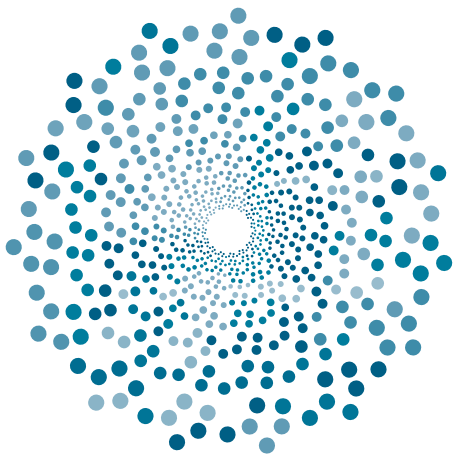


Racial & Ethnic Economic Inequality and the COVID-19 Pandemic

*PREPARED BY THE DEMOCRACY COLLABORATIVE
FOR THE HEALTHCARE ANCHOR NETWORK*



DEMOCRACY
COLLABORATIVE

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Executive Summary

Every passing day brings new, painful evidence of how the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting people of color in the United States. Moreover, as this working paper from The Democracy Collaborative demonstrates, there are also clear links emerging between racial and ethnic economic inequities, structural racism, and the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on people of color. While these connections do not come as a surprise to the many experts who have studied the intersections of racial and ethnic inequality, economic conditions, and public health for decades, we felt that it was important to begin reviewing and analyzing the emerging data and evidence on these links and interactions. We believe that the data presented in this working paper suggests a clear need to redouble our efforts to address racial economic inequality and build and democratize wealth in low-income communities both as part of the COVID-19 recovery, and in general.

In order to conduct this research we looked at three general questions:

1) How are racial and ethnic disparities in the economy showing up in the COVID-19 epidemic?

Building on data being compiled by other organizations and researchers – including the APM Research Lab, whose May 20 analysis of 40 states and the District of Columbia found that 1 in 2,000 Black people have died from COVID-19 (50.3 per 100k) compared to 1 in 4,300 Asian and Latinx people (22.7 and 22.9 per 100k) and 1 in 4,700 White people who have died (20.7 per 100k) – we compiled case and mortality data from a sample of geographies home to about 166.8 million people (just over 50% of the US population).

What we found was consistent with many of the studies and news reports to date, namely that there are clear indications that people of color are being disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of cases and deaths. Specifically, our analysis indicates that in a majority of the geographies assessed, Black people are overrepresented in the number of COVID-19 deaths. In terms of cases and deaths, we also found that Latinx people were overrepresented in some geographies, especially with regards to case data (who has contracted COVID-19). Although limited by big gaps in the reported data, we also identified overrepresentation of American Indian people in cases and deaths in some areas. In stark contrast, White people are underrepresented in both cases and deaths in all but one of the geographies we assessed.

Next, we investigated the link between the economic health of communities and the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of color. First and foremost, we conducted a literature review on how the pandemic is disproportionately affecting people of color (as of May 25-27) and coded references to economic issues and conditions. The most commonly cited economic factor was “Type of Jobs,” which refers to the fact that people of color are often over-represented in jobs that are lower-paying with fewer benefits (such as paid sick leave) or considered “essential” within the context of the current pandemic (i.e. healthcare workers, janitors and maintenance staff, food service workers, etc.). In total, 76% of the articles and reports we reviewed referenced this factor.

This was followed by: Access to healthcare (56.5%); Poverty (39%); Health insurance (33%); Income inequality (22%); Housing (24%); Telework (24%); Transportation (17%) Wealth inequality (15%); Unemployment/lack of jobs (15%); Disinvestment (11%); Homelessness (9%); Lack of public health spending (6.5%);

Access to financial services (4%); and Economic exploitation/extraction (2%).

Lastly, we looked at four large counties and cities (Fairfax, Virginia; Miami-Dade, Florida; New York City, New York; and Prince George's, Maryland) where zip-code level data on the number of COVID-19 cases and or deaths was available. We then compared this information against economic and demographic data for these zip codes as well as against the county or city as a whole. In all four geographies, there were clear indications of a link between racial and ethnic composition, economic inequality, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19.

2) How are racial and ethnic disparities showing up in the public policy response to the COVID-19 epidemic?

In response to the pandemic, governments at all levels have rolled out various policies, and these can be generally grouped into two categories: 1) policies to control the spread of COVID-19 and protect public health; and 2) policies to mitigate or repair the economic damage caused by both the pandemic and the control policies. In both of these categories, there is emerging statistical and anecdotal evidence of significant racial and ethnic disparities.

In the first category, economic shutdowns, while necessary from the perspective of public health, are disproportionately affecting workers of color and businesses owned by people of color. This is due to a combination of factors, including that workers of color and businesses owned by people of color are concentrated in sectors that are most likely to be shut down by public health directives or affected by loss of demand as people stay home to avoid the disease. Another factor is that businesses owned by people of color are less likely than White owned businesses to have the financial cushion to

be able to withstand a prolonged economic shutdown.

The racial inequities caused by the necessary economic shutdowns could have been mitigated by an effective and equity-focused economic policy response from the US government. However, that has not been the case. Instead, crisis response and recovery programs have thus far themselves been institutionally racist and rife with racial and ethnic inequality. This includes both the individual "stimulus check" distribution process and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for small businesses.

3) How will the economic effects of the epidemic likely impact racial and ethnic inequality?

Lastly, we attempted to compile emerging data points that allow us to make some forward looking projections about how the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic might impact racial economic inequality in the coming years. While undoubtedly all linked, we have grouped these projections into the following categories:

- 1) unemployment and income inequality;
- 2) business ownership;
- 3) wealth inequality.

Unemployment

First and foremost, the current crisis threatens to undo any employment equality gains Black and Latinx people have made over the past ten years. With only two months of data available since the start of the pandemic (March and April) at the time of writing, the unemployment gap (between the White unemployment rate and the Black and Latinx employment rates) has already started to increase again (after ten years of decline).

To get further definition on this question, we partnered with Autonomy (a research

organization focused on issues of work and employment) to analyze the racial and ethnic composition of the workforce in different occupational categories. This information, combined with information on the current unemployment rate by sector, allows us to further demonstrate that job losses are disproportionately affecting people of color. In particular, 4 out of the top 5 industries with the greatest unemployment variance (from April 2019 to April 2020) are industries where Black and or Latinx people are significantly over-represented (compared to the 2019 total employment breakdown by race and ethnicity).

Lastly, our data (which is confirmed by other secondary sources) suggests that people of color are more likely to be employed in jobs that they cannot perform virtually (telework). The occupational groups that are least likely to be able to be done remotely are: 1) Food preparation and Service Related; 2) Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance; 3) Construction and Extraction; 4) Production, Transportation and Material Moving; 5) Farming Fishing and Forestry; 6) Healthcare support. These occupational groups generally involve lower pay and often have higher concentrations of Black and Latinx workers. This has implications both for employment (as these workers are more likely to be laid off, rather than moved to telework status) and community health (as these workers are more likely to be forced to continue to work, thereby risking exposure to COVID-19).

Business Ownership

According to new data from Robert Fairlie, an economics professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the number of Black business owners fell 40 percent between February and April 2020, far in excess of the 22 percent decline across all racial and ethnic groups. This amounts to a decline of around 450,000 Black business owners. Latinx

business owners also saw a disproportionate decline, falling by 32%. Moreover, Asian business owners have also been particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic given their over-representation in the food services sector and an increase in racist fearmongering and blame over the origins of COVID-19. Since these declines are already on top of severe racial and ethnic inequalities in terms of business ownership, they threaten to dramatically widen the gap between White business owners and business owners of color.

While individual business ownership (and homeownership), alone (without structural and systemic changes), is not enough to end racial economic and wealth disparities, the loss of businesses owned by people of color will almost inevitably exacerbate these inequalities. This is because, according to research, business owners of color are wealthier than their non-business owning peers and wealth disparities between business owners of color and White business owners are less pronounced than in the population as a whole. In sum, all indications, from both the emerging data and the recent experience of the Great Recession, is that businesses owned by people of color are likely to be disproportionately affected by the current crisis, which will, in turn, have a negative effect not only on families of color, but also racial wealth and economic inequality throughout our society.

Wealth Inequality

The US as a whole is one of the most economically inequitable countries in the OECD (countries with similar levels of economic development), and research suggests that high levels of income and wealth inequality are associated with numerous negative social and economic effects. Trends around wealth inequality, in particular, are even more pronounced when looking at race and ethnicity. In a 2017 report, the Institute

for Policy Studies and Prosperity Now found “if the racial wealth divide is left unaddressed and is not exacerbated further over the next eight years, median Black household wealth is on a path to hit zero by 2053—about 10 years after it is projected that racial minorities will comprise the majority of the nation’s population. Median Hispanic household wealth is projected to hit zero 20 years later, or by 2073. In sharp contrast, median White household wealth would climb to \$137,000 by 2053 and \$147,000 by 2073.”

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely one of those exacerbating factors and emerging data suggests that the crisis is likely to further deepen racial wealth inequality, and narrow the time frames in which median Black and Latinx wealth in the United States is projected to drop to zero.

Racial & Ethnic Economic Inequality and the COVID-19 Pandemic

As data has started to trickle in from states and municipalities across the country, it is becoming increasingly and painfully evident that the COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting people of color in the United States. Specifically, in many parts of the country, Black people are contracting COVID-19 and dying at a higher rate than the overall population, and Latinx and American Indian people also experiencing disparate impacts compared to White people. There are already dozens of interpretive articles, preliminary studies, and investigative reports that have been published that suggest clear links between racial and ethnic economic inequities, structural racism, and the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on people of color. While acknowledging both that it is still too early in the pandemic to develop detailed conclusions, and that these connections do not come as a surprise to the many experts who have studied the intersections of racial inequality, economic conditions, and public health for decades, The Democracy Collaborative felt that it was prudent to begin reviewing and analyzing the emerging data and evidence on these links and interactions. As the following sections suggest, we believe that these early results indicate a clear need to redouble our efforts to address racial economic inequality and build and democratize wealth in low-income communities both as part of the COVID-19 recovery, and in general.

Specifically, in order to conduct this research we looked at three general questions:

- 1) How are racial and ethnic disparities in the economy showing up in the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2) How are racial and ethnic disparities showing up in the public policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 3) How will the economic effects of the pandemic likely impact racial and ethnic inequality?

To investigate each of these questions, we used a combination of secondary sources and original data research. Sources used are available in the endnotes of this working paper and in the various appendices. The material presented here is designed primarily to be illustrative and we do not intend to suggest any proven correlation or statistical significance unless specifically stated.

How are racial disparities in the economy showing up in the COVID-19 epidemic?

Relatively early in the COVID-19 pandemic, data and anecdotes began emerging from various virus hot spots that people of color, and specifically Black people, were disproportionately getting sick and dying from the disease. This has led to significant media and political attention on both the racial disparities and their potential causes. While at the beginning, impact data based on race was relatively scarce, under pressure from community and civil rights groups, as well as elected officials, many cities and counties, most states, and the CDC are now reporting data by race and ethnicity.¹ In recent weeks, various researchers have begun to compile, analyze, and visualize this data.

One example is the dashboard built by the Kaiser Family Foundation using state-level data from mid-April 2020.² Another is the mortality statistics being compiled by the APM Research Lab. Their May 20, 2020 analysis of 40 states and the District of Columbia found that 1 in 2,000 Black people have died (50.3 per 100k), 1 in 4,300 Asian and Latinx people have died (22.7 and 22.9 per 100k), and 1 in 4,700 White people have died (20.7 per 100k). In all, while Black people make up 13% of the population in the areas reporting data, they comprised 25% of all deaths. Visualizations of APM's data (prepared by our partners, Autonomy) are available in Appendix A.³

To begin, The Democracy Collaborative compiled data (as of May 18-25, 2020) from

a sample of 15 states and 3 major cities/counties from different geographic parts of the country. All the US states were divided into three geographic groups (east, central, and west) and then 5 from each region were selected at random. If a selected state did not provide demographics for both COVID-19 cases and deaths, if their data collection site was down or unavailable (as was the case with both Ohio and South Dakota), or if they did not provide ethnicity data in addition to race, they were replaced with another randomly selected state from that region. The cities and counties were specifically chosen based on: A) their size (with a preference for larger population); B) the availability of comparable data (both in terms of cases and deaths, but also if this data was disaggregated by race and ethnicity); and C) their not being already represented in the selected states. What makes our sample relatively unique is its analysis of both COVID-19 cases and deaths, as well as its inclusion of certain city/county level data.

All told, our sample covers geographies home to 166.8 million people, or just over 50 percent of the total US population. What we found was consistent with many of the studies and news reports to date, namely that despite various gaps in the data (which prevent definitive conclusions), and state-to-state differences, there are clear indications that people of color are being disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of cases and deaths.

Specifically, our analysis indicates that in a majority of the geographies assessed, Black people are overrepresented in the number of COVID-19 deaths, meaning the percentage of COVID-19 deaths is higher than the percentage of the population who are Black. In terms of cases and deaths, we also found that Latinx people are overrepresented in some geographies, although there was more variation between different states, and generally there is a higher degree of overrepresentation

in COVID-19 cases than COVID-19 deaths. Although limited by gaps in data, we also identified overrepresentation of American Indian people in cases and deaths. In stark contrast, White people are underrepresented in both cases as deaths in all but one of the geographies assessed, meaning that the percentage of COVID-19 cases and deaths that are White people is less than the percentage of the population who is White. In general, there are less pronounced variations for Asian people at the state level, but in certain municipalities, they are more pronounced.

A summary of this data is below, and selected visual representations are available in Appendix B. A note on methodology is contained in the endnotes.⁴

Alabama (East)⁵

In Alabama, Black people make up around 26% of the population, but 37% (+11) of the COVID-19 cases and 44% (+18) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 65% of the population, but 40% (-25) of the COVID-19 cases and 50% (-15) of the COVID-19 deaths. Variances for other racial and ethnic groups are minimal.

Maryland (East)⁶

In Maryland, Black people make up around 31% of the population, but account 42% (+11) of the COVID-19 deaths. Latinx people make up around 10% of the population, but 23% (+13) of the COVID-19 cases, however only 8% (-2) of deaths. And White people make up around 50.5% of the population, but 24% (-26) of the COVID-19 cases and 41% (-9) of the COVID-19 deaths.

Tennessee (East)⁷

In Tennessee, Black people make up around 17% of the population, but 21% (+4) of the COVID-19 cases and 33% (+16) of the

COVID-19 deaths. Latinx people make up around 6% of the population, but 15% (+9) of the COVID-19 cases and 5% (-1) of the COVID-19 deaths. And White people make up around 74% of the population, but 39% (-35) of the COVID-19 cases and 59% (-15) of the COVID-19 deaths.

Georgia (East)⁸

In Georgia, Black people make up around 34% of the population, but 49% (+15) of the COVID-19 deaths. Latinx people make up around 10 percent of the population, but 4% (-6) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 52% of the population, but 44% (-8) of the COVID-19 deaths. Georgia's case data has a high percentage of unknown racial or ethnic identity (27%), making it relatively unreliable for comparative purposes.

Connecticut (East)⁹

In Connecticut, Black people make up around 12% of the population, but 15% of COVID-19 deaths (+3). Connecticut was, also, the only state in our sample where White people were over-represented in the COVID-19 death statistics. White people in the state make up around 66% of the population, but 73% of the COVID-19 deaths (+7). Latinx people were the only racial or ethnic group that was under-represented in the COVID-19 death statistics, accounting for around 16% of the population, but 8% (-8) of the COVID-19 deaths. Connecticut's case data has a high percentage of unknown racial or ethnic identity (36%), making it relatively unreliable for comparative purposes.

Texas (Middle)¹⁰

Texas has a high percentage of unknown racial and ethnic identities in its cases and deaths data. However, in the data that is available, Black people, who make up roughly 13% of

the state's population, account for 15% (+2) of total cases and 14% (+1) of total deaths. White people make up around 41% of the population, but 28% (-13) of cases and 37% (-4) of deaths.

