

The Long-Run Effects of Residential Racial Desegregation Programs: Evidence from *Gautreaux**

Eric Chyn

*University of Texas at Austin
and NBER*

Robert Collinson

University of Notre Dame

Danielle Sandler

U.S. Census Bureau

March 29, 2023

Abstract

This paper provides new evidence on the long-run effects of residential racial desegregation policies by studying the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program. From the late 1970s until the 1990s, Gautreaux assisted thousands of Black families to move to predominately white, mostly suburban neighborhoods. We link historical program records to administrative data and use plausibly exogenous variation in neighborhood placements to estimate the effects of Gautreaux on the long-run outcomes of children. Being placed in a white neighborhood significantly increases children's future lifetime earnings, employment, and wealth. Gautreaux children placed in a white neighborhood are also significantly more likely to be married and twice as likely to be married to a white spouse. Moreover, placements through Gautreaux impact the neighborhood choices of children in adulthood. Children placed in white neighborhoods during childhood live in more racially diverse neighborhoods with higher rates of upward mobility nearly 40 years later.

Keywords: Neighborhoods, desegregation, children.

JEL codes: J15, I38, R23.

* **Chyn:** Department of Economics, University of Texas-Austin, and the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), Email: eric.chyn@austin.utexas.edu. **Collinson:** Department of Economics, University of Notre Dame, Email: rcollin8@nd.edu. **Sandler:** U.S. Census Bureau, Email: danielle.h.sandler@census.gov. We are indebted to Jeff Kling and Todd Richardson for their help accessing data from the Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program. Our thanks also go to Barbara Biasi, Marcus Casey, Raj Chetty, David Cutler, Stefanie DeLuca, Ed Glaeser, Nathan Hendren, Larry Katz, Jeff Kling, Jeff Liebman, and Kate Pennington for helpful conversations. We are grateful for comments and suggestions from seminar participants at the NBER Economics of Mobility Fall 2022 Meeting, Opportunity Insights, the U.S. Census Bureau, RAND, University of Notre Dame, University of Illinois-Chicago, University of Washington, and Yale University. Blanca Garcia provided excellent research assistance. This project received financial support from the National Science Foundation (NSF Award Number: 2018266). Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the U.S. Census Bureau. This research was conducted as a part of the U.S. Census Bureau's Evidence Building Project Series. The Census Bureau has reviewed this data product to ensure appropriate access, use, and disclosure avoidance protection of the confidential source data used to produce this product (Data Management System (DMS) number: P-7530292; Disclosure Review Board (DRB) approval number(s): CBDRB-FY22-CES018-018, CBDRB-FY23-CES018-007).