



Population Overview

BLACK COMMUNITY



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Get Involved

Addressing health inequities across Orange County by enabling system change.



Achieving Equity in Orange County

Health inequities are differences in health status or in the distribution of health resources among various populations. This is due to the social conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Across Orange County (OC) we see differences in the length and quality of life; rates of disease, disability, and early death; severity of disease; and access to treatment because of these inequities.

Equity in OC is an OC Health Care Agency (HCA) initiative in collaboration and partnership with local Orange County community partners. Funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Equity in OC Initiative is a community-informed and data-driven initiative to address health inequities and disparities in Orange County by laying the foundation for creating a healthier, more resilient, and equitable Orange County.

Why Create Population Overviews?

These population overviews are snapshots of available data for various populations in Orange County. By laying out population-specific data in these overviews, we can identify systemic changes that can improve the quality of life within these communities. Since these population overviews are only the start of democratizing community-level data, we welcome feedback and input to further refine and improve this living document.

For more information go to www.equityinoc.com.

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Orange County at a Glance



\$94,441
Median Household Income
2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



56.9%
Home Ownership Rate
as of March 2022

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)



1,129,785
Total Housing Units
2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



41.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher
2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



10.1%
Persons in Poverty
2020

Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)



3.1%
Unemployment Rate
as of March 2022

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

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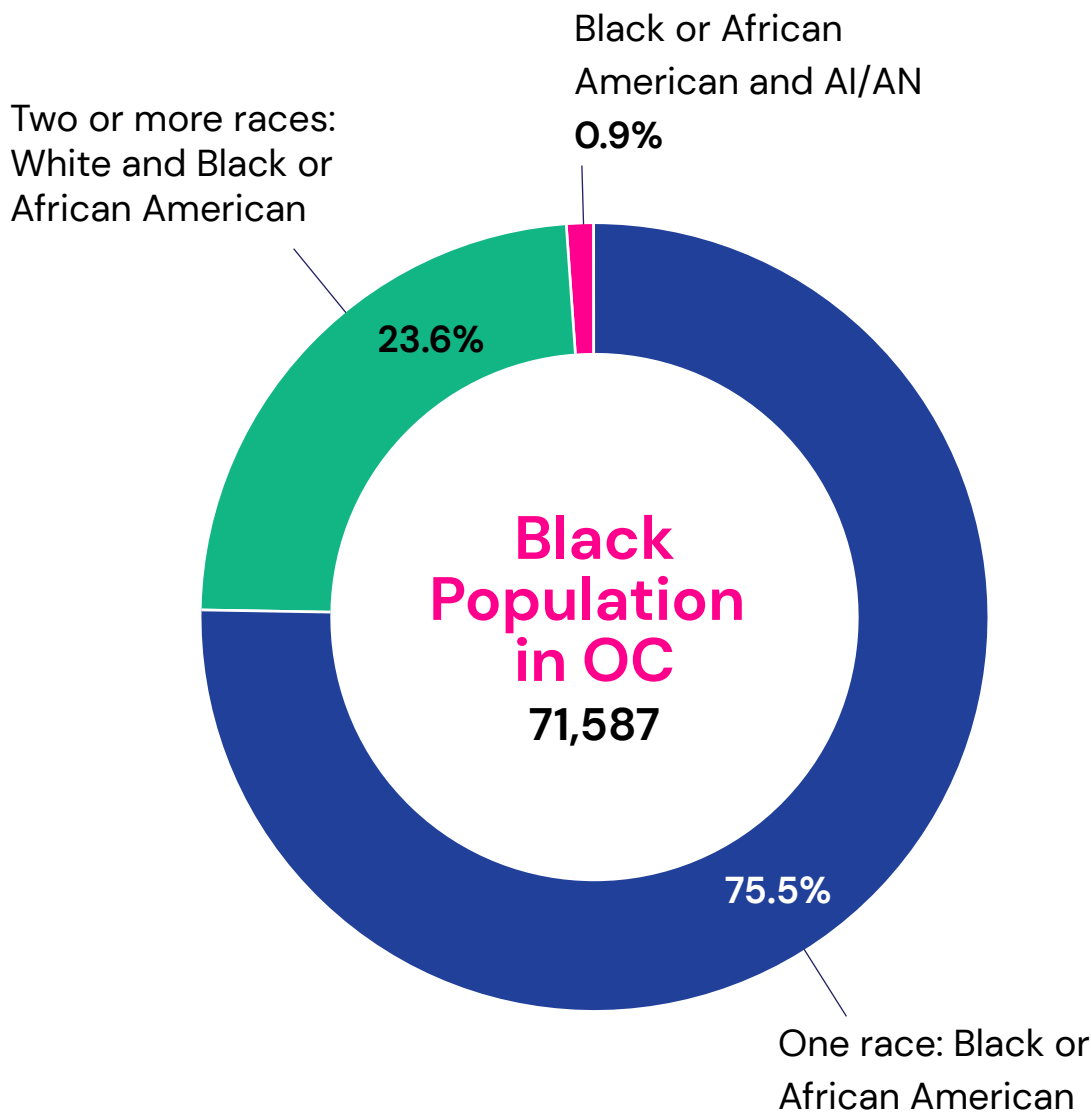
Social Determinants of Health ▶