Illinois (Middle)¹¹

In Illinois, Black people make up around 15% of the population, but 18% (+3) of COVID-19 cases and 31% (+16) of COVID-19 deaths. Latinx people make up around 17% of the population, but 30% (+13) of COVID-19 cases and 18% (+1) of COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 61% of the population, but 20% (-41) of COVID-19 cases and 43% (-18) of COVID-19 deaths.

Michigan (Middle)¹²

In Michigan, Black people make up around 14% of the population, but account for 31% (+17) of the COVID-19 cases and 40% (+26) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 75% of the population, but 36% (-39) of COVID-19 cases and 50% (-25) of COVID-19 deaths. Variances for other racial and ethnic groups were minimal.

Missouri (Middle)¹³

In Missouri, Black people make up around 12% of the population, but account for 33% (+21) of the Covid-19 cases and 38% (+26) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 79% of the population, but 42% (-37) of the COVID-19 cases and 56% (-23) of the COVID-19 deaths. Variances for other racial and ethnic groups were minimal.

Arkansas (Middle)¹⁴

In Arkansas, Black people make up around 16% of the population, but 40% (+24) of COVID-19 cases and 38% (+22) of COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 72% of the

population, but 52% (-20) of COVID-19 cases and 55% (-17) of COVID-19 deaths. Variances for other racial and ethnic groups were minimal. It should be noted that Arkansas did not report any unknown racial or ethnic identities in their cases or death data.

California (West)¹⁵

In California, Latinx people make up around 39% of the population, but 43% (+4) of the COVID-19 cases. Black people make up around 6% of the population, but 10% (+4) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 37% of the population, but 18% (-19) of the COVID-19 cases, and 35% (-2) of the COVID-19 deaths. In general, variances in California are relatively low across all racial groups. However, in 25% of all California cases, the race or ethnicity of the affected person is unknown, limiting what can be inferred from that particular data set.

Arizona (West)¹⁶

In Arizona, the racial and ethnic identity of many people who have contracted COVID-19 (42%) and died from it (19%) are unknown, thus limiting what can be learned from these data sets. However, one glaring statistic stands out. American Indians make up around 5% of the population, but 18% (+13) of COVID-19 cases and 17% (+12) of COVID-19 deaths.

Colorado (West)¹⁷

In Colorado, Black people make up around 5% of the population, but 6% (+1) of the COVID-19 cases and 7% (+2) of the COVID-19 deaths. Latinx people make up around 22% of the population, but 36% (+14) of the COVID-19 cases and 19% (-3) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 68% of the population, but 36% (-32) of the COVID-19 cases and 65% (-3) of the COVID-19 deaths.

Oregon (West)¹⁸

In Oregon, Black people make up around 2% of the population, but 2% of the COVID-19 cases (0) and 4% (+2) of the COVID-19 deaths. Latinx people make up around 13% of the population, but 32% (+19) of the COVID-19 cases and 9% (-4) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 75 percent of the population, but 50% (-25) of the COVID-19 cases and 73% (-3) of the COVID-19 deaths.

Washington State (West)¹⁹

Washington was the only state in our sample in which all racial and ethnic groups were under-represented in the COVID-19 death statistics. This is due, in part, to the relatively high number of unknown racial or ethnic identities at the time of data analysis (13%) and may change as more demographic data is added. However, at the time of analysis Black and Asian people were the least under-represented racial or ethnic groups. Black people make up around 4% of the population, but 3% (-1) of the COVID-19 deaths; Latinx people make up around 13% of the population, but 8% (-5) of the COVID-19 deaths; Asian people make up around 9 percent of the population, but 8% (-1) of the COVID-19 deaths; and White around people make up around 68% of the population, but 63% (-5) of the COVID-19 deaths.

Milwaukee, County (Wisconsin)²⁰

With a population of around 945,726, Milwaukee County is the most populous county in Wisconsin and in the top 50 most populous counties in the United States. As of May 20, the county had 5,531 COVID-19 cases and 244 COVID-19 deaths. In Milwaukee County, Black people make up around 27% of the population, but 34% (+7) of the COVID-19 cases and 47% (+20) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 51% of the population, but

22% (-29) of the COVID-19 cases and 43% (-8) of the COVID-19 deaths.

Boston (Massachusetts)²¹

With a population of around 692,600, Boston is the most populous city in the state of Massachusetts. As of May 20, the city had 12,143 COVID-19 cases and 591 COVID-19 deaths. In Boston, Black people make up around 25% of the population, but 31% (+6) of the COVID-19 cases and 34% (+9) of the COVID-19 deaths. White people make up around 44% of the population, but 20% (-24) of the COVID-19 cases and 42% (-2) of the COVID-19 deaths. Latinx and Asian people were both under-represented in the COVID-19 death statistics (-10 and -4 respectively).

New York City (New York)²²

With a population of around 8.4 million people, New York City is the largest city in the United States. As of May 20, the city had 192,374 COVID-19 cases and 16,153 COVID-19 deaths (along with another 4,781 probable deaths). The city is reporting the race and ethnicity of its COVID-19 cases and deaths per 100,000 residents, and the data shows clear disparities. As of May 21, Black people had a case rate of 1,467.35; Latinx people had a case rate of 1,302; White people had a case rate of 931; and Asian people had a case rate of 557. In terms of deaths, Latinx people had a rate of 216; Black people had a rate of 207; White people had a rate of 104; and Asian people had a rate of 97. In other words, Latinx and Black people in the City had double the COVID-19 death rate than White and Asian people in the city.²³

Next, we investigated the link between the economic health of communities and disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of color. First and foremost, we conducted a literature review on how the pandemic was disproportionately

affecting people of color (as of May 25-27) and coded references to economic issues and conditions. We explicitly excluded articles, reports, and studies that focused exclusively on the economic impacts of the pandemic on people of color (many of these were used in section three of this memo); similarly, we excluded articles, reports, and studies that focused exclusively on presenting the racial and ethnic disparities in case and mortality statistics. A note on methodology is provided in the endnotes.²⁴ Visual representations of these findings are available in Appendix C.

In total, we reviewed 46 articles or reports that discussed how COVID-19 was disproportionately affecting people of color. 32 of the 46 (69.5%) were from popular publications (including magazines, newspapers, advocacy groups, and other online news and opinion sites), 10 of the 46 (21.7%) were from scholarly publications (primarily academic journals), and 4 (8.7%) were government/political reports or statements.

Out of the 46 articles and reports, just 4 (8.7%) made no mention of specific economic factors (for a discussion on what economic factors we coded for, and why, please see the methodological note). Two of these were opinion pieces and one was an academic call to collect more data. The remaining 42 (91.3%) articles/reports made reference to at least one economic factor for why COVID-19 was disproportionately affecting people of color.

The most common number of economic factors cited was 3 (out of the 15 possible factors we coded for), and the average number of factors cited was 3.5. A total of 15 articles and reports (21.7%) cited 3 economic factors. On the low end, one article/report cited just one economic factor (leaving aside the four that cited none), and on the high end, one article/report cited 11 economic factors.

The most commonly cited economic factor was “Type of Jobs,” with 35 out of the 46

articles/reports mentioning it (76%). “Type of Jobs” refers to the fact that people of color are often over-represented in jobs that are lower-paying with fewer benefits (such as paid sick leave) and or considered “essential” within the context of the current pandemic (i.e. healthcare workers, janitors and maintenance staff, food service workers, etc.). Sometimes referred to as occupational segregation, the over-representation of people of color in these industries both puts them at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 and less able to take time off or afford medical treatment if they get sick. For instance, writing in *Boston Review*, Colin Gordon, Walter Johnson, Jason Q. Purnell and Jamala Rogers state: “In St. Louis, as elsewhere, African American workers are overrepresented among frontline service workers, among whom low wages are the rule and the luxury of social distancing is not.”²⁵

Related to occupational segregation is the ability (or lack thereof) to telework. In total, 11 out of the 46 articles/reports (24%) explicitly referenced racial disparities in who has access to remote work opportunities. These disparities are caused both by the types of jobs that people of color are more likely to hold, but also a lack of affordable and accessible internet. For instance, according to surveys, while one in five White Americans don't have high-speed internet at home, that ratio is roughly one in three for Black Americans, and one in 2.5 for Latinx Americans.²⁶

Another cause directly related to the types of jobs people of color hold is how they get to those jobs. 8 of the 46 articles (17%) specifically referenced the fact that in many places (cities in particular) people of color disproportionately commute long distances on public transportation due to the intersection between the types of jobs that they work (which are often lower paying) and the high costs of housing close to their workplaces. Regarding housing, while most of the articles referred to it in one form or another, we specifically coded for

references to the cost, affordability, insecurity, or segregated nature of housing (rather than the condition or type of housing, although undoubtedly the two are strongly connected). In total, 11 of the 46 articles/reports (24%) mentioned housing in this context. For instance, speaking about Washington D.C., Julia Craven writes that: “rapid gentrification causes rent to spike, which can result in homelessness, faulty housing, or food insecurity, all of which exacerbate the persistent poor health from which many Black residents in the district suffer. Rising housing costs can also cause those in low-wage jobs to move out farther and thus have more complicated commutes that take substantially longer (and enclosed spaces like public transit are transmission zones for viruses like the one that causes COVID-19).”²⁷

The second mostly common cited economic factor was “Access to Healthcare.” As explained in the methodological note, in the US context we consider access to healthcare an economic issue given how it is organized and the costs associated with it. In total, 26 of the 46 articles/reports (56.5%) mentioned racial disparities in access to healthcare as a cause for why COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting people of color. For instance, a report from the Democratic Policy & Communications Committee found that “people of color are less likely to receive quality care than other communities...”²⁸ Related to this, 15 of the 46 (33%) articles/reports specifically mentioned inequitable access to health insurance. Summing up the interactions between the economics of healthcare and the disproportionate lack of access for people of color, Whitney N. Laster Pirtle writes: “given our capitalist, privatized insurance system in the United States, most homeless and unemployed have inadequate access to quality health care... Health care inequities are another risk factor; the coronavirus does not have to discriminate across race and class, our health care system does that work on its own.”²⁹

The third most commonly cited economic factor was “Poverty.” In total, 18 of the 46 (39%) articles/reports specifically mentioned poverty as a contributing factor to the disproportionate affect COVID-19 is having on people of color. “We are watching, in real time, racial disparities and the pandemic of poverty,” Michael Blake, an assemblyman from the Bronx, was quoted as saying in the *New York Times*. Related to poverty were specific mentions of income and wealth inequality. In total, 10 articles/reports (22%) mentioned income inequality and 7 (15%) mentioned wealth inequality. On the latter, Kilolo Kijakazi of the Urban Institute writes that the “racial wealth gap has grown over time, and the Great Recession exacerbated this disparity... Given these lower levels of wealth, many Black families were not in the position to prepare for and respond to the pandemic, and they will have a harder time recovering.”³⁰

The remaining causes were, in order of most to least cited: unemployment/lack of jobs (15%), disinvestment (11%), homelessness (9%), lack of public health spending (6.5%), access to financial services (4%), and economic exploitation/extraction (2%).

Lastly, we looked at four large counties and cities (Fairfax, Virginia; Miami-Dade, Florida; New York City, New York; and Prince George's, Maryland) where zip-code level data on the number of COVID-19 cases and or deaths was available. We then compared this information against economic and demographic data for these zip codes derived from the Census Bureau's Zip Code Tabulation Areas as well as against the county or city as a whole. A note on methodology is contained in the endnotes.³¹ In all four geographies, there were clear indications of a link between racial and ethnic composition, economic inequality, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19. Visual representations of this data are available in Appendix D.

Fairfax County, Virginia³²

Fairfax County is a relatively large and wealthy county outside of Washington, D.C. It has a population of around 1.147 million people and a median household income of around \$121,000. Of the county's residents, around 10% are Black, 16% are Latinx, 20% are Asian, and 50% are White. Due to its size, density, and proximity to other similarly situated jurisdictions, the county has one of the highest COVID-19 rates in the state of Virginia. As of May 18, 2020, the county (along with two small cities within it) had recorded 7,934 cases and 291 deaths. While racial and ethnic identity is not available for COVID-19 deaths, it is for cases. As of May 20, the county reported that while Latinx people make up around 16% of the population, they accounted for 63% (+47) of COVID-19 cases. Conversely, while White people make up around 50% of the county's population, they account for just 19% (-31) of COVID-19 cases.

Zip code data for the county showed a clear intersection between income, racial and ethnic composition, and COVID-19 cases. Of the top 10 most affected zip codes (cases per 100k residents), 90% had Latinx populations significantly higher than the county as a whole, 50% had Black populations significantly higher than the county as a whole, and 60% had Asian populations significantly higher than county as a whole; Conversely, 90% had White populations that were significantly lower than the county as a whole.

Furthermore, 80% had median household incomes significantly lower than the county as a whole (the sole exception, outside of the anomaly described in the endnote, was the 10th most affected zip code on the county's list).³³

Miami-Dade County, Florida³⁴

Miami-Dade County is a large county in Southern Florida that includes the city of Miami. It has a population of around 2.71 million

people and a median household income of approximately \$48,900. Of the county's residents, around 18% are Black, 69% are Latinx, 2% are Asian, and 13% are White. As of May 18, 2020, the county had 15,688 COVID-19 cases, and 566 deaths.

Zip code data for the county showed an intersection between income, racial and ethnic composition, and COVID-19 cases (although not as clear as Fairfax County). Of the top 10 most affected zip codes (total number of cases), 40% had Black populations significantly higher than the county as a whole and 40% had Latinx populations significantly higher than the county as a whole. In total, 80% had Black or Latinx populations significantly higher than the county as a whole, and 70% had White populations significantly lower than the county as a whole.

Furthermore, 60% had household incomes lower than the county as a whole and 10% were about the same. The three zip-codes with higher percentages of White residents than the county as a whole all had higher incomes than the county as a whole as well.

New York City³⁵

New York City is the largest city in the United States. It has a population of around 8.4 million people and a median household income of approximately \$61,000. Of the city's residents, around 24% are Black, 29% are Latinx, 14% are Asian, and 32% are White. The city was an early epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic and was badly affected both in terms of cases and deaths. As of May 18, 2020, New York City had recorded 191,073 cases and 15,983 confirmed deaths (along with another 4,823 probable deaths).

Zip code-level data for the city showed a strong intersection between income, racial and ethnic composition, and COVID-19 cases (and deaths). Of the top 10 most affected zip codes (cases per 100k residents), 30% had a Black population significantly higher than the city as

a whole, 70% had a Latinx population higher than the city as a whole, and 20% had an Asian population higher than the city as a whole. In total, 90% had at least one non-White racial or ethnic group over-represented compared to the city as a whole. In 30% of the zip-codes on the list, White residents were also over-represented compared to the city as a whole (incidentally, these were the 8th, 9th, and 10th most affected zip-codes on the list).

Furthermore, 60% had household incomes lower than the city as a whole, and 20% were relatively similar. Only 20% of the zip-codes on the list had household incomes significantly higher than the city as a whole, and these were 2 of the 3 in which White residents were over-represented (including the only zip-code on the list in which a non-white racial or ethnic group was not over-represented).

Furthermore, New York City has begun to publish data on the poverty status of COVID-19 affected individuals. As of May 21, the City reported that in terms of cases, “Very High Poverty” individuals had a COVID-19 case rate (per 100k people) of 2,517. “High Poverty” individuals had a case rate of 2,154. “Medium Poverty” individuals had a case rate of 2,035. And “Low Poverty” individuals had a case rate of 1,704. In terms of deaths, “Very High Poverty” individuals had a rate of 235, “High poverty” individuals had a rate of 204, “Medium Poverty” individuals had a rate of 162, and “Low Poverty” individuals had a rate of 101. The statistics, coupled with the city-wide race and ethnicity case and death statistics presented above, suggest a clear link between the economic health of communities of color and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the city.

