

U.S. Pharmacy Closures Impact Latino and Black Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods of color have fewer pharmacies per capita compared with white neighborhoods.

June 7, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Hundreds of major retail [pharmacies](#) across the United States have closed in recent years, leaving residents without reliable [access to prescription meds](#) and certain public health services, according to the [The Associated Press](#) (AP).

In some rural areas, residents must travel great distances not only to fill prescriptions but also to receive vaccinations and buy over-the-counter medicines and sometimes even food.

This is especially true in Black and brown communities. In fact, an AP analysis of licensing data from 44 states found that neighborhoods made up of mostly Latino and Black residents have fewer pharmacies per capita compared with people who live in mostly white areas.

Pharmacy closures can mostly be attributed to a lack of investment in pharmacy development and incentive to remain open in certain neighborhoods, Dima Qato, PharmD, MPH, PhD, a professor of clinical pharmacy at the University of Southern California told the AP.

These closures put more pressure on working pharmacies to provide equitable care to thousands of residents.

Jasmine Gonzalvo, PharmD, who teaches at Purdue University's College of Pharmacy and has researched the needs of Spanish-speaking customers at pharmacies, notes that it is important to build trust with a customer base by understanding the community.

Pharmacists also play an important role in helping customers understand and adhere to their medication.

At Bert's Pharmacy in Elizabeth, New Jersey, owner and pharmacist Prakash Patel told the AP that his business has Spanish- and English-speaking staff because Latino residents make up nearly 70% of residents in the pharmacy's ZIP code.

"We want to make sure, too, they understood everything," Patel said. "We have Spanish-language labels for them; we print all the instructions in Spanish for them."

Additionally, pharmacists support customers in managing [chronic illnesses](#), such as [diabetes](#) and [heart](#)-related conditions, which disproportionately affect people of color.

In fact, a [recent study showed](#) that pharmacist-provided care and intervention helped Latino patients lower their A1C, elevated levels of which are associated with diabetes risk. Research showed that having at least one pharmacist visit was associated with a significant reduction in a customer's A1C.

To read more, click [#Pharmacy](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Walmart Opens 70 More HIV-Focused Pharmacies](#)," "[California Bill Allows Pharmacists to Provide More PrEP to Prevent HIV](#)" and "[As COVID Infections Rise, Nursing Homes Are Still Waiting for Vaccines](#)."