

# BLAC COMMITTEE 2023 PULSE REPORT (DRAFT)

## Health & Wellness – Will Rucker & NOMHE

### Observations

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to exacerbate health disparities for Black Nevadans in several ways. Studies and data from 2020-2021 have shown that Black communities have been highly impacted by high rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths compared to other racial and ethnic groups. These disparities can be attributed to various factors such as pre-existing health conditions, limited access to healthcare, socioeconomic factors, vaccine hesitancy, systemic inequities, etc. See Figures 1 & 2.

Figure 1: COVID-19 Hospitalization Rate in Clark County

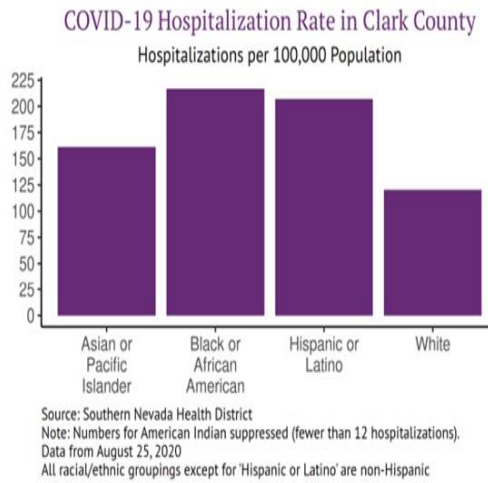
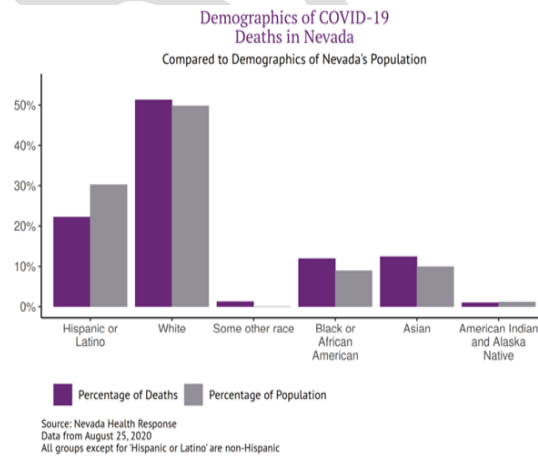


Figure 2: Demographics of COVID-19 Deaths in Nevada



### Underlying Risk Factors

Pre-existing health conditions: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), age, heart disease, diabetes, and lung diseases are among the most significant risk factors for severe COVID-19-related illness (CDC, 2020). See figures 3 & 4.

Although risk factors can vary in prevalence among different racial and ethnic groups, minority groups, especially Blacks tend to have limited access to health care. Differences in access to health care as well as underlying health conditions may contribute to higher rates of COVID-19 (Guinn, 2020).

Limited access to healthcare: Black Nevadans, like many marginalized communities, often face barriers to accessing quality healthcare. These barriers can include a lack of health insurance, limited healthcare facilities in their communities, transportation challenges, and implicit biases within the healthcare system. Limited access to testing, treatment, and follow-up care can lead to delayed or inadequate medical support.

Figure 3: Cardiovascular Deaths in Nevada by Race and Ethnicity

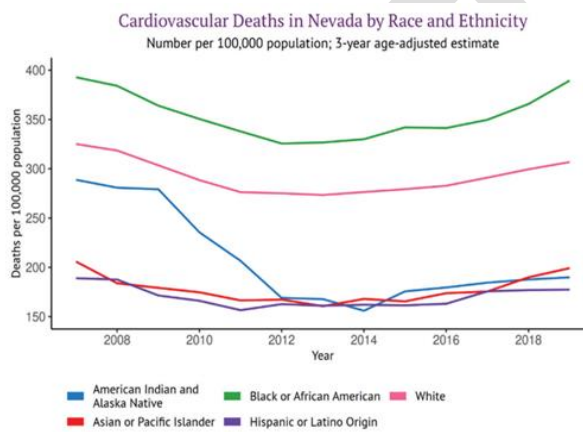
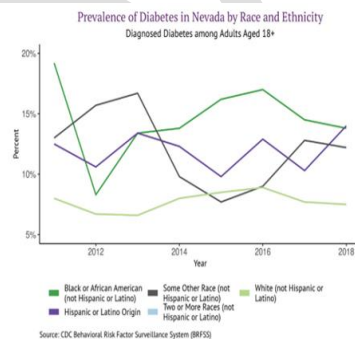


