

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare many inequalities in American society. My research assessed economic and healthcare inequalities by race as it relates to consequences of the pandemic by analyzing a March 2020 Pew Research dataset. I found that in terms of economic vulnerability and healthcare access, Black and Hispanic Americans are at much greater risk of being negatively impacted by the pandemic than White Americans.

BACKGROUND

Research Question. How will Americans be impacted by the economic and public health consequences of COVID-19 based on race?

Importance. The immediate societal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is being felt in terms of an economic downturn and an overwhelmed healthcare system. Understanding inequalities in how these consequences are being felt can better inform public policy to ensure relief and recovery efforts to do not leave behind particular groups.

Background. Previous research has explored inequalities in unemployment and health coverage.

- The Great Recession and racial inequality (Masterson 2017)
- Racial health disparities in the U.S. (Baciu 2017)

However, due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, very little research has taken into account the intersection of both under pressure.

Contribution/Hypotheses

- I expect that unemployment and lack of healthcare will disproportionately impact communities of color.

DATA AND METHODS

DATA

I used data from a March 2020 Pew Research Center survey on the coronavirus pandemic.

- The data consists of responses from 8,914 respondents, who were asked questions about how they are responding to the pandemic.
- My data has 8,914 rows, each representing individual responses.
- I take particular interest in three variables, which describe race of respondent, their anticipated economic situation if they lose their job, and their healthcare coverage.

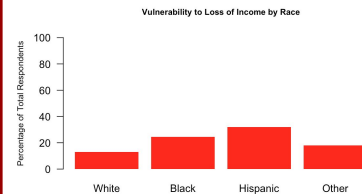
WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	OTHER
6,211	668	1422	487

APPROACH

I performed a descriptive analysis of responses.

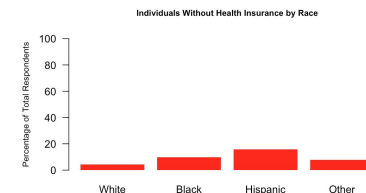
- Race/ethnicity was my independent variable
- I analyzed a.) the frequency of perceived financial turmoil based on race of respondent, and b.) the frequency of reported lack of healthcare coverage. I then conducted the following comparisons:
 - Differences in responses across races
 - Differences by gender within races

KEY RESULTS



- This graph compares the percentage of total respondents by race who reported that if they are laid off for at least two weeks because of the coronavirus, they would not get paid and would be unable to pay basic expenses.
- 32% of Hispanics and 25% of Blacks reported financial vulnerability if they lose two weeks of income, compared to just 13% of Whites.
- This comparison suggests significant disparities in job stability and financial health by race, which could be exacerbated by a recession.

- This graph compares the percentage of total respondents by race who reported not having health insurance
- Though the average uninsured rate of respondents is 9%, Hispanics and Blacks reported an uninsured rate of 16% and 9% respectively.
- Just 4% of Whites reported being uninsured.



CONCLUSIONS

The economic and health disparities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic are significant. Though the virus is just in its early stages and possibly the first of many waves, Hispanic and Black Americans are already self-reporting indicators of increased economic and health vulnerability compared to White Americans. If left unaddressed in public policy and community measures, these disparities could grow as the country grapples with the fallout of the pandemic.

One particular limitation of this study's data is that the responses are self-reported and not an audit of one's finances or health coverage. Particularly for personal finance questions, there may be self-reporting bias that misrepresents one's actual financial situation positively or negatively.