



# Stout's Independent Evaluation of Cleveland's Eviction Right to Counsel

## *Key Findings*

January 31, 2022



- Prevented eviction judgments and achieved client housing goals
- Identifying and responding to housing conditions
- RTC-C responds to an eviction crisis that disproportionately impacts Black and female households
- Leveraging rental assistance
- Preliminary assessment of fiscal impacts
- Significant increase in eligible tenants who accessed a lawyer
- Themes from landlord counsel engagement activities

## *Prevented eviction judgments and achieved client housing goals*

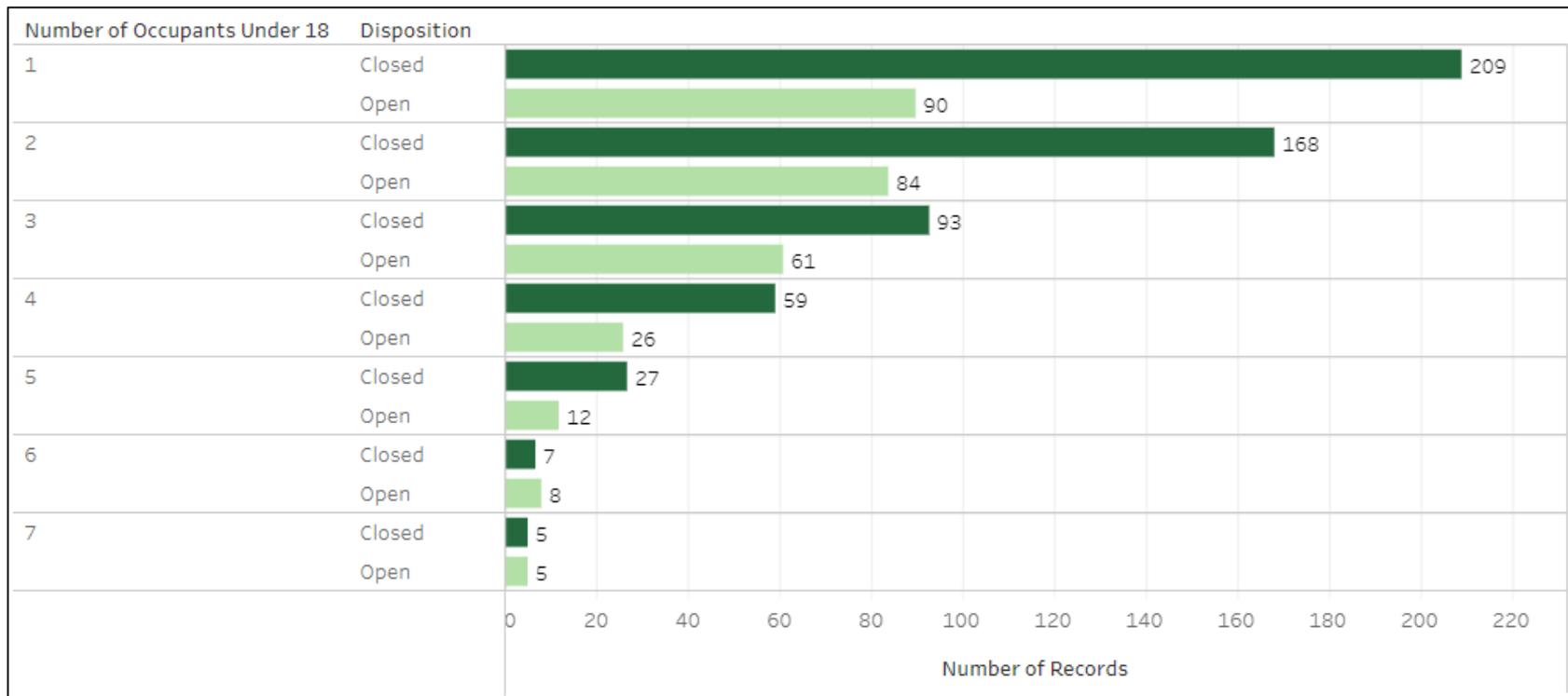
- Discussing client goals during the interview process
  - Client goals can change during the case
- Cleveland Legal Aid tracks 25 distinct client goals
- Key client goals achieved:

