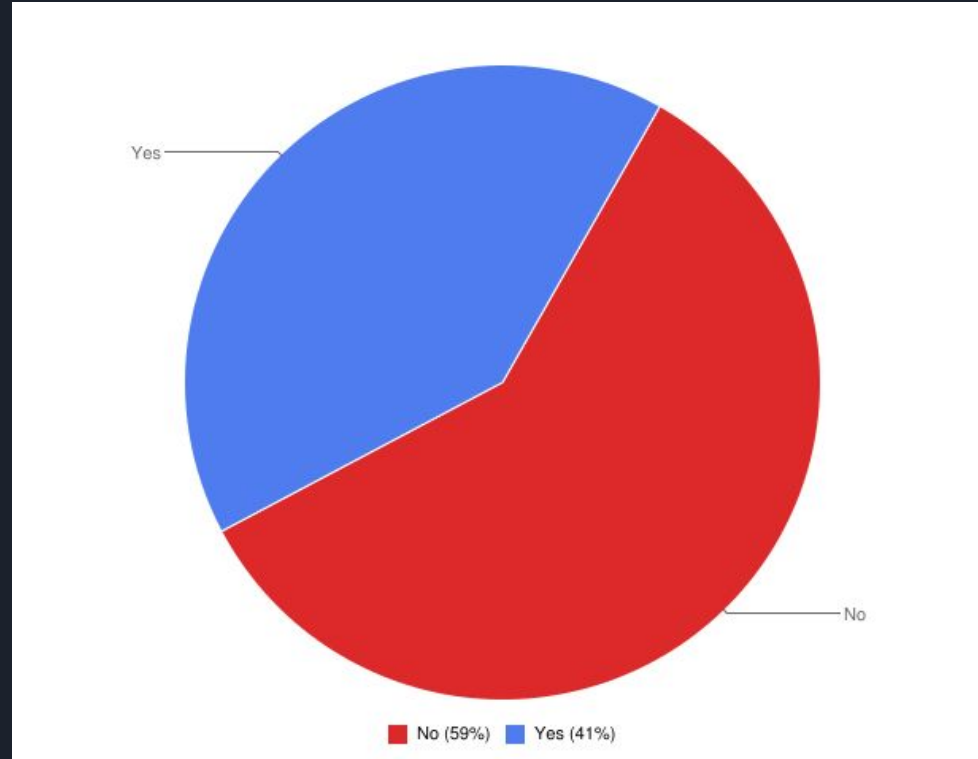
National Origin: 32

Marital Status: 23

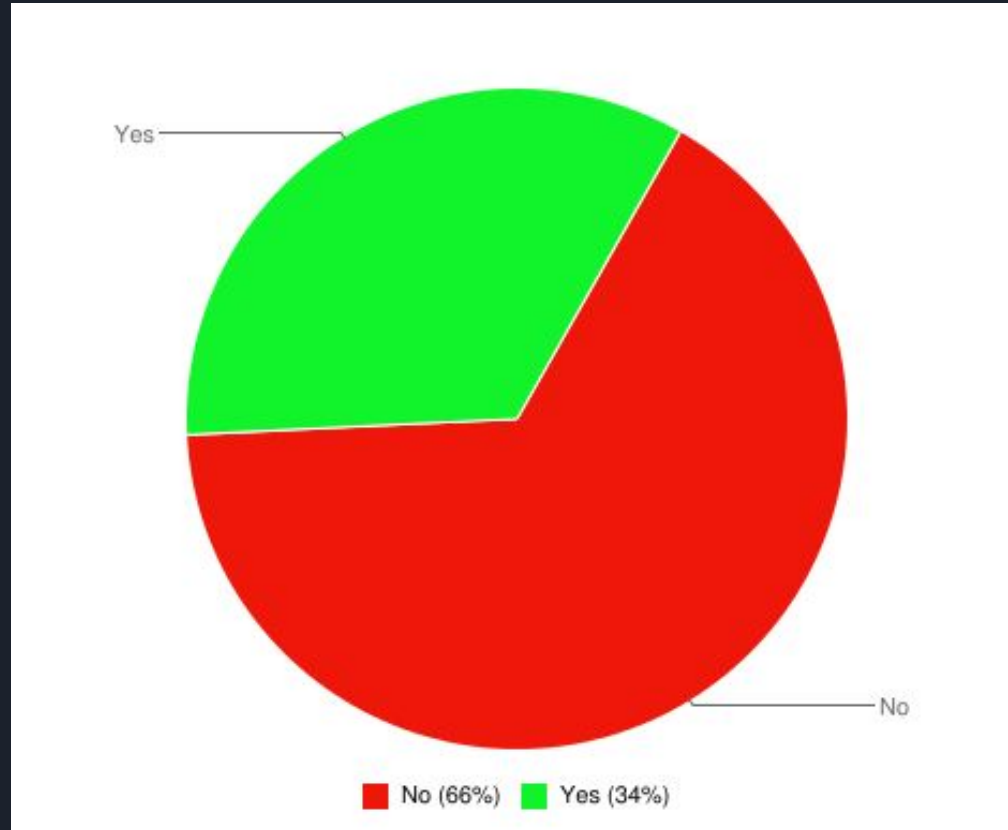
Do you think that subsidized, affordable housing is concentrated in certain neighborhoods?



