

Black, Latino renters far more likely to be facing housing displacement during pandemic

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A new study of the magnitude, pattern and causes of COVID-19's impact on California housing reveals that Blacks and Latinos are more

than twice as likely as whites to be experiencing rent-related hardships.

The analysis by researchers from the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and Ong & Associates, in coordination with the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy, relies on the U.S. Census Bureau's weekly Household Pulse Survey, a multiagency effort to collect information on the social and economic effects of COVID-19 on Americans. The research findings are based on pooling a 10-week sample of more than 22,000 adults in California for the period from April 23 to July 7.

During the pandemic, workers, families, businesses and communities have experienced enormous financial difficulties, and the new study estimates that more than 1.9 million adults in California were unable to pay their rent on time in early July. The finding that Blacks and Latinos are particularly vulnerable echoes previous analyses showing that minority renters are more likely to be suffering economically during the pandemic.

"These systematic racial or ethnoracial disparities are the product of systemic inequality," UCLA Luskin research professor Paul Ong writes in the study. "People of color, low-income individuals, and those with less education and skills are most at risk."

An analysis of the survey responses shows that people of color are disproportionately more concentrated in the lower-income and lower-education brackets, and they entered the crisis with fewer financial and human capital resources. Those people of color who lost their jobs or suffered a significant earnings loss during the pandemic were therefore far more likely to fall behind on rent.

When the researchers looked closely at who was unable to pay rent during the period of study, they found that 23% were Black and 20%

were Latino—more than double the 9% for both whites and Asians.

In her foreword to the study, UCLA urban planning professor Ananya Roy, the director of the Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy, writes, "An especially important finding of the report is that across socioeconomic status categories, Black and Latinx households are more likely to be unable to pay rent compared to non-Hispanic whites and Asian Americans, a stark reminder of the entrenched [racial disparities](#) that are being rearticulated and amplified by the present crisis."

The researchers delved deeper into the data to compare the experiences of various ethnic and [racial groups](#) based on demographic characteristics such as level of education. They found that Blacks and Latinos with some college education had higher rates of nonpayment of rent than whites and Asian Americans with similar educations. Racial disparities were evident even when the researchers focused on employment and earnings categories related to COVID-19.

"In other words," Ong writes, "the pattern indicates that [racial inequality](#) is not due simply to class differences."

Many experts believe this situation will lead to a wave of evictions in coming months unless governments take steps to protect people who have fallen behind on rent during the crisis. This includes extending the state's eviction moratorium, continuing supplemental employment benefits and providing financial assistance to offset accumulated [rent](#) debt.

More information: Paul M. Ong, Systemic Racial Inequality and the COVID-19 Renter Crisis. (2020). [challengeinequality.luskin.ucl...id-19-renter-crisis/](#)

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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