Outcome Achieved	Frequency Outcome Achieved	# of RTC-C Clients with Goal	% of RTC-C Clients with Goal
Prevented eviction judgment or involuntary move	93%	650	94%
Secured rental assistance	83%	342	50%
Secured time to move (30 days or more)	92%	299	43%
Mitigated damages	94%	288	42%
Secured monetary relief	97%	94	14%

- Cleveland Legal Aid achieved 92% - 99% for nearly all client goal categories in 2021

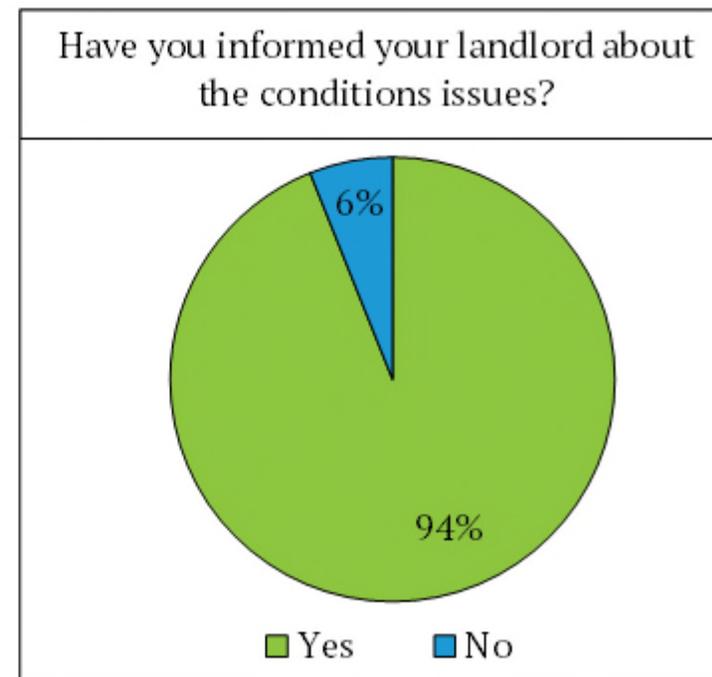
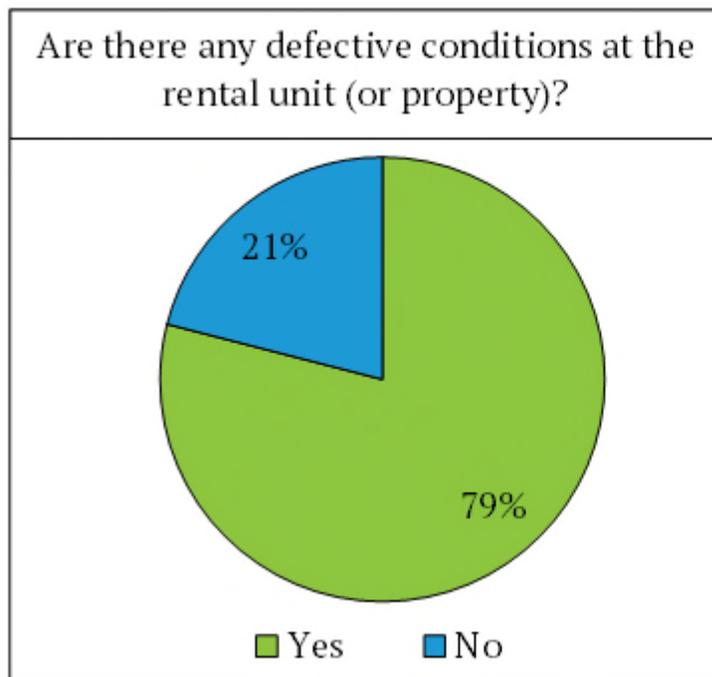
## *Prevented eviction judgments and achieved client housing goals*

