



Population Overview

BLACK COMMUNITY

This document was produced as part of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities, Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations and Rural Communities (CDC-RFA-OT21-2103), which was completed in 2024.



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Addressing health inequities across Orange County by enabling system change.



Achieving Equity in Orange County

Health inequities are differences in health status or in the distribution of health resources among various populations. This is due to the social conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Across Orange County (OC) we see differences in the length and quality of life; rates of disease, disability, and early death; severity of disease; and access to treatment because of these inequities.

Equity in OC is an OC Health Care Agency (HCA) initiative in collaboration and partnership with local Orange County community partners. Funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Equity in OC Initiative is a community-informed and data-driven initiative to address health inequities and disparities in Orange County by laying the foundation for creating a healthier, more resilient, and equitable Orange County.

Why Create Population Overviews?

These population overviews are snapshots of available data for various populations in Orange County. By laying out population-specific data in these overviews, we can identify systemic changes that can improve the quality of life within these communities. Since these population overviews are only the start of democratizing community-level data, we welcome feedback and input to further refine and improve this living document.

For more information go to www.equityinoc.com.

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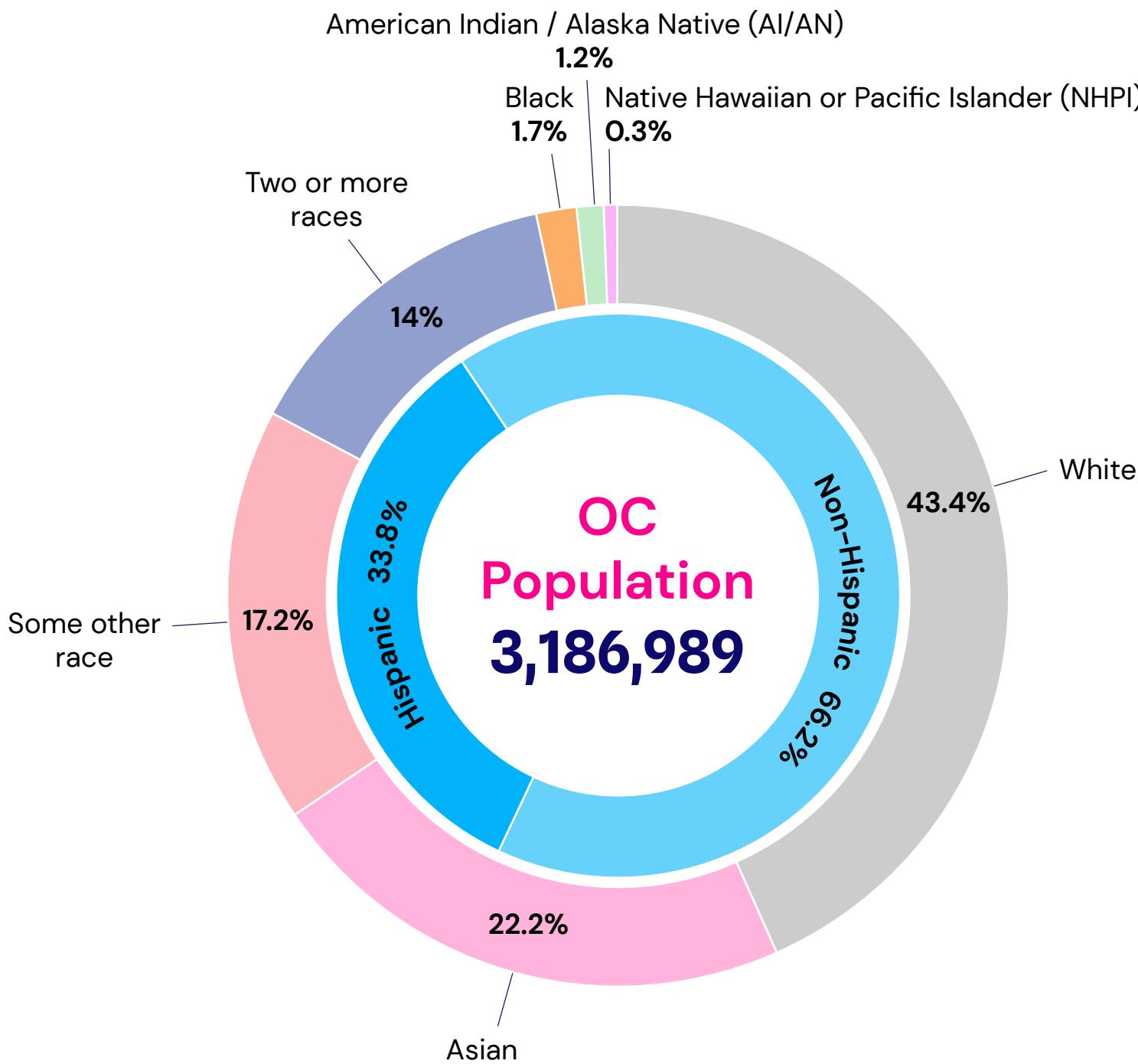
Built Environment and Social Context



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Orange County at a Glance



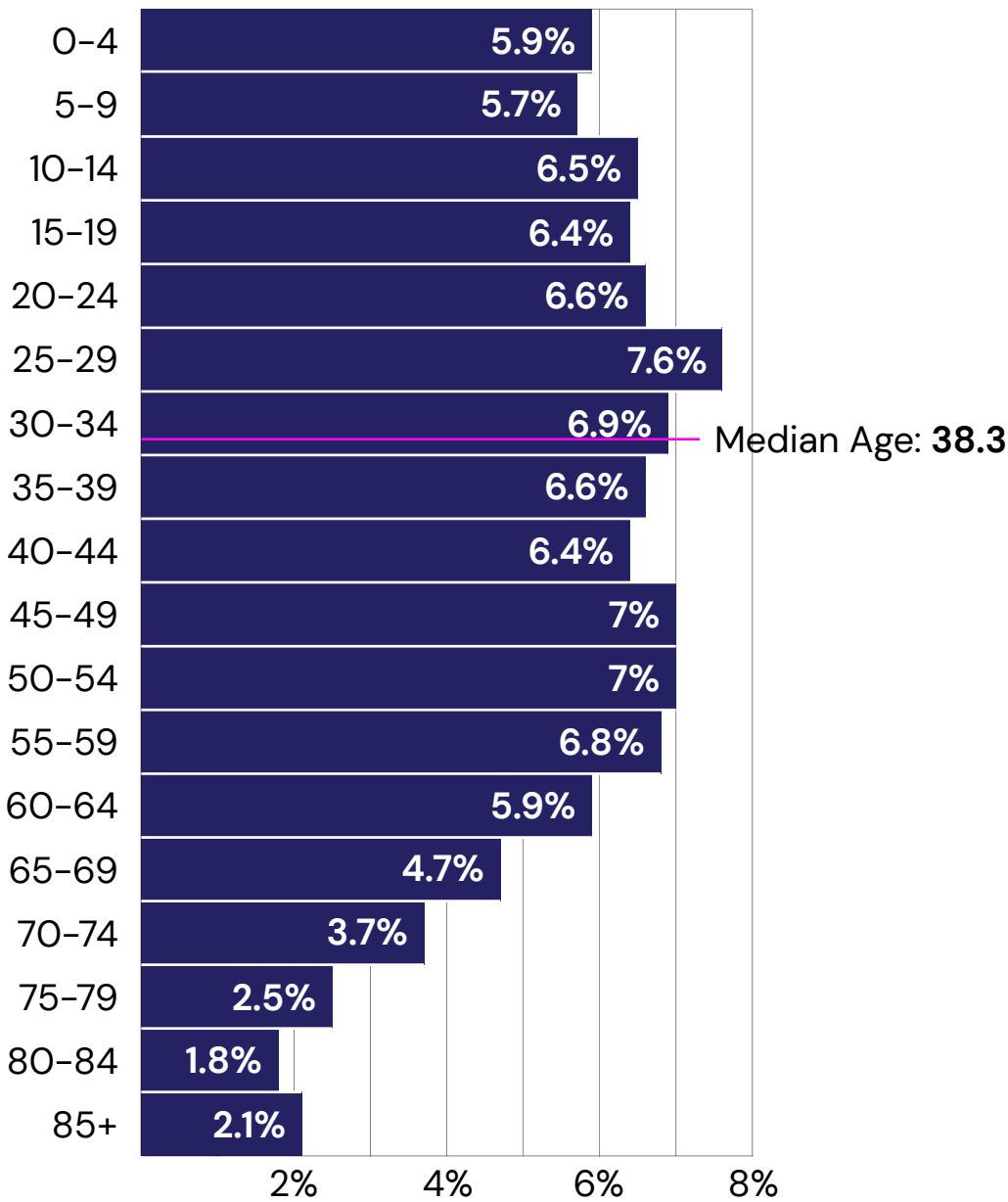
The United States (US) Census Bureau collects racial data according to guidelines by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and these data are based on self-identification.

Racial categories in the census survey reflect a social definition of race in the US. It is not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. Also, categories of race include national origin or sociocultural groups. People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race.

[About the Topic of Race \(census.gov\)](#)

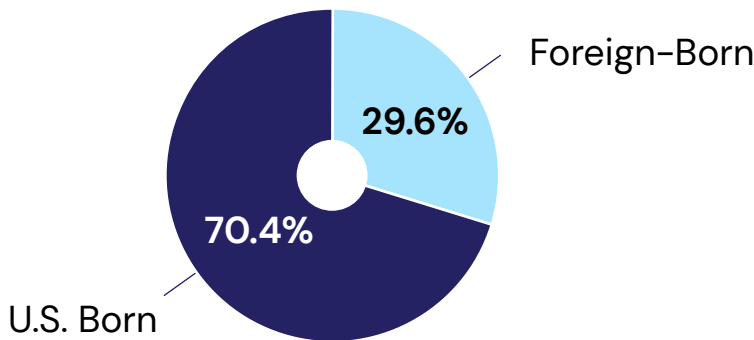
Source: [2020 Decennial Census](#)

Population by Age Group



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

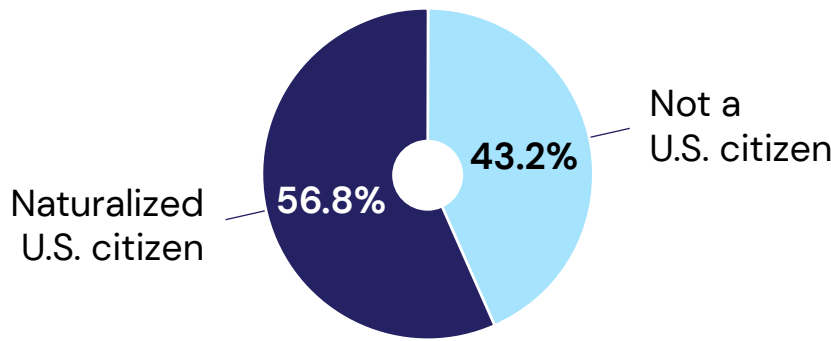
Population by Birth Origin



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

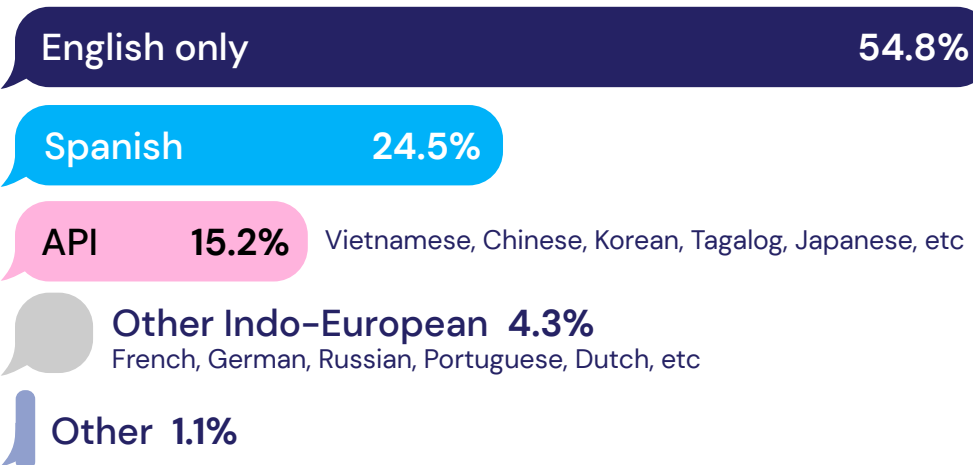
Population by Citizenship

of foreign-born residents



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Languages Spoken at Home



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

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\$94,441
Median Household Income

2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



56.9%
Home Ownership Rate

as of March 2022

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



1,129,785
Total Housing Units

2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



41.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher

2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



10.1%
Persons in Poverty

2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



3.1%
Unemployment Rate

as of March 2022

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

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Black Population Overview in Orange County

Top Cities of Black Residents

2020, with percentage changes since 2015

City	Total Pop	Black or African American Alone	% Change Since 2015
Anaheim	353,085	9,707	+21.37%
Buena Park	82,228	2,329	-33.46%
Costa Mesa	112,958	1,702	-5.60%
Fullerton	141,061	3,055	-9.00%
Huntington Beach	199,778	2,848	+41.48%
Irvine	272,694	3,979	-23.77%
Lake Forest	84,666	1,868	+22.41%
Orange	139,322	2,107	+10.20%
Santa Ana	332,610	3,392	-12.80%
Tustin	80,815	2,021	-5.15

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Geographical Markers

- 1

Creations
- 2

Cory Briggs – Coryffic Salon
- 3

Black Chamber of Commerce
- 4

Second Baptist Church
- 5

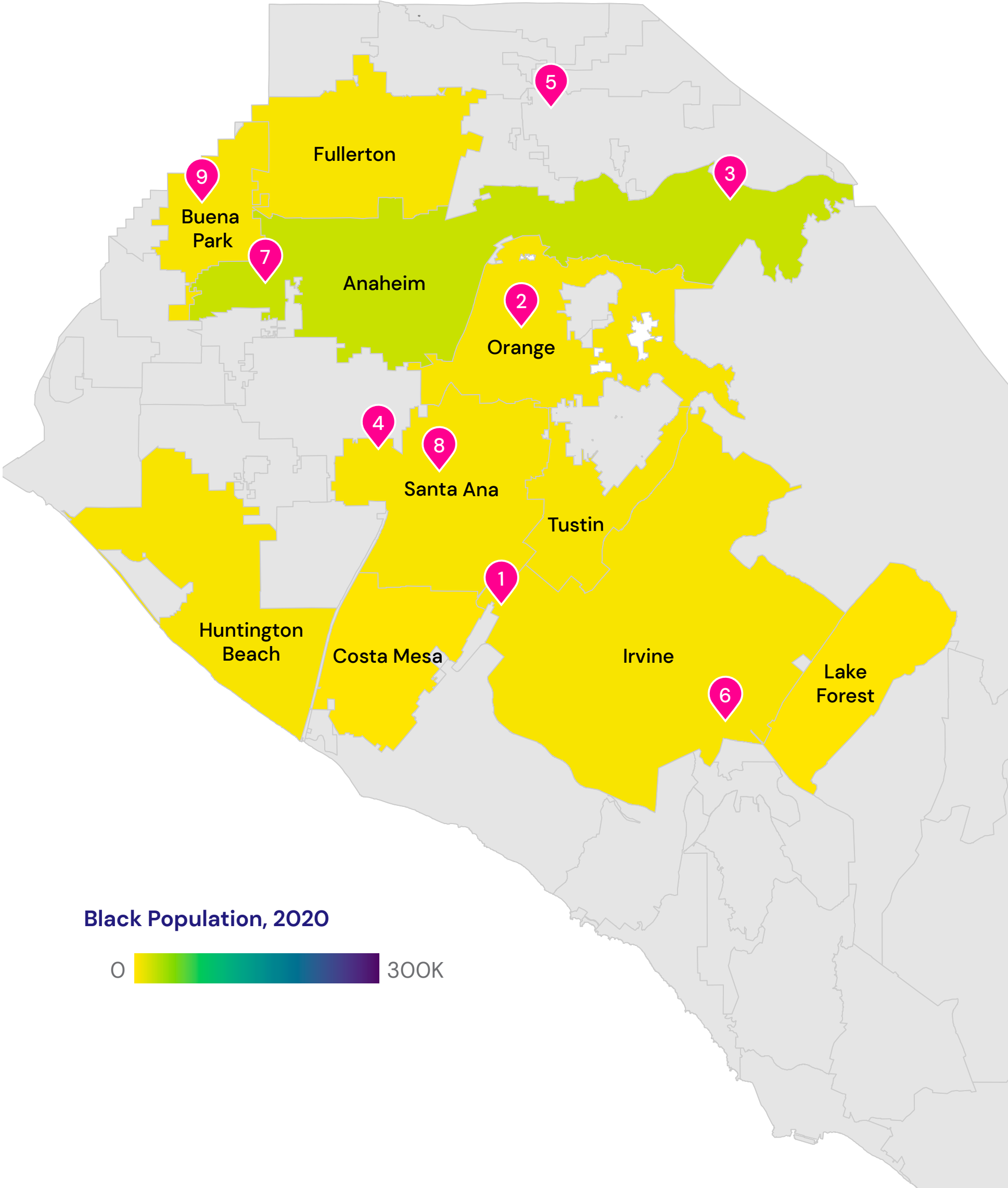
Friendship Baptist Church
- 6

Christ Our Redeemer AME
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New Hope Presbyterian Church
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Johnson Chapel AME
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SonRise Community Christian Church



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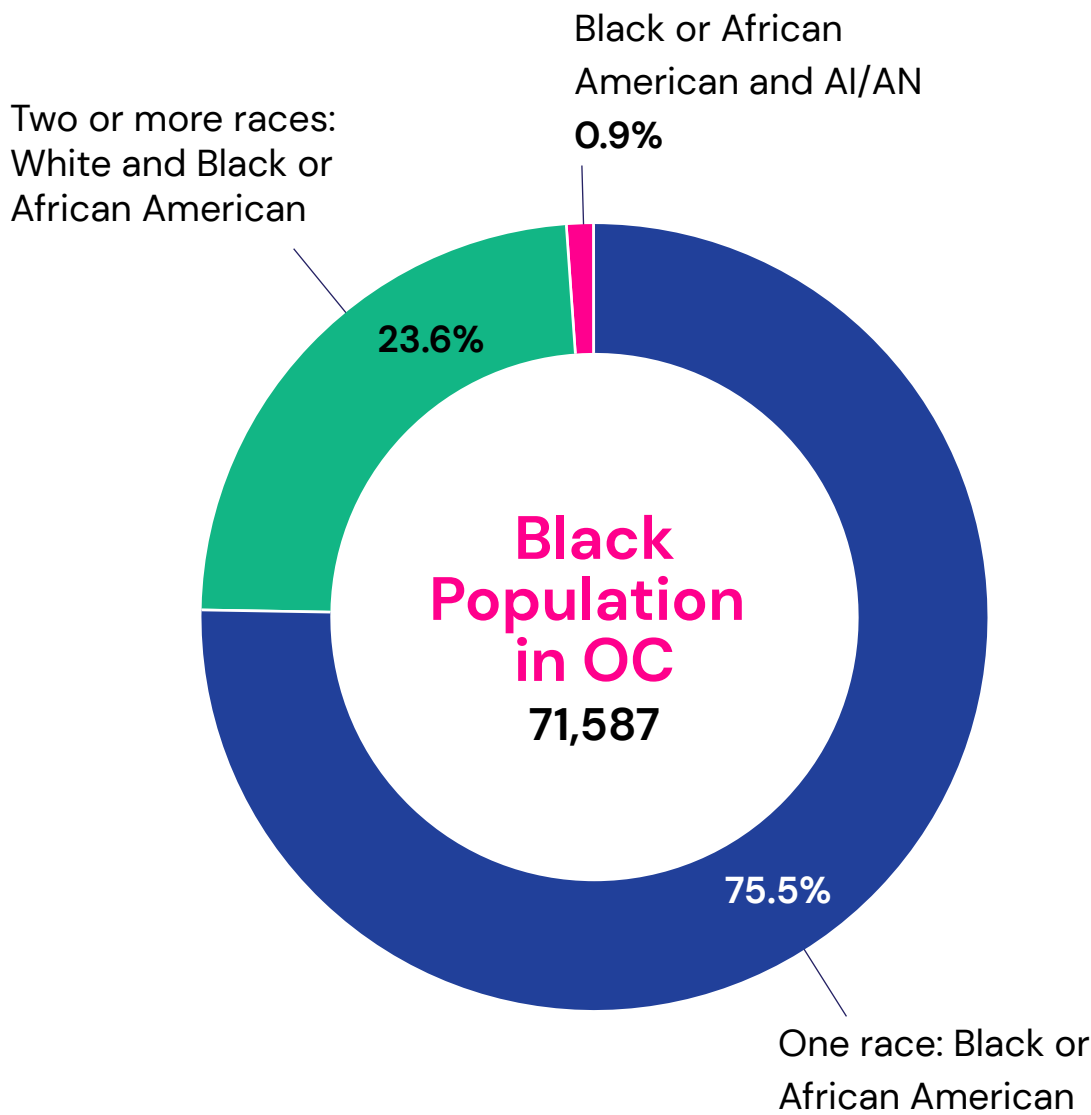
Social Determinants of Health ▶

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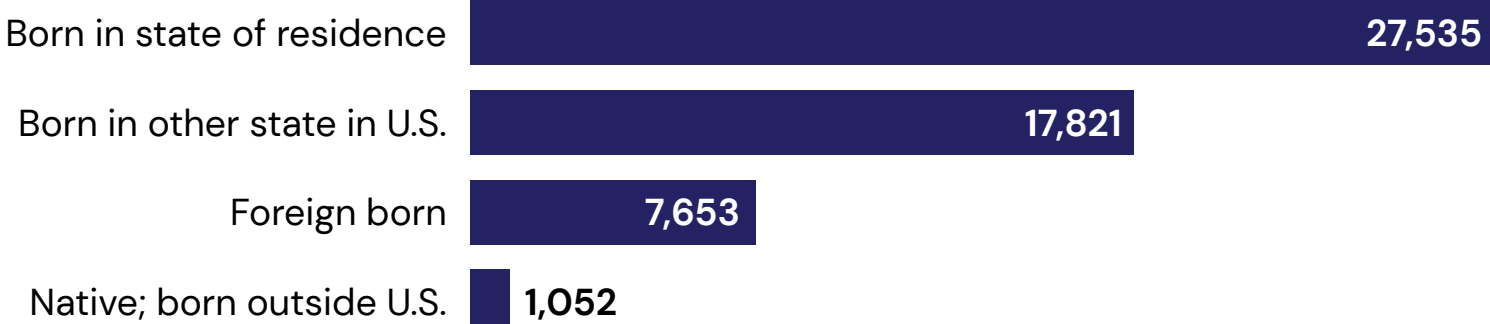
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Black Population Overview in Orange County (continued)



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Black Population in OC Place of Birth



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Understanding Terms

When referring to people who identify as Black, African American, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color), POC, or another designation, community members should consult with individuals to determine the appropriate choice. Note that [African American](#) is not necessarily an all-encompassing term, and the labels African American and Black have different connotations. The nation-specific term African American (and its related terms) might be preferred by Black American individuals with strong connections and a traceable lineage to the continent of Africa. On the other hand, the term Black tends to be the preferred option to those who do not relate to their African heritage but more their traits of Blackness. Although African American has been coined as the politically correct and/or polite term to describe Black Americans over the years, it has also made some individuals feel as though they are inferior or inadequate due to their disconnect with African customs and heritage.

