

Does Systemic Racism Contribute to High Diabetes Rates Among Blacks?

Black people develop diabetes at higher rates due to poor social conditions caused by systemic racism.

February 2, 2021 By [Alicia Green](#)

African Americans are more likely to develop [diabetes](#) and experience worse health outcomes compared with white people. Now, a [new paper](#) published in the [Endocrine Society's](#) Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism has found that poor social conditions caused by systemic racism play a role in diabetes health disparities.

Researchers found that social determinants, such as poverty, unsafe housing, lack of access to healthy food and safe physical activity, and inadequate employment, contributed to negative health outcomes among Black people with diabetes. These consequences are a direct result of residential racial segregation and a lack of economic investment in Black communities, according to scientists.

Investigators added that unethical practices and experimentation in minority communities also caused racial bias in the health care field as well as a lack of trust between minority patients and their providers.

“Traditionally, physicians have focused on the biological contributors to disparities in diabetes, obesity and other chronic diseases. However, given the bright light shone on health disparities during the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to view the contributing factors and solutions more broadly,” said Sherita Hill Golden, MD, MHS, of Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore, one of the study’s authors. “This will give us agency in contributing to and advocating for health system, public health and policy-level interventions to address the structural and institutional racism embedded in our medical and social systems.”

In order to address diabetes health disparities, study authors advised health systems to implement the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care. These guidelines work to guarantee that all patients receive interpretation services and educational materials at a literacy level of learning that most people can comprehend.

Researchers also suggested that health care providers receive more antiracism training to counter unconscious bias and to help cultivate an appreciation for diversity in clinical care settings.

For related coverage, read "[Institutional Racism Affects COVID-19's Impact on African Americans](#)" and "[How Social and Structural Racism Drive Health Inequities.](#)"

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