

CONFRONTING STRUCTURAL RACISM

in the

CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

Listening. Understanding. Taking Action.

NYC
Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Social Services

CHILD SUPPORT
SERVICES

“The Data Says...”

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Background

- The federal Title IV-D child support program is a central component of the effort to address poverty, particularly among children. With the latest U.S. Census Bureau data showing child poverty on the rise, the critical importance of this mission is clear.
- In NYC, the Title IV-D program is administered by the DSS-HRA Office of Child Support Services (OCSS). Each year, OCSS distributes hundreds of millions of dollars to NYC families, keeping tens of thousands of children out of poverty.
- OCSS also seeks to support noncustodial parents (NCPs) in meeting their child support obligations, with efforts to support right-sized orders and connect NCPs to employment and debt reductions programs.
- Still, there are more than **90,000 child support cases in NYC in which NCPs owe over \$5,000**, including 20,000 cases with debt of \$50,000 or more.

Background (cont.)

- Black and Hispanic New Yorkers are *far* more likely than other City residents to be NCPs on Title IV-D child support orders. There are also important differences in program experiences *among NCPs* in NYC by race and ethnicity.
- The following slides illustrate the profound racial/ethnic disparities seen in NYC's child support caseload, along with select other data points (re: poverty, cash assistance, unemployment, and wealth) that offer important context for today's discussion of structural racism in the child support program.
- Except where otherwise noted, analyses presented below are based on February 2023 administrative data from the NYC DSS/HRA Office of Child Support Services (OCSS).

NYC'S CHILD SUPPORT CASELOAD IS MARKED BY LARGE RACIAL / ETHNIC DISPARITIES.

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NYC Child Support Cases by NCP Race/Ethnicity

- *Black and Hispanic New Yorkers make up the overwhelming share of NYC's IV-D child support caseload.*
- *The same patterns hold in NYC when viewed by CP race/ethnicity (not shown).*
- *Nationally, patterns are **very different**: Nearly half of CPs served by the IV-D program in the U.S. are non-Hispanic White.**

NCP Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases	% among Cases with Known NCP Race/Ethnicity**
Hispanic	76,012	31%	43%
Black	87,881	36%	50%
White	7,933	3%	4%
Asian	2,402	1%	1%
Other (including mixed race)	2,536	1%	1%
Unknown	70,220	28%	--
TOTAL	246,984	100%	

NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data.

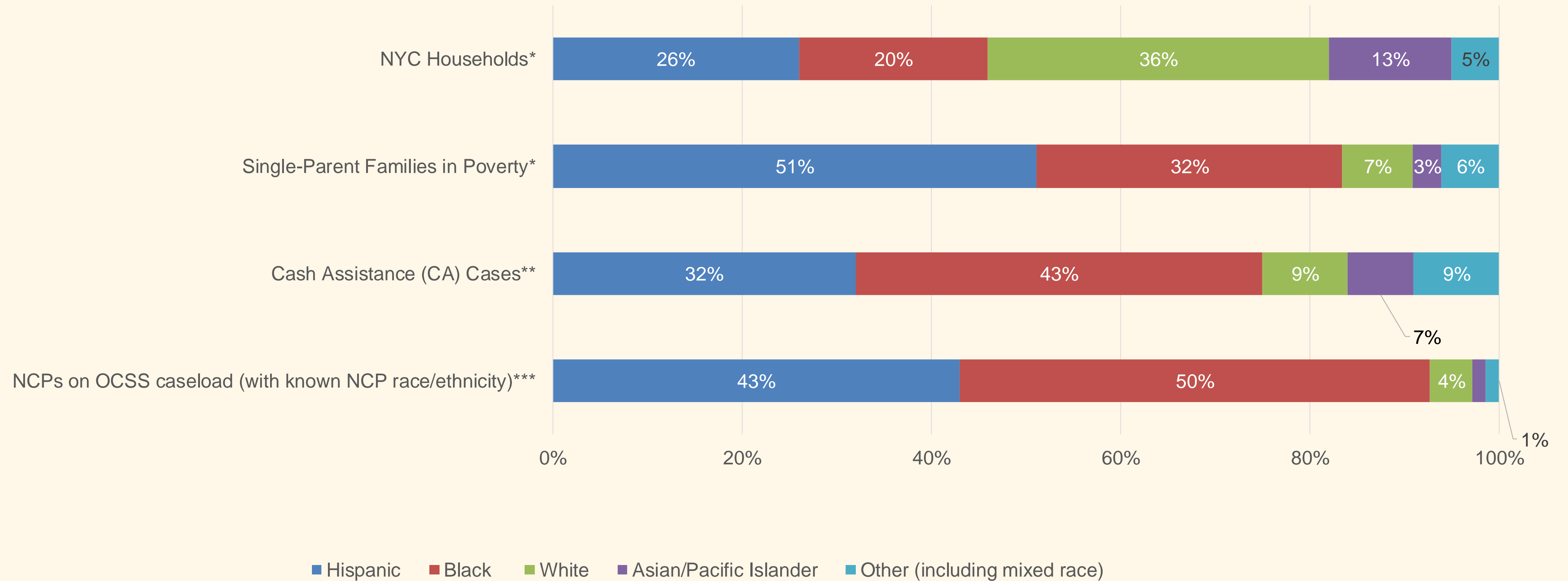
* Elaine Sorenson (2021). *Characteristics of Custodial Parents and Their Children*.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/characteristics_cps_and_their_children.pdf

