CPAL CHILD POVERTY ACTION LAB

Understanding Housing Choice Voucher Acceptance in North Texas

Executive Summary | Published October 2026

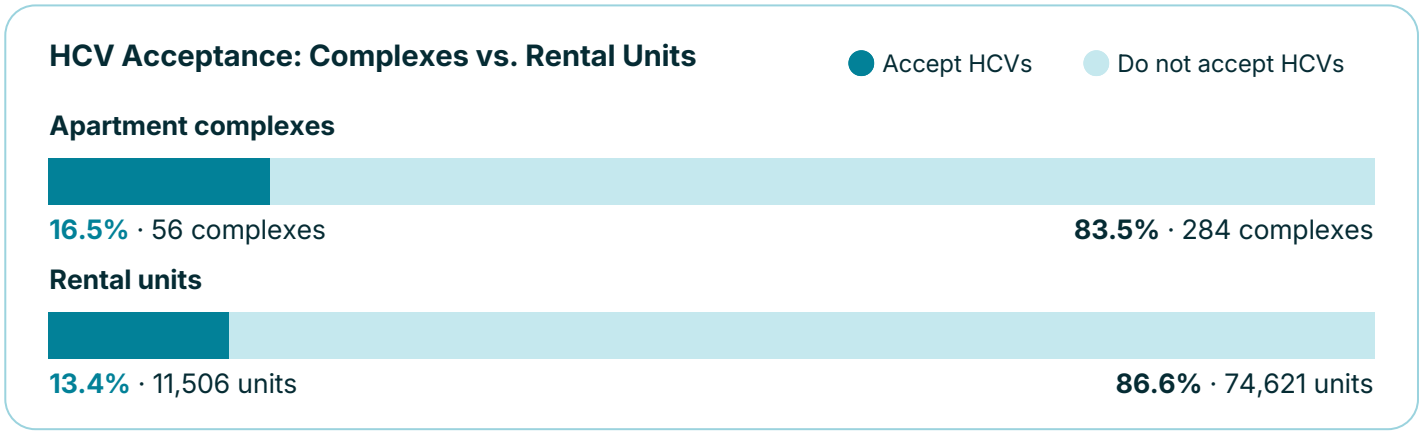
Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) are a form of federally administered rental assistance that assist low-income households in securing and affording reasonably-priced housing on the open market. Research shows that HCVs are an effective anti-poverty tool: In economist Raj Chetty's **2015 Moving to Opportunity** study, he found that when a young child moves to a low-poverty neighborhood using a voucher, their future lifetime earnings increase by ~$302K. However, in Texas, landlords are not required to accept vouchers and may reject a prospective applicant just because they are using a voucher to help pay rent, even if they meet other screening criteria. Since landlords do not have to accept vouchers, voucher holders are limited in where they can rent and may not realize the full benefits of the voucher as a result. To better understand voucher acceptance across North Texas, the Child Poverty Action Lab (CPAL) surveyed 340 apartment complexes in seven counties across Dallas-Fort Worth in summer 2026.

KEY FINDING 1

16.5% (56) of apartment complexes reported accepting Housing Choice Vouchers — about 1 in 6.

83.5% of surveyed apartment complexes reported not accepting Housing Choice Vouchers.

- The 56 apartment complexes that reported accepting vouchers account for 11,506 rental units.
- The 284 complexes that do not accept vouchers account for 74,621 rental units.
- When measuring the acceptance rate for apartment units instead of complexes, the acceptance rate is lower at 13.4%.
- 14 of the apartment complexes that reported accepting HCVs are required to under their affordability covenants (e.g., Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Housing Finance Corporation, Public Facility Corporation, and HOME Investment Partnerships Program properties). When those properties are excluded, the voluntary HCV acceptance rate is 12.9%.



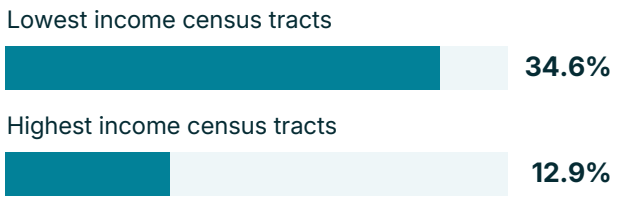
KEY FINDING 2

- 34.6% of properties in the lowest income census tracts, defined as under 30% Area Median Income (AMI), or under $33,100 for a family of 4, reported accepting HCVs.
- Only 12.9% in the highest income census tracts, defined as above 120% AMI, or $132,360 for a family of four, reported accepting HCVs.

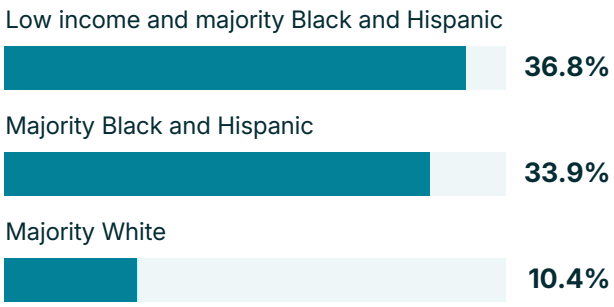
KEY FINDING 3

- 33.9% of properties in the majority Black and Hispanic census tracts, defined as when Black and Hispanic residents together comprise 50% or more of the tract population, reported accepting HCVs.
- Only 10.4% in majority White census tracts, defined as where White residents comprise 50% or more of the tract population, reported accepting HCVs.
- The highest HCV acceptance rate, 36.8%, was observed in census tracts that are both low income and majority Black and Hispanic.

HCV Acceptance by Census Tract Income



HCV Acceptance by Census Tract Race and Ethnicity



Brief Data Notes

In 2017 and 2020, the Inclusive Communities Project published studies on local HCV acceptance rates. However, **an apples-to-apples comparison between the past reports and this current report is not recommended** due to key differences between the projects, including the region of inquiry, geographic unit of analysis, and the target apartment complexes. In 2017 and 2020, the ICP studies' region of inquiry covered Dallas, Collin, Denton, and Rockwall Counties. The CPAL study covered those counties and also Ellis, Kaufman, and Tarrant Counties. The ICP reports include a ZIP-code level analysis, while CPAL's includes a census tract-level analysis with American Community Survey 2019-2023 5-year estimates. CPAL collected data from a stratified sample of apartment complexes with 5 or more units, while ICP targeted "private multi-family properties" that were "non-Low Income Housing Tax Credits or tax exempt bond projects" in 2017 and "reasonably priced" complexes in 2020. In 2017, ICP sought to contact as many apartment complexes as possible. In 2020, ICP prioritized apartment complexes that they did not contact in 2017.

Acknowledgements

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Want to learn more about the study and CPAL's findings? READ THE FULL REPORT →