

Stafford, K., Swanson, E. **AP-NORC poll: Pandemic especially tough on people of color** May 6, 2020 Kat Stafford is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Stafford on Twitter at http://twitter.com/kat__stafford. Swanson reported from Washington. AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

Summary : DETROIT (AP) – People of color have not only been hit harder by the deadly coronavirus than have Americans overall, but they're also bearing the brunt of the pandemic's financial impact, according to a recent survey from the [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). The poll found that 61% of Hispanic Americans say they've experienced some kind of household income loss as a result of the outbreak, including job losses, unpaid leave, pay cuts and fewer scheduled hours. That's compared with 46% of Americans overall. Thirty-seven percent of Latinos and 27% of black Americans say they've been unable to pay at least one type of bill as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. Only 17% of white Americans say the same.

The financial picture is especially grim for Hispanic Americans, while some African Americans face the dual burden of being disproportionately affected by the virus itself while also struggling to pay bills due to the economic fallout.

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"If our policies do not adequately address these shortfalls and the racial disparities in income, wealth, employment and wages, then we're going to see the same pattern that we have seen historically," said Valerie Wilson, director of the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute's program on race, ethnicity and the economy. "It's going to take much longer for these families to recover – if they ever recover economically."

The survey, conducted in mid-April, found that 21% of Hispanics have been unable to make a rent or mortgage payment as a result of the outbreak, while 23% have been unable to pay a credit card bill. That compares with 8% of white Americans in both cases. Black Americans are also slightly more likely than white Americans to have been unable to pay a credit card bill, at 15%.

New Mexico resident Denise Abraham, a retired teacher and librarian, said her 34-year-old son has experienced a loss of income after he quit his restaurant job because he didn't want to potentially expose his family to the virus.

"As a community, I don't see a lot of anger, just a lot of sadness and worry about what's to come," Abraham, a Hispanic woman, said, adding that she's worried about the Navajo Nation and people who are in the country illegally becoming infected. "But what this shows now is

who we really need and who's really doing the labor to carry our economy. It's always been on the shoulders of poor people."

While income losses have hit Americans across the board, layoffs have been especially concentrated among lower income and less educated people. Twenty-eight percent of Americans without college degrees say they've had a layoff in their household, compared with 19% of those with degrees. Milwaukee resident Tamela Andrews was excited to start her new job a few months ago as an inventory specialist, serving some of the big box stores in her community. She and several others at her company were furloughed after the pandemic began. Andrews, a 51-year-old black woman, was able to land a different job, but she's concerned for the future.

"I hope when things do go back to normal maybe the stores will have us back for our other jobs," Andrews said. "It's up in the air though and it's really stressful to experience this."

Along with the financial impact, people of color are also more likely to know someone close to them who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus. The poll found that 12% of Americans say they or a close friend or relative has been diagnosed. Among black Americans, 21% say they or someone close to them has been diagnosed.

A separate [Associated Press analysis](#) of available state and local data shows that nearly one-third of those who have died of COVID-19 are African American, with black people representing about 14% of the population in the areas covered in the analysis.

San Diego resident Cristina Hall, who identifies as Hispanic, said communities of color tend to have a cultural history of multiple generations of families living together. She believes those strong familial ties have put some at risk, as has work in jobs, such as those in the service industry, that require them to interface with the public.

"It's frustrating," Hall, 41, said. "All of these protests all over the United States (to reopen state economies), who do you see? You don't see people of color at those protests. It's a sense of entitlement that they want this economy to open, not so they can necessarily go back to work but so that people of color can go back to work and take care of them."

While the protests have garnered attention, the AP-NORC poll found that [most Americans overwhelmingly support restrictions aimed at containing the virus](#) and are taking personal actions to protect themselves from the coronavirus. Ninety-five percent say they're both washing hands more frequently and staying away from large groups. African Americans are also more likely than either white or Hispanic Americans to say they're wearing masks outside the home, 83% to 64% and 67%, respectively.

"I take it very seriously, because it's an invisible killer," said Michael French, a 62-year-old black man, of St. Paul, Minnesota, who says he wears a mask and gloves everywhere he goes. "But some people won't until it affects them personally and then they'll wake up to the deadliness of this virus." The AP-NORC poll of 1,057 adults was conducted April 16-20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus

or minus 4.0 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later were interviewed online or by phone.