

DAY 7: Opportunity in Washtenaw County

In Michigan alone, over 1.6 million working households – or 43 percent of households – are struggling to afford basic necessities like housing, child care, food, transportation, and technology, according to the [2019 ALICE Report](#) by the Michigan Association of United Ways. These households, also known as ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to cover the basic cost of living, called the ALICE threshold, in their counties. This means that a parent within an ALICE household may have to make trade-offs between necessities like rent or stocking the refrigerator or going without healthcare as a parent to ensure that a child has access to preschool.

In Washtenaw County, these numbers are just as concerning, with 39% of households below the ALICE earnings threshold (12% below poverty line; 27% below ALICE threshold but above poverty line) and deep disparities across communities, ranging from 15% in Webster Township to 56% and 68% in Ypsilanti Charter Township and Ypsilanti City, respectively.

We know that where you live and where children are raised can have a strong influence on opportunity. We also know that when these factors are combined with race, people of color are disproportionately impacted. Over the next few days, we will be exploring how ALICE, race, and other factors impact a person's housing, health, education, financial stability, and more.

Did you know? Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan works to provide insights on preventing and alleviating poverty. Leading researchers within the institute include [Dr. Vonnie McLoyd](#), [Dr. Luke Shaefer](#), and [Dr. Trina Shanks](#). If you are looking to dive further into these topics throughout our challenge, check out Dr. Shaefer's book [\\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America](#).

Today's Challenge:

Option 1: Read the [ALICE Report](#) for the State of Michigan and dig down further into [Washtenaw County](#).

Option 2: Explore the data further through the [Washtenaw County Opportunity Index](#) to see how increasing racial and socioeconomic disparities in our community are impacting opportunity. We encourage you to explore the stark differences in opportunity depending on where you live.

Option 3: Listen to Washtenaw County's first Racial Equity Officer, Alize Asberry Payne, [Washtenaw United interview](#) about moving towards racial equity through the One Community initiative.

Option 4: Read this [NY Times article](#) debunking widely held beliefs about income inequality and exploring the disproportionate impact race has on black boys.

Option 5: Read about [Raj Chetty](#), a Harvard economist committed to showing how zip code shapes opportunity. Dive into his research through the [Equality of Opportunity Project](#).

Option 6: Journal about how the data and stories in today's challenge compares with the commonly told story that the United States is a land of opportunity.

Share your reflections on today's topic on social media using the hashtag **#unitedforequity** and tag **@uwashtenaw**.