Prince George’s County, Maryland³⁶

Prince George’s is a large county in Maryland, adjacent to Washington D.C. Home to around 909,000 people, it is one of the most prosperous majority-Black counties in the US. Of the

county’s residents, around 64% are Black, 19% are Latinx, 4% are Asian, and 12% are white. Despite its relative prosperity compared to other majority-Black counties nationally, the county is generally less prosperous than some of its immediate, and Whiter neighbors in the region. Prince George’s County has a median household income of around \$82,000. Its immediate northern neighbor, Montgomery County (which has a Black population of just around 20%) has a median household income of around \$106,000; and Arlington County and Fairfax County (just across the Potomac River in Virginia) have median household incomes of around \$117,000 and \$121,000 respectively.

Prince George’s County has also been the county in Maryland worst affected by COVID-19. As of May 23, it had 13,587 cases and 450 deaths. It also has a worst case (1.5%) rate than all of its regional counterparts (Montgomery County: .92%; Fairfax County: .79%; and Arlington County: .76%). Thus, first and foremost, from a regional perspective there is a clear connection between the racial and ethnic composition and economic health of Prince George’s County (relative to the region as a whole), and how it has been affected by COVID-19.³⁷

Secondly, zip code-level data for the county showed a strong intersection between income, racial and ethnic composition, and COVID-19 cases (and deaths). Of the top 10 most affected zip codes (cases per 100k residents), 90% had household incomes less than the county as a whole. While only one zip code (10%) has a Black population higher than the County as a whole, 90% of the zip codes on the list had Latinx populations substantially higher than the county as a whole (and the remaining zip code was higher, but roughly similar).

In total, 100% of the zip-codes on the list had a Latinx or Black population greater than the County as a whole. By contrast, only 10% of the zip codes had a White population greater than

the county as a whole (and this was the one zip-code with a higher income than the county median) and 10% were about the same.

How are racial and ethnic disparities showing up in the public policy response to the COVID-19 epidemic?

In response to the pandemic, governments at all levels have rolled out various policies, and these can be generally grouped into two categories: 1) policies to control the spread of COVID-19 and protect public health; and 2) policies to mitigate or repair the economic damage caused by both the pandemic and the control policies. In both of these categories, there is emerging statistical and anecdotal evidence of significant racial and ethnic disparities. Visual representations of some of the data and statistics presented in this section are available in Appendix E.

While we focused our research on the economy and the economic policy response, it must be acknowledged from the outset that in some places, social control policies (lockdowns, mask ordinances, etc.) related to the pandemic have been enforced in a racist and racially inequitable way. For instance, in New York City, data released in mid-May showed that 90% of the people arrested and 82% of the people receiving summonses for pandemic-related offenses were Black or Latinx; This, combined with videos and anecdotes of police officers forcibly breaking up gatherings of people of color, while handing out masks to large gatherings of White people, have led to increased scrutiny on the racial disparities at play in enforcing public health directives in the city.³⁸

In the first category, economic policies related to controlling the spread of COVID-19 have primarily taken the form of state and local directives shutting down various economic sectors and activities. While necessary from the perspective of public health and saving lives, these shutdowns are disproportionately affecting workers of color and businesses owned by people of color. As will be discussed further below in the section on unemployment, another result of occupational segregation (in addition to the previously mentioned concentration of people of color in “essential” sectors) is that people of color are disproportionately employed in sectors that have been required to shut down by public health directives. This includes sectors like hospitality, food service, and retail, and more specifically industries such as restaurants, personal care services (such as nail and hair salons), and hotels and hospitality.³⁹

Similarly, as discussed below, emerging data suggests that the economic shutdowns are disproportionately affecting business owners of color. This is due to a combination of factors, including that businesses owned by people of color are concentrated in sectors that are most likely to be shut down by public health directives or affected by loss of demand as people stay home to avoid the disease. “Minority-owned businesses tend to occupy parts of the economy most shaken by the coronavirus and the shutdown orders states have embraced to combat it. High shares of African American-owned ventures, for example, are in industries such as beauty salons, taxi services and day-care centers that have had to close, or have faced precipitous drops in demand,” the *Washington Post* reports.⁴⁰

Another factor is that businesses owned by people of color are less likely than White-owned businesses to have the financial cushion to be able to withstand a prolonged economic shutdown. As Brookings reported in early April 2020, “the median white family

has roughly 10 times the amount of wealth as the median Black family, meaning Black business owners generally have less cushion to deal with economic shocks. Many minority-owned businesses did not survive the Great Recession; Brookings's Joseph Parilla and Sifan Liu found that about 60% of white-owned businesses that existed in 2002 were still around in 2011, compared to 49% of Black-owned firms.⁴¹ And the wealth disparity does not only affect business owners of color. People of color, in general, have significantly less wealth to fall back on (and pay bills, rent, etc.) in times of crisis than White people. "Without wealth and liquidity, households may be unable to cover unexpected expenses and withstand long-term negative income shocks. Perhaps as a result, many families of color report that they would not be able "to pay their current month's bills" in the event of a \$400 emergency expense," an April 2020 report from the Center for American Progress found.⁴²

The racial and ethnic inequities caused by the necessary economic shutdowns could have been mitigated by an effective and equity-focused economic policy response from the US government. However, that has not been the case. Instead, crisis response and recovery programs have thus far themselves been institutionally racist and rife with racial and ethnic inequality. First and foremost, in addition to massive bailouts and cheap credit to large corporations and financial institutions, a centerpiece of the federal government's economic response to the pandemic was a one-time (thus far) cash "stimulus payment" to individuals and families. However, as the National League of Cities warned in late April, "low-income Black individuals will likely face the greatest challenges in receiving a stimulus payment." This is because the distribution of these payments was conditioned on having filed tax returns or being in receipt of social security retirement or other federal benefits. People who

did not fall into either of these categories had to specifically apply for the payments.⁴³

Moreover, those who had electronically filed tax returns or otherwise had a bank account on file with the government received their payments first, while those who did not had to wait weeks or months to receive their payment. According to Terri Friedline, a professor at the University of Michigan, "this delay will disproportionately affect the people who were marginalized or already burdened to begin with, and who especially need relief now: black and brown, lower-income white and female-headed households."⁴⁴ In other words, while people of color have been disproportionately affected by the economic effects of the crisis (due to occupation segregation and lack of wealth to cover an unexpected crisis), they are likely to be among the last to receive their stimulus payments, if they receive them at all.

Another major component of the federal government's economic response has been aid to small businesses affected by the economic downturn. While these efforts have in general been plagued with problems, these have been particularly acute for businesses owned by people of color. A centerpiece of the government's response is the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which provides an operating loan to small businesses that can be forgiven in the future if certain conditions are met. In the early stages of the PPP program, these loans were routed through banks and other traditional financial institutions. This was a problem because businesses owned by people of color are less likely to have an existing relationship with a bank or traditional lender (often due to legacies of institutional racism and discrimination) and the PPP funds were allocated by these institutions on a first come, first serve basis.⁴⁵ "A lot of the money that was set aside for small businesses did not end up in the businesses that we own and operate,"

Ron Busby, president of US Black Chambers, was quoted as saying in the *Guardian*. “When this piece of legislation came out and it did not address an equitable way for black and brown business owners to get access to capital, it is a huge burden for us.”⁴⁶

Moreover, smaller community-based lenders and financial institutions that often do have relationships with business owners of color were initially excluded from the PPP program. “It’s just frustrating and disappointing,” Harold Pettigrew, Executive Director of the Washington Area Community Investment Fund (Wacif) told the *Washington Post*.⁴⁷ At the beginning of May, a survey conducted on behalf of two racial justice organizations (UnidosUS and Color of Change) found that only 12% of Black and Latinx business owners who had asked for assistance had received the full amount they had requested from the federal government (through PPP or other programs). Moreover, 41% had not received any assistance and 21% were still waiting to hear back.⁴⁸ While the Small Business Administration currently does not provide demographic data on PPP recipients (despite growing calls for it to), making it impossible to conclusively determine the extent of racial inequality in the program, many Democratic lawmakers are becoming increasingly vocal about their concerns that businesses owned by people of color are disproportionately missing out on government relief funds.⁴⁹

The Treasury Department has since relaxed some of its rules on the types of institutions that can participate in the PPP program, and in late May it was reported that the SBA has designated \$10 billion in PPP loans to be routed through Community Development Financial Institutions.⁵⁰ Further research will need to be conducted to determine if these changes mitigate some of the racial inequities that are likely prevalent in the program.

How will the effects of the pandemic impact racial and ethnic economic inequality?

Lastly, we attempted to compile emerging data points that allow us to make some forward looking projections about how the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic might impact racial and ethnic economic inequality in the coming years. While undoubtedly all linked, we have grouped these projections into the following categories: 1) unemployment and income inequality; 2) business ownership; 3) wealth inequality.

To begin with, our partners at Autonomy (a research organization focused on issues of work and employment) compiled some statistics and data on existing racial and ethnic economic inequality, specifically: household income levels, usage of SNAP benefits, homeownership, and health insurance coverage. Visualizations of these are available in Appendix F, accompanied by visualizations of certain other trends from the Next System Project’s 2019 Index of Systemic Trends and selected visualizations of the data and statistics presented below from outside sources.

Unemployment

Since the financial crisis and Great Recession ten years ago, the racial and ethnic gap in the official unemployment rate (U3) has been slowly narrowing back to its historical, yet still disastrous norm (with the rate for Black people about twice as high as the rate for White people). In the first quarter of 2010, the official, seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Black people was 16.5%. By the last

quarter of 2019, it was down to 5.6%. For White people, the rate fell from 8.9% to 3.2%. In other words, the gap between the Black and White unemployment rate shrunk from 7.6 percentage points to 2.4 percentage points over the course of ten years. While less dramatic, the gap between Latinx and White unemployment also shrunk, from a 3.9% percentage point gap in 2010 to a .9% percentage point gap in 2019.⁵¹

However, the current crisis threatens to undo any employment equality gains Black and Latinx people have made over the past ten years. With only two months of data available since the start of the pandemic (March and April) at the time of writing, the unemployment gap has already started to increase again. In March the gap between the Black and White unemployment rate was 2.7 percentage points, and in April it was 2.5 percentage points. For Latinx people, the increase was much more pronounced. In March the gap had increased to 2 percentage points, and in April it was up to 4.7 percentage points. In March, Latinx people had the highest unemployment rate of any racial or ethnic group (at 18.9%).

These findings are in accordance with the data presented in a new Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research Working paper on the subject, and also confirms multiple news reports that Latinx people are amongst the hardest hit in terms of COVID-19 related job losses.⁵² It also confirms polling data that suggests that Latinx people are more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to have experienced a pay cut or job loss in their household due to the pandemic.⁵³ Moreover, additional polling has found that Latinx and Black people have been furloughed or laid off at higher rates than White people during the pandemic, suggesting that the racial and ethnic unemployment gaps will continue to rise in the coming months. For instance, a May *Washington Post*-Ipsos poll found that 20% of Latinx adults and 16% of Black adults had been furloughed or laid off, compared to 11% of

White adults.⁵⁴ As will be discussed below, this also has an impact on racial wealth inequalities.

To get further definition on this question, we partnered with the research organization Autonomy to analyze the racial and ethnic composition of the workforce in different occupational categories. This information, combined with information on the current unemployment rate by sector, allows us to further demonstrate that job losses are disproportionately affecting people of color. In particular, 4 out of the top 5 industries with the greatest unemployment variance (from April 2019 to April 2020) are industries where Black and or Latinx people are significantly over-represented (compared to the 2019 total employment breakdown by race and ethnicity). These are 1) Leisure and Hospitality (34.8 percentage point difference), in which both Black and Latinx people are over-represented; 2) Other Services (20.5 percentage point difference), in which Latinx people are over-represented; 3) Wholesale and Retail Trade (12.8 percentage point difference), in which Latinx people are over-represented; and 4) Construction (11.9 percentage point difference), in which Latinx people are over-represented. The only exception was durable goods manufacturing (12.5 percentage point difference), in which both Black and Latinx people were under-represented, and White people were over-represented.⁵⁵

This confirms data presented by other groups and researchers. For instance, the Center for American Progress reports that “workers of color are overrepresented in the lowest-paid agricultural, domestic, and service vocations and have the least job security. Many of these workers, including restaurant and retail workers, have already been laid off due to public health guidance....For communities of color, the labor market is unsteady when the economy is strong and extremely hazardous when it is not.”⁵⁶ Similarly, a study by University of Chicago economist Erik Hurst found that 9%

of workers in the top 1/5th of income earners had been laid off; while 35% of workers in the bottom 1/5th of income earners had been laid off.⁵⁷ This latter category, other studies confirm, is disproportionately comprised of Black and Latinx workers.⁵⁸

Lastly, our data (which is confirmed by other secondary sources) suggests that people of color are more likely to be employed in jobs that they cannot perform virtually (telework). The occupational groups that are least likely to be able to be done remotely are: 1) Food Preparation and Service Related; 2) Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance; 3) Construction and Extraction; 4) Production, Transportation and Material Moving; 5) Farming Fishing and Forestry; 6) Healthcare support. These occupational groups generally involve lower pay and often have higher concentrations of Black and Latinx workers. This has implications both for employment (as these workers are more likely to be laid off, rather than moved to telework status) and community health (as these workers are more likely to be forced to continue to work, thereby risking exposure to COVID-19). Visualizations of some of the data in this section are available in Appendix G.

Business Ownership

As discussed in Part II in conjunction with racial and ethnic inequities in the economic policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is increasing concern that businesses owned by people of color are being disproportionately affected by the crisis. According to unpublished data from Robert Fairlie, an economics professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the number of Black business owners fell 40 percent between February and April 2020, far in excess of the 22 percent decline across all racial and ethnic groups. This amounts to a decline of around 450,000 Black business owners. Latinx business owners also saw a disproportionate decline, falling by 32%.⁵⁹

Asian business owners have also been particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Fairlie, around 10 percent of Asian owned businesses are in the food service sector (higher than any other racial or ethnic group), making them particularly vulnerable to the public health shutdowns and lockdowns. On top of this, many Asian owned businesses have seen disproportionate drops in traffic or have been afraid to stay open (or re-open) due to racist fearmongering and blame over the origins of COVID-19. “Business after business has forgone even online orders and pickup both ‘out of fear of the virus and out of fear of retaliation because of the virus,’ Vicente Reid, CEO of Arizona’s Asian Chamber of Commerce, is quoted as saying in the *Washington Post*.⁶⁰

Moreover, since these declines are already on top of severe racial and ethnic inequalities in terms of business ownership, they threaten to dramatically widen the gap between White business owners and business owners of color. “We already have disparities. African Americans have the lowest business-ownership rate in the population.... And so here we’re creating a situation of closures that’s hitting the groups with the lowest rates even harder,” Fairlie was quoted as saying. “We’re just going to see further increases in inequality that has been so hard to change.”⁶¹

Fairlie and others have speculated as to the reasons behind this disproportionate decline in business owners of color, including:

- 1) many of these businesses are in occupations that are most affected by the COVID-19 related economic shut-downs (service, transportation, childcare, etc.);
- 2) many of these businesses are located in areas that are more affected by the virus (given that, as we have seen, communities of color are being disproportionately affected); and
- 3) that racism and inequities have permeated the economic policy response to the economic crisis (as discussed in Part II of this memo).

However, another factor is structural. Black owned businesses in particular tend to be smaller (both in terms of revenue and employment) than White owned businesses, making them potentially less able to weather an economic crisis.⁶² In fact, around 96% of Black owned firms have no employees, which means that the ability of the business to survive an economic crisis is highly dependent on the wealth of the individual owner.⁶³ And, as will be discussed further in the next section, there are longstanding racial and ethnic disparities in the distribution of wealth and income in the US. According to a recent report by the NAACP, 58% of Black and Latinx households do not have enough income to cover 3 months of expenses (compared to 29% of White households).⁶⁴

While individual business ownership (and homeownership), alone (without structural and systemic changes), is not enough to end racial economic and wealth disparities, the loss of businesses owned by people of color will almost inevitably exacerbate these inequalities.⁶⁵ This is because, according to research, business owners of color are wealthier than their non-business owning peers and wealth disparities between business owners of color and White business owners are less pronounced than in the population as a whole. For instance, a recent report found that while the median wealth of White adults was 13 times greater than Black adults, the median wealth of White business owners was only 3 times greater than that of Black business owners.⁶⁶ In sum, all indications, from both the emerging data and the recent experience of the Great Recession, is that businesses owned by people of color are likely to be disproportionately affected by the current crisis, which will have a negative effect not only on families of color, but also racial wealth and economic inequality throughout our society more generally.