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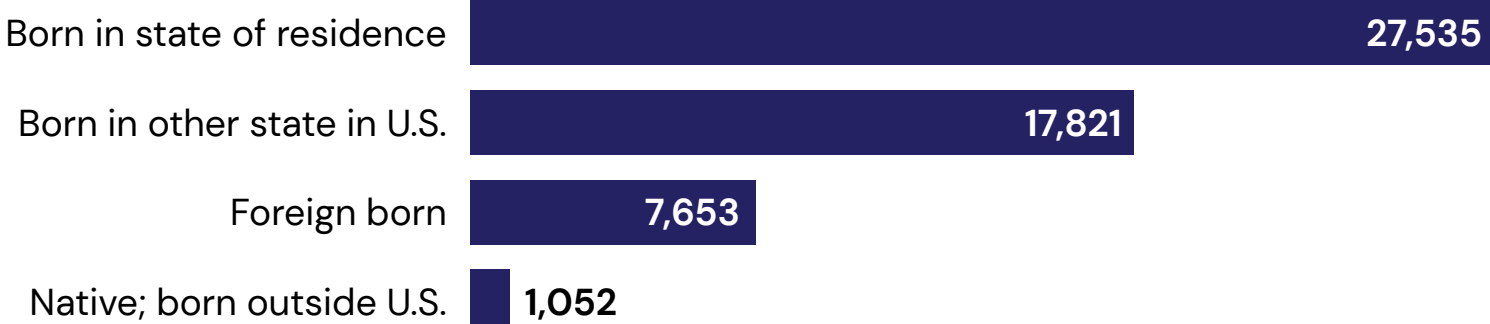
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Black Population Overview in Orange County (continued)



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Black Population in OC Place of Birth



Source: [2020 ACS 5-Year Data, U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Understanding Terms

When referring to people who identify as Black, African American, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color), POC, or another designation, community members should consult with individuals to determine the appropriate choice. Note that [African American](#) is not necessarily an all-encompassing term, and the labels African American and Black have different connotations. The nation-specific term African American (and its related terms) might be preferred by Black American individuals with strong connections and a traceable lineage to the continent of Africa. On the other hand, the term Black tends to be the preferred option to those who do not relate to their African heritage but more their traits of Blackness. Although African American has been coined as the politically correct and/or polite term to describe Black Americans over the years, it has also made some individuals feel as though they are inferior or inadequate due to their disconnect with African customs and heritage.

Black Americans: A Historical Context

Prior to the colonization, displacement, and deaths of millions of African individuals, Africa was a continent filled with rich heritage and innovation that many now describe as both [the birthplace of humanity](#) and the cradle of civilization. To this day, many historians and anthropologists marvel in awe at the great achievements of Kemet, or Ancient Egypt, for example, one of the most notable of the early African civilizations, which first developed in the Nile valley over 5000 years ago.

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Black Population Overview in Orange County (continued)

All of the progress and achievements occurring in Africa during this time was forcefully interrupted between 1500 and the end of the slave trade in the 1860s. At least 12 million Africans were forcibly taken to the Americas — then known as the “[New World](#)” by European settlers. This largest forced migration in human history involuntarily relocated around 50 ethnic and linguistic groups and led to the eradication of many of them. A portion of the enslaved individuals (less than half a million) were forcibly sent to North America, while the majority were sent to South America and the Caribbean. In the mid-1600s, Africans outnumbered Europeans in nascent cities such as Mexico City, Havana, and Lima.

