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AAP News

Study: Hispanic, Black, low-income children had highest rates of SARS-CoV-2

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Editor's note: For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <https://www.aapublications.org/news/2020/01/28/coronavirus>.

Children in the Washington, D.C., area who are Black, Hispanic or from low-income households were more likely to test positive for SARS-CoV-2 than children who are White or living in high-income households, a new study found.

Researchers from Children's National Hospital studied children and young adults who were tested at a drive-through/walk-up testing site serving people up to age 22 years with mild symptoms and a physician referral.

From March 21 through April 28, 2020, 1,000 children were tested using nasopharyngeal or throat swabs. About 21% tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, and they had a median age of 11 years, according to "Racial/Ethnic and Socioeconomic Disparities of SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Children," (Goyal MK, et al. *Pediatrics*. Aug. 5, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-009951>).

About 46% of Hispanic children, 30% of Black children, and 7% of White children tested positive. Adjusted odds ratios were 6.3 for Hispanic children and 2.3 for Black children compared to White children.

Looking at children's socioeconomic background, researchers found 9% of those in the highest income quartile tested positive compared to 38% in the lowest quartile. Black and low-income children also reported the highest rates of exposure to someone with SARS-CoV-2.

The findings of racial and socioeconomic differences among children are similar to those that have been found among adults. The researchers state that it was beyond the scope of the study to understand the reasons for the differences in infection rates. They suggest that many factors may have contributed to the disparity, including structural factors that impede physical distancing and increase the risk of exposure, such as living in crowded settings or multigenerational homes. Delay in receiving care because of poor access to health care as well as and experiencing bias and discrimination also may have contributed to the noted disparity in Black and Hispanic families. In addition, the authors cited factors such as parents having jobs that require them to work outside their home and greater reliance on public transportation.

Authors said it is important to understand and address these disparities.

"Future work to ensure equitable allocation of testing and culturally appropriate prevention education may help improve early identification, quarantine, and distribution of resources to reduce community spread of disease," they wrote.

Resources

- [Information from the CDC about COVID-19 for health care professionals](#)
- [Information about COVID-19 from the AAP Red Book](#)
- [Information about COVID-19 from the AAP](#)
- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on coronavirus](#)