

Race and Racism Packet

Topics covered:

1. Racism in Connecticut
2. Economic inequality and the racial wage gap in Connecticut
3. Racial justice efforts in Connecticut

Important vocabulary:

- Racism and racial Stereotypes
- Wage gaps
- Redlining and housing
- Social Mobility
- Environmental Racism

Grade level(s):

- 7-8
- 9-10
- 11-12

Description of activities:

- Reading on systemic racism
 - ◆ 9-10 grade reading level
 - ◆ 11-12 grade reading level
- Reading on Environmental racism
 - ◆ 9-10 grade reading level
- Environmental racism inquiry activity
- School suspension reading and data analysis
- Redlining reading and data analysis

Teacher tips:

- These lessons pair well with the intersectionality lessons and the education lessons
- Race and the impact of race is mentioned in most of the packets, as well, so there are plenty of opportunities to pair these lessons with other packets, such as the community wellness one!

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Readings

What is Systemic Racism?

(Level III Reading)

Racism is a belief system that unfairly judges people based on their race or ethnicity. It can manifest in various ways, such as stereotyping, name-calling, exclusion, or even physical harm. It can come in the form of someone being racist, of a community having racist rules, a country having a past of racial discrimination that persists in modern day, a group using violence towards another group based on racism, and many other forms. This kind of discrimination has been present throughout history and has caused immense suffering for many individuals and communities.

When something is described as "systemic," it means that it is deeply ingrained and pervasive within a system or institution. Systemic issues or problems are not isolated incidents but rather part of the overall structure, policies, and practices of the system itself. These issues are often complex, interconnected, and difficult to address, as they have become embedded in the very fabric of the system.

When we talk about systemic racism, we are referring to racism that is not just the result of individual prejudices or biases but is instead built into the social, economic, and political systems of a society. This form of racism can be seen in policies, practices, and attitudes that disproportionately disadvantage certain racial or ethnic groups and perpetuate inequalities. One example of systemic racism is the historical and ongoing discrimination against African Americans in the United States. This discrimination is deeply rooted in various systems, institutions, and policies that have perpetuated racial inequalities for centuries. Slavery and Jim Crow Laws, housing discrimination, healthcare and education disparities, the criminal justice system, voter suppression, and employment discrimination are just a few examples of how systemic racism has persisted in various aspects of American society. It's crucial to recognize and address these issues to create a more equitable and just society for all.

Racism can have devastating effects on individuals. When someone is a victim of racism, they may experience feelings of sadness, anger, or helplessness. Being treated unfairly because of their race can lower a person's self-esteem and confidence. It can lead to anxiety, depression, and even impact their academic performance and overall well-being. It can also threaten their lives, their families, and their ability to gain access to resources like healthcare, housing, education, or fair treatment by the law.

Racism doesn't just affect individuals; it also impacts society as a whole. Discrimination can lead to division, tension, and conflict between different racial and ethnic groups. This division can prevent societies from coming together and reaching their full potential. Embracing diversity and fostering inclusion can lead to a stronger, more united community. Further, celebration of diversity is very important. We need to see the joy in each other's identities and embrace each other to fight racism.

Racism is a harmful belief system that negatively impacts individuals and societies. By understanding its effects and working to combat it, we can build a more inclusive and compassionate world.

What is Systemic Racism?

(Level II Reading)

Racism is a way of thinking that unfairly judges people based on their race or ethnicity. It can happen in many different ways, such as stereotyping, name-calling, leaving someone out, or even hurting someone. It can come in the form of someone being racist, of a community having racist rules, a country having a past of racial discrimination that continues in modern day, a group using violence towards another group based on racism, and many other forms. This kind of discrimination has been present throughout history and has caused lots of suffering for many people and communities.

When something is described as "systemic," it means that it is hard to change and widespread in a system, like a government or society. Issues, such as racism in a system that is built on racist beliefs, happen both because of the individuals that act racist and because they are living within a society that has made racism appear normal or encouraged. These issues are often hard to fight back against as they have become embedded in the very fabric of the system.