According to [The Great Migration: Creating a New Black Identity in Los Angeles](#), Mexico abolished the enslavement of Black individuals as a part of the Trans-Atlantic trade by 1821, and therefore allowed the Black community in Southern California to grow from a successive stream of small migrations, beginning in 1848 with the California Gold Rush, during which more than 5,000 Black individuals made their way to the state of California by the year 1860. Prior to the 1920s, the Black Community in Southern California was based in a more complex Black identity with Mexicans of mixed-African descent. In 1930 there were slightly over 50,000 Black individuals living in the major cities of California, and by 1950 the number of Black individuals increased to over 250,000. By the early 20th century, there were also ample blue collar job opportunities for Black individuals and other people of color, such as, hauling lumber, digging ditches, cleaning toilets, laying brick, shining shoes, and more.

During the Great Migration of the 1920s, the Black South moved to large cities such as Detroit, New York, and Chicago, bypassing most of Los Angeles and other cities in California. It wasn’t until nearly 20

years later during [The Second Great Migration](#) and the beginning of World War II where billions of dollars in defense production and automobile demand encouraged Black Americans to migrate West. As a result, the Black population in Southern California in Los Angeles increased from nearly 63,700 in 1940 to over 763,000 by 1970.

Though the Emancipation Proclamation made Black Americans free citizens, Black individuals continued to struggle with racism and inequity nationwide, including [Orange County](#). In the 1920s the city of Anaheim was home to many members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Individuals such as Reverend Leon Myers, who were considered influential at the time, publicly showed their support of this racist hate group through city council elections. Another example from this [period](#) can be traced back to the year 1945 when citrus growers imported 500 Jamaicans to La Habra to fill a labor shortage just for those same workers to be accused of causing a “racial problem” for county residents. There is also a long history of fraternities and sororities in Californian schools (Chapman, Cal State Fullerton, UC Irvine) practicing black face and hosting “[slave auctions](#)” from the 1960s to the early 1990s.

As of the year 2022, Black Americans make up approximately 2% of Orange County’s population. Despite this, they continue to experience health disparities that have resulted in a life expectancy nearly six years shorter than their White counterparts. It is evident that Black Americans around the nation and in Orange County have been fighting an uphill battle for equality for centuries. With this consideration, it is time for Black Americans to finally receive the proper services and care to create equitable health outcomes for every member of this community.

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Health and Mortality

Black Americans and Life Expectancy

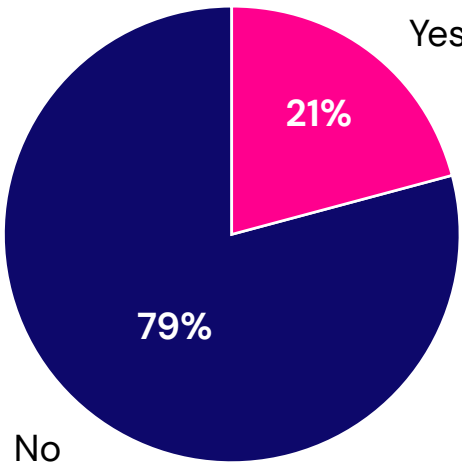
According to the 2022 County Health Rankings, the Black population in Orange County has a life expectancy of 80.4 years, which is the lowest among racial and ethnic groups in the county. The American healthcare system is beset with inequalities that have a disproportionate impact on people of color and other marginalized groups. These inequalities contribute to gaps in health insurance coverage, uneven access to services, and poorer health outcomes among certain populations. Black Americans bear the brunt of these health care challenges. Black Americans experience higher maternal mortality, infant mortality, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and other health issues. Even with improved access to medical care under the Affordable Care Act, the disparities in health outcomes between Black and White Americans are stark.

Black women are three times [more likely to die of pregnancy-related causes](#) than White women. The Black infant mortality rate is [twice the rate for White infants](#). Black Americans are more likely to die from cancer and heart disease than Whites, and are at greater risk for the onset of diabetes. Black women have the highest rates of obesity or being overweight compared to other groups in the United States. About four out of five Black women are overweight or obese, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. Across many chronic illnesses, Black Americans are still more likely to die from these illnesses compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

Nationwide, the [leading causes of death for Black Americans](#) are heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, homicide, and stroke.

Does your doctor or healthcare provider give you anxiety?

