

HEALTH DISPARITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19: Racial and Ethnic Minorities Disproportionately Impacted by Coronavirus

Health disparities have persisted as a major challenge across the U.S. healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic has only magnified and exacerbated this issue, with an increasingly large body of research demonstrating that **there is mounting evidence that some racial and ethnic minority groups are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19.**¹

- Rates of COVID-19 among Black or African Americans are more than 1.5 times their share of the population and in some states the rate is closer to 2.5 times.
- Hispanic and Latino communities face a disproportionate rate of infection in 45 states and the District of Columbia, and are dying from COVID-19 at rates increasingly higher than their share of state populations.
- American Indian and Alaskan Native communities also suffer infection and death rates disproportionate to their population share. In Utah, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming, the share of death and sickness is five times greater than population share.²

The pandemic has only widened existing health disparities and social inequities that have been driven by racial discrimination, inequality and social determinants that are influenced more by zip code than genetic code. To that end, **building trust and confidence, and ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines across disproportionately impacted communities must be a top priority.**

Equitable access and acceptance of vaccines requires acknowledgement of the health disparities that persist and have been exacerbated by COVID-19, along with meaningful engagement and dialogue across diverse communities that have been most harmed.



COVID-19 has merely put a spotlight on an issue that has long pervaded the health system. **A long history of systemic discrimination, inequity, distrust, and lack of diverse representation in clinical trials has led to pervasive racial and ethnic disparities in immunization rates.**³ To help ensure equitable COVID-19 vaccine access and adoption, the COVID-19 Vaccine Education and Equity Project seeks to:



Engage with a broad, diverse set of stakeholders including those most impacted by COVID-19



Advocate for diverse COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial populations to help ensure that those most affected by the virus will benefit from the vaccine



Provide clear, culturally competent information, invite discussion and underscore the processes already in place to maintain scientific rigor, and ensure inclusion among the groups and stakeholders necessary to meet this challenge



Lead a conversation that helps ensure equitable access to vaccines through equitable access to information and dialogue

¹ <https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/09/studies-spotlight-covid-racial-health-disparities-similarities>

² <https://covidtracking.com/race>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5824643/>