



2026

STATE OF OUR DATA REPORT

UNC CHARLOTTE URBAN INSTITUTE
AND REGIONAL DATA TRUST

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE AND DATA TRUST

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and the Charlotte Regional Data Trust equip changemakers with data and information that make a difference in people's lives. Established by the state legislature in 1969 to serve our urbanizing region, the Institute is our region's applied research and community outreach center. We engage expertise across a diverse set of disciplines and life experiences to curate data and conduct actionable research and policy analysis to convene and equip community members, nonprofit organizations, local governments, local leaders, educators and more. The Institute serves a 14-county region that consists of Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union counties in North Carolina; as well as Chester, Lancaster and York counties in South Carolina.

The Data Trust, formed in 2004, is a community-university partnership that links data across service and organizational silos to provide information our community can act on. The Data Trust is a 501(c)(3) and a university-affiliated entity. It is governed by a board of community and university partners, and staffed by the Institute. In addition to fiduciary responsibilities over the data, the board guides the strategic priorities of the Institute. Together, the Institute and Data Trust connect the resources of Charlotte's public research university to the richness of our local and regional communities, and provide information and infrastructure our communities can use.

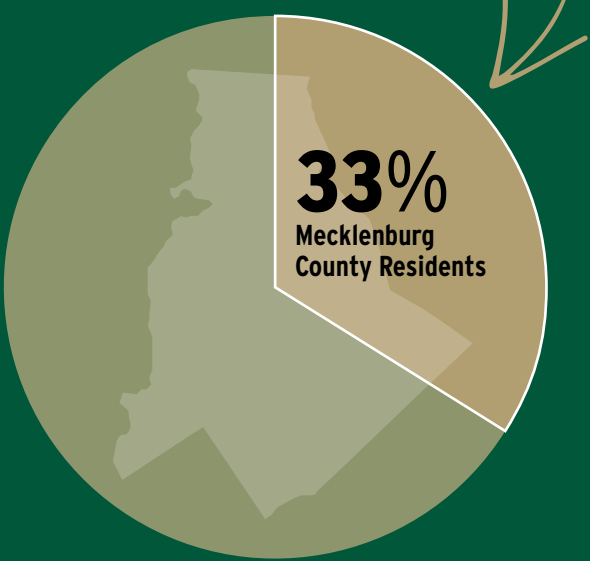
For more information, visit ui.charlotte.edu.



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2025 BY THE NUMBERS

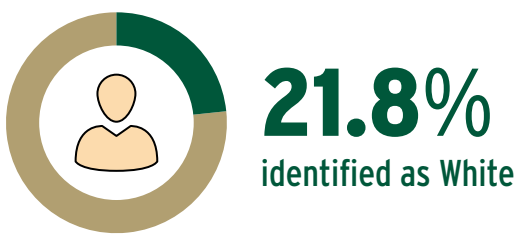
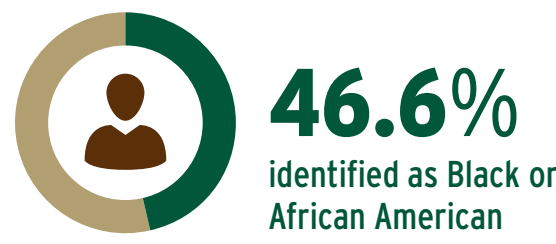
DATA INFLUENCE



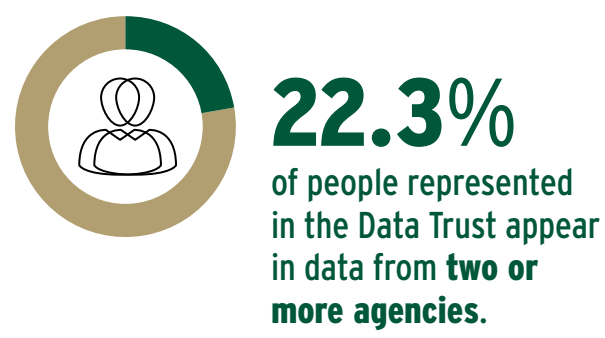
See Appendix B for more information about new data partners and datasets.

REPRESENTATION

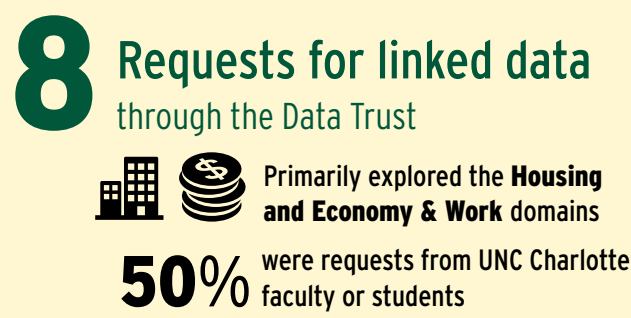
THE PEOPLE IN THE DATA TRUST



Black/African American and multiracial residents are overrepresented in Data Trust data relative to Mecklenburg County; White residents are underrepresented.



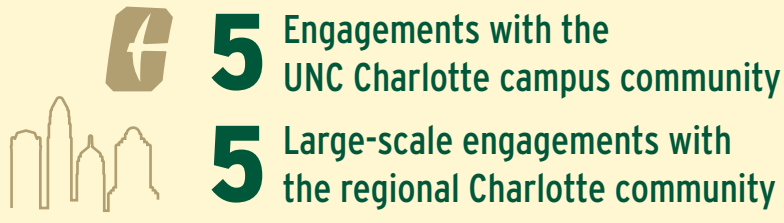
DATA USE AND IMPACT



54% used linked data
from the Data Trust



REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT



See Appendix C for more information about data use and impact.

OUR BOARD AND STAFF

Charlotte Regional Data Trust Board of Directors

Jamaal Kinard, Board President and Co-Chair

Community Data Oversight Committee
- Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance

Kathryn Firmin-Sellers, Board Vice President

United Way of Greater Charlotte

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Bank of America

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Casey Calloway, 26th Judicial District Court (Mecklenburg County)

Sherri Chisholm, Leading On Opportunity

Laura Yates Clark, Foundation For The Carolinas

Brian Collier, The Gambrell Foundation (2026)

Magan Cook, Red Ventures

Geraldine Gardner, Chair, Regional Advisory Committee, Centralina Regional Council

Rachel George, Chair, Data and Research Oversight Committee,
Advocate Health

Tim Gibbons, Mecklenburg County Child Family and Adult Services

Melvin Herring, Co-Chair, Community Data Oversight Committee, Johnson C. Smith University

Johnathan Hill, Bank of America

Kristen Howard, Novant Health

Anna London, Charlotte Works

Carlene Mayfield, Advocate Health

Aisling Nagel, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Ann Oshel, Alliance Health

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Erin Shoe, Cabarrus Health Alliance

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Jennifer Troyer, UNC Charlotte Division of Academic Affairs

Institute and Data Trust Staff

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Toye Watson, Director of Strategic and Community Impact

Khou Xiong, Director of Community Research Services

Katie Zager, Research Associate

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Alish Jain, Master's, Computing and Informatics

Varad Paradkar, Master's, Computer Science

Sarah Paul, Ph.D., Public Policy

Kadae Phimia, Ph.D., Geography

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LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our central work at the Data Trust is to maintain and build trust around use of community data. The State of *Our* Data report informs our board of directors and the broader public, describing the data that we hold in trust and use for community benefit. It serves as our annual report and key transparency tool, helping us more clearly understand what we do and how we do it.

There is much to highlight and celebrate in the calendar year 2025. Our integrated administrative data system continues to hold about 1.1 million unique individuals from the Charlotte region (2016-2024). And our Explorer tools provide public access to 140 variables, 80 variables for 458 Charlotte-Mecklenburg neighborhoods, and 65 variables for 752 census tracts in our 14-county North and South Carolina region - ready resources for residents and decision-makers.

As excited as we are about our growth, we know the greatest value of our data is not simply in what it tells us, but in how it is used, the impact it creates and particularly whether the people and communities represented in the data benefit from its use. In 2025, we marked the appointment of the first members of our Community Data Oversight Committee, a committee composed of community members whose lived experiences are represented within our integrated administrative data. CDOC helps ensure that community voice and lived experience inform the questions we ask, how we understand what the data reveals and how research about communities returns to communities in ways that are accessible, useful and actionable. Ultimately, CDOC's goal is not simply to produce better data or better research, but to ensure that data becomes a community resource; one that strengthens understanding, informs better decisions, builds trust and helps communities shape their own futures.

We also celebrated the first course of the Impact, Data and Evaluation Academy to build non profit capacity in data management and evaluation. Over the course of the year, IDEA worked with 96 organizations. And we launched a training initiative with our Charlotte-Mecklenburg libraries, training librarians to train patrons on using the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer. We continue to build the ways we focus on use, impact and community benefit.

We are grateful to the many people it takes to build and sustain a trusted community data infrastructure - our board, our committees, our donors, our staff, our data and research partners, and especially, the people in the data.

Thank you.

Jamaal Kinard
Jamaal Kinard, President
Charlotte Regional Data
Trust Board of Directors

Lori Thomas
Lori Thomas, Ph.D., Executive Director
Charlotte Urban Institute
and Regional Data Trust



We know the greatest value of our data is not simply in what it tells us, but in how it is used, the impact it creates and particularly whether the people and communities represented in the data benefit from its use.



INTRODUCTION

The State of *Our* Data report describes the Institute and Data Trust's data and its use. The report provides our board of directors, our communities, partners and stakeholders with an annual update and summary of our community data ecosystem, the data we hold *in trust* and why it matters. **This third annual report reflects the calendar year 2025.**

In legal terms, a **trust** is an arrangement where a person or entity holds an asset on behalf of a designated beneficiary. At the Institute and Data Trust, we hold data for our partners, for community benefit - especially for those who are represented in the data. The "*Our*" in the State of *Our* Data is purposeful and inclusive. We recognize that the integrated data we hold does not "belong" to the Institute and Data Trust or the University. It is a public good.

Trust is also the essential work of this community asset. We prioritize building and maintaining trust with all of

our stakeholders - people in the data, organizations and institutions that collect and share the data, decision-makers who put it to use, and the researchers, analysts, and people with lived expertise who help make sense of its patterns and anomalies.

How We Use the Report

The State of *Our* Data report is an accountability and decision-making tool for the Charlotte Regional Data Trust Board of Directors. We use annual information about who is in our data to inform representation on the Board and its committees. We also use it to guide our communication and dissemination strategies. The report also helps us monitor the extent of data coverage across key quality of life domains and across our region, as well as how the data has been used and the impact of that work. It provides a public record of how our community data ecosystem is continuously growing and evolving to better meet the needs of our communities. This annual report also serves as an ongoing assessment of who and what is missing in our data and the success of strategic efforts to create a more comprehensive and representative resource.

