



## RACIAL AND ETHNIC HEALTH DISPARITIES IN NEW YORK: AN URGENT CRISIS

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

New York was recently classified as having among the highest structural racism and income inequality indexes in the entire United States.<sup>1</sup> As the COVID-19 pandemic has made irrefutably evident, perhaps nowhere are racial and ethnic inequities more evident in our State than with regards to health inequities.

- Black New Yorkers are more than twice as likely as whites to die in their first year of life and to live in poverty.
- New York's childhood lead poisoning and exposure crises disproportionately impact children of color and children living in poverty. For example, in Buffalo, children in predominantly Black and Latinx neighborhoods are twelve times more likely to be lead poisoned than children living in white neighborhoods.
- In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, New York's Black and Latinx children were disproportionately impacted by COVID-fueled multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C).
- Black women in New York State are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.
- The prevalence of diabetes in New York is significantly higher among Black adults (14.5 percent) than among Hispanic adults (11 percent) and non-Hispanic white adults (9.2 percent).

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Honan, Tyson H. Brown, and Brittany King. August 6, 2021." Structural Intersectionality as a New Direction for Health Disparities Research." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 62(3), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221465211032947>.

- Gun violence – which is a public health and economic justice issue – is often concentrated in high poverty zip codes in communities of color. This is evident in Rochester, which carries the second highest child poverty rate in the nation among cities with at least 100,000 people, and other counties throughout New York State.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Latina adolescents in New York, accounting for approximately 23.5 percent of all deaths of Latinas ages 15 to 19 between 2006 and 2015, with the risk of completed suicides among Latina adolescents nearly doubling since 1999.
- Black youth are at a particularly heightened risk of suicide in our State and are classified as a high-risk suicide population in New York, with New York’s data reflecting stark national trends.
  - Between 1997 and 2021, the percentage of New York’s Black high school Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) respondents reporting attempting suicide at least once within the prior year increased by 50.5 percent, while the percentage of white respondents reporting a suicide attempt decreased by 17.8 percent.
  - From 2017 to 2019, New York’s Black high school YRBS respondents are the only racial or ethnic group whose self-reported rate of injurious suicide attempt increased.
  - Between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of New York’s high school YRBS respondents who reported attempting suicide at least one within the prior year increased by 12.9 percent, with the percentage of Black high school YRBS respondents reporting a suicide attempt increased by 38.4 percent.
- New York communities with a majority of residents who are people of color have higher rates of medical debt than communities with residents who are predominantly white.

## WHAT WE PROPOSE

Undoing generations of racial and ethnic disparities and institutionalized harm demands an anti-racist approach that actively examines the role of legislative and regulatory action in perpetuating inequality in New York. **Our State must take a stand and lead the nation in only legislating policies that uplift, not harm, our most marginalized communities. Now is the time to lead the nation in embarking on the path to achieving equity in all policies.**

New York’s pervasive racial and ethnic disparities must be addressed through systemic change. This means no longer passing legislation or adopting rules without examining whether the policies will eliminate, perpetuate or create racial and ethnic disparities. To accomplish this, New York should:

- (1) Establish an independent office or entity tasked with producing racial and ethnic impact statements.

**(2)** Require all bills advancing out of committee in the legislature and amendments to bills to be accompanied by a racial and ethnic impact statement.

**(3)** Require all proposed rules to be accompanied by a racial and ethnic impact statement.

**(4)** Require racial and ethnic impact statements to include an estimate of the impact of the bill, amendment or proposed rule on various racial and ethnic groups, and the basis for the estimate, including any specific data relied upon.

**(5)** Prohibit adopting bills and rules that are found to increase racial or ethnic disparities.