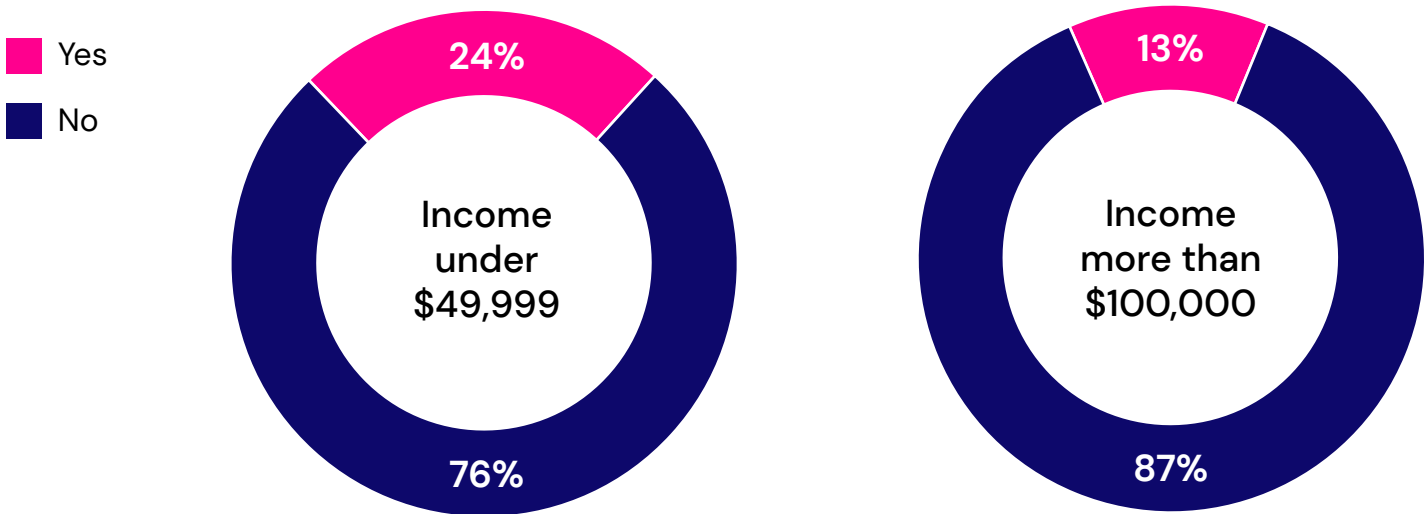
2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

Do you currently feel heard by your doctor or healthcare provider?