** The high rate of missing NCP race/ethnicity data (28%) means that this distribution should be interpreted with caution.



NYC Households by Race/Ethnicity



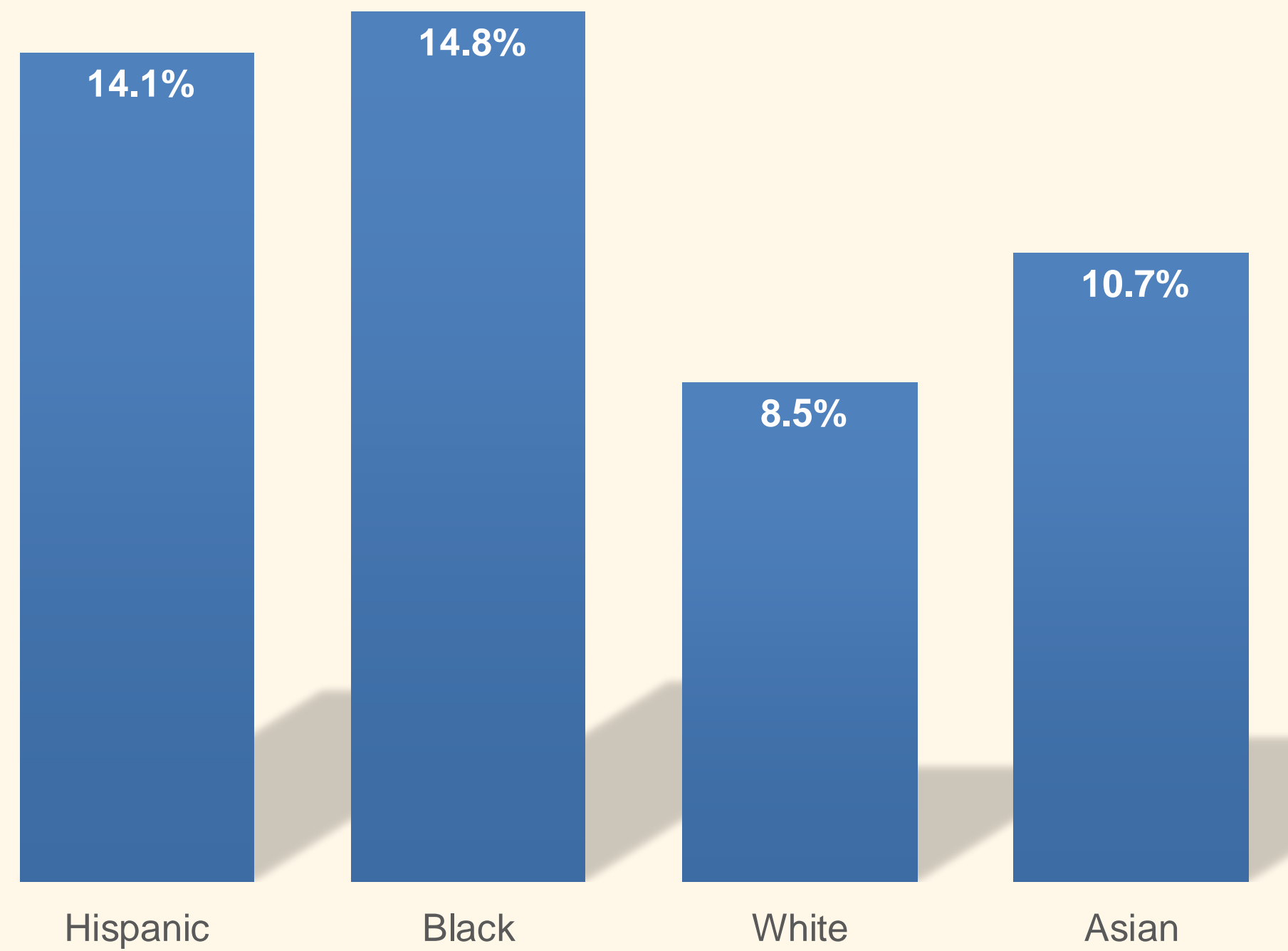
* U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey. Race/ethnicity of household head.

