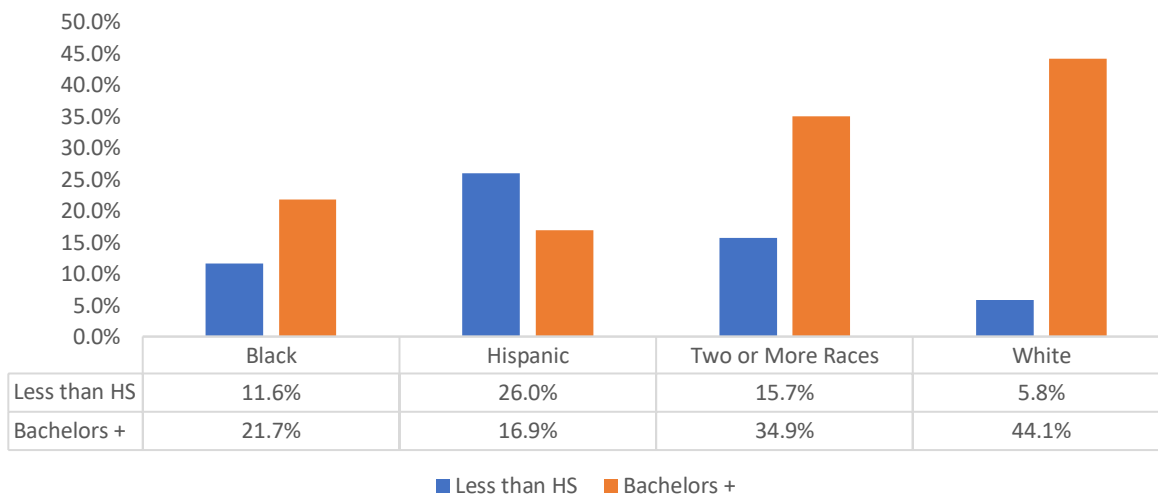


## The State of Black Hartford: Shaping the New Normal Post COVID-19

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected People of Color, severe racial disparities in educational attainment and employment outcomes have been evident in the Greater Hartford region. Black and Hispanic individuals have statistically lower educational opportunity than White persons, which leads to lower wages and increased occupational vulnerability to economic instability. These inequities have contributed to the race-based harms of the pandemic and will be exacerbated unless immediate, coordinated action is taken.

In the City of Hartford, where 38% of individuals are Black and over 45% are Hispanic, 42% of youth aged 16 to 19 (around 3,700 youth) and 20% aged 20 to 24 (around 2,800 youth) were recorded as unemployed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 77% of youth aged 18 to 19 and 50% of youth aged 20 to 24 have been enrolled in school. Over 13% (about 2,000 youth) of those aged 18 to 24 do not have a high school diploma or an equivalent degree.<sup>1</sup> Most area businesses require post-secondary degree skills and prior work-readiness experiences but only 25% of Hartford students gain a post-secondary degree. While in 2019 White students in the Hartford School District graduated from high school within 4 years at a rate of 92.4%, only 75.2% of Black students and 64.3% of Hispanic students graduated.<sup>2</sup> In the Hartford Public Schools, where almost 30% of students are Black and over 50% are Hispanic, less than 40% of seniors graduating this year have a complete post-secondary plan.<sup>3</sup>

*Hartford County Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity*



In Hartford County, over 11% of Black persons and 26% of Hispanic individuals have less than a HS Diploma, and less than 22% of either demographic has a bachelor's degree.<sup>4</sup> These metrics of educational attainment illuminate conditions of cyclical poverty, where the parents of over 82% of the Connecticut children living in poverty have less than a HS diploma. This inequity has explicitly racial dynamics as

<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey. 2018 1-Year Estimates. *Hartford County: Educational Attainment, School Enrollment, Employment Status*. Accessed at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

<sup>2</sup> EdSight. *Four-Year Graduation Rates: Hartford School District, Race/Ethnicity*. Accessed at: <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>

<sup>3</sup> EdSight. *District Profile and Performance Report*. Accessed at: <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>

<sup>4</sup> ACS. 2018 1-Year Estimates. *Hartford County: Educational Attainment*.