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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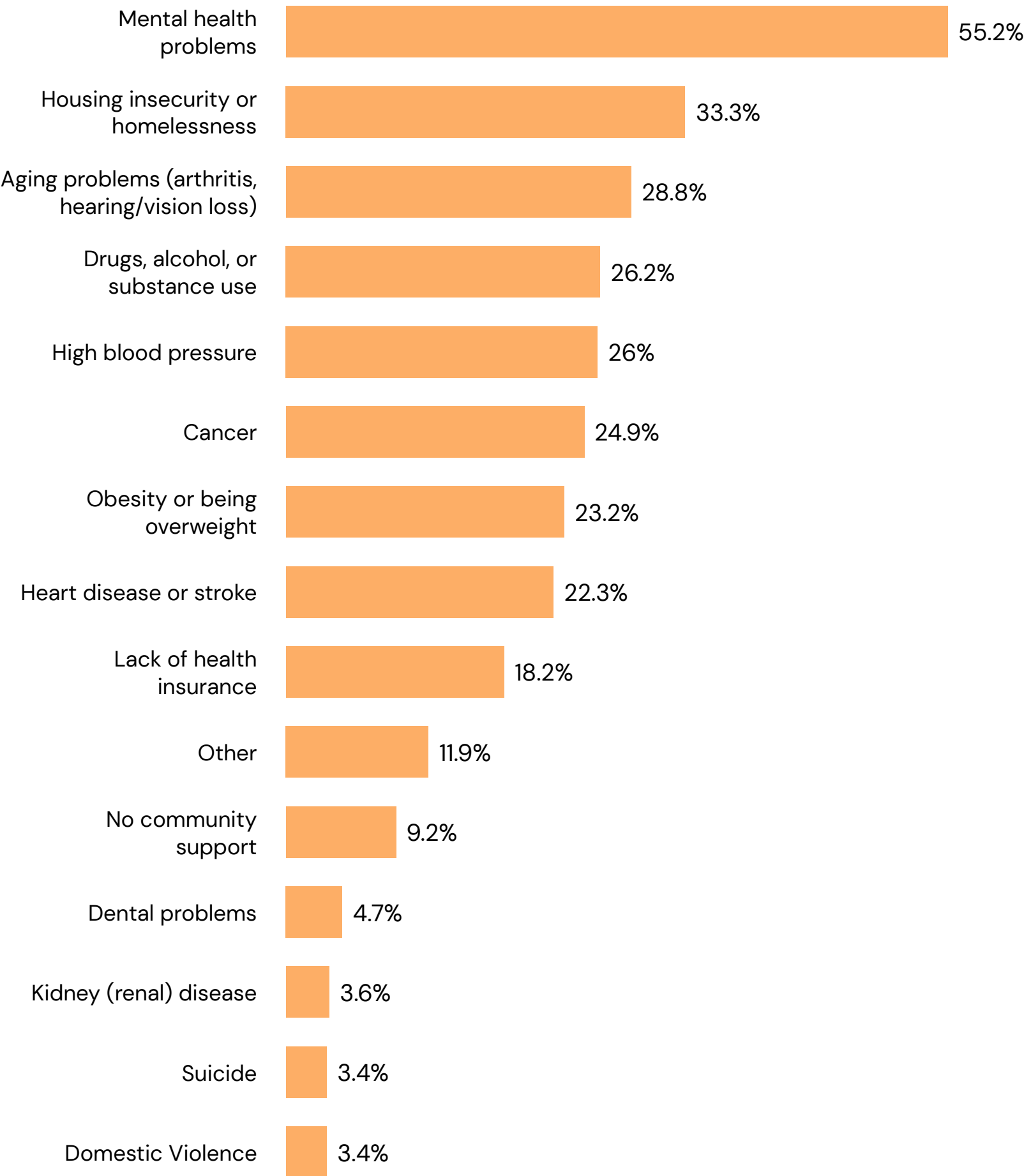
Built Environment and Social Context