Black Americans: A Historical Context

Prior to the colonization, displacement, and deaths of millions of African individuals, Africa was a continent filled with rich heritage and innovation that many now describe as both [the birthplace of humanity](#) and the cradle of civilization. To this day, many historians and anthropologists marvel in awe at the great achievements of Kemet, or Ancient Egypt, for example, one of the most notable of the early African civilizations, which first developed in the Nile valley over 5000 years ago.

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Black Population Overview in Orange County (continued)

All of the progress and achievements occurring in Africa during this time was forcefully interrupted between 1500 and the end of the slave trade in the 1860s. At least 12 million Africans were forcibly taken to the Americas — then known as the “[New World](#)” by European settlers. This largest forced migration in human history involuntarily relocated around 50 ethnic and linguistic groups and led to the eradication of many of them. A portion of the enslaved individuals (less than half a million) were forcibly sent to North America, while the majority were sent to South America and the Caribbean. In the mid-1600s, Africans outnumbered Europeans in nascent cities such as Mexico City, Havana, and Lima.

According to [The Great Migration: Creating a New Black Identity in Los Angeles](#), Mexico abolished the enslavement of Black individuals as a part of the Trans-Atlantic trade by 1821, and therefore allowed the Black community in Southern California to grow from a successive stream of small migrations, beginning in 1848 with the California Gold Rush, during which more than 5,000 Black individuals made their way to the state of California by the year 1860. Prior to the 1920s, the Black Community in Southern California was based in a more complex Black identity with Mexicans of mixed-African descent. In 1930 there were slightly over 50,000 Black individuals living in the major cities of California, and by 1950 the number of Black individuals increased to over 250,000. By the early 20th century, there were also ample blue collar job opportunities for Black individuals and other people of color, such as, hauling lumber, digging ditches, cleaning toilets, laying brick, shining shoes, and more.

During the Great Migration of the 1920s, the Black South moved to large cities such as Detroit, New York, and Chicago, bypassing most of Los Angeles and other cities in California. It wasn’t until nearly 20

years later during [The Second Great Migration](#) and the beginning of World War II where billions of dollars in defense production and automobile demand encouraged Black Americans to migrate West. As a result, the Black population in Southern California in Los Angeles increased from nearly 63,700 in 1940 to over 763,000 by 1970.

Though the Emancipation Proclamation made Black Americans free citizens, Black individuals continued to struggle with racism and inequity nationwide, including [Orange County](#). In the 1920s the city of Anaheim was home to many members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Individuals such as Reverend Leon Myers, who were considered influential at the time, publicly showed their support of this racist hate group through city council elections. Another example from this [period](#) can be traced back to the year 1945 when citrus growers imported 500 Jamaicans to La Habra to fill a labor shortage just for those same workers to be accused of causing a “racial problem” for county residents. There is also a long history of fraternities and sororities in Californian schools (Chapman, Cal State Fullerton, UC Irvine) practicing black face and hosting “[slave auctions](#)” from the 1960s to the early 1990s.

As of the year 2022, Black Americans make up approximately 2% of Orange County’s population. Despite this, they continue to experience health disparities that have resulted in a life expectancy nearly six years shorter than their White counterparts. It is evident that Black Americans around the nation and in Orange County have been fighting an uphill battle for equality for centuries. With this consideration, it is time for Black Americans to finally receive the proper services and care to create equitable health outcomes for every member of this community.

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Black Population and COVID-19 in OC

According to the OC Health Care Agency as of August 30, 2022, over 650,000 cases and over 7,300 deaths have occurred in Orange County due to COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2).

Among the 650,000 cases reported in Orange County, most of the COVID-19 cases did not have racial or ethnic classification. Unknown cases include those who did not identify with a particular racial or ethnic classification or those who were not asked for this information. As such, generalizations about the impact of COVID-19 among various racial and ethnic groups should be avoided.

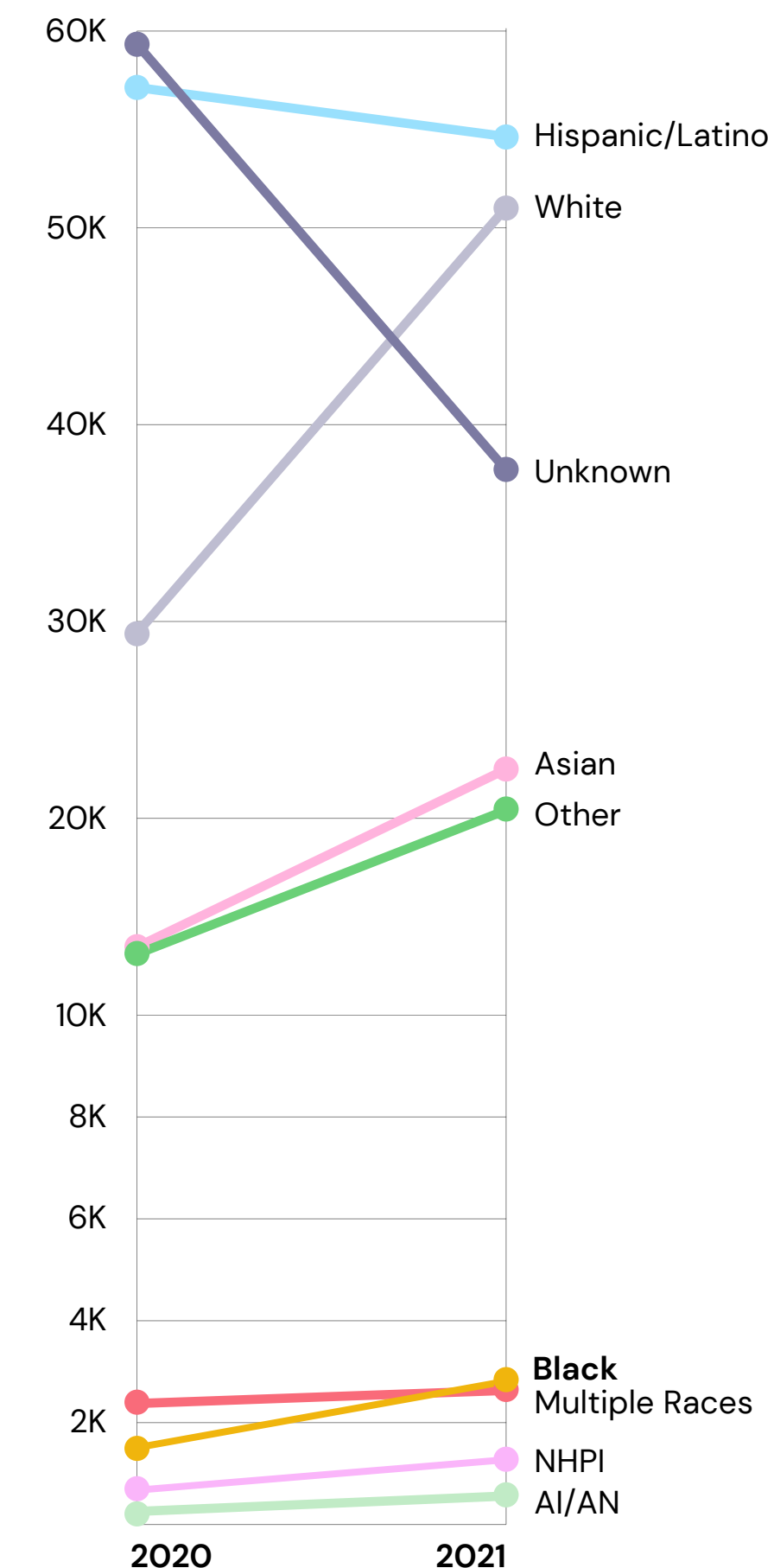
According to the California Immunization Registry, 73.1% of Orange County residents are fully vaccinated. The vaccination rate of California is 72.0%. The Black population has the third lowest vaccination rates in Orange County at 61%.

Black Americans and Vaccine Hesitancy

Vaccine hesitancy within the Black population has [strong historical precedence](#), the aftereffects of which still linger to this day. The Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male was an abhorrent exploitation of innocent Black lives perpetrated by the United States Public Health Service (USPHS). Beginning in 1932, the study was set up in Macon County (Illinois), where hundreds of Black men were recruited under the guise of free medical treatment for "bad blood," the colloquial term for syphilis at the time.

Total Cases

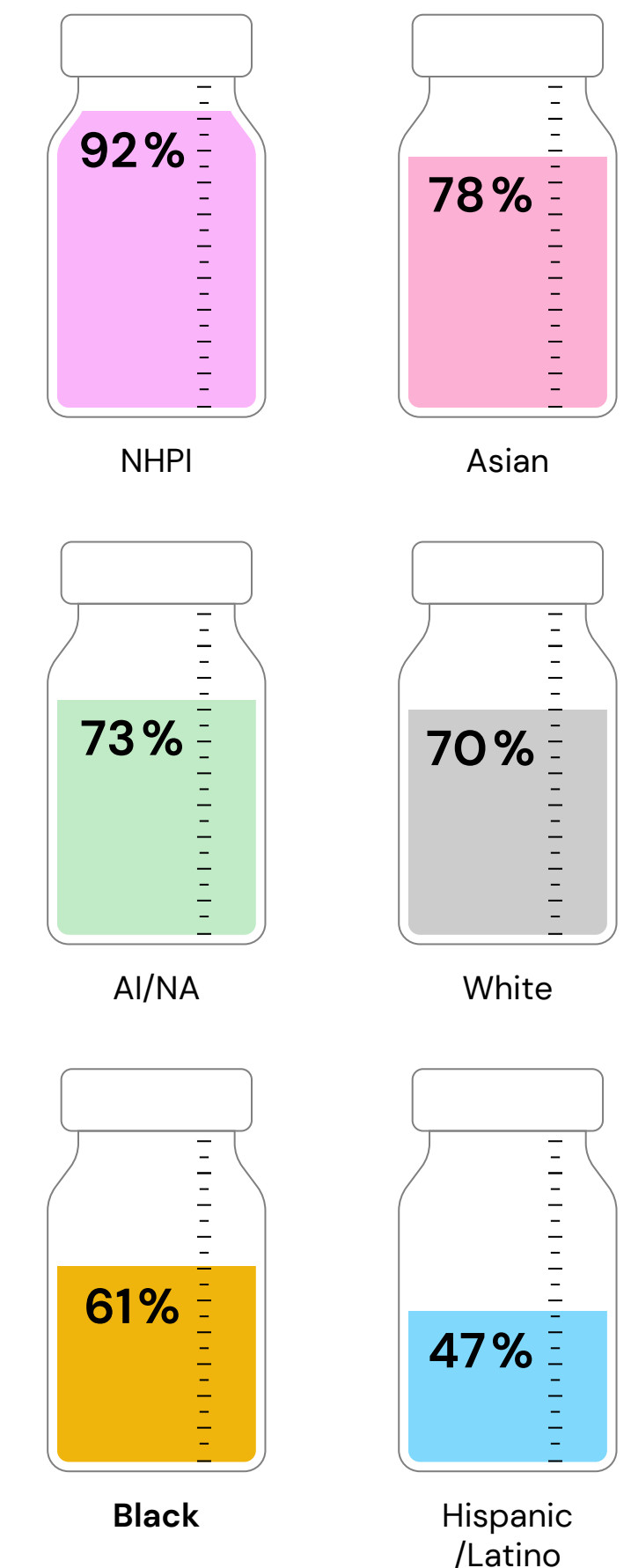
by race/ethnicity, 2020-2021



Source: [OC Health Care Agency](#)

Vaccination Rate

per 100K population, 2021



Source: [OC Health Care Agency](#)

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Black Population and COVID-19 in OC (continued)

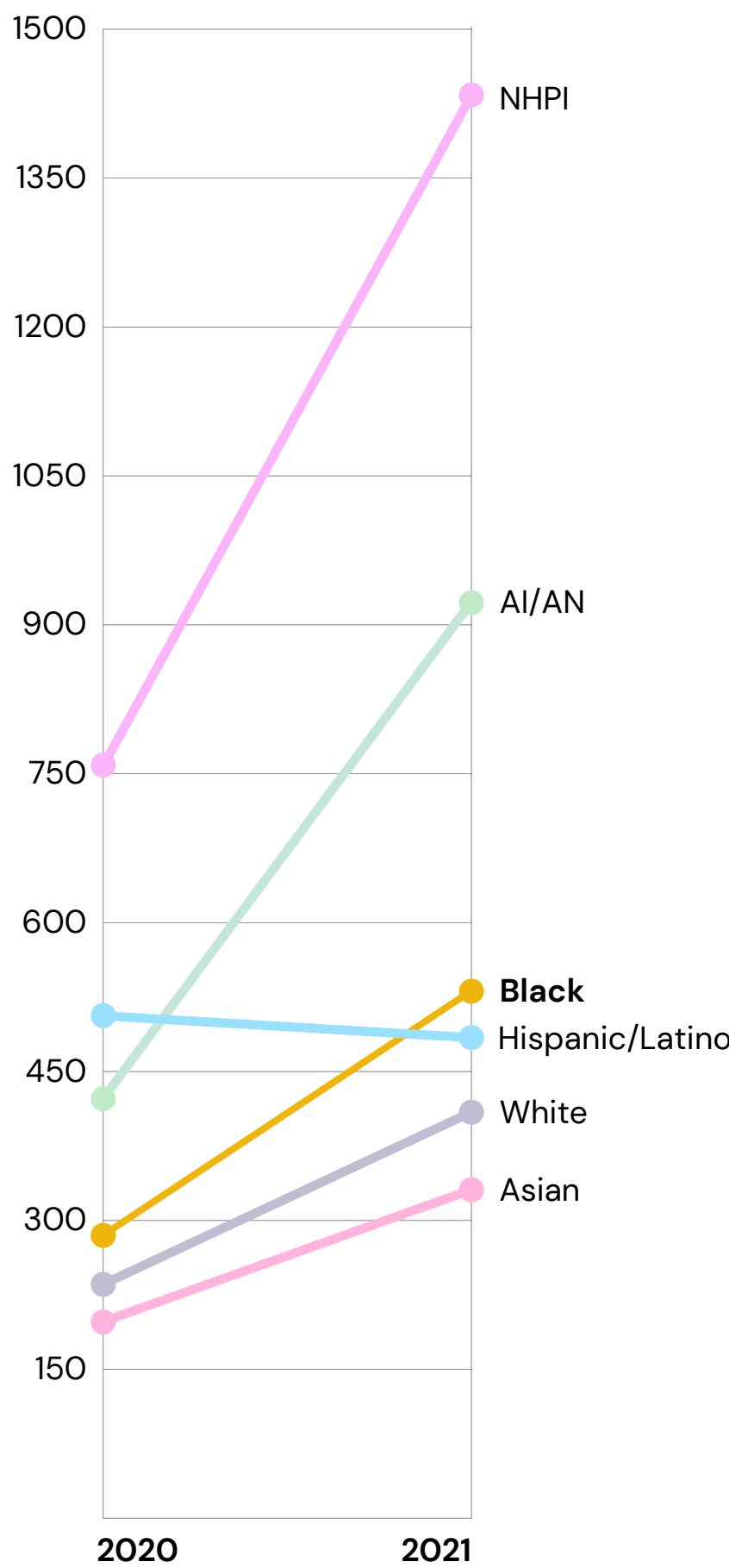
Medical researchers purposefully misled participants in the study to believe that they were receiving treatment for syphilis; they were not. The researchers went so far as to provide a list of participants to local hospitals and doctors, specifically asking them not to treat participants suffering from syphilis.

At the time, the researchers responsible for conducting this study held racist pseudoscientific beliefs, including that Blacks were inherently inferior and that they were more prone to sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis. Researchers argued that it was necessary to let the disease run its course to understand its natural progression, however fatal. Additionally, at the time, it was also believed that Black people were less likely to seek out treatment. By intervening in this way, USPHS ensured that the Tuskegee study was a horrific self-fulfilling prophecy. Hundreds of Black people died without proper treatment because they thought they were already receiving it.

[The Tuskegee study](#) shaped Black attitudes towards participation in clinical studies and receiving treatment from researchers. Though the Tuskegee study has been described as, “arguably the most infamous biomedical research study in U.S. history,” it is far from the only example. The decades long use of Henrietta Lacks’ “immortal cell line,” in medical research without notice (much less compensation) to the family still raises concerns about patient rights and privacy to this day. It should come as no surprise, then, that there remains reticence and deep mistrust in receiving “help” from such institutions.

Case Rate

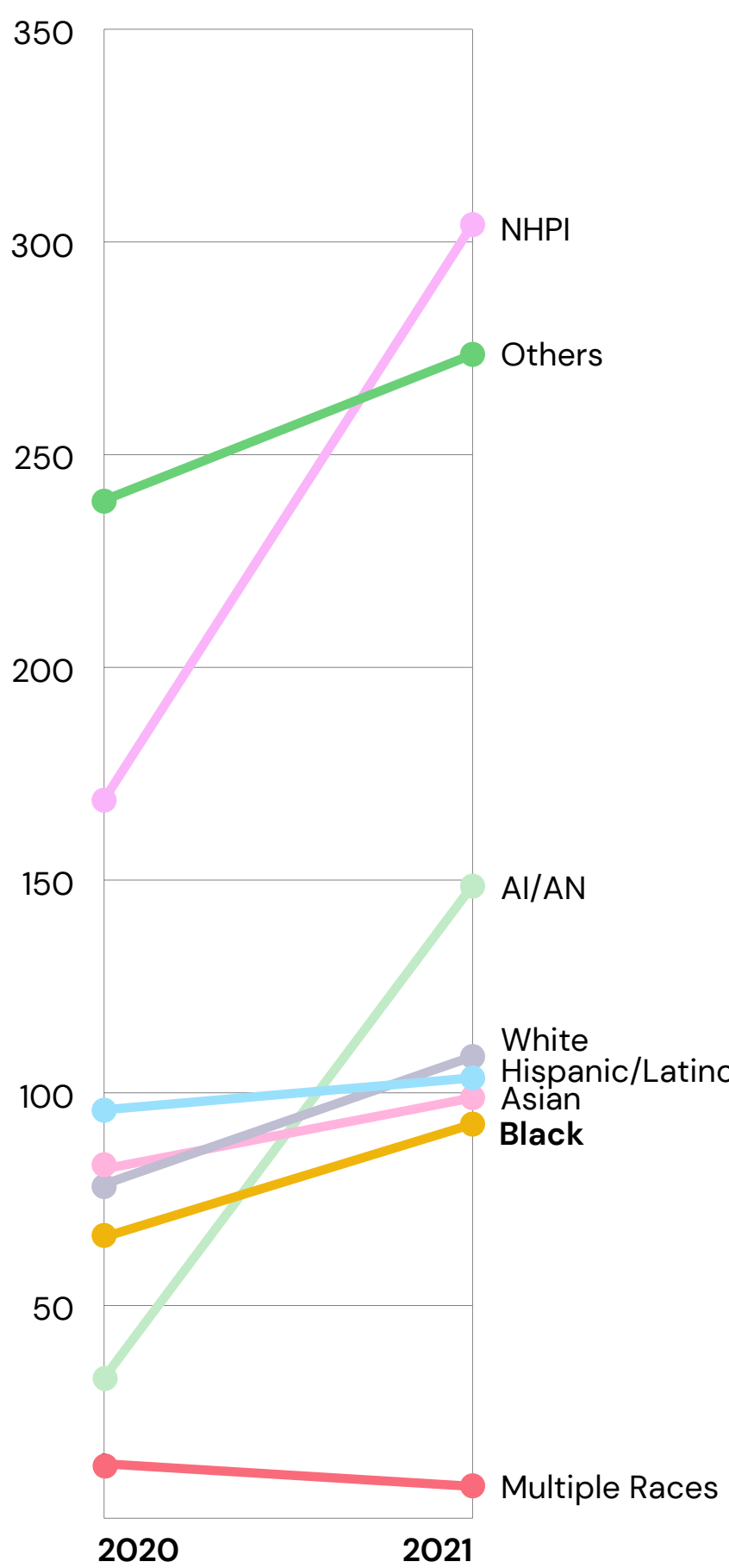
per 100K population, 2020–2021



Source: OC Health Care Agency

Death Rate

per 100K population, 2020–2021



Source: OC Health Care Agency

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Health and Mortality

Black Americans and Life Expectancy

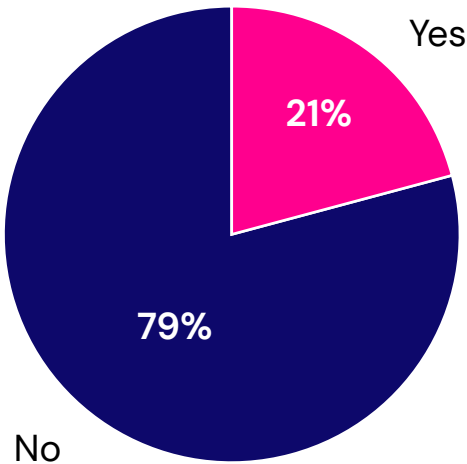
According to the 2022 County Health Rankings, the Black population in Orange County has a life expectancy of 80.4 years, which is the lowest among racial and ethnic groups in the county. The American healthcare system is beset with inequalities that have a disproportionate impact on people of color and other marginalized groups. These inequalities contribute to gaps in health insurance coverage, uneven access to services, and poorer health outcomes among certain populations. Black Americans bear the brunt of these health care challenges. Black Americans experience higher maternal mortality, infant mortality, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and other health issues. Even with improved access to medical care under the Affordable Care Act, the disparities in health outcomes between Black and White Americans are stark.

Black women are three times [more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes](#) than White women. The Black infant mortality rate is [twice the rate for White infants](#). Black Americans are more likely to die from cancer and heart disease than Whites, and are at greater risk for the onset of diabetes. Black women have the highest rates of obesity or being overweight compared to other groups in the United States. About four out of five Black women are overweight or obese, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. Across many chronic illnesses, Black Americans are still more likely to die from these illnesses compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

Nationwide, the [leading causes of death for Black Americans](#) are heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, homicide, and stroke.

Does your doctor or healthcare provider give you anxiety?

