

# Study reveals underreporting of domestic violence in Black communities during Chicago's stay-at-home order

September 3 2021, by Kat Carlton

---

As resources for people experiencing domestic violence in Chicago's South Side dwindled during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic stay-at-home order, so did reporting of violence within the home, according to new research published in *JAMA Network Open*.

While it's likely that cases of intimate partner violence, along with other types of violence in the home, did not actually decrease, researchers found that Black communities reported fewer cases of violence to [police](#). In contrast, there was no significant change in reporting among White majority neighborhoods on Chicago's North Side.

"Recently, nationwide awareness of police brutality against communities of color increased," said study first author and third-year University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine student Louisa Baidoo. "We hypothesize that an increased reticence of Black communities to call the police, combined with a stark reduction of resources to get help, led to this underreporting of domestic violence."

According to the researchers, domestic violence tends to increase during times of stress. Scholars theorize it may be linked to negative coping mechanisms. This seems especially likely given the context of the pandemic, when more people are experiencing prolonged contact with abusers alongside financial stressors. This is occurring as emergency and community resources have been overwhelmed.

"When we started this, we expected to see reporting of domestic violence increase," said study senior author and UChicago Medicine Assistant Professor of Medicine Elizabeth Tung, MD, MS. "Instead, we saw this paradoxical drop in reporting in Black communities. Unfortunately, we realized it made a lot of sense given the current reality of policing and mistrust in communities of color."

According to Tung, underreporting of domestic violence already existed before the pandemic. Lack of legal support, fear of escalation, and stigma all contribute to the underreporting of cases. That makes [domestic violence](#) particularly difficult to track. But the team did not expect to see the racial disparity in underreporting widen to the extent that it did, with a 10-fold drop in police reporting for Black communities relative to White communities.

The team looked at six months of police data before and following Chicago's March 2020 stay-at-home order. Domestic [violence](#), which has been a public health concern during the pandemic and beyond, includes any physical, sexual, psychological or other [violent behavior](#) perpetrated by a family member, partner or other household resident. Support and resources from the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence can be obtained anytime from 800-799-SAFE or [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org).

The study, "Domestic Violence Reporting and Resources During the 2020 COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order in Chicago, Illinois," was published September 2, 2021 in *JAMA Network Open*.

**More information:** Louisa Baidoo et al, Domestic Violence Police Reporting and Resources During the 2020 COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Order in Chicago, Illinois, *JAMA Network Open* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.22260](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.22260)

Provided by University of Chicago Medical Center

Citation: Study reveals underreporting of domestic violence in Black communities during Chicago's stay-at-home order (2021, September 3) retrieved 5 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-09-reveals-underreporting-domestic-violence-black.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.