



**Title:** COVID-19 and Disparities in Health Amongst the Black Population in Mississippi

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**Abstract:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and amplified the health disparities among ethnic/racial populations that are fueled by complex socioeconomic health determinants and long-standing structural inequities. Consistently, research has shown that ethnic and racial populations are disproportionately affected by the virus. The purpose of this study is to understand how these socioeconomic and health disparities originate by using the state of Mississippi as a case of how minorities affected by COVID-19 across the United States. The state of Mississippi ranks lower than most states in terms of minority health outcomes, poverty levels, health insurance coverage rates, and overall public health outcomes.

The ongoing pandemic has presented a unique opportunity to study the correlation of the spread and effect of COVID-19 among ethnic and racial minority populations. The rapidly changing daily numbers of COVID-19 made it challenging to find a data source that was current and so we compiled our own data set for a more accurate data analysis. A data set for different racial and ethnic minority groups for all the United States and territories, containing pre-COVID-19 and COVID-19 sections was put together. It contains data on population demographics, case counts, death rates and percentage of cases reported by the respective state. Detailed analysis of mortality rates, case trends, and case fatality rates in comparison with the population demographics for racial and ethnic minorities in each state revealed several interesting findings and later also led us to develop a set of research questions for the State of Mississippi.

Mississippi is ranked as the state with the highest prevalence of hypertension and obesity and the state with the second highest prevalence of diabetes. It also has the highest death rate for cardiovascular disease and renal disease, and third highest death rate for lung disease. Mississippi's most prominent underlying health conditions were particularly high for the Black minority population. When investigating further into each health condition, to better understand how having one or more of these conditions would lead an individual to have a higher risk of contracting or transmitting the virus, we discovered that the higher rates of comorbidities were directly related to the social determinants of health such as: education and income gaps, lack of primary care physicians, and limited healthcare access within Mississippi.

Our recommended solutions have been divided into immediate mitigating strategies, short term, and long term strategies in order to reduce the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and increase accessibility and affordability of primary care.