Get Involved

Health and Mortality (continued)

What do you think are the 3 most important “health problems” in your community?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

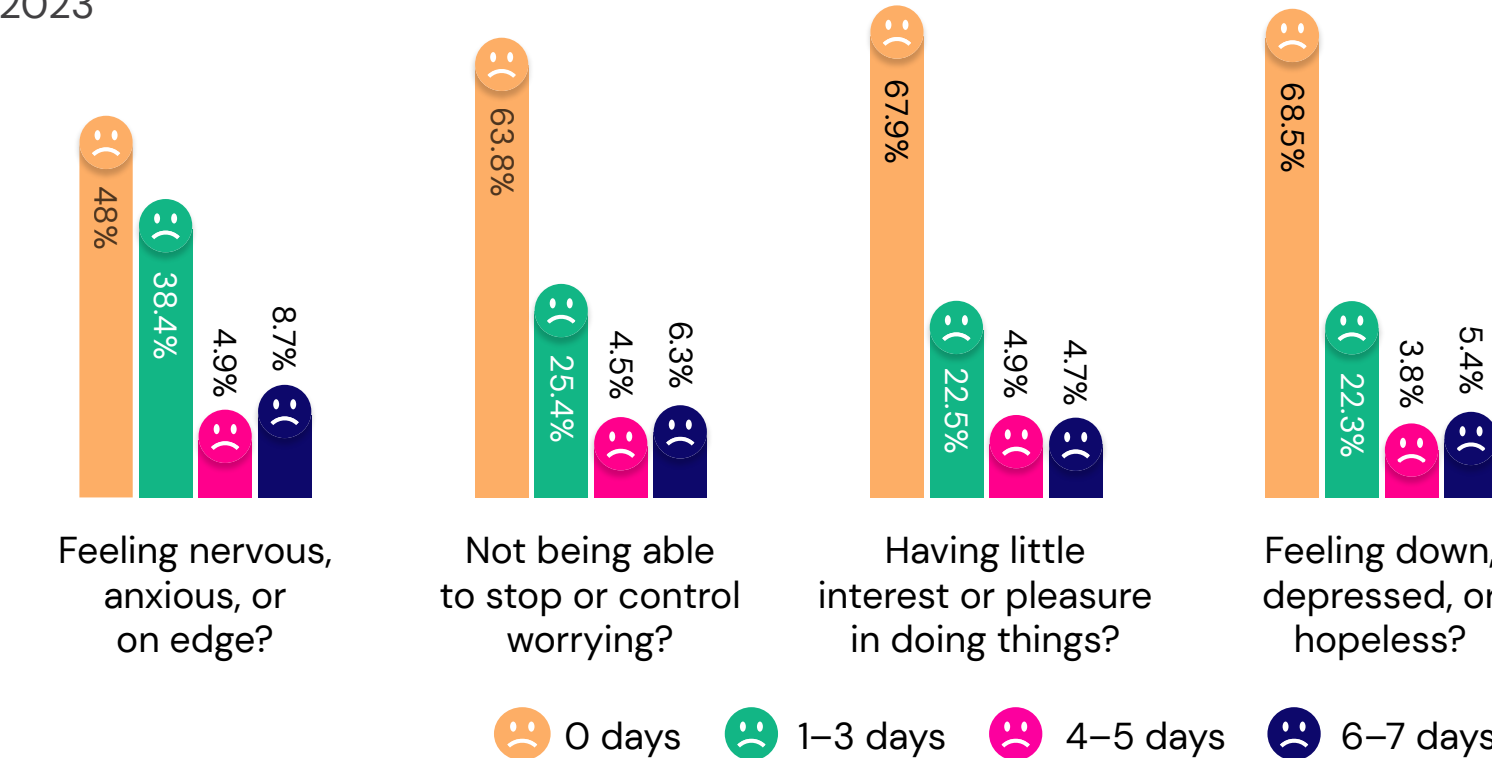
Mental Health

In addition to conditions that may affect one’s physical health, mental health awareness has risen significantly in recent years. This is especially pertinent among those in minority groups, such as the Black community, who may struggle against systemic racial biases which are harmful to their emotional well-being. In Orange County, more than half (55.2%) of Black Americans felt that mental health problems were one of the top three most important health problems in their community.

On an individual level, approximately a quarter to one-third of Black Americans in Orange County have experienced various dips in mental health for at least one – three days in a seven-day period prior to taking the HEAAL survey. These statistics show both the prevalence and need for culturally competent mental health services in the Black community.

In the past 7 days, how often have you experienced the following?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

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Health and Mortality (continued)

women have experienced a disproportionate risk of disease, disability, and mortality, including premature births and infant mortality, caused by chronic active coping. Weathering, which refers to the health risk caused by persistent stress and constant coping, is a way to describe similar effects among Black men.

John Henryism

[John Henryism](#) syndrome describes Black Americans who work harder as a coping mechanism in response to the discrimination that they face. This continual exertion leads to physiological costs such as hypertension and high blood pressure. This syndrome is named after a Black American railroad worker, [John Henry, a folk hero](#) who passed away from stress after competing against a steam-powered drill. It speaks to the high stress and damaging health impacts of hard work in the face of inequity, financial hardship, and racial discrimination.

Black Smoking Paradox

Another phenomenon that is prevalent in the Black community is the Black Smoking Paradox. This paradox describes the higher risk of Black Americans to develop lung cancer compared to Whites despite having lower smoking rates. There may be [multiple causes to this paradox](#), including increased stress, which makes smoking desirable and quitting smoking difficult. Another article suggests that cigarettes containing menthol are used disproportionately more by Black Americans may play a role in the [Black Smoking Paradox](#).

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What are Social
Determinants of Health?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines social determinants of health (SDoH) as the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that impact health outcomes of a person or community. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at the global, national, and local levels. These forces are outside the control of an individual or community and can greatly affect their overall health and well-being. Addressing these SDoH requires collective community action on a systemic level. The following pages highlight the status of the Black American population in Orange County across three social factors:

Health and Mortality

Comparing how long a group lives and determining their quality of life to the population at large and can be a baseline for whether systemic disparities exist and how these disparities impact the community.

