

Impacts of Covid 19

Addendum to the Racial Equity Assessment Tool

July 2020



Prepared by

Race Forward for the Zero Cities Project

Table of Contents

- 3 Introduction**
- 6 Economic Impacts**
(Job and Wage Loss, Essential Workers)
- 10 Energy Cost Burden**
- 12 Housing** (Displacement and Unhoused Populations, Crowded Conditions)
- 14 Geographic Location and Exposure to Health Risk**
- 16 Internet Access and the Digital Divide**

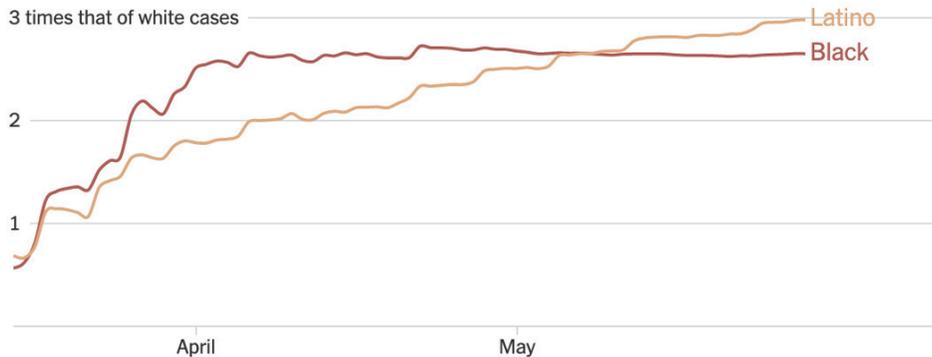
Introduction

AS OF THIS WRITING IN JULY OF 2020, THE COVID-19 CRISIS is approaching the staggering four-and-a-half-million case mark in the U.S., and rising. The grinding economic halt and job loss caused by the pandemic has occurred on a scale we haven't seen since the Great Depression. In every sector from healthcare to housing, our society's key underlying condition has been laid bare, intensifying the impacts of COVID-19 for many Americans: structural racism.

Federal data, providing detailed characteristics of 640,000 infections detected in nearly 1,000 U.S. counties, reveals a devastating picture for communities of color: Black, Latino and Indigenous people have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus in a widespread manner that spans the country, throughout hundreds of counties in urban, suburban and rural areas, and across all age groups.¹

Black and Latino residents of the United States have been three times as likely to become infected as their white neighbors. And Black and Indigenous people are dying at the highest rates relative to white Americans.²

Rate of Black and Latino coronavirus cases, compared with white cases³



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | Note: Data is through May 28.

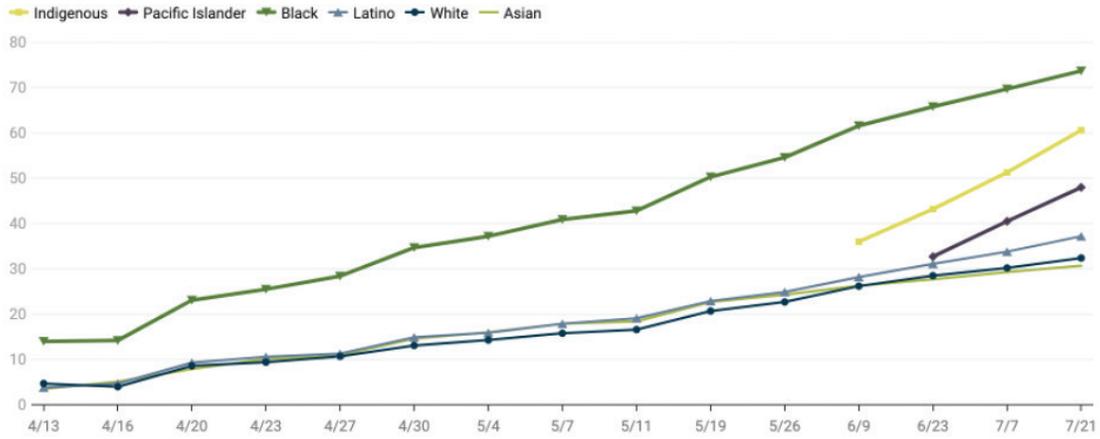
1 Richard A. Ooppel Jr., Robert Gebeloff, K.K. Rebecca Lai, Will Wright and Mitch Smith. *The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus*, The New York Times. July 5, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latino-african-americans-cdc-data.html?referringSource=articleShare>