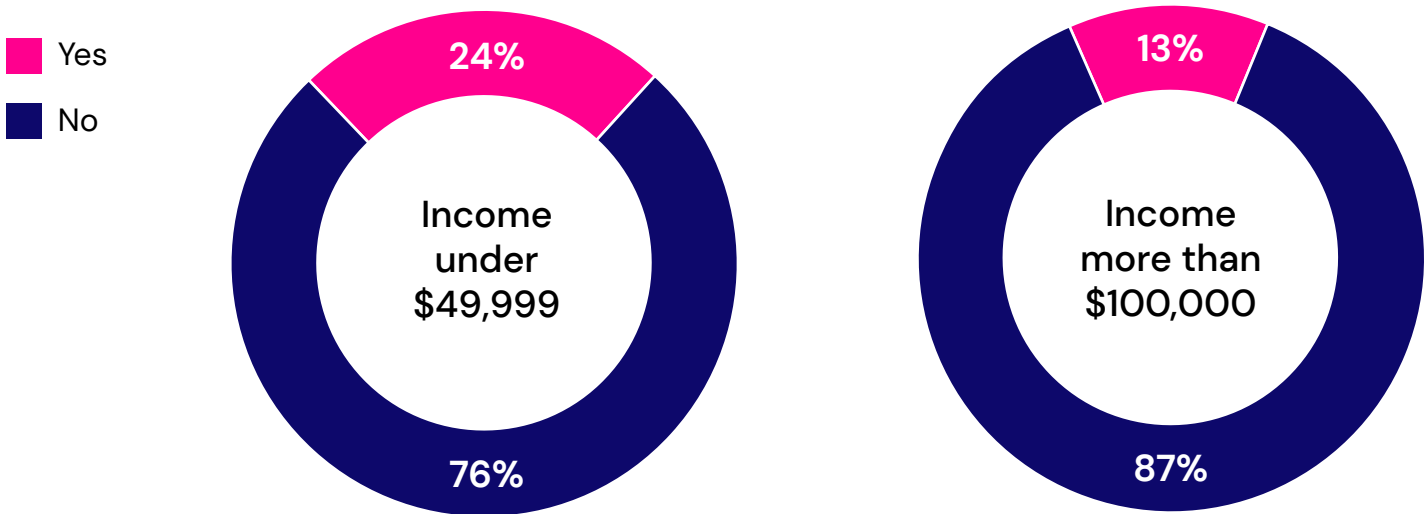
2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

Do you currently feel heard by your doctor or healthcare provider?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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Health and Mortality (continued)

[Numerous factors](#) play a role in the high rates of heart disease in Black American people, including socioeconomic disparities, lack of access to healthcare, and discrimination in healthcare.

Homicides are also a leading cause of death for Black Americans. From 2019 to 2020, the firearm homicide rate in the U.S. increased about 35%, [according to the CDC](#). The firearm homicide rate increased most for Black people, resulting in 27 deaths per 100,000.

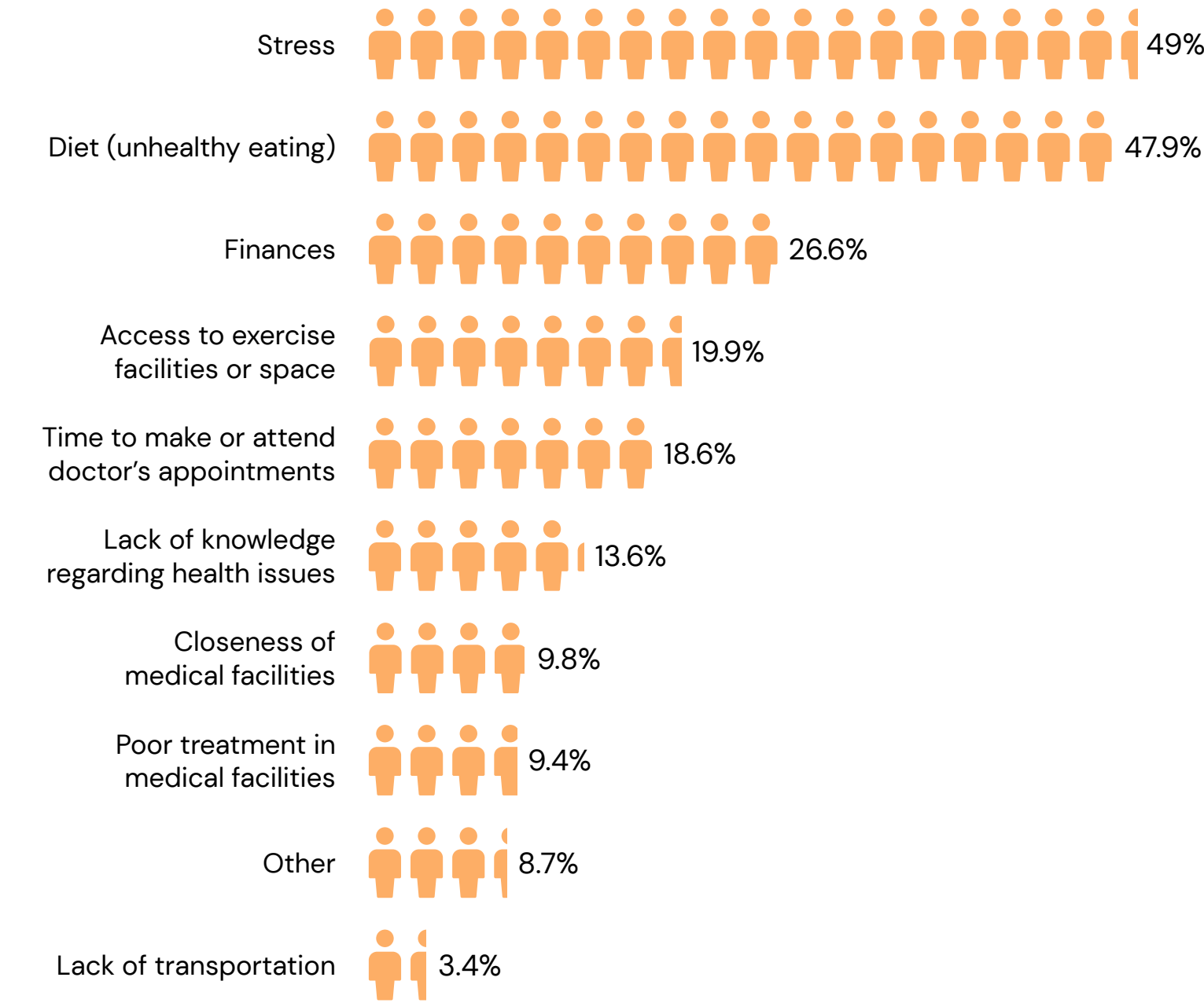
Black Americans and Trauma

The word “trauma” expresses many states and emotions. One is the everyday feeling of being extremely scared or overwhelmed. A second use for the word is the more clinical definition—an emotional response to a terrifying, often unexpected event. This can include being in a serious car accident, experiencing combat stress from a military deployment, or surviving a natural disaster such as a major earthquake. These events all can cause trauma. In some cases, those affected have little or no lasting trauma symptoms. Research shows that surrounding those harmed by a traumatic event with physical, emotional, and social support can make a huge difference in their healing and recovery. For others, longer-term reactions and symptoms are a natural response to a harrowing event; this response can make it difficult for people to move on with their lives.

One source of trauma among Black Americans has been gun violence. In a recent publication by the CDC, the rate of U.S. gun deaths among Black Americans increased by almost 40% from 2019 to 2020. For those directly impacted, research shows that crimes with a gun have more severe mental health impacts than crimes

Which of the following significantly impacts your health?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

with other weapons. Even those [who witness or hear gun violence can be traumatized](#). Ultimately, gun violence leaves indelible marks on the memory that can alter the health, choices, and lifelong trajectory of children, young people, adults, and the collective community in serious and lasting ways.

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Health and Mortality (continued)

Black Americans and Racism

Persistent racism and discrimination also contribute to community trauma. Unfortunately, discrimination by healthcare providers contributes to that. The 2023 HEAAL Survey indicates that 23% of Black Americans in Orange County have felt discriminated against by their doctor or healthcare provider.

Furthermore, a higher percentage of Black American females in Orange County faced discrimination from a doctor or health care provider compared to their male counterparts according to the same survey.

In a recent survey conducted by Health Equity for African Americans League (HEAAL) in Orange County, 21% of Black Americans surveyed reported having anxiety about visiting their doctor or healthcare provider.

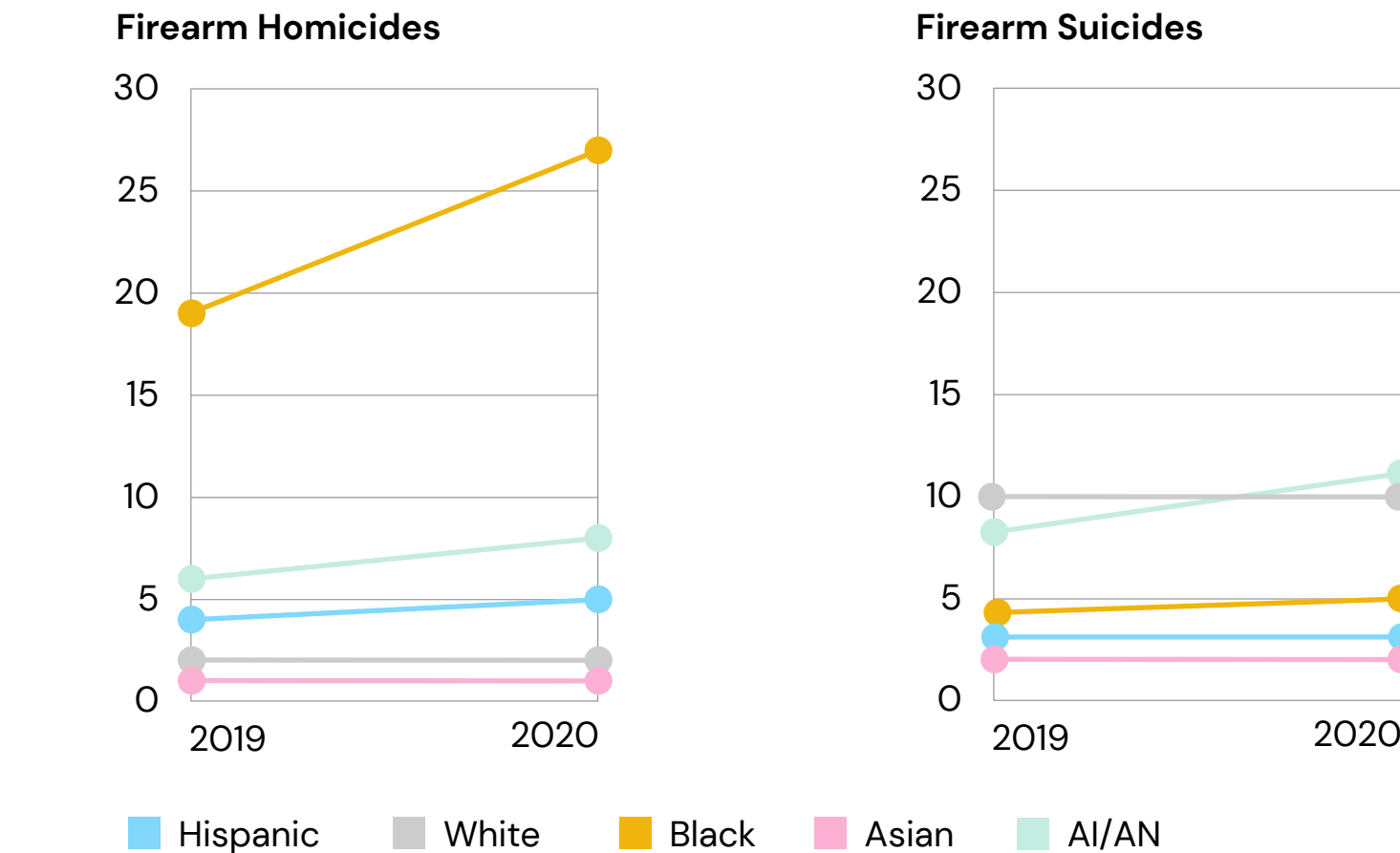
Additionally, the 2023 HEAAL survey showed that many Black Americans feel they are not being heard by their doctor or healthcare provider. Almost 25% of lower income Black Americans felt unheard, twice as many as Black Americans earning more than \$100,000.

In addition, exposure to racism may increase the risk of [stress](#)-related health issues. In Orange County specifically, nearly 50% of Black Americans reported that stress significantly impacts their health.

From a medical perspective, according to a study published in the journal of [Psychoneuroendocrinology](#), experiencing racism brings on an [increase in inflammation in Black Americans](#). This increase in inflammation raises the risk of becoming chronically ill. The researchers of the study assert that the body’s response to stressors—such as the adversity of racism—compromises systems

Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rate

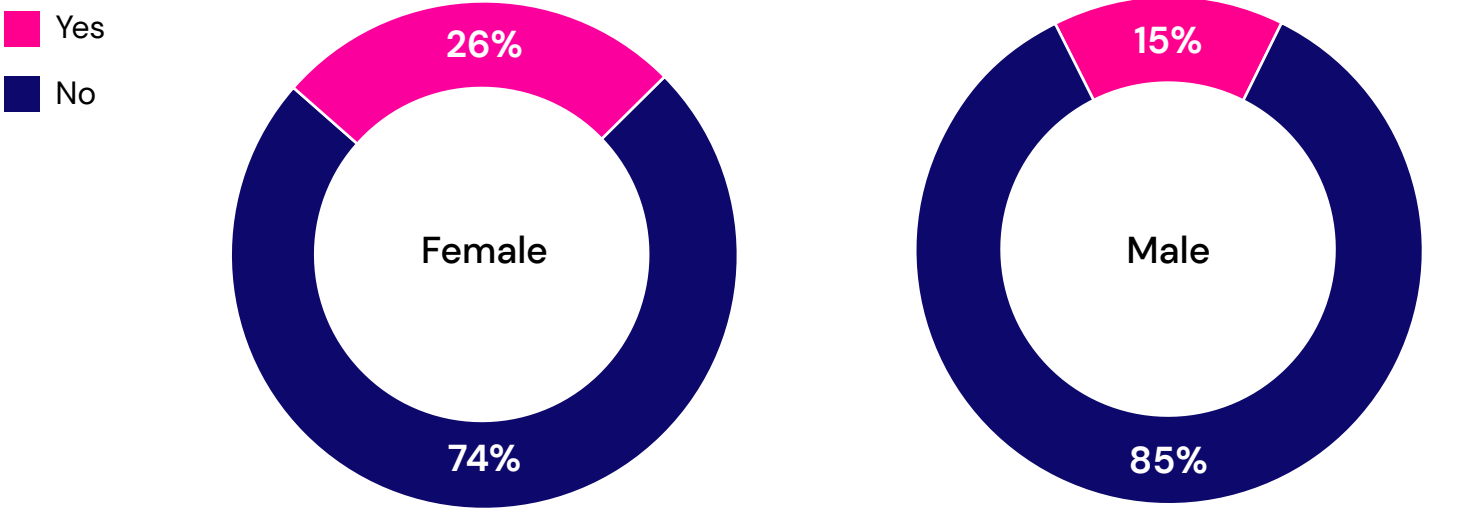
2019–2020, U.S.



Source: [CDC](#)

Have you ever felt discriminated against by your doctor or healthcare provider?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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that are critical in fending off disease. Exposure to racism over long periods of time cause the health of Black Americans to suffer greatly. Chronic illness manifests when the body’s defenses are down due to inflammation. Chronic illnesses associated with experiencing racism include heart attack, neurodegenerative disease, and metastatic cancer. The study participants had similar socioeconomic backgrounds, which eliminated poverty as a stressor—a social factor that has also been linked to the onset of illness.

Racism is woven into many portions of society, including medical health records. [A study published in January 2022](#) quantified the negative patient descriptors that disproportionately impact the health records of people of color compared to their White counterparts. In fact, Black patients had a negative descriptor in the history and physical notes section of their patient records two and a half times more often compared to White patients.

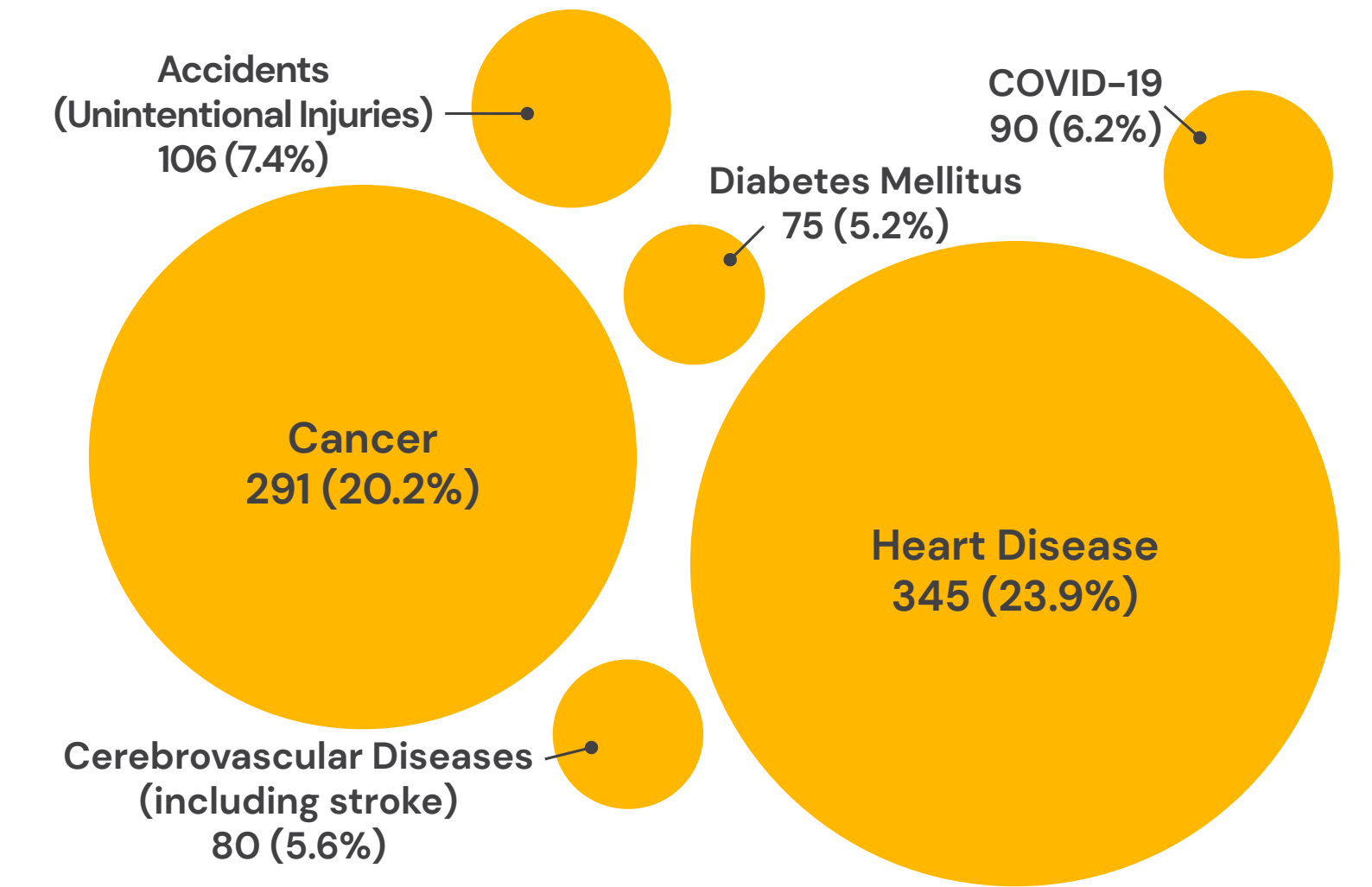
There are a few distinctions in causes of death among the Black population compared to the available baseline of the entire United States from 2017. One notable difference is caused by the emergence of COVID-19, as it was one of the recent leading causes of death among Black Americans in Orange County, especially over the past two years.

Black Americans and Infant Mortality

Another important topic of discussion within the Black community is the higher rates of both maternal and infant mortality during childbirth, which is due in part to inadequate access to healthcare and overall quality of healthcare, both in Orange County and the United States as a whole. One striking statistic is that in 2020, the

Top 5 Leading Causes of Death Among Black Population in OC

According to the California Death Report, there were a total of 1441 deaths among the Black population in Orange County during the years of 2018 through 2021. The leading causes of death were the following:



Source: [California Death Report](#)

[maternal mortality rate](#) in the U.S. was 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births, yet among non-Hispanic Black women, this rate was 55.3 deaths per 100,000 live births, 2.9 times the rate for non-Hispanic White women. The Black community faces a similar struggle, with an infant mortality rate much higher than their White peers.

While these statistics are representative of the issue nationally, this trend translates to the county level as well, as three-year averages

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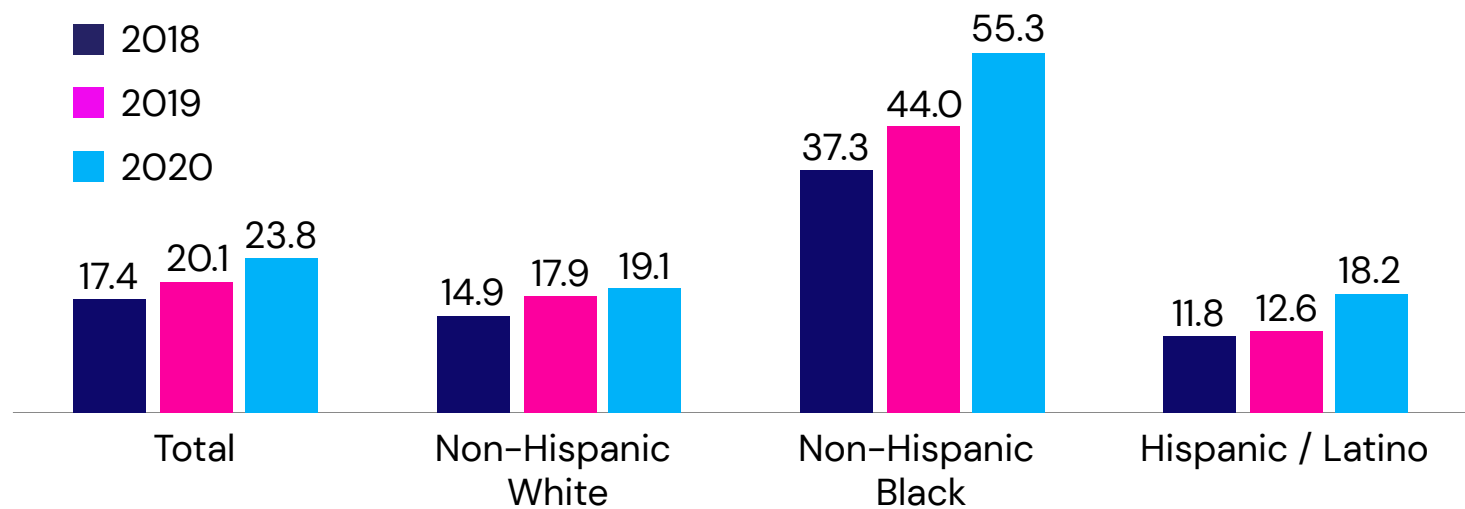
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Health and Mortality (continued)

of infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births in Orange County show that Blacks have consistently had the highest rate of infant mortality between 2009 and 2017, and by a significant and increasing margin. Overall, this data demonstrates a pressing need for improved equity and elimination of racial biases, such as those against Black individuals experiencing genuine pain and therefore receiving [worse medical treatment](#) from staff, within the healthcare system at all geographical levels.