This report is one of the ways we practice transparency in our work and honor the investment of UNC Charlotte, our donors and, particularly, our communities, whose lives are represented in our data and whose quality of life we seek to ensure. ***Trust requires transparency.***

This annual report also serves as an ongoing assessment of who and what is missing in our data and the success of strategic efforts to create a more comprehensive and representative resource.



To create a city and region where everyone thrives, the Institute and Data Trust nurtures and maintains a **community data ecosystem** that addresses quality of life domains, ensures adequate data infrastructure and engages people and partners.



The size of each quality of life domain represents the number of data partners contributing to the Charlotte Urban Institute and Data Trust.



Quality of Life Domains

The Institute and Data Trust work across nine interconnected domains that influence quality of life and thriving at individual, organizational and community levels. We continuously seek new data sources and conduct applied research to help us and our communities better define and understand these arenas. In the adjacent diagrams, the size of each quality of life domain represents the number of data partners contributing to the Charlotte Urban Institute and Data Trust.

The domains are:

- **Education:** Teaching and learning from pre-K through higher or vocational education.
- **Economy and Work:** Wealth, resources and the means to attain them.
- **Environment:** Natural and built surroundings including air, water and infrastructure.
- **Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Biological, psychological, social and spiritual wellness across the lifespan.
- **Housing and Homelessness:** The dwellings and neighborhoods where people reside and live their lives.
- **Justice and Safety:** Fairness, accountability and access to legal protection, including child welfare.
- **Transportation:** Movement within and across communities, the city and the region to meet individual and collective needs.
- **Arts and Culture:** Creative expression and communal values, tradition and heritage.
- **Engagement:** Participation in communities and collective processes.

Data Infrastructure

Our community data infrastructure supports understanding and improving these nine domains for everyone's benefit and includes the data tools and training we provide, as well as the services, technology, policies and practices that ensure access, security, ethical use and impact. Key tools of our infrastructure include:

- The Data Trust's [integrated administrative data system](https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/charlotte-regional-data-trust/)¹ that links the individual-level administrative data of more than 60 partners across organizational silos.
- The [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer](https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/quality-life-explorer/)², a partnership with the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville, provides data on more than 80 variables for 462 neighborhoods in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

¹<https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/charlotte-regional-data-trust/>

²<https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/quality-life-explorer/>



- The **Carolinas Regional Explorer**, currently in beta testing, provides data similar to the Quality of Life Explorer for the 14-county Charlotte region. The Regional Explorer adds analytic capacity and the ability to explore context and related data stories.
- The **public opinion survey center** includes a regional well-being and quality of life survey and an omnibus survey that allows partners to buy one or more questions. This reduces the typical cost of a representative survey for participating partners.
- The [Impact, Data and Evaluation Academy](https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/idea/)³, also known as IDEA, provides training and skill-building so people can put data and information to use in their organizations and communities.
- Technical Assistance contracts like the [Transportation Management Information System](https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/tims/)⁴ is an ongoing statewide project that maintains and improves efficiency in state public school bus transportation at the district level. TMS Support Staff at North Carolina State University and UNC Charlotte provide daily software and technical support to individual TMS data managers across the state.

³<https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/idea/>

⁴<https://ui.charlotte.edu/our-work/tims/>

People and Partnerships

The strength of our infrastructure is dependent on the people and partners who contribute data, expertise, context, join us in research and engagement, and put the infrastructure to work for our communities and region. There are many hands that shape our work and we highlight key stakeholder groups below.

- **Board of Directors and Committee Members.** The Data Trust Board maintains responsibility over the data held by the Data Trust, and different aspects of organizational and data governance are managed by our committees: the Executive Committee, the Data and Research Oversight Committee, the Data and Technical Advisory Committee and the Community Data Oversight Committee.
- **Data Partners.** Our tools are dependent on data partners who prepare and share their data and work with us to support use and maintain legal and ethical data practices. Our data partners and sources are listed in Figure 1.
- **Data Users.** Community, faculty and staff researchers turn the data available through the Data Trust's web portal and Explorer tools into information our community can use.
- **UNC Charlotte Partners.** The Institute is a unit of UNC Charlotte's Division of Academic Affairs and the Data Trust is a 501(c)(3) affiliated entity of the University. Faculty, staff, students, and the divisions of Academic Affairs, Advancement, Legal Affairs, OneIT and Research are key internal partners in our ongoing work.
- **Funders and Project Sponsors.** Funders and community organizations of every size contribute to the work of the Institute and Data Trust.

In 2025, we grew our participatory governance. We recruited the first group of Community Data Oversight Committee members and began meeting with the group on a regular basis to establish and work towards goals and objectives. CDOC is a committee of the Board of Directors that is comprised of 11 people who are represented or overrepresented in Data Trust data. The State of Our Data Reports informed committee recruitment.

OUR DATA



This section describes two key data sources at the Institute and Data Trust: (1) the spatial variables used for the Quality of Life Explorer and the emerging Carolinas Regional Explorer, and (2) annual deposits of administrative data into the Data Trust's integrated data system. Additional details on data, methods, and analyses are available in Appendix A.

Figure 1 (*small preview below; full graphic and explanation on next page*) describes the data sources by domain for the Quality of Life Explorer, Regional Explorer and the Data Trust's administrative data system. We have the most extensive data coverage in the housing and homelessness domain, followed by economy and work. Arts and culture represents the domain with the lowest amount of data coverage, and we continue to expand these partnerships.



OUR COMMUNITY DATA SOURCES

Our Data Sources by Arena

DATA TYPE LEGEND	● Explorer Data	● Integrated Administrative Data
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This list reflects all current data partners as of 12/31/25. The data partners in bold deposit data annually to the Data Trust. Data partners with an asterisk are those where the Data Trust does not store their data and where data is shared for specific projects. Data partners in italics are those who shared data for a single project in the reporting period.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS ● Ada Jenkins Center ● American Community Survey ● Charlotte land use planning ● City of Charlotte ● City of Charlotte Housing and Neighborhood Services ● City of Charlotte Neighborhood & Business Services ● Crisis Assistance Ministry ● DreamKey Partners ● Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region ● Heal Charlotte ● Homeless Management Information System (30+ agencies) ● INLIVIAN ● Mecklenburg County Code Enforcement ● Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds ● Mecklenburg County Tax Parcels ● National Housing Preservation Database ● North Carolina Housing Finance Agency ● <i>Roof Above</i> ● The Housing Collaborative ● U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	ENVIRONMENT ● Catawba Riverkeeper ● Charlotte Heat Mappers ● Charlotte land use planning ● Charlotte Water ● CharMeck 311 ● City of Charlotte ● City of Charlotte Solid Waste Services ● Haw River Assembly ● Mecklenburg County Land Use & Environmental Services Agency ● Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation ● Yadkin Riverkeeper SAFETY & JUSTICE ● Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department ● City of Charlotte Fire Department ● Cornelius Police Department ● Huntersville Police Department ● Matthews Police Department ● Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services ● Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office ● Mecklenburg E911 ● Mint Hill Police Department ● Pineville Police Department EDUCATION ● American Community Survey ● <i>Charlotte Bilingual Preschool</i> ● Charlotte Mecklenburg Library ● Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools ● City of Charlotte ● Girl Scouts Hornet's Nest Council ● Smart Start of Mecklenburg County ● University of North Carolina at Charlotte*	ENGAGEMENT ● City of Charlotte ● Mecklenburg County Board of Elections ● Town of Cornelius ● Town of Davidson ● Town of Huntersville ● Town of Matthews ● Town of Mint Hill ● Town of Pineville HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING ● Atrium Health* ● Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance ● Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation ● <i>Medic</i> ● North Carolina Board of Pharmacy ● <i>Novant Health</i> ● Smart Start of Mecklenburg County TRANSPORTATION ● American Community Survey ● Charlotte Area Transit System ● Charlotte Department of Transportation ● Charlotte land use planning ● City of Charlotte ● NC Department of Transportation ARTS & CULTURE ● Charlotte Museum of History ● Levine Museum of the New South ● Mint Museum
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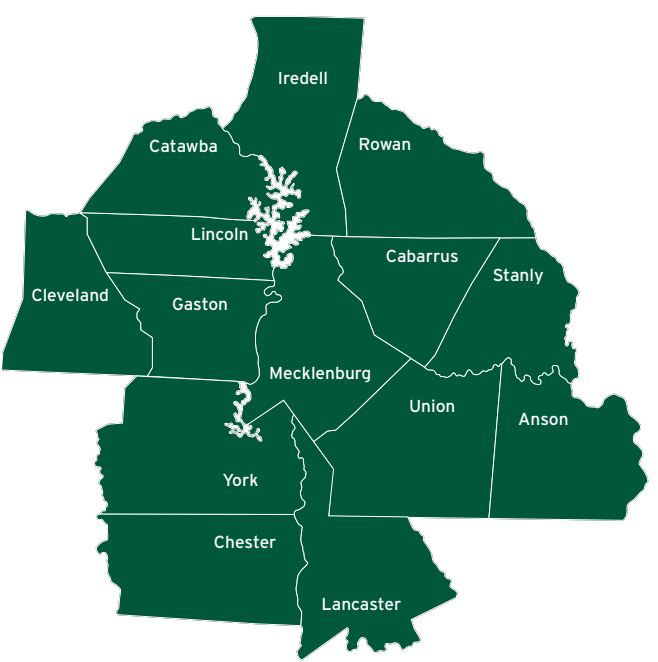
FIGURE 1 – Our Community Data Sources

Explorer Data

The focus of our communities’ Explorer data is on place. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer and emerging Carolinas Regional Explorer use data from multiple sources to map quality of life-related data across counties, towns and neighborhoods. These data help us understand our own spaces and places, but also help us see patterns – areas where we are thriving together, or areas where we have work to do – to ensure everyone can share in the prosperity of our city and region.

The [Quality of Life Explorer](#) focuses on Charlotte-Mecklenburg neighborhoods called Neighborhood Profile Areas. NPA boundaries were determined using census block boundaries informed by conversations with neighborhoods conducted by the City, County and University in 2011. While neighborhood boundaries may change over time, we generally do not adjust neighborhood boundaries, which make it possible to observe patterns in the same place over time. The Data Trust incorporates this place-based data that can be linked with administrative data to provide additional neighborhood-level insights.

While neighborhoods are the focus for the Quality of Life Explorer, the Carolinas Regional Explorer, currently in beta testing, displays data at the larger census-tract level across the Institute’s 14-county region. Eventually, and as regional neighbors express interest, the Institute can work with municipalities, county governments and their residents to create more granular tools like the Quality of Life Explorer. In the meantime, the Regional Explorer will offer an integrated lens on how quality of life in our region changes across place and time.



The Carolinas Regional Explorer covers the Institute’s 14-county region, providing a regional view of quality of life across place and time.