- Nearly 1,300 children were served through RTC-C in 2021
- Children per client household ranged from 1 to 7, and the average number of children per client household was 2
- Approximately 64% of RTC-C client households had more than 1 child



## *Identifying and responding to housing conditions*

- Of RTC-C clients who answered interview questions related to sub-standard housing conditions:
  - 79% indicated that their home had at least 1 sub-standard housing condition, and 94% indicated they informed their landlord about the sub-standard housing condition(s)

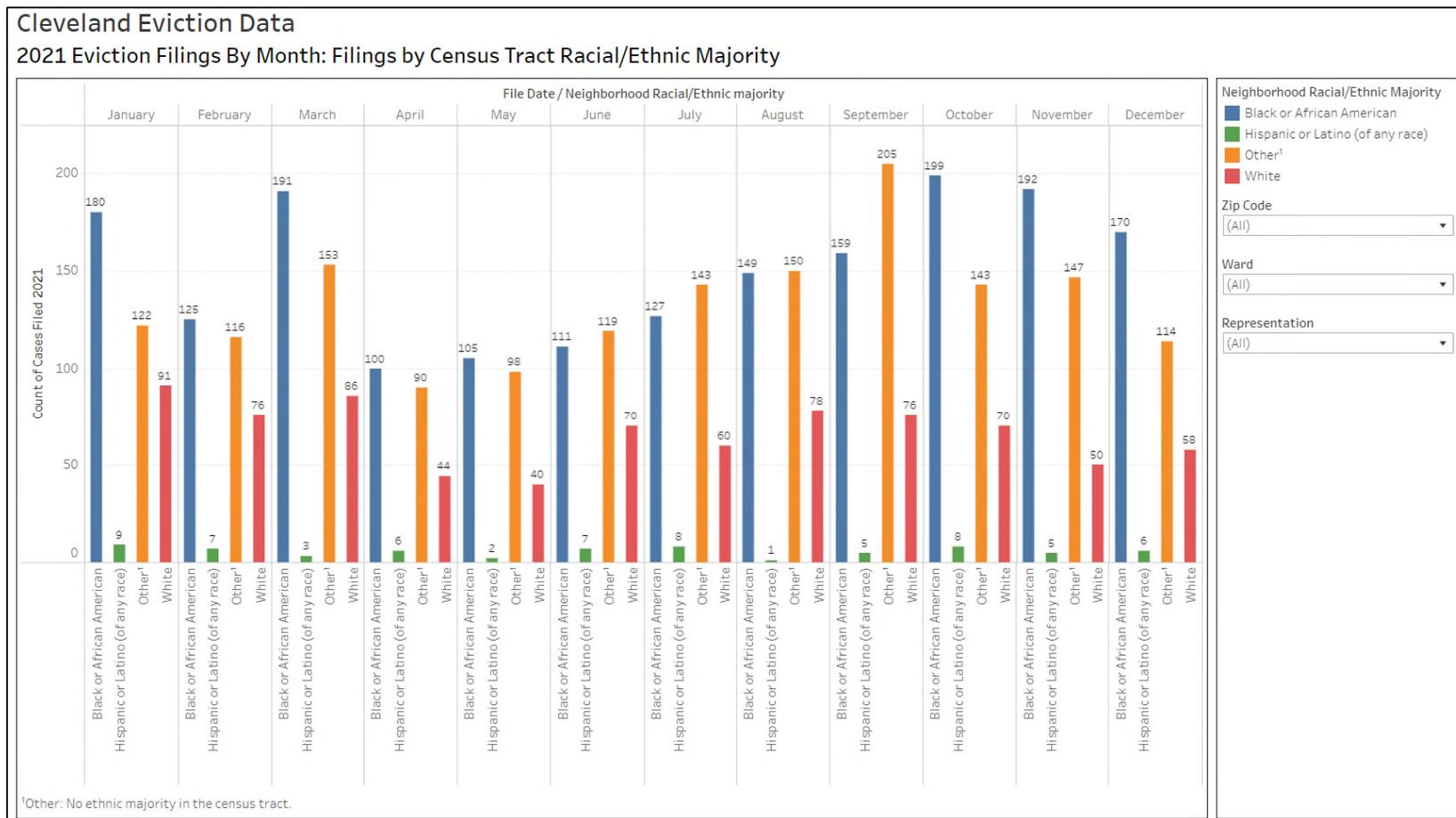


