

Housing Challenges Take a Toll on Health and Cancer Care

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Problems with housing have an important link to people's health. Living conditions like overcrowding, limited utilities and city services, exposure to dust and pests, high rents, and homelessness can take their toll on both mental and physical health [1]. This is largely because people experiencing such conditions:

- Have less access to preventive healthcare, like screenings
- Are more likely to put off using and refilling medications,
- Are less likely to follow plans for treating health issues [1-3].

Many housing challenges are caused by financial strain. High housing cost burdens (spending more than 30% of monthly income on rent or a mortgage) can limit spending on basic needs, which include cancer screenings, appointments, and treatments. And the costs of cancer care can also lead to financial strain and housing challenges.

These housing cost burdens are greater for households of color, especially among renters. Close to 54% of Black renters are burdened by housing costs, compared to 42% of White renters [4]. And these racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in housing instability are reflected in disparities in cancer death and other health outcomes. By working to end housing instability, we can have a profound impact on cancer deaths and other disparities in cancer care.

QUICK FACTS



In 2021, there were just over **100,000** requests related to housing and shelter to the 2-1-1 community services help line in Missouri. Around 41,000 of these were for assistance with rent [5].



Families with low-incomes that use over half of their income on housing are less able to spend money on healthcare, spending 93% less on necessary health services than families with low incomes who aren't as burdened by housing costs [4].



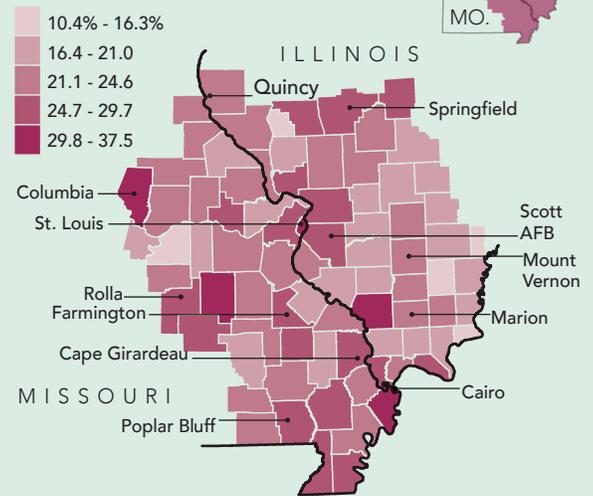
Nearly **25%** of all renters in the Siteman service area have severe housing problems, like overcrowding, lack of plumbing, and severe financial strain. In Hispanic and Black households, it's 30% or more of renters [6].

DATA FOR OUR REGION

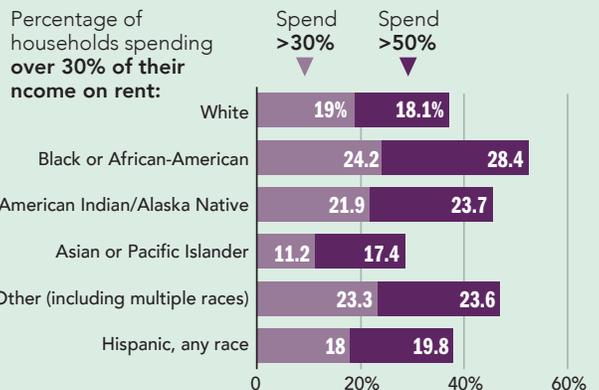
Housing cost burden is common in the Siteman service area, with a **greater impact on renters than owners**, and on **Black and Hispanic households than White households**.

Burdened by Housing Costs

Percent of households spending over 30% of income on housing costs [7].



Nearly **53%** of Black households and **40%** of Hispanic households spend at least 30% of their income on rent.



Such challenges can have an important impact on health and cancer care. But, there are programs that can help.

Putting Knowledge Into Practice

One way to help make real and on-going improvements in people's housing is to put into practice – or implement – approaches that research has shown works. The field of implementation science looks at how best to get such programs to the people who need them the most. And key to this is working together with communities to adapt programs to fit their needs. To help reduce the health and cancer burdens from housing challenges, some of these approaches may focus on:

- Financial assistance for low-income renters and owners who have trouble paying for housing and other important costs, like healthcare and food.
- Policies that promote development of affordable housing.
- Policies that reduce racial and income-based housing segregation.

HOW OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS CAN HELP

Justine PETERSEN | Helping Clients and Communities

The not-for-profit corporation, Justine PETERSEN, helps people in Missouri and Illinois with low and middle-incomes develop financial stability through a combination of education and credit building. Chief Strategy Officer, Galen Gondolfi, MA, sheds light on their approach:

On helping the community

"We view our work as a hybrid of social work and banking... delivering financial asset products and services to those populations historically under-resourced."



On helping build credit scores

"Your credit score is your most fundamental gateway to a lifetime of financial asset building. It's that simple."



On helping first time homeowners

"We also provide homeowner counseling" and "connect those interested in becoming homeowners with down payment and closing cost assistance."



On helping solve financial problems

"We are there for individuals who have...financial problems, and we attempt to solve them. So, don't ever give up, and also understand that our business is helping you solve those problems."



Full interview:

<https://bit.ly/JustinePetersenFullInterview>

TAKE ACTION

Whether you're an individual, community leader, or researcher, there are many available resources that can help address housing challenges.

Resources for rental and financial assistance

- 2-1-1 Community Help Line: 211 or 800-427-4626 (TTY: 866-385-6525) <http://211helps.org>



- Justine PETERSEN: <http://justinepetersen.org>
- Start Here – St. Louis Area Resource Directory: <http://startherestl.org>
- US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development: Missouri: <http://hud.gov/states/missouri> Illinois: <http://hud.gov/states/illinois>

Resources for more local data

- Missouri 2-1-1 help line data: <http://211mo.211counts.org>
- Washington University Dashboard: https://bit.ly/SDOH_Cancer_Dashboard



Resources for research

- Dr. Patrick Fowler's research focuses on policies and programs intended to promote housing and family stability. He welcomes the opportunity to collaborate in these areas. <http://bit.ly/WustlPatrickFowler>

For More

The Washington University Implementation Science Center for Cancer Control (WU-ISC3) brings together a diverse group of researchers from the School of Medicine and the Brown School to focus on eliminating cancer disparities in Missouri and Illinois by advancing implementation science methodologies. <http://implementationscience.wustl.edu>

The Program for the Elimination of Cancer Disparities (PECaD) of the Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Washington University works with community partners to address the excess cancer burden within the region through outreach and education, research, and culturally relevant training strategies that foster healthy communities and environments less burdened by cancer. <http://bit.ly/PECaD>

References

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2. Pollack, C.E., B.A. Griffin, and J. Lynch, Housing affordability and health among homeowners and renters. *Am J Prev Med*, 2010. 39(6): p. 515-21.
3. Kushel, M.B., et al., Housing instability and food insecurity as barriers to health care among low-income Americans. *J Gen Intern Med*, 2006. 21(1): p. 71-7.
4. Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, State of the Nation's Housing 2020.
5. Health Communication Research Laboratory, 2-1-1 Counts MO. 2021.
6. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014-2018 CHAS data. 2021.
7. U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 - 2019 American Community Survey (Table B25106). 2020.