In 2025, work with the Explorer tools included the following milestones:

- Added [Heat Index to the Quality of Life Explorer](#). Geolocated point data was gathered using car-mounted mobile sensors by community volunteers during an effort led by Charlotte Heat Mappers.
- Initiated concerted efforts to re-establish an arts and culture variable on the Quality of Life Explorer. The Institute and Data Trust worked to establish data sharing partnerships with local museums. **Three organizations signed agreements in 2025.**
- Conducted training with Charlotte-Mecklenburg library staff regarding the Quality of Life Explorer so they can serve as an extended public resource for the tool.
- Developed both the back-end and front-facing platform to host the Carolinas Regional Explorer. Development included building out analysis tools to view trends over time and across space, as well as to look at relationships between multiple variables. The Carolinas Regional Explorer will formally launch in fall 2026.

Administrative Data

The Data Trust’s integrated administrative data system uses data that are collected for an organization’s operational purposes such as managing program enrollment or tracking services provided. Integrating administrative data addresses the central challenge of organizational and information silos, particularly across the often fragmented health and human services landscape. Community challenges and opportunities span organizations and sectors, but the data that would help us better understand issues and create solutions are located in individual agencies. Integrated administrative data systems allow us to more comprehensively understand how people move within and across organizations and sectors. Importantly, the Data Trust practices strong data ethics and vet all uses of data through our participatory governance processes.

The focus of the Data Trust’s integrated administrative data system is on people. Because the Data Trust’s administrative data is about people and, because the information that organizations collect on people’s lives can be sensitive and private, there is an additional layer of legal responsibility. As such, ongoing governance processes accompany our work. We manage the deposit, use and privacy of these data with a suite of legal agreements and a decision-making process that all partners agree to before joining the Data Trust (visit [the Data Trust website](#) for a description of how the Data Trust works).

This year’s report includes data from one more partner: Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance. See Appendix B for more information. The data from these partners is reflected in all analyses, including longitudinal analyses, and therefore historical counts in this report may differ from previous reports.

FIGURE 2 – Standing Data Partner Names, Abbreviations, and Colors

NAME	ABBREV. & COLOR	DOMAIN
Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department – Adult Victims	CMPD	Justice & Safety
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Homeless Management Information System (28 partner organizations)	HMIS	Housing & Homelessness
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	CMS	Education
City of Charlotte Housing and Neighborhood Services – House Charlotte	House CLT	Housing & Homelessness
Crisis Assistance Ministry	Crisis	Housing & Homelessness
Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont	GW	Economy & Work
Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region – Critical Home Repair	Habitat – CHR	Housing & Homelessness
Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region – Homeowner	Habitat – Homeowner	Housing & Homelessness
Housing Collaborative	HC	Housing & Homelessness
INLIVIAN (includes waitlist)	INLIVIAN	Housing & Homelessness
Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance	LNA	Economy & Work
Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services – Abuse and Neglect Investigations	CFAS – ANI	Justice & Safety
Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services – Children in Custody	CFAS – CIC	Justice & Safety
Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services – Family In Home Services	CFAS – FIHS	Justice & Safety
Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources – Economic Services	DCR – ES	Economy & Work
Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office – Arrest Processing Center	MCSO – Arrest	Justice & Safety
Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office – Booking	MCSO – Booking	Justice & Safety

The administrative data described below includes the data holdings of our standing partners, both individual and collaborative partnerships.⁵ We use abbreviations and colors to refer to data partners in the graphics in the report. The colors are associated with the quality of life domain that each data partner represents. For example, all data partners who represent the Housing and Homelessness domain will be the same color (see Figure 2).

Below, we describe the count of unduplicated individuals in our data holdings, the extent to which individuals are present in the data of multiple partner organizations, and individual’s demographic characteristics. We describe an annual count of our reporting year: 2025. We also provided longitudinal information since 2016.⁶

See Appendix A for a more in-depth description about partner years and methods included in analyses and all data tables.

How Many Unique People are Reflected in Our Administrative Data?
In 2025, administrative data on 397,572 unduplicated individuals were included in the Data Trust, approximately 33% of the Mecklenburg County population (American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2024). Compared with last year’s report, there are four percent fewer unique individuals represented (n=16,902; total unique people in 2024 was 414,474). This report does not include 2025 data from Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office, which may account for some of the decrease.

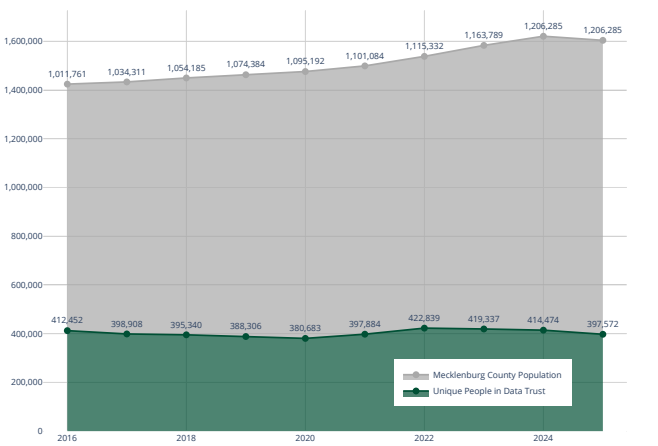


FIGURE 3 – Since 2016, the number of unique people in the Data Trust has remained relatively stable, representing about 36.5% of the Mecklenburg County population (n=1,161,819). Note: the Mecklenburg County population number is from the 2024 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

⁵Habitat for Humanity for the Charlotte Region, Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office and Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services share more than one distinct dataset with the Data Trust. Depending on the analysis, they may be described as one organization or as a specific dataset.
⁶When possible, data partner datasets are provided for dates 1/1/2025-12/31/2025. For Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the 2024/2025 school year is the most recent school year used in this report. Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont data begins 1/1/2020. MCSO - Arrest ends 4/30/2022. MCSO - Booking ends 12/31/2024. For more information see Appendix A.

Since 2016, over 1.1 million (1,161,819) unique individuals administrative data have been reflected in the Data Trust, while overall annual unduplicated counts of individuals remain fairly steady, ranging between 381,398 in 2020 to 422,744 in 2022, or 34.8% to 37.9% of the annual Mecklenburg County population. Figure 3 below describes the annual unduplicated count of individual data in the Data Trust compared to the annual Mecklenburg County population.

Figure 4 displays the total number of unique individuals by data partner as of the latest available year for each data partner. Unless otherwise noted, the numbers are for the entire 2025 calendar year. Data partners vary widely by how many people they serve and the size of their datasets. The largest datasets are Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources - Economic Services, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Crisis Assistance Ministry and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department

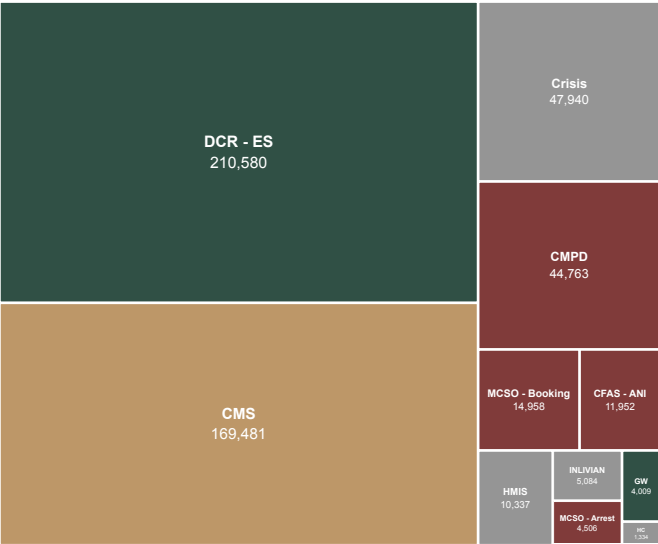


FIGURE 4 – DSS - ES, CMS, Crisis, and CMPD represent the largest data partners (n= 409,725). Note: MCSO - Booking represents 2024 and MCSO - Arrest represents 2022. Not shown due to smaller populations: CFAS - FIHS n=959; Habitat - CHR n=215; CFAS - CIC n=206; Habitat - Homeowner n=167; LNA n=139; House CLT n=101.

Seven data partners had fewer unique people compared with last year’s report. The largest changes were from Homeless Management Information System (-31% change; n=4,658) and Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services - Family in Home Service (-16.9% change; n= 195):

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (-4.6% change; n=8,236)
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department (-5.4% change; n=2,573)
- Homeless Management Information System (-31.1% change; n=4,658)

- Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont (-13.6% change; n=631)
- Housing Collaborative (-11% change; n=165)
- Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services - Family in Home Services -16.9% change; n= 195)
- Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region - Homeowner (-12.6% change; n=24)

Seven data partners increased the number of unique people compared with last year’s report.⁷ The largest changes were from Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region - Critical Home Repair (+59.2% change; n=80) and INLIVIAN (+24.2% change; n=992):

- Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources - Economic Services (0.77% change; n=1,625)
- Crisis Assistance Ministry (0.55% change; n=264)
- Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services - Abuse and Neglect Investigations (4.3% change, n=493)
- INLIVIAN (24.2% change; n=992)
- Habitat for Humanity - Critical Home Repair (59.3% change; n=80)
- Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services - Children in Custody (15.7% change; n=28)
- City of Charlotte Housing and Neighborhood Services - House Charlotte (5.2% change; n=<10)

See Appendix A for more information.

What are the Characteristics of the People in the Data Trust’s Administrative Data?

The administrative data held by the Data Trust includes information our partners collect about the characteristics of the people they serve. Whether specific data are collected, however, isn’t always consistent. These variations are typical in administrative data and can be driven by government regulations, funding requirements and/or simply the evolution of an organization’s data system. Figure 5 describes the types of characteristics that are collected by each of the Data Trust’s standing data partners in their most recent deposit.

Normalization: The data collected about people’s characteristics may vary from partner to partner. The Data Trust *normalizes* these data, meaning we make methodological decisions to standardize the data so they can be grouped and compared. Namely, we normalize the names of the racial, ethnic and gender groups because there is variation across data partners. The Data Trust acknowledges the need to standardize data as well as the risk of doing so, particularly when it can obscure and oversimplify identities. More information about normalization is available in Appendix A.

	Race*	Ethnicity*	Children*	Adults*	Geography*	Gender*	Education Level	Disability	Income	Birth County	Military/Vet Status	Allows for multiple races
CMS	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		
CMPD	✓	✓		✓		✓						
Crisis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CFAS-ANI	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓
CFAS-CIC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
CFAS-FIHS	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓
DCR-ES	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
GW	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓			✓
Habitat – CHR	✓			✓				✓			✓	✓
Habitat – Homeowner	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		
HC	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
HMIS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
House CLT	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
INLIVIAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
LNA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
MCSO – Arrest	✓	✓		✓		✓						
MCSO – Booking	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						

*Characteristics described further below.

FIGURE 5 – There is variation in the characteristics collected by data partners.

As the figure above shows, there is variation in what data partners collect. This section focuses on variables that are collected the most consistently across data partners: race, ethnicity, gender, age and geography. We also include a map related to median income. In future reports, more detailed income data may be included.