Are you aware of fair housing organizations who work to enforce fair housing laws in Somerville?



Do you know how to report a fair housing problem?



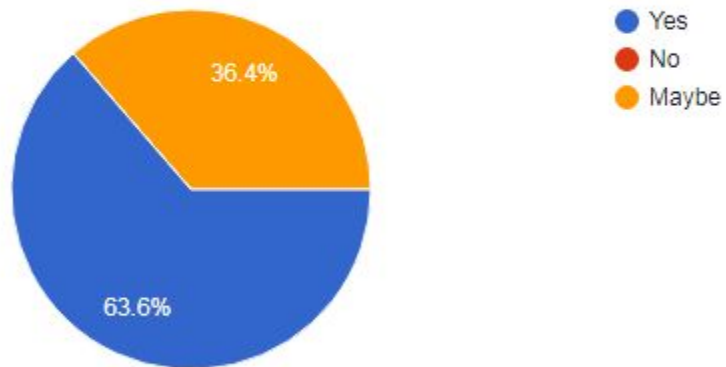


Stakeholder Survey

- 11 Responses
- Participating organizations: Welcome Project, SCC, CAAS, SHA, Big Sisters of Greater Boston, Immigrant Services Provider, Somerville Cambridge Elder Services, Council on Aging.
- Sent out to more than 30 groups.

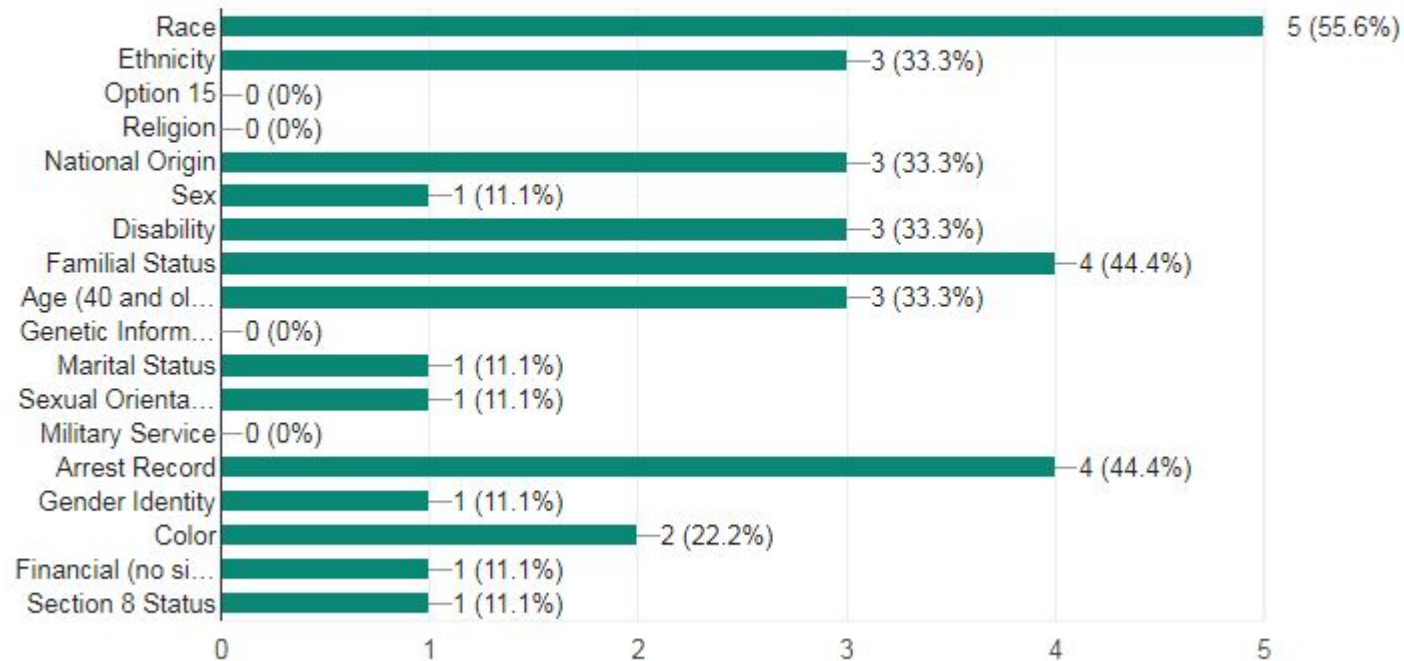
Do the populations your organization serves experience housing discrimination in Somerville?