Maternal Mortality Rates

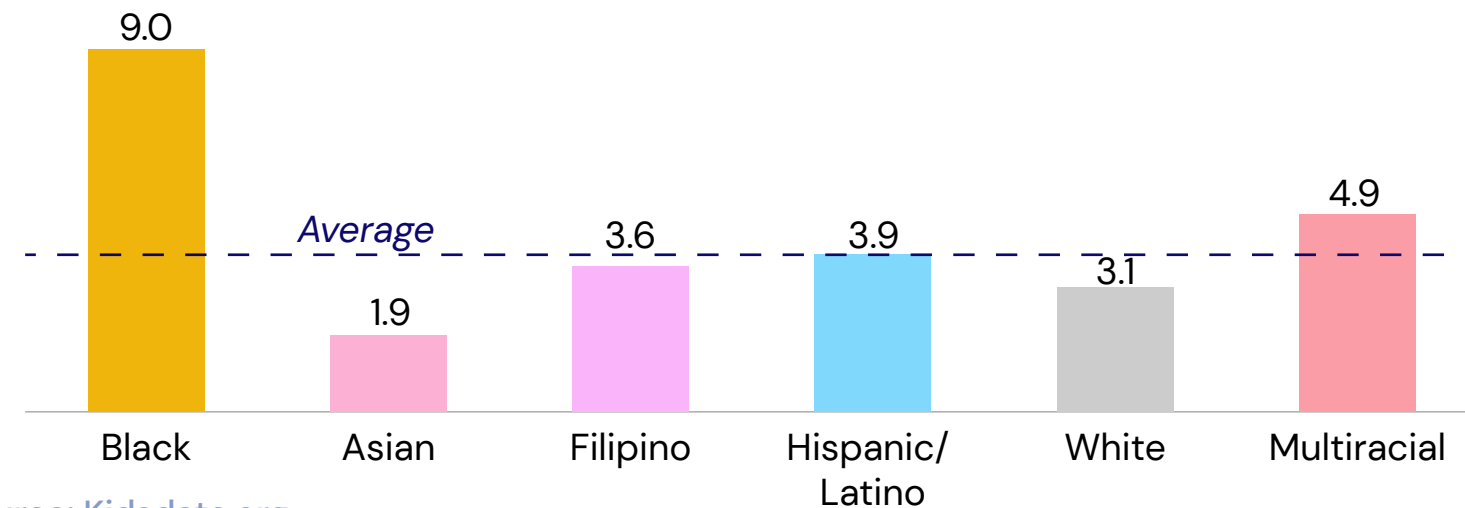
United States, 2018–2020



Source: [CDC](#)

Averages of Infant Mortality Rates in California

Per 1,000 live births, 2020



Source: [Kidsdata.org](#)

Representation in Healthcare

[Despite an increase in diversity reported in medical school admissions](#), the proportion of [Black/African American practicing physicians](#) is [not enough](#) to support the growth of the Black population in the United States. [Studies](#) have suggested that patients tend to feel more comfortable with physicians that look like and come from similar backgrounds as them: [a majority of patients](#), both Black and White, feel that doctors of the same race understand their concerns best. This has important implications for healthcare delivery and treatment – people are disinclined to trust someone who doesn’t look like them or share similar experiences. This could take the form of patients refusing important, possibly lifesaving, procedures and complying or not complying with doctor’s orders, simply because of an inability to relate to their doctor.

For example, dermatology clinics are typically staffed by physicians who are not properly trained to treat people of color, unused to seeing patients with higher levels of melanin. [People of color have a lower five-year survival rate \(71%\)](#) for melanoma (skin cancer) compared to Whites (93%), despite the fact that people of color are at lower risk for the disease. Late-stage diagnoses are more common for POC than Whites. A similar trend is witnessed in cardiovascular disease care, a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the United States with large racial disparities when it comes to health outcomes. Only [3% of all practicing cardiologists are Black](#), despite Blacks making up 13.4% of the general population. This translates to higher prevalence and poorer health outcomes in the Black community.

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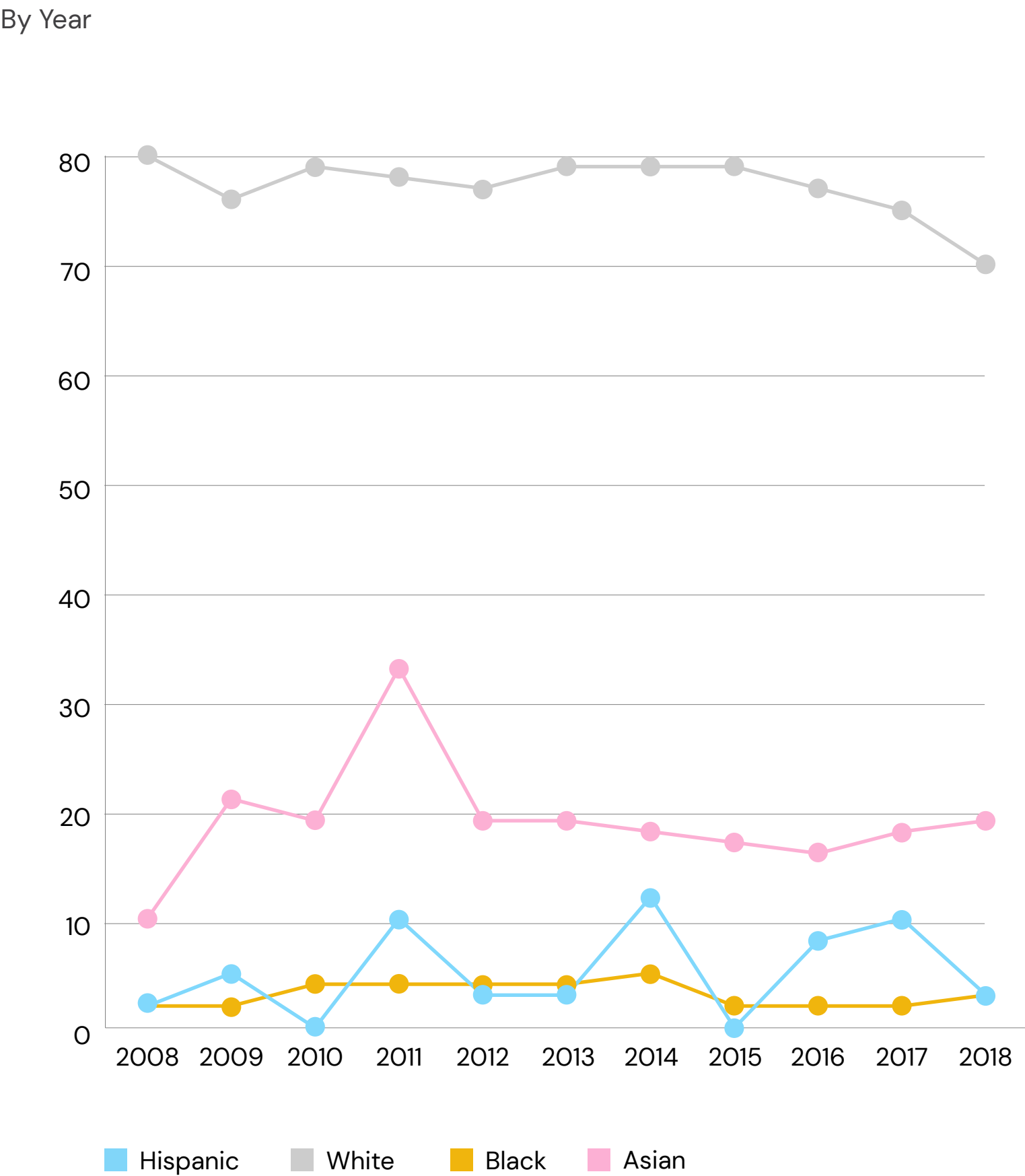
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Health and Mortality (continued)

Clinical Trials

As previously mentioned, though Black Americans make up about [14% of the US population](#) (according to the Pew Research Center), they currently make up only about [5% of all active physicians](#) in 2018 (according to the Association of American Medical Colleges). This also rings true with regards to clinical trials. It is [critical for participants in clinical trials to be diverse](#), as they are meant to represent as broad a swath of the population as possible. Without diversity, there is an incomplete picture of how the drug or treatment may affect patients. Even if a drug is deemed safe for use in humans, there could be devastating ramifications for groups excluded from participating in clinical trials. [Racial minorities such as Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics participate in clinical trials much less than their White counterparts](#). As technology progresses, and as precision medicine (medicine made to target specific biological characteristics) becomes more prevalent, [it is important to consider other genetic backgrounds](#) to bridge disparities in health outcomes and improve treatment. With that being said, both scientists and researchers must be both able and willing to address the historical trauma faced by these communities if they desire to increase their participation.

Percentage of Patients Enrolled in FDA Drug Approval Trials by Race



Source: [National Library of Medicine](#)

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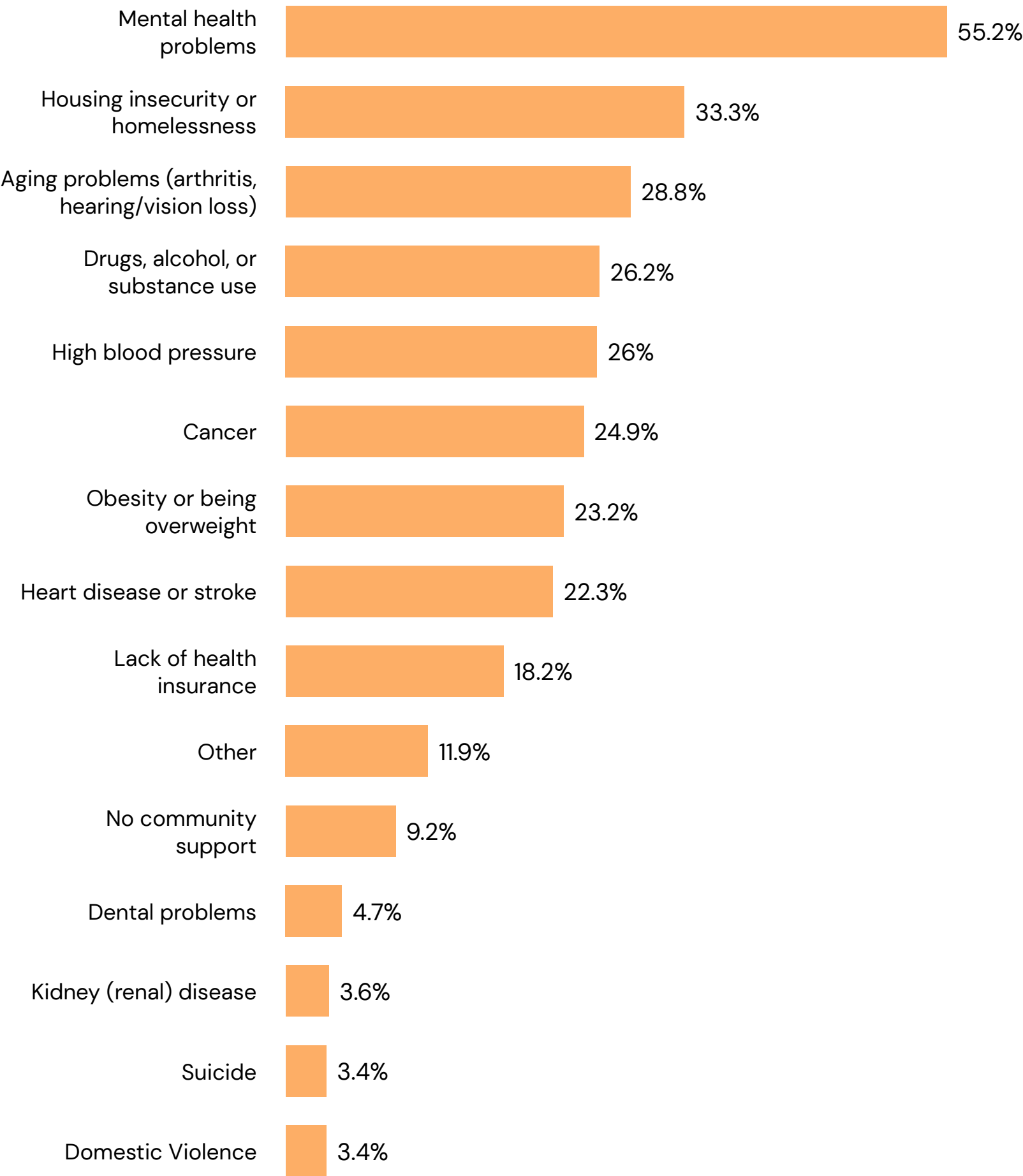
Built Environment and Social Context

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Health and Mortality (continued)

What do you think are the 3 most important “health problems” in your community?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

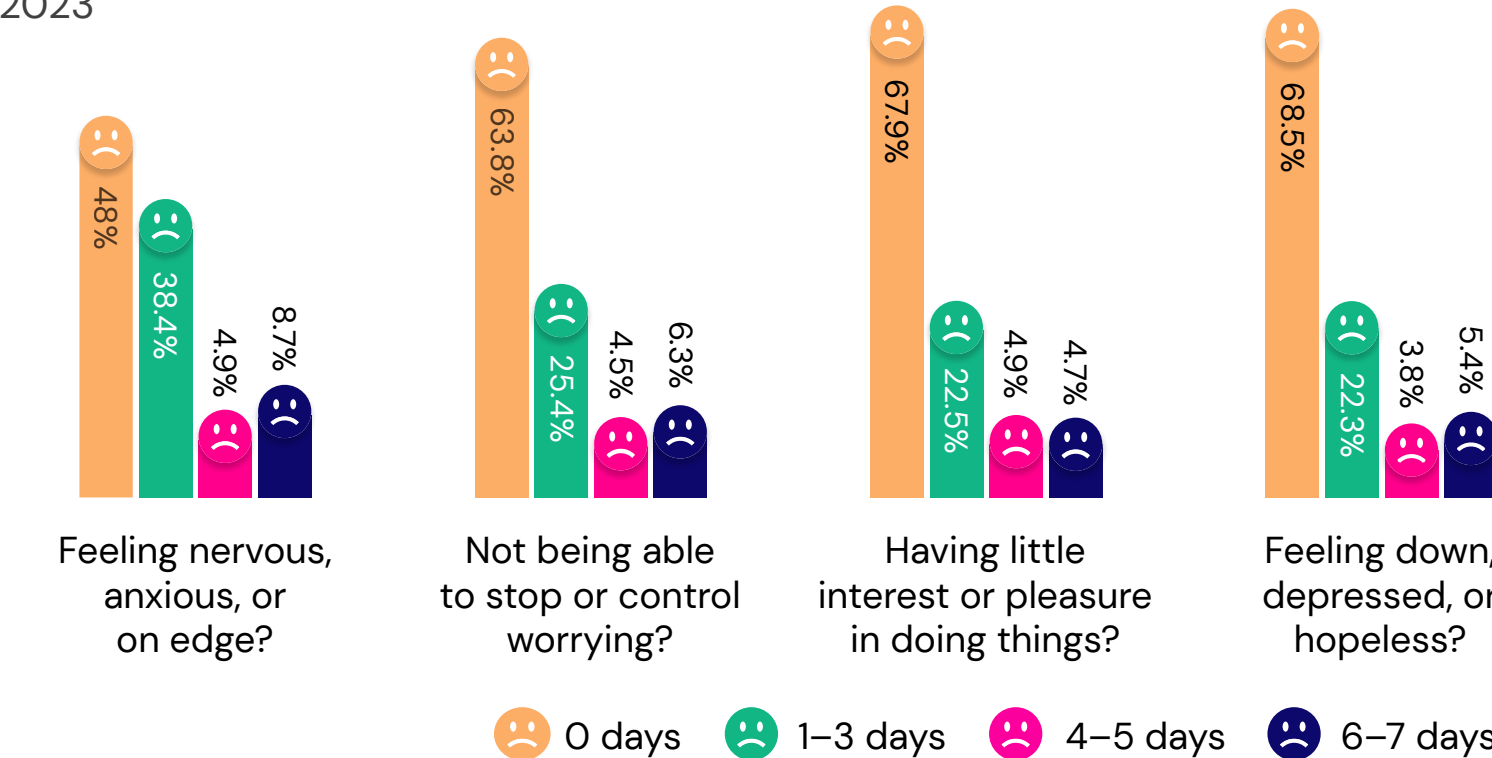
Mental Health

In addition to conditions that may affect one’s physical health, mental health awareness has risen significantly in recent years. This is especially pertinent among those in minority groups, such as the Black community, who may struggle against systemic racial biases which are harmful to their emotional well-being. In Orange County, more than half (55.2%) of Black Americans felt that mental health problems were one of the top three most important health problems in their community.

On an individual level, approximately a quarter to one-third of Black Americans in Orange County have experienced various dips in mental health for at least one – three days in a seven-day period prior to taking the HEAAL survey. These statistics show both the prevalence and need for culturally competent mental health services in the Black community.

In the past 7 days, how often have you experienced the following?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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Health and Mortality (continued)

Unfortunately, utilizing mental health services and treatment is stigmatized in modern society. It may also carry an especially negative connotation among certain minority groups, including some Black Americans.

As described in a [2019 article from USC](#), only about one in three members of the Black community in the United States facing emotional distress successfully find appropriate mental health treatment. Therefore, it is necessary to not only increase access to these resources for treatment, both at a county level and nationally, but to also destigmatize the process of receiving this treatment. Among Black Americans, distrust against the “medical establishment” is common due to higher rates generationally of misdiagnosis by medical professionals. Additionally, there is a clear disparity in the ability to access mental health services for different incomes within the Black American population in Orange County.

According to the 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey, 18.7% of those who earn less than \$49,999 were not able to get mental health counseling when needed in the past year whereas only 9.2% of those earning over \$100,000 experienced the same issue. This speaks to the unaffordability of mental health services in the county. It also suggests there is a lack of providers able and willing to serve less affluent clientele, let alone those who can do it in a way that is sensitive to the needs and experiences of the Black community.

According to suicide data for Orange County from 2014 to 2017, Black Americans have the second highest rate of suicide among all ethnic categories (11.1 deaths per 100,000 people). This is more than double the national average rate of approximately five to seven deaths per 100,000 people in the past 10 years.

Access to Health Insurance (stats on Medicare, Medicaid, overall coverage, etc)

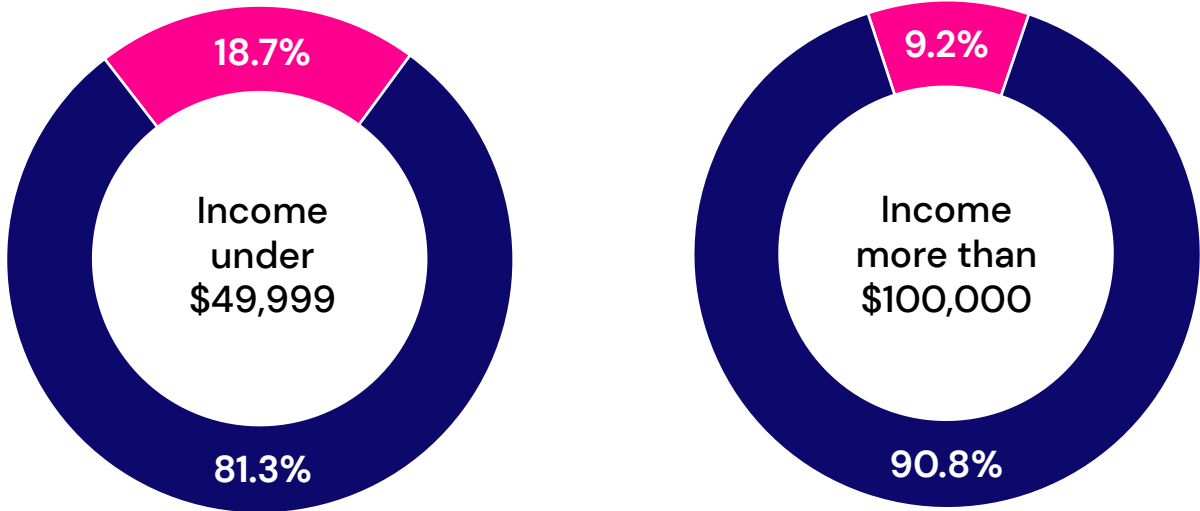
When compared to the overall population of Orange County (92.7%), there is a slightly lower percentage of the Black population who have any form of health insurance coverage (91.8%). Nonetheless, the rate at which Blacks in Orange County carry either public (33.1%) and/or private (67.9%) health insurance is very similar to the overall population (33.2% and 68.1%, respectively).

On the other hand, when observing the percentage of the OC Black population who have insurance through Medicare (12.9%), which primarily serves those over the age of 65 along with others who may need more frequent medical attention, it is lower than the rate of those covered by Medicare throughout Orange County (15.3%). This is likely correlated with the lower life expectancy of this population (80.4 years) compared to the entirety of Orange County (82.8 years).

In the last year, was there a time you needed mental health counseling but could not get it?

