



NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER COVID-19 NEEDS ASSESSMENT Executive Summary May 26, 2021

The AA & NH/PI COVID-19 Needs Assessment Study, conducted by the Pacific Islander Center on Primary Care Excellence's Pacific Islander COVID-19 Response Team and the Asian American Psychological Association, examines different facets of Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AA & NH/PI) experiences during the pandemic, including mental health, discrimination, health and health care access, economic and housing impact of COVID-19, food security, and education. This project is part of a larger multi-racial research study that is supported by the National Urban League, a historic civil rights and advocacy organization with 90 affiliates in 300 communities across the country. The full COVID-19 Communities of Color Needs Assessment Phase 1 report, inclusive of this study and its full report, will be available on the National Urban League's [website](#) in June 2021.

Researchers prioritized study accessibility and community engagement. Since language is a key facet in AA and NH/PI communities, the survey was translated from English into the following languages: Chamoru/Chamorro, Marshallese, Samoan, and Tongan, along with Bangla, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Hindi, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese. We also worked extensively with different national and community organizations to gather input on the survey design and content, to ensure that the data can be useful and usable for policy and programmatic purposes, and to facilitate the recruitment of participants. The study was conducted January 18-April 9, 2021, with 1,262 NH/PI adults (18 years and older).¹ Sample demographics and methodology can be found on our [website](#) and in the full report.

KEY FINDINGS ON THE NEEDS AND IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON NATIVE HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

1. Economic Impact

In our study, financial hardship was a primary source of stress among NH/PIs. The economic impact of COVID-19 can also highlight pandemic specific concerns or stressors that have been worsened during COVID-19.

- Almost 62% had someone in their household lose employment income since the start of the pandemic with 29% expecting additional loss of employment income in the next four weeks.
 - More than 2 out of 3 Native Hawaiian and Marshallese respondents reported losing employment income, followed by 3 out of 5 Samoan and multiethnic respondents reporting lost income.
 - Income loss was most significant among those with an annual household income less than \$50,000.
- More than half (53%) of NH/PIs reported financial concerns to be one of their greatest sources of stress during the pandemic.

2. Healthcare Access

Access to health care resources and being able to access care in a timely manner are two important factors that could mitigate the transmission of COVID-19, the severity of COVID-19 symptoms, and worsening of chronic conditions. Overall, NH/PIs found it more difficult to see a healthcare provider during the pandemic compared to before the spread of COVID-19.

- Two-thirds (68%) reported difficulty accessing a health care provider during the pandemic, compared to 33% pre-pandemic.
- The main ways in which COVID-19 impacted health care access were through changes from in-person appointments to phone or online visits (29%) and missing healthcare appointments due to concerns about entering a healthcare provider's office (20%).

¹ Our executive summary of findings from Asian American respondents can be found [here](#).

3. Mental Health

Pre-existing structural inequities coupled with pandemic-related stressors have contributed to an unprecedented increase in mental health needs among Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders.

- Nearly 4 in 10 of NH/PI respondents (38%) stated they had either depression or anxiety symptoms.
- Marshallese (50%) respondents had the highest proportion of individuals with depression or anxiety, and Tongan (18%) respondents had the lowest percentage.
- 46% of 18-24 year olds reported depression or anxiety symptoms, the highest among all age groups.

4. COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy

Views on getting vaccinated for COVID-19, being receptive to the vaccination, or having access to the vaccinations shed light on COVID's continued effect in a community. Vaccination data can also highlight whether some groups remain vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19. Our study found a high percentage (38%) of Pacific Islanders who reported being hesitant (uncertain or unlikely to get vaccinated for COVID-19) about receiving the COVID-19 vaccination.

- There was substantial variation among NH/PIs related to vaccine hesitancy. Over half of Tongans and Marshallese reported high levels of uncertainty about the getting the COVID-19 vaccination.
- NH/PIs in the lower income brackets are more hesitant about the COVID-19 vaccination. 48% of those with annual household income less than \$25,000, and 43% of those with annual income \$25,000-49,999 reported vaccine hesitancy.
- Respondents in the 18-24 (40%) and 25-44 (47%) age groups reported high levels of hesitancy about the vaccination.
- Although essential workers in each age group were more receptive to the vaccination than those who were not essential workers, rates of hesitancy were still high, particularly in the youngest age groups.

CONCLUSIONS

- Data reflecting Native Hawaiians' and Pacific Islanders' experiences during the pandemic have rarely been reported. A strong community-led effort was successful in overcoming historical obstacles in data collection through effective community engagement.
- This report shows the importance of considering the heterogeneity within the NH/PI community. Critical ethnic differences were observed across different outcomes. The heterogeneity of the NH/PI population also intersected across age and income groups.
- Our survey highlights the importance of disaggregating outcomes for the NH/PI population to fully identify groups and communities who are particularly at risk for different social, economic, and health problems.
- The NH/PI population has suffered during the pandemic, and many individuals still bear a burden as COVID-19 continues to impact their lives. In the three areas highlighted in this report, NH/PIs had high levels of economic stress, limited use and access to health care, high levels of depression and anxiety symptoms, and a reluctance to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.
- The demographic breakdown of the survey suggests that NH/PIs frequently experience low levels of educational attainment and live in low-income households, which may have contributed to delays in seeking healthcare and significant hesitancy to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This disengagement of resources intended to protect communities from COVID-19 has the potential to prolong the devastating impact that COVID-19 has on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

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