## *Identifying and responding to housing conditions*

- More than half of sub-standard housing conditions identified by RTC-C clients were:
  - Plumbing issues – 15%
  - Wall/ceiling/floor damage – 15%
  - Water damage/water leaks – 13%
  - Infestation or pests – 12%
- 2022 – working with Cleveland Legal Aid to understand better when clients stay in their homes, how frequently sub-standard housing conditions are remediated through representation
- 92% of clients who had a goal of securing more time to move were successful in achieving that goal

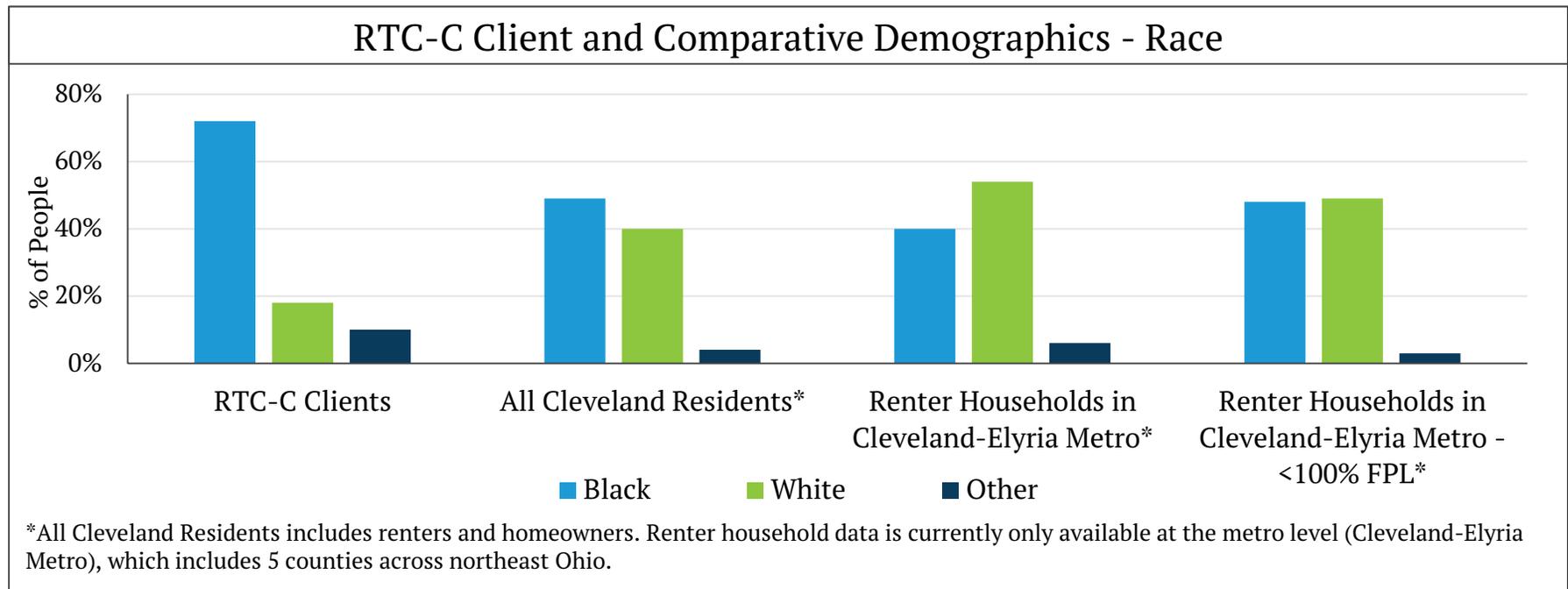
## *RTC-C responds to an eviction crisis that disproportionately impacts Black and female households*

