

Racial Equity in the Fight Against COVID-19

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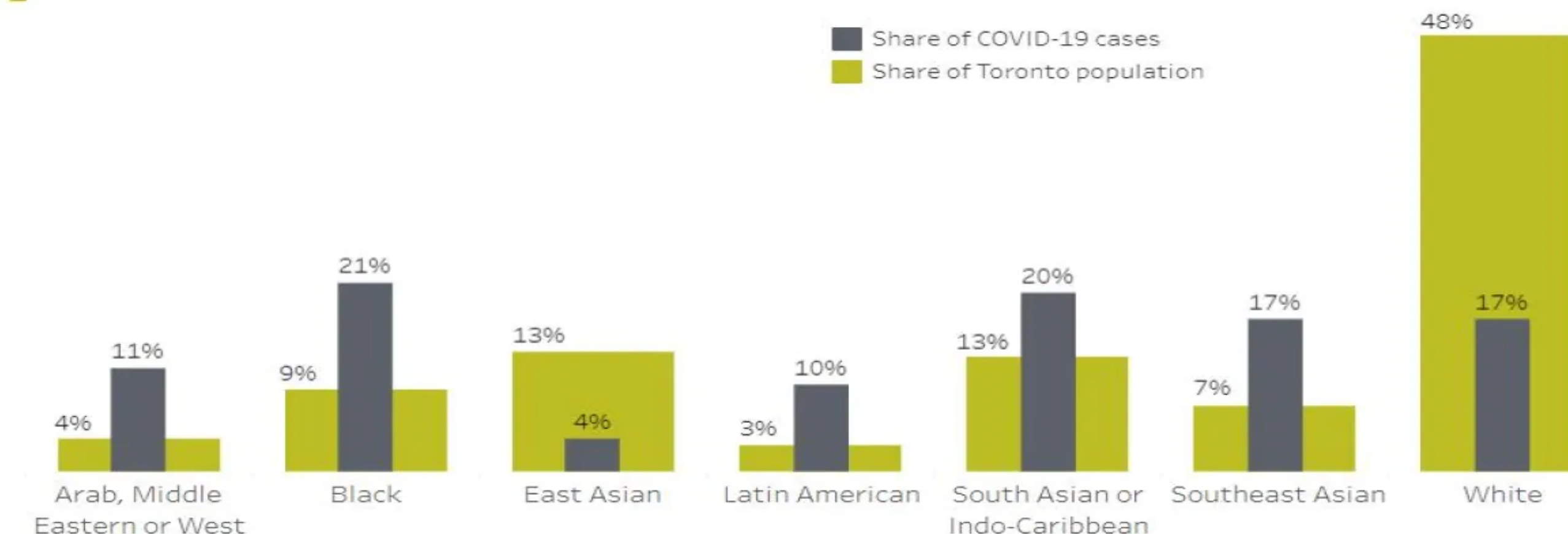
Background

- Research shows that black communities are disproportionately affected by certain chronic conditions, such as HIV, diabetes, food insecurity, low-income, and unstable housing in Canada (Gardezi et. al, 2008).
- The effects of COVID-19 have further exacerbated these already present health disparities.
- The inequitable experiences of marginalized populations needs to be identified and addressed early on, as these groups disproportionately bear a greater burden of suffering (Garg et. al, 2020).

Objectives

- To demonstrate the importance of collecting race-based COVID-19 data to ensure an equitable response to the current pandemic
- Graph below illustrates the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on the black community, highlighting the need for race-based data

Share of COVID-19 cases among ethno-racial groups compared to the share of people living in Toronto, with valid data up to July 16, 2020 (N=3,861)



Source: City of Toronto

Methods

- Three one-on-one interviews and three podcasts were conducted with community health centre leaders in the Greater Toronto Area (areas that have a high population of racialized communities)
- We asked about the issues and concerns surrounding the current pandemic within these communities in order to identify the importance of collecting race-based data
- Interviews and podcasts were transcribed verbatim
- Transcripts were analysed using content analysis to extract main themes

Summary of Findings

Main concerns of individuals living within the vicinity of the community centre:

- Difficulty self-isolating after a positive test due to overcrowded housing
- Food insecurity has significantly increased

"Individuals were concerned because they weren't able to work, and they didn't have enough money to literally buy groceries. Employment, access to food, family support, socialization are all concerns individuals had. Overall, COVID really exacerbated the inequities that they were facing"

The role of Canada's governmental financial aid within these communities:

- Individuals who are laid off may not be eligible for financial aid
- A special equitable response to address the distribution of financial resources is needed

The role of systemic racism in driving the devastating effects of COVID-19:

- Black and racialized communities are disproportionately affected and impaired by COVID-19 due to systemic oppression
- A lack of attention to these communities perpetuates anti-black racism in relation to COVID-19

"80% of people affected by COVID-19 in Toronto are black or racialized, so we don't need to look far to see that we need to pay attention to the anti-black racism story related to COVID-19 and If we do not, it perpetuates this situation where the black community will continue to be disproportionately impacted"

Policy recommendations to lessen the social inequities faced by black communities in relation to COVID-19:

- Target testing and support need to be made available and accessible
- Current COVID-19 and anti-racism policies need to be translated and put into practice

Conclusions

- These findings provide further evidence of COVID-19 disproportionately affecting black and other racialized communities. They also draw attention to the importance of collecting race-based data to ensure an equitable response to the current pandemic.
- The current "one size fits all" response is not effective for all individuals, especially black communities. Not all populations have access to the same resources, nor do they live in the same conditions (Crawley, 2020). A deeper consideration of the social determinants of health is needed when putting COVID-19 policies and responses into place

References

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- Gardezi F, Calzavara L, Husbands W, et al. Experiences of and responses to HIV among African and Caribbean communities in Toronto, Canada. AIDS Care 2008; 20(6): 718-725
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