

COVID-19 and Diversity: The Emerging Picture in California

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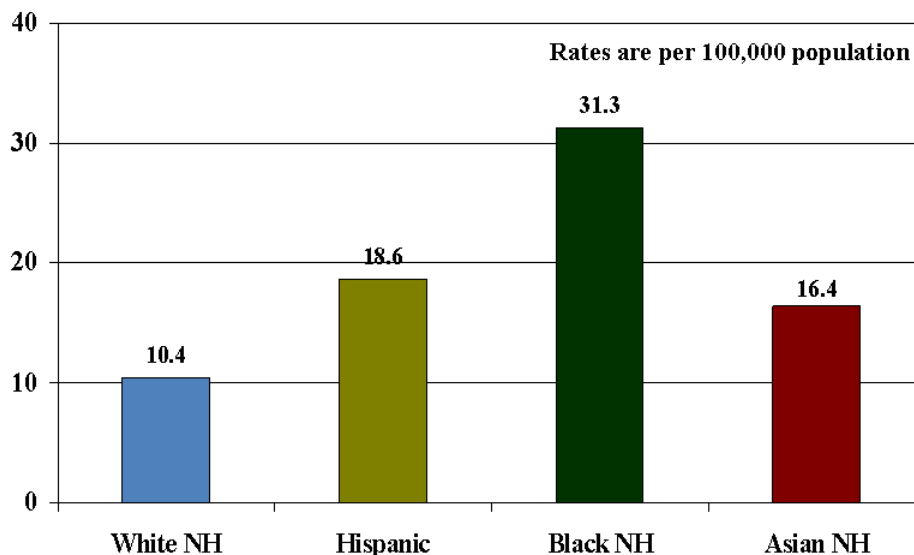
The coronavirus does not discriminate. Like the falling rain, it descends upon everyone, young or old, rich or poor. But there are patterns of who stays dry and who gets drenched during this pandemic.

Some individuals enjoy a protective social umbrella, with full health insurance, good access to health care, and the ability to shelter at home until the storm passes.

Others have far fewer protective umbrellas, with big holes in them, such as little or no health insurance, little or no access to medical care, and essential jobs that require them to stay out in the rain so that others can shelter at home: farmworkers growing and harvesting food, workers in meat-processing plants, truck drivers delivering necessities, and cashiers working within arm's length of hundreds of customers each shift. In California, these essential jobs are often filled by Latinos and other minorities.

Age-specific death rates in California's diverse population provide an emerging pattern of how these social umbrellas are distributed by race/ethnic group. Figure 1 shows these rates per 100,000 population for the age group 65+. Latinos and Asians have close to twice the age-specific death rate of non-Hispanic whites, while African-Americans have more than three times the death rate.

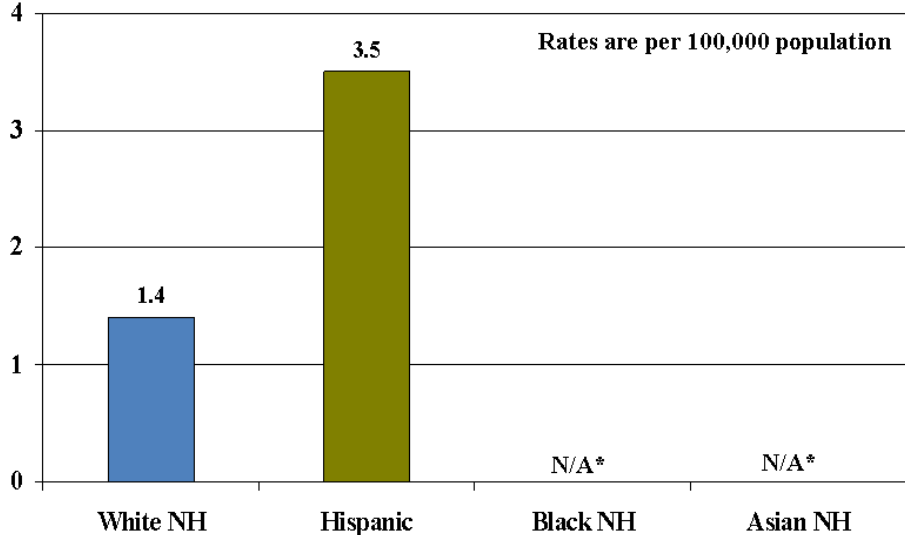
Death Rates of COVID-19 for the 65+ Age Group by Race/Ethnicity for California



These death rates are very preliminary, but they strongly suggest how unevenly distributed protective benefits are among the state’s diverse population. These rates are based on the first data released by the State of California stratified by age-group and race/ethnicity. As more data become available, we will update these figures. We expect that while the specific death rates will change somewhat in future reports, the overall pattern has already emerged and will not change: the social umbrellas that most Latinos, African-Americans, and Asians rely upon in California have huge holes in them, and the result is higher age-specific death rates for these groups, compared to non-Hispanic whites.

Figure 2 shows death rates for ages 50–64. Because the data released thus far record fewer than 30 black and Asian deaths, respectively, in this age group, any rates calculated for these two groups would have been unstable and perhaps misleading. Therefore they have not been included in Figure 2, in the current report. As COVID-19 continues to ravage the state’s populations, these numbers are expected to rise; and we will include them in future reports.

Death Rates of COVID-19 for the 50-64 Age Group by Race/Ethnicity for California



*the number of deaths (n < 30) did not allow for a meaningful calculation.
UCLA CESLAC Tabulations, Deaths: CDPH, 04-20-2020, Population: ACS 2018

Methods. The initial count of deaths from COVID-19 as of April 20, 2020, stratified by race/ethnicity and age group, was released by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Population denominators were tabulated from the 2018 American Community Survey, the latest available.

About CESLAC. Since 1992, the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture (CESLAC) of the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA has provided cutting-edge, fact-based research, education, and public information about Latinos, their health, their history, and their roles in California society and economy.

For more information, or to arrange a telephone interview with the Center’s Director, David E. Hayes-Bautista, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Medicine, please contact Adriana Valdez, at (310) 794-0663 or cesla@ucla.edu.