

The Answer

SHELTERFORCE

Q: Can prohibiting discrimination based on source of income help holders of housing vouchers find better places to live?

A: Yes. Currently landlords in most places can discriminate against voucher holders, and many do. For example:

- An African-American female tester using a voucher was denied housing 91.2 percent of the time in Ohio's Cuyahoga County in 2016.¹
- In Austin, Texas, 91 percent of landlords refuse to accept Section 8 tenants.²

This makes it hard for voucher holders to use their vouchers at all, and often keeps them concentrated in a few segregated neighborhoods where vouchers are more readily accepted:

- One HUD study found 31 percent of vouchers had to be returned because no unit was found where they would be accepted.³
- Voucher holders are more racially segregated than people with similar incomes who do not have vouchers.⁴



Source-of-Income (SOI) Antidiscrimination Laws Do Help

- Three different studies, including one of 48 housing authorities and 2,600 voucher households, found that, all else being equal, the probability of successfully using one's voucher within the program time limit is 4 to 12 percentage points higher in jurisdictions with an SOI antidiscrimination law.⁵

Black, Asian, and Native American voucher recipients in areas with an SOI antidiscrimination law had 5 to 22 percent more white neighbors than they would otherwise.⁶

¹ *Housing Voucher Discrimination and Race Discrimination in Cuyahoga County*, by Michael Lepley & Lenore Mangiarelli. The Housing Center, December 2017, bit.ly/2unq8dv

² *Voucher Holders Need Not Apply: An Audit Report on the Refusal of Housing Choice Vouchers by Landlords in the Austin MSA*, by the Austin Tenants' Council, November 2012, bit.ly/23cvP35

³ *Study on Section 8 Voucher Success Rates*, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 2001, bit.ly/2L5zsq1

⁴ *Patterns of Housing Voucher Use Revisited: Segregation and Section 8 Using Updated Data and More Precise Comparison Groups*, by Molly W. Metzger and Danilo Pelletiere, 2013, bit.ly/2K3oKQx

⁵ "The Impact of Source of Income Laws on Voucher Utilization," by Lance Freeman. *Housing Policy Debate*, March 2012, bit.ly/2ug5T2f; *The Impact of Source of Income Laws on Voucher Utilization and Locational Outcomes*, by Lance Freeman, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, February 2011, bit.ly/2m69gE9; and "Source of Income Discrimination and Fair Housing Policy," by J. Rosie Tighe, Megan E. Hatch, and Joseph Mead, *Journal of Planning Literature*, 2017, bit.ly/2unuJmu

⁶ *The Impact of Source of Income Laws on Voucher Utilization and Locational Outcomes*, by Lance Freeman, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, February 2011, bit.ly/2m69gE9

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