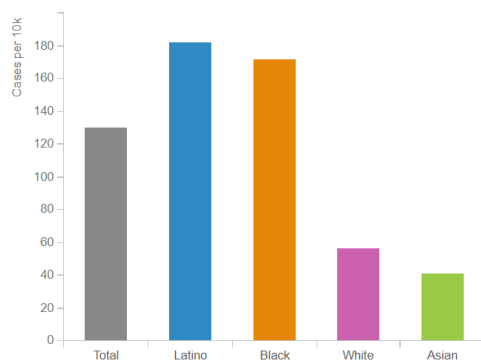
53% of Black children and 59% of Hispanic children live in low-income families, compared to 15% of White children in Connecticut.<sup>5</sup> The persistent linkages between race, educational attainment, and employment outcomes have been exposed and deepened through the initial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent economic projections indicate that in the post COVID-19 environment industries with the lowest wages and educational attainment are the most vulnerable. Of the most vulnerable jobs, around 86% pay below \$40,000/year.<sup>6</sup> Prior to the current pandemic, the median income for nonfamily Black persons in Hartford County was \$25,934 and the median household income was only \$49,884, indicating significant risks of employment vulnerability.<sup>7</sup> While in 2019 the overall CT unemployment rate was 3.5%, the rate for Black persons was 7.3% and 10.2% for Black men.<sup>8</sup> Persons of Color experienced significant and disproportionate economic vulnerability entering the pandemic.

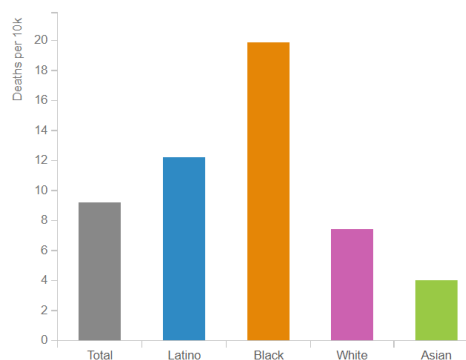
Black persons have also been disproportionately represented in the incidence of COVID-19 cases. In Connecticut, for every 10,000 Black individuals there are 171.4 reported cases, while for the White population cases reported occur at a rate of 56.4 per 10,000 people. Deaths due to COVID-19 show a similar disparity. For every 10,000 Black individuals, 19.8 have died. For every 10,000 White individuals, 7.4 have died.<sup>9</sup> The following chart depicts the reported COVID-19 case and death rates by race, where race has been identified.

#### *Reported COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in CT per 10,000 Residents by Race/Ethnicity<sup>10</sup>*

Age-adjusted rate of detected cases per 10,000 residents by race/ethnicity, statewide as of 08/03/2020



Age-adjusted rate of COVID-19-related deaths per 10,000 residents by race/ethnicity, statewide as of 08/03/2020



Compounding these significant health disparities, the Black population in Connecticut has also experienced severe economic distress as a result of COVID-19. While in the previous year the average

<sup>5</sup> National Center for Children in Poverty. *Connecticut Demographics of Low-Income Children*. Accessed at: [http://www.nccp.org/profiles/CT\\_profile\\_6.html](http://www.nccp.org/profiles/CT_profile_6.html)

<sup>6</sup> McKinsey. 2020. *COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery in Connecticut*.

<sup>7</sup> American Community Survey. 2018 1-Year Estimates. *Hartford County: Median Nonfamily Household Income in The Past 12 Months*. Accessed at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