2 *The Color Of Coronavirus: Covid-19 Deaths By Race And Ethnicity In The U.S.*, APM Research Lab. July 22, 2020. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race#indigenous>

3 Richard A. Ooppel Jr., Robert Gebeloff, K.K. Rebecca Lai, Will Wright and Mitch Smith. *The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus*, The New York Times. July 5, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latino-african-americans-cdc-data.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Black & Indigenous American experience highest death tolls from COVID-19⁴

Cumulative actual COVID-19 mortality rates per 100,000, by race and ethnicity, April 13-July 21, 2020



Note: Dates are not consistently scaled, but reflect data collection intervals for our Color of Coronavirus project.

Source: APM Research Lab · Get the data · Created with Datawrapper

Most cities and states have not published case breakdowns by race. But for those who have, these numbers are even higher. Data from April 2020 revealed that African Americans made up almost half of Milwaukee County’s 945 cases and 81 percent of its 27 deaths in a county whose population is 26 percent Black.⁵

In Michigan, where the state’s population is 14 percent Black, African Americans made up 35 percent of cases and 40 percent of deaths. Cities with majority Black residents, like Detroit and New Orleans, have been early hotspots with high death tolls. Louisiana has not published case breakdowns by race, but 40 percent of the state’s deaths have happened in Orleans Parish, where the majority of residents are Black.⁶ Illinois and North Carolina are two of the few areas publishing statistics by race, and their data shows a disproportionate number of African Americans were infected.

As of May 3rd, approximately 19 percent of the COVID-19 deaths in Arizona were among the Native American population even though they represent approximately 5.3 percent of the state’s population.⁷

This addendum to the [Equity Assessment Tool](#) for the [Zero Cities Project](#) aims to highlight

⁴ *The Color Of Coronavirus: Covid-19 Deaths By Race And Ethnicity In The U.S.*, APM Research Lab. July 22, 2020. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race#indigenous>

⁵ Akilah Johnson and Talia Buford. *Early Data Shows African Americans Have Contracted and Died of Coronavirus at an Alarming Rate*, Propublica. April 3, 2020. <https://www.propublica.org/article/early-data-shows-african-americans-have-contracted-and-died-of-coronavirus-at-an-alarming-rate>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Margot Bordne, Clinton Johnson, Rebecca Lehman. *New Data Collection Available: COVID-19 Health, Racial, and Economic Equity*, Esri. May 11, 2020. <https://www.esri.com/arcgis-blog/products/arcgis-living-atlas/health/new-data-collection-available-covid-19-health-racial-and-economic-equity/>

the ways in which the COVID-19 crisis has impacted communities of color and exacerbated the racial inequities detailed in the Tool — that is, in the intersections of racial equity and the built environment. There are many additional factors not covered in this addendum that have led to the outcomes illustrated by the above statistics and point to communities of color as those most at risk. Among them: senior populations, physical disability, food insecurity, lack of healthcare, and the prison and detention systems.

This addendum offers a snapshot of the existing data as of this writing (July 2020) and offers some resources for further examination. Because the pandemic remains an evolving and dynamic phenomenon, studies and data will continue to emerge. The original intent of the Equity Assessment Tool remains and comes into sharper focus and urgency now: to lead with racial equity in climate change mitigation strategies, and indeed in all policy planning processes.