11 responses



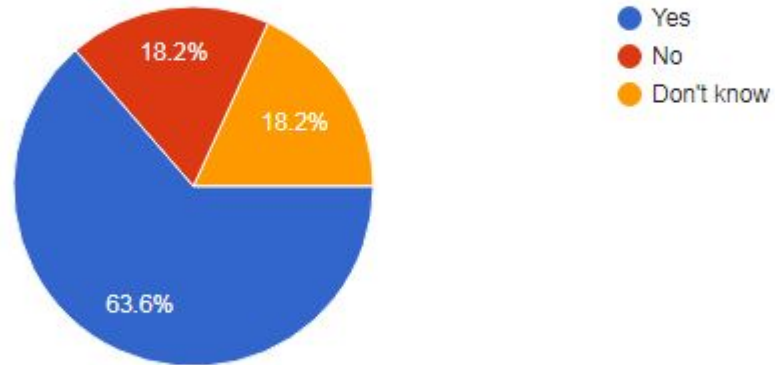
If so, what is that discrimination based on? (Check all that apply).

9 responses



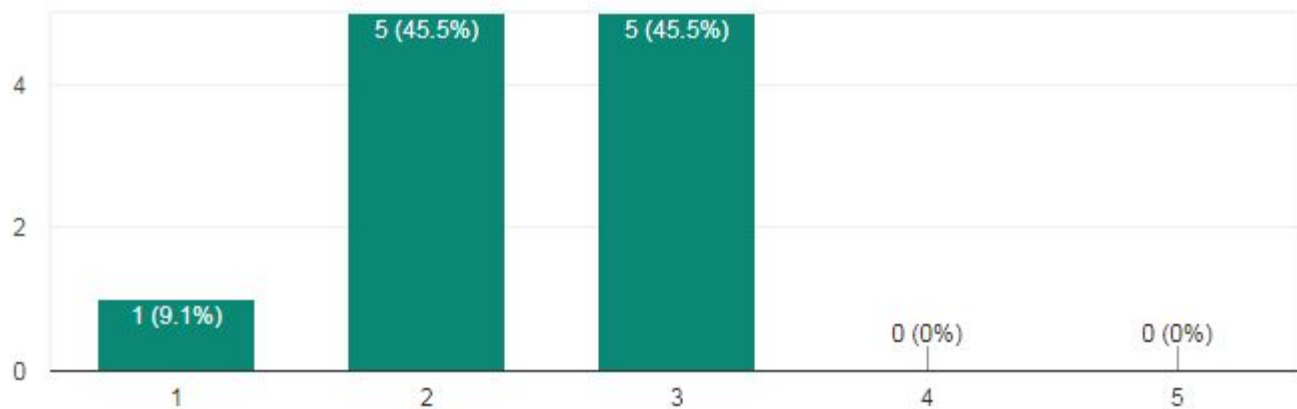
Do the populations your organization serves experience segregation or are they concentrated in certain neighborhoods of the City?

11 responses



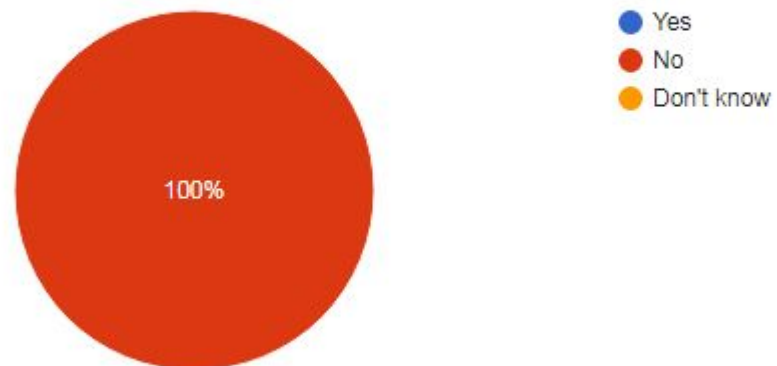
Do the neighborhoods that your program participants live in have better, equal, or worse access to employment opportunities than other neighborhoods in Somerville?

