

Ohio 811 Program Tableau Dashboards

Ohio Housing Finance Agency

Special Needs Housing: Housing for Persons with Special Needs

HFA Staff Contact

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BACKGROUND/SUMMARY

The Ohio 811 Project Rental Assistance Program is a project-based subsidy demonstration funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is the first statewide interdepartmental rental subsidy program focused on extremely low-income adults with disabilities. The goal is to increase affordable housing and integrated support services for this population. As part of the Ohio Housing Finance Agency's mission to ensure that every Ohioan has a safe and affordable place to call home, OHFA spearheads the 811 Program in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), the Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM), and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). Ohio was one of 25 states that received funding (\$12 million) in 2015 and one of 15 states awarded additional funding (\$6.9 million) in November 2020.

The process of housing applicants through the 811 program is complex and requires coordination between multiple state agencies, affordable housing property owners and developers, and local referral agents. OHFA must work with property owners and developers to get units committed to the program, in both new construction and existing buildings. Once units are committed, DODD, ODM, and OhioMHAS coordinate with local agencies to identify those who qualify for the program and want to live independently. These 811 Referral Agents help people apply and get placed on the state waiting list. When a unit becomes available in the county where the applicant wants to live, OHFA reaches out to the applicant through the referral agent. The continual challenge for OHFA is how to manage and share accurate, up-to-date information on the availability of units and the location of housing need so applicants can be housed as quickly as possible, and how to constantly measure and gauge the program to implement changes needed to make the program as effective as possible.

The nature of a program with so many moving parts is that it is constantly in flux and data changes daily. Prior to the first quarter of 2020, decentralized Excel sheets kept data, requiring each agency to record their own information and share updates either through email or at weekly meetings. This was both time consuming and frequently provided an incomplete picture of the housing landscape moment to moment, impeding the speed of the program.

INTERVENTION/EXECUTION

The complex nature of the 811 Program gave OHFA a unique opportunity to create a system that could be more secure, easier to update, and better able to share information across agencies. Using Tableau, the Office of Housing Policy collaborated with the multi-agency 811 team to design dashboards that collect, analyze and visualize the data. The data is refreshed on a daily and weekly basis, which allows all parties to view the exact same data in real time.

The dashboards capture the two key pieces required for monitoring 811: **availability** of units and **need** of applicants. The availability must be able to show how many units are available in each of the 35 participating Ohio counties. All units pass through three stages: commitment by the property/developer, execution of the contract with the 811 program, and, finally, an 811 eligible applicant leases a unit. The first two stages – commitment and execution – are static; however, the third – leased – fluctuates with occupancy changes; actively monitoring this stage is challenging. To solve this, OHFA created event fields in an internal database: entered dates signify when the unit passes through each stage as well as a note that indicates if the unit is available or occupied. As the 811 team enters the data, the dashboard immediately updates (FIGURE 1). Data modifications show how many units are available in a particular county, the user clicks on that county in the map or selects it in the drop-down menu, and the dashboard will filter to show data specific to that location (FIGURE 2).

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Visualizing the need in each county was more challenging; need changes frequently and can't be captured in OHFA's internal database. Local referral agents are required to use a program called SocialServe to track their data on applicants and referrals. OHFA worked with SocialServe to set up a biweekly delivery of applicant waitlist data to OHFA. Using key information provided by applicants on housing need, counties of interest, and disability types, OHFA was able to create a dashboard that aggregates data on active applicants – those who have been approved for the program or are pending approval (FIGURE 3). This breakdown of demographic data is extremely important as it allows partner agencies to drill down to see information on specific populations. For example, if an agency wants to assess the demographic make-up of applicants who need accessible housing, they can click on "Yes" in the "Needs Accessible Housing" section, and the dashboard will filter accordingly (FIGURE 4). One thing to note is that because applicants can select multiple options for where they would like to live, the map presents an overall picture of geographic need and does not change when other filters are selected. OHFA has also been utilizing the waitlist data to assess reasons given for exiting the program to identify and address any potential barriers to being housed through the program (FIGURE 5).

A final challenge was how to share the dashboards across agencies while also protecting all Personally Identifiable Information (PII) associated with the program and the applicants. To achieve this, two versions of each dashboard are published – one to the internal OHFA server where the OHFA 811 team can access the underlying data as needed and one to the public server where PII is restricted.