** NYS DSS OPMDA. Race/ethnicity of CA head of household, August 2023; child-only cases excluded.

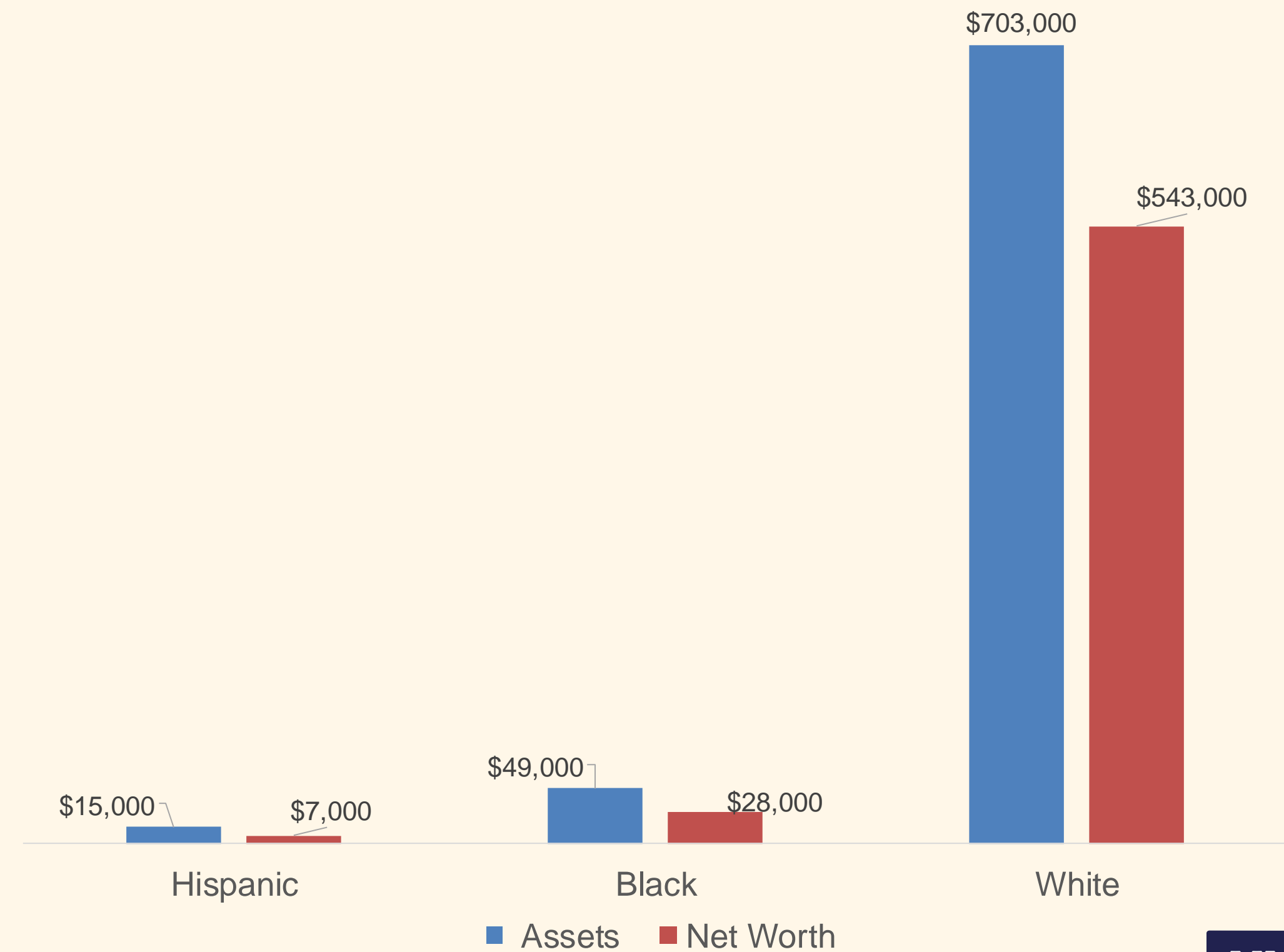
*** NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data. Analysis is at the case level; NCPs with more than one case are counted multiple times. **Data should be interpreted with caution as 28% of NCPs are excluded for missing race/ethnicity data.**

