



Housing Research & Advocacy Center  
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Read the report: <http://www.thehousingcenter.org/StateofFairHousing2008.htm>

## **Discrimination Widespread 40 Years After Passage of Fair Housing Act Race, Disability Discrimination Complaints Most Common**

In the last five years, the number of fair housing complaints alleging discrimination based on disability has nearly doubled in Northeast Ohio, and the number based on race has increased by 75% compared to the previous five-year period, according to a new report issued by the Housing Research & Advocacy Center in Cleveland. Comparing the five-year period 1998-2002 to the period 2003 to 2007, the number of complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) went from an average of 74.8 per year to 140.2 per year, a 87% increase. Of the complaints filed in the most recent five-year period, 34.5% were based on race, 32.8% were based on disability, and 12.8% alleged discrimination based on familial status.

The report, entitled “The State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio: April 2008,” notes that the vast majority of fair housing cases are never reported to a government agency and estimates that there are annually at least 33,690 instances of housing discrimination in the region against African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the rental and sales markets.

Jeffrey D. Dillman, Executive Director of the Housing Center, stated, “Forty years after the passage of the federal Fair Housing Act, Northeast Ohio and the country as a whole still have a long way to go to achieve equal housing opportunities for all.”

The Housing Center’s “State of Fair Housing” report analyzes housing discrimination and segregation in a six-county region made up of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina Counties. Among the report’s other findings:

- *upper* income African Americans were denied more home purchase and refinance loans than *low* income whites;
- for those individuals who obtained loans, upper income African Americans were more than twice as likely to obtain high-cost home purchase loans as low income whites (62.8% compared to 24.5%). For refinance loans, upper income African Americans received high-cost loans 55.8% of the time, compared to 32.0% of the time for low income whites;
- from 1980 to 2000, segregation slightly decreased for African Americans in the region, while segregation for Hispanics/Latinos remained constant.
- 54 localities in the region have fair housing ordinances, including 35 in Cuyahoga County, 3 in Ashtabula County, 3 in Lake County, 9 in Lorain County, and 4 in Medina County. There are no local fair housing ordinances in Geauga County.

Dillman continued, “It is past time for governments at all levels to make a strong stand for fair housing and to commit additional resources to ensure that all individuals have an opportunity to choose their housing free from discrimination.”

Federal law prohibits discrimination in the rental or sale of housing, and in the mortgage lending and

homeowners insurance markets, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status and handicap. In addition, Ohio law prohibits discrimination based on ancestry and military status.

The report recommends that local governments enact stronger fair housing laws, implement comprehensive education efforts, vigorously enforce fair housing laws through systemic testing for discrimination as a means of addressing housing discrimination in the region, and increase investigation of mortgage lenders.

The “State of Fair Housing” report will be released officially on Thursday, April 24, 2008, and the Housing Center’s Third Annual Wine & Cheese Reception fundraiser. Tickets for the event are available by calling the Housing Center at (216) 361-9240.

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The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is a nonprofit fair housing organization whose mission is to eliminate housing discrimination and assure choice in Northeast Ohio by providing those at risk with effective information, intervention and advocacy. The Housing Center is a member of Greater Cleveland Community Shares.