

**Resiliency in Action:
African American
Communities**

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The Impact of COVID-19 in African American Communities

African Americans and other minority groups have been disproportionately represented in the COVID-19 pandemic



Why Is There An Increased Risk?

- Complex health issues exacerbated by the virus
- More likely to be essential workers
- Housing environments
- Densely populated communities
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Poor quality of care/treatment
- Lack of access to prevention and wellness
- Under-diagnosis and misdiagnosis
- Fewer support systems and resources
- Exposure to stress and trauma



Our Health has been Affected by COVID...and Racism

African Americans reported experiencing racism and racial discrimination prior to the pandemic and have continued to experience it during the pandemic.



The Impacts of Racism on Health and Wellness

- Racism and discrimination harm the health and well-being of AA communities
- Racial Trauma: The physical and emotional pain caused by racism or discrimination
- The effects of intentional or unintentional racism can have significant psychological impacts similar to other forms of trauma
 - Many racist incidents are experienced as traumatic, emotionally abusive, or threats to livelihood and can increase the risk for post-traumatic symptoms
 - Continued daily incidents of racism can lead to psychological effects that parallel those of sexual assault and intimate partner violence

Resilience as a Response to Two Pandemics

Resilience in physics: The ability of an elastic material to absorb energy (such as from a blow) and release that energy as it springs back to its original shape

Resilience in psychology: The ability of an individual to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress

Resilience in the AA community: The ability of members within the African American community to continuously recover from the misfortunes and stress caused by racial inequities and systemic racism

Examples of Resilience in the African American Community during COVID

Study 1

- Taylor, M.G., Carr, D.C., & Jason, K. (2021). Financial hardship and psychological resilience during COVID-19: Differences by race/ethnicity, *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 1-6.
 - Examined changes in psychological resilience among older adults before and during the pandemic to determine whether financial hardships and other stressors have altered this resource for White, Black, and Hispanic older adults
 - Sample of 735 individuals from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS)
 - Findings: While Black respondents reported greater financial hardships, job loss, and infection rates during COVID-19 compared to White respondents, the resilience of Black older adults remained stable
 - This suggests that Black older adults better maintained resilience in the face of financial hardships compared to their White counterparts

Examples of Resilience in the African American Community during COVID

Study 2

- Owens, V. & Saw, H.-W. (2021). Black Americans demonstrate comparatively low levels of depression and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PLoS ONE*, 16(6), 1–16.
- Examined the differential mental health impact of COVID-19 on Black and Non-Black Americans.
- Data from the Understanding America Study (UAS)
- Findings: Black Americans were less likely to report symptoms for anxiety, depression, or both during the pandemic compared to Non-Black Americans; between March through November of 2020, prevalence of depression remained stable among non-Black Americans while it declined gradually among Black Americans.
- This suggests that Black Americans maintained better mental health than Non-Black Americans despite their struggle against economic, health, and racial inequalities during the pandemic.

Factors that Create Resilience in the African American Community



- A history of surviving historical trauma
- Critical consciousness about oppression
- Resistance against oppression
- Collectivism and connections to our community
- Coping with symptoms tied to racial trauma

How Can Healthcare Continue to Support Resilience in the African American Community?

Cultural humility

Acknowledgement

Workplace diversity

Advocacy

Research

Resources

Partnerships

Engagement

Healthy communities

“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them”

–Maya Angelou