Figure 4: Prevalence of Diabetes in Nevada by Race and Ethnicity



<sup>3</sup> This figure uses self-reported data to estimate the prevalence of diabetes. It also does not differentiate between Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, though Type 2 diabetes represents more than 90 percent of diabetes cases, so the figure is likely more representative of Type 2 diabetes.

### Recommendations & Related Resources

Addressing these disparities is indeed a colossal undertaking; the layers of systemic inequities embedded in our healthcare system and broader society make the challenge daunting, but it is not an impossible task. With targeted strategies and collective efforts, we can make a tangible difference.

Implementing targeted strategies such as (1) equitable vaccine distribution, (2) culturally competent outreach and education, (3) expanded access to healthcare, (4) economic support for affected

communities. To promote health equity and safeguard the well-being of Black Nevadans, we must understand, acknowledge, and act upon these systemic issues contributing to health disparities.

1. First, we need to ensure equitable vaccine distribution. It's not just about the availability of vaccines, but also their accessibility. We must strive to bring vaccines to the neighborhoods most affected, to those who may not have the means or time to travel to distant vaccination sites. This might involve mobile vaccination clinics or partnering with local community centers to provide vaccines where people are.

Resources: Pending

2. Second, culturally competent outreach and education is critical. We must meet people where they are, both physically and emotionally, understanding and respecting their experiences, concerns, and beliefs. This could involve working closely with trusted leaders within these communities, using linguistically appropriate and relatable materials, and engaging in open, honest conversations about the vaccine and the virus. Culturally competent care can lead to more effective communication, greater trust, and higher rates of vaccine acceptance.

Resources: Pending

3. Expanded access to healthcare is a broader strategy, but fundamental. This involves working towards ensuring all Nevadans have health insurance, reducing geographical barriers to healthcare, and tackling systemic issues within the healthcare system that disproportionately affect communities of color. It's about creating a system where everyone has regular access to a healthcare provider, preventative care, and the resources they need to maintain their health.

Resources: Pending

4. Lastly, financial support is vital. The economic hardships stemming from this pandemic have been particularly devastating for communities of color. Rent relief, unemployment benefits, and food assistance can help address immediate needs and we also should implement long-term, future-focused strategies that include a guaranteed income commonly referred to as universal basic income, well-paying, stable jobs, and quality affordable housing.

Resources: Pending

## **Education & Youth - Kamilah Bywaters**

### *Observations*

Low achievement for Black students can have a significant impact on their health and well-being and can influence health outcomes. It can limit future opportunities for economic advancement and social mobility. See figures 5 & 6.

Figure 5: Education Percentages

### Education

- **84 percent** of Black, **76 percent** of Hispanic and **57 percent** of white 4<sup>th</sup> grade public school students were not proficient in reading in 2019.
- **85 percent** of Black, **78 percent** of Hispanic and **61 percent** of white 8<sup>th</sup> grade public school students were not proficient in reading in 2019.
- **72 percent** of Black, **82 percent** of Hispanic and **86 percent** of white students graduated high school on time during 2017-2018.
- **19 percent** of Black, **7 percent** of Hispanic and **5 percent** of white public secondary students had at least one out-of-school suspension in 2015-2016.

