

Discrimination & Racial Inequity

Definition

Discrimination refers to policies, practices, and behaviors that unfairly advantage some and disadvantage others based on socially defined characteristics such as race (racism), gender, age, ability, or sexual orientation.

Racial inequities refer to unfair or unjust differences in health outcomes and factors influencing health (such as education, housing, employment, environment, etc.) along racial or ethnic lines.

Importance

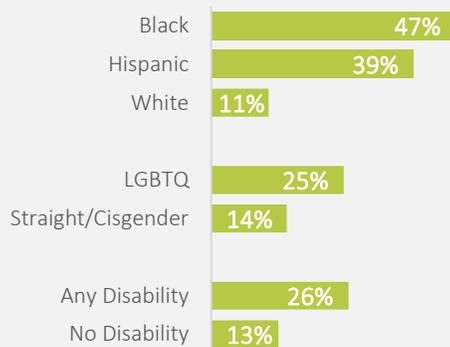
Discrimination has been linked to health problems such as anxiety, depression, obesity, high blood pressure, and substance abuse.² It may also cause people to not participate in health-promoting behaviors such as cancer screening, diabetes management, and condom use.³

At the systems-level, discriminatory policies and institutional practices create unhealthy living environments and restrict access to social and economic opportunities. This structural discrimination—particularly racism—is a driving force of the social determinants of health and an additional barrier to health equity.⁴

“This community is not inviting for African-Americans, for black and brown people. It just is not our community. And our systems here are not reflective of black and brown communities.”

Discrimination and Stress

High stress levels can contribute to a variety of physical and mental health problems. According to community survey respondents, discrimination was more often reported as a frequent or constant stressor among people of color, people who identify as LGBTQ, and people with disabilities.



RACIAL INEQUITIES IN KENT COUNTY

On average, when compared to their White counterparts, Black residents in Kent County are more likely to have:



Lower household incomes

For every \$100 in income earned by White households, Black households earn \$52.29



Higher unemployment rates

Black adults are 3x more likely to be unemployed



Lower homeownership rates

Black residents are 45% less likely to be homeowners



Increased risk of chronic disease and mortality

2 times as likely to have diabetes or prediabetes
1.7 times as likely to have high blood pressure
1.5 times more likely to die of cardiovascular disease

Discrimination and Health Care

Discrimination was described as a barrier to receiving quality, affordable care, particularly among:

People who have a **disability** (physical, hearing, and vision), who are **transgender**, or who speak a **language** other than English.

“It's an excellent community to raise family. It's a good place to live. But it all goes back to who you are, what color you are. There is not a lot of opportunities for people of color.”

—Focus Group Participant

¹ Gulliford, M. (2019). Discrimination and public health. *Lancet Public Health*, 4(4): E173-E174.

² American Public Health Association, 2020. *Racism and health*.

³ Healthy People, 2020. *Social determinants of health: Discrimination*.