

Systemic Rental Testing in Hanford CA

2015 Race Testing Project

Overview

The Fair Housing Council of Central California conducted a systemic testing project of rental housing in Hanford CA through a partnership with the City of Hanford. The purpose of the testing project was to explore differences in treatment between rental applicants on the basis of race. In total, 20 paired, or 40 tests were conducted at sites throughout the city of Hanford.

The sites tested had anywhere from 36% to 87% minority population, mostly Hispanic.

Individual test site locations form an aggregate sum of 50% owner occupied units and 50% of test sites located in areas that contain more rental housing than owner occupied housing. The test sites included income brackets from upper to moderate income levels.

Methodology

The systemic rental testing project began on March 9, 2015 and was concluded on March 25, 2015. A total of 40 tests were conducted using 20 pairs of testers. Tester pairs were individually matched to perform each test. Each tester pair for each test side was matched to gender. Tester pairs were identified as representing either a protected, in this case African American, or a control, Caucasian, tester of the same gender. The control and protected testers were equally matched in regard to income, length of employment, rental history and credit history. Each tester pair requested the same sized unit. In order to narrow the possibility of changes in unit rental status, each paired test assignment was performed on the same day. The constant variable for every test was the tester's race.

Project Results

Information from 40 tests was analyzed for differences in treatment between control and protected testers. The result of that analysis demonstrated that protected testers experienced differences in treatment 65% of the time. All of the differences in treatment noted were such that protected testers acting as home seekers were negatively affected as compared to control testers. These differences offered the control tester a preference in obtaining housing over protected testers. Protected testers at some sites were shown different units than the control tester. Protected testers were lied to about availability. The protected tester would be told a unit was available at a future date and the control tester was told the unit was available now. Some sites steered the protected tester to another town while not mentioning the other town to the control tester. One site in particular told the protected tester they had strict rules and if they could not follow the rules, they need not apply. At the same site the control tester was not told about strict rules. Another site contacted the control tester to inform them a unit was still available at a reduced rate. The protected tester was not contacted. Both testers gave management contact information.

Of the 20 sites tested, 13 properties showed differences in treatment between the protected and control testers. Four of the 20 sites had inconclusive results and 3 showed no differences in treatment between the protected and control testers.