2023

■ Yes
■ No



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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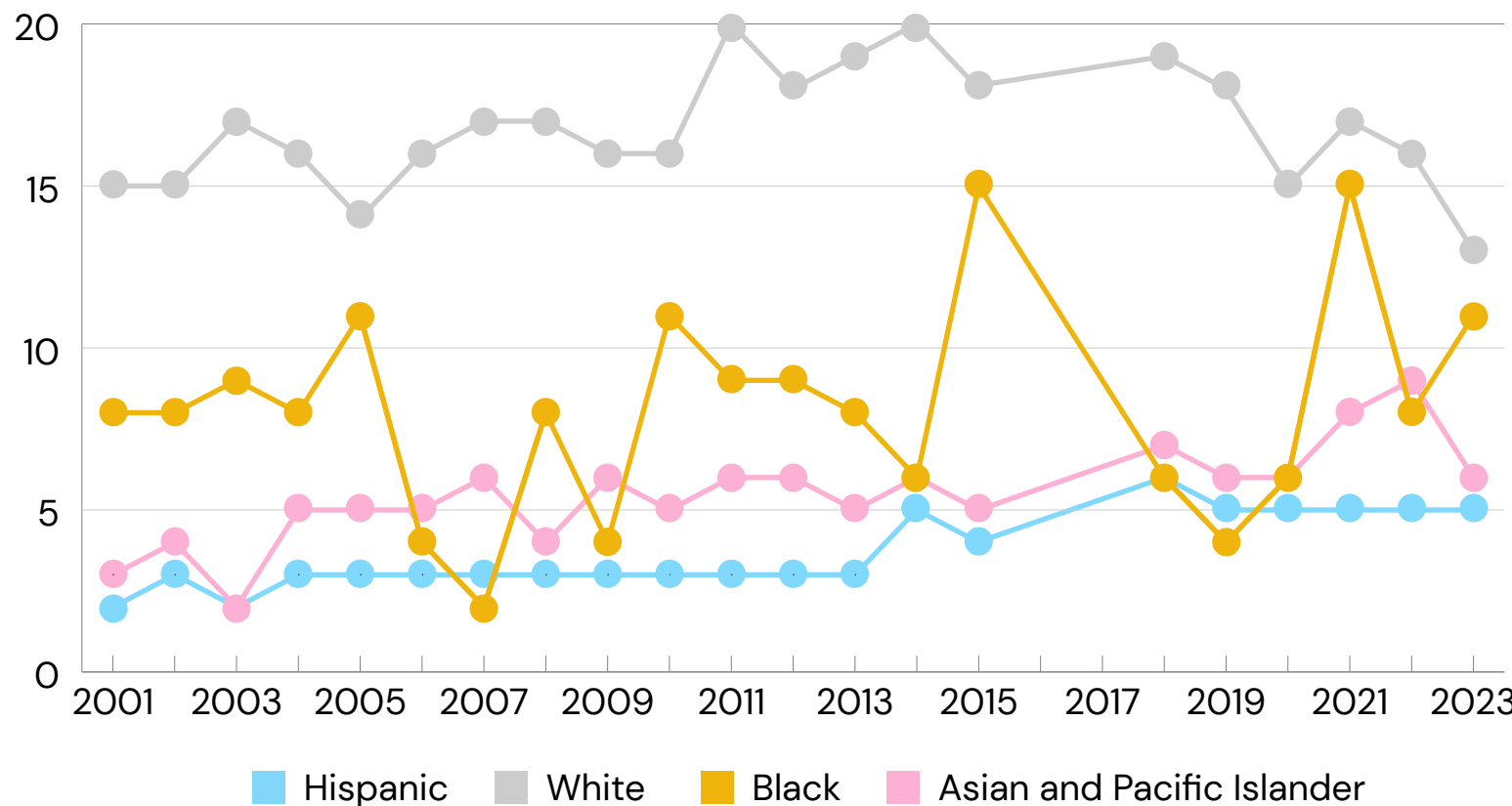
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Health and Mortality (continued)

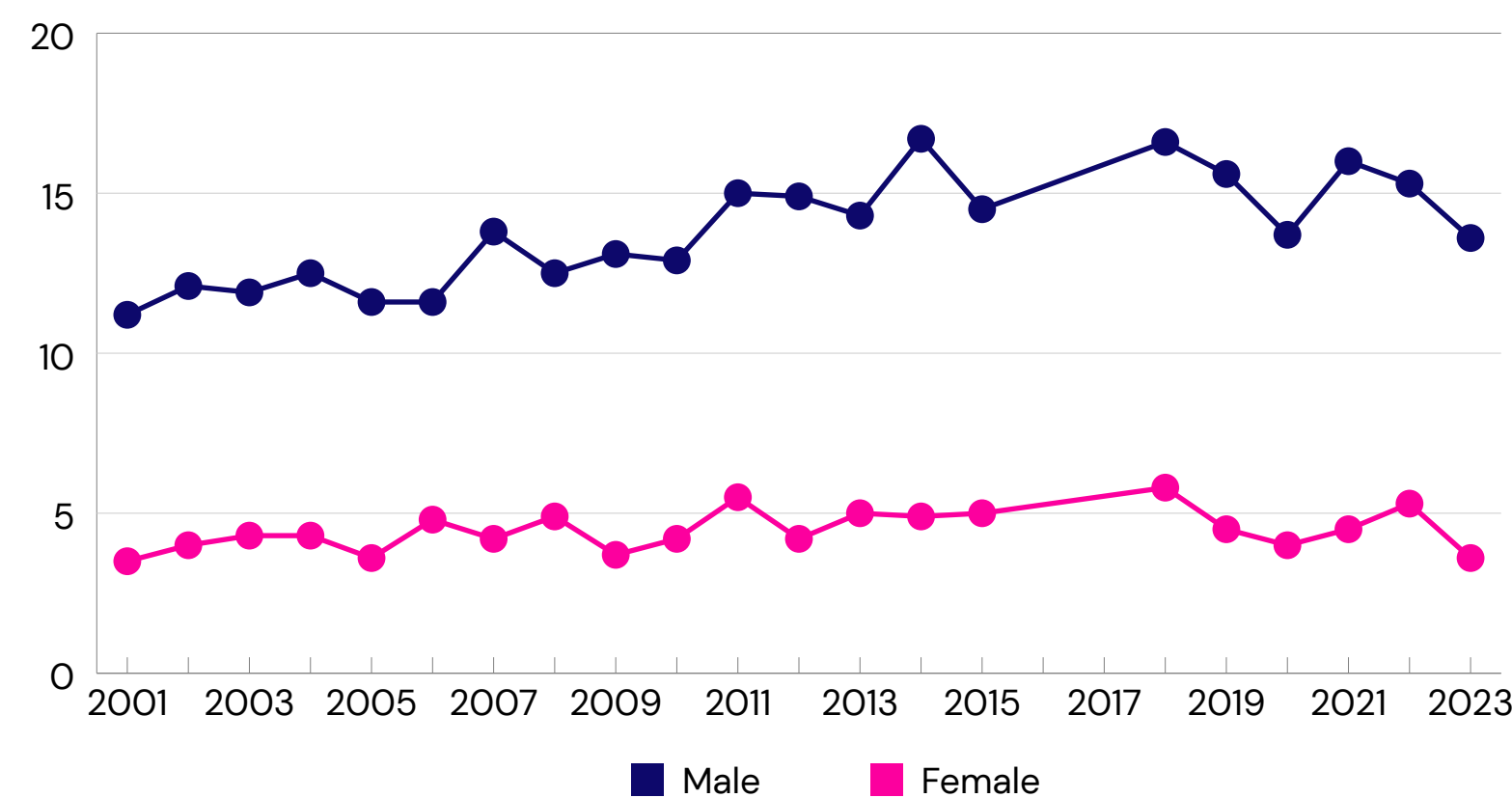
Rates of Suicide by Race/Ethnicity

Orange County, 2001-2023



Rates of Suicide by Gender

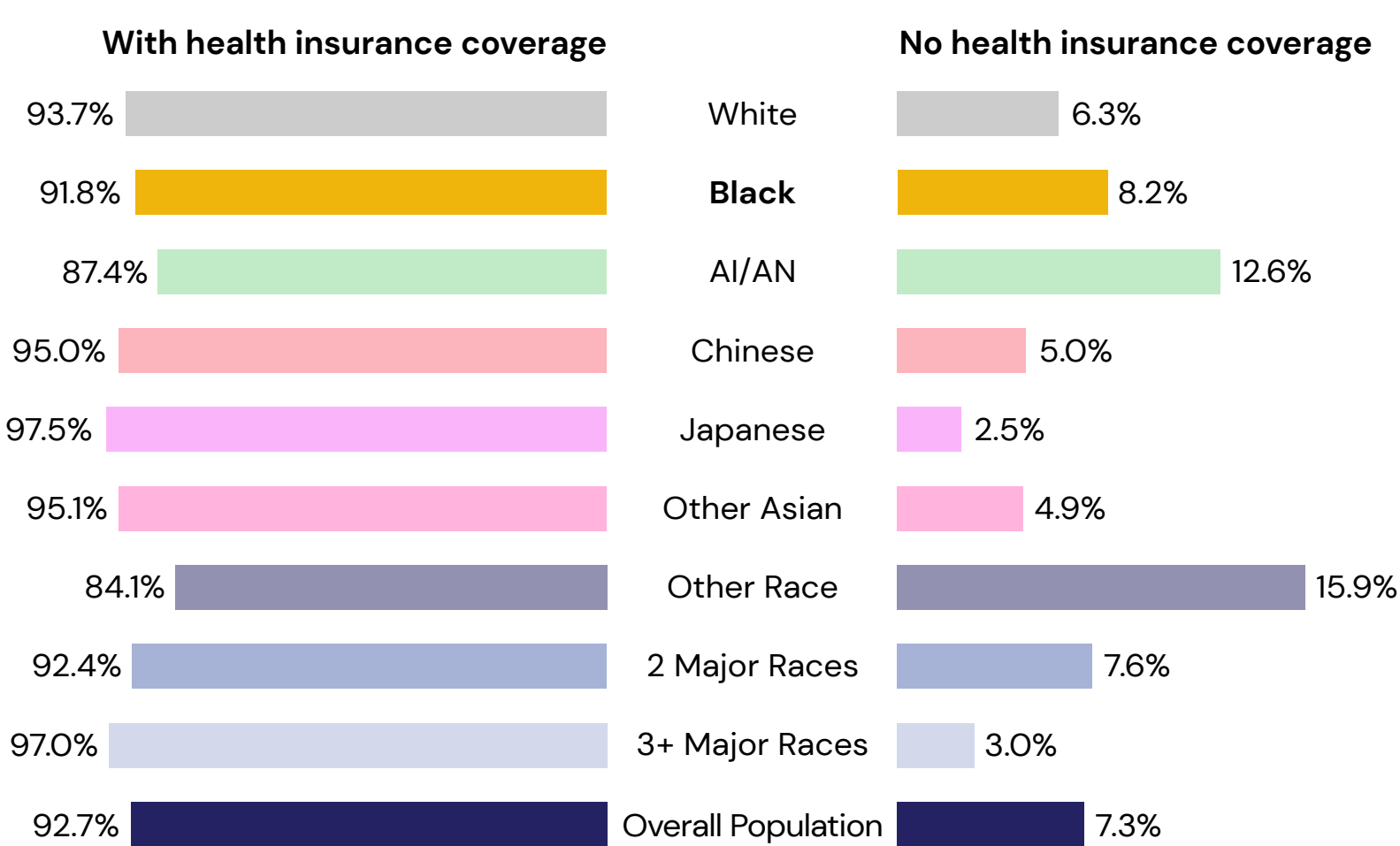
Orange County, 2001-2023



Source: [OC Health Info](#)

Access to Health Insurance

Orange County, 2019



Source: [American Community Survey](#)

Sojourners Syndrome

[Sojourners Syndrome](#) describes how the race, class, and gender oppression that Black American women have faced has caused an increase in health disparities and resulted in adaptation and fostered [resilience](#) under the oppressive circumstances. Named after Sojourner Truth, a 19th century abolitionist and activist who was known for her courageous determination against adversary, Sojourners Syndrome exemplifies the resilience and strength of Black [women](#) while also providing an understanding of why Black Americans die younger compared to Whites. Black American

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Health and Mortality (continued)

women have experienced a disproportionate risk of disease, disability, and mortality, including premature births and infant mortality, caused by chronic active coping. Weathering, which refers to the health risk caused by persistent stress and constant coping, is a way to describe similar effects among Black men.

John Henryism

[John Henryism](#) syndrome describes Black Americans who work harder as a coping mechanism in response to the discrimination that they face. This continual exertion leads to physiological costs such as hypertension and high blood pressure. This syndrome is named after a Black American railroad worker, [John Henry, a folk hero](#) who passed away from stress after competing against a steam-powered drill. It speaks to the high stress and damaging health impacts of hard work in the face of inequity, financial hardship, and racial discrimination.

Black Smoking Paradox

Another phenomenon that is prevalent in the Black community is the Black Smoking Paradox. This paradox describes the higher risk of Black Americans to develop lung cancer compared to Whites despite having lower smoking rates. There may be [multiple causes to this paradox](#), including increased stress, which makes smoking desirable and quitting smoking difficult. Another article suggests that cigarettes containing menthol are used disproportionately more by Black Americans may play a role in the [Black Smoking Paradox](#).

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What are Social Determinants of Health?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines social determinants of health (SDoH) as the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that impact health outcomes of a person or community. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at the global, national, and local levels. These forces are outside the control of an individual or community and can greatly affect their overall health and well-being. Addressing these SDoH requires collective community action on a systemic level. The following pages highlight the status of the Black American population in Orange County across three social factors:

Health and Mortality

Comparing how long a group lives and determining their quality of life to the population at large and can be a baseline for whether systemic disparities exist and how these disparities impact the community.

Economics and Education

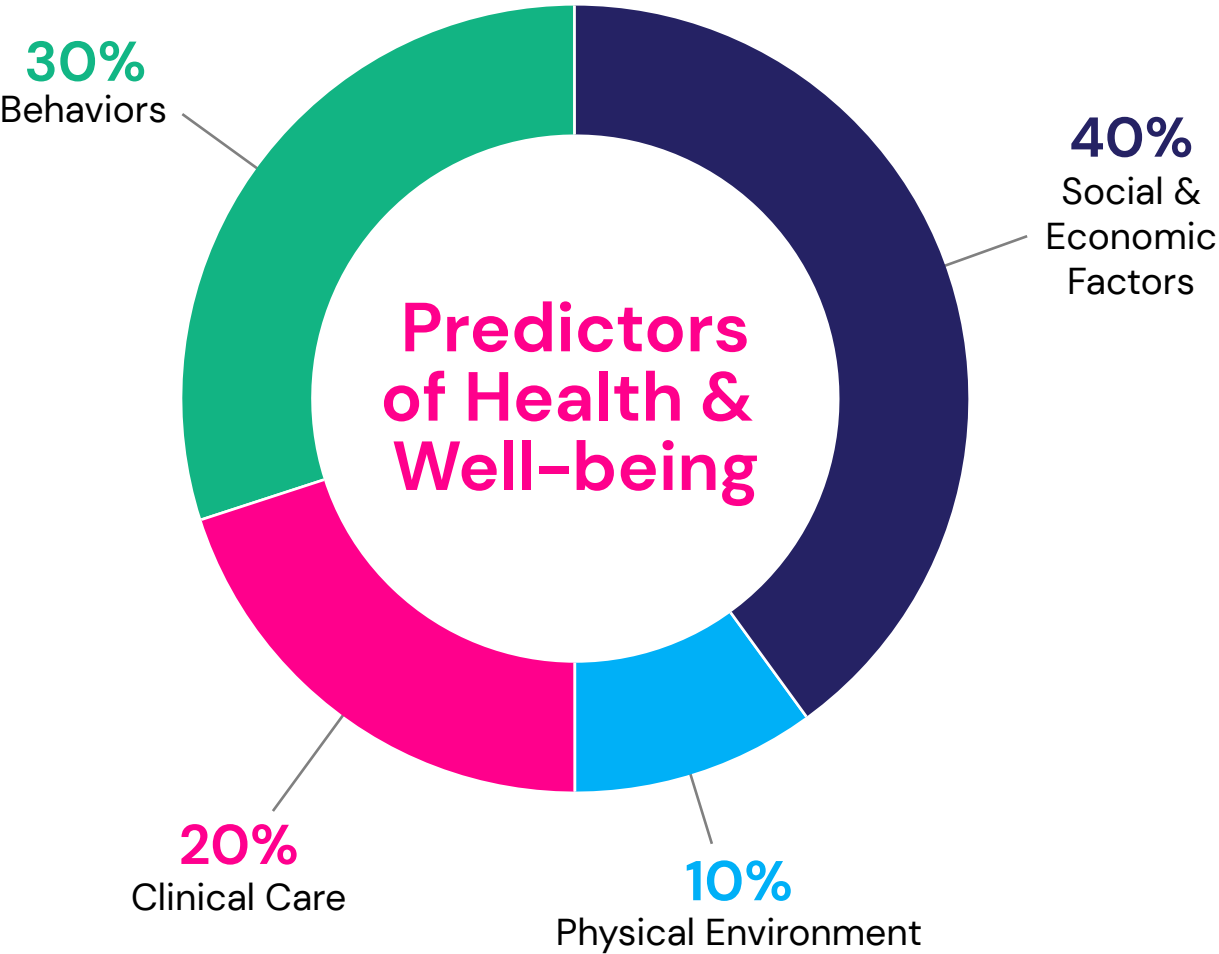
Education does more than determine one’s income. Individuals with higher education are more likely to be healthier and live longer. Improving education in various communities can bring significant health benefits to everyone.

Built Environment and Social Context

Where someone lives, how an individual gets around, and what is going on in a person’s community can greatly impact both individual and community health and well-being. Things like neighborhood walkability, cleanliness of air and water, and even the age of building in the community can affect quality of life in the community.

“*It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and political environment conspire against such change.*”

National Academy of Medicine



Source: [County Health Rankings](#)

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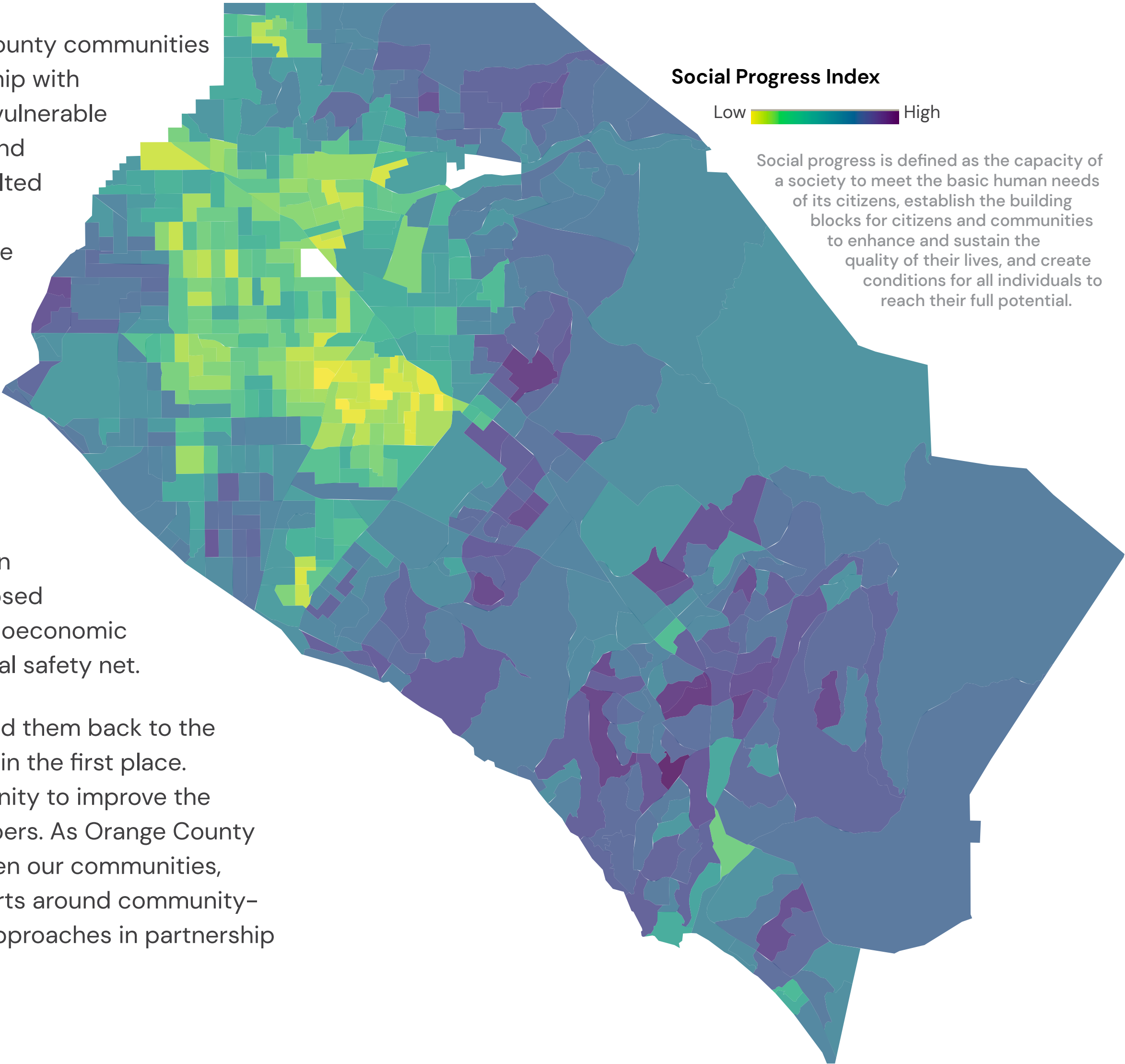
Mapping the Disparity

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Orange County communities unequally and disproportionately. In partnership with AdvanceOC, a local non-profit, we identified vulnerable communities using comorbidity risk factors and social vulnerability. This rigorous analysis resulted in the Orange County Equity Map and guided the county’s response and management of the pandemic.

What We Learned

The OC Equity map measures social progress in various census tracts of the county. Analyzing and layering COVID-19 cases in Orange County showed that higher concentrations of COVID-19 cases occurred in low social progress areas. The pandemic exposed and magnified existing racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequities, including flaws in the county’s social safety net.

We cannot treat and heal individuals then send them back to the systems and conditions that made them sick in the first place. Orange County sees COVID-19 as an opportunity to improve the health and well-being of all community members. As Orange County charts a path forward to rebuild and strengthen our communities, the Health Care Agency will center these efforts around community-informed, data-driven, and equity-oriented approaches in partnership and collaboration with community members.



Source: [OC Equity Map](#), [AdvanceOC](#)

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Social Determinants of Health Impacting the Black Community

Black Americans make up 1.7% of Orange County’s population, 17.7% of California’s population, and 12.4% of the United States’ population. Knowing how small the Black population truly is helps individuals understand the degree at which they are disproportionately experiencing negative health outcomes when compared to their White counterparts.