Systemic Racism is not just the result of prejudices or biases but is instead built into the social, economic, and political systems of a society. This form of racism can be seen in policies, practices, and attitudes that disadvantage, or hurt, certain racial or ethnic groups more than others and make inequalities continue. One example of systemic racism is the historical and ongoing discrimination against African Americans in the United States. This discrimination is deeply rooted in various systems, institutions, and policies that have continued racial inequalities for centuries. Slavery and Jim Crow Laws, housing discrimination, healthcare and education disparities, the criminal justice system, voter suppression, and employment discrimination are just a few examples of how systemic racism has continued in various parts of American society. It's crucial to recognize and address these issues to create a more equitable and just society for all.

Racism can have devastating effects on people. When someone is a victim of racism, they may experience feelings of sadness, anger, or helplessness. Being treated unfairly because of their race can lower a person's self-esteem and confidence. It can lead to anxiety, depression, and their ability to feel safe. It can also threaten their lives, their families, and their ability to gain access to resources like healthcare, housing, education, or fair treatment by the law.

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Racism is a harmful belief system that hurts people and societies. By understanding its effects and working to combat it, we can build a more inclusive and compassionate world.

What is Environmental Racism?

(Level II Reading)

Racism is a way of thinking that unfairly judges people based on their race or ethnicity. It can happen in many different ways, such as stereotyping, name-calling, leaving someone out, or even hurting someone. It can come in the form of someone being racist, of a community having racist rules, a country having a past of racial discrimination that continues in modern day, a group using violence towards another group based on racism, and many other forms. This kind of discrimination has been present throughout history and has caused lots of suffering for many people and communities.

Environmental racism is a form of discrimination where certain communities, primarily made up of people of color, face a disproportionate, or way more, exposure to pollution, toxins, and environmental hazards. These communities often have fewer resources and less political power to protect themselves from harmful environmental impacts. While climate change and threats to the environment hurts everyone, people who are already less likely to be protected or have resources due to racism are more at risk.

For example, living in polluted environments can harm people's health. Children and adults in these communities may suffer from respiratory problems and other illnesses caused by exposure to toxins in the environment. Environmental racism unfairly affects the well-being of people who are already facing challenges.

TABLE 7E

Health risk factors

SHARE OF ADULTS, GREATER HARTFORD, 2021

LOCATION	ASTHMA	DIABETES	OBESITY	SMOKING RATE
White	16%	10%	26%	10%
Black	22%	18%	47%	15%
Latino	31%	11%	44%	14%

Access to parks and green spaces is essential for everyone's well-being. However, some communities may have fewer parks and recreational areas, limiting opportunities for outdoor activities and enjoyment of nature. As temperatures climb and weather patterns change, being able to enjoy outdoor activities becomes harder for everyone. For a community that already struggles to have a safe way to enjoy the outdoors, these threats are even worse. Extreme weather events like hurricanes and floods can also be more devastating for these communities.

Environmental racism is a serious concern that affects the well-being of communities around the world. By understanding its impact and taking action, we can work together to create a more fair and sustainable, or long lasting, world for everyone. It is very important to protect our planet and ensure that all people, regardless of their race or ethnicity, have access to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment.

Activities

Environmental Racism Inquiry Activity

Directions: Pick an example of environmental racism and research its origin, impact, how it's being addressed, and possible solutions. Make sure your sources are credible and approved by your teacher.
Examples: Impact of climate change, the Dakota Access Pipeline decision, the handling of recent natural disasters in Puerto Rico, the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color.

Research Topic:	
Summary of the crisis: → How did it begin → Who is involved → Where is it happening → What's the timeline? → Important people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Impact of the crisis: → What groups are impacted? → How is the environment or surrounding area impacted? → How does this hurt the groups impacted? → What are the long term impacts and risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Addressing of the crisis: → What has been done by impacted groups to help their community? → Are there any outside groups or communities helping out? → Are there any non profit or activist groups helping? → Any government agencies or officials helping?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
Possible solutions to the crisis: → What should some goals be? → What is needed to meet those goals? Resources, people, actions? → How will you know the solution is working and the goals are met? → What are some barriers or things that'll get in the way of your goals being met and the solution being successful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

Final Reflection

1. How did you find your research on your topic? Was it difficult or easy to find reliable information?
2. How did you come up with your solutions? How did you make sure they were realistic?
3. Why is it important to learn about the different ways racism can happen and impact people?
4. Are you optimistic about environmental racism coming to an end? Why or why not?