Wealth Inequality

The United States as a whole is one of the most economically inequitable countries in the OECD (countries with similar levels of economic development), and research suggests that high levels of income and wealth inequality are associated with numerous negative social and economic effects. Trends around wealth inequality in particular are even more pronounced when looking at race and ethnicity. In 1983, Black and Latinx households had just \$7,000 and \$4,100 respectively in median net worth. Comparatively, the median net worth of White households was around 1,500% higher, at \$105,300. By 2016, however, the median net worth of Black families had fallen to roughly half that of 1983 levels and the median net worth of White families had increased to 4,000% higher.

This was partly due to the effects of the financial crisis and Great Recession. As Danyelle Solomon and Darrick Hamilton wrote recently, Black and Latinx communities “are typically the first to feel the effects of economic downturns. They are also last to recover from economic swings. For example, when reviewing the median wealth of Black and white families following the Great Recession, Black families’ wealth in 2016 was about half of the median Black wealth recorded right before the Great Recession. In comparison, the median white wealth in 2016 had grown by almost 15 percent since the Great Recession.”⁶⁷

Moreover, in a 2017 report, the Institute for Policy Studies and Prosperity Now found “if the racial wealth divide is left unaddressed and is not exacerbated further over the next eight years, median Black household wealth is on a path to hit zero by 2053—about 10 years after it is projected that racial minorities will comprise the majority of the nation’s population. Median

Hispanic household wealth is projected to hit zero 20 years later, or by 2073. In sharp contrast, median White household wealth would climb to \$137,000 by 2053 and \$147,000 by 2073.” Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely one of those exacerbating factors.

Taken together, these data points suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to further deepen racial wealth inequality, and narrow the time frames in which median Black and Latinx wealth is projected to drop to zero.

Conclusion

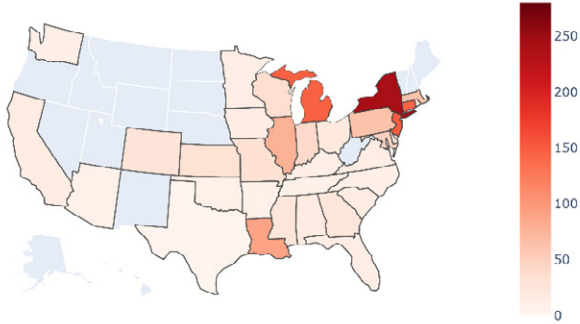
Recent events, including both the COVID-19 pandemic and the mass uprisings against police brutality and the murder of Black people, have, at least temporarily, lifted the veil on how pervasive systemic racism is, and always has been, in the United States. This includes how race and ethnicity are intimately connected both to economic conditions in our communities and population and individual health. Our research not only reveals these connections in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic,

but suggests that in several areas racial and ethnic economic inequality is only likely to get worse due to both the pandemic itself and the inadequate (and institutionally racist) response.

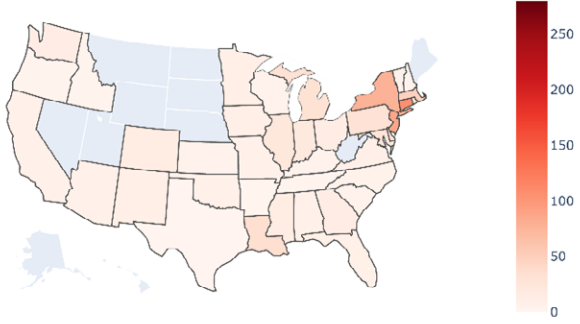
To counter this, it is imperative that we take this opportunity – and seize upon this terrible, yet historic moment – to redouble and refocus our efforts to address racial and ethnic economic inequality by building community wealth and enhancing community control. We must also go far beyond the small-scale changes, reforms, and incremental gains that have repeatedly proven to be fragile and easily reversible in times of economic and social crisis. Community wealth building, and economic development more generally, must be consciously linked to both a reparative agenda (based on addressing the deep and enduring legacies of dispossession, enslavement, and racism that are at the heart of US capitalism) and fundamental structural changes that move us in the direction of a system that is, at its core, equitable, sustainable, and democratic.

Appendix A: National COVID-19 Deaths

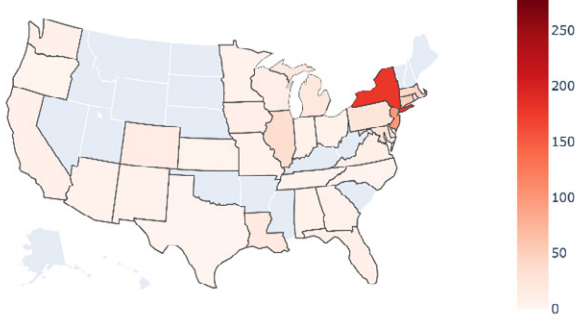
Black COVID Deaths per 100,000 persons



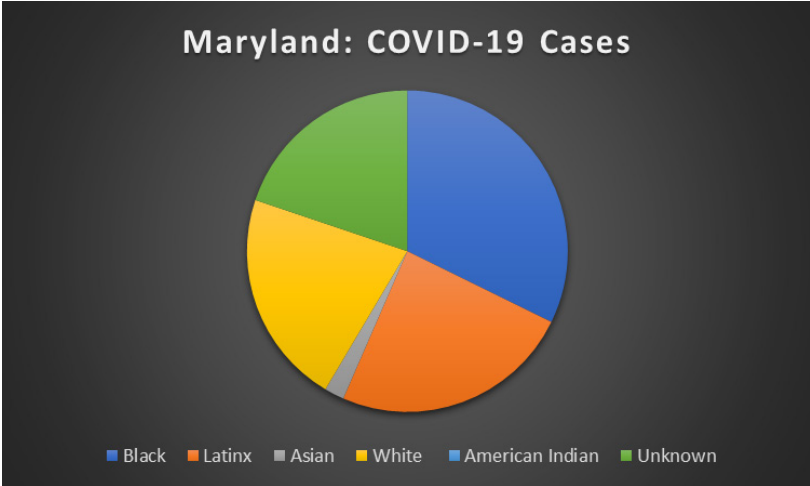
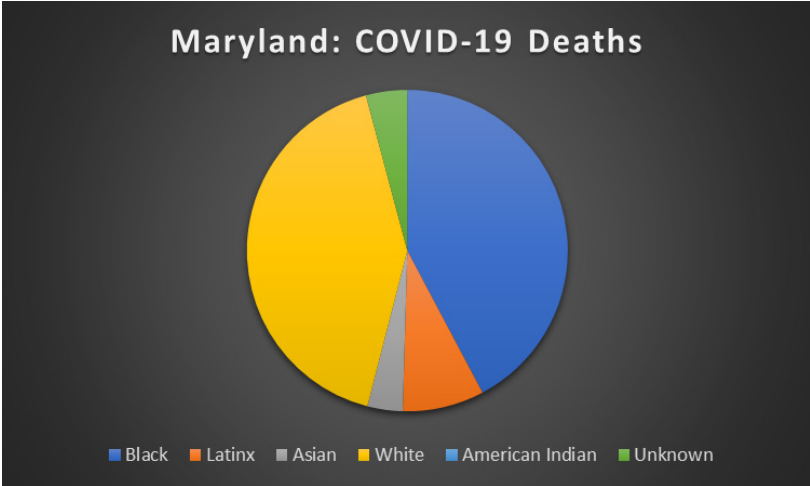
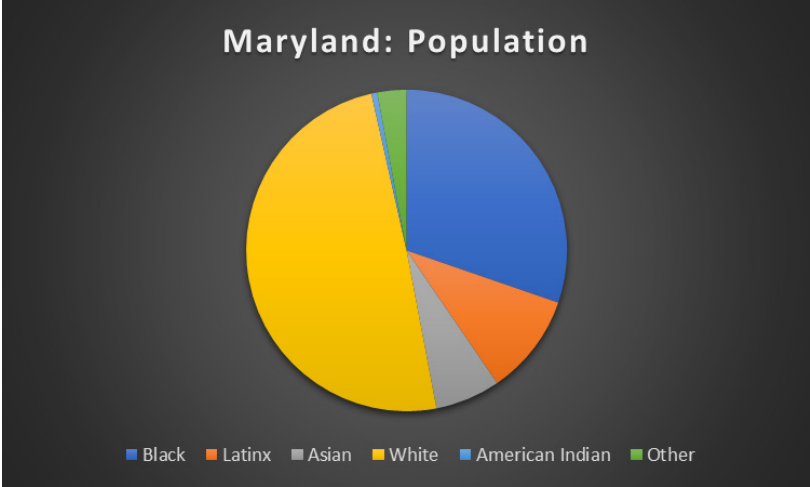
White COVID Deaths per 100,000 persons



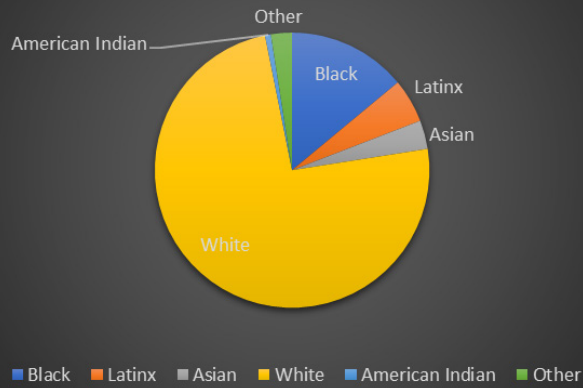
Latinx COVID Deaths per 100,000 persons



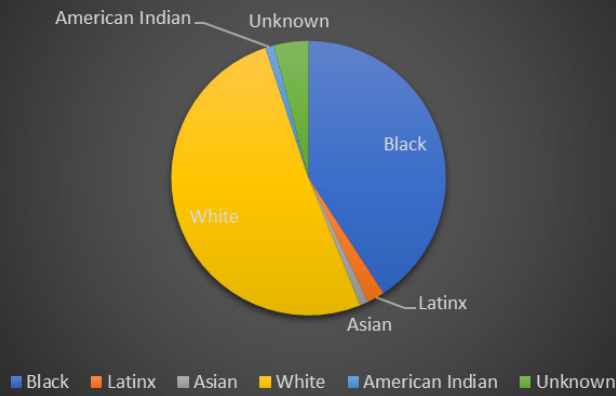
Appendix B: State & Local COVID-19 Cases and Deaths