This combination of dashboards that visualizes availability and need has streamlined and centralized information and resulted in more efficient data-driven analysis and better communication among the 811 inter-agency team.

IMPACT

While Tableau has been used internally to track and visualize data for a few years, this is the first time that OHFA has used dashboards for an interagency program. The potential to incorporate the use of Tableau into other collaborative efforts will help to further the Agency's mission of creating affordable housing options across the state. In addition, OHFA maintains annual Tableau licenses, so there are no extra costs associated with the dashboards.

The 811 dashboards have a number of benefits. First, they combine a number of metrics to create a more accurate picture of availability and need throughout Ohio. This is critical to ensure that people are matched with available units and increases the likelihood that people will be housed.

Second, the dashboards provide a streamlined platform that all members of the 811 team can access. With the data now stored in a secure, centralized place, each person is able to look at the same information while making decisions. This allows for better interagency communication and collaboration, which also increases the likelihood applicants will find the housing they need.

Finally, the dashboards are easy to replicate and update with new data. As information needs change, the ways in which the data can be visualized are endless. The current dashboards can be revised or new dashboards can be created that are tailored to the needs of each individual agency that is part of the 811 team. As this program ramps up and expands to other states, a model like this can and should be exported to ease and improve the program.

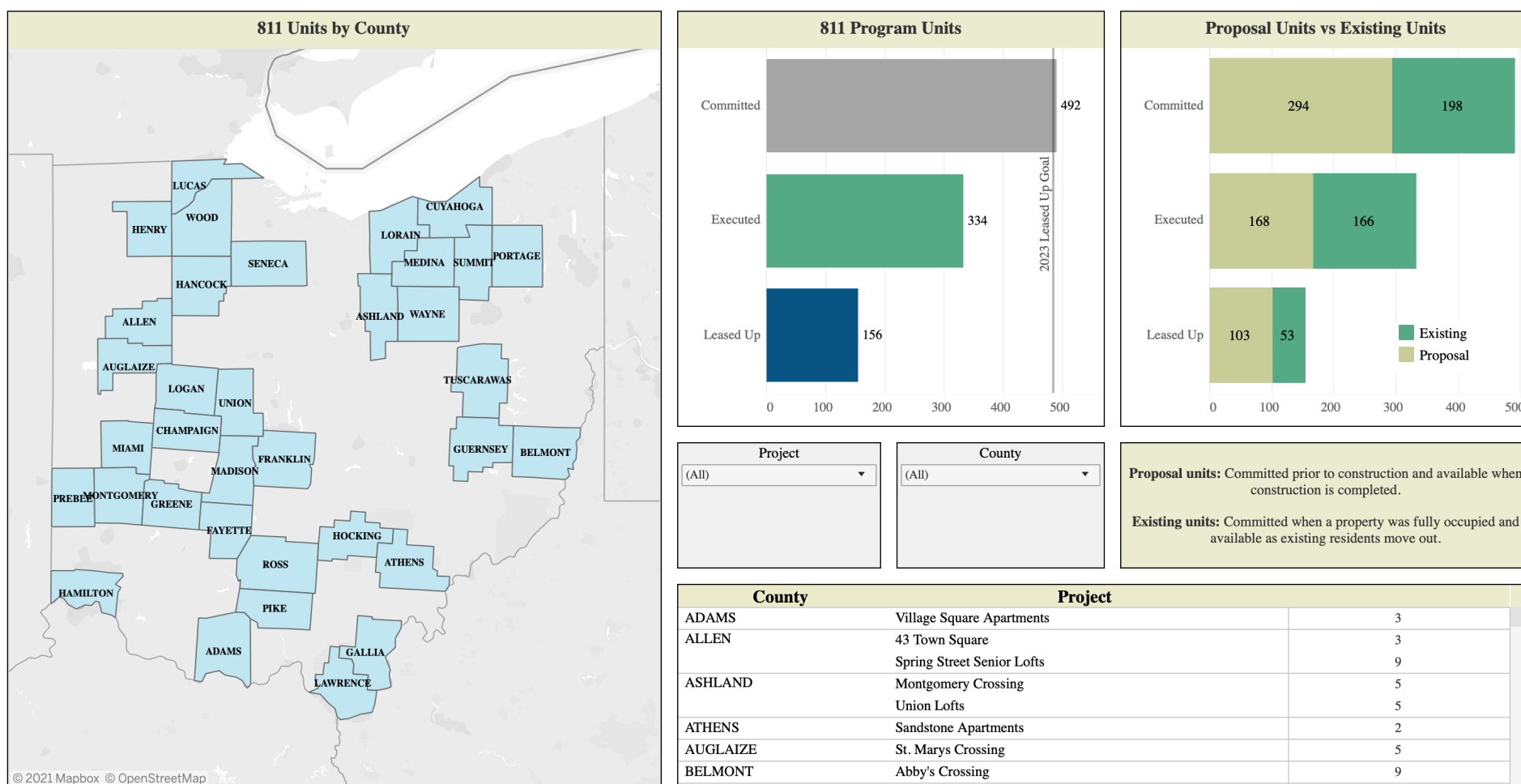
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VISUAL AIDS

