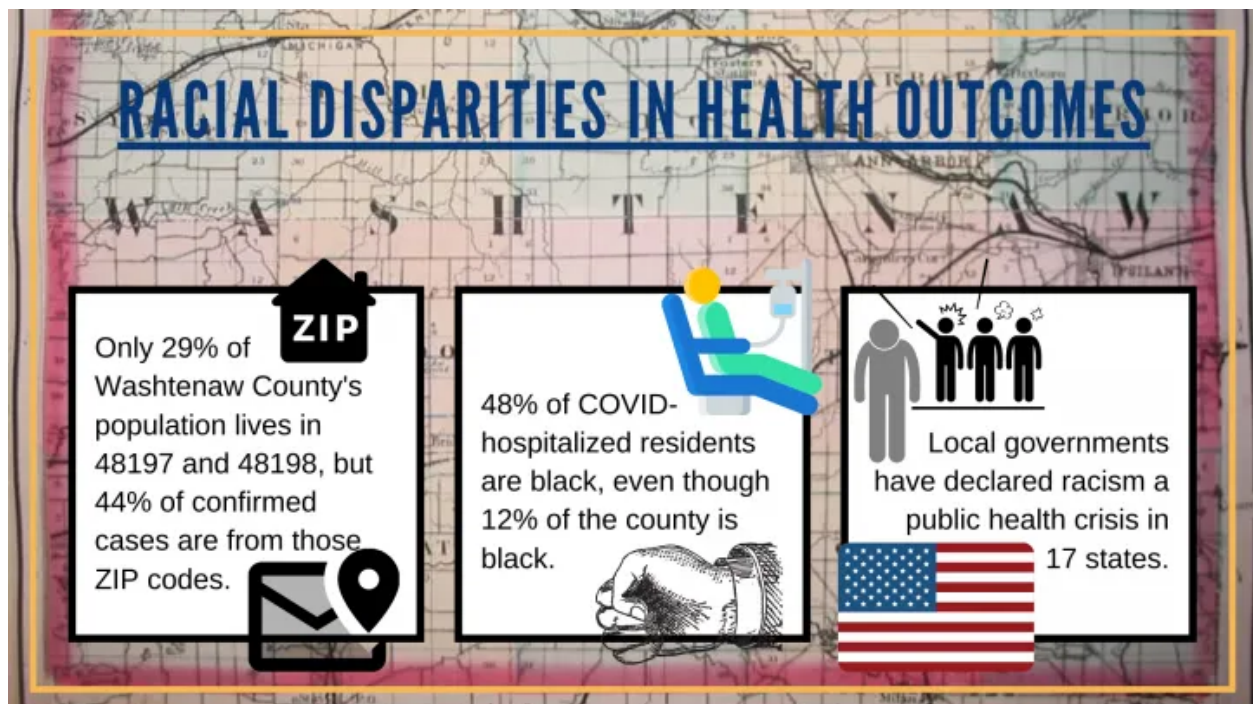


## DAY 10: Racism is a Public Health Crisis

On July 1, 2020, the [Washtenaw County Department of Health declared racism a public health crisis in our community](#). What does this mean? It confirms that racism-- not genetics, not culture, not health behaviors-- is the root cause of disparities that “harms, kills and prevents individuals and communities from living healthy lives,” and commits the Health Department to sharing power, decision-making and resources with community members and communities of color who are most impacted by existing health disparities.



[Source of graphic](#)

According to the NY Times 1619 Project, “[racial health disparities are foundational as democracy itself](#).” Socioeconomic status and institutional racism lead to disparities across living conditions, limit access to quality health care, and contribute to chronic stress. The factors lead to shorter life spans and higher likelihood of adverse health outcomes for people living in poverty and people of color.

Healthcare costs also make up a significant portion of a household’s annual budget, placing additional stress on families that may or may not have insurance and access to quality care. In developing the 2019 [ALICE Report](#), the most significant driver of increases in the Household Survival Budget from 2010 to 2017 was health care costs, including an average 59 percent increase in out-of-pocket costs.

[In Washtenaw County](#), we are seeing how race and income can disproportionality impact individuals' health. Importantly, a study published in the journal Nature illustrates that this is not a result of individual choices, but rather institutional racism. It found that [millions of Black people have been affected by racial bias in health-care algorithms used by many U.S. hospitals](#), resulting in Black people being less likely than white people who were equally sick being referred to programs.

**Did You Know?** In Washtenaw County, 28% of hospitalized COVID-19 patients as of June 3rd were Black, even though they only make up 12% of the county's residents. [The latest County figures](#) show 23% of the deaths and 14% of the total confirmed cases involve Black patients.

## Today's Challenge:

**Option 1:** [Read this Concentrate Magazine article](#), which highlighted the multiple reasons for racialized health disparities in Washtenaw County exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including higher density living areas, service jobs that don't allow working remotely or taking paid time off and more.

**Option 2:** [Watch D. R Williams, a public health sociologist, on the TED stage](#) discuss why race and deep-rooted systemic racism have such a profound impact on health.

**Option 3:** Hear Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones explain social determinants of health through her [analogy of the "cliff of good health"](#) in a video collaboration with the Urban Institute.

**Option 4:** Check out this [Fact Sheet from the American Psychological Association](#) exploring the compounding impact of socioeconomic status and race on health.

**Option 5:** [Listen to this podcast about how unconscious bias becomes dangerous in emergency medical situations](#) where providers are much more likely to default to making decisions based on stereotypes.

**Option 6:** [Read this article to better understand COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among Black Americans](#), which points out that the Tuskegee experiment still looms large within the Black community.

**Option 7:** [Hear the story of Henrietta Lacks](#), an African American woman whose cells have been used to test the effects of radiation and poisons, to study the human genome, to learn more about how viruses work, and played a crucial role in the development of the polio vaccine. It is most important to note that, while Ms. Lacks' cells have been the source of life-saving medical solutions, no consent was obtained to culture her cells, nor were she or her family compensated for their extraction or use.

**Share your reflections** on today's topic on social media using the hashtag **#unitedforequity** and tag **@uwashtenaw**.