The Divide in School Punishments

Directions: Read and annotate the following background information about suspension trends in schools and analyze the graphs to answer the thoughts questions.

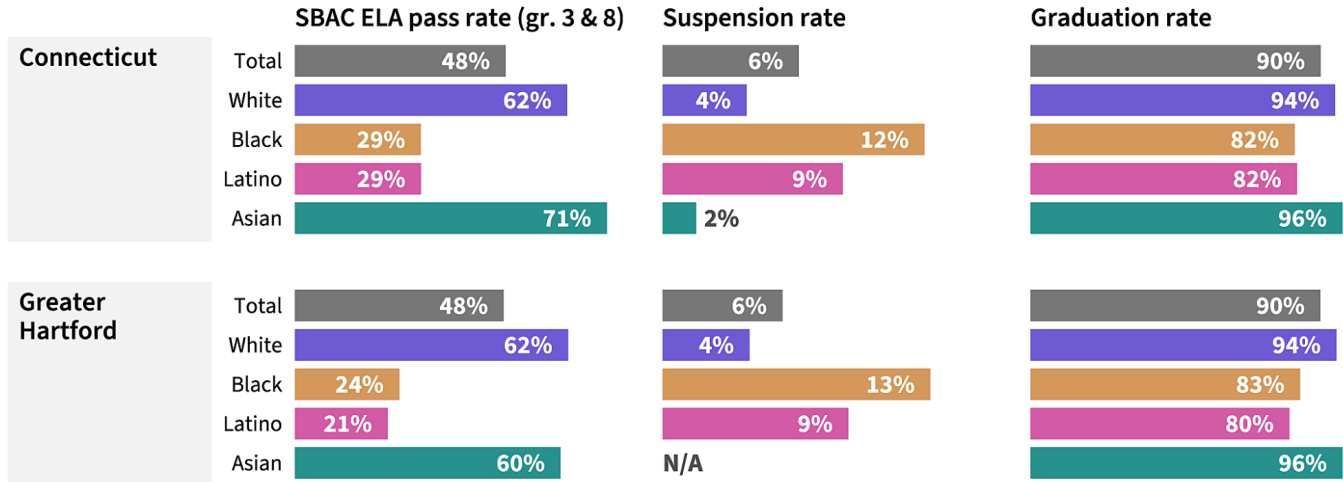
Background: Not every student experiences the same opportunity, treatment, or success in schools. For example, academic disadvantages can be a result of in-school or out-of-school suspensions. Suspension from school generally happens after a student has been deemed as having done something harmful or not allowed. However, suspensions can be *disproportionate*. This means that some students are more likely to get this punishment; more students from a certain group may get this punishment, even if they don't make up a large portion of the student body. Students who are suspended or expelled from school are more likely to have negative perceptions of school and to have lower GPAs. This can impact their ability to attend a college or trade program after high school, limiting their options for employment and opportunity in life. They are also more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system. Black and Latinx students—boys especially—are expelled or suspended far more frequently than White students, even as early as preschool. Further, students who are labeled as receiving special education (SPED) services are also more likely to be suspended or expelled from schools. A Black student who is receiving special education services is at an even higher risk due to the *intersectionality* of their identity. While some schools are making efforts to reevaluate discipline, taking a more restorative approach, the issue of inequitable suspensions still persists. Further, there is not an agreement on how to best reform the system. How can you balance accountability, education, restorative justice, all while combating racism in the school system?

Reading Check

1. Why do you think these inequities in punishment in schools exist? What is the impact on students and the broader community?
2. What can be done to help reform or change these inequalities? How can we balance accountability, education, restorative justice, all while combating racism in the school system?
3. What could your school do about inequities in punishment? Come up with a plan for administrators, teachers, other staff and students to follow.

Using the Data

Selected academic and disciplinary outcomes by student race/ethnicity, 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years



Above is data from the Greater Hartford area, ranging from the 2020 to the 2022 school years. What are the percentages of students, by demographic, that were suspended or expelled in Greater Hartford?