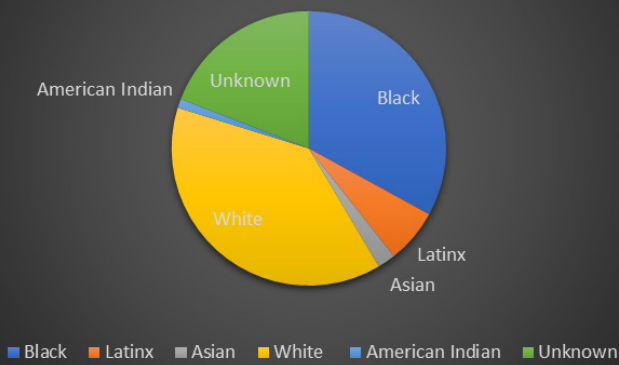
Michigan: Population



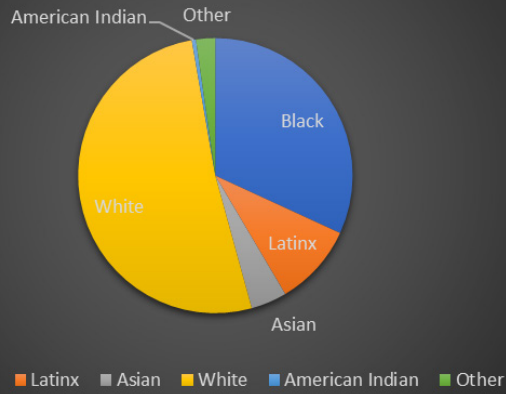
Michigan: COVID-19 Deaths



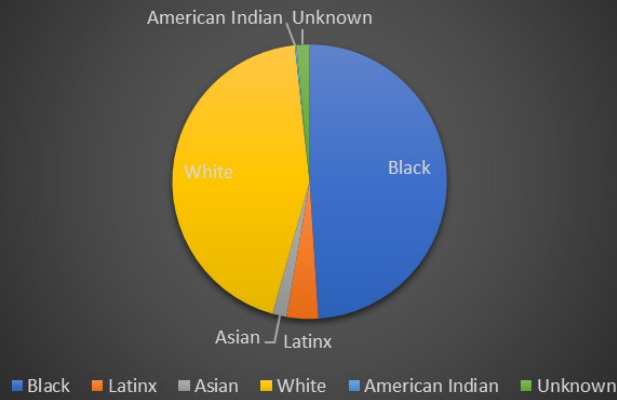
Michigan: COVID-19 Cases



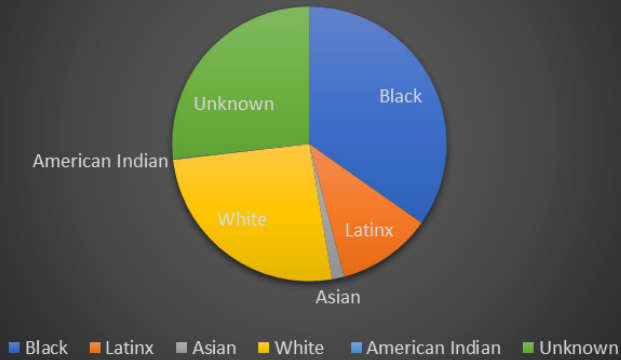
Georgia: Population



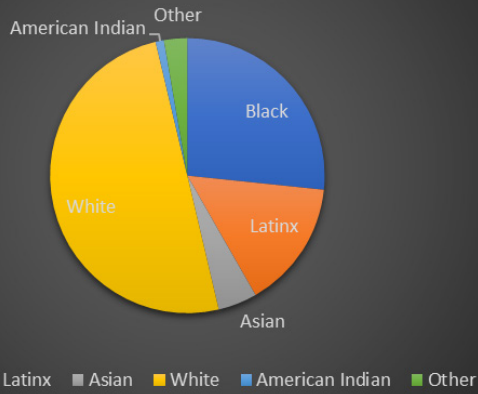
Georgia: COVID-19 Deaths



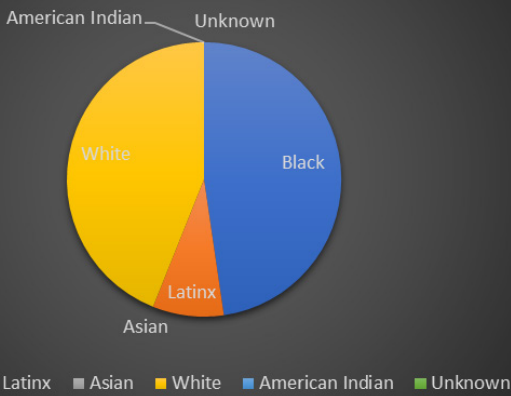
Georgia: COVID-19 Cases



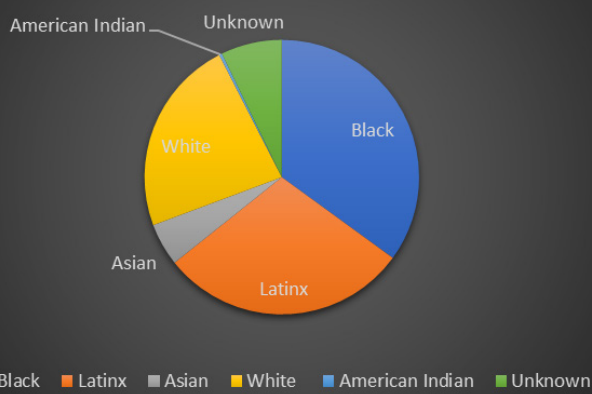
Milwaukee County: Population

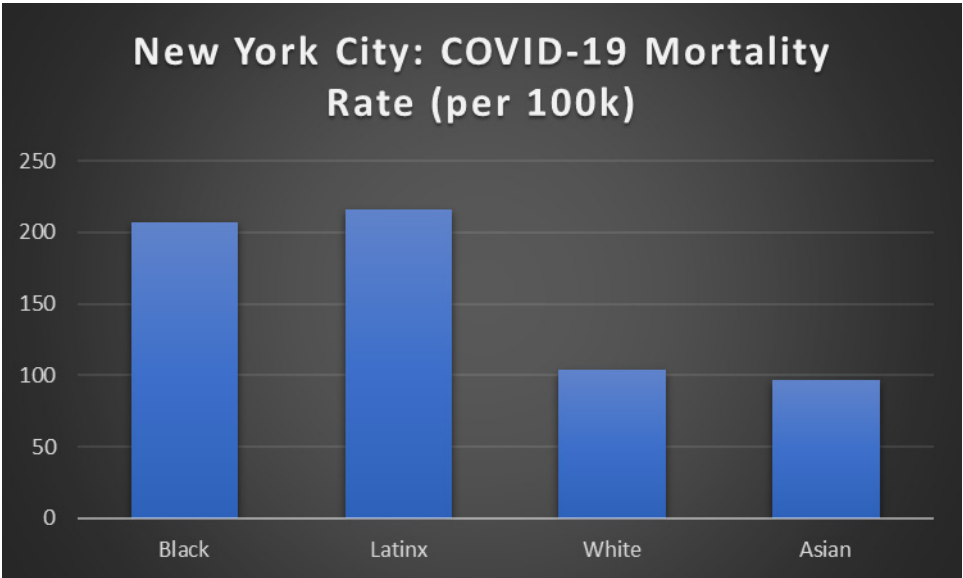
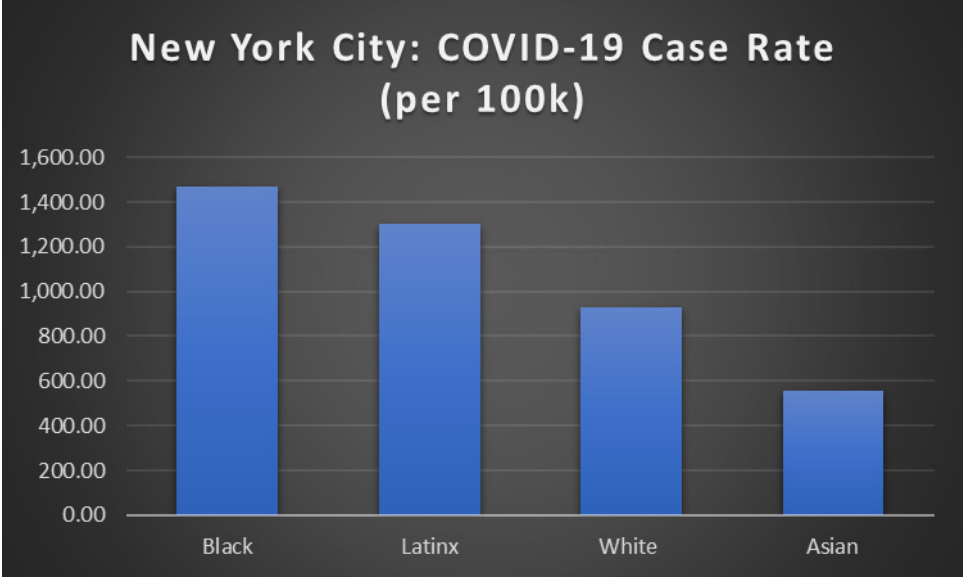


Milwaukee County: COVID-19 Deaths

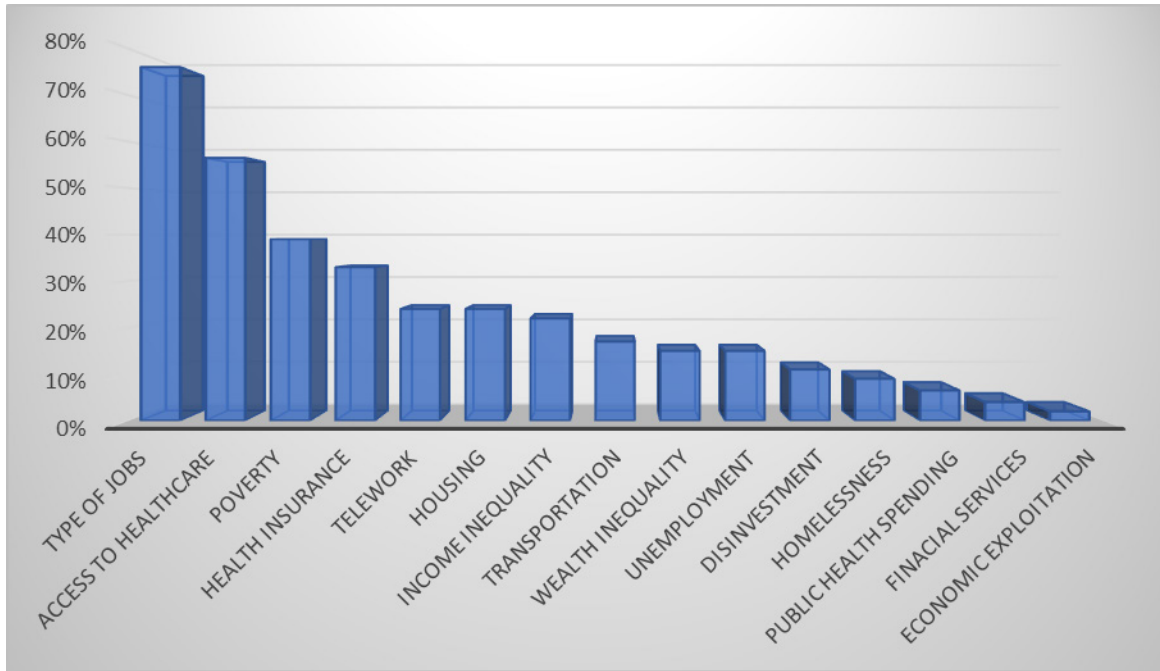
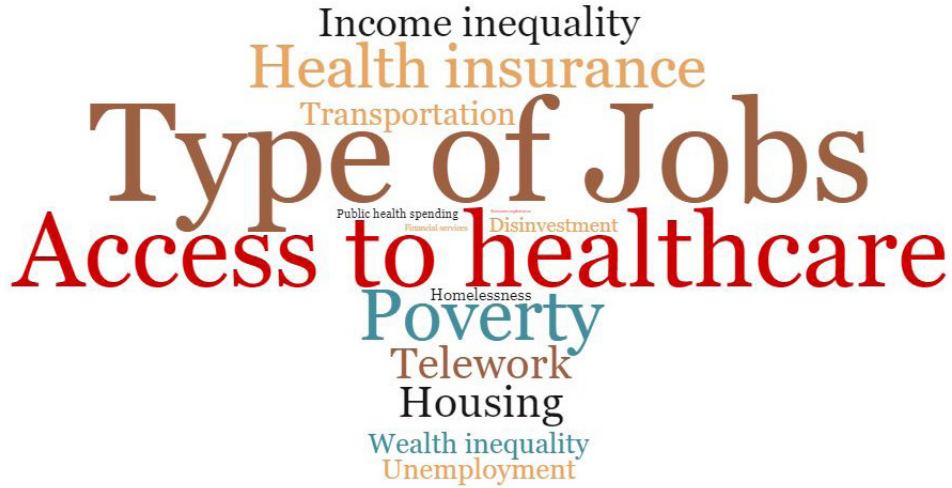


Milwaukee County: COVID-19 Cases

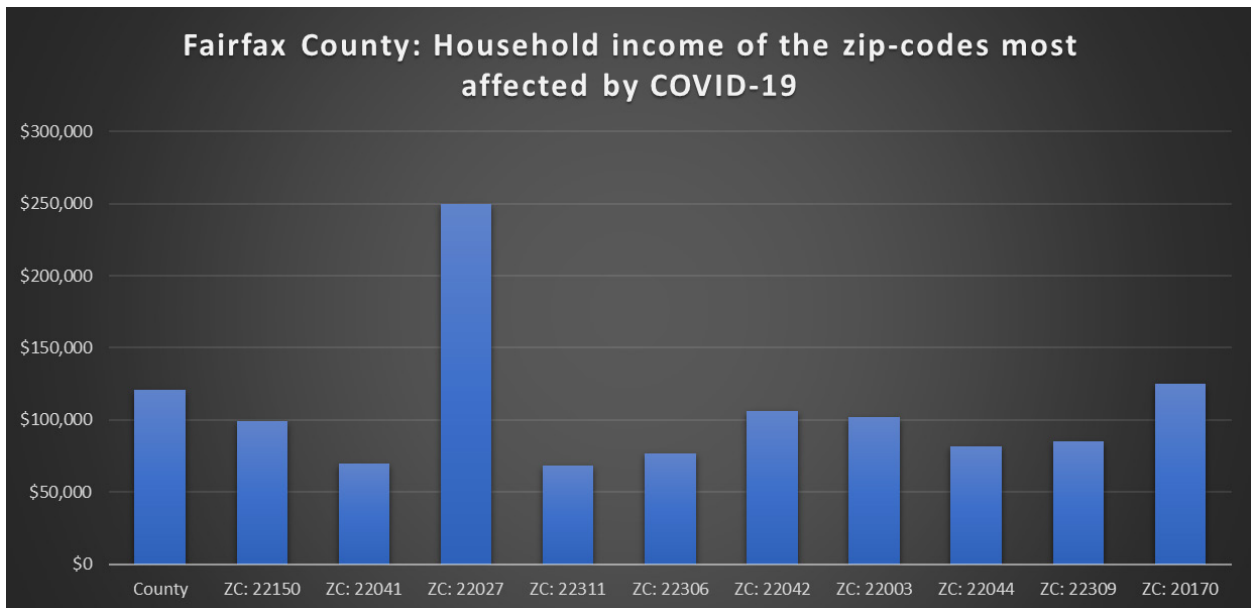
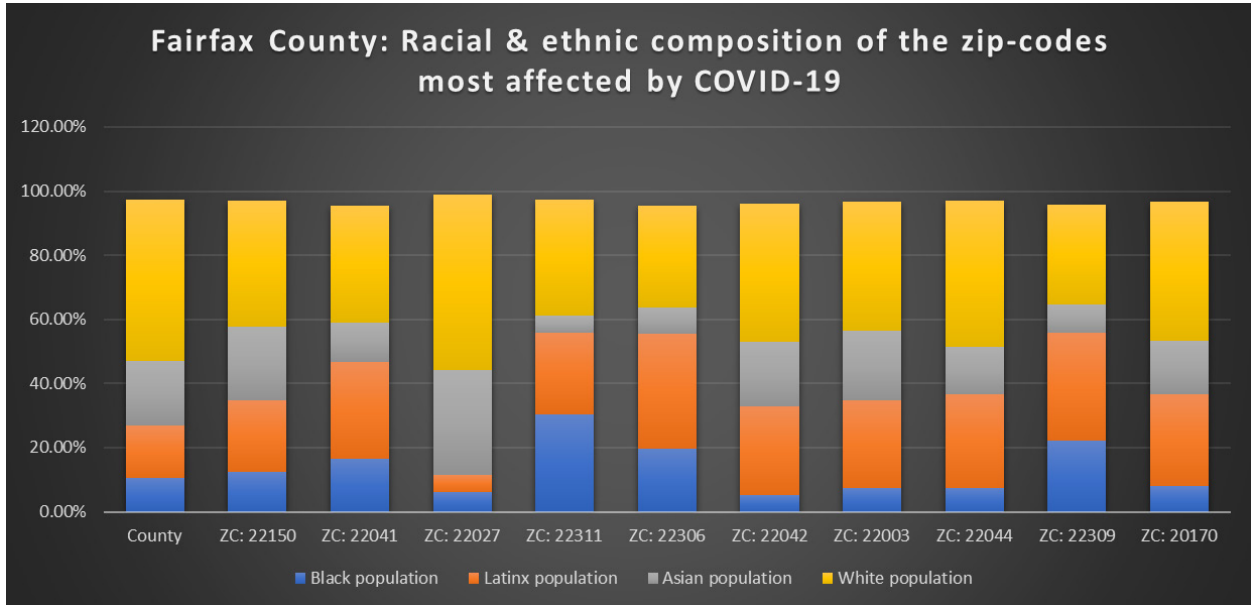