- Cleveland eviction filings are concentrated in non-white majority census tracts



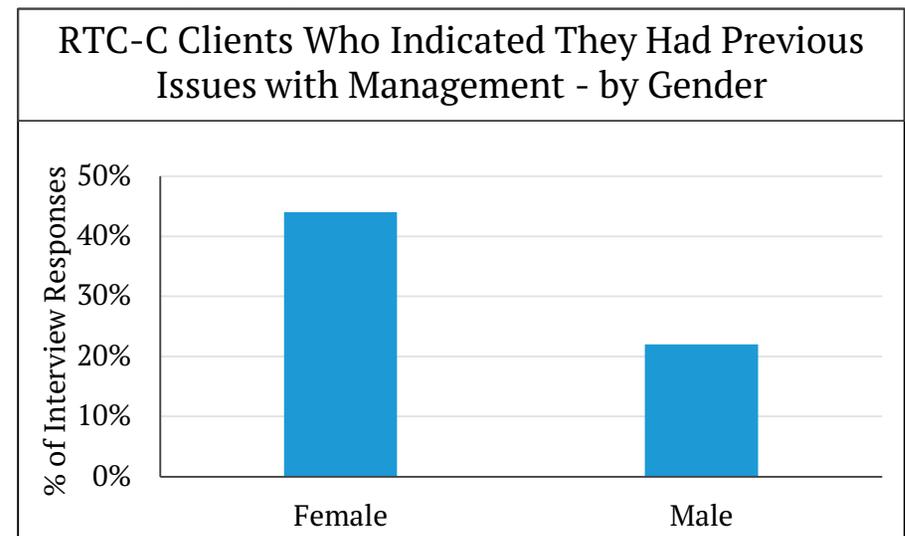
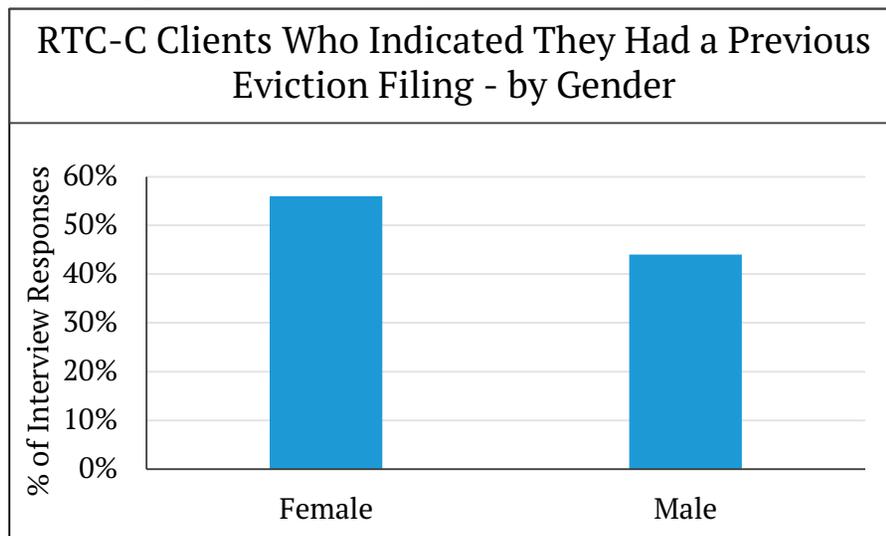
## *RTC-C responds to an eviction crisis that disproportionately impacts Black and female households*

- 42% of all 2021 Cleveland eviction filings were in majority Black or African American census tracts compared to 19% in majority white census tracts
- RTC-C clients are disproportionately Black and female compared to Cleveland's overall demographics and the racial demographics of renters in the Cleveland-Elyria metropolitan area



