The Colorado Health Foundation™



3 Things to Know About Coronavirus and Black/African American Coloradans

Colorado's Black/African American residents make up just under 4% of the state's population, but as of May 12, 2020, they make up 6.44% of the state's deaths from COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. While the coronavirus outbreak and response may be impacting all of us, it isn't doing so equally, and Black/African American Coloradans are experiencing a disproportionate impact.

Data from public health departments isn't the only data we have showing this reality. Our April 2020 survey of 1,100 Coloradans, conducted in partnership with Healthier Colorado and Magellan Strategies, highlights some of the ways Black/African American Coloradans have been hit hard by the virus. Here's what you need to know:

1. Black/African American Coloradans are feeling pessimistic about the coronavirus and its impacts – with 55% believing the worst is yet to come.

That's 12% higher than all survey respondents. What's more, a quarter of Black/African American Coloradans (26%) think their personal financial situations will be worse, rather than better, a year from now.

- *"They cannot get this in control, and that worries me." – Male, 65+ years of age, Denver County*
- *"[I worry] that it will go into the next year." – Female, 35-39 years of age, Arapahoe County*

2. Thirty percent of Black/African American Coloradans were struggling to pay for the basic necessities of life before the

coronavirus outbreak, and it's only gotten worse with 42% now reporting difficulty paying for food, housing, utilities and health care.

That's compared to 35% of all respondents. Additionally, 45% of Black/African American residents say they're worried about being able to afford their rent or mortgage in the next 12 months. Here's what some respondents said about their financial challenges:

> *"What will happen tomorrow, how will I survive without work or a job, are the things that worry me." – Male, 40-44 years of age, Denver County*

- *"[I worry] how I gonna pay my bills." – Female, 18-29 years of age, El Paso County*
- *"Can't earn a living. All cash flow stopped to my business and I can't get a paycheck." – Female, 65+ years of age, Denver County*

3. Black/African American Coloradans are worried about the health impacts of the coronavirus and want the government to do more to protect the public's health.

Eighty-four percent of Black/African American respondents are worried that essential workers don't have the necessary personal protective equipment (compared to 76% of all respondents), and 75% are worried local hospitals will run out of necessary equipment like beds or ventilators (compared to 60% of all respondents).

Seventy-seven percent of Black/African American Coloradans want the government to do more to make health care more affordable (compared to 65% of

all respondents), and 72% want the government to do more to ensure paid sick leave, family leave and medical leave for workers (compared to 54% of all respondents).

For many, the worry and stress is taking a toll on mental health:

- *"I have felt the saddest. It is too fast. Everybody works, but the public is at risk. They are opening up the states too soon. There is a shortage of PPE [personal protective equipment] for health workers. I am concerned about the homeless and mentally ill." – Female, 55-59 years of age, Denver County*
- *"I am very depressed about the situation of the coronavirus. Nurses and doctors are dying, because of trying to take care of the people who had the coronavirus. Children are not going to school." – Female, 65+ years of age, Denver County*
- *"Being a 60-year-old Black man, I am in a high risk category to die from this disease. I'm very nervous whenever I leave my house." – Male, 60-65 years of age, Denver County*

The majority of Black/African American Coloradans live in urban centers like Denver where coronavirus has ripped through neighborhoods. These data illustrate the toll the virus has taken on some more than others – its health, economic and mental wellness impacts hitting hard. Addressing the negative effects of the virus means working toward recovery in partnership with those who have weathered the most difficulty, including communities of color.

Learn more about the survey and its key findings, and check out other blog posts highlighting the experiences of Coloradans living on low incomes and Latinx Coloradans.

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