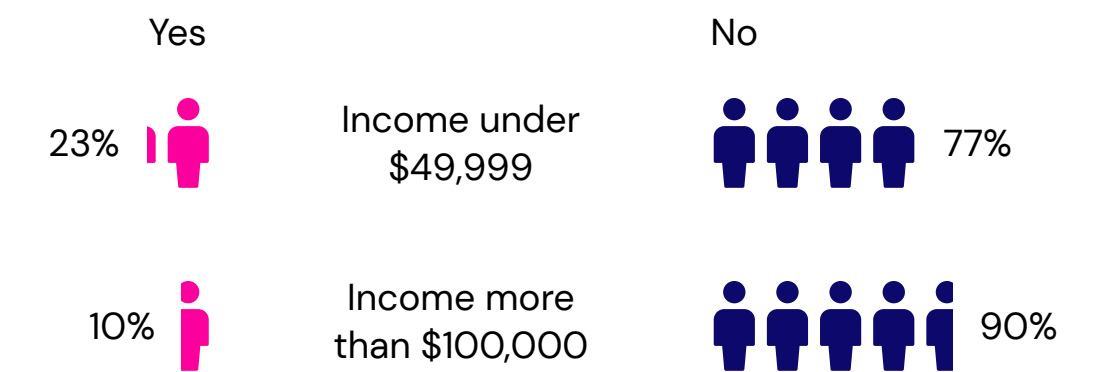
Insurance

Public insurance programs and coverage allow many low- and middle-income Black children and families to have health insurance access that can help improve health outcomes. Since the implementation of the [Affordable Care Act](#) (ACA)’s coverage provisions, the uninsured rate among Black Americans under age 65 decreased by 8 percentage points, from 20% in 2011 to 12% in 2019. The uninsured rate for Black Americans, however, is still higher than that for White Americans: 12% compared to 9%.

Implementation of the ACA’s coverage provisions led to significant coverage gains among Black Americans. Despite the decreased uninsured rate, however, disparities in access to care persists for Black Americans. Since implementation of the ACA, the proportion of Black Americans reporting problems paying for medical care has decreased from 27% in 2011 to 18% in 2020. Similar trends were observed in other access to health care measures, such as worries about medical bills (25% in 2011 to 18% in 2020) and delayed prescription refills to save money (13% in 2011 to 9% in 2020).

In the last year, was there a time when you needed medical care but were not able to get it?

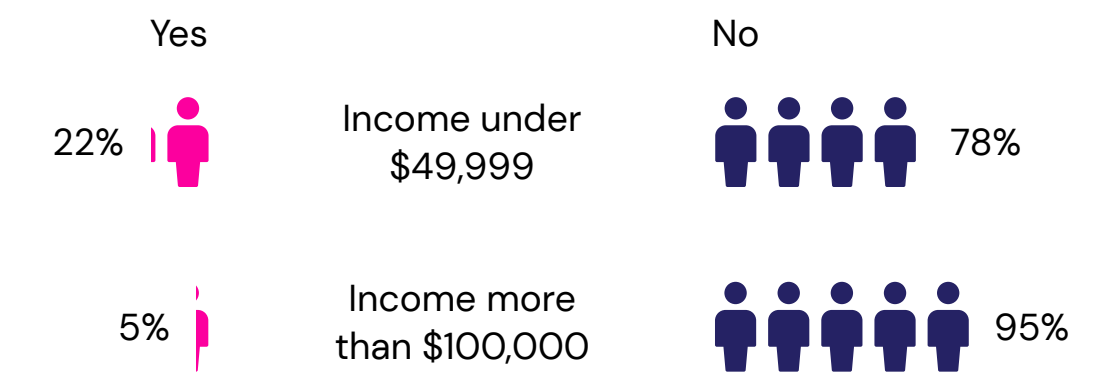
2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

In the last year, was there a time when you needed prescription medicine but were not able to get it?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

The proportion of Black Americans reporting delaying refilling prescription medications to save money has decreased since 2013 and rates in these access to care barriers were higher among Black Americans compared to White Americans over time.

Despite the improvement in coverage nationally, there are still large disparities in both access to medical care and prescription medicine in Orange County. Twenty-two percent of Black Americans surveyed who have incomes below \$50,000 were not able to get the medical care they needed in the past year compared to 6.2% of those with incomes over \$100,000. Gaps in insurance coverage may be causing

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SDoH Impacting Black Community (continued)

this disparity between Black Americans with different incomes. As such, continued conversation and advocacy around the ACA and access to health care broadly are needed. Likewise, nearly 20% of lower income Black Americans in Orange County were not able to get prescription medicine when they needed it compared to 3.6% of those with incomes over \$100,000.

Air Pollution

Air pollution is an environmental health risk worldwide, but the burden is not shared evenly. [Fine particle matter \(PM2.5\) pollution](#) consists of inhalable solid particles that can penetrate deep into the lungs and can enter the bloodstream, posing risks of cardiovascular, respiratory, and neurological diseases. In the United States, populations of color and those with low income bear a disproportionate burden of health impacts associated with PM2.5 exposure. Further, a variety of epidemiological studies presents strong evidence that historically disadvantaged groups, such as Black and Hispanic communities, are exposed to higher PM2.5 concentrations than White and non-Hispanic populations, contributing to increased risk of PM2.5-related adverse health effects. A study conducted by Industrial Economics Incorporated states that the Black population experiences more than three times as many PM2.5-attributable deaths per 100,000 persons compared to all other races, and Black individuals aged 65+ experience three times as many PM2.5-attributable deaths per capita compared to all other races.

Food Insecurity

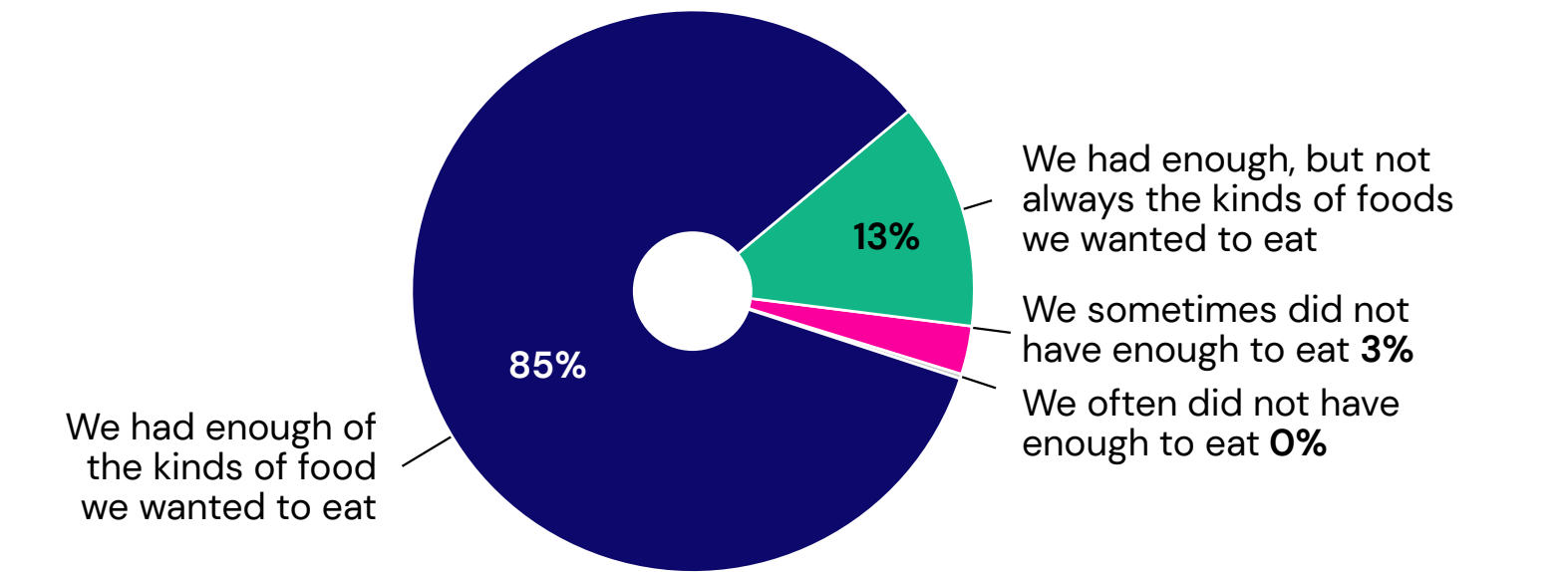
[Feeding America](#) states that Black communities battle hunger at a higher rate than other communities in America, partially due to

discriminatory policies and practices that have led to Black people being more likely to live in poverty and face unemployment. It is important to note that while the United States has an overall poverty rate of 11.4%, the Black community has a poverty rate of 19.5%. Fewer financial resources such as savings and/or property is an indirect factor that can lead and has led to the increase in someone’s likelihood of experiencing hunger. In fact, according to the [USDA](#) in 2021, nearly 20% of Black Americans and 22% of Black children live in a food-insecure household.

Unspoken “[supermarket redlining](#)” in many Black communities means that food is more expensive, choice is limited, and healthy, organic products are harder to come by. As such, it should be no surprise that Black people are almost three times more likely to face hunger than their White counterparts in this [country](#).

In the past month, which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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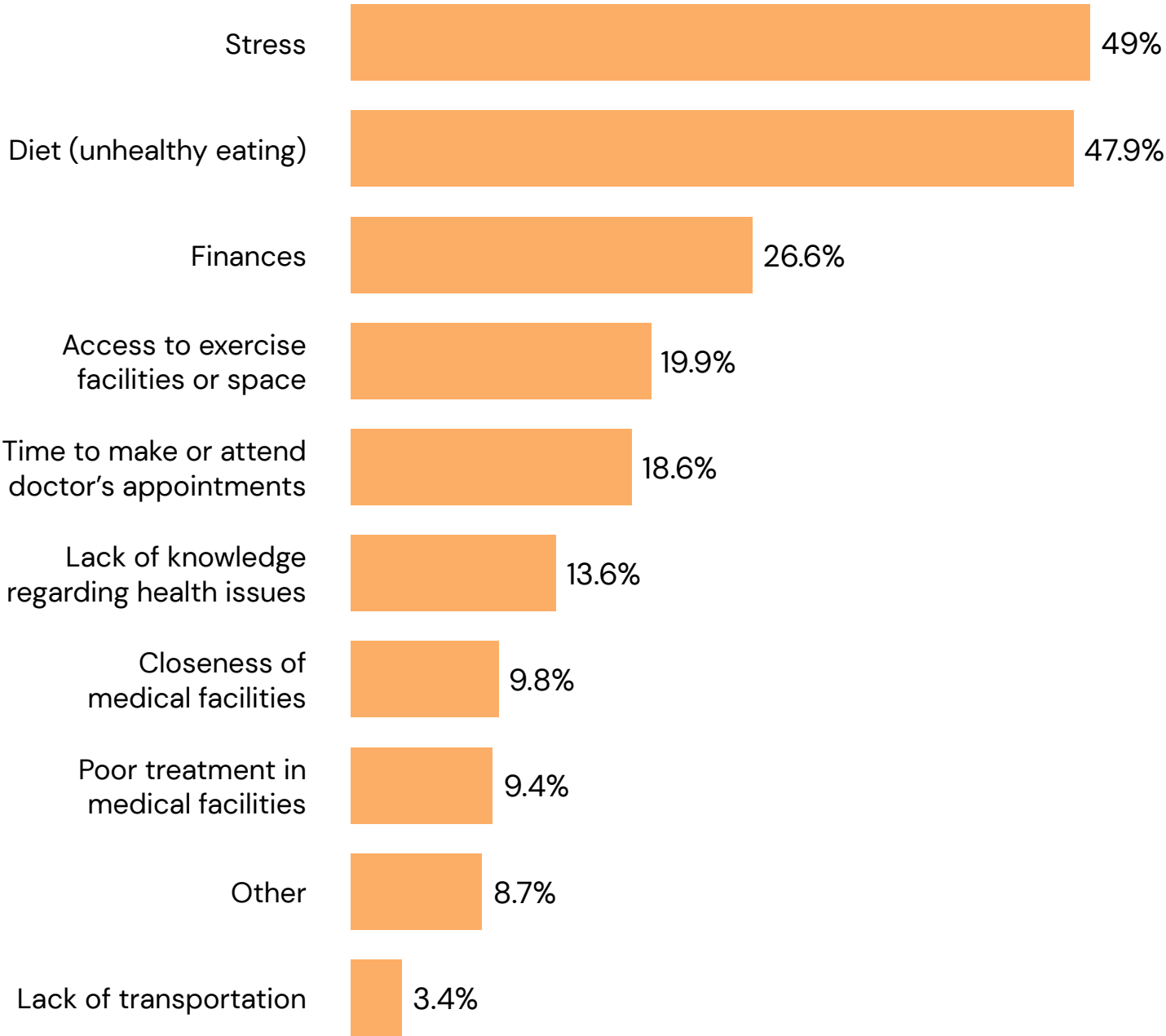
In Orange County, 16% of Black Americans surveyed either were not able to purchase the foods that they wanted or did not have enough food.

A big factor in food insecurity within the Black community in America is the amount of food deserts and food swamps. A food desert is an area without access to fresh foods, that is underserved by food retailers due to limited economic power, and where there

is a lack of public education on what’s healthy, local grown, fresh food and what is unhealthy food. Food swamps are areas where fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, and other sources of cheap, processed food opportunistically move in. Both factors have a negative impact on the health of Black American communities as revealed in the HEAAL Survey, which showed that 47.9% of Black Americans surveyed in Orange County felt that diet and unhealthy eating significantly impacts their health.

Which of the following significantly impacts your health?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

Health Disparities

While much of the attention around African American health disadvantages has recently been on COVID-19 death and vaccination rates, there are still many chronic illnesses and preventable deaths that are directly tied to the inadequate health care Black Americans experience in this country. Access to healthcare and primary care providers is essential to every community as expressed by almost 80% of Black Americans in Orange County who were asked to rank the top three most important factors of a “healthy community.”

When compared to their White counterparts, Black Americans are at a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, HIV/AIDS, asthma, influenza, diabetes, as well as pneumonia, according to the [Office of Minority Health](#). While some of these illnesses are not preventable, some can be reduced in severity with proper screenings, tests, and lifestyle changes. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [states](#) that Black Americans are sometimes suffering through diseases that are typically more common at older ages for other races. This means that young Black Americans are experiencing health concerns and diseases

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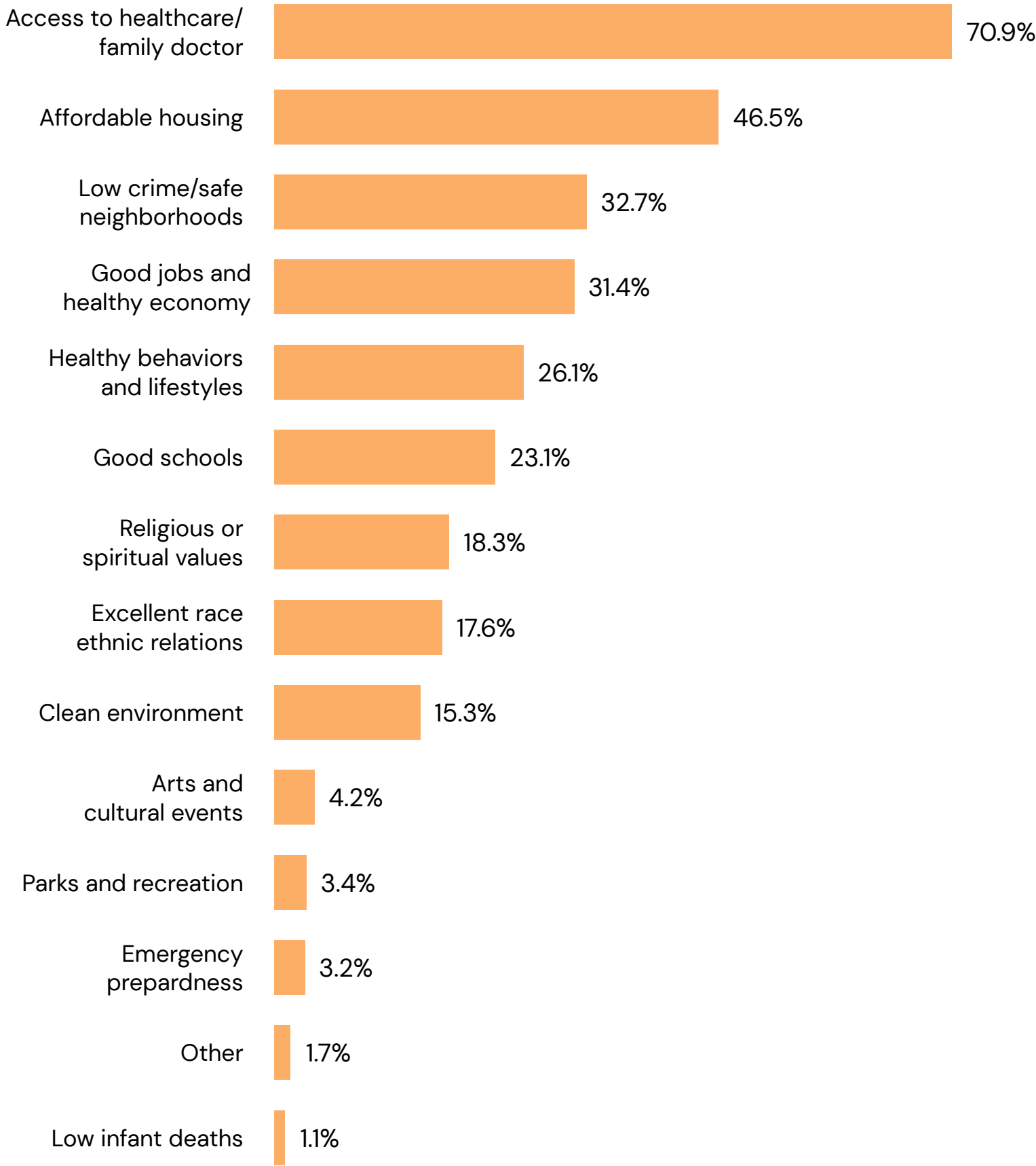
(sometimes chronic) at younger ages, and, therefore, are carrying these health burdens with them for extra years that other races don't experience until years after.

[Pfizer](#) provides an example of this health injustice with high blood pressure. In their study, high blood pressure was first observed among 12% of Black individuals age 18–34. The same was not observed in a similar percentage of White participants until ages 35–49 (10%). In other words, Black participants faced worse health outcomes at a younger age. The same situation can be seen and applied to diabetes being common in 10% of Black individuals aged 35–49 when compared to only 6% of White individuals. In Orange County specifically, 48% of Black Americans surveyed were diagnosed with high blood pressure/hypertension, and 18.2% had diabetes. Obesity/being overweight and allergies were also among the most common health considerations for Black Americans according to the HEAAL Survey.

Some of the underlying factors that have contributed to the health disparities seen in Black communities can include poverty, unemployment, environmental injustice, obesity, smoking, inactive lifestyle, and the cost of seeing a medical provider. Most of the time, individuals do not have control over their environments and instead are forced to live in inadequate conditions and face the consequences. It is important to remember that for communities of color, such as Black Americans, racism is a driving force of the social determinants of health and is a barrier to health equity. Until health equity is truly attainable for minorities such a Black Americans, people of color will continue to experience worse health outcomes, some preventable, and will continue to need assistance and support.

Which do you think are the 3 most important factors in a health community?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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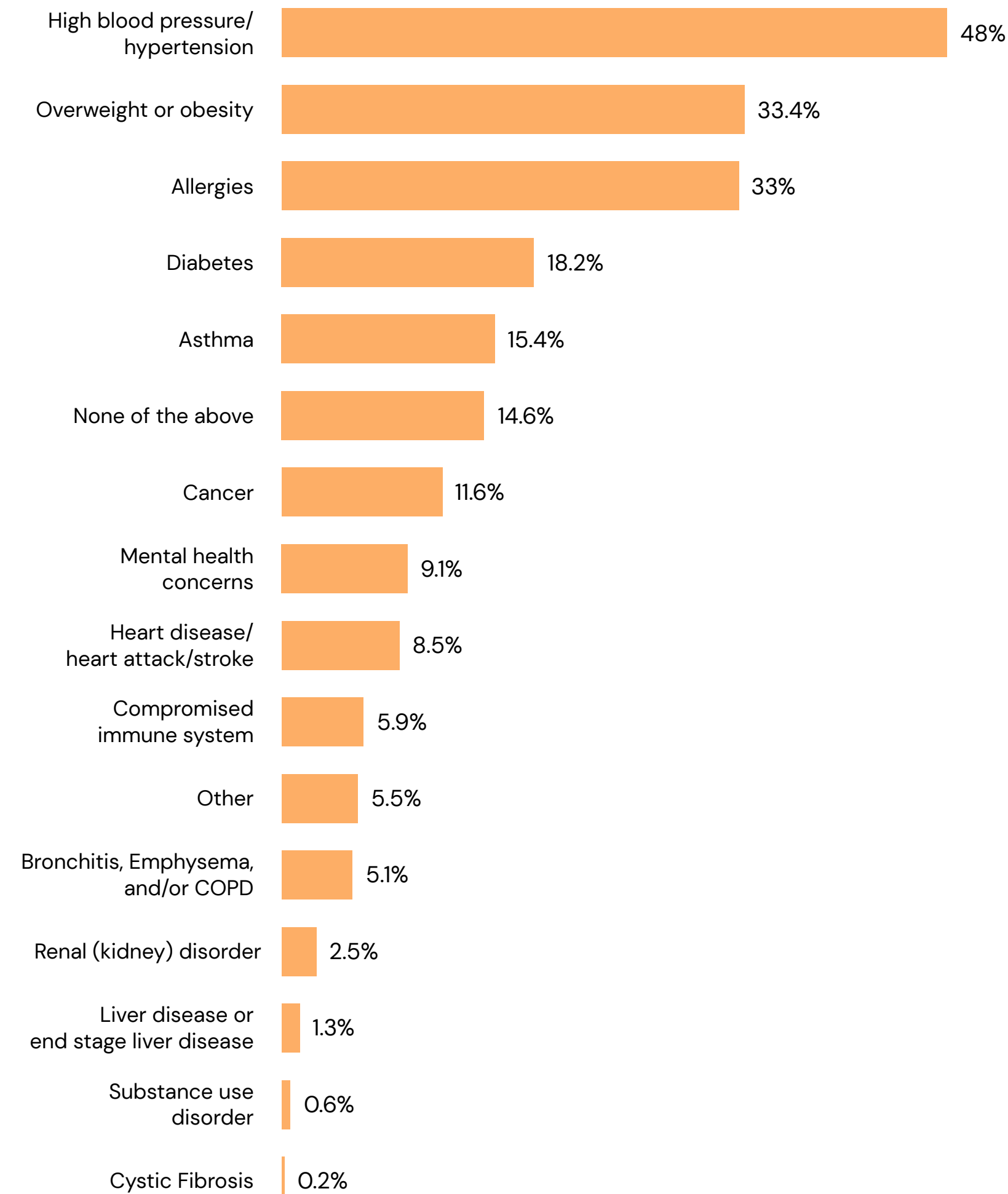
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SDoH Impacting Black Community (continued)

Has a doctor or healthcare provider ever told you that you have any of the following?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

Hate Crimes

In Orange County, Black men and women have been subjected to hate crimes at a rate far greater than their share of the population, according to the recently released [2020 Hate Crime Report](#) by the Orange County Human Relations Commission. In the county, Black people account for 2% of the general population but experienced nearly one-third (33%) of all targeted hate crimes in the year 2020. Since 2003, the Human Rights Commission has reported that Black people have nearly always been targeted more often and/or disproportionately victimized than any other community. [In 2019](#), members of the Black community were victims of 53% of all recorded hate crimes in Orange County.