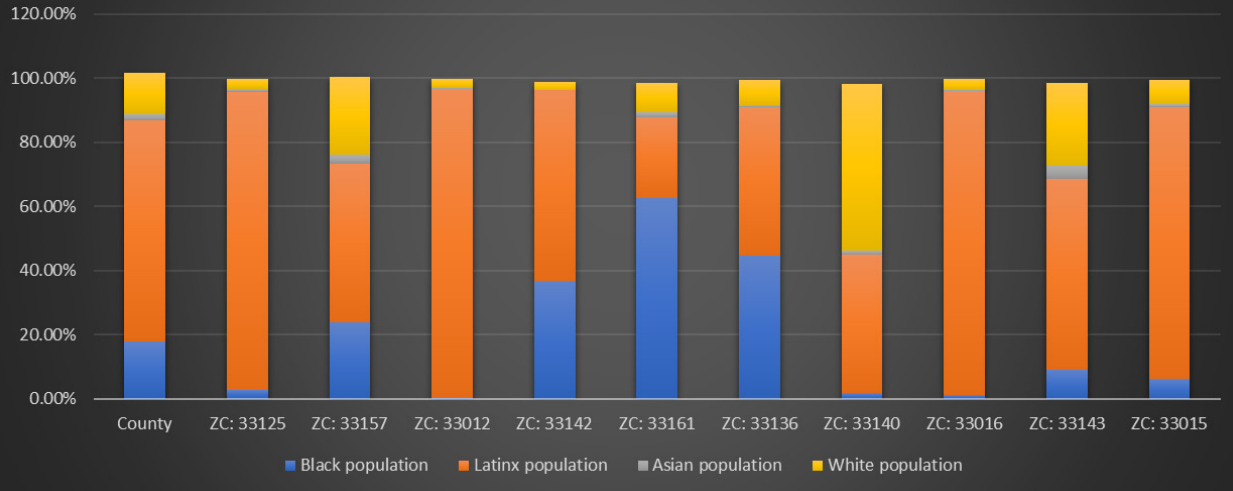
Appendix C: Literature Review Results



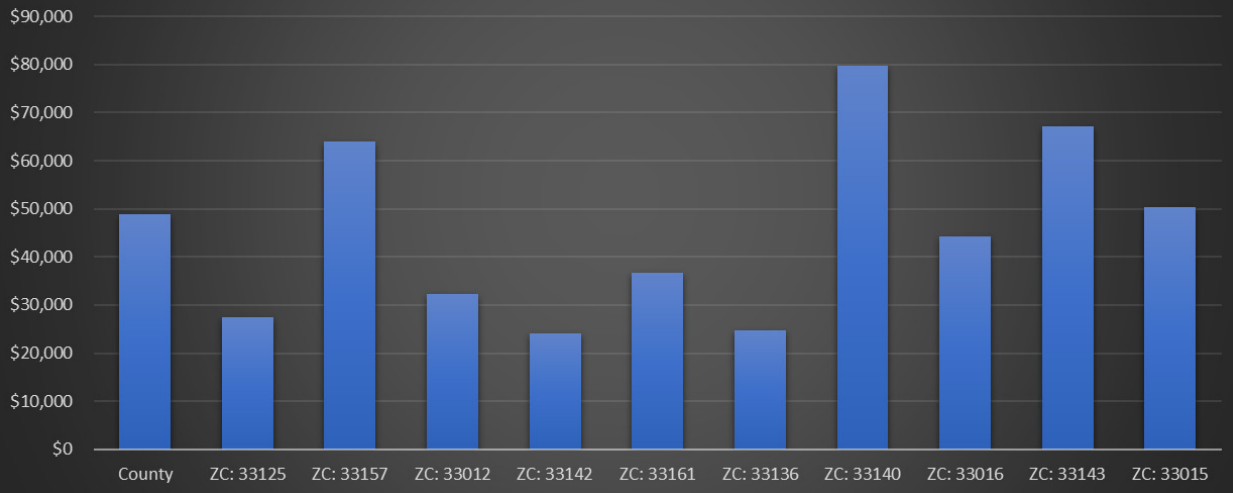
Appendix D: Zip-code Level Data



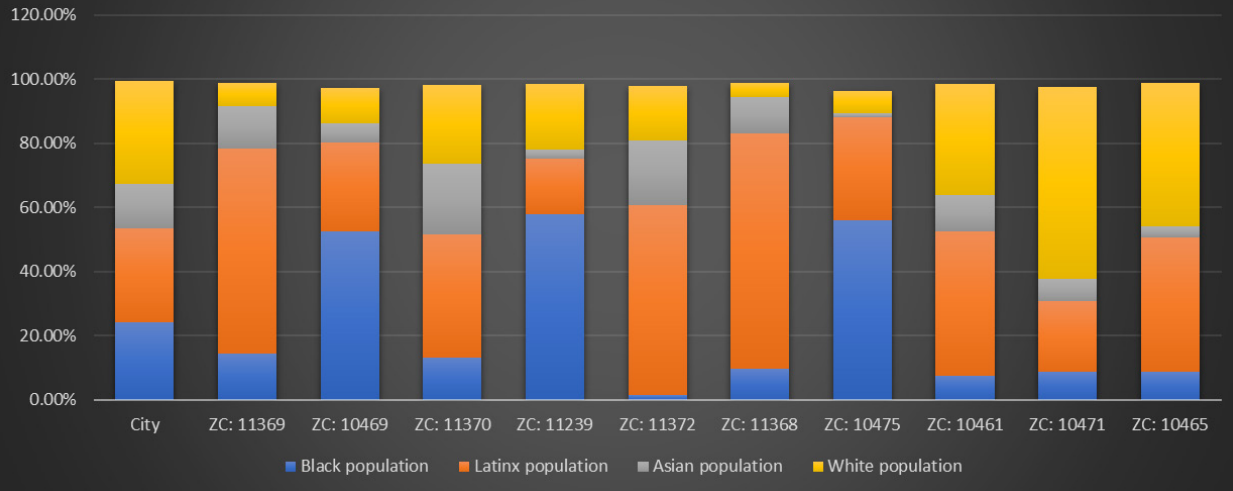
Miami-Dade County: Racial & ethnic composition of the zip-codes most affected by COVID-19



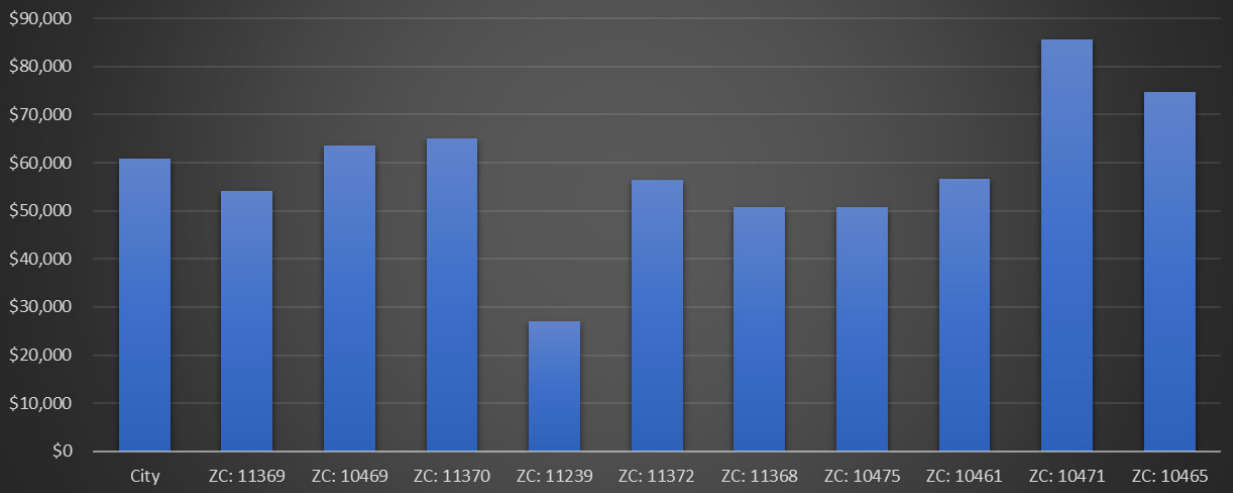
Miami-Dade County: Household income of the zip-codes most affected by COVID-19



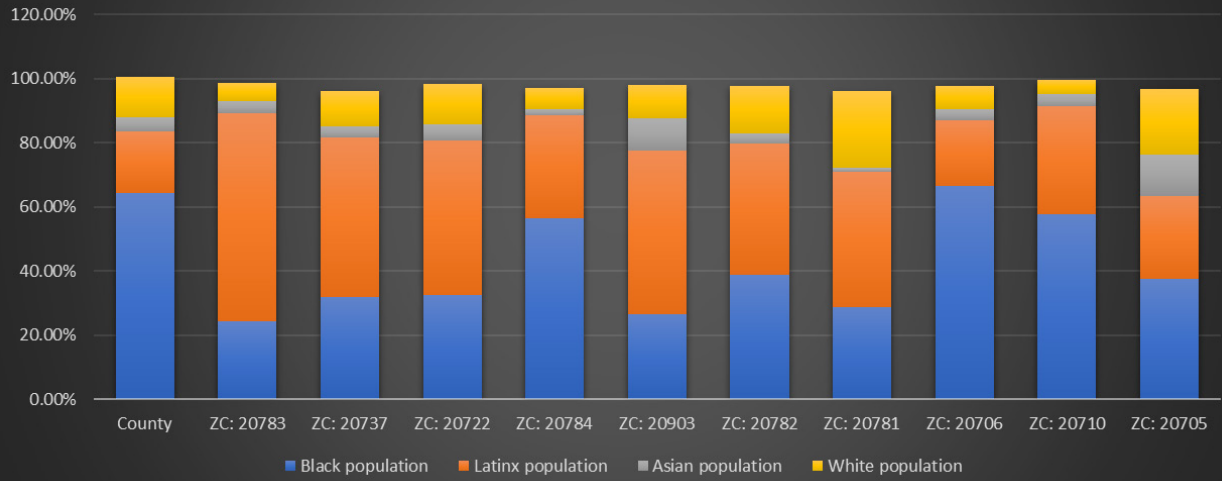
New York City: Racial & ethnic composition of zip-codes most affected by COVID-19



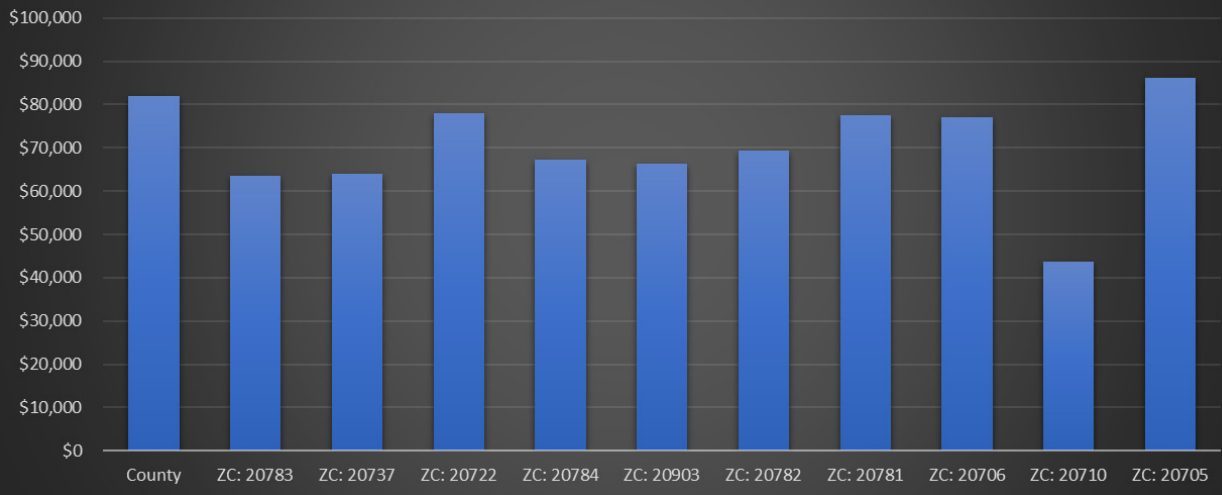
New York City: Household income of zip-codes most affected by COVID-19



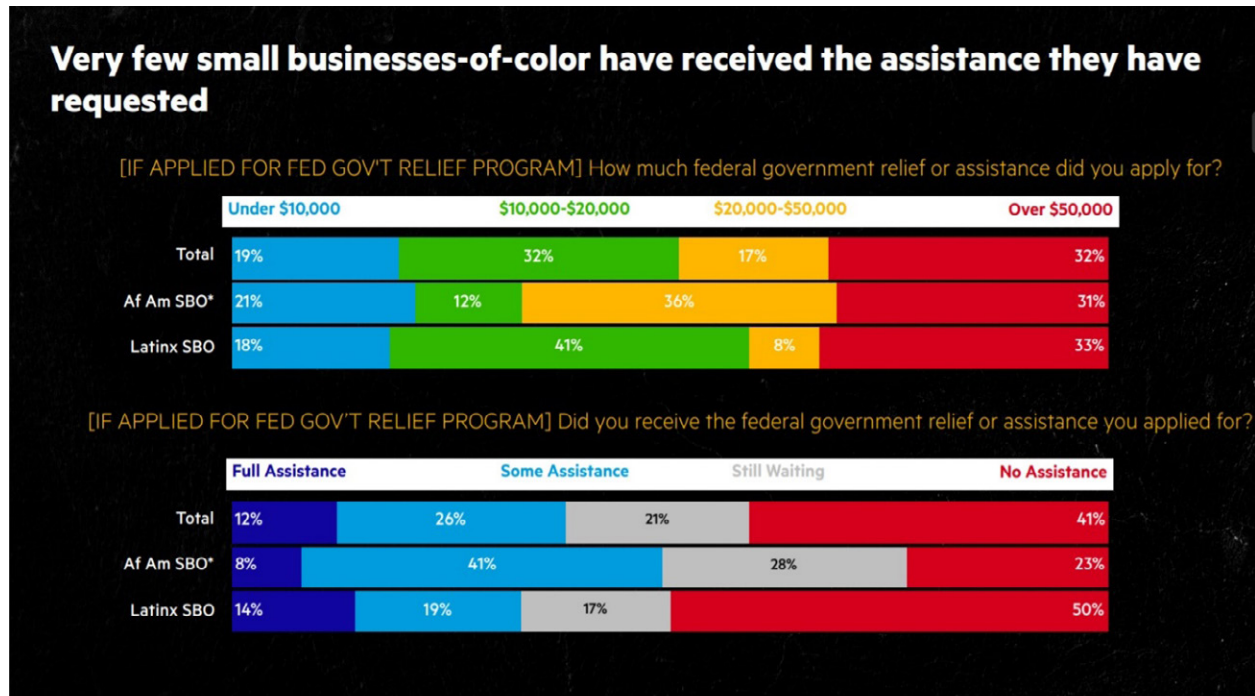
Prince George's County: Racial & ethnic composition of zip-codes most affected by COVID-19



Prince George's County: Household income of zip-codes most affected by COVID-19

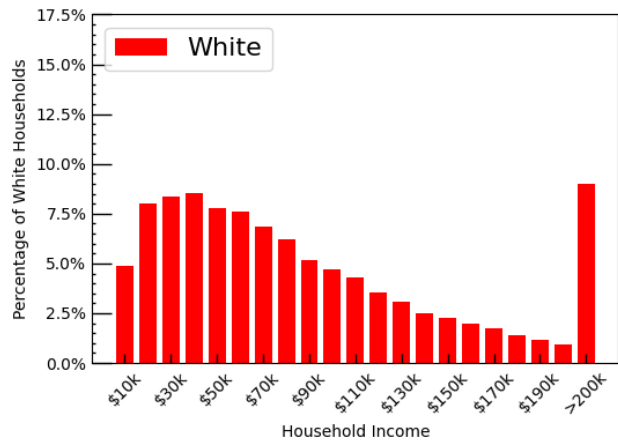
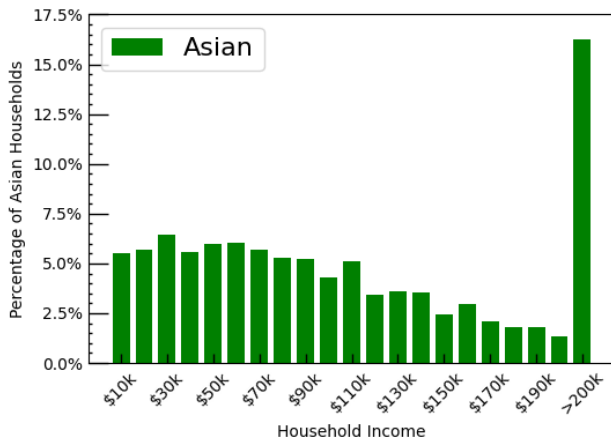
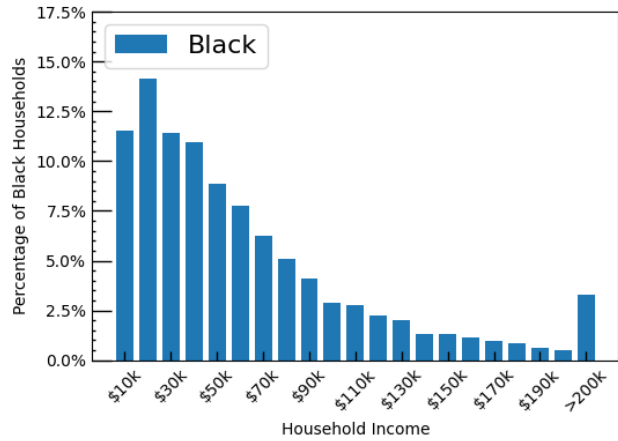
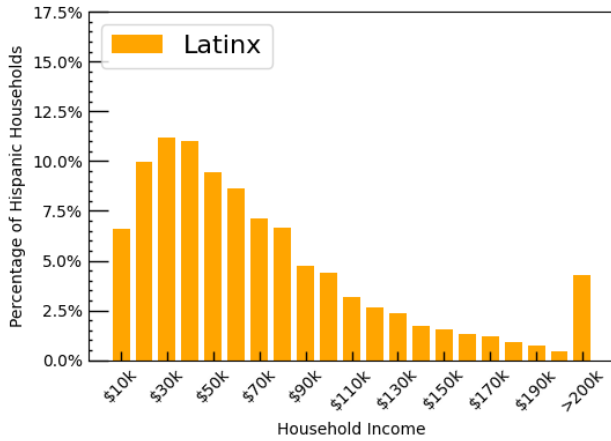


Appendix E: Government Response

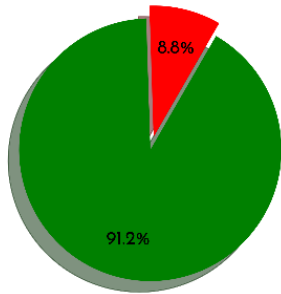


From: "Federal Stimulus Survey Findings," *UnidosUS & Color of Change*, accessed 5/28/2020, <https://theblackresponse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COC-UnidosUS-Abbreviated-Deck-F05.13.20.pdf>.

