Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Impact of Racism on our Nation's Health

Racism, both structural and interpersonal ⧉ , are fundamental causes of health inequities, health disparities and disease. The impact of these inequities on the health of Americans is severe, far-reaching, and unacceptable.

Across the country, racial and ethnic minority populations experience higher rates of poor health and disease in a range of health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, obesity, asthma, and heart disease, when compared to their White counterparts. The life expectancy among Black/African Americans is four years lower than that of White Americans.

The COVID-19 pandemic, and its disproportionate impact among communities of color, is another stark example of these enduring health disparities. Recent COVID-19 data show show that Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native populations in the U.S. are experiencing higher rates of hospitalization and death compared to White populations.

These health disparities underscore the urgent need to address systemic racism as a root cause of racial and ethnic health inequities and a core element of our public health efforts.

Related Resources

Minority Health

Advancing CDC's efforts on health equity

Leading Causes of Death

Leading causes of death in the United States

Health Equity Strategy

CDC's strategy to address COVID-19 health disparities

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