

WEEK 7

Opportunity in Illinois



**“What the people
want is simple.
They want an
America as good
as its promise.”**

**BARBARA C. JORDAN,
U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN,
1977**

In Illinois alone, over 1.1 million working households – or 35% – are struggling to afford basic necessities like housing, childcare, food, transportation, and technology, according to the United Way of Illinois [2020 ALICE Report](#). 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. This means that a parent within an ALICE household may have to make trade-offs between necessities like rent, stocking the refrigerator or going without healthcare as a parent to ensure that a child has access to preschool.

However, when you disaggregate the data, they tell another story. Fifty six percent (56%) of Black households are struggling to afford basic necessities, which is almost double that of White households—just 30%.

As Illinois recovered from the Great Recession, more Black households fell below the ALICE Threshold, with an 8% increase from 2010 to 2018. At the same time, the number of Latinx and Asian households considered ALICE grew by 24% and 28% respectively. In comparison, the number of white households under the threshold declined by 2%.

We don't have all the data yet, but it's very likely that more households are struggling to meet their basic needs now, as families have lost jobs and loved ones due to COVID-19. This means many parents, especially Black parents, are deciding whether to pay rent and bills or buy food.

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 weeks, we will be exploring how ALICE, race, and other factors impact a person's housing, health, education, financial stability, and more.

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Week 7 Challenge

Please **choose one or two** of the below activities to engage with for 15 minutes this week, and if you have time, we encourage you to complete more.



ACTIVITY A

Check out the [ALICE Report for the State of Illinois](#) (based on 2018 data) and dig down further into your county.



ACTIVITY B

See this [New York Times article](#) debunking widely held beliefs about income inequality and exploring the disproportionate impact race has on boys.



ACTIVITY C

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](#).



ACTIVITY D

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 and any resources that helps further the discussion on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#UWIEquityChallenge](#).

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