## *RTC-C responds to an eviction crisis that disproportionately impacts Black and female households*

- More Black or multi-racial RTC-C clients living in market rate housing experience sub-standard housing conditions (82%) compared to white RTC-C clients living in market rate housing (73%)
- More female RTC-C clients (56%) indicated they have a previous eviction filed against them compared to male RTC-C clients (44%)
- More female RTC-C clients (44%) indicated they had previous issues with management compared to male RTC-C clients (22%)

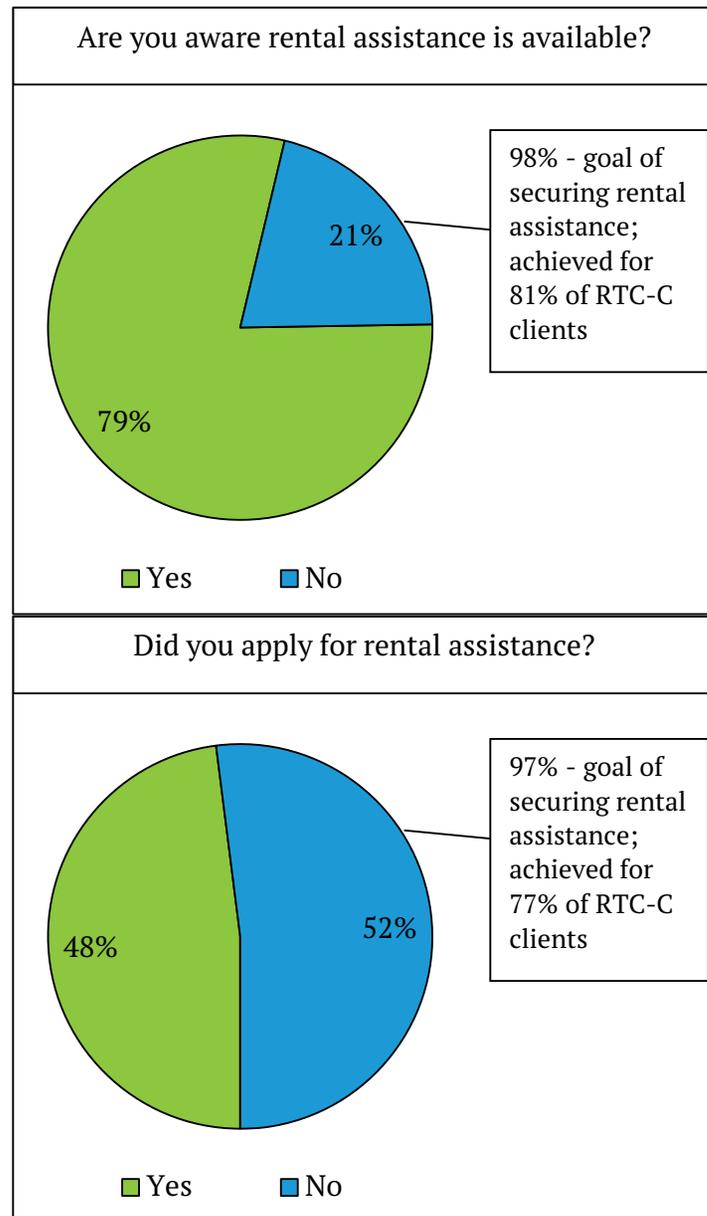


## *Leveraging rental assistance*

- More than \$28 million available for distribution, and \$17 million distributed in 2021
- CHN Housing Partners received and reviewed approximately 20,000 applications for rental assistance from Cleveland residents
- Like RTC-C clients, rental assistance applicants were disproportionately Black, female, and had incomes of 100% or less of the FPL
  - 73% of applicants with household incomes of 100% or less of the FPL also had at least 1 child
  - The number of rental assistance applicants that would likely also qualify for RTC-C compared to the actual number of RTC-C clients suggests that rental assistance has likely assisted in avoiding a significant number of eviction filings