- Black:
- Latino:
- White:
- SPED:
- NON SPED:
- ELL (English Language Learners):
- NON ELL:

Conclusion: Take a look at your answers to the reading check questions. Use this data to rework your answers, basing them on data and citing your analysis of this graph. Then, share your answers with a partner.

Racial Wage Gap and Economic Inequality in Connecticut

Do Now: List the ways in which having less money might create barriers for someone.

Part I: Read the excerpt below. As you read, annotate and prepare to discuss in small groups.

What Is Economic Inequality?

Economic inequality is when some people have a lot of money and others have very little. It can impact people in many ways. It is important to understand how this type of inequality changes how someone might live. Economic inequality isn't just about money; it's about the unequal opportunities and resources available to different people in our society. Here are some examples:

Education: One way economic inequality impacts our lives is through education. Some students have access to great schools, lots of books, and helpful tutors, while others may not have these opportunities. This can make it harder for kids with fewer resources to do well in school and achieve their dreams. It can affect future prospects.

Staying healthy: Economic inequality also affects our health. People with more money can afford better healthcare and medicine. They can see doctors when they're sick and get the care they need. But if you don't have much money, it can be tough to stay healthy. Many people cannot afford to see a doctor or get the care they need when they are sick. Medical debt is another economic pressure that people face. Economic inequality can also affect the food we eat. Some families can afford healthy meals with lots of fruits and vegetables, while others might have to rely on less nutritious food because it's all they can afford. Eating well helps keep us strong and healthy.

Housing: Where we live is another way economic inequality plays a role. Some people can afford big, safe homes, while others may have to live in places that aren't as safe or comfortable. Those with lower incomes may live in overcrowded or unsafe conditions, affecting their overall quality of life. Having a good place to live is essential for our well-being.

Jobs and Opportunities: Economic inequality can make it harder for some people to find good jobs. People with more money often have more opportunities to learn and grow, while others may not have those chances. People from more affluent backgrounds often have access to better internships, networks, and career guidance. This also makes it harder for someone to gain more money and break "cycles" of poverty.

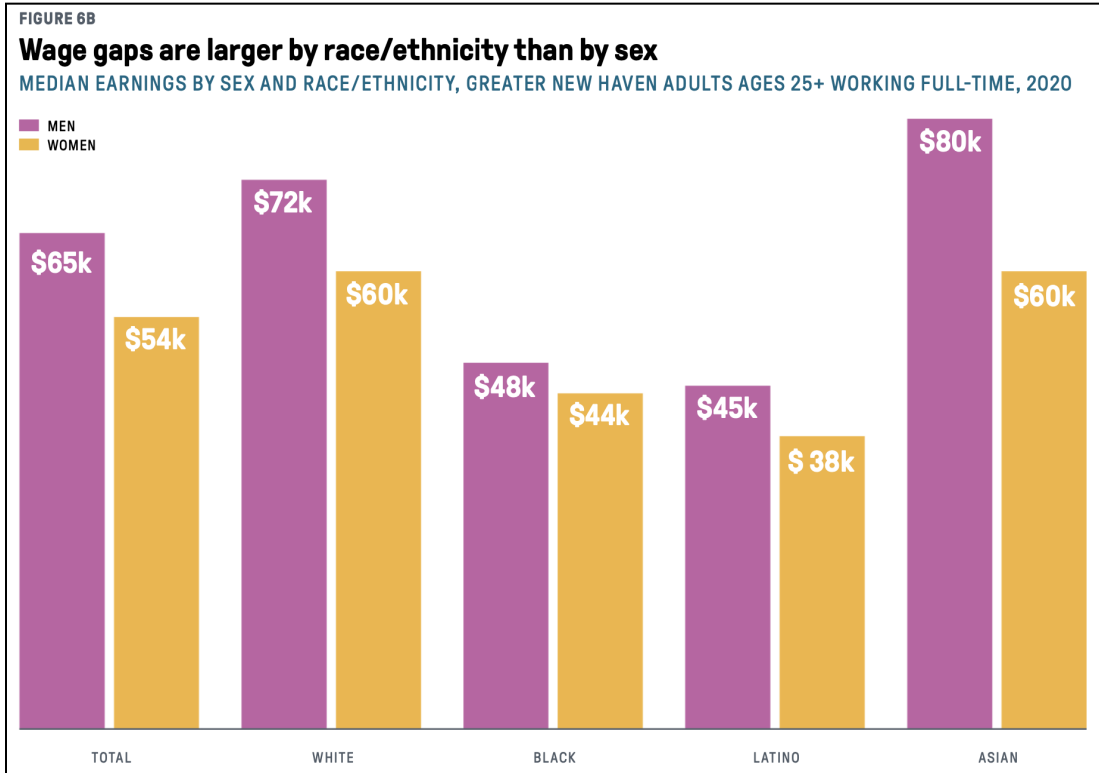
Stress and Well-being: Lastly, economic inequality can lead to stress and worry. Families with less money might always be worried about paying bills and having enough to get by. That stress can make life tough for kids and adults alike. Economic inequality can also affect how people relate to one another. High levels of inequality can lead to social tensions and divisions within communities.

