

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 can affect anyone, yet new data show that communities of color are disproportionately impacted by pre-existing, racial/ethnic and economic disparities in light of this pandemic.

A [recent report](#) released by Piedmont Rising showed that Black residents -- and now Hispanic/Latino and Native American residents -- are increasingly bearing the brunt of this crisis.

Public health researchers say the alarming statistics highlight inequalities in resources, health, and access to care. Pervasive health conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease put people at a higher risk of getting seriously ill or dying if they contract COVID-19.

Initial data in North Carolina shows Hispanics account for 12% of the confirmed cases, even though they make up a smaller share of the state's population.

As more information trickles in about the unequal toll the coronavirus pandemic is having on communities of color it is crucial to keep the longstanding layers of racial and ethnic inequality across North Carolina front of mind to ensure every person in our state is protected.

As of April 29th:

Number of Hispanic North Carolinians	994,267
Percent of Total Population	10 percent
Total Confirmed Hispanic Coronavirus Cases	1,066
Percent of Total Confirmed Cases	17 percent
Total Confirmed Hispanic Coronavirus Deaths	7
Percent of Total Coronavirus Deaths	2 percent

Sources: AARP, Data USA, NCDHHS

HISPANIC COMMUNITIES GOING UNDER THE RADAR

Data shows that there are many factors preventing members of the Hispanic community from accessing health care and, as a result, testing. A fear of identifying as ethnically Hispanic has likely downplayed the effect of coronavirus compared to other groups in the state.

Roughly [30 percent](#) of Hispanics in North Carolina do not have health insurance. This number is far higher than any other group in the state.

- Individuals without health insurance are [less likely](#) to seek medical care.

An individual who is uninsured most likely [does not](#) have a primary care physician, which leaves long-term illnesses to go undiagnosed or untreated. During the coronavirus pandemic, that might mean people have either untreated illnesses that could expose them to coronavirus complications or the inability to call a doctor to see if their symptoms are serious.

- Hispanic North Carolinians, many of whom do not have health insurance, are less likely to have access to a doctor who can ensure they're healthy during the pandemic.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#): “If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider immediately.” Individuals who historically do not have access to medical care do not have this option. Until testing becomes more widespread, communities with high rates of uninsured people will continue to face difficulties even identifying potential coronavirus patients.

While North Carolina releases data about confirmed cases and deaths, it has not revealed data about those who are [getting tested](#). We don't currently know if this gap in access to care is impacting the numbers of Hispanic coronavirus patients who are receiving tests.

[News & Observer](#): Experts: Racism, misinformation fuel NC's high coronavirus rate among blacks, Hispanics

- “Kattia Blanco, the health manager at El Centro Hispano, a Triangle-area Latino advocacy nonprofit, said Hispanics often don't disclose their ethnicity when filling out forms, particularly if they're undocumented. Many will list their race — which could be white, black or mixed, among others — but skip ethnicity.”
- “Immigrant health is also affected by a multitude of factors such as language barriers, immigration status, health insurance ineligibility, no broadband access, and widespread misinformation.”

Public health experts have warned that Hispanic communities might be [less willing](#) to seek treatment for coronavirus due to fears that doing so will expose them to immigration authorities.

HISPANIC WORKERS MORE LIKELY TO BE ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE PANDEMIC

For many Latinos in North Carolina, the economic fallout from the pandemic is just as concerning as the health risks, leaving many with little choice but to risk their lives while working on the frontlines.

Exacerbating the disparate access to care across North Carolina, social and economic disparities combined with health disparities have left Hispanic communities less able to protect themselves from getting sick and at a disadvantage when trying to access relief from the federal government.

Hispanic and Latino workers in North Carolina are about [half as likely](#) to be able to work from home as non-Hispanic workers.

- Compared to over 31 percent of workers who identify as non-Hispanic, only 16 percent of Hispanic workers have the option to work from home.

Hispanic workers make up a [large share](#) of workers that have been deemed “essential” throughout the coronavirus pandemic, such as grocery workers, fast-food employees and cleaners.

- Nationwide, Hispanic workers are [disproportionately](#) vulnerable to coronavirus exposure and infection because they are more likely to work lower-wage jobs that require exposure to others.

On April 16th, the [first case](#) of a seasonal farm worker in North Carolina diagnosed with coronavirus was confirmed. A Latino immigrant farmworker with an H-2A visa tested positive in Dunn, North Carolina.

- The federal government has designated farm workers as “[essential](#)” to the U.S. food supply chain during the COVID-19 crisis.
- In 2017, there were roughly [80,000](#) migrant and seasonal farmworkers in North Carolina.
- The H2A migrant farm worker visa supplies [27 percent](#) of all of North Carolina farmworkers.
- North Carolina has the [third largest](#) migrant farm worker population in the country.
- Migrant and seasonal workers [struggle](#) to maintain their health due to the “prohibitive costs of healthcare” and a “shortage of healthcare services” that are affordable and culturally accessible.

UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS/ITIN HOLDERS NOT GETTING RELIEF MONEY

Thousands of residents in North Carolina, undocumented immigrants mostly from Mexico and Central America who pay federal taxes, did not receive any relief money from the CARES Act. *These are many of the individuals who are working “essential” jobs throughout the pandemic, the vast majority of whom do not have health insurance.*

U.S. residents without [Social Security](#) numbers did not receive any relief money from the CARES Act, which provided economic relief to individuals and families across the country.

- Many undocumented immigrants have a Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, which is used to [pay taxes](#) through the Internal Revenue Service regardless of their immigration status.
- Roughly [half](#) of undocumented immigrants have an ITIN and pay federal taxes.
- Across the United States, Latinos make up roughly [three quarters](#) of the undocumented immigrant population.

There are an estimated [321,000](#) undocumented immigrants in North Carolina.

- Most undocumented immigrants in North Carolina have lived within the United States for [10 years or more](#)
- More than [one third](#) of undocumented immigrants in North Carolina have at least one child who is under the age of 18, most of whom are U.S. citizens.
- [83 percent](#) of undocumented immigrants in North Carolina are from Mexico or Central American.
- **An estimated [228,000](#) undocumented immigrants in North Carolina, or 71 percent, do not have health insurance.**

[Spectrum News](#): Millions of Taxpaying Immigrants Won't Receive Stimulus Checks

- “In Mecklenburg County alone, there are 100,000 undocumented immigrants, about 70 percent are living in poverty. They pay taxes with ITINs.”
- “The IRS requires workers to pay taxes regardless of their immigration status. Those without a Social Security number are given an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number or ITIN. Typically, these workers file taxes with W-2 forms, 1099s, or even cash payouts. Regardless of paying taxes, they will not be getting checks because of the way the senate wrote the bill. You must have a social security number to qualify.”

CALL TO ACTION

The stimulus bill doesn't go far enough to protect our frontline workers for the risks they take to care for us during this pandemic. Oversight and additional support are needed to ensure workers and small businesses get the resources they need, not just the large corporations at the top.

Our elected leaders must call for more widespread testing and ensure that every precaution is taken and that all frontline workers have resources to protect themselves on the job and access to care if they get sick.

While the CDC encourages individuals to contact their doctor if they suspect they have contracted coronavirus, the problem is that a staggering number of North Carolinians, including a third of Hispanic residents, do not have health insurance and therefore likely don't have a doctor to call. North Carolina, in addition to expanded testing, our lawmakers need to address a lack of available health insurance through Medicaid expansion.