

# RACIAL EQUITY & PUBLIC HEALTH

## **What is Racial Equity?**

Racial equity is the condition that will be achieved when racial identity no longer predicts how a person fares in society.

---

- Fatal police violence accounts for approximately eight percent of total homicide deaths each year. On average, unarmed Black adults are approximately 3.5 times more likely to be shot by the police than unarmed white adults (and up to 20 times more likely in some U.S. counties).<sup>9</sup> Individuals who have been victimized by police experience higher rates of PTSD, and the communities where people experience and witness police violence suffer higher rates of depression, anxiety, anger, fear, lack of trust, and other psychosocial problems.<sup>10</sup>
- According to a study by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, racial and ethnic health disparities cost the U.S. economy \$451 billion in 2018 alone.<sup>11</sup>
- Thankfully, many of these worse health outcomes are preventable. For example, research has demonstrated that nearly half of severe maternal morbidity events and maternal deaths are preventable. These unnecessary deaths and outcomes can be prevented through a multi-pronged approach that addresses multiple factors including provider education. Ensuring that providers are educated about racial and ethnic disparities, the importance of shared decision-making, cultural competency and implicit biases are important steps toward addressing – and reducing – disparities in care.<sup>12</sup>

## What Can We Do?

To reduce the burden of racism and achieve racial equity, we need to:

- **Be explicit.** Name the groups impacted by equity initiatives and identify the steps required to advance racial equity policies and eliminate health disparities. Being explicit is key to ensuring communities of color and low-income communities receive the social and economic resources needed to be as healthy as possible. Being explicit includes calling out racism as a contributor to health disparities and driver of the social determinants of health. As of 2023, 262 states, cities and counties had declared racism a public health crisis.<sup>13</sup>

-

■

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## REFERENCES CONTINUED

- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2030. Disparities. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-equity-healthy-people-2030>
- <sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternal-mortality/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> APM Research Lab. The Color of Coronavirus: COVID-19 Deaths by Race and Ethnicity in the U.S. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race>
- <sup>8</sup> Geronimus, Arline T., Hicken, Margaret, Keen, Danya, Bound, John (2006). "Weathering" and Age Patterns of Allostatic Load Scores Among Blacks and Whites in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96(5), 826-833.
- <sup>9</sup> DeVlyder JE, Anglin DM, Bowleg L, Fedina L, Link BG. Police Violence and Public Health. *Annu Rev Clin Psychol*. 2022 May 9;18:527-552. doi: 10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-072720-020644. Epub 2021 Dec 10. PMID: 34890247.
- <sup>10</sup> Berger M, Sarnyai Z (2015). "More than skin deep": stress neurobiology and mental health consequences of racial discrimination. *Stress*, 18:1–10. [PubMed]
- <sup>11</sup> LaVeist, T. A., Pérez-Stable, E. J., Richard, P., Anderson, A., Isaac, L. A., Santiago, R., Okoh, C., Breen, N., Farhat, T., Assenov, A., & Gaskin, D. J. (2023). The economic burden of racial, ethnic, and educational health inequities in the US. *JAMA*, 329(19), 1682-1692. doi:10.1001/jama.2023.5965
- <sup>12</sup> Howell, Elizabeth A. (2018). Reducing Disparities in Severe Maternal Morbidity and Mortality. *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 61(2), 387-399.
- <sup>13</sup> APHA Map of Racism Declarations. <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health/racism-declarations>