Race and Ethnicity

In 2025, the majority of individuals (46.6%, n=185,388) whose administrative data are in the Data Trust identified as Black or African American (see Figure 6). That is the same as the share of individuals who identified as Black or African American in last year’s report (46.5%, n=191,496). White individuals were the second largest group in the Data Trust, representing 21.8% of individuals (n= 86,657), roughly 1.6% less than last year (23.4%, n=96,518).

The share of individuals who identified as multiracial increased by 1.5% compared with last year. Those who identified as multiracial represented 15.9% (n=63,078) of individuals in the Data Trust in 2025 (14.4%, n=59,329 in 2024). All other racial and ethnic identities remained roughly the same as last year.

Individuals who identified as Hispanic or Latino made up 9.5% (n=37,670) of people in 2025 (9%, n=36,983 in 2024). Those identifying as Asian were 4.4% (n=17,304) of the people in the data (4.4%, n=18,071 in 2024). Individuals who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander each made up less than one percent of the

Data Trust’s administrative data (0.2%, n=607; 0.1, n=281, respectively), remaining the same as last year (0.2%, n=734; 0.1%, n=320, respectively in 2024).

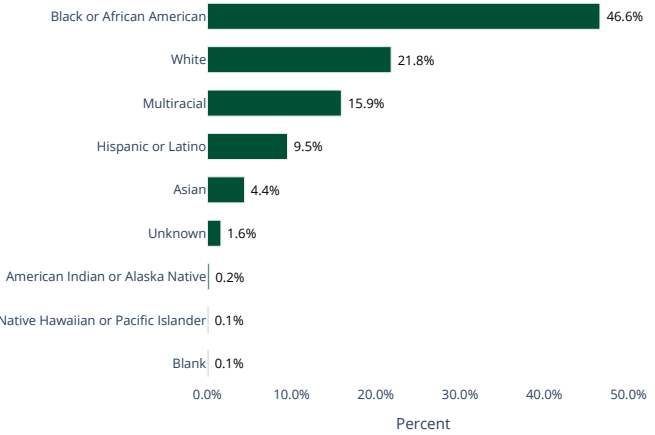


FIGURE 6 – In 2025, the majority of people in the Data Trust identified as Black or African American. People who identify as white represent the second largest group. (n=397,572).

Since 2016, the proportions of racial and ethnic groups represented in Data Trust data have been relatively similar. There has been a slight increase over time in the percentage of Hispanic or Latino people and/or multiracial people, and where race/ethnicity is unknown, as well as a slight decrease in White people, similar to larger population trends in Mecklenburg County over the same period (Figure 7).

⁷Mecklenburg County Sheriff’s Office - Booking and Arrest and Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance are not included because we don’t have 2025 data from the Sheriff’s Office and Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance was not included in last year’s report.

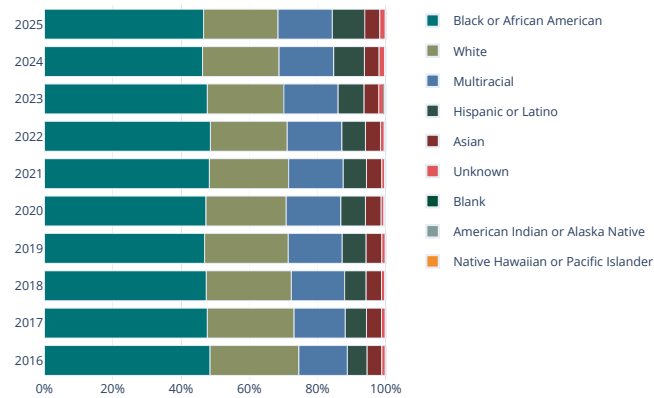


FIGURE 7 – Since 2016, the share of racial and ethnic identities has been fairly steady, with a slight increase of people who identify as multiracial and/or Hispanic or Latino and where race/ethnicity is unknown.

Compared to the Mecklenburg County population, people who identify as Black or African American are overrepresented in Data Trust data (see Figure 8). People who identify as Black or African American make up 29% of Mecklenburg County, overall, compared with 46.6% of people in the Data Trust. People who identify as multiracial are also overrepresented in the Data Trust, compared with Mecklenburg County; *there*

are more than three times more individuals who identify as multiracial in the Data Trust than the County overall. This may be due to the fact that, in the Data Trust data, we included a count for all racial categories a person identified within any dataset. We may be capturing more detail than the U.S. Census is able to report.

White individuals are underrepresented in Data Trust data in comparison to the Mecklenburg County population; the share of people who identify as White in the Data Trust is half of the share of people who identify as White in Mecklenburg County, overall. People who identify as Asian, and Hispanic or Latino individuals are also underrepresented in the Data Trust. There is a slightly higher percentage of people who

Representation: In several places, this report describes proportionate representation and disproportionate overrepresentation or underrepresentation. This refers to how the data we hold compares to data on the overall population of the County or the particular area we are describing. Understanding representation is important in the use and interpretation of Data Trust data.

Understanding Data Overrepresentation and Underrepresentation

There are a number of possible reasons for overrepresentation and underrepresentation in Data Trust data. One reason may be the implications of eligibility criteria. Many of the datasets at the Data Trust are associated with economic and other eligibility criteria. For example, people who apply for Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources - Economic Services (our largest dataset) are seeking financial support. Undocumented individuals, however, are not eligible for many government programs and this may deter mixed-status households (households that include both documented and undocumented immigrants) from enrolling in services (e.g., Bovell-Ammon et al., 2019; Vargas & Pirog, 2016). This could lead to underrepresentation of Hispanic or Latino people in the Data Trust data despite their size and growth in the broader Mecklenburg County population. For context, 11.7% of the Mecklenburg County population are not U.S. citizens, though they may have other legal status (U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2024, Table B05001). Additionally, 34% of people who identify as Hispanic or Latino in Mecklenburg County are under 18 years old, which may also influence their underrepresentation in datasets that only include adults (U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, 2024, Table B01001).

While eligibility criteria may account for the above underrepresentation, explanations for disproportionate representation in administrative data may be less straightforward. For example, historic policies and practices

like redlining and subsidized housing support explicitly restricted equal access to housing and homeownership, and has been linked to a negative impact on wealth generation for families of color (e.g., Scott, 2024). These early and subsequent policies have contributed to the wealth gap between Black and White households impacting who has sufficient household or network wealth to prevent or delay use of public safety net programs. This can partly explain why people who identify as Black or African American, who have less access to wealth that can prevent safety net use, are overrepresented in the Data Trust data.

It is also important to consider who is more likely to be monitored in our society and for what reasons. Even in an age of digital surveillance through our phones and wearables, we are more likely to collect sensitive data during people's most difficult times, and disproportionately so, from families of color and families who are poor (e.g., Eubanks, 2018; Fong, 2020). Understanding the extent and implications of disproportionate representation in our data can help us make ethical decisions about data use and guard against research that furthers harm.

Want to dive deeper? Visit <https://ui.charlotte.edu/state-of-our-data/> for detailed pictures of each racial or and ethnic identity and the extent to which other identities are part of each category in Data Trust data and charts combining all racial and ethnic identities for every unique person, across all datasets from 2016-2025.

identify as American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander than the Mecklenburg County population.

Among people who are in more than one dataset in 2025 (n=88,733), the over- and underrepresentation is even more pronounced (see Figure 9).

For the groups that are overrepresented:

- People who identify as Black or African American, and who are in more than one dataset, make up 59.7% (n=53,014) of people who are in more than one dataset, compared to 46.6% (n=185,388) people who identify as Black or African American overall in the Data Trust. This is slightly lower than last year's report (two or more datasets 61.2%, overall 46.5%).

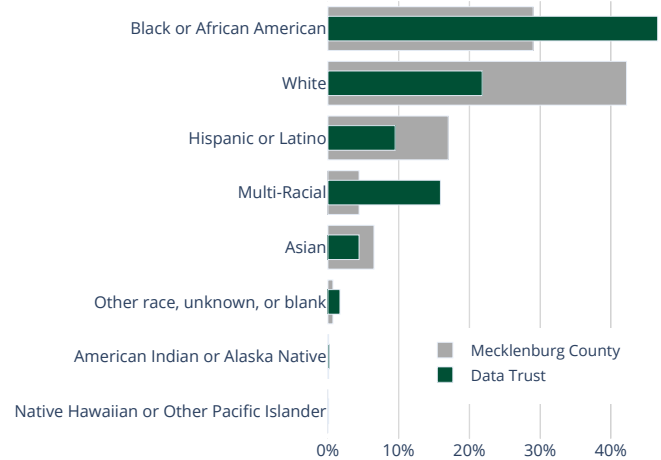


FIGURE 8 – The 2025 population of people in the Data Trust differs from the overall population of Mecklenburg County. People who identify as Black or African American or multiracial are overrepresented in the Data Trust (Data Trust n=397,572; County n=1,206,285).

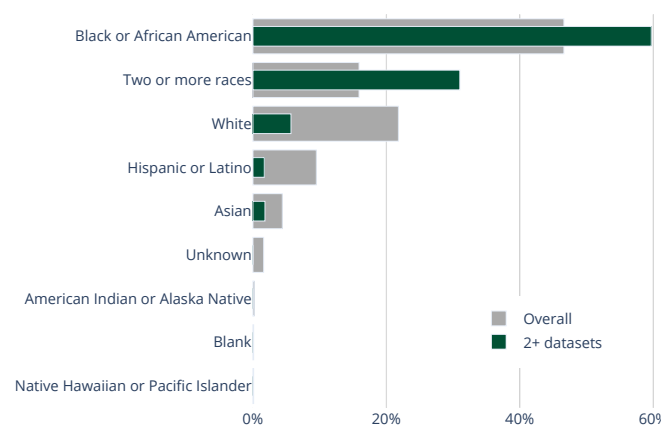


FIGURE 9 – For people who were in more than one dataset, the over- and under- representation is even more pronounced. The percentatges of people who identify as Black or African American or multiracial are far larger than the Data Trust, overall. The opposite is true for the groups that are underrepresented: people who identify as white, Asian, or Hispanic/ Latino are smaller than the Data Trust, overall (Overall n=397,572; 2+ datasets n=88,733).

- The percentage of people who identify as multiracial, and are in more than one dataset, is double the percentage of the overall population of people in the Data Trust (31%; n=27,499 and 15.9%; n=63,078, respectively). The share of people who identified as multiracial and were in two or more datasets increased 1.5%, compared to last year's report (28.5%).

For the groups that are underrepresented:

- The share of people who identified as White and were in two or more datasets (5.7%; n=5,090) is four times smaller than the people who identify as White in the Data Trust, overall (21.8%; n=86,657). The share of people who identified as White and were in two or more datasets decreased by about 1.2%, compared to last year's report (6.9%).
- People who identify as Asian and who were in two or more datasets (1.8%; n=1,598) are about half the share of people who identify as Asian in the Data Trust, overall (4.4%; n=17,304).
- Hispanic and Latino people who were in two or more datasets (1.7%; n=1,479) are roughly five times fewer than Hispanic and Latino people in the Data Trust, overall (9.5%; n=37,670).

