



Racial Justice and Health Equity in Los Angeles

The Public Health Awakened [Los Angeles Chapter](#) stands in solidarity with local Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) who are significantly and disproportionately impacted by ongoing systemic racism, white supremacy, police violence, and heightened community and workplace exposure to COVID-19. All people should benefit from a just society that does not actively harm, neglect, oppress, or brutalize, especially based on one's appearance, race, ethnicity, or nationality. Our collective health in Los Angeles improves when all of us are healthy, safe, liberated, and thriving. Public health works to protect and promote the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of whole communities and the individuals within them.

As public health experts, we envision a society where:

- BIPOC are supported in healing from historical and ongoing pain regardless of their socioeconomic status
- We grow in community together without relying on policing, incarceration, or state surveillance
- Public health workers effectively utilize evidence, expertise, and resources for collective action that demands racial justice and health equity

In Los Angeles, BIPOC experience unjust burdens which contribute directly to health inequities. We know that health inequities do not stem from personal choices and individual behavior, rather they are the result of a variety of social, political, and economic structures that contribute directly — and daily — to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

For example, among college graduates in Los Angeles with a BA or higher, Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander graduates earn \$6/hour less than White counterparts, while Latinx graduates earn \$9 less. And college educated women of color earn \$11/hour less than their White male counterparts.¹ The homeownership rate among White people is 58%, while the rates for Black and Latinx people stands at 34 and 38 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the foreclosure rates are 2.3 times higher for Black people, and 1.9 times higher for Latinx people, than that for White people.²

Black students in Los Angeles County are 9 times more likely to be suspended than Filipino students, the least suspended group.³ Because structural racism is baked into policing, the juvenile felony arrest rate here was 1.5 arrests per 1,000 White youth aged 10-17 years old, 3.4 arrests per 1,000 Hispanic/Latinx youth, and 17.5 arrests per 1,000 Black youth in 2018.⁴

Los Angeles County operates the largest jail system in the nation. We see structural racism at play in the inequities that persist in the jails today: 74% of people arrested here are Black and Latinx. While only 9% of the County's residents are Black, Black people make up 29% of the jail population. Hispanic or Latinx people comprise 52% of the jail population, but only 49% of the greater Countywide population. Only 9% of all women in Los Angeles County are Black, but 33% of all women booked into jail are Black.⁵

¹ Policy Link and USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. [An Equity Profile of the Los Angeles Region](#). 2017.

² Advancement Project, Community Coalition, and LA Voice. [The Case for Justice Reinvestment in Los Angeles County: Resetting Priorities, Resourcing, and Supporting Communities](#). March 11, 2020.

³ Advancement Project. [Race Counts LA County Overview from Race Counts](#).

⁴ KidsData.org [Juvenile Felony Arrest Rate, by Race Ethnicity](#). 2018.

⁵ Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group. [Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration Final Report: Care First, Jails Last](#).

Members of the public can report suspicious activity to the police by phone or online. Audit findings from the LAPD's Inspector General indicated that over 82% of the department's Suspicious Activity Reports were filed on people of color. Overall, there was a 3-to-1 disproportionate impact among the Black community. When examining the reports by gender, the audit found 50% of reports against women were opened on Black women.⁶

Because of these systemic factors (and a myriad more) BIPOC are experiencing worse health outcomes than White people. In Los Angeles County, Black people have a 6.5 year reduction in life expectancy on average compared to White people.⁷ Black women are 4 times more likely to die from pregnancy than non-Black women, and Black babies are 2-3 times more likely to die before their 1st birthday than other babies.⁸ Latinx people are over 2 times more likely to report having trouble accessing medical care compared to White people.⁹ Indigenous people are over 2 times more likely not to report having a regular source of healthcare than White people.¹⁰ The COVID-19 mortality rate is 2.7 times higher for the Hispanic/Latinx population and nearly 2 times higher for the Black population than for the White population.¹¹

Locally, several jurisdictions and organizations have acknowledged racism as a public health crisis or emergency. We view these declarations as invitations to engage policy makers and local leaders about their responsibilities to assure health equity and racial justice. In late June, the Los Angeles City Council declared racism a public health crisis¹² and the County's Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted an anti-racist policy agenda.¹³

We, the members of Public Health Awakend's Los Angeles Chapter, are committed to:

- Using our expertise to improve health equity, demand racial justice, and confront economic issues harming our communities
- Condemning and protesting systemic racism
- Confronting and protesting white supremacy
- Calling out public policies that harm BIPOC and advocating for anti-racist policy reforms
- Supporting racial justice movements actively working to improve local conditions affecting population health
- Listening, learning, reimaging, and co-creating a more just future for all in Los Angeles
- Developing materials and messages that elevate the public health impacts of social design on our collective health

We recognize that Los Angeles benefits from a rich tapestry of social justice organizations and coalitions historically striving to make Los Angeles better, stronger, and more just. We are eager to partner with those who share our values and aims. As we work together to collaboratively address racial justice and achieve health equity in Los Angeles, we will welcome and are open to constructive feedback and accountability for our contributions.

⁶ Stop LAPD Spying Coalition. [Interdepartmental Correspondence Memorandum dated March 12 2013 from the Inspector General](#). March 2013.

⁷ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Center for Health Equity. [A Call to Action: Supporting a Movement for Fair and Just Health Outcomes. Action Plan 2018-2023](#). Jan 31, 2019.

⁸ Los Angeles County African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Initiative. [Quick Facts via AAIMM Homepage](#). 2019.

⁹ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Center for Health Equity. [A Call to Action: Supporting a Movement for Fair and Just Health Outcomes. Action Plan 2018-2023](#). Jan 31, 2019.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, [COVID-19 Daily Data Homepage](#). *Age-Adjusted Death Rates due to COVID-19 per 100k, by race*. August 26, 2020.

¹² [L.A. City Council declares racism a public health crisis](#)

¹³ [Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approves anti-racist policy agenda](#)