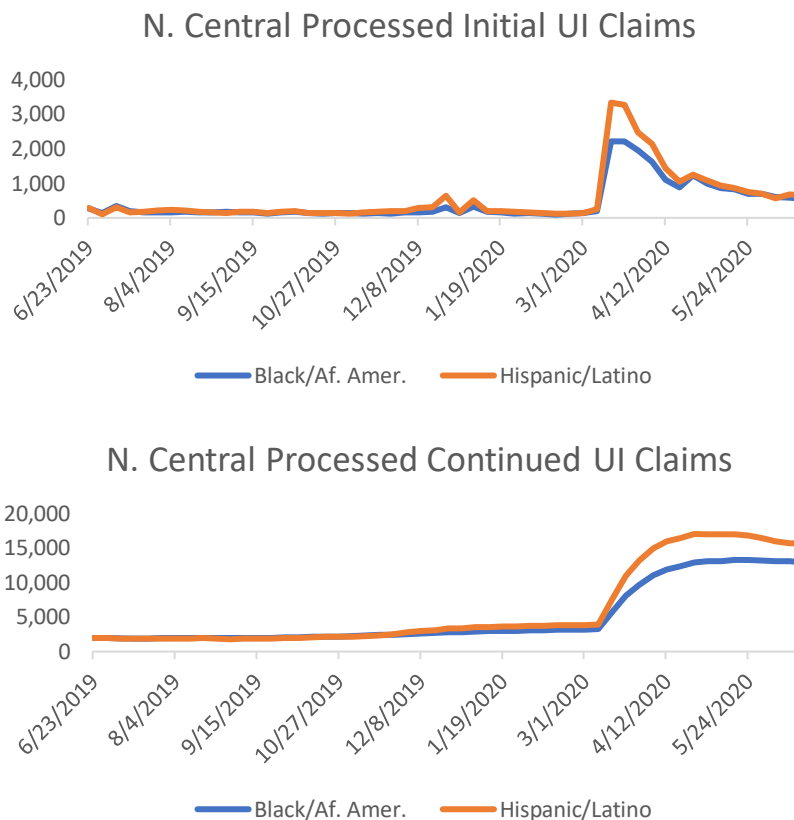
<sup>8</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020. *2019 Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population*. Accessed at: <https://www.bls.gov/lau/ex14tables.htm>

<sup>9</sup> DataHaven. 2020. *COVID-19 in CT*. Accessed at <https://ct-data-haven.github.io/covidpub/>.

<sup>10</sup> DataHaven. 2020. *COVID-19 in CT*. Accessed at <https://ct-data-haven.github.io/covidpub/>.

amount of weekly initial UI Claims for Black residents of the North Central Region was 145, this increased to over **2,200** in mid-March and has remained in the thousands for much of the period since. For the Hispanic population, initial UI Claims reached over **3,300** in mid-March. Similarly, the amount of Continued UI Claims for Black residents of the North Central Region has more than quadrupled over this period and increased fivefold for Hispanic residents. The following charts depict these unprecedented increases in unemployment for Black and Hispanic workers. A current backlog of claims yet to be processed may explain much of the decrease in claims in recent weeks.

*Processed Initial and Continued UI Claims in North Central CT<sup>11</sup>*



The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have most severely affected the Retail and Accommodation sectors, which are also among the lowest paying and require the least educational attainment. Despite the critical need for certain types of health workers, the Healthcare/Social Assistance industry overall is also one of the greatest contributors to recent unemployment growth. Collectively, there have been over **47,000** Processed Initial UI claims in the North Central region in the period of March 15 to June 28 from workers in the Accommodation, Retail, and Healthcare/Social Assistance sectors. These sectors contribute to a total processed UI claim figure of over **124,000** during this period.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> CT DOL. *North Central Region: Processed Initial and Continued Claims by RNO.*

<https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/claimsdata.asp>

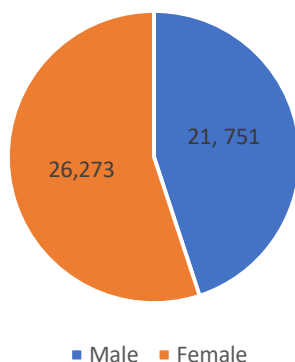
<sup>12</sup> CT DOL. *North Central Region: Processed Initial Claims by Industry.*