Figure 1: [811 Program Units Dashboard](#)

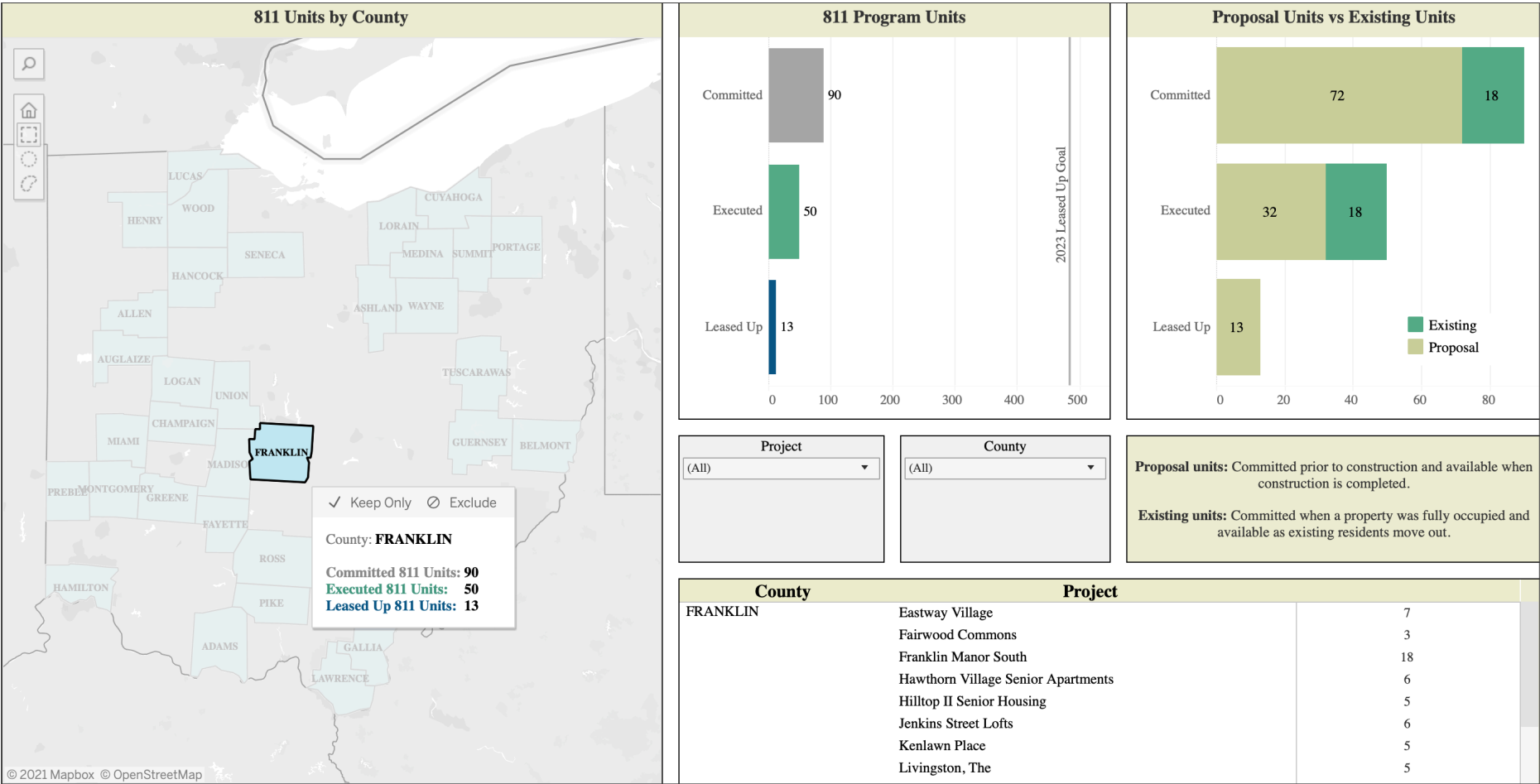


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Figure 2: 811 Program Unit Dashboard – Filtered to Franklin County