With the momentum created by the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 and the protests that occurred within the United States, government officials have moved forward with “[comprehensive reparations](#)” created for those “harmed by history of government-sanctioned oppression.” These so-called reparations are meant to address past harms and potential future ones to help eligible Black Californians experience a better tomorrow.

Although this sounds advantageous in theory, there is still no budget on this project since the second report has yet to be released. However, the first report does a successful job at recounting the history of California’s mistreatment of Black Americans, tracing all the way back to the enforcement of fugitive slave laws that required the return of enslaved people who sought freedom in California—a “free state” admitted and approved to the union. With all the wrongdoings that have been inflicted on Black Americans in this country, and specifically in Orange County, it is promising to see legislation moving to right these evident wrongs.

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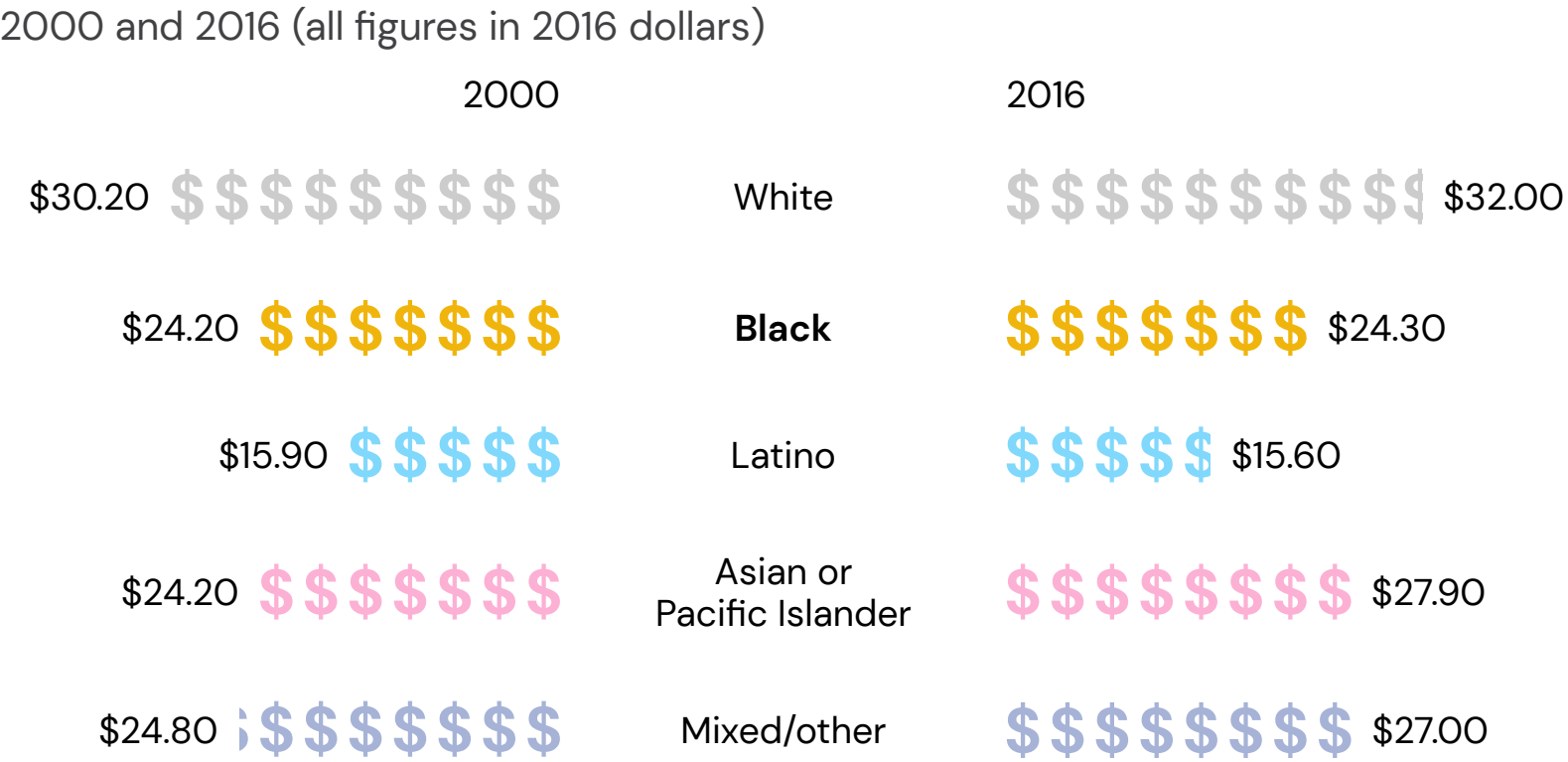
Racial and Gender Pay Gap

Data on race and gender reveals many economic disparities across the United States, and especially in Orange County. According to the National Women’s Law Center, Black women are paid [63 cents](#) to every dollar a White, non-Hispanic male is paid. This adds up to close to a million dollars less over the span of her career. A [study](#) done by the University of Southern California (USC) shows that median hourly wages in Orange County have been stagnant for Black American workers from 2000 to 2016.

The study also shows that Black Americans earn \$9/hour less than their White counterparts in Orange County. Particularly, college-educated women of color earn \$16/hour less than their White, male counterparts. This is reflected in the [2021 Census data](#), which shows that in Orange County, the per capita income of Whites was \$1,361,528, whereas Black Americans had a per capita income of \$57,685.

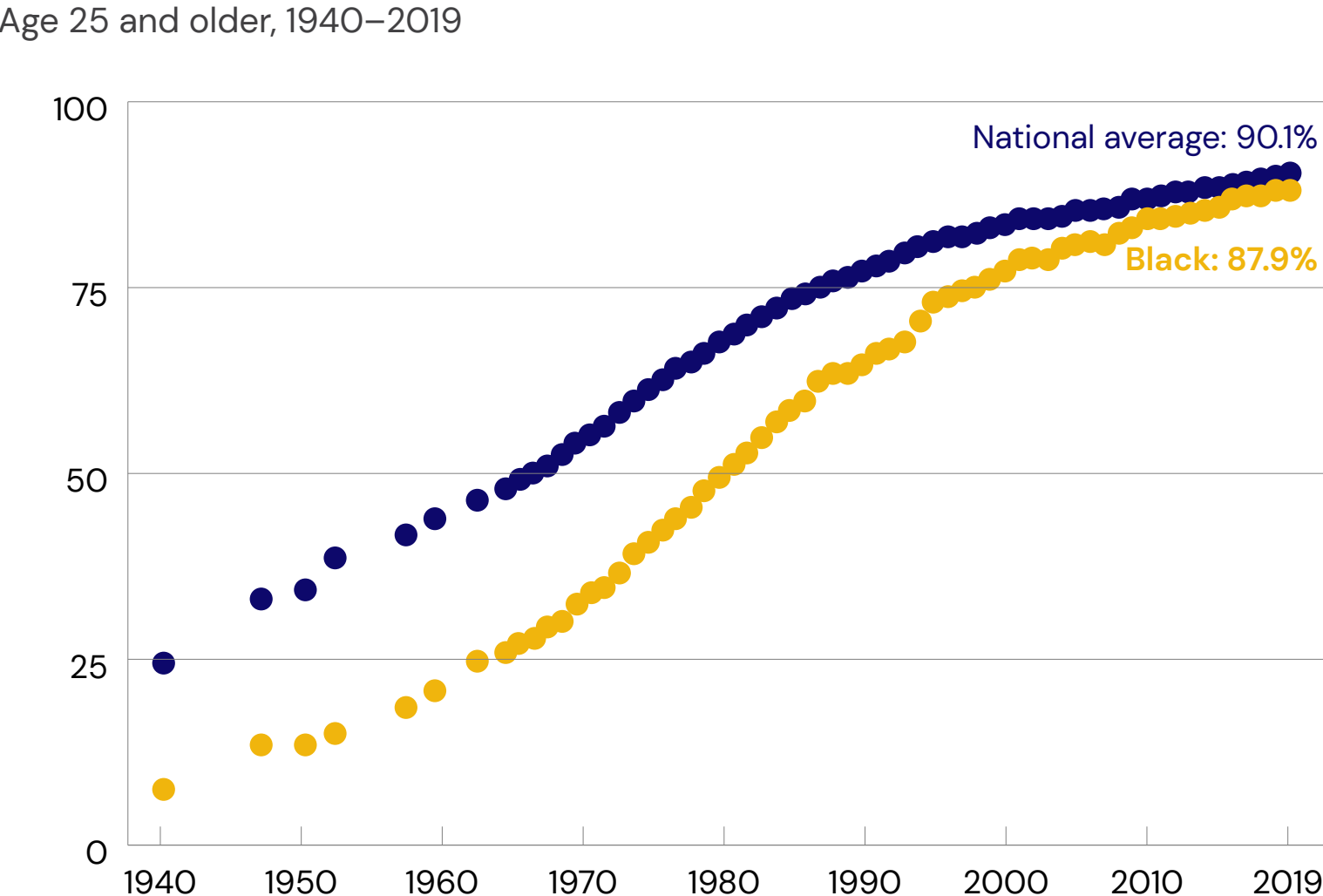
In addition to income disparities, Black Americans also experience discrimination in the workplace. Even though [race and gender discrimination](#) are illegal under both federal and California law, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports that they are two of the most common types of workplace discrimination. Experiences of workplace discrimination include lower pay, verbal abuse, retaliation against reporting abuse, being more frequently tasked with menial labor jobs (compared with White counterparts), mocking accents, and being expected to work overtime with no pay.

Median Hourly Wage by Race/Ethnicity



Source: [University of Southern California](#)

High School Attainment of Black Populations



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Educational Attainment in Orange County

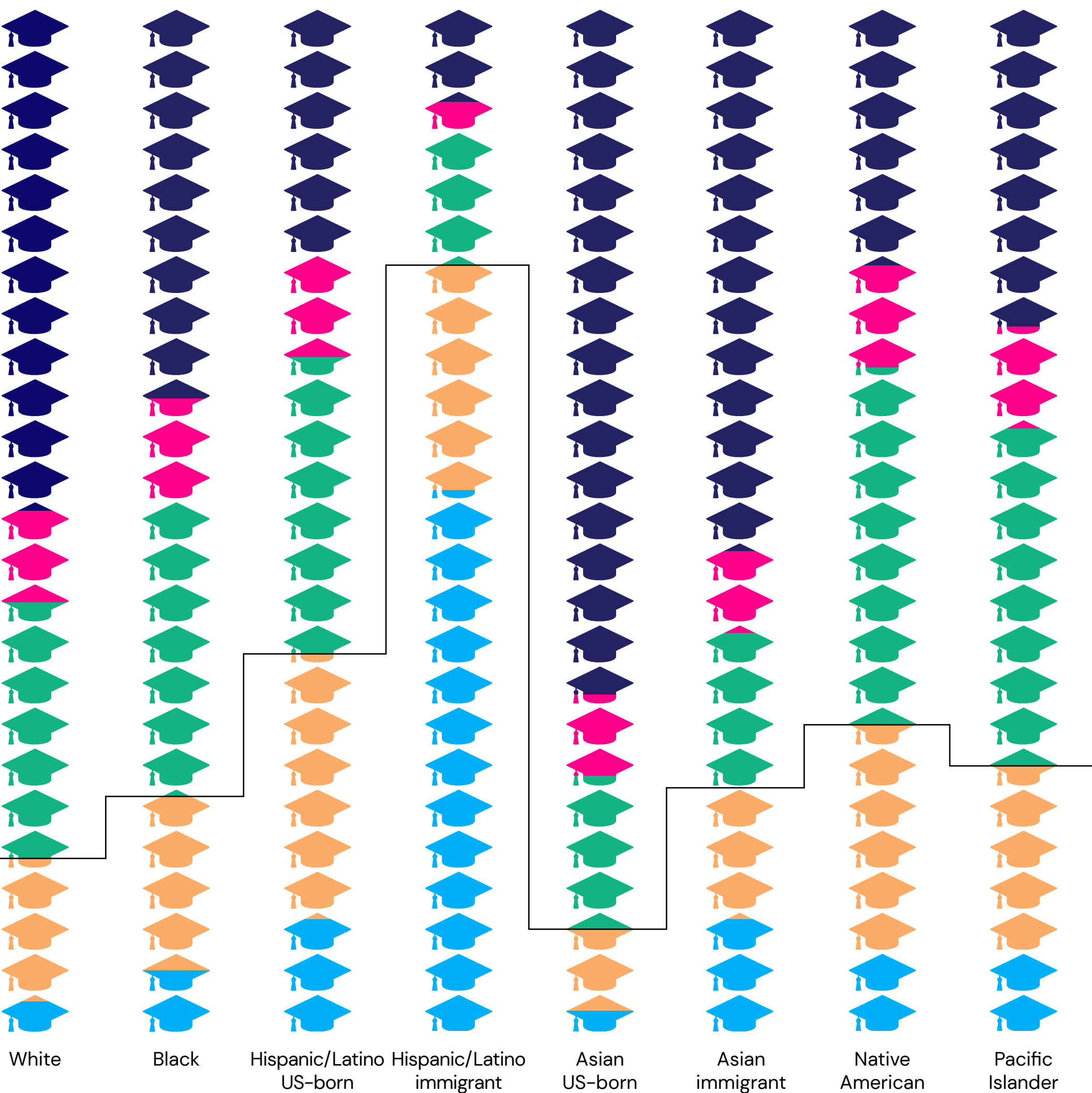
According to the 2021 U.S. Census, 90.3% of the Black Americans in the U.S. who are 25 years and older had at least a high school diploma when compared to 74.2% of non-Hispanic Whites.

When compared to 20.6% of non-Hispanic Whites, 28.1% of Black Americans had earned at lease a bachelor’s degree.

According to the U.S. Census, 88% of Blacks have a high school diploma, and 26% a bachelor’s degree. A major reason for the skyrocketing high school attainment is universal compulsory education. This educational attainment provides a glimpse of future trends.

- BA degree or higher
- Associate’s degree
- Some college
- High school diploma
- Less than HS diploma

Source: [Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 \[dataset\]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2022. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0](#)



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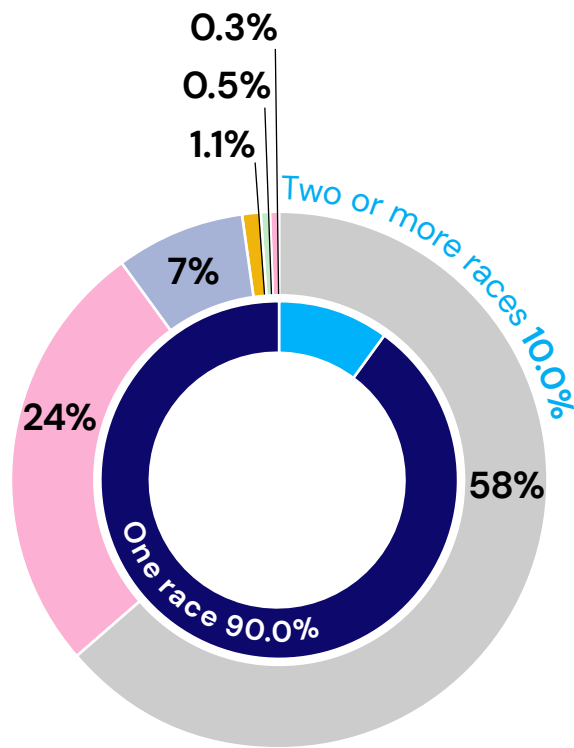
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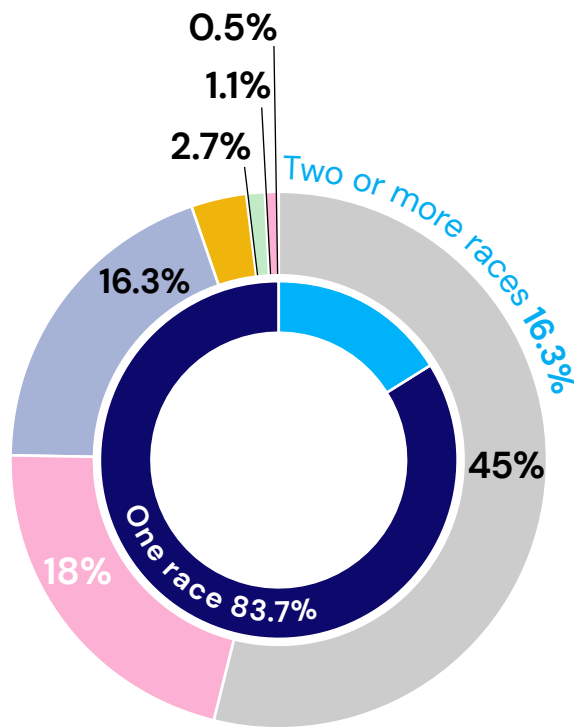
Homeownership in Orange County

By race, 2021

Percent owner-occupied housing units



Percent renter-occupied housing units



White
Black
Asian
AI/AN
NHPI
Other

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Affordable and Safe Housing

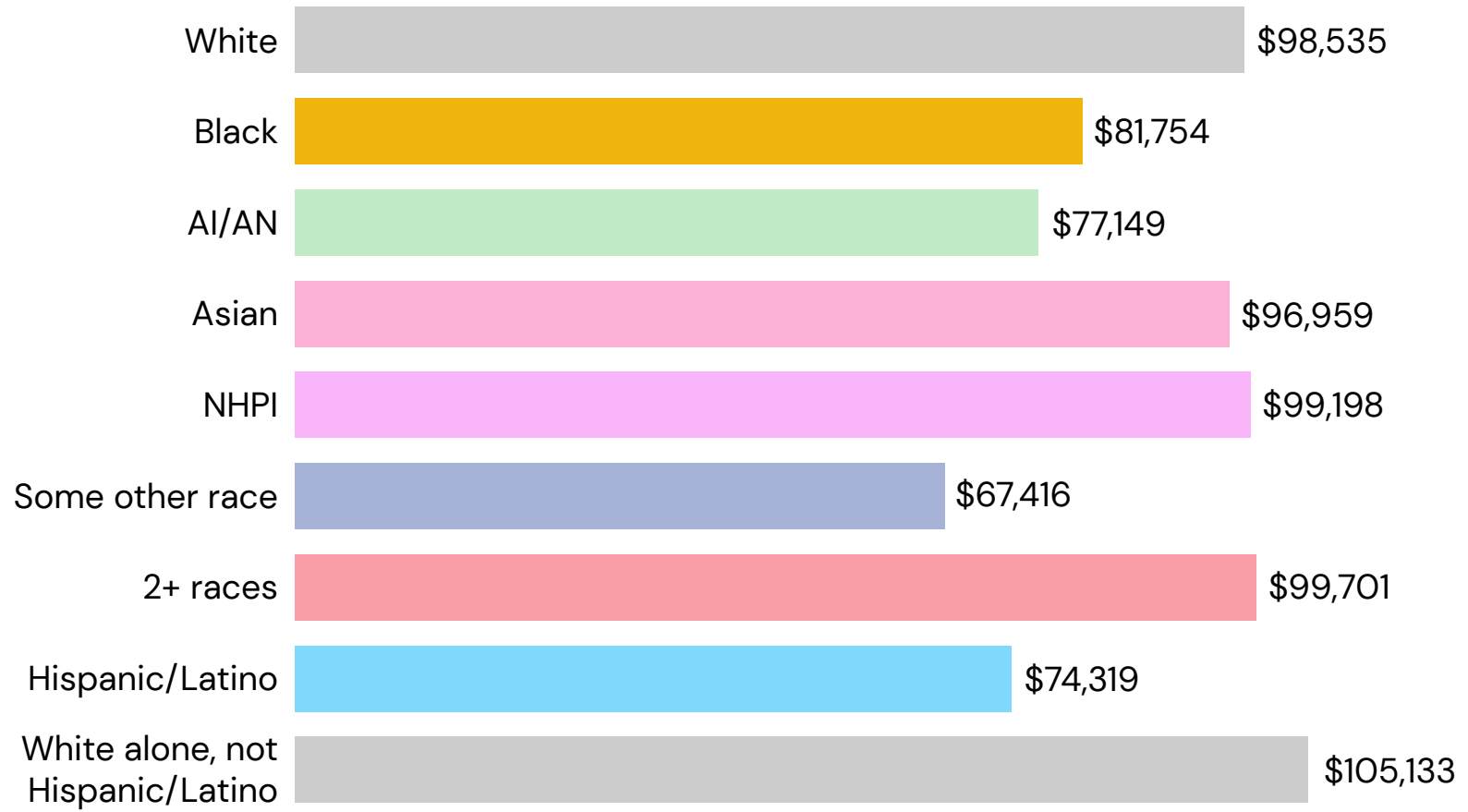
Drivers of the racial wealth gap include family financial support, unemployment, education, and household income. The primary driver, however, is homeownership. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that, as of December 31, 2020, the rate of Black homeownership is 44.1%, whereas the rate of White homeownership is 74.5%. At all income ranges, even at incomes above \$100,000, homeownership rates are lower for Black households than for White households. For Black Americans, then, a high income is less likely to result in high wealth. Lisa Rice, president, and chief executive officer of the National Fair Housing Alliance, argues that housing policy must

specifically cater to Black Americans because racial segregation is “the bedrock of all inequality in America,” and the effects of this residential segregation still manifest today.

The effects of the segregation laws, restrictive covenants, [racial steering](#), and redlining of the past reverberate and shape the financial infrastructure aiding or impeding homeownership today. Banks are foreclosing in affluent Black neighborhoods at higher rates than in low-income, non-African American neighborhoods. Many people of color are also living in credit deserts—areas with low access to mainstream credit—and this phenomenon is reflected in low or absent credit scores among residents of these areas.

