

COVID-19: A barometer for social justice in New York City

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In an editorial for the *American Journal of Public Health*, faculty from the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH) led by Dean Ayman El-Mohandes highlight the long-standing public health-related inequities among people of color in the United States—which have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—and call upon New York City lawmakers to put forth policies to achieve a more equitable distribution of basic necessities such as employment, food, health care, housing, and education.

The authors discuss the COVID-19 tracking survey conducted by CUNY SPH and Emerson Polling between March and May 2020, which revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic fallout had a particularly deleterious effect on access to [health care](#), employment, housing, food, and education for Black and Latinx New Yorkers. This disparate effect could have been avoided, they say, if city lawmakers had addressed the widening racial/ethnic gaps in income, health care, and food access before the

pandemic as well as the risk that they will continue to undermine health equity after the pandemic ends.

"In our opinion, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of addressing these disparities immediately; otherwise, the gaps will undoubtedly widen further, even beyond where they stood before the pandemic," the researchers warn.

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, the authors conclude, city lawmakers should embrace the data and rely on proven programs that address these growing disparities with holistic, cross-sectoral, community-based strategies that focus on the interconnectedness of health, social, and economic risks that confront our most vulnerable communities.

More information: Ayman El-Mohandes et al, COVID-19: A Barometer for Social Justice in New York City, *American Journal of Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2020.305939](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305939)

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