Economics and Education

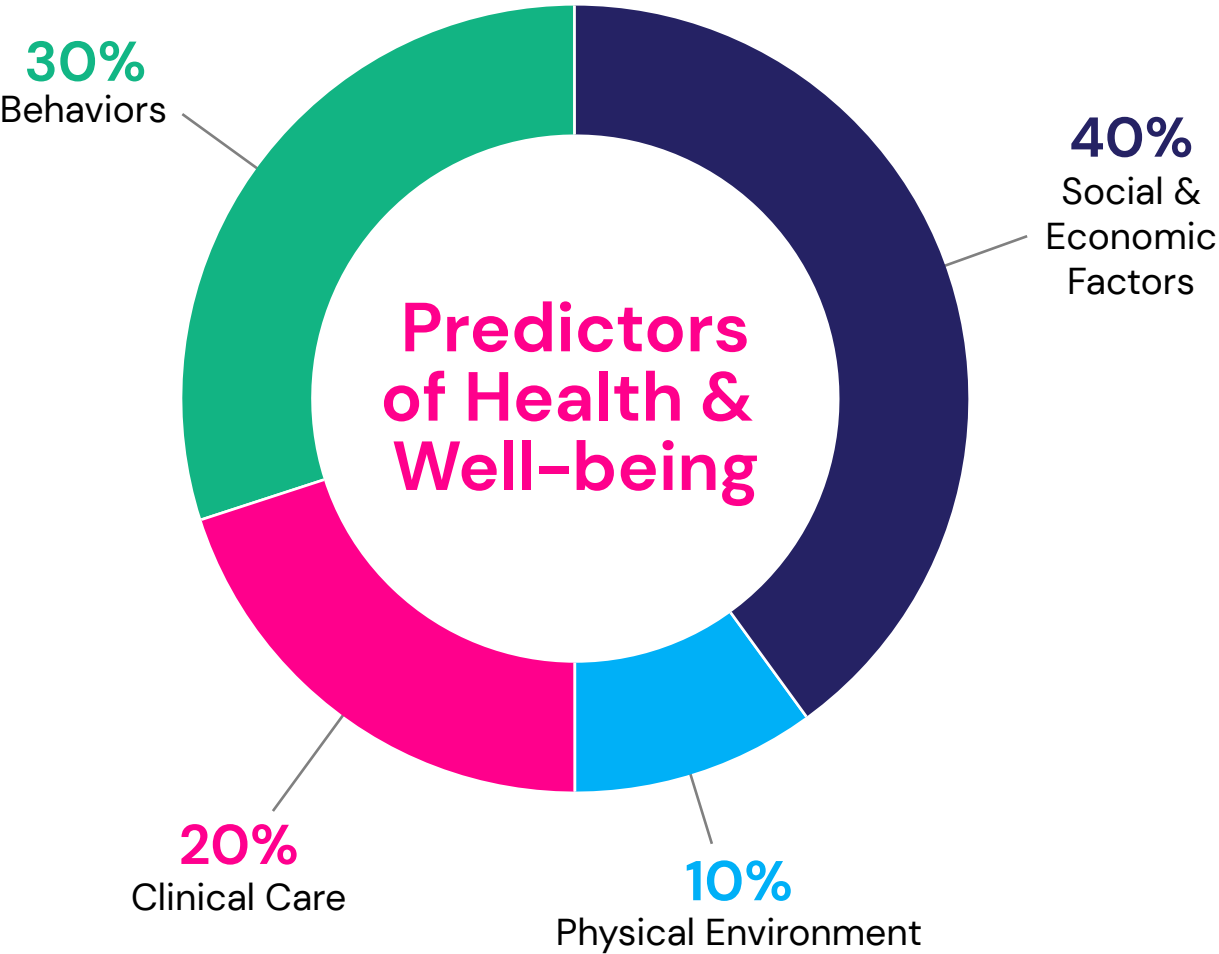
Education does more than determine one’s income. Individuals with higher education are more likely to be healthier and live longer. Improving education in various communities can bring significant health benefits to everyone.

Built Environment and Social Context

Where someone lives, how an individual gets around, and what is going on in a person’s community can greatly impact both individual and community health and well-being. Things like neighborhood walkability, cleanliness of air and water, and even the age of building in the community can affect quality of life in the community.

“
It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and political environment conspire against such change.
”

National Academy of Medicine



Source: [County Health Rankings](#)