<https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/claimsdata.asp>

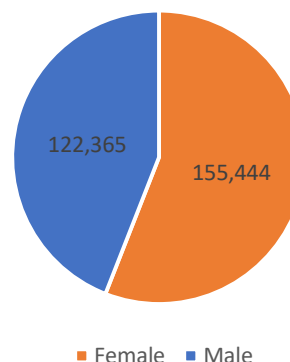
Recent public health and labor market data further highlights how the impacts of COVID-19 are experienced most severely by Women of Color. Women of Color are disproportionately employed in the most vulnerable sectors of the economy and have persistently received lower wages than men. Of the three most vulnerable industries in Hartford County—Accommodation, Retail, and Healthcare/Social Assistance—over 65% of employees are women.<sup>13</sup> Compounding this evident need, formal labor market data has been shown to underreport circumstances of sub-formal employment for Women of Color, particularly in domestic care occupations. A national survey of female domestic workers, a majority minority population, found that at least 23% of domestic workers were paid hourly wages below the state minimum rate.<sup>14</sup> This increased likelihood of economic and health vulnerability for women has clearly manifested in the COVID-19 pandemic, where women in Connecticut have experienced greater rates of infection (54.7% of cases) and simultaneously higher incidences of unemployment (over 33,000 more claims than men).

#### *COVID-19 Cases and UI Claims by Gender<sup>15</sup>*

COVID-19 Cases by Gender



CT Continued UI Claims by Gender



#### **Workforce Solutions**

The imperative to meet these unprecedented needs through expanded services and job placement supports has arisen just as public and philanthropic funding for workforce development is becoming less stable. The workforce system must build more collaborative and consolidated models of service delivery, prioritizing core competencies and on-ramps that are applicable across sectors and resilient to the certainty of change.<sup>16</sup> As employers increasingly emphasize skills-based hiring practices and restrict resources dedicated to training, the workforce system must reduce redundancies and asymmetries in employer engagement strategies and programming options. Local partnerships such as the Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative, the Hartford Work Based Learning Network, and the Hartford Data Collaborative will be critical in efficiently meeting the current scale of need.

<sup>13</sup> Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2020. *Industry Snapshot: Hartford County*.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Burnham and Nik Theodore. *Home Economics: The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work*. National Domestic Workers Alliance. 18.

<sup>15</sup> CTDPH. 2020. *COVID-19 Test, Gender*. Accessed at: <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/COVID-19-data/wa3g-tfvc/#covid-19-data-resources>; Connecticut Department of Labor, *Statewide Claims Profile*, Updated June 21, 2020, Accessed at: <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/claimsdata.asp>.

<sup>16</sup> JobsFirstNYC. 2020. *The Early Impact of COVID-19 on Young Adult Workforce Development: Insights from the Field*.

While major infrastructure projects are expected to significantly contribute to regional economic recovery, prompting substantial employment opportunities in the Construction sector, industries such as Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, Financial Services, and IT will likely continue to comprise the long-term economic base of the North Central region. More robust career pathways in these industries must be developed through Registered Apprenticeships and other Work-Based Learning (WBL) strategies directly aligned to skill-based business needs. Industry partnerships in these sectors are critical in facilitating regular dialogue and employer engagement with the workforce system.

Education and WBL programming must align to the needs of local industries to ensure job placements for trainees. Skills-based learning and curricula informed by employers should be available to in-school youth. Outdated stigmas about certain sectors, skills, and occupations should be dismantled through robust workforce system partnerships with academic advisors and career counselors. Hands-on learning opportunities at worksites, internships, employer presentations, and other strategies can also aid in developing new perspectives among students and educators about the modern workplace.

Career pathways educational models deployed in the most vulnerable communities, which disproportionately comprise People of Color, must also embed comprehensive supportive services to directly address the barriers and challenges facing low-income youth. Supportive infrastructure targeting barriers such as a lack of transportation, food & housing insecurity, and mental health challenges must be a pillar of the workforce system to assist individuals with the greatest needs. The provision and development of wraparound services should occur in partnership with local governments, Community-Based Organizations, philanthropic partners, and the employer community. In Hartford, the Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative has already initiated this systems-building work with strong emphases on youth mental health and holistic personal and professional development. Services for vulnerable youth must also begin to align more tightly with family supports as part of a 2-Generational approach targeting the causes and perpetuators of poverty among minority families and communities.