All other racial and ethnic identities of people who are in more than one dataset represent similar percentages compared with the overall population of the Data Trust.

Gender

In 2025 people who identified as female (52.3%, n=207,764) made up a slightly larger share of people represented in the Data Trust than those who identified as male (see Figure 10; 46.2%, n=183,576). A small number of people represented in the Data Trust (1.56%, n=6,232) identified as a gender other than singularly male or female, with more than one gender, or had an unknown gender. This is similar to last year's report. The gender distribution is representative of the population in Mecklenburg County where females represent 51.7 % of the population and males make up 48.3 % (ACS 1-Year Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2024. Table DP05). The U.S. Census does not collect gender data other than male or female.

Age

In the Data Trust data, people are represented across different phases of the life course - from infancy to old age. Historically, the Data Trust focused primarily on children and families, but subsequent data partnerships extended to adults. For some data partners, like Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services - Abuse and Neglect Investigations and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, only children are represented; while some data partners, like Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department only collect or share information about

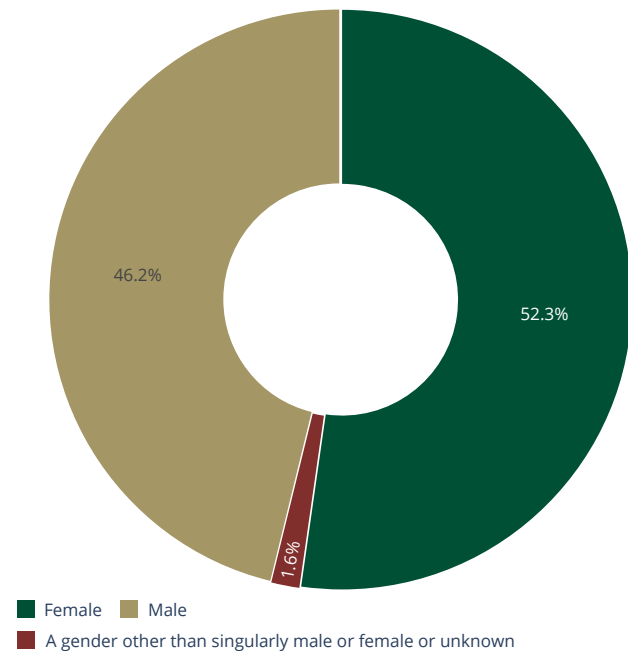


FIGURE 10 – The genders of people in the Data Trust are representative of Mecklenburg County (n=397,572).

adults. Other data partners, like the Homeless Management Information System, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance and INLIVIAN collect information about entire households, so both children and adults are represented.

Figure 11 displays the median age and age ranges of the people represented in each data partner in 2025. Outliers (negative ages and ages over a certain threshold) are filtered out. Age was calculated as of the most recent entry in 2025 for all partners except Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office - Arrest and Booking due to data availability. Most data partners have a population where the median age is under 40 years old. The people represented in Housing Collaborative, Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region - Critical Home Repair and Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance are slightly older and have a median age over 40 years.

Where do People in the Data Trust Live?

Address information partner datasets allow us to understand where people who are included in Data Trust data live across Mecklenburg County. Of the 397,572 unique individuals in Data Trust data in 2025, 90.8% (n=361,078) had one or more available addresses. The map on the following page (Figure 12) describes the neighborhood profile areas, also known as NPAs (these match with the Quality of Life Explorer), that correspond with the address of those in datasets where addresses are available: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources - Economic Services, Crisis Assistance Ministry, Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region- Homeowner, Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region - Critical Home Repair, City of Charlotte Housing and Neighborhood Services - House CLT, Housing Collaborative, INLIVIAN and

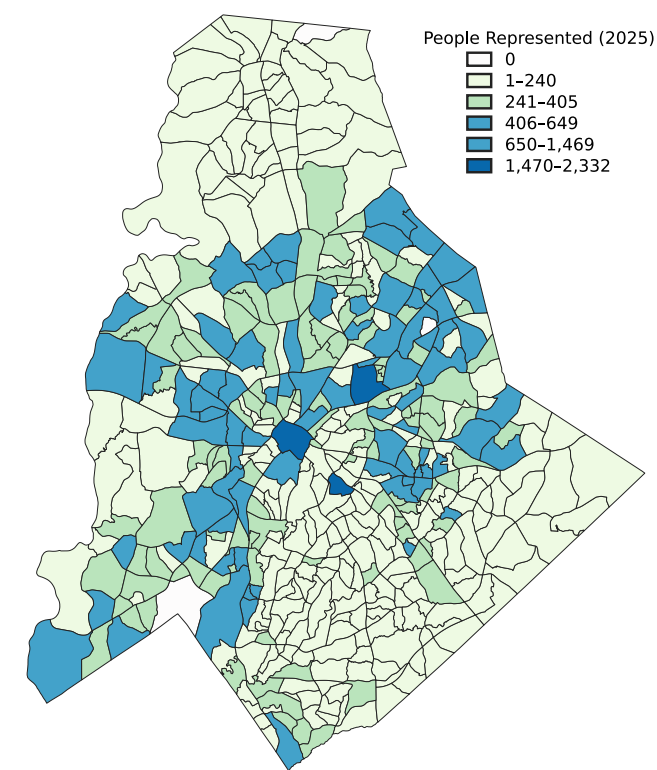


FIGURE 12 – People in the Data Trust are represented in nearly every NPA, with the highest numbers in neighborhoods along Monroe Road/Wendover Road, uptown, and along W. Sugar Creek Road/I-85/N.Tryon Street (n=361,078)

Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance. The blue colors represent neighborhoods where there are higher numbers of people represented in the Data Trust. The green colors have fewer people.

As the map portrays, individuals whose data are in the Data Trust are present in nearly all of our NPAs. But as the shading suggests, there are areas with a greater concentration of people from Data Trust data. **The five NPAs with the highest number of people represented in the Data Trust are:**

- NPA 370 - This area holds the Grier Heights neighborhood, Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region's administrative offices, and the Mecklenburg County Health Department
- NPA 476 - This area is Uptown Charlotte. This area also has the Roof Above day shelter, Crisis Assistance Ministry administrative offices, and other shelters and resources for people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.
- NPA 371 - This area holds part of the Hidden Valley neighborhood along the Sugar Creek/I-85 Corridor.
- NPA 53 - This area holds the Colony Acres neighborhood along Nation's Ford Road and I-77.
- NPA 234 - This area holds the Autumnwood neighborhood and is between Hidden Valley and UNC Charlotte.

Using the Quality of Life Explorer to compare these areas with Mecklenburg County as a whole, these areas have slightly higher percentages of people who identify as Black or African American and/or Hispanic or Latino; similar employment rates; lower median household incomes; higher rates of enrollment in Food and Nutrition Services; fairly similar rates of high school graduates; lower rates of voter participation; lower tree canopy; higher proximity to low cost health care, public outdoor recreation and public transportation; lower rates of homeownership, smaller sized homes, older homes, and relatively similar average home sales prices and rental costs; and higher rates of transit ridership.

WANT TO DIVE DEEPER? Visit <https://ui.charlotte.edu/state-of-our-data/> to explore how people are proportionately or disproportionately represented across different neighborhoods and income levels.

What and who is missing in Data Trust data?

The characteristics of the data described above demonstrate the complexity of the data and the people represented in the Data Trust. And yet, significant information is still missing from the available data. Having a better sense of who and what is missing in our data can guide future data partnerships and research focus.

For demographic data to be included in this report, at least 60% of data partners must collect data about that group. This year, disability status/type, veteran status and country of origin are not included because comparatively few partners collect the information and it does not meet the 60% threshold. Income is collected by at least 60% of data partners, however there is vast variation in how income is collected. We are exploring ways to standardize income variables to use in future reports. Decisions about standardizing these categories will be informed by our data partners and may be included in future reports.

In addition to the characteristics we didn't include in this report, the available data on the characteristics we **did** include may not be sufficiently comprehensive. For example, we should assume that we are underestimating the number of people who identify with a gender other than singularly male or female, since there is limited information collected. In addition, the available data is limited to a single ethnicity, Hispanic or Latino. And similarly, we do not have enough information about the country of origin of people in the data. We know the Charlotte region has a rich and diverse immigrant population, and country-of-origin data would help us better understand these groups. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools began sharing country of origin data in 2026, which we will explore for next year's report.

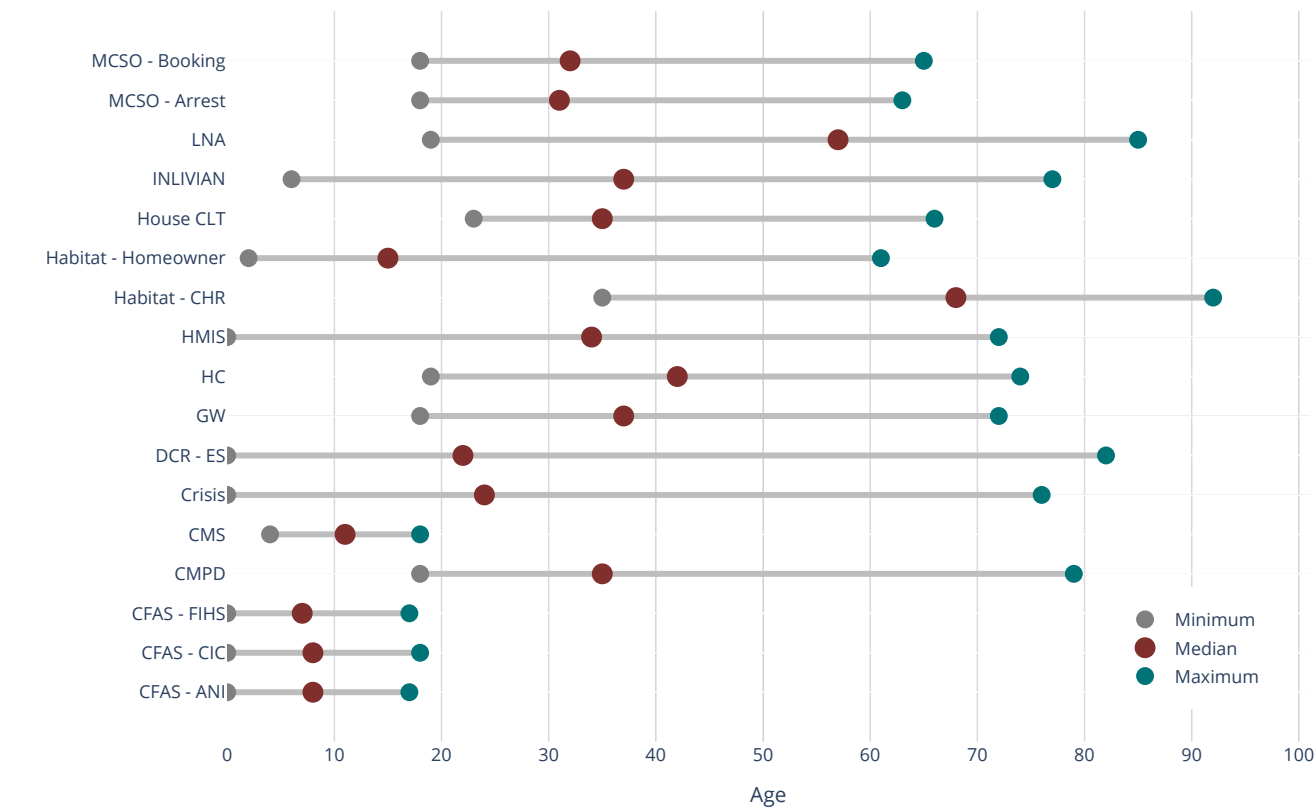


FIGURE 11 – People across the life cycle are represented in the Data Trust. Most partners have a population where the median age is under 40 years old.

