



HEALTHIER WORKPLACES | A HEALTHIER WORLD

The Lens of Minority Populations in the Workplace During COVID-19

Guidance Document

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The approach detailed in this outreach document should be applied to meet the needs, across industries, regions, and even business sectors. The objective is to provide all levels of leadership, including management, human resources, inclusion and diversity advocates, and health and safety professionals, a means to develop data-driven decisions that factor in the needs of minority workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no denying the challenge that COVID-19 presents to protecting the health and safety of employees around the world. According to the CDC, long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put some members of racial and ethnic minority groups, especially black and Hispanic, at increased risk of contracting the virus that causes COVID-19 and experiencing severe illness, regardless of individual age as compared to their white, non-Hispanic counterparts.¹

Disparities affecting minority populations can also manifest in the workplace: a disproportionate number of minority workers are employed in facilities where implementing CDC-recommended hazard controls like social distancing and occupancy limits is not an option or are not enforced. The inability to implement CDC recommended controls place minority workers and their communities at an increased risk of exposure as compared to other ethnic groups. Therefore, employers should consider comprehensive hazard controls.

Socioeconomic Concerns

Telecommuting is not an option for a large majority of the minority population. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that Black workers' ability to telework has decreased, with the height percentage of work from home at 23% of the black employed population to roughly 18%. Hispanic workers' telework options have also decreased from

Social Change

Demands for social and racial equity for people of color heightened during the pandemic, with global companies like Coca-Cola, Netflix, Twitter, Nike, Apple, Walmart, and many others committing to furthering the equity efforts. Consequently, the demand for safe work conditions must match the proposed action of companies around the world.

18 % to about 12% since the onset of the pandemic. Conversely, Asian populations have increased from 6% to 35% and white populations have seen heights of 35%, but never dropped below 20% of the employed populations with the infrastructure to work from home.²

Per the CDC, in addition to work status and systemic health conditions, living conditions may increase the likelihood of minorities to be impacted by COVID-19.

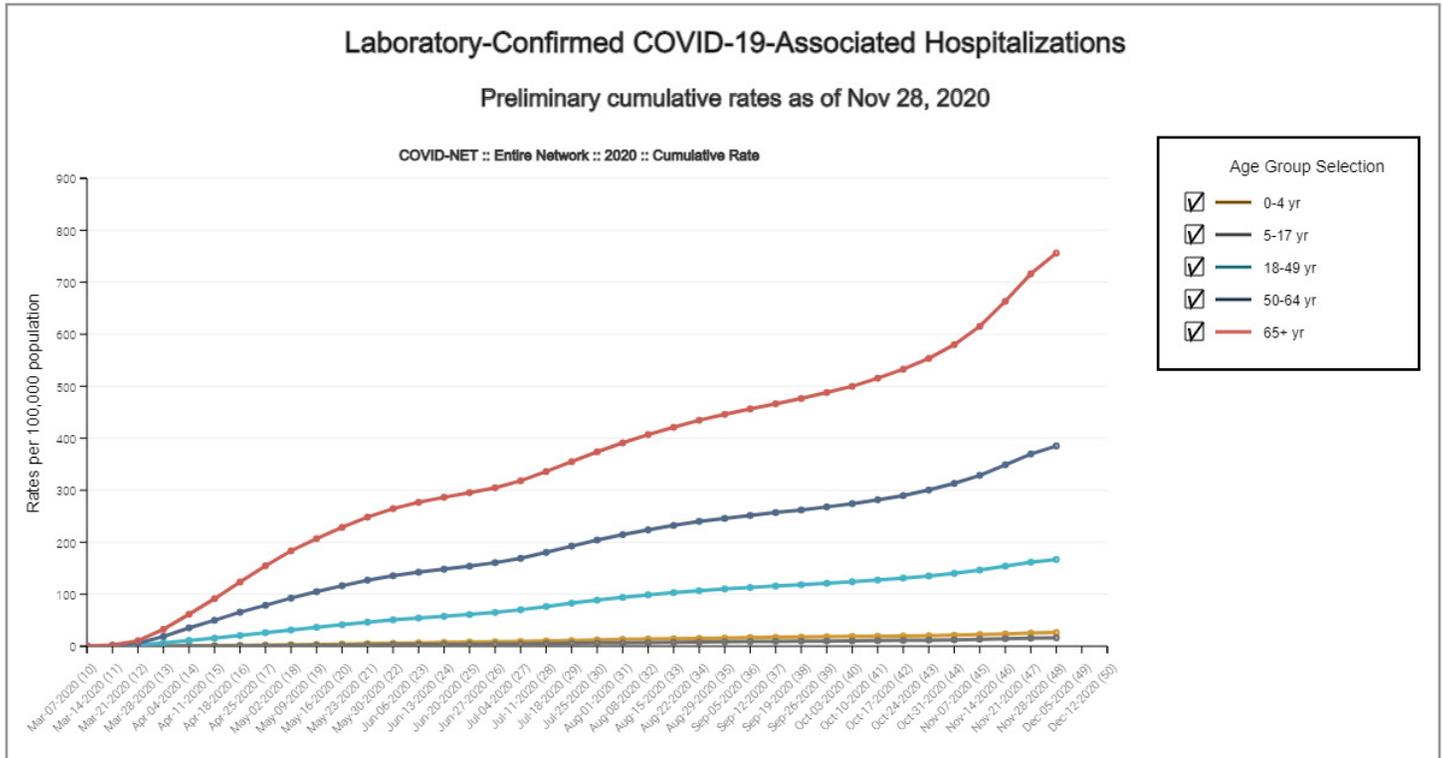
Increased hospitalization rates in ethnic minority groups

- Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native persons have rate approximately 4 times that of non-Hispanic white persons.
- Non-Hispanic black persons have a rate approximately 3.7 times that of non-Hispanic white persons.
- Hispanic or Latino persons have a rate approximately 4.1 times that of non-Hispanic white.