Part II: Read the excerpt below. As you read, write any questions you have in the margins. Some ways to start a question include “I wonder why...” “What is the reason for...” “How does...”

The Racial Wage Gap

The racial wage gap refers to the disparities (differences) in earnings between different racial and ethnic groups, with some groups consistently earning less than others. This gap exists due to a complex combination of historical, structural, and systemic factors. Historical discrimination, such as slavery, segregation, and discriminatory hiring practices, has left lasting economic inequalities. Structural factors like differences in access to education, access to opportunities, and occupational segregation contribute to the wage gap. Systemic racism, which includes biases in hiring, promotion, and pay decisions, perpetuates these disparities. Addressing the racial wage gap requires addressing these deep-rooted issues through policies and initiatives aimed at promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace and society as a whole.

Part III: Using what you just read and the graph below, revisit your answer to the Do Now. Refine your answer, citing at least two specific ways that someone may face a barrier and at least two supports from the graph’s data.



Your revisited list:

Redlining and Housing

Why is Housing Important? What is Housing Instability?

What is the significance of housing? It plays a crucial role in our individual lives and for the wellness of our community. Housing provides us with shelter, a place where we can seek refuge from the outside world. It protects us from the elements, such as rain, snow, and extreme temperatures. It also provides so much more!

A home also offers a safe and secure environment, allowing us to feel protected and at ease. Housing gives us privacy and personal space. It allows us to have a quiet corner to read, study, play, or simply relax. It provides stability in our lives. It is a place where we can create memories, build relationships, and establish roots within a community. Being part of a community allows us to develop social connections, support one another, and celebrate our shared experiences. When we have a stable home, we can attend the same school, commit to a job, and make lasting friendships. Having a safe and healthy living environment is essential for our well-being. Housing ensures that we have access to clean water, proper sanitation, and ventilation. It protects us from the spread of diseases and allows us to maintain good physical health.

It's important to understand that not everyone has a safe and stable place to live. *Housing insecurity* happens when individuals or families do not have a reliable and stable place to live. It means they may not have a permanent home or struggle to afford their housing. It can happen for various reasons, such as losing a job, facing financial difficulties, or experiencing unexpected circumstances like natural disasters.

Housing insecurity can lead to several challenges for individuals and families. Without a stable home, it becomes challenging to keep a job, stay healthy, and focus on education. It can create stress, worry, and uncertainty in people's lives, making it difficult for them to plan for the future or meet their needs. One of the most visible examples of housing insecurity is homelessness. Homelessness occurs when someone doesn't have a place to live at all and may sleep in places not meant for housing, like cars or shelters.

According to DataHaven's 2021 Community Wellness Report, "The U.S. government has used a range of policy measures to expand homeownership access to more American families...as a result, the homeownership rate in the United States steadily increased from 1990 until the mid-2000s. Since then, however, the homeownership rate has declined." Further, "Connecticut home prices have risen significantly since the start of the pandemic. Between 2020 and 2022, home prices increased by 32 percent in Connecticut". The trend of housing affordability declining is also seen in the rental market, or when someone rents an apartment instead of buying a house. The 2021 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey found that a significant portion of Connecticut adults struggle with the high cost of housing.