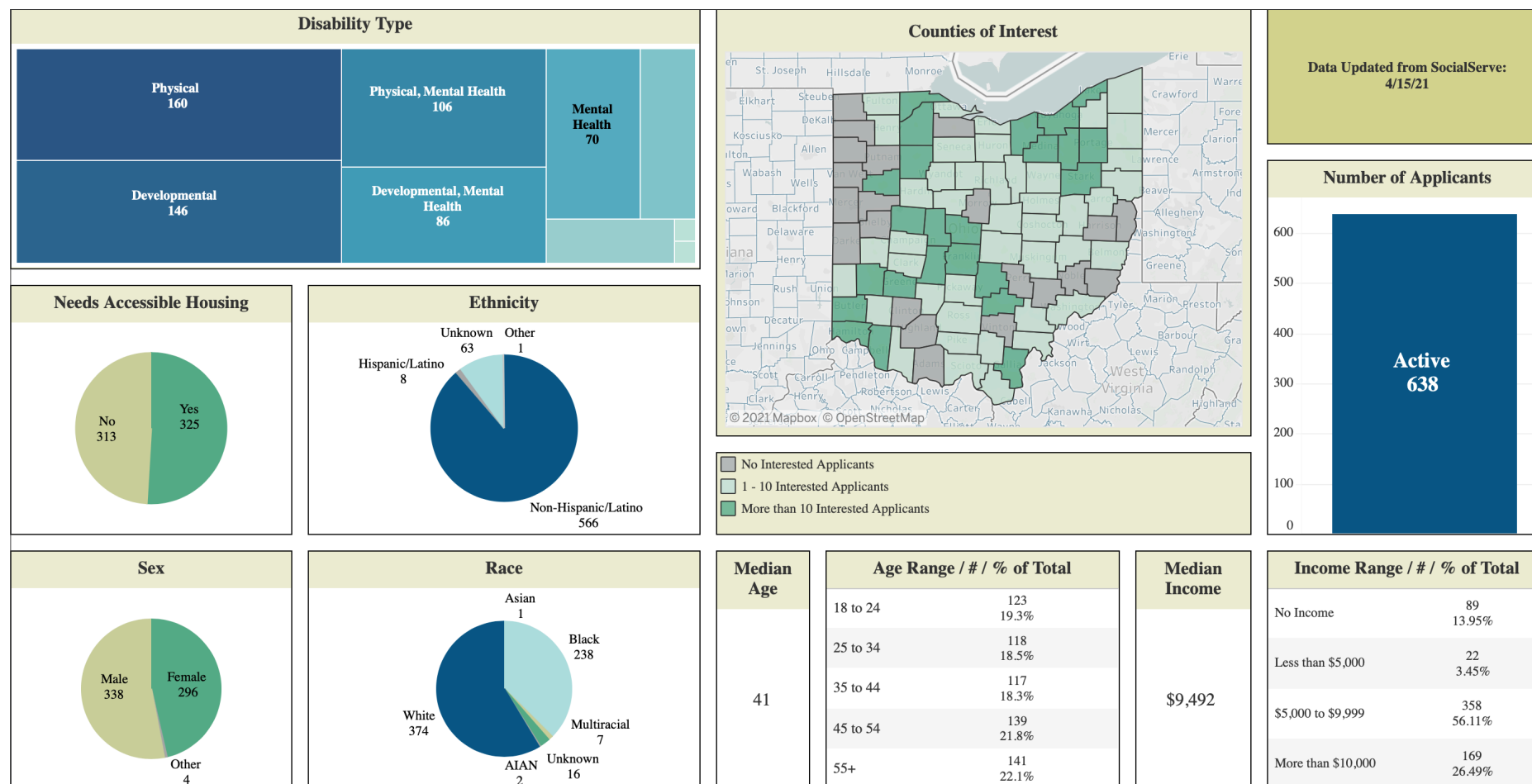


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Figure 3: [811 Waitlist Demographics Dashboard](#)