Since many of our data partners are serving people who are in some form of economic crisis or a crisis that's closely associated with lower-income households (homelessness for instance), the Data Trust is missing data on people with higher incomes, who are likely not to experience some of the same hardships. Without this data, it's difficult to understand the pathways and factors that influence economic mobility. At the same time, the Data Trust also has data that represents positive aspects, such as homeownership. Among our partners who regularly deposit data, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is one of the few that serve a range of income levels. In order to better understand a comprehensive economic picture, including additional partners whose data include individuals across income levels will be important.

Additionally, the data may omit people who do not meet eligibility requirements for programs and services. This includes people who are not eligible for programs based on immigration status or because their income is above the eligibility threshold. The Data Trust data may, therefore, not capture those in our community who still struggle, but don't qualify for or interact with services, including those who could most benefit from interventions that may prevent a person from further hardships.

Since many of our data partners represent a fairly young population, we are missing comprehensive information about older adults in our community. Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services has shared five datasets related to services for older adults and adults with disabilities, which will be included in next year's report (see Appendix B for more information).

Finally, we are missing important data partners that could help us better understand who is thriving, who is left behind and why. While many areas such as homelessness and education are well represented in our current data, gaps remain in these and other domains. Arts and culture program data, health data, early childhood data, workforce data, and data from our broader metropolitan region would strengthen this community resource, and engage more partners and researchers in its use and application.

How are People Reflected Across Partners?

A key benefit of the Data Trust's administrative data system is the ability to understand the extent to which people served by one partner are also served by other partners. Operationally, it helps organizations understand if there are gaps in their services, if they are duplicating services or effectively layering services with another provider, or if their programs are reaching their target audience who may be best represented in another partner's data. From both an operations and research perspective, it is helpful to understand if involvement in one organization may impact outcomes in another. For example, if a student is in the child welfare system, how might that involvement impact school attendance or performance? Or if a person who is

experiencing homelessness secures stable housing, are they less likely to be arrested or use the emergency room?

Overlap Across Partners

In 2025, the majority of individuals whose administrative data were in the Data Trust's integrated data system were reflected in one partner's data (see Figure 13; 77.7%, n=308,839) and 17.8% (n=70,810) were reflected in two partners' data. This is very similar to the overlap reflected in last year's report. Comparatively few individuals were reflected in three or more partners' data with only 3.8% (n=15,245) reflected in

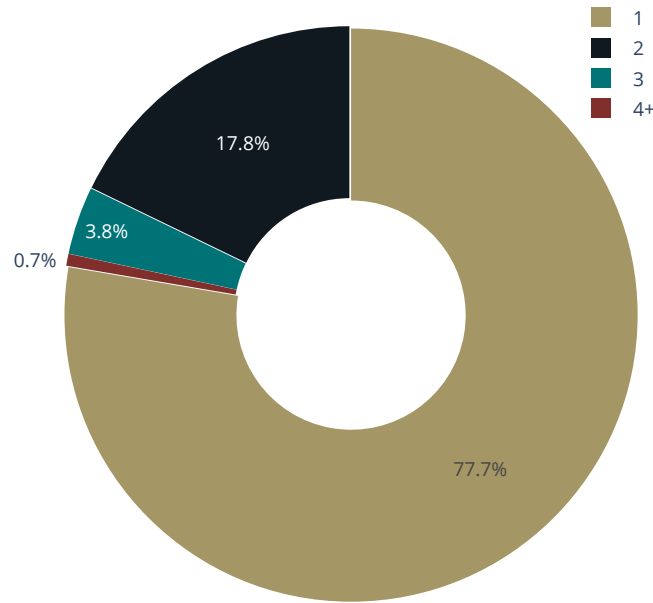


FIGURE 13 – In 2025, most people were in 1 or 2 data partners. 4.5% of people overlapped with 3 or more data partners (n=397,572).

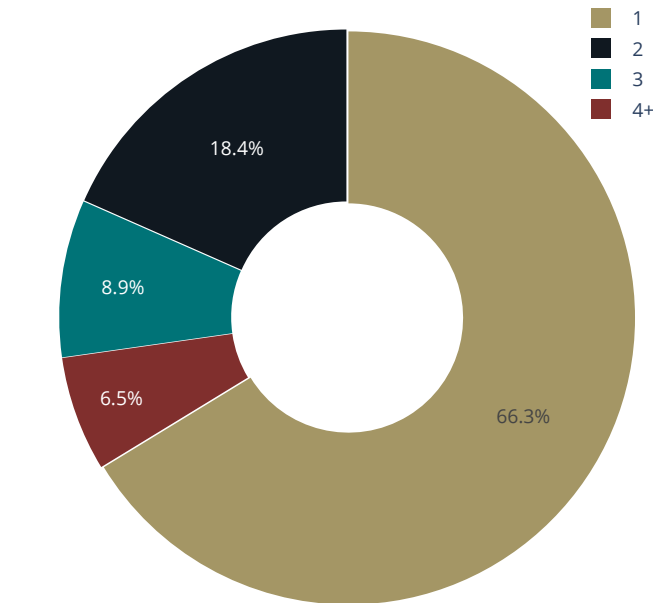


FIGURE 14 – Since 2016, roughly a fifth of people in the Data Trust were reflected in 2 data partner datasets. Nearly 180,000 people overlapped with 3 or more partners (n=1,161,819).

three, and 0.7% (n=2,678) reflected in four or more partner datasets.⁸ This is a slight decrease compared with last year's report.

Cumulatively, since 2016, about two-thirds (66.3%; n=770,058) of individuals whose administrative data is in the Data Trust were in one partner's data and 18.4% (n=213,643) were reflected in two data partners' data (see Figure 14). Importantly, the 15% of people who were in three or more partners' data number nearly 180,000 people (15.4%, n=178,118). A little more than 6% (6.5%, n=75,205) were reflected in four or more partners' data. These numbers are very similar to last year's report.

Both annually and cumulatively since 2016, the majority of individuals in the data were only in one partner's data, with a small minority reflected in three or more partners. This distribution represents a rich area for further research and understanding. For example, what factors are associated with individuals' involvement with multiple organizations or with only one? Are there shared characteristics or experiences of people who interact with three or more partners?

Notably, over time, we expect to see greater overlap between partners than we would see annually because individuals may be reflected in multiple services as they age. For example, a child or adolescent receiving child welfare services may be reflected as an adult in Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont or Charlotte-Mecklenburg Homeless Management Information System. These longitudinal patterns are also important patterns for further research. What factors in childhood predict whether the individual is more or less likely to become homeless as an adult? Administrative data along with Explorer data can be used to examine these and related questions about quality of life.

Overlap Across Datasets

Since the Data Trust is here to link data, it is also helpful to understand the extent to which each dataset overlaps with other datasets. Figure 15, called a chord diagram, visualizes the overlap across all datasets from calendar year 2025 or most recent calendar year available and includes all individuals, even if they did not overlap with another partner in 2025 (n=409,725).⁹ Data partners are color coded to associate with the domain they represent. See Figure 2 (page 17) for a reminder of the data partner abbreviations, domains and colors.

How to read the chord diagram: Each segment of the chart displays a partner dataset. The size of each segment shows how large that partner dataset is based on how many unique people. The different colored lines in each segment link to the additional categories people identified. Thicker lines represent more people.

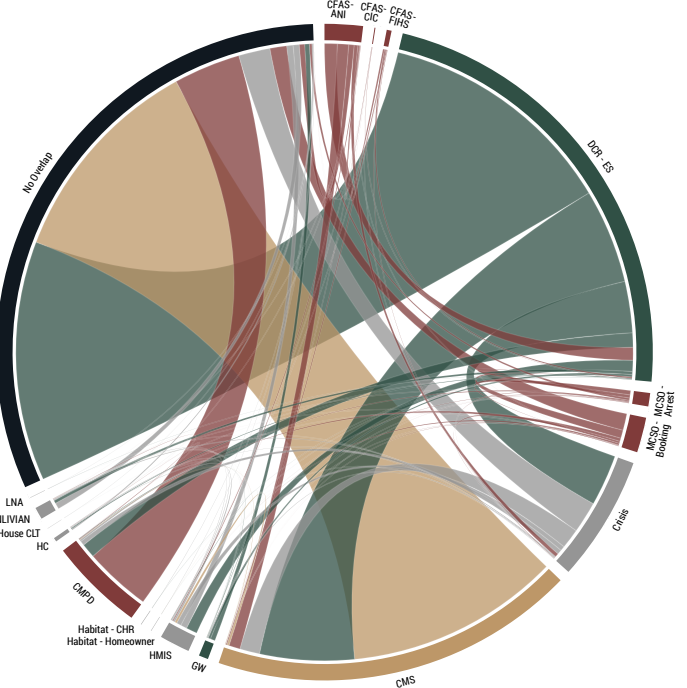


FIGURE 15 – Every data partner serves people who are also served by other partners (n=409,725). Note: 2025 is used for all data partners except MCSO - Arrest (2022) and MCSO - Booking (2024) due to data availability.

The colored bands within each data partner reflect the domains the people in each data partner are connected with. For example, under the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (red; safety and justice domain), there is a large share of people who have no overlap with other data partners (light grey), a portion that overlap with Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources - Economic Services (green; economy and workforce domain), and a small share who overlap with other data partners in the safety and justice domain. Thicker lines represent more people. The figure demonstrates the variety of ways that people are linked across datasets, and visualizes how people and data partners overlap with different quality of life domains. This presents opportunities to understand the nature of the overlaps and more comprehensively develop and consider solutions that span organizations and domains.

WANT TO DIVE DEEPER? Visit <https://ui.charlotte.edu/state-of-our-data> to explore the extent to which the individuals in each partner dataset were reflected in that of other partners during calendar year 2025.