It's essential to remember that people experiencing homelessness deserve our kindness, respect, and support. We can use our voices to advocate for policies and initiatives that promote affordable housing, accessible support services, and economic opportunities for all.

The History of Redlining

Context warnings: descriptions of racism, violence, and harm done to communities

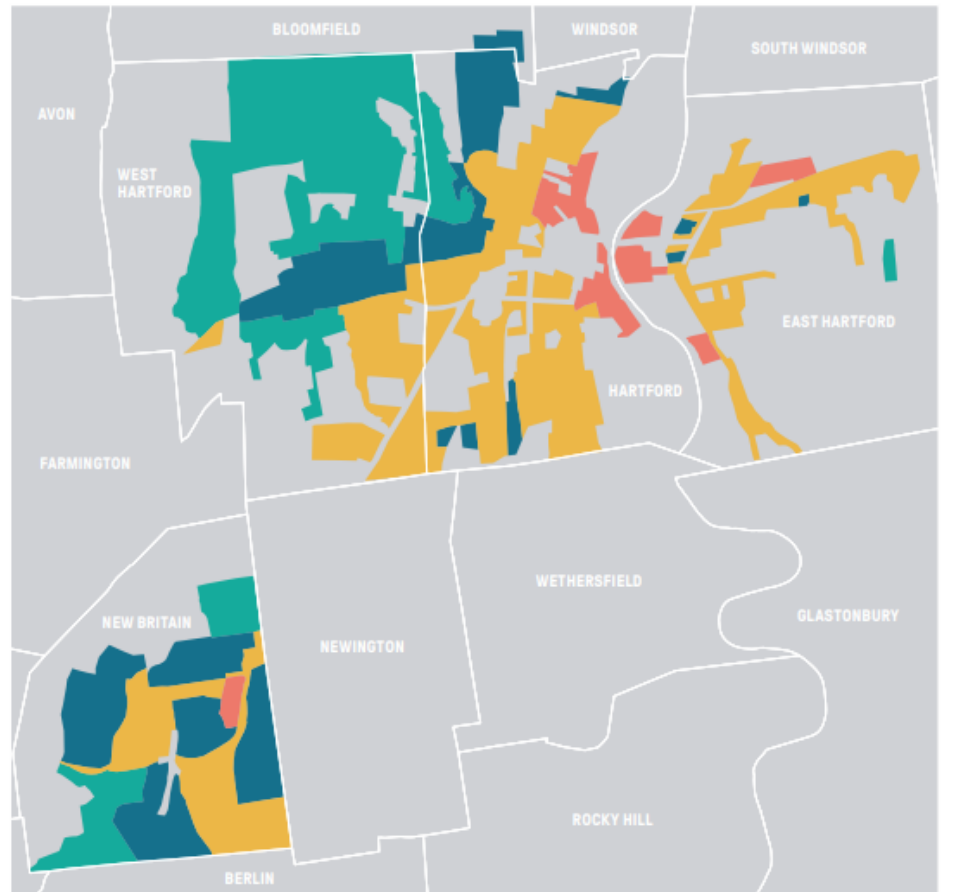
Background: After the end of the Civil War and abolition of slavery in the United States, racist policies and discrimination persisted all over the country. These policies sometimes took the form of laws, like ones that enforced segregation of public places based on race. This era in American history is often called the Jim Crow Era. This was an era when state and local laws enforced racial segregation. Even Northern states like Connecticut had Jim Crow laws during parts of this era. These laws enforced separate bathrooms, doctor offices, and water fountains. It prohibited types of marriages, employment opportunities, and access to power for people of color in America. The amenities, like bathrooms or school, for White Americans would be much better funded, cared for, and supplied. Racism within the American public and government led to the prominence of hate groups like the Klu Klux Klan, public lynchings, blackface in cinema, and other forms of hate committed by people all over the nation. This is when *redlining* began, which is only one of many lasting legacies from this time period.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), founded in 1934, began the practice of redlining. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created to help fund mortgages for homebuyers. HOLC created maps of cities that rated neighborhoods from A ("Best") to D ("Hazardous"). It denied families of color from purchasing certain houses in certain areas, which prevented them from living where they liked, gaining property-based wealth, and integrating with the White families.