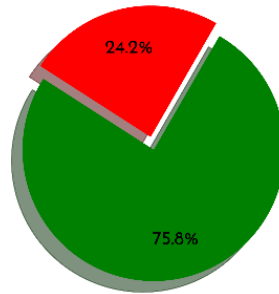
Appendix F: Existing Racial and Ethnic Economic Inequalities



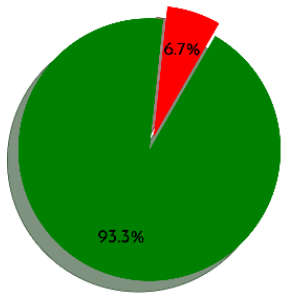
Food Stamps US Households



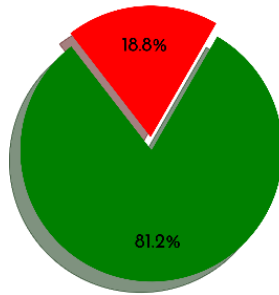
White



Black or African American



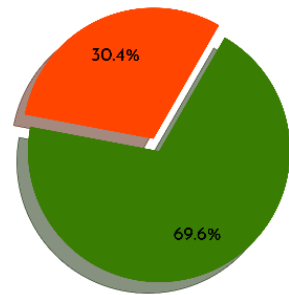
Asian



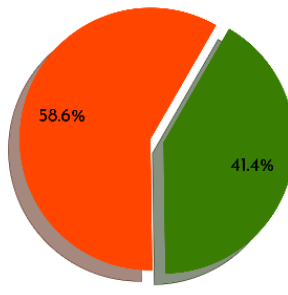
Latinx

■ Receiving Food Stamps
■ Not Food Stamps

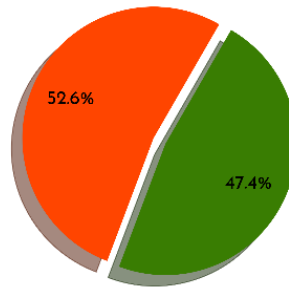
Housing Tenure US Households



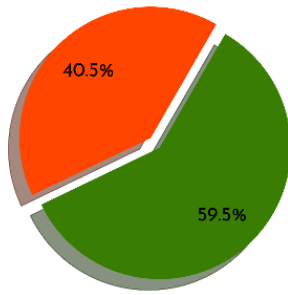
White



Black or African American



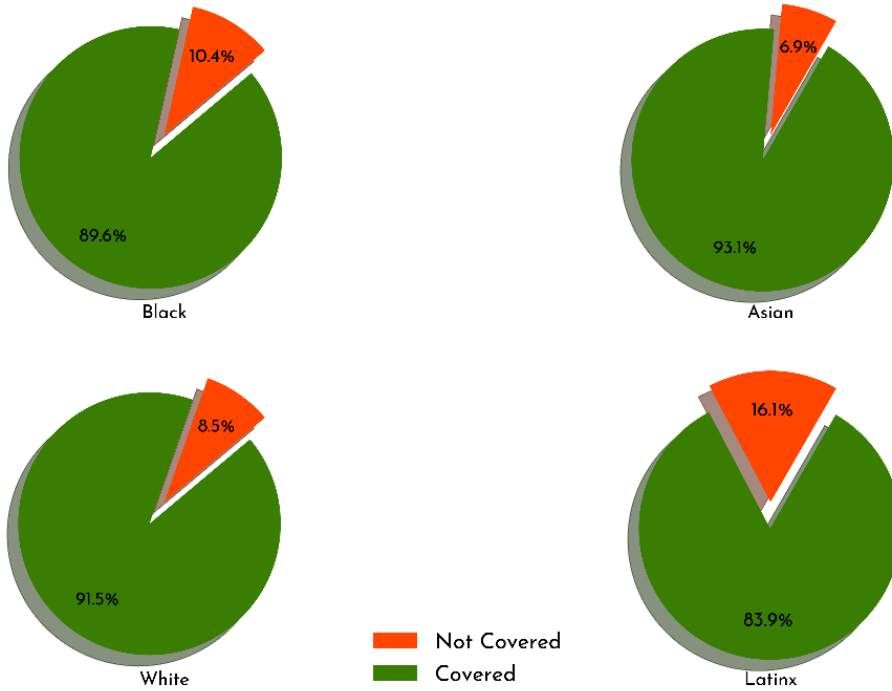
Latinx



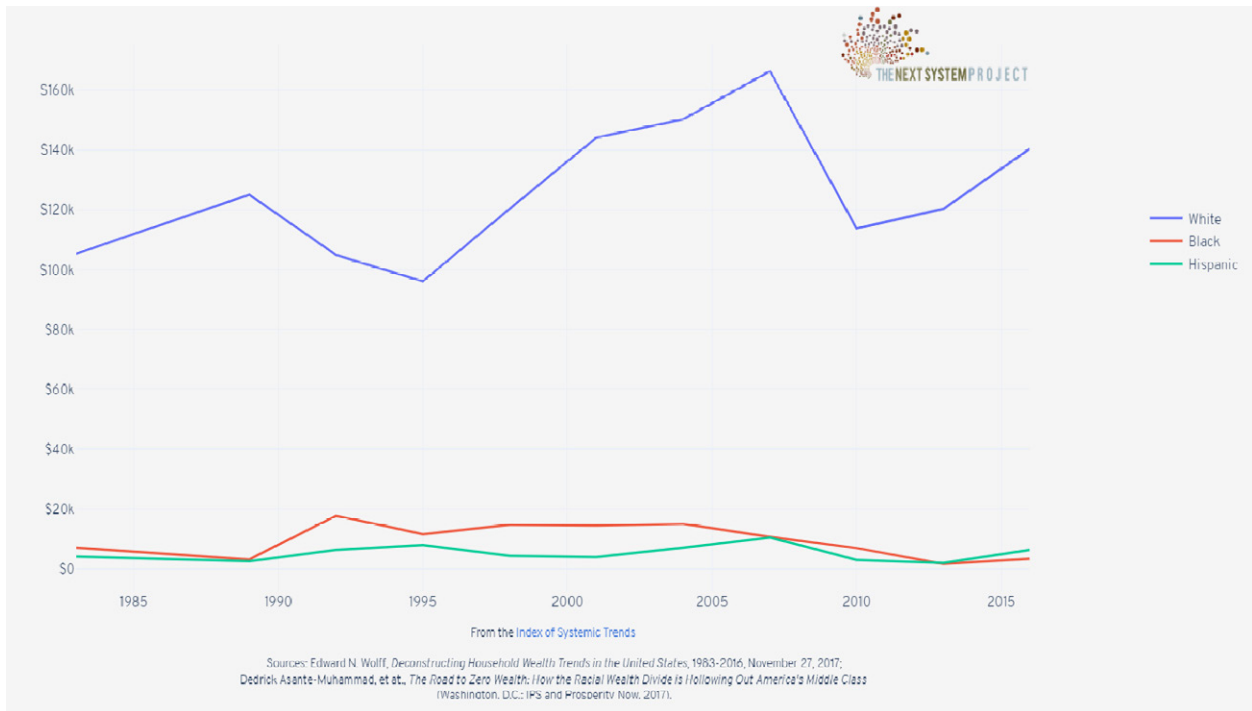
Asian

■ Rent
■ Own

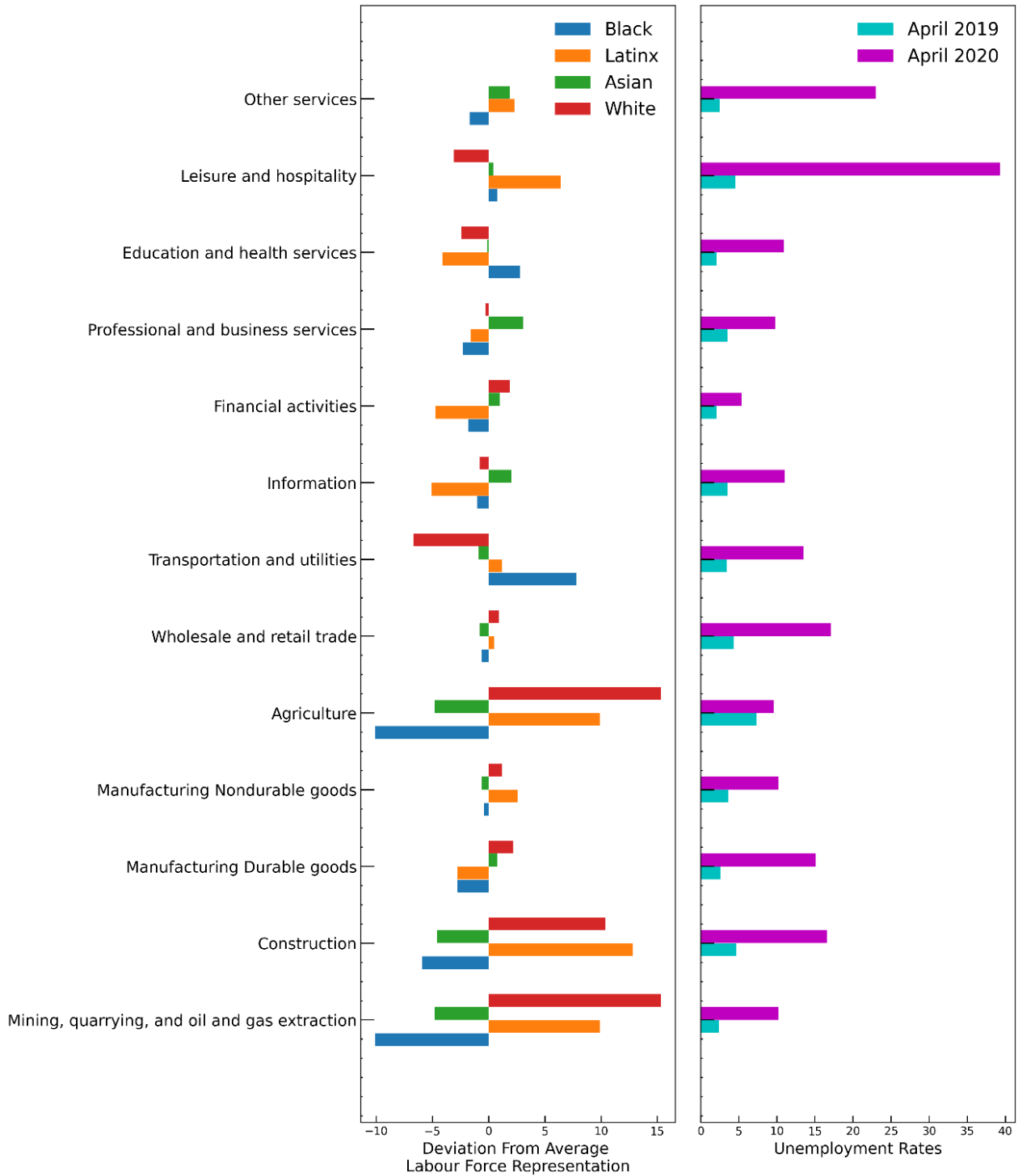
Health Insurance Cover

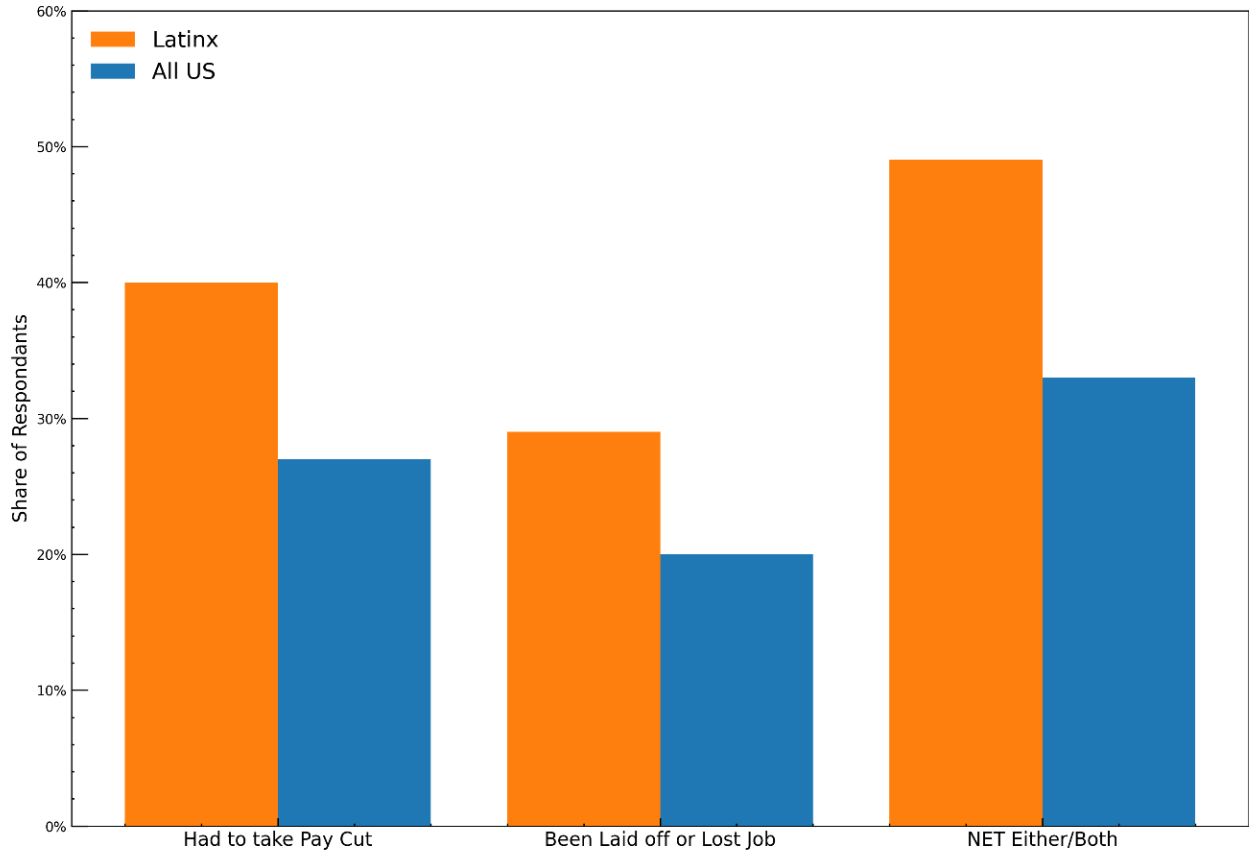


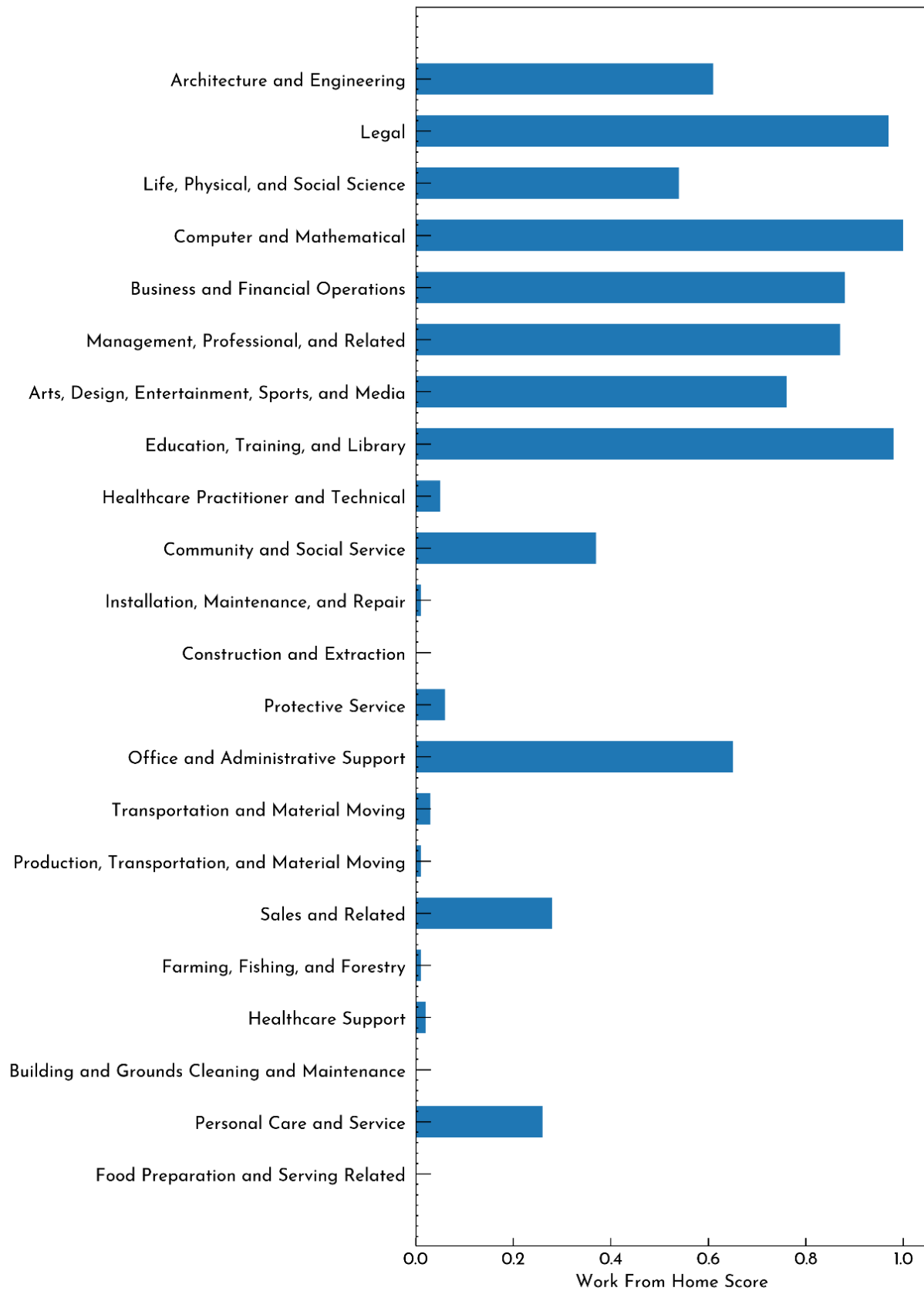
Racial Wealth Inequality



Appendix G: Unemployment







Endnotes

- 1 "Racial Data Transparency," *Johns Hopkins University*, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/racial-data-transparency>.
- 2 Samantha Artiga, et al., "Growing Data Underscore that Communities of Color are Being Harder Hit by COVID-19," *Kaiser Family Foundation*, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-policy-watch/growing-data-underscore-communities-color-harder-hit-covid-19/>.
- 3 APM Research Lab Staff, "The Color of Coronavirus: COVID-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.," *APM Research Lab*, May 20, 2020, accessed 5/20/20, <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>.
- 4 Percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole percent. For a variety of reasons these figures should be considered rough estimates and are not strictly comparable. First and foremost, the high percentages of unknown racial and ethnic identities in many of the data sets implies a large margin of error. Second, each of the states report their data differently. For instance, some states report race and ethnicity data together, allowing for more accurate comparisons between groups. However, some states report race and ethnicity data separately, leading to some potential data overlap between Latinx and other groups. Unless otherwise specified, baseline population percentages for each racial and ethnic group were drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau's July 2019 estimates (contained in the "Quick Facts" section). The Census Bureau "considers race and Hispanic origin to be two separate and distinct concepts. Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race." Therefore, while it is possible to develop a rough estimate of a state's racial and ethnic makeup by tallying the Census Bureau's percentages for "Hispanic or Latino," "White alone, not Hispanic or Latino" and the various other racial groups (excluding "White alone"), these are approximations rather than exact percentages. In all cases, the baseline population percentages developed and presented here have been double checked against the Kaiser Family Foundation's "2018 Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity" chart to ensure that they are as accurate as possible. See: "Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity: 2018," *Kaiser Family Foundation*, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/distribution-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22collid%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>.

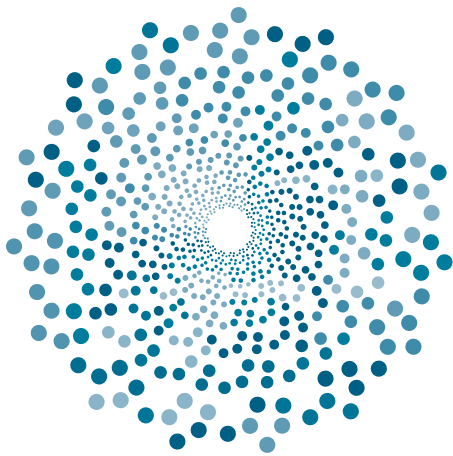
COVID-19 death percentages and population percentages have also been compared against the APM data (from May 20) for each state to double check against potential errors. See: APM Research Lab Staff, "The Color of Coronavirus: COVID-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S.," *APM Research Lab*, May 20, 2020, accessed 5/20/20, <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>.
- 5 Alabama lists race and ethnicity in separate tables. The percent of Black cases and deaths has been compared against the "Black or African American alone" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. The percent of White cases and deaths has been compared against the "White alone, not Hispanic or Latino" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. COVID-19 data is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://alpublichealth.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/6d2771faa9da4a2786a509d82c8cf0f7>.
- 6 COVID-19 data is from May 17, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/datasets/md-covid-19-data-dashboard>.
- 7 Tennessee lists race and ethnicity in separate tables. For the purposes of this report, we have reported the exact percentage of Latinx cases and deaths from the ethnicity table, and the exact percentages of Black, Asian, and White cases and deaths from the race table. The percent of Black cases and deaths has been compared against the "Black or African American alone" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. The percent of Latinx cases and deaths has been compared against the "Hispanic or Latino" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. The percent of White cases and deaths has been compared against the "White alone, not Hispanic or Latino" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. COVID-19 data is from May 19, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov/data.html>.
- 8 COVID-19 data is from May 19, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-19-daily-status-report>.
- 9 COVID-19 data is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://data.ct.gov/Health-and-Human-Services/COVID-19-confirmed-cases-by-race-ethnicity/7rne-efic>.
- 10 COVID-19 data is from May 17, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://txdshs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/ed483ecd702b4298ab01e8b9cafc8b83>. For White people, this data shows a significant variance from the May 20 APM data (collected May 19). APM's newer data shows a +7 for White people (rather than a -4).
- 11 COVID-19 data is from May 19, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/covid19-statistics>.
- 12 Michigan lists race and ethnicity in separate tables. The percent of Black cases and deaths has been compared against the "Black or African American alone" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. The percent of White cases and deaths has been compared against the "White alone, not Hispanic or Latino" percent in the Census Bureau's population estimates. COVID-19 data is from May 15, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163_98173---,00.html.

- 13 Missouri lists race and ethnicity in separate tables. The percent of Black cases and deaths has been compared against the “Black or African American alone” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. The percent of White cases and deaths has been compared against the White alone, not Hispanic or Latino” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. COVID-19 data is from May 15, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/novel-coronavirus/results.php>.
- 14 Arkansas lists race and ethnicity in separate tables. The percent of Black cases and deaths has been compared against the “Black or African American alone” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. The percent of White cases and deaths has been compared against the White alone, not Hispanic or Latino” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. COVID-19 data is from May 20, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c2ef4a4fcb5458bf2e48a21e4fece9>.
- 15 In California, baseline population percentages were presented by the state alongside jointly reported race and ethnicity data for both COVID-19 cases and deaths. COVID-19 data is from May 17, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Race-Ethnicity.aspx>.
- 16 COVID-19 data is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/infectious-disease-epidemiology/covid-19/dashboards/index.php>.
- 17 COVID-19 data is from May 19, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://covid19.colorado.gov/data/case-data>.
- 18 Oregon lists race and ethnicity in separate tables. For the purposes of this report, we have reported the exact percentage of Latinx cases and deaths from the ethnicity table, and the exact percentages of Black, Asian, and White cases and deaths from the race table. The percent of Black cases and deaths has been compared against the “Black or African American alone” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. The percent of Latinx cases and deaths has been compared against the “Hispanic or Latino” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. The percent of White cases and deaths has been compared against the White alone, not Hispanic or Latino” percent in the Census Bureau’s population estimates. COVID-19 data is from May 19, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/DISEASESCONDITIONS/DISEASESAZ/Emerging%20Respiratory%20Infections/COVID-19-Weekly-Report-2020-05-19-FINAL.pdf>.
- 19 COVID-19 data is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020COVID19/DataDashboard>.
- 20 COVID-19 data is from May 20, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/COVID-19>.
- 21 COVID-19 data is from May 20, 2020 and was collected from the state’s database. See: <https://www.bphc.org/whatwedo/infectious-diseases/Infectious-Diseases-A-to-Z/covid-19/Pages/Boston-COVID-19-Data.aspx>.
- 22 COVID-19 data is from May 21, 2020 and was collected from the city’s database. See: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>