The figure above (and others available in the online version) allows us to see how the systems and services in our community are linked by the people they serve. Every data partner serves people who are also served by other partners. Further analysis to understand these connections allows us not only to see connections across systems, but better understand, coordinate, and improve service delivery.

⁸Note the datasets within child welfare and criminal justice reflect many of the same people and may account for the slight increase in the share of people who are represented in three or more datasets.
⁹2025 is used for all data partners except MCSO - Arrest (2022) and MCSO - Booking (2024) due to data availability.

For example, we can better understand connections across the housing continuum (in other words, how people are linked across the data partners in the homelessness and housing domain). When we look at INLIVIAN (which includes people both receiving housing subsidies and on the waitlist), a small share of the people engaged with another agency providing housing support sometime in 2025: nine percent of people interacted with Crisis Assistance Ministry; almost six percent (5.7%) used a service through the Homeless Management Information System, and one percent were served by the Housing Collaborative. By exploring these connections, we can uncover elements of successful long term housing and where gaps in support may still exist.

The absence of overlap can also be telling. For instance, more than a third (35.2%) of the people in the Crisis Assistance Ministry dataset, and almost two-thirds (60.0%) of the people in the Mecklenburg County Department of

Community Resources - Economic Services did not overlap with any other data partners, which may provide opportunity to explore these gaps and connect people to additional resources if needed.

Sometimes, the absence of overlap reflects different populations reflected in data partners. For example, a little over half (50.2%) of the children and youth in the Mecklenburg County Child, Family and Adult Services-Abuse and Neglect Investigations dataset are linked with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, but a large share of the children are not yet school aged so would not be reflected in school data. Additionally, data partners like Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department Victim only represent adults, so they would be less likely to overlap with the datasets that involve only children. The various ways data overlap or fail to do so are rich opportunities for additional research.



The Institute and Data Trust maintains a community data infrastructure so that the data can be used for community benefit, specifically through research, evaluation and planning. As a resource to both the community and the University, we engage researchers who are based in our local government and nonprofits, as well as academic researchers doing community-engaged research and advancing knowledge in the nine domains we address. This section summarizes the use and impact of the Explorer tools, the ways in which Data Trust data were used, projects completed by Institute researchers during 2025 and the work of the [Impact, Data, and Evaluation Academy](#).

Twenty-one projects were started, two were continued and eleven projects were completed for a total of 34 active projects in 2025, not including initiatives like the Carolinas Regional Explorer and the Regional Well-Being Survey that will be launched in 2026. The three most studied quality of life domains across all of the Institute's work in 2025 were **Housing and Homelessness, Safety and Justice, and Economy and Work (Figure 16)**. Some projects explored multiple domains.

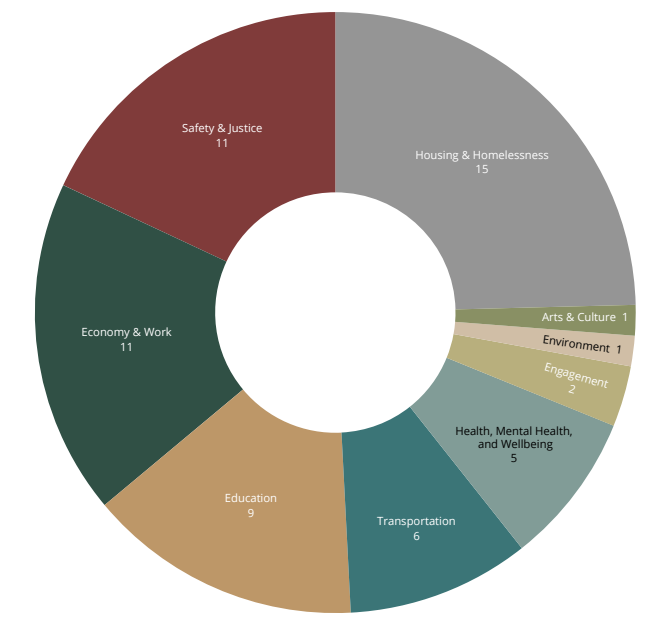


FIGURE 16 – The most studied quality of life domains in 2025 were housing & homelessness, safety & justice, and economy & work.

In 2025, the Institute also initiated three University Impact projects. University Impact projects are short-term, high-impact projects that draw on UNC Charlotte’s multidisciplinary expertise to complete research related to quality of life across the region. These projects incorporate a range of faculty expertise, as well as the perspectives of community partners. Impact projects involve partnerships with leaders from the corporate, government and non-profit sectors. This year’s impact projects were:

- Housing Trust Fund Research Brief Series (funder: City of Charlotte)

- State of Child Care in Mecklenburg County (partially funded by and co-led with Childcare Resources, Inc.)
- Alliance Health Managed Care Organization Research Roadmap (funder: Alliance Health)

Additional details are available in Appendix C.

Use of Explorer Tools

As publicly available tools, the Institute’s Explorer tools (Quality of Life Explorer and Carolinas Regional Explorer, in development) are used by many different stakeholders for a variety of purposes. Below, we share some highlights of the use and impact of the Quality of Life Explorer in 2025.

In 2025, more than 16,800 unique people visited the **Quality of Life Explorer**, roughly the same as last year. Additionally, this past year, the Institute hosted ten group presentations of the Quality of Life Explorer, half of which were to the UNC Charlotte campus community and half to the regional Charlotte community.

Quality of Life Explorer Group Presentations

Presentation Audience	Campus / Charlotte Region
Mecklenburg County Internal Consultants	Charlotte Region
UNC Charlotte Center for Community, Heritage and the Arts Event	Campus
Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services Youth Leadership Board	Charlotte Region
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library	Charlotte Region
CORE Series Faculty Engagement	Campus
Levine Scholars	Campus
Camino Research Institute	Charlotte Region
Public Health Graduate Students	Campus
Charlotte Urban Institute Open House	Campus
2025 Schul Forum	Charlotte Region
Innovation Incubator - Central Ave./ Albemarle Corridor	Charlotte Region

Want to get on this list? Email us at urbaninstitute@charlotte.edu

From Data to Impact - Quality of Life Explorer

One important way the Quality of Life Explorer is used is by the [Institute’s Innovation Incubator Project](#), led by Toye Watson, director of community and strategic partnerships. The Quality of Life Explorer serves as a key resource that allows residents to engage with the data, alongside their personal experiences, to explore and better understand neighborhood context, identify priority areas and envision their desired future for the community. In 2025, the Incubator concluded its work in the Sugar Creek corridor and began work with the Central Avenue/Albemarle Road corridor.

Data License Requests

People interested in using linked data from the Data Trust must submit a Data License Request, or, DLR.. The Data and Research Oversight Committee, composed of data partner representatives and university subject matter and methodological experts, reviews and decides on DLRs. Note: DLRs may be submitted during one calendar year and approved in the next calendar year, and it may take several years for a project to be completed.

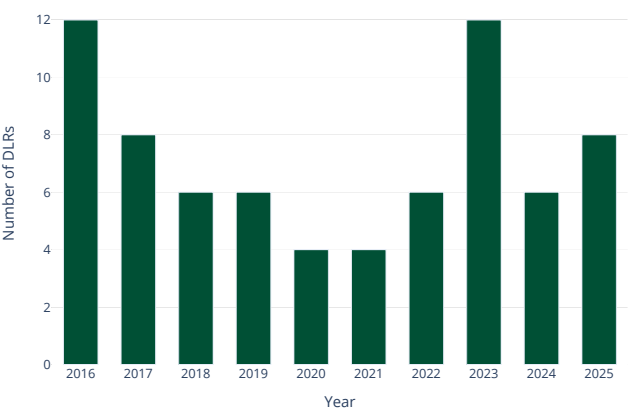


FIGURE 17 – The number of DLRs submitted varies year-to-year. 2025 had 2 more requests than 2024.

In 2025, there were a total of 20 active DLR projects: eight DLRs were submitted and approved, seven projects were completed, and five projects continued from previous years. The number of DLRs submitted and approved was 33% (n=2) more than in 2024. Figure 17 shows the number of DLRs requested by year. The project names of the DLRs submitted in 2025 are below. Most (n=6) explored the Housing and Homelessness and/or Economy and Work domains. Three DLRs explore the Health, Mental Health, and Well-being domain. More information can be found in Appendix C.

- **Quality of Life Explorer 2024 Update** - Project Lead: Katie Zager, Charlotte Urban Institute/Data Trust (Domains: Economy and Work; Education)

- **Evaluation of the Lakeview Guaranteed Basic Income Program** - Project Lead: Drew Reynolds Ph.D., Common Good Data LLC (Domains: Education; Economy and Work; Safety and Justice; Housing and Homelessness)

- **Assessing the role of peer support specialists in housing stability using the homeless management information system: A retrospective matched cohort study** - Project Lead: Lindsay Miller Ph.D., UNC Charlotte Health and Human Services (Domains: Housing and Homelessness)

- **SECU - The Rise on Clanton** - Project Leads: Eric Moore Ph.D., and Jenny Hutchison Ph.D., Charlotte Urban Institute/ Data Trust (Domains: Housing and Homelessness; Safety and Justice; Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing; Economy and Work)

- **State of Our Data 2025** - Project Leads: Sydney Idzikowski and Nick Occhipinti, Charlotte Urban Institute/ Data Trust (Domains: All)

- **Understanding how Charlotte Bilingual Preschool Prepares Dual Language Learners for Success in Elementary School** - Project Lead: Drew Gadaire, Ph.D., UNC Charlotte Department of Psychological Sciences (Domains: Education)

- **Project BOOST Retrospective Outcomes Analysis** - Project Lead: Annelise Mennicke Ph.D., UNC Charlotte School of Social Work (Domains: Safety and Justice; Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing; Housing and Homelessness; Economy and Work)

- **The Role of Social Services in Reducing Housing Instability: A Local Analysis in Charlotte, North Carolina** - Project Lead: Clysha Whitlow, doctoral student, UNC Charlotte Department of Psychological Services (Domains: Housing and Homelessness; Economy and Work)

The DLRs ranged between one and sixteen datasets. Four DLRs requested four or fewer datasets and four DLRs requested seven or more datasets. Figure 18 shows how many times a dataset was requested in 2025. DCR - ES, CMS

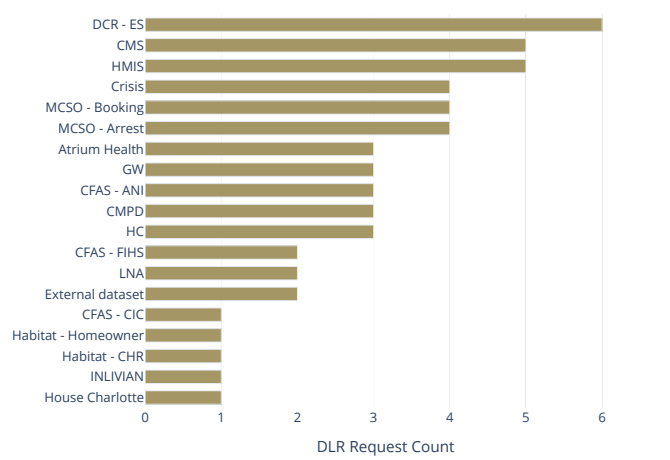


FIGURE 18 – DCR - ES, CMS, and HMIS were the most requested datasets in 2025.