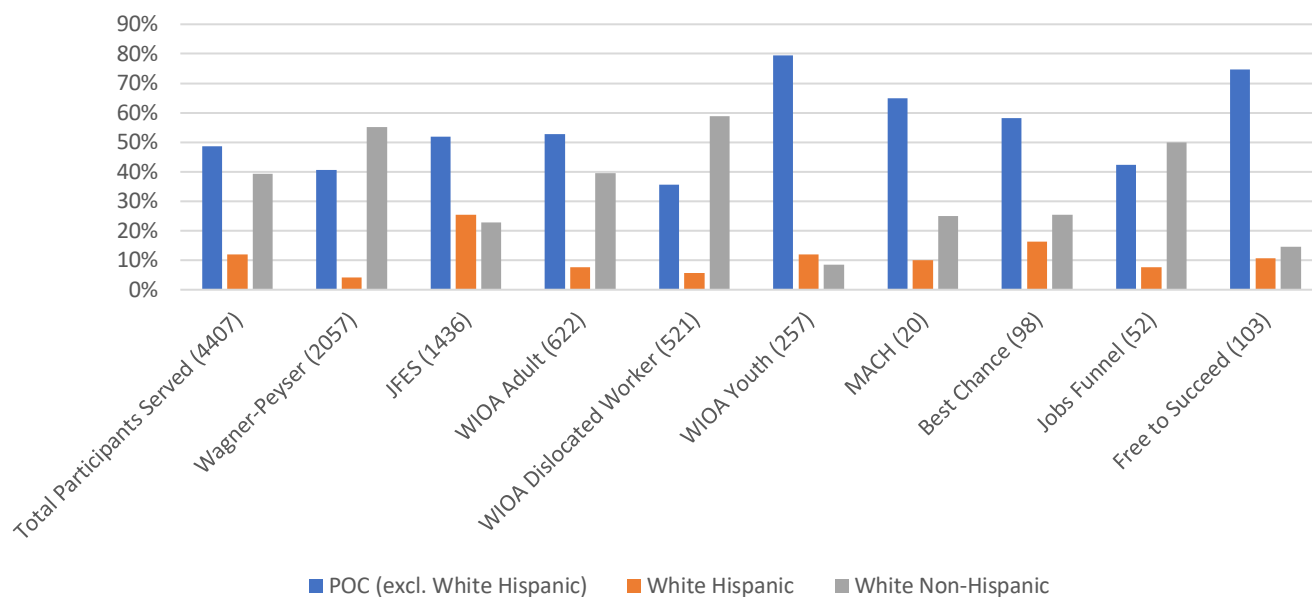
Capital Workforce Partners has also recently launched a set of rapid training and job placement program proposals with support from the CT Governor's Workforce Council: Workforce Training Innovation Fund, which is a CARES Act-funded resource. These programs collectively aim to train and place over **350** recently dislocated workers and Opportunity Youth in the North Central region in occupations showing continued hiring demand in the Healthcare, IT, Financial Services, Manufacturing, Construction, and Transportation sectors. While the successful implementation of these programs will begin to meet the critical needs of dislocated workers, especially persons of color, there remains a tremendous unmet need for additional supports and job training resources.

These CARES-funded programs will build on the existing workforce development infrastructure and system facilitated by CWP in the North Central Region, which includes the American Job Centers, the Jobs Funnel, and numerous longstanding training initiatives. These programs have a strong record of service delivery to Persons of Color and other underserved populations. In the period from January 1, 2020 to early August, of the over **4,400** individuals served by the CWP system, **49%** identify as Persons of Color (POC) and **12%** identify as White Hispanic.<sup>17</sup> The following chart depicts the demographic breakdown for each of CWP's major training initiatives facilitated through the American Job Centers.

---

<sup>17</sup> POC as used here includes individuals identifying as a race other than White and excludes White Hispanic, which is noted separately.

### CWP Systemwide Enrollment Demographics: 1/1/20-8/13/20



CWP's WIOA/Wagner-Peyser programs are intended for low-income workers lacking in-demand skills and workers dislocated due to current economic situations. Of the 3,200 individuals collectively served through Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Adult, and WIOA Dislocated Worker programming over **42%** identify as POC and **5%** identify as White Hispanic. WIOA activities are designed to be comprehensive and tailored to individual needs to fully support workers as they transition into self-sufficient employment, and include job search assistance, skills training, English language aid, work preparation, retention support, referrals, internships, assessments, and individual employment plans, among other services. Participants needing substantial training can apply for Individual Training Accounts (ITA) through a competitive scholarship process.