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in Orange County

2020



Source: [Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 \[dataset\]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2022. https://doi.org/10.18128/DO10.V12.0](#)

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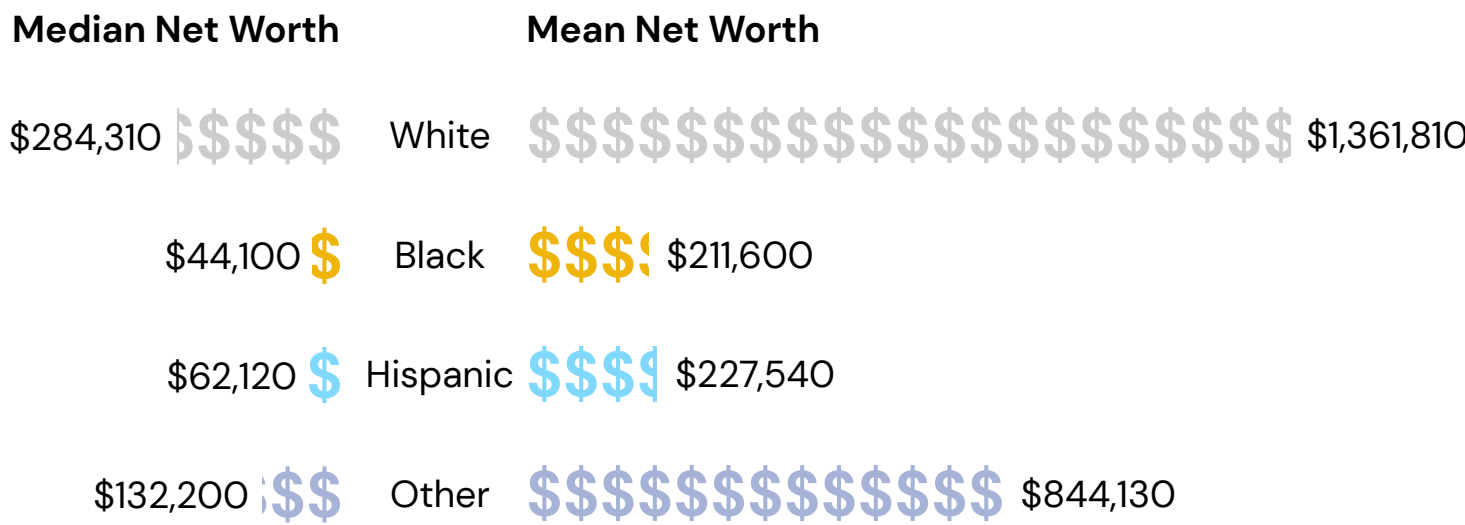
Black Americans continue to face [greater financial and generational barriers](#) to homeownership than White Americans, with a recent article reporting that only 45.1% of Black Americans bought or own their home as of the first quarter of 2021—compared to 73.8% of White Americans.

Per Redfin, 23% of White homeowners made no financial sacrifices to buy their first home, versus 14% of Black homeowners. Meanwhile, 30% of Black respondents took an extra job to afford their first home, versus 22% of White respondents, the study found.

When looking at financials, 21% of Black homeowners earned \$150,000 or more when they bought their first home, versus 11% of White homeowners. And 58% of White homeowners earned less than \$50,000 when they purchased their first home, versus just 34% of Black homeowners.

Net Worth by Race

2019, U.S.



Source: [The Fed – Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances](#)

A 2018 study from the Brookings Institute [found](#) that in the average U.S. metropolitan area, homes in neighborhoods where the share of the population is 50% Black are valued at roughly half the price as homes in neighborhoods with no Black residents. The difference in appraisals has led to a \$156 billion cumulative loss in value nationwide for majority-Black neighborhoods, the study claimed.

Nationwide, Redfin reported that 16% of Black Americans who apply for mortgages are rejected, compared with 7% of White Americans. [Black home buyers](#) are also more frequently turned down due to debt and credit scores than their White counterparts.

In addition to homeownership, finding affordable housing is a major issue in Orange County for Black Americans due to the decades of systemic racism. In the 2023 HEAAL Survey, 25.9% of respondents expressed that affordable or better housing was one of the top services that needed improvement in their neighborhoods.

This is reflective of the housing crisis in Orange County where renters need to earn [\\$51.39](#) an hour, which is more than three times the state’s minimum wage, in order to afford their rent. According to the American Community Survey, [Black Americans](#) are shown to be the most heavily impacted by housing cost burden out of all the ethnic groups.

New data from the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF) show that long-standing and substantial wealth disparities between families in different racial and ethnic groups were little changed since the last survey in 2016; the typical White family has eight times the wealth of the typical Black family and five times the wealth of the typical Hispanic family.

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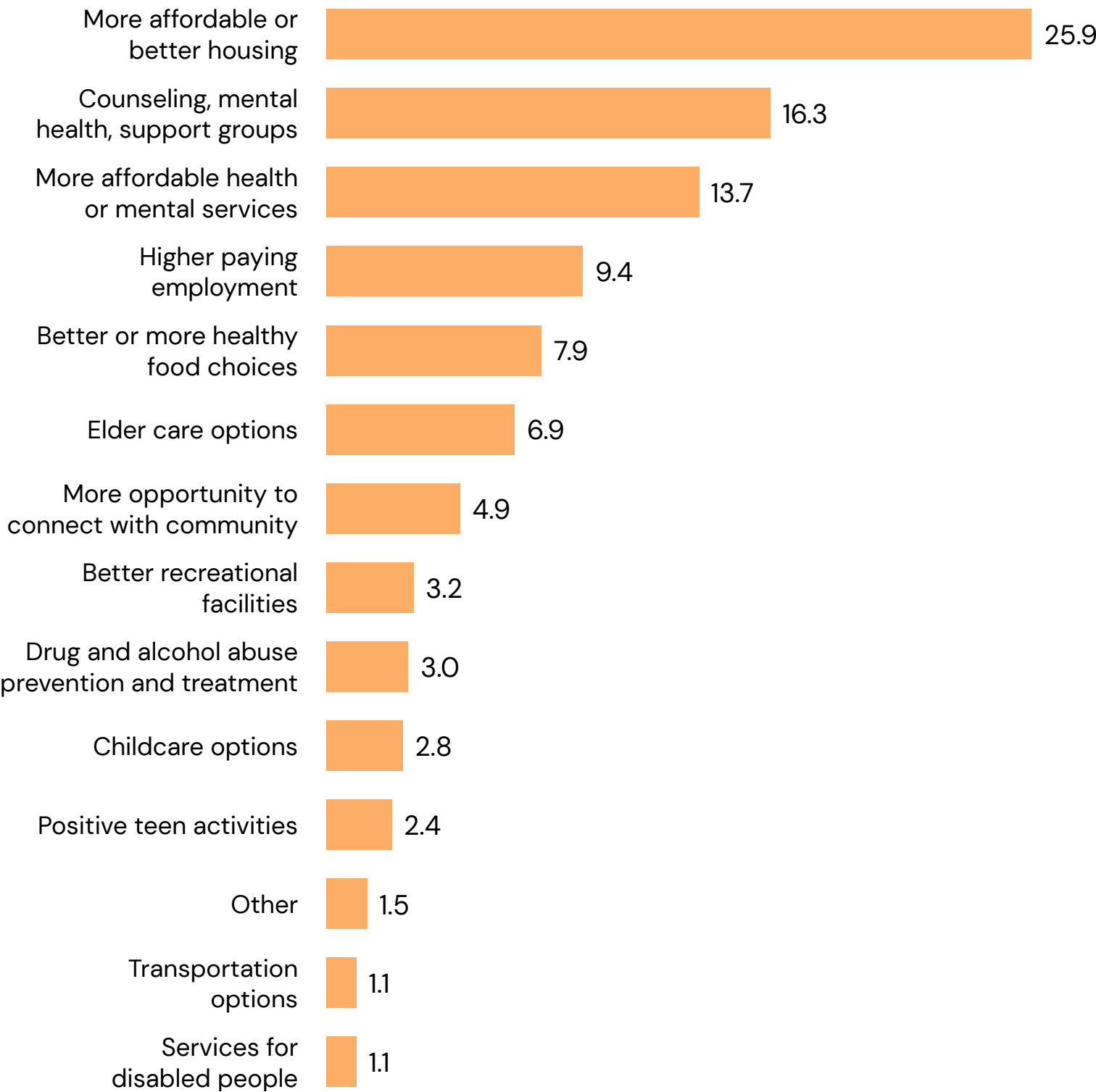
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Built Environment and Social Context

Black Americans often struggle to find stable, safe, and affordable housing. In the 2023 HEAAL Survey, 25.9% of respondents expressed that affordable or better housing was one of the top services that needed improvement in their neighborhoods.

Which of the following services needs the most improvement in your neighborhood/community?

2020



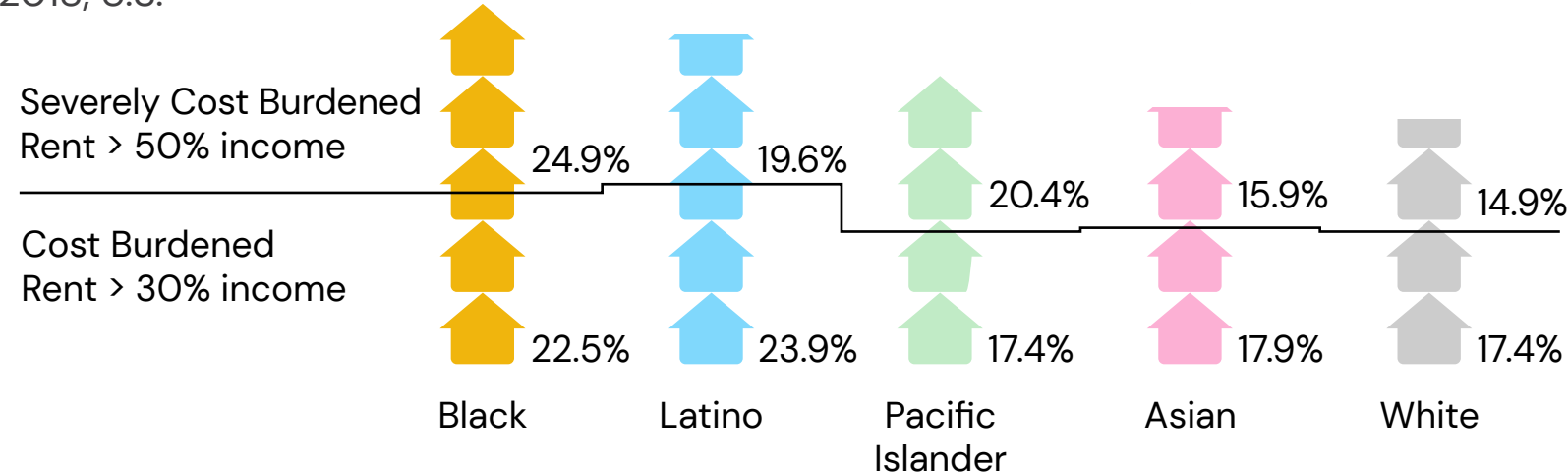
Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

The [California Budget and Policy Center](#) defines someone experiencing housing burden as the percent of owned or rented housing units with cost greater than 30% of household income. The [California Department of Housing and Community Development](#) defines housing overcrowding as the percent of households with more than one occupant per room. While many Americans are still financially recovering from the resulting recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, renter households of color specifically have been battling higher housing cost burdens and substantial financial blows. A study conducted at Harvard University found that Black American renter households in particular are twice as likely as their White renter household counterparts to be behind on housing payments and also twice as likely to report being at risk of eviction. Additionally, the American Community Survey showed that Black Americans were most heavily impacted by housing cost burden out of all the ethnic groups in 2018.

In Orange County specifically, renters need to earn \$51.39 an hour, which is more than three times the state’s minimum wage, in order to afford their rent.

Housing Cost Burden by CA Ethnic Group

2018, U.S.



Source: California Budget and Policy Center, 2018 American Community Survey

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Built Environment and Social Context (continued)

Residential Segregation

According to Ricky Bluthenthal, associate dean for social justice and professor at USC, systemic racism excludes the Black population from educational opportunities, employment opportunities, as well as housing opportunities. Although Black people only consist of around 13% of the American population, they account for 39% of homeless individuals. The current economy has generated more unhoused people from the results of corporations suppressing wages to keep them as low as possible while maintaining high housing costs, specifically seen in Orange County and Los Angeles County.

Air Pollution Exposure in Orange County

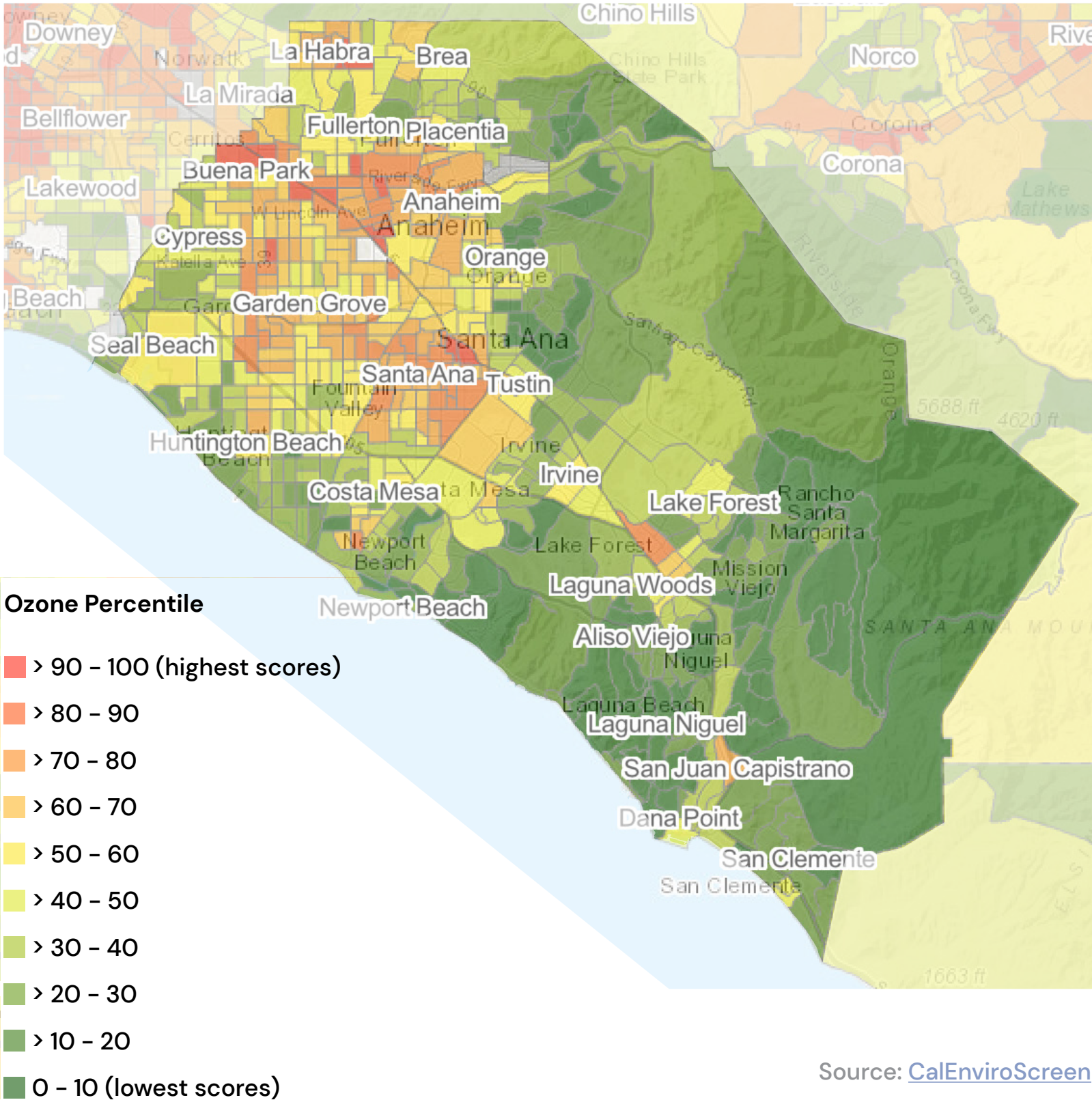
In California, environmental quality has improved over the last few decades. This is seen in improved water quality, reduced air pollution, decrease in pesticide use, continued cleanup of hazardous waste sites, increased recycling, and reduction of solid waste going into landfills. However, pollution reduction and the resulting health and environmental benefits are not uniformly distributed across the state, within a region, or among all population segments. Many communities continue to bear a disproportionate burden of pollution not only from multiple nearby sources but also from pollution in various forms, such as air and water.

Ozone pollution causes adverse health effects including respiratory irritation and worsening of lung disease. Adverse effects of ozone have been studied extensively since the late 1960s, and ongoing exposure to ozone shows inflammation and cell and tissue injury. People with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are considered sensitive to the effects of ozone. Studies also show that long-term ozone exposure affects respiratory and cardiovascular mortality. A 2019 study estimates 13,700 deaths in California in the year 2012 were due to long-term ozone exposure.

Of these deaths, 7,300 were from respiratory causes, and 6,400 were from cardiovascular causes. The CalEnviroScreen 4.0 draft ozone map of Orange County shows high levels of ozone pollution scores in north and central Orange County. In the OC Equity Map, these communities have low Social Progress Index scores.

Ozone Levels by Pollution Score

2021



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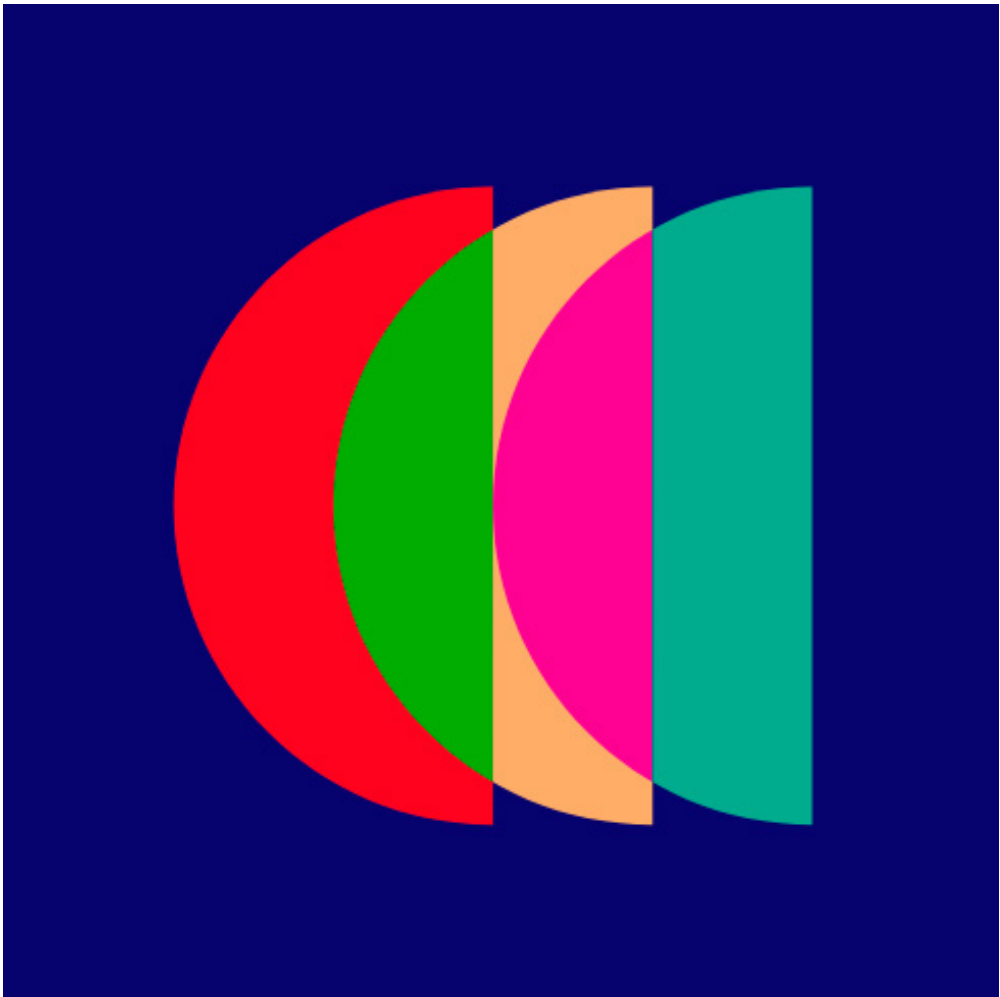
Health is a shared value.
Your involvement will help create a healthier,
more resilient, and equitable Orange County.

Here’s how you can get involved:



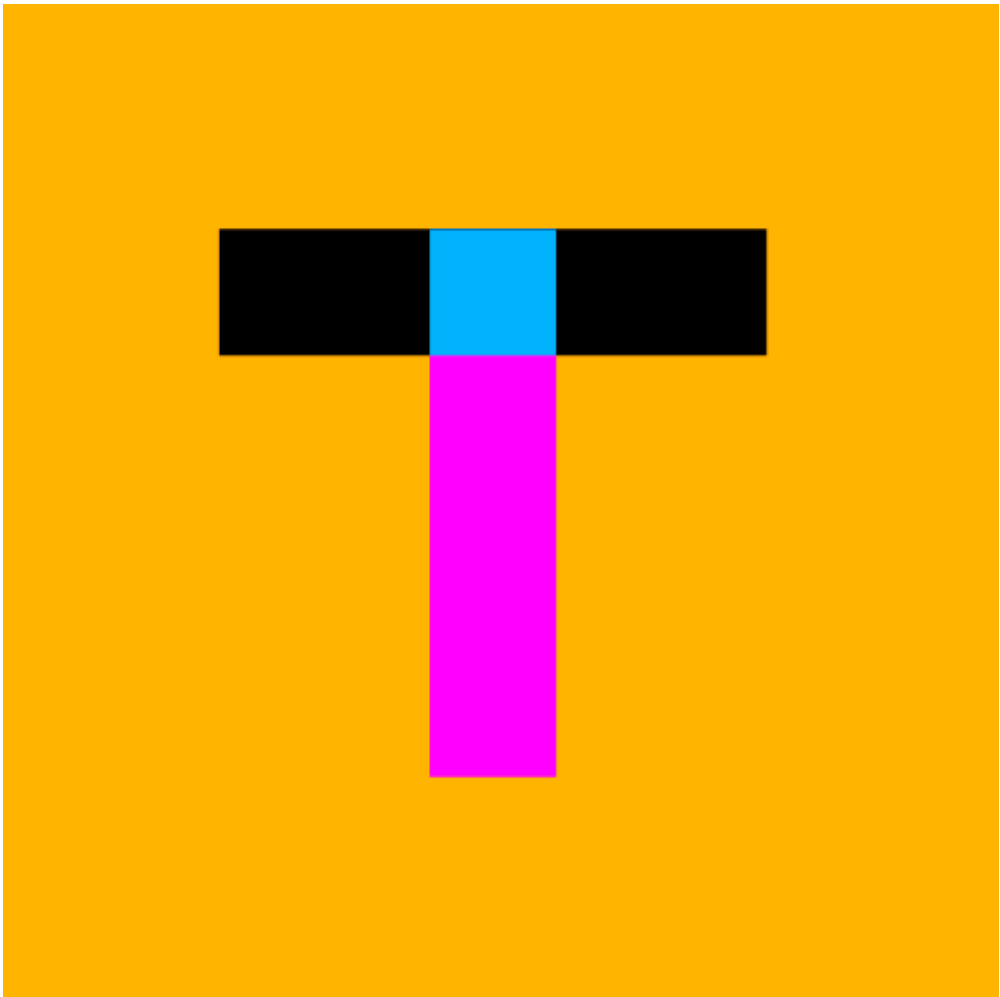
Participate in the EiOC Action
and Learning Community

Learn More



Join a Population Health
Equity Collective

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Make your voice heard at
EiOC Taskforce Meetings

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