Unemployment and Wealth by Race/Ethnicity

2021 NYC Unemployment Rate*



Assets and Net Worth (median)**



* U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey (Table S2301). White rate reflects non-Hispanic only; other races' rates include Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Note that NYC unemployment has fallen substantially since 2021.

** Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy, unpublished analysis of 2018, 2020, & 2021 Policy Tracker data (2023). Assets calculated for individual adults in NYC, including value of home, bank accounts, retirement savings, and other. Net worth subtracts debts from assets.

**THERE ARE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES AMONG
CHILD SUPPORT CASES BY NCP RACE AND
ETHNICITY.**

Child Support Case Characteristics by NCP Race/Ethnicity

NCP Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases Opened Due to Child CA Receipt*	% of Cases with Order Established (i.e., "Account-level")
Hispanic	76,012	67%	79%
Black	87,881	68%	81%
White	7,933	41%	86%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2,402	39%	80%
Other (including mixed race)	2,536	38%	75%
Unknown	70,220	25%	87%

NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data.

* Includes cases in which the custodial parent and child(ren) are currently or formerly on cash assistance.

Child Support Orders by NCP Race/Ethnicity

NCP Race/Ethnicity	Among account-level cases,			Among current non-zero orders,
	% Arrears-Only	% Zero-Dollar Order	% Current Non-Zero Order	Monthly order amount (mean)
Hispanic	30%	7%	63%	\$374
Black	32%	7%	61%	\$389
White	28%	4%	67%	\$660
Asian/Pacific Islander	16%	3%	81%	\$508
Other (including mixed race)	12%	3%	85%	\$523
Unknown	40%	3%	56%	\$439

NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data.

Child Support Payments by NCP Race/Ethnicity

NCP Race/Ethnicity	Among cases with payment in past year,			
	Among account-level cases, % with Any Payment in Past Year	% in DMV Suspension Process	# Months with a Payment (mean)	Total Paid (mean)
Hispanic	57%	32%	8.6 months	\$4,618
Black	57%	35%	8.5 months	\$4,824
White	64%	29%	9.6 months	\$9,524
Asian/Pacific Islander	72%	25%	9.3 months	\$7,809
Other (including mixed race)	75%	25%	9.1 months	\$7,463
Unknown	55%	33%	9.0 months	\$5,779

NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data.

Child Support Arrears by NCP Race/Ethnicity

NCP Race/Ethnicity	Among account-level cases,		
	% with \$500+ Owed to CP	% with \$500+ Owed to DSS	Total Arrears Owed (mean; includes \$0)
Hispanic	45%	31%	\$13,961
Black	48%	34%	\$16,014
White	47%	17%	\$26,128
Asian/Pacific Islander	40%	11%	\$18,030
Other (including mixed race)	44%	12%	\$11,449
Unknown	54%	17%	\$20,732

*In a national study matching IV-D child support data to the National Directory of New Hires (which generally includes all wage income), fully 60% of parents who owed >\$100,000 in arrears had no reported income.**

NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data.