Please refer to the *How to Use Equity Metrics* section of the Tool. The need to start with community partnerships is, as ever, foundational for the development of roadmaps and policy solutions. To align with the equity assessment tool and given social distancing and shelter-in-place guidelines, it is essential for policymakers to assess all pathways for engagement, create new models and practices, and include methods to reach community members without stable internet access (more on this in the *Internet Access and the Digital Divide* section below). This could include text and phone outreach, and partnerships with neighborhood organizations and grassroots organizing groups.

Economic Impacts

(Job and Wage Loss, Essential Workers)

THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC HAVE BEEN HISTORIC, with some economists predicting it could take up to three years for the U.S. economy to recover.⁸ In May, job loss topped 40 million. Communities of color already entrenched in occupational segregation, labor exploitation, and employment discrimination entered the pandemic at greater risk of unemployment, dangerous working conditions and severely limited ability to weather the economic crisis.

According to surveys conducted by Pew Research Center, job and wage losses due to COVID-19 have hit Hispanic and Black adults the hardest. Some 61 percent of Hispanic Americans and 44 percent of Black Americans said in April that they or someone in their household had experienced a job or wage loss due to the coronavirus outbreak, compared with 38 percent of white adults. These shares were up from March, when 49 percent of Hispanics, 36 percent of Blacks and 29 percent of whites said their household had experienced a job or wage loss.⁹

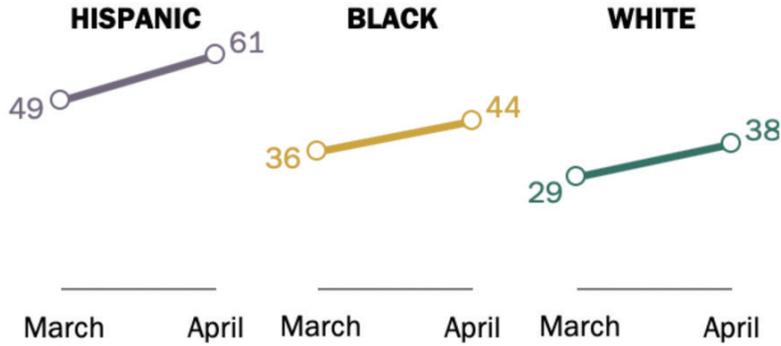
This economic reality of the pandemic has made it harder for some Americans to pay their monthly rent, utility, and other bills. Black (48 percent) and Hispanic adults (44 percent) were more likely than white adults (26 percent) to say they “cannot pay some bills or can only make partial payments on some of them this month,” according to the April survey. For Hispanics, this was a considerably greater share than the 28 percent who said they have trouble paying their bills in a typical month.¹⁰

⁸ Laura Oliver. *It could take three years for the US economy to recover from COVID-19*, World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/economic-impact-covid-19/>. March 30, 2020.

⁹ Mark Hugo Lopez, Lee Rainie and Abby Budiman. *Financial and health impacts of COVID-19 vary widely by race and ethnicity*, Pew Research Center. May 5, 2020.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Percent saying they or someone in their household has lost a job or taken a pay cut due to the coronavirus outbreak



Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted March 19-24 and April 7-12, 2020. Pew Research Center

For those who do continue to report to work during the pandemic, Census data from 2018 shows that across the country, 43 percent of Black and Latino workers are employed in service or production jobs that for the most part cannot be done remotely. Only about one in four white workers held such jobs.¹¹

Nearly every state governor has issued executive orders that outline industries deemed “essential” during the pandemic, which typically include health care, food service, and public transportation, among others. People of color are overrepresented in many occupations within these essential and frontline industries, leading to the most exposure to the virus and the greatest risk in their places of employment. Hispanics are especially overrepresented in Building Cleaning Services (40.2 percent of workers). Blacks are most overrepresented in Child Care and Social Services (19.3 percent of workers). Workers of color are particularly overrepresented in the following occupations: bus drivers, transit and intercity (56.7 percent); most of the top 10 occupations in Trucking, Warehouse, and Postal Service; most of the top 10 occupations in Building Cleaning Services; all of the top 10 occupations in Health Care, except registered nurses, physicians, managers, and secretaries and administrative; four of the top 10 occupations in Child Care and Social Services (childcare workers, personal care aides, social workers, and nursing assistants).¹²