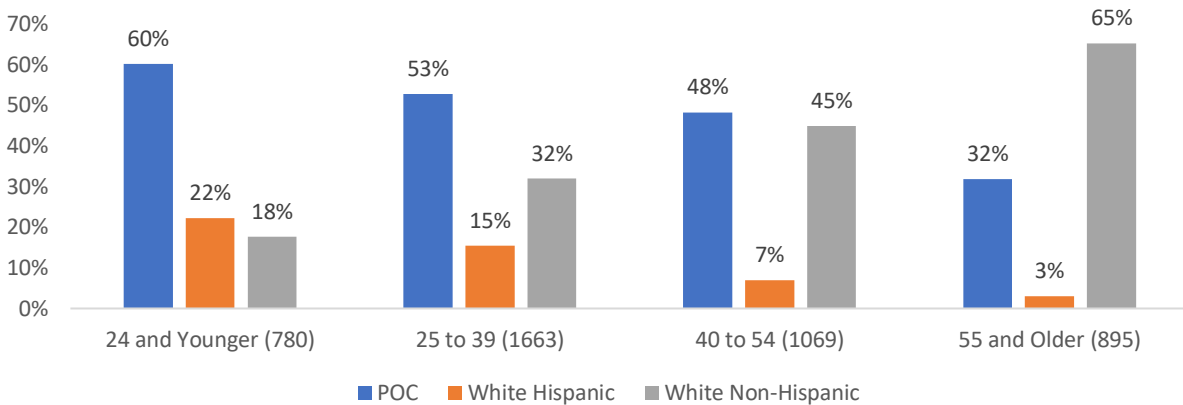
Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) are exclusive to and requisite for Temporary Family Assistance recipients. Of the 1436 JFES clients served since January 1, 2020 over **52%** identify as POC and **25%** identify as White Hispanic. Services are designed to directly match clients with unsubsidized employment, and include one-on-one case management, an individualized employment plan based on assessments and mutual expectations, coordination of ancillary supports and educational opportunities.

CWP's WIOA Youth services target out-of-school young people aged 18-24 who meet specific criteria including: school dropout; low-income basic skills deficient or English language learner; justice-involved; homeless; pregnant or parenting; disabled; or low-income requiring additional assistance. Within these parameters, certain subpopulations are targeted including: people of color, young parents, justice-involved youth, disabled youth, and youth in or aging/aged out of foster care. Of the 257 youth served in this calendar year **79%** identify as POC and **12%** as White Hispanic. WIOA Youth services are designed to increase basic skills, enhance awareness of education and job opportunities, establish ancillary supports, and provide guidance along a pathway toward postsecondary enrollment or employment.

CWP’s initiatives focused on Returning Citizens include the BEST Chance and Free to Succeed programs. Of the 201 Returning Citizens collectively served by these programs since January 1, 2020, at least **67%** identify as POC and **13%** identify as White Hispanic. BEST Chance provides pre-employment preparation services, job placement assistance and retention supports to returning Hartford citizens or individuals who have been involved with the justice system through the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (IBEST) [model](#). The BEST Chance program is a form of contextualized learning, which blends academic curricula with occupational skills. This preparation has allowed former offenders to compete in today’s labor market and secure employment opportunities in the construction, culinary and manufacturing fields. BEST Chance is a collaboration of the CWP Jobs Funnel, Center for Latino Progress, local community colleges and other partners.

Overall, the AJC system facilitated by CWP evinces a record of service during this calendar year that has prioritized youth identifying as POC and White Hispanic, with **60%** of the 24 and Younger population served identifying as POC and **22%** identifying as White Hispanic. As the population served increases in age, the proportion of individuals identifying as White increases.

AJC Customers By Age and Demographic (Percentage Served)



Within the POC populations served by CWP’s AJC system since January 1, 2020, women have comprised **59%** of service recipients. Within populations identifying as White Hispanic, women have comprised **74%** of service recipients.

Program Enrollees by Gender