Data source: COVID-NET (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covid-net/purpose-methods.html>, accessed 11/25/2020). Numbers are ratios of age-adjusted rates standardized to the 2000 US standard COVID-NET catchment population.



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Minority workers often live in multigenerational households, and their working outside the home makes it harder to protect older family members from infection. These workers are also more likely to live farther from grocery stores, live in densely populated areas, and rely heavily on public transportation or employer commuter buses.¹ Each of these factors contributes to increasing the volume of COVID-19 infections in this worker population.

Health and Safety Considerations to Protect the Workforce

Recommendations:

- Use national and local public health data to identify the risk of your employee’s populations.

Many states are reporting demographic data on COVID-19 impacts.

- Anticipate potential adverse health effects, at an increased rate, for ethnic minorities if an exposure were to occur.
- Anticipate the need for transportation stipends to limit worker reliance on public transportation.
- Expect increased absenteeism if comprehensive hazard controls are not implemented.

Total Worker Health

It is essential to consider the multitude of mental and emotional stressors that adversely impact minority workers, including instances of COVID-19 related ethnic and racial discrimination. Further, employers



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should consider the heightened anxiety experienced by impacted populations, which may be witnessing firsthand the devastation caused by COVID-19 in their communities and immediate family.

The Total Worker Health approach, pioneered by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), can benefit employers by mitigating employee risk at work, thus reducing risk in the home and community. Employers that actively take steps to reduce risk in the workplace will benefit from a strengthened employer-employee relationship through respect, trust, and integrity.³

Employers should consider partnering with advocacy groups, agencies, and insurance companies that are offering COVID-19 awareness training or critical supplies that ease healthy decision-making at home, which inevitably benefit the workplace. Some examples are:

- “Go-packs” with hand sanitizer, face coverings, and thermometers to measure temperatures before commuting to work or other establishments
- Access to telehealth appointments or on-site, socially distanced medical support

Emotional Intelligence

Race relations and equity can be emotional topics for some employees. One approach is to have discussions and make decisions that are driven by data. These conversations can benefit from implementing the following emotional intelligence strategies.⁴

- Be aware of your personal feelings and biases as well as the potential for elevated emotions on the topic.
- Develop tools like decision trees to help remove bias in the decision-making process.
- Employ a facilitator to ensure fairness in the discussion process.

“Total Worker Health can benefit the employer by mitigating risk to the employee at work, thus reducing the risk in the home and community.”

— Stephen Thompson, University of Maryland
School of Public Health

Call to Action

- Consider minority populations in your workplace when developing COVID-19 risk mitigation and infection control plans.
- Consult occupational health and safety professionals to interpret data and determine similar exposure groups.
- Identify at-risk groups and create measurable controls to minimize impacts of COVID-19 across your organization. Be cognizant of unintentional bias in control implementation.
- Communicate and educate your workforce on relevant data and strategies to reduce COVID-19 transmission.
- Follow return-to-work procedures such as those provided at www.backtoworksafely.org.
- Disseminate data-driven actions to protect workers at all levels of leadership.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>
2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/effects-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic.htm>
3. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>
4. Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2017/02/emotional-intelligence-has-12-elements-which-do-you-need-to-work-on>



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COVID-19 Minority Populations Considerations Checklist

This checklist is intended to be used by business leaders, human resources, diversity and inclusion advocates, health and safety professionals, or other personnel charged with decision-making for the health and safety of the workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Note: If you respond yes more to than 50% of the questions below, your workforce may be disproportionately impacted by COVID-

19. Protections as well as considerations to protect your workforce can be found in the “The Lens of Minority Populations in the Workplace During COVID-19” document published by the American Industrial Hygiene Association.

Fit Criteria		Yes	No	Notes/Recommended Actions
1	Does your workforce primarily work from home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	If yes, this checklist may not apply.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Does your workforce work in a physical location?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Is your workforce or business considered “essential” in regard to COVID-19?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	If impacted by COVID-19, does your workforce have the ability to work from home or to use paid sick leave to cover the 14-day quarantine requirement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5	Do potentially impacted personnel in your workforce earn less than \$30,000 annually?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Do the demographics of your workforce include minority populations (immigrants, Hispanic, Black, Native American, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7	Does your workforce primarily live in densely populated areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Does your workforce primarily use public transportation, carpooling, or shared ride transport as a means to travel to/from worksite?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	Does your state report demographic data (ethnicity, race, gender) in COVID-19 testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10	If yes, do the impacted populations reflect the demographics of your workforce?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11	Does your state report demographic data relate to COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and/or deaths?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12	If yes, do the impacted populations reflect the demographics of your workforce?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



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Use the additional blank spaces below to add your own company, organization, or business-specific questions.

Fit Criteria		Yes	No	Notes/Recommended Actions
13		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Use the spaces below to assign the responsible persons and due dates to follow-up on the notes or recommended actions.

Item No.	Responsible Person(s)	Due Date	Confirm Date	Notes

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