In the food industry, some companies have adopted policies that reject the Centers for Disease

¹¹ Richard A. Ooppel Jr., Robert Gebeloff, K.K. Rebecca Lai, Will Wright and Mitch Smith. *The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus*, The New York Times. July 5, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latinos-african-americans-cdc-data.html?referringSource=articleShare>

¹² Hye Jin Rho, Hayley Brown, and Shawn Fremstad. *A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries*, Center for Economic and Policy Research. April 7, 2020. <https://cepr.net/a-basic-demographic-profile-of-workers-in-frontline-industries/>

Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidance to stop the spread of COVID-19 at their processing facilities and the results of their current operating procedures have a discriminatory impact on the predominantly Black and Latino workforce at the companies' plants. The majority of meat processing plant floor workers – nearly 70 percent – are Black or Latino, as opposed to salaried employees and management, who are predominantly white.¹³

Despite being categorized as essential, many workers in these industries are not receiving the most basic health and safety measures to protect them from the spread of COVID-19.¹⁴ Millions of essential jobs are low-paid ones, where employer-subsidized health insurance or paid leave are not options. Many essential workers, such as grocery workers and bus drivers, are dying as a result.¹⁵

For the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S., the employment and financial crisis brought on by the pandemic has deepened existing workplace inequities. Many are working essential jobs as farmworkers and grocery workers, and in food processing plants and hospitals. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that 6 million immigrant workers (a figure that does not take into account legal status) are in jobs on the frontlines of coronavirus response, while another 6 million are in industries hardest hit by the pandemic.¹⁶ Despite our society and economy's reliance on their labor, undocumented workers were ineligible for even the temporary relief doled out by the March 2020 \$2.2 trillion coronavirus stimulus bill.

¹³ Complaint filed by Food Chain Workers Alliance, Rural Community Workers Alliance, HEAL Food Alliance, American Friends Service Committee – Iowa, Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, and Forward Latino to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, July 8, 2020. <https://food.publicjustice.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/07/2020.07.08-Food-Chain-Workers-v-Tyson-Foods-Title-VI-complaint-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ Emily Stewart. *Essential workers still lack basic safety protections on the job*. May 7, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/coronavirus-covid19/2020/5/7/21250387/essential-worker-ppe-amazon-walmart-employees-protection-hazard-pay>

¹⁵ Abha Battaral. "It feels like a war zone": As more of them die, grocery workers increasingly fear showing up at work. April 12, 2020.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/04/12/grocery-worker-fear-death-coronavirus/>
Jose Martinez. New York City bus drivers are being hit the hardest by deaths as COVID-19 devastates the MTA. April 9, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.com/new-york-city-bus-drivers-most-deaths-covid-19-mta-2020-4>

¹⁶ Julia Gelatt. *Immigrant Workers: Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 Response, Disproportionately Vulnerable*, Migration Policy Institute. March 2020. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-workers-us-covid-19-response>

Additional resources:

- » [COVID-19 GIS Hub's Health, Racial and Economic Equity Data Group \(mapping and spatial software\)](#)
- » [Center for American Progress' *The Economic Fallout of the Coronavirus for People of Color*](#)
- » [Economic Policy Institute's *Who are essential workers?*](#)
- » [Data Show COVID-19 is Hitting Essential Workers and People of Color Hardset \(ACLU Massachusetts blog post\)](#)
- » [Center for Economic and Policy Research's *A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries*](#)
- » [*How Millions of Women Became the Most Essential Workers in America*](#)
- » [Center for Migration Studies' *US Foreign-Born Essential Workers by Status and State, and the Global Pandemic*](#)
- » [Migration Policy Institute's *Immigrant Workers: Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 Response, Disproportionately Vulnerable*](#)
- » [*State And Local Policymakers Must Step Up To Ensure Covid Worker Protections* \(National Employment Law Project's blog\)](#)