Redlining gets its name from a practice that mortgage loaners used — drawing red lines around parts of a map to indicate "high risk of defaulting" areas where they would not give loans. Red-shaded parts of these maps would be a "warning" for loaners rooted in racism; do not loan to families here as they probably won't be able to pay. These areas were predominantly Black and Latino, which was the basis of these assumptions. Without these loans, these families could not buy houses. This not only segregated

The patterns in 1930s redlining maps are still present today

HOLC REDLINED AREAS OF HARTFORD, NEW BRITAIN, AND NEIGHBORING TOWNS, 1937



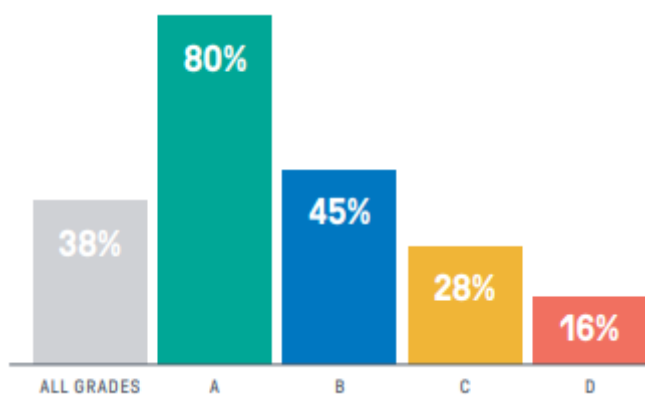
HOLC GRADE
A — BEST
B — STILL DESIRABLE
C — DEFINITELY DECLINING
D — HAZARDOUS

America, but also worsened the already present wealth inequalities, housing inequalities, resource inequalities, education inequalities, racial stereotypes, and other detrimental impacts on the families afflicted. It is important to recognize that this practice was backed by the US government and impacted some of the nation's biggest cities. Though the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 helped put an end to these racist Jim Crow Era ways, racism in America, including the legacy of redlining, still exists today.

According to DataHaven, “comparing the neighborhoods targeted for investment decades ago to demographics from 2010, we notice comparatively high rates of homeownership in higher-grade areas—80 percent in Greater Hartford’s A-grade areas compared to 38 percent across all HOLC-mapped blocks in the region and just 16 percent in D-grade areas. The areas are also racially segregated, and higher-grade areas were predominantly White in 2010. More than 81 percent of residents in A-grade areas were White, compared to just 9 percent in D-grade areas.” The graphs below show these percentages.

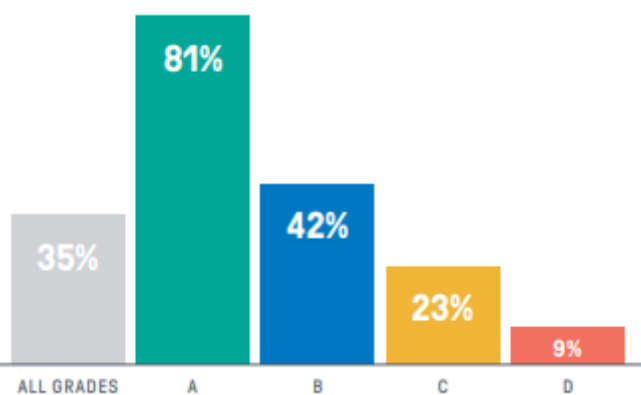
Homeownership is still low in lower-grade areas

HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE BY HISTORIC REDLINING GRADE, HOLC-MAPPED PARTS OF GREATER HARTFORD TOWNS, 2010



High-grade areas are still predominantly white

WHITE SHARE OF POPULATION BY HISTORIC REDLINING GRADE, HOLC-MAPPED PARTS OF GREATER HARTFORD TOWNS, 2010



Reflection Questions

1. What is redlining? How did it *impact* certain communities? Connect to your reading on both housing and redlining.
2. How can data help us understand and support communities impacted by redlining?