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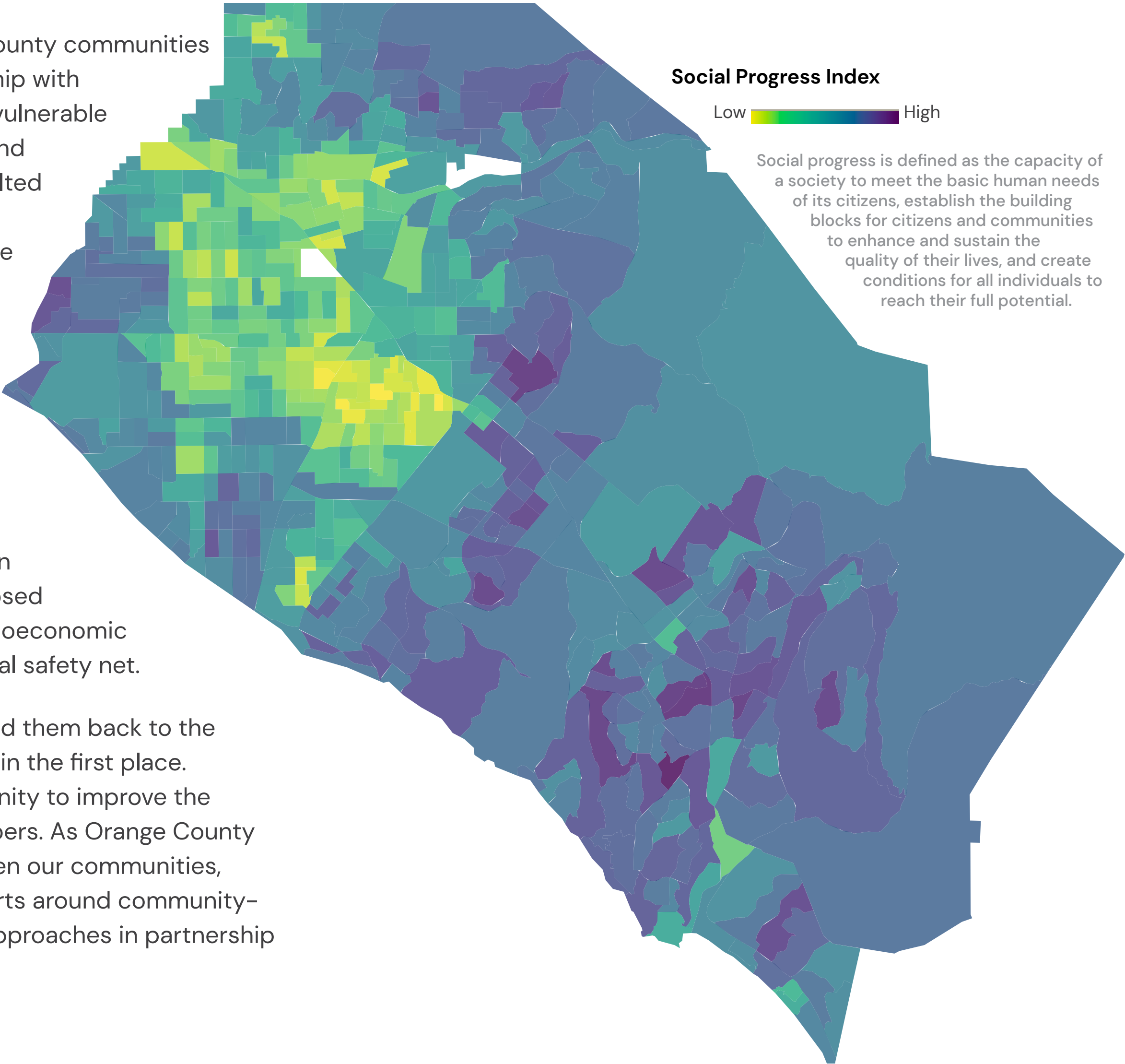
Mapping the Disparity

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Orange County communities unequally and disproportionately. In partnership with AdvanceOC, a local non-profit, we identified vulnerable communities using comorbidity risk factors and social vulnerability. This rigorous analysis resulted in the Orange County Equity Map and guided the county’s response and management of the pandemic.

What We Learned

The OC Equity map measures social progress in various census tracts of the county. Analyzing and layering COVID-19 cases in Orange County showed that higher concentrations of COVID-19 cases occurred in low social progress areas. The pandemic exposed and magnified existing racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequities, including flaws in the county’s social safety net.

We cannot treat and heal individuals then send them back to the systems and conditions that made them sick in the first place. Orange County sees COVID-19 as an opportunity to improve the health and well-being of all community members. As Orange County charts a path forward to rebuild and strengthen our communities, the Health Care Agency will center these efforts around community-informed, data-driven, and equity-oriented approaches in partnership and collaboration with community members.



Source: [OC Equity Map](#), [AdvanceOC](#)

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SDoH Impacting Black Community (continued)