Energy Cost Burden

WITH SOARING UNEMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR STRUGGLING to pay for their basic needs, energy burden and the disproportionate effects on people of color have come to the fore among many intertwined issues. Most Black and Hispanic Americans do not have financial reserves to cover expenses in case of an emergency, and nearly three-quarters of Black (73%) and Hispanic adults (70%) said they did not have emergency funds to cover three months of expenses.¹⁷ This has led especially Black and Hispanic families to choose between paying rent, buying groceries, and paying utility bills. Early in the pandemic, communities of color sounded the call for utility bill cancellations to provide immediate relief to families by addressing the threat of electricity and water shutoffs.¹⁸ But as of this writing, shutoff moratoriums that many utilities have put in place because of the pandemic are set to expire. For customers of Georgia Power, they already have.¹⁹

Before the pandemic, energy burden was already most pronounced in places struggling economically; in some counties, families put more than 30 percent of their income toward their electric bills, and families living below the poverty line have been far more likely to also be suffering from their energy burden.²⁰ With stay-at-home orders to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and the summer months upon us, energy bills have and will continue to increase. And while energy use has declined in commercial buildings, factories and other large electricity users, total residential demand is up.²¹ One study in the Austin, TX area showed that for April, daily residential demand was about 17 percent higher than the average from previous Aprils.²²

The complexities of energy burden and extreme heat or cold in the pandemic are requiring creative responses. In the New York City area, the City and its electric utility Con Edison both recognized that residents may have limited access to cooling or may choose not to cool their homes due to high energy burden. The City's response included procuring thousands of air conditioners for seniors with some of the funding coming from the City and other

¹⁷ Mark Hugo Lopez, Lee Rainie and Abby Budiman. *Financial and health impacts of COVID-19 vary widely by race and ethnicity*, Pew Research Center. May 5, 2020.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/05/05/financial-and-health-impacts-of-covid-19-vary-widely-by-race-and-ethnicity/>

¹⁸ Josh McClenney and Shiva Patel: *COVID exposes energy burden, deep wealth disparities*. May 3, 2020. https://journalnow.com/opinion/columnists/josh-mcclenney-and-shiva-patel-covid-exposes-energy-burden-deep-wealth-disparities/article_35551b0b-6cfc-5e8e-8562-cceb7b0559df.html

Energy Burden in a Pandemic <https://appvoices.org/2020/05/15/energy-burden-in-a-pandemic/>

¹⁹ Karl R. Rábago. *Highs & Lows in Utility Commission Decisions During COVID-19*. July 21, 2020. <https://medium.com/getting-it-right-on-electricity-rate-design/highs-lows-in-utility-commission-decisions-during-covid-19-4fddb5211490>

²⁰ Joseph Daniel. *Electricity Shut-Offs in a Pandemic: How COVID-19 Leads to Energy Insecurity, Burdensome Bills*. April 20, 2020. <https://blog.ucsusa.org/joseph-daniel/how-covid-19-leads-to-energy-insecurity>

²¹ Scott Hinson. *COVID-19 is Changing Residential Electricity Demand*. May 15, 2020. <https://www.pecanstreet.org/2020/05/covid/>

²² Ibid.

funds coming through a request to the public service Commission.²³ Con Edison also filed successfully at the public service commission to double the size of the current low-income program bill discount through the heat season so residents could feel comfortable utilizing HVAC.²⁴

Additional resources:

- » [Vote Solar's COVID-19 and the Utility Bill Debt Crisis](#)
- » [Utility shutoff bans are in effect for many families, but what happens when they end? \(National Consumer Law Center\)](#)
- » [NAACP's Utility Termination Policy Report Lights Out in the Cold](#)
- » [National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' COVID-19 State Response Tracker](#)
- » [Suspend Shutoffs of Essential Utility Services in Crisis \(National Resource Defense Council blog post\)](#)
- » [Electricity Shut-Offs in a Pandemic: How COVID-19 Leads to Energy Insecurity, Burdensome Bills \(Union of Concerned Scientists blog post\)](#)
- » [Energy Efficiency For All's Policy Responses to COVID-19](#)
- » [A Perfect Storm? COVID-10 cuts incomes and hikes home energy bills \(American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy blog post\)](#)
- » [Who Pays the Most? COVID-19, Utility Accessibility, and Race \(Regional Housing Legal Services blog post\)](#)
- » [Past due: Energy shutoffs, affordability, and COVID-19 \(Public Sector Consultants blog post\)](#)

