

Commonwealth Report Highlights U.S. Health Disparities

Researchers found disparities in health, access to care and health insurance in all states.

April 23, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

The [2024 Commonwealth Fund State Health Disparities Report](#) found stark [racial disparities](#) in health and health care across all states.

For the study, researchers collected data for over a dozen indicators of how state health systems performed. Researchers focused on health outcomes, [access to care](#) and quality and use of health care services among Black, white, Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN), and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations.

Racial health disparities have been exacerbated by the [COVID-19](#) pandemic. These disparities are especially significant among Black and AIAN people, according to the study.

For example, compared with white people, Black, Latino and AIAN people are less likely to have [health insurance](#), more likely to delay care due to cost and more likely to have [medical debt](#).

What's more, Black and AIAN folks have a higher risk for many [chronic conditions](#), including [diabetes](#) or [hypertension](#). They are also more likely to die of treatable conditions and more likely to experience serious pregnancy-related conditions, including death.

When analyzing health system performance across states, researchers found that Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut stood out for their relatively high performance for all racial and ethnic groups. Poorly performing states included Oklahoma, West Virginia and Mississippi.

An estimated 25 million people are uninsured in the United States, and many of them are people of color, according to the report. People who are uninsured or underinsured are more likely to have gaps in coverage, pay high out-of-pocket costs for care and experience delays in care. Across most

states, Black, Latino and AIAIN residents have higher uninsured rates.

For nearly two decades, The Commonwealth Fund has tracked health and health care in each state in an effort to understand how government policy affects health outcomes and to demonstrate how policy changes might improve the health of all U.S. residents.

The study highlights the need for affordable, universal and equitable health coverage. For example, the study's researchers urge Congress to eliminate the barriers to coverage that prevent 3 million uninsured immigrant adults from enrolling in Medicaid or Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) marketplace plans. They also encourage the 10 states that have yet to expand Medicaid programs to do so.

The study notes that primary care and delivery of services in Black and Latino communities—which tend to have fewer primary care providers and lower-quality health care facilities compared with white communities—must be improved.

To view the full report, [click here](#).

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