FIGURE 19 – In 2025, most DLRs were from UNC Charlotte faculty and staff.

and HMIS Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources - Economic Services, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools remain the most requested datasets. Homeless Management Information Systems was the third most requested dataset in 2025. Two DLRs linked a dataset that is external to the Data Trust. The majority of the DLRs in 2025 were from UNC Charlotte faculty or students, followed

the Charlotte Urban Institute. One DLR was requested by a nonprofit outside of the region, but working with a nonprofit in the region (see Figure 19). In addition, five DLRs continued from previous years.

Completed Data Trust Projects

Seven Data Trust projects were completed in 2025. Four of the projects were completed by Institute researchers on behalf of a community partner and one project was completed by Institute researchers as an internal project. One was completed by an outside entity and one was completed by a UNC Charlotte staff member. The “Domain” column identifies the quality of life domain(s) that align with the project. The PIs and Organization column shows the principal investigator, or PIs, and their organization. Principal Investigators are the lead of the project. As available, links to the reports are provided. Each completed project has potential for continued research in the topic area. See something you’re interested in? Contact the Data Trust to talk about a data request (DataTrust@charlotte.edu). See Appendix C for more information.

Project Name	Description	Domain(s)	PI(s) & Organization
Student Emergency Fund - An Exploratory Analysis of Community Connections (January 2025)	The Vice Chancellor for UNC Charlotte’s Division of Student Affairs requested that Student Affairs Research and Assessment take a deeper look into our students who request Student Emergency Funds (SEF). This project identified whether students who request SEF are receiving (or received in the past) selected community resources or have had interactions with selected agencies outside of the university. You can read findings here.	Education; Housing and Homelessness; Economy and Work; Safety and Justice	Ellissa Brooks Nelson, Ph.D., UNC Charlotte Division of Student Affairs
Quality of Life Update (March 2025)	The Quality of Life team submits an annual DLR to update data on the Quality of Life Explorer. The Quality of Life Explorer can be accessed here.	All	Katie Zager, Charlotte Urban Institute and Data Trust
Examining Educational Outcomes for Children Involved in Foster Care (March 2025)	This project investigated educational outcomes of school-aged youth involved in the foster care system. The project used comparison groups of children in CMS experiencing homelessness and students who are neither homeless nor in foster care.	Education; Safety and Justice; Housing and Homelessness	Robert Pinka, Ph.D., Council for Children’s Rights
Transition age foster care youth and housing instability (June 2025)	This project examined the total prevalence of homelessness among foster-care youth and youth who participated in the Extended Foster Care program. The project reported on risk and protective factors for homelessness. This project was part of the State of Housing Instability and Homelessness Report series. You can read results here.	Housing and Homelessness; Safety and Justice; Economy and Work	Bridget Anderson and Jenny Hutchison, Ph.D., Charlotte Urban Institute
Understanding proportionality and representation in Data Trust datasets (June 2025)	This project was the initial data request for the annual State of Our Data Report. The report serves at the annual report for the Data Trust shows who is represented in the data, how people are linked across datasets, and how the data are used. You can read results here.	Education; Housing and Homelessness; Economy and Work; Safety and Justice	Sydney Idzikowski, Charlotte Urban Institute

Project Name	Description	Domain(s)	PI(s) & Organization
The Influence of Tutoring Services on Elementary Students Below Grade Level Math (June 2025)	The project evaluated the effectiveness of Heart Math Tutoring (HMT). HMT is a math tutoring program that works with dedicated volunteers to help elementary students develop foundational math skills. The project examined if there are differences in academic performance between students who receive tutoring through HMT and those who do not; whether the tutoring method and/or number of tutoring sessions affected academic performance.	Education; Economy and Work	Eric Moore, Ph.D., Charlotte Urban Institute
Good Jobs Charlotte - Workforce Development (December 2025)	This project sought to improve the understanding of local workforce development clients and their needs. The project examined the data that are collected by workforce agencies; the extent to which clients access workforce agencies; and what other community services do clients of workforce agencies engage with. This study focused on a critical issue: the fragmented nature of workforce development data. The project connected various information strands by highlighting this disjointed data environment, forming a unified representation that illustrates the challenges and opportunities within the local workforce landscape.	Economy and Work; Housing and Homelessness	Eric Moore, Ph.D., and Jenny Hutichson, Ph.D., Charlotte Urban Institute

From Data to Impact - Student Emergency Fund - An Exploratory Analysis of Community Connections

The research findings shifted the UNC Charlotte Student Emergency Fund from an isolated, one-time fix into a proactive, cross-department tool for retention and student well-being. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Dean of Students established Basic Needs Services as a dedicated new functional area, creating a centralized hub designed to streamline wrap-around support for students facing food insecurity and other basic needs. The findings served as a catalyst for deeper cross-departmental collaboration, prompting Student Assistance and Support Services to use applications as an opportunity to screen for broader vulnerabilities and connect students to community and campus resources

based on their needs to ensure students under financial stress receive comprehensive mental health and academic support. The findings also highlighted that financial relief alone cannot ensure long-term stability. In response, the Student Emergency Fund is now paired with financial education and skill building through Niner Finances, helping students avoid future financial shocks during their academic career while equipping them with financial management skills for life beyond graduation. Moving beyond addressing immediate financial need, the university leveraged the data to better address the root causes of student need by building intentional bridges between crisis relief and long-term financial stability and well-being.

Completed Institute Projects

In addition to the linked data projects described above, Institute researchers completed five research projects in 2025. The table below summarizes the projects that were completed in 2025. Links are provided where available.

Project Name	Description	Domain(s)	PI(s)
Ascent Housing Impact Fund - Phase 1 (April 2025)	This project developed an evaluation framework to assess the overall influence of the Housing Impact Fund on the well-being of households within their communities. The evaluation framework prioritizes the monitoring and measurement of long-term impacts of housing stability, as well as measurements related to the Community Health Worker and peer-parenting education programs.	Housing and Homelessness	Jenny Niu
A Home for All (June 2025)	Provided data capacity building and support for six agencies involved with the community-wide effort to end homelessness and housing instability in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The data capacity building will support the evaluation of the Initiative and help to ensure that high quality data is being collected ahead of, during, and after the evaluation.	Housing and Homelessness	Sydney Idzikowski
Knight Foundation West End News Ecosystem (July 2025)	This project investigated news sources and engagement, the information ecosystem in Charlotte's West End, and whether that information ecosystem is meeting the needs of residents and businesses. Read the findings here.	Engagement	Angelique Gaines
Sugar Creek Charter School TIMS Computerized Bus Routing (June 2025)	The Institute's TIMS staff assisted Sugar Creek Charter with training and software/data support services within the existing TIMS computerized bus routing software.	Transportation	Andrew McComery
Alternatives to Violence 3-Year Evaluation (December 2025)	The Institute evaluated the Alternatives to Violence program in Beatties Ford. This evaluation looked at three years of the program. Read the findings here.	Safety and Justice	Angelique Gaines, Fatima Rodrigues Caba

Impact, Data, and Evaluation Academy (IDEA)

2025 marked the first full year of the [Impact, Data and Evaluation Academy](#). IDEA provides low-cost, community-centered data and evaluation training that is designed with and for Charlotte-area nonprofits. In the past year, nearly 100 (n=96) organizations and 152 unique people participated in at least one IDEA offering. The organizations represent

nonprofits, social impact organizations, universities and government agencies.

IDEA provided six types of services to participants in 2025. The table below shows the types of services and how many people received that service.

Service	Service Description	Number of Services Offered	Number of Participants
Newsletter	Quarterly newsletter distributed with information about upcoming offerings and sharing free evaluation resources	4	83
Workshop	Single or multi-day workshops covering a range of evaluation and data topics.	3	54
Webinar	Webinar focusing on strategic narratives	1	33
Evaluation Office Hours	Short consultation sessions designed to answer specific questions or provide more information to interested participants	7	7
Data Service	More enhanced and specific services like a logic model and evaluation plan	2	1



The Institute and Data Trust's State of *Our* Data report summarizes and describes our data ecosystem, our data and its use. The report itself is intended to be a tool, focusing not only on what we have completed and developed over the past year, but also on who is missing, what needs to be improved, where there are new opportunities for collaboration, and, critically, assess our impact. This report also annually reminds us that:

Our data are people. Whether describing people or the places they live, the data we hold, curate and use for research and decision-making reflect human lives. This brings added responsibility, both in terms of protecting the privacy of data, but also in using it so it benefits the people reflected.

Simple categories hold immense complexity. The categories that we often take for granted to describe who we and others are hold a great deal of nuance and complexity. Categories we use to describe characteristics like race and ethnicity help us standardize and compare data, but they can also oversimplify or erase important aspects of people's identities and experiences. A community data infrastructure minds this tension and a resource like the Data Trust's integrated data system has the capacity to help us better understand and recognize the level of detail and the people behind the categories.

Understanding representation is essential. When compared to Mecklenburg County, people who identify as Black or African American, or who are captured in multiracial categories are overrepresented in Data Trust data. People in our datasets are also disproportionately located in lower-income neighborhoods in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. In addition, people with higher incomes are underrepresented in our data. Understanding disproportionate representation matters for research methods, analysis, and interpretation. It also matters strategically for the Data Trust, particularly in the recruitment of new data partners, as well as board and committee members.

Understanding disproportionate overrepresentation in Data Trust data also points to the importance of understanding data in context and linking administrative data with other forms of data, like broader population data from the Quality of Life Explorer as well as more qualitative, contextual and historical data to build a fuller picture of the people in our community and their experiences. There is a bigger story that additional forms of data allow us to tell.



CONCLUSION

Organizations and services in our community are connected by the people they serve. Whether intentional or not, services in our community are linked by the people receiving them. Seeing those connections across programs and partners (or where there are not connections) allows us to ask questions about them to better coordinate services, observe gaps and better serve those in our community that are engaged in multiple organizations and systems.

A community data infrastructure requires ongoing commitment. The report details the extent of our partnerships and the wide variety of data required to develop and maintain an enduring community data infrastructure. Accessible people and place data across multiple, interconnected domains like housing, health and transportation requires more than one leader or one organization or one sector. The community infrastructure stewarded by the Institute and Data Trust and our partners is a community effort and a community commitment.



And last, but not least, we invite you to join us as a partner in this work. Use the QR code below to let us know if you are interested in becoming a data partner or learning more about using our community data. You can also email us at datatrust@charlotte.edu.

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NOTES





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