²³Mark Sunstrom. NYC providing 74K air conditioners for low income senior ahead of summer months, Pix 11, May 15, 2020. <https://www.pix11.com/news/coronavirus/nyc-providing-74k-air-conditioners-for-low-income-seniors-ahead-of-summer-months>

²⁴PSC Approves Plan to Help Low Income Customers. New York Department of Public Service. June 11, 2020. [http://www3.dps.ny.gov/pscweb/webfileroom.nsf/ArticlesByCategory/7EA0CAF63787699B852585840063F94F/\\$File/pr20051.pdf?OpenElement](http://www3.dps.ny.gov/pscweb/webfileroom.nsf/ArticlesByCategory/7EA0CAF63787699B852585840063F94F/$File/pr20051.pdf?OpenElement)

Housing

(Displacement and Unhoused Populations, Crowded Conditions)

STRUCTURAL RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION in housing, criminal justice, child welfare and education — along with violence against LGBTQ+ young people, and systemic negligence of American veterans — have led to the reality that people of color in the U.S., especially Blacks and Native Americans, are overrepresented in the country’s unhoused population. According to Census data, African-Americans make up thirteen percent of the general population but account for 40 percent of people experiencing homelessness, and half of homeless families with children, according to the 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), produced by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.²⁵

While the CDC has warned that people with serious medical conditions may be at greater risk of death or serious illness due to COVID-19, a recent study by California Policy Lab revealed that 50 percent of unsheltered people experience tri-morbidity (co-occurring physical health, mental health, and substance abuse), versus two percent of sheltered people, increasing the vulnerability of unsheltered people to COVID-19.²⁶ And while the CDC has likewise warned that people 65 years and older may be at higher risk, unhoused adults age faster than the general population, experiencing geriatric conditions such as memory loss, falls and impairments in their 50s at rates that the general population experiences in their 70s.²⁷

Reports have noted the rapid spread of COVID-19 among unhoused people due to crowded shelters and encampments, sleeping outdoors, and housing instability. Widespread food insecurity, inadequate sleep, and limited access to running water needed to wash hands — one of the key prevention measures recommended by COVID-19 public health experts — have also contributed to the crisis within this population.

²⁵ Teresa Wiltz. 'A Pileup of Inequities': Why People of Color Are Hit Hardest by Homelessness, Pew. March 29, 2019. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/03/29/a-pileup-of-inequities-why-people-of-color-are-hit-hardest-by-homelessness>

²⁶ Janey Rountree, Nathan Hess, and Austin Lyke. *Health Conditions Among Unsheltered Adults in the U.S.*, California Policy Lab. October 2019. <https://www.capolicylab.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Health-Conditions-Among-Unsheltered-Adults-in-the-U.S.pdf>

²⁷ Dennis Culhane, Dan Treglia, Thomas Byrne, Stephen Metraux, Randall Kuhn, Kelly Doran, Eileen Johns, and Maryanne Schretzman. *The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness: Could Housing Solutions Be Funded by Avoidance of Excess Shelter, Hospital, and Nursing Home Costs?* <https://1slo241vnt3j2dn45s1y90db-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness-1.pdf>

With eviction moratoria set to end on varying timelines across states, housing advocates have demanded rent cancellations and longer-term policies to prevent further crowding of shelters and exacerbation of the crisis. In New York City, housing rights groups estimate that in the coming weeks, 50,000 to 60,000 cases could be filed in New York City's housing courts. And a recent report has stated that there is a risk of a number of evictions and foreclosures in excess of the levels we saw in the wake of the Great Recession.²⁸

For the housed / sheltered populations, a recent study of cases in New York City has shown that COVID-19 is more prevalent in areas where more people reside in crowded units where conditions may compound risk of exposure. This risk would be even greater for households with non-remote workers, as those workers are more likely to become infected by the virus.²⁹ In New York City, Latino people are twice as likely to reside in a crowded dwelling — less than 500 square feet per person — as white people, according to the American Housing Survey.