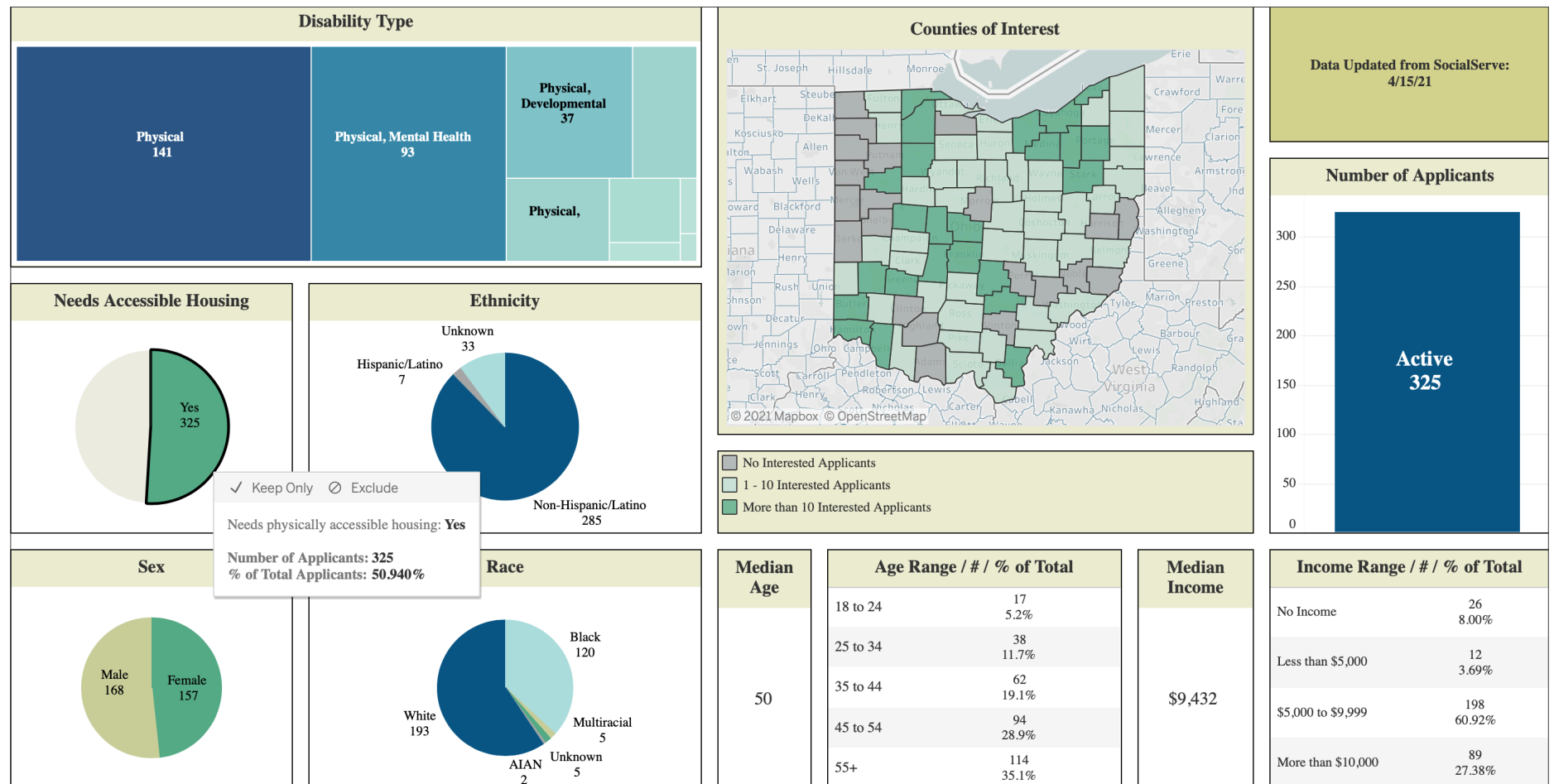


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Figure 4: 811 Waitlist Demographics Dashboard – Filtered to Needs Accessible Housing



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Figure 5: [811 Waitlist Applicants Status Dashboard](#)