Figure 6: Poverty, Income and Wealth Inequalities, and Youth Justice

### Child Poverty

- **17 percent** of Nevada's children were poor in 2019—a total of **114,886** children—and children of color were disproportionately poor.
- **26 percent** of Black, **21 percent** of Hispanic and **11 percent** of white children were poor.
- **6 percent** of children were extremely poor (their family had income below half the poverty level).
- **18 percent** of children under 6 were poor.

### Income and Wealth Inequality

- **\$89,100** was the median income for white families with children compared with **\$47,400** for Black and **\$50,900** for Hispanic families in 2019.

### Youth Justice

- **588** children were in residential placement in 2017. **40 percent** were Black; **28 percent** were Hispanic; and **27 percent** were white.

Source: *The State of America's Children 2021 Report*

### Underlying Risk Factors

**Psychological well-being:** Low academic achievement can lead to feelings of low self-esteem, reduced self-worth, and increased stress and anxiety. These negative emotions can have long-term effects on mental health, potentially leading to depression, chronic stress, and other mental health issues.

**Health Behaviors:** Academic achievement is often associated with the development of positive health behaviors, such as engaging in physical activity, making healthier dietary choices, and avoiding risky behaviors. Lower academic achievement may contribute to a lack of knowledge about healthy behaviors

and limit opportunities for learning about health promotion, thereby increasing the risk of adopting unhealthy habits.

Health Disparities: Educational attainment is closely linked to socioeconomic status, and lower socioeconomic status is associated with health disparities. Low achievement among Black students can perpetuate existing disparities, as it may limit their opportunities for higher education, better job prospects, and access to resources that promote health and well-being.

#### *Recommendations & Related Resources*

Higher education often serves as a pathway to better employment, higher incomes, and improved living conditions, all of which can positively impact health outcomes. When these opportunities are limited, it can lead to increased stress, financial strain, and reduced access to resources that support overall well-being.

Addressing the achievement gap and promoting educational equity is crucial to mitigating the adverse health effects on Black students. Creating inclusive learning environments, providing targeted support and resources, promoting culturally relevant curriculum, and addressing systemic barriers can help improve academic achievement and subsequently positively impact the health and well-being of Black students. Possible recommendations and solutions include:

1. **Equitable Funding:** Allocate resources and funding to schools in a way that ensures students, have access to high-quality education and supportive services.
  - a. Seek out and gain access to funding sources
  - b. Collaborate with U.S. Department of Education, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans.
  - c. Collaborate with Nevada Department of Education.

Resources: Pending

2. **Mentoring and Support Programs:** Establish mentoring and support programs to provide additional guidance and encouragement for Black students, helping them navigate academic challenges and develop positive self-esteem.

Resources: Pending

3. **Access to Technology:** Ensure equitable access to technology and internet connectivity, particularly in underserved communities, to facilitate remote learning and bridge the digital divide.

Resources: Pending

4. **Identify organizations who are already providing solutions, and ensure the community is aware of the resource.**
  - a. Create a community binder of resources, if needed

Resources: Pending

#### **Public Policy, Law & Government - Adrienne Feemster Cobb**

#### *Observations*

Political determinants of health with the social determinants of health can impact health. Political determinants of health include policies and procedures that guide population health practices within a community. See figure 1.

### *Underlying Risk Factors*

Housing insecurity, a major issue found in the Black community as well as issues including jobs/wages, racism/discrimination, improving K-12 schools, addressing gun violence, and protecting a woman's right to choose.

*Figure 1: Pending*

### *Recommendations & Related Resources*

1. Pending  
Resources: Pending
2. Pending  
Resources: Pending
3. Pending  
Resources: Pending

### **Acknowledgement:**

*The BLAC Committee would like to thank the below BLAC membership for their contribution:*

***Will Rucker:***

*Health and Wellness*

***Kamilah Bywaters:***

*Youth Education and Attainment*

***Adrienne Feemster Cobb:***

*Public Policy, Law and Government*

***Pastor Robert Bush:***

*Public Policy, Law and Government*