Additional resources:

- » Princeton University's [Eviction Lab](#) and [Eviction Tracking System](#)
- » [International Alliance of Inhabitants' Zero Evictions for Coronavirus](#)
- » [The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress](#)
- » [National Alliance to End Homelessness' Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response](#)
- » [National Alliance to End Homelessness' Coronavirus and Homelessness Portal](#)
- » [Homelessness Research Institute's Fact Sheet *Population At-Risk: Homelessness and the COVID-19 Crisis*](#)
- » [Enterprise's Linking Housing Challenges And Racial Disparities In Covid-19](#)
- » [COVID-19 and the unequal surge in mortality rates in Massachusetts, by city/town and ZIP Code measures of poverty, household crowding, race/ethnicity, and racialized economic segregation, Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies](#)

²⁸ COVID-19 Relief Helps Some, Leaves Over Half of Households Vulnerable, Amherst. <https://www.amherstcapital.com/documents/20649/0/Amherst+Market+Commentary+-+May+2020+Issue/b6520038-308f-4708-8ed5-3b678d8ed560>

²⁹ COVID-19 Cases in New York City, a Neighborhood-Level Analysis, NYU Furman Center. April 10, 2020. <https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/covid-19-cases-in-new-york-city-a-neighborhood-level-analysis>

Geographic location and exposure to health risk

COMMUNITIES WITH THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF AIR POLLUTION are at higher risk of diabetes, strokes, heart attacks, asthma attacks — many of the pre-existing conditions that increase the risk of death in those with COVID-19.³⁰ These communities are overwhelmingly Black, Hispanic, and Native.

A report by the NAACP found that oil and natural gas facilities are built near or currently exist within a half-mile of over one million African Americans. The oil and natural gas industries violate the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) air quality standards for ozone smog due to natural gas emissions in many African American communities, causing over 138,000 asthma attacks among school children. And there are 91 counties across the U.S. where oil refineries exist or are being built close to more than 6.7 million African Americans, or 14 percent of the national population.³¹

Another report found that living on Fort Berthold Indian Reservation or the Navajo Nation (Utah and New Mexico only) made Native Americans twice as likely as the general population in the encompassing state to live one-half mile from an oil and gas facility. On Uintah-Ouray land, Native Americans were 42 times more likely.³²

Recent research indicates that a small, single-unit increase in people's long-term exposure to pollution particles raises infections and admissions by about 10 percent and deaths by 15 percent.³³ A previous study found an 8 percent increase in coronavirus deaths for a single-unit rise in fine particle pollution.³⁴

Some researchers are showing the connection between energy efficiency and improving outcomes for populations most at-risk. They suggest that health and energy stakeholders can

³⁰ *Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: A nationwide cross-sectional study*, Harvard University. April 24, 2020. <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/covid-pm>

³¹ Lesley Fleischman and Marcus Franklin. *Fumes Across the Fence-line*, NAACP. November 2017. https://www.naacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Fumes-Across-the-Fence-Line_NAACP_CATF.pdf

³² *Tribal Communities at Risk: The Disproportionate Impacts of Oil and Gas Air Pollution on Tribal Air Quality*, Clean Air Task Force. https://www.catf.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Tribal_Communities_At_Risk.pdf

³³ Damian Carrington. *Is air pollution making the coronavirus pandemic even more deadly?* The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/04/is-air-pollution-making-the-coronavirus-pandemic-even-more-deadly>