- 23 Racial and ethnic case and death rates are from May 21 and were collected from the city’s database. See: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>.
- 24 Articles and reports were gathered through various internet and database searches. First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge up front: 1) that there is a convincing argument to be made that any and all factors that affect health and racial inequalities are, in some way, economic in nature; and 2) that none of these factors act in isolation, rather they all connect and intersect in various ways to create a structurally racist system. That being said, after doing an initial scan of the articles and reports, we coded for the following factors: 1) Access to Healthcare; 2) Disinvestment; 3) Poverty; 4) Wealth and wealth inequality; 5) Housing affordability; 6) Income and income inequality; 7) Health insurance; 8) Type of jobs; 9) Transportation; 10) Telework; 11) Financial services; 12) Public health spending; 13) Unemployment and lack of jobs; 14) Economic exploitation and extraction; and 15) Homelessness. In each of these areas, subjective judgements were made based on the context of the reference and its connection to specific COVID-19 racial and ethnic disparities. As such, the data presented here should be considered illustrative and not fully representative of what the author or authors of any of the pieces reviewed believe, unless otherwise specifically stated or quoted. Similarly, just because a particular article or report does not reference a specific economic factor (or reference it with enough specificity for inclusion in this analysis), does not mean the author or authors do not consider it important. Lastly, while many of the categories are straightforward, others are less so. In particular, we included access to healthcare as an economic reference because we believe that in the context of the largely privatized and profit-centric US health care system, the ability to receive medical care is, inherently, an economic decision.
- 25 Colin Gordon, et. al. “COVID-19 and the Color Line,” *Boston Review*, May 1, 2020, accessed 6/1/20, <http://bostonreview.net/race/colin-gordon-walter-johnson-jason-q-purnell-jamala-rogers-covid-19-and-color-line>.
- 26 “Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet,” Pew Research Center, June 12, 2019, accessed 6/1/2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/>.
- 27 Julia Craven “Coronavirus Cases Are Increasing in the Nation’s Capital. That Doesn’t Bode Well for Its Black Population,” *Slate*, April 9, 2020, accessed 6/1/2020, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/04/coronavirus-disparate-impact-black-people-washington-dc.html>.

- 28 Debbie Stabenow and Chuck Schumer, *Racial Disparities on Full Display: COVID-19 is Disproportionately Affecting Communities of Color* (Washington, D.C.: DPCC, April 30, 2020), accessed 6/1/2020, <https://www.stabenow.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/DPCC%20Report%20on%20Racial%20Disparities.pdf>.
- 29 Whitney N. Laster Pirtle, "Racial Capitalism: A Fundamental Cause of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Inequities in the United States," *Health Education and Behavior*, 00(0) (2020), accessed 6/1/2020, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1090198120922942>.
- 30 Kilolo Kijakazi, "COVID-19 Racial Health Disparities Highlight Why We Need to Address Structural Racism," *Urban Institute*, April 10, 2020, accessed 6/1/2020, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/covid-19-racial-health-disparities-highlight-why-we-need-address-structural-racism>.
- 31 Percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole percent. Like with the state-level data, the data presented here should be considered an approximation. First and foremost, county and city level racial and ethnic composition was derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's July 2019 estimates (contained in the Quick Facts Section). Please refer to the previous note on methodology regarding potential overlaps between race and ethnicity in the reported data. Secondly, COVID-19 case and death data were collected from the various city and county health department databases. In each jurisdiction, there are significant percentages of unknown racial and ethnic identities in many of the data sets, implying a large margin of error. Moreover, they are from a certain point in time (mid-May 2020) and may have changed in various ways prior to dissemination or publication of this research. Finally, while the cities and counties are reporting COVID-19 data by zip-code, the Census Bureau does not maintain demographic data by zip-code. Rather, they use "Zip Code Tabulation Areas" which are "generalized areal representations of United States Postal Service (USPS) ZIP Code service areas." Thus, while ZCTA's are close approximates of zip-codes, they are not always 100 percent exact. See: "ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs)," *United States Census Bureau*, accessed May 18, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/guidance/geo-areas/zctas.html>. County and city level median household income is also derived from the Census Bureau's "Quick Facts." Racial and ethnic composition for each ZCTA was derived from the 2017 American Community Survey: 5 year estimates Detailed Tables; Table B03002: Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race. Income data for each zip code was derived from CDX Technologies "Data Reports by Zip Code," and specifically the Combined ACS report, which utilizes data from the US Census' 2018 5 year American Community Survey. See: "Free Demographic Data Reports by Zip Code," *CDX Technologies*, accessed May 18-23, 2020, <https://www.cdxtech.com/tools/demographicdata/>.
- 32 COVID-19 is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the county's database. See: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/case-information>.
- 33 The one zip code where Latinx people were not over-represented and White people not under-represented was clearly an anomaly. It is a tiny - just 2,362 residents -- yet extremely wealthy zip code, indicating a localized outbreak.
- 34 COVID-19 data is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the state's database. See: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/96dd742462124fa0b38ddedb9b25e429>.
- 35 COVID-19 data is from May 18, 2020 and was collected from the city's database. See: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data.page>.
- 36 COVID-19 zip-code level data is from May 21, 2020 and was collected from the city's database. <https://princegeorges.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/9491556559cb4bba8ead3aa72ac3edcf>
- 37 COVID-19 data is from May 23, 2020 and was collected from the various county databases: Arlington, See: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/covid19-dashboard/>; Fairfax: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/covid19/case-information>; Montgomery: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/hhs/rightnav/coronavirus.html>; Prince George's: <https://princegeorges.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/9491556559cb4bba8ead3aa72ac3edcf>.
- 38 Ashley Southall, "N.Y.C. Commissioner Denies Racial Bias in Social Distancing Policies," *New York Times*, May 13, 2020, accessed 5/28/20, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/nyregion/nypd-social-distancing-race-coronavirus.html>.
- 39 Connor Maxwell and Danyelle Solomon, "The Economic Fallout of the Coronavirus for People of Color," *Center for American Progress*, April 14, 2020, accessed 5/28/20, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2020/04/14/483125/economic-fallout-coronavirus-people-color/>.
- 40 Hannah Knowles, "Number of working black business owners falls 40 percent, far more than other groups amid coronavirus," *Washington Post*, May 25, 2020, accessed 5/28/20, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/25/black-minority-business-owners-coronavirus/>
- 41 Andre M. Perry and David Harshbarger, "Coronavirus economic relief cannot neglect Black-owned business," *Brookings*, April 8, 2020, accessed 5/27/20, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/04/08/coronavirus-economic-relief-cannot-neglect-black-owned-business/>.
- 42 Connor Maxwell and Danyelle Solomon, "The Economic Fallout of the Coronavirus for People of Color," *Center for American Progress*, April 14, 2020, accessed 5/28/20, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2020/04/14/483125/economic-fallout-coronavirus-people-color/>.
- 43 "What Cities Need to Do Now to Ensure Black Communities Get Stimulus Payments," *CitiesSpeak*, National League of Cities, April 24, 2020, accessed 5/28/20, <https://citiesspeak.org/2020/04/24/what-cities-need-to-do-now-to-ensure-black-communities-get-stimulus-payments/>

- 44 Jared Wadley, "Terri Friedline: Stimulus checks might not reach those who need them most," *Michigan News*, April 9, 2020, accessed 5/28/20, <https://news.umich.edu/stimulus-checks-might-not-reach-those-who-need-them-most/>.
- 45 Adrian Ma, "Federal Aid Might Not Reach Small Businesses Owned By People of Color, Advocates Fear," *WBUR*, April 27, 2020, accessed 5/28/2020, <https://www.wbur.org/bostonmix/2020/04/26/minority-owned-businesses-in-danger-of-missing-federal-aid>.
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