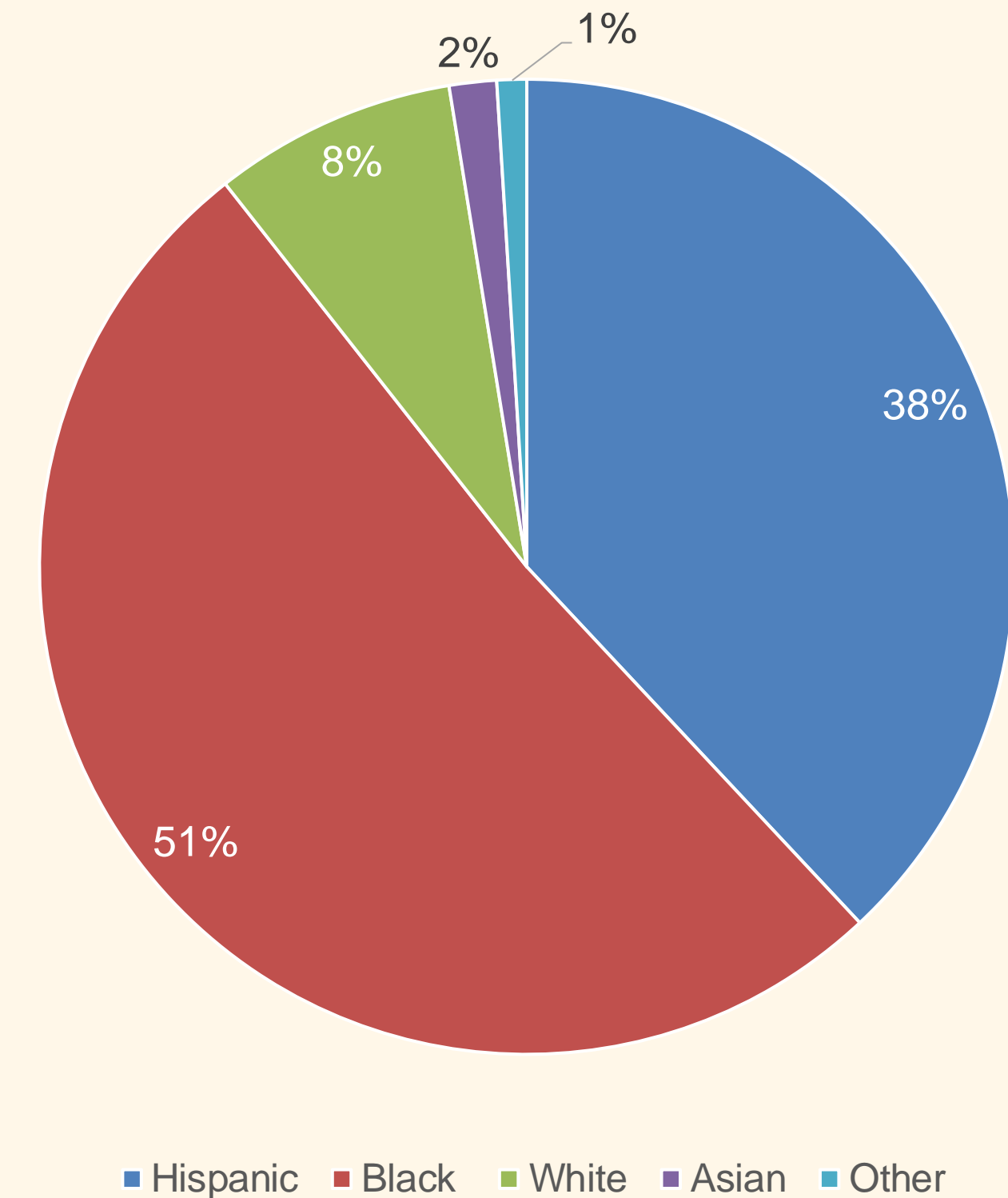
* US DHHS/ACF/Office of Child Support Services. (2018). "Do Parents Who Owe the Most Child Support Debt Have Reported Income?" <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/ocsedatablog/2018/07/do-parents-who-owe-most-child-support-debt-have-reported-income>



Viewed another way, the data indicate that...

- At least 33% (and potentially half) of all child support arrears in NYC are owed by Black New Yorkers, with Hispanics accounting for much of the rest.
- At least two-thirds of New Yorkers submitted by OCSS for the driver's license suspension process are Black or Hispanic.
- ❖ *These patterns are driven by disparities in the Title IV-D caseload composition, which in turn reflects **the City's and the nation's profound systemic disparities in income and wealth by race and ethnicity.***

Distribution of Arrears, among Cases with Known NCP Race/Ethnicity*



NYC DSS/HRA OCSS, February 2023 data.

* Results should be interpreted with caution as the 28% of NCPs excluded for missing race/ethnicity data account for **37% of total arrears owed.**

THANK YOU

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