³⁴ *Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: A nationwide cross-sectional study*, Harvard University. April 24, 2020. <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/covid-pm>

collaborate together to increase federal funding focused on health and leverage it for these communities.³⁵

Additional resources:

- » [Fumes Across The Fence-line, A New Study By NAACP, Clean Air Task Force, And National Medical Association](#)
- » [Harvard University's Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States: A nationwide cross-sectional study](#)
- » [Opinion: Coal dust and COVID-19 in Richmond a deadly combination, The Mercury News](#)

³⁵Ben Somberg. *Efficiency programs can expand by leveraging health-focused funding*, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. July 14, 2020. <https://www.aceee.org/blog-post/2020/07/efficiency-programs-can-expand-leveraging-health-focused-funding>

Sara Hayes and Ronald Denson, Jr. *Protecting the Health of Vulnerable Populations with In-Home Energy Efficiency: A Survey of Methods for Demonstrating Health Outcomes*, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. October 22, 2019. <https://www.aceee.org/research-report/h1901>

Internet Access and the Digital Divide

WITH STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS AND THE NEED TO LIMIT EXPOSURE to stop community spread and keep the most vulnerable safe, internet access has become one of – if not the only – portal to essential functions from social gatherings to elections to school. Roughly half of U.S. adults (53 percent) say the internet has been essential for them personally during the pandemic.

But according to a 2016 Free Press report, nearly half of Americans without at-home internet are in Black and Hispanic households.³⁶ Roughly eight-in-ten whites (82 percent) report owning a desktop or laptop computer, compared with 58 percent of Blacks and 57 percent of Hispanics.³⁷ And Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to have to depend on their smartphones as their sole source of access to the internet.³⁸

Racial disparities are evident in ability to pay. Fifty-four percent of Hispanic broadband users say they worry about being able to pay for their home internet services, compared with 36 percent of Black users and 21 percent of white users. Similar patterns are present when asked about worries related to paying cellphone bills over the next few months, with Hispanic smartphone owners being more likely than their Black or white counterparts to say they worry about this.³⁹

The digital divide may have impacts especially on students of color. New research suggests that by September, most students will have fallen behind where they would have been if they had stayed in classrooms, with some losing the equivalent of a full school year's worth of academic gains. Due to the disparities in access to computers, home internet connections and

³⁶ S. Derek Turner. *Digital Denied: The Impact of Systematic Racial Discrimination on Home-Internet Adoption*, Free Press. December 2016. https://www.freepress.net/sites/default/files/legacy-policy/digital_denied_free_press_report_december_2016.pdf

³⁷ Andrew Perrin and Erica Turner. *Smartphones help blacks, Hispanics bridge some – but not all – digital gaps with whites*. August 20, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/20/smartphones-help-blacks-hispanics-bridge-some-but-not-all-digital-gaps-with-whites/>

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Emily A. Vogels, Andrew Perrin, Lee Rainie and Monica Anderson. *53% of Americans Say the Internet Has Been Essential During the COVID-19 Outbreak*, Pew Research. April 30, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/04/30/53-of-americans-say-the-internet-has-been-essential-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

direct instruction from teachers, long-documented racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps will most likely widen.⁴⁰

Additional resources:

- » [Digital Denied: The Impact of Systematic Racial Discrimination on Home-Internet Adoption, Free Press](#)

⁴⁰Dana Goldstein. *Research Shows Students Falling Months Behind During Virus Disruptions*, The New York Times. June 5, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/05/us/coronavirus-education-lost-learning.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Dana Goldstein. *The Class Divide: Remote Learning at 2 Schools, Private and Public*, The New York Times. May 9, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/09/us/coronavirus-public-private-school.html>



NEW YORK 145 East 57th St, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10022 **p** 212.513.7925 **f** 212.513.1367

OAKLAND 900 Alice Street, Suite 400 Oakland, CA 94607 **p** 510.653.3415 **f** 510.986.1062

RACEFORWARD.ORG    **RACEFORWARD**