11 responses



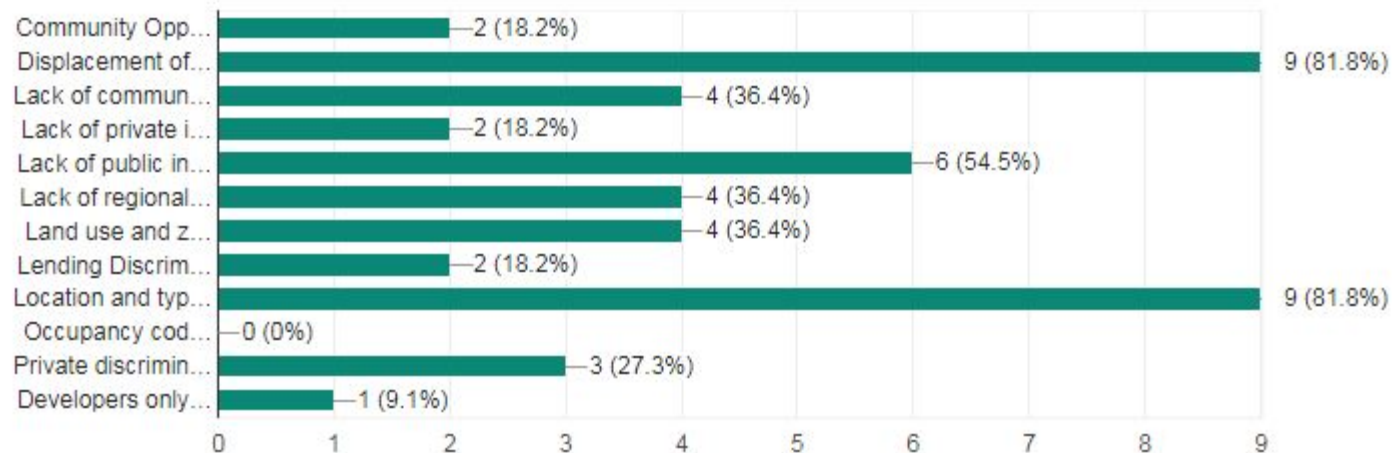
Is there an adequate supply of affordable housing for the population(s) your organization serves?

11 responses



What are the factors that contribute to housing discrimination, segregation/concentrations of certain populations, and unequal access to housing, jobs, transportation, and healthy neighborhoods?

11 responses





Focus Groups/Presentations

- What fair housing issues impact particular communities/protected classes?
- What are the contributing factors to these issues?
- What is already being done to solve these problems?
- What are some other potential solutions?



Themes

- AFFORDABILITY
 - Economic displacement, displacement due to revitalization strategies
- Section 8 does not cover cost of housing
- Lack of information about tenant rights and housing law
- Condo conversions are driving up prices and taking rental units off the market
- Long wait lists for affordable housing
- Discrimination: Race, recipients of public assistance, languages spoken/accent
 - Those who experience discrimination don't have the capacity or time to report it, they're more focused on finding a place to live.
- Not enough homes for families
- Lead paint discrimination
- Navigating information about affordable housing is confusing, particularly for non-english speakers
- Jobs (that pay well), particularly for low-skilled workers and those who have limited English skills, are hard to come by.



Solutions

- Rent control
- Provide a one-stop-shop for info on housing (Office of Housing Stability)
 - More information in more languages
 - Affordable housing options
 - Section 8
- Extra support for those using Section 8
- More unifying events and festivals to bring people together across race/class lines
- Stronger and more useful Fair Housing Commission
 - Could tally the number of fair housing violations from a specific landlord to track patterns of discrimination?
- More protections for those at risk of eviction/displacement
- Utilizing alternative forms of affordable housing- Community Land Trusts, incentives for landlords who rent under market rate, etc.



A few notable quotes...

“I used to work for an apartment rental company in Somerville/Cambridge. They openly would encourage landlords to charge higher rates, honor discriminatory practices, and cater to wealthy students at the expense of serving local, Section 8 and family residents seeking housing.”

“I have had realtors hang up on me when I mention Section 8. The majority will say the owner doesn’t want it or they’ll say they don’t want more than 3 people in a 3 bedroom.”

“There are not enough affordable housing units in the city, so people are paying more and more for less space and worse conditions. The questions the city should be asking are not only “Who has the least access to housing?” but also “Who CAN access housing?””

“No realtors or owners would even talk to me when they heard I was pregnant.”

“It is VERY common (I would almost say universal) that families with young children have trouble getting rental applications accepted in Somerville, regardless of income.”