## Leveraging rental assistance

- 79% of RTC-C clients indicated they were aware rental assistance was available
  - Of the 21% who were not aware, approximately 98% had the goal of securing rental assistance (in addition to other goals), and Cleveland Legal Aid achieved this goal for 81% of them
- Of the 52% of RTC-C clients who had not already applied for rental assistance, approximately 97% had the goal of securing rental assistance (in addition to other goals), and Cleveland Legal Aid achieved this goal for 77% of them



## *Preliminary assessment of fiscal impacts*

- Stout's estimates are preliminary and likely understated
- Preliminary fiscal impacts Stout was able to quantify based on currently available data:
  - Cost savings related to housing social safety net responses - \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million
  - Sustained education funding for children in Cleveland Metropolitan School District - \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million
  - Economic value preserved by retaining residency in Cleveland - \$1.4 million to \$1.6 million
  - Cost savings related to Medicaid spending on health care - \$108,000 to \$116,000
  - Cost savings related to out-of-home foster care placements - \$580,000 to \$620,000
- Total estimated preliminary fiscal impact - \$4.3 million to \$4.7 million

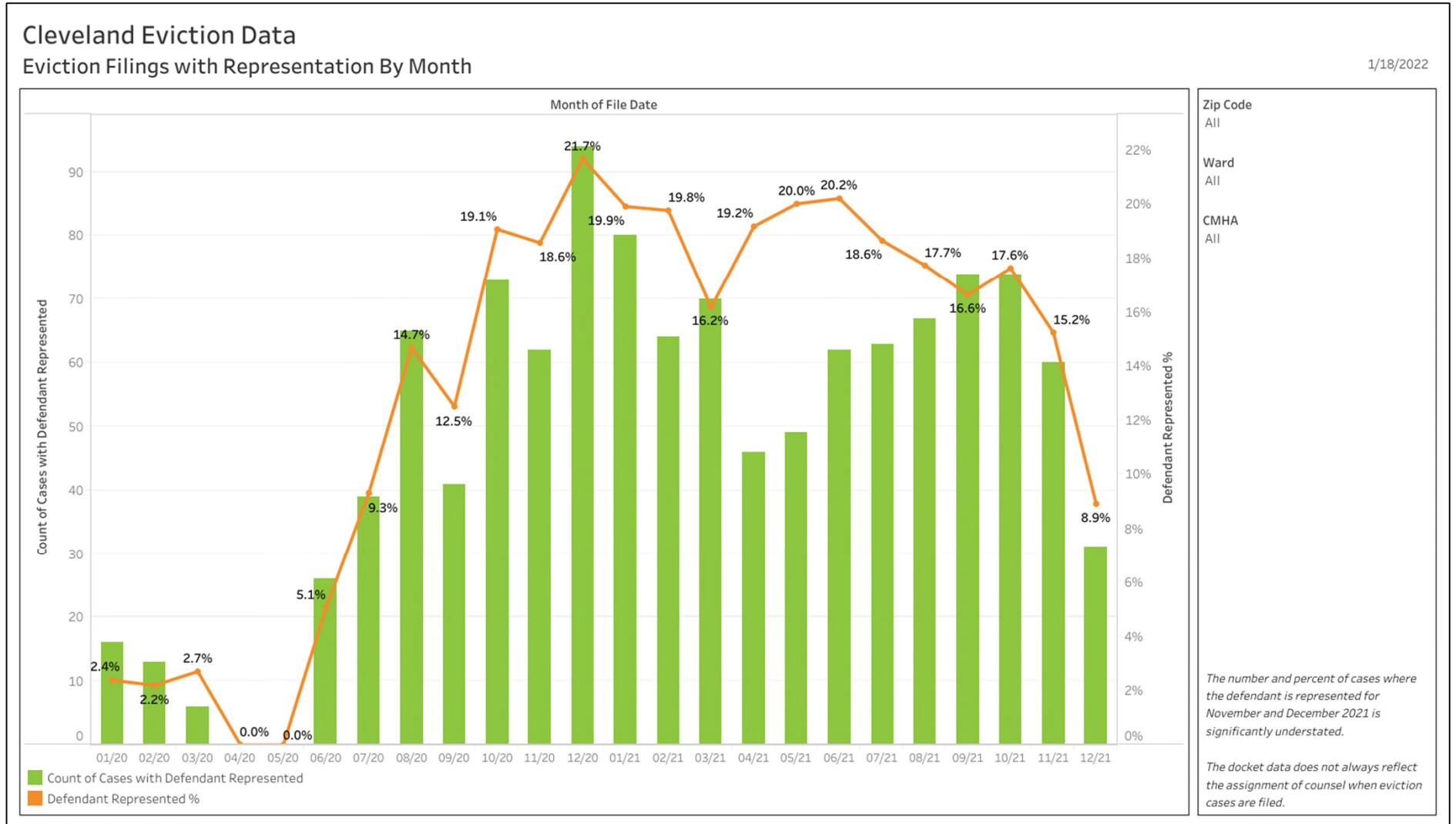
## *Preliminary assessment of fiscal impacts*

- Costs that are not currently quantifiable based on available data:
  - The education costs, juvenile justice costs, and child welfare costs associated with children experiencing homelessness
  - The effects of stabilized employment and income and the economic and tax benefits to the state associated with consumer spending
  - The negative impact of eviction on tenants' credit score, ability to re-rent, and the potential loss of a subsidized housing voucher
  - The cost of providing public benefits when jobs are lost due to eviction or the eviction process
  - The cost of mental health care
  - Certain additional costs associated with homelessness, such as additional law enforcement and incarceration costs
  - The cost of family, community, and neighborhood instability
  - Preservation of financial and personal assets
  - A reduction, over time, of the number of eviction cases filed resulting in improved use of Cleveland Municipal Court resources.

## *Significant increase in eligible tenants who accessed a lawyer*

- The estimated representation rate for households expected to be *eligible* for RTC-C was approximately 60% from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021
- In 2021, on average, approximately 18% of all tenants facing eviction in Cleveland were represented in housing court compared to between 1% and 2% before RTC-C was enacted
- Cleveland Legal Aid represented approximately 90% of all tenants who were represented in 2021 filings. Not all of these tenants were eligible for RTC-C, however, 9 out of 10 represented tenants had a Cleveland Legal Aid attorney assisting them with their eviction case
- 38% of RTC-C clients screened at court were aware of RTC-C before their hearing
  - UWGC and Cleveland Legal Aid undertaking hyper-local outreach and communications plans in 2022 to increase awareness

## Significant increase in eligible tenants who accessed a lawyer



## *Themes from Stout's landlord counsel engagement*

- Stout's landlord engagement
  - Supportive of intent of RTC-C and believe tenants should be represented
  - Underscored importance of eviction diversion and effective mediation
  - Communicated the importance of sustained rental assistance to maximize impact of RTC-C and minimize potential hard to small landlords
  - Indicated importance of training, process improvements, and leveraging social workers

## *Recommendations for 2022*

1. Iteratively refining data collection, reviewing and rephrasing interview questions, developing mechanisms to ensure completion of interviews and prompt case closure
2. Launch client follow-up surveys via text message to develop deeper insights into medium- and long-term impacts of RTC-C
3. Develop complementary communication and outreach strategy centered on local trusted messengers and a methodology for evaluating its impact
4. Collaborate with UWGC, Cleveland Legal Aid, and community stakeholders to collect information during door-to-door canvassing, particularly for residents who do not plan to seek legal representation
5. Support the development of a Tenant Advisory Council and a Landlord Advisory Council

## *Recommendations for 2022*

6. Understand efforts landlords are undertaking to work with tenants prior to filing eviction
7. Understand intersection of pre- or post-filing eviction diversion programs and RTC-C
8. Refine data collection and qualitative feedback to assess impact of RTC-C and intersections with other Cleveland initiatives (Lead Hazard Control Program, Say Yes Cleveland) and identify opportunities to use new data to unlock further insights related to:
  - Nexus between rental assistance and the prevention or effective resolution of eviction cases
  - Analyze differences in outcomes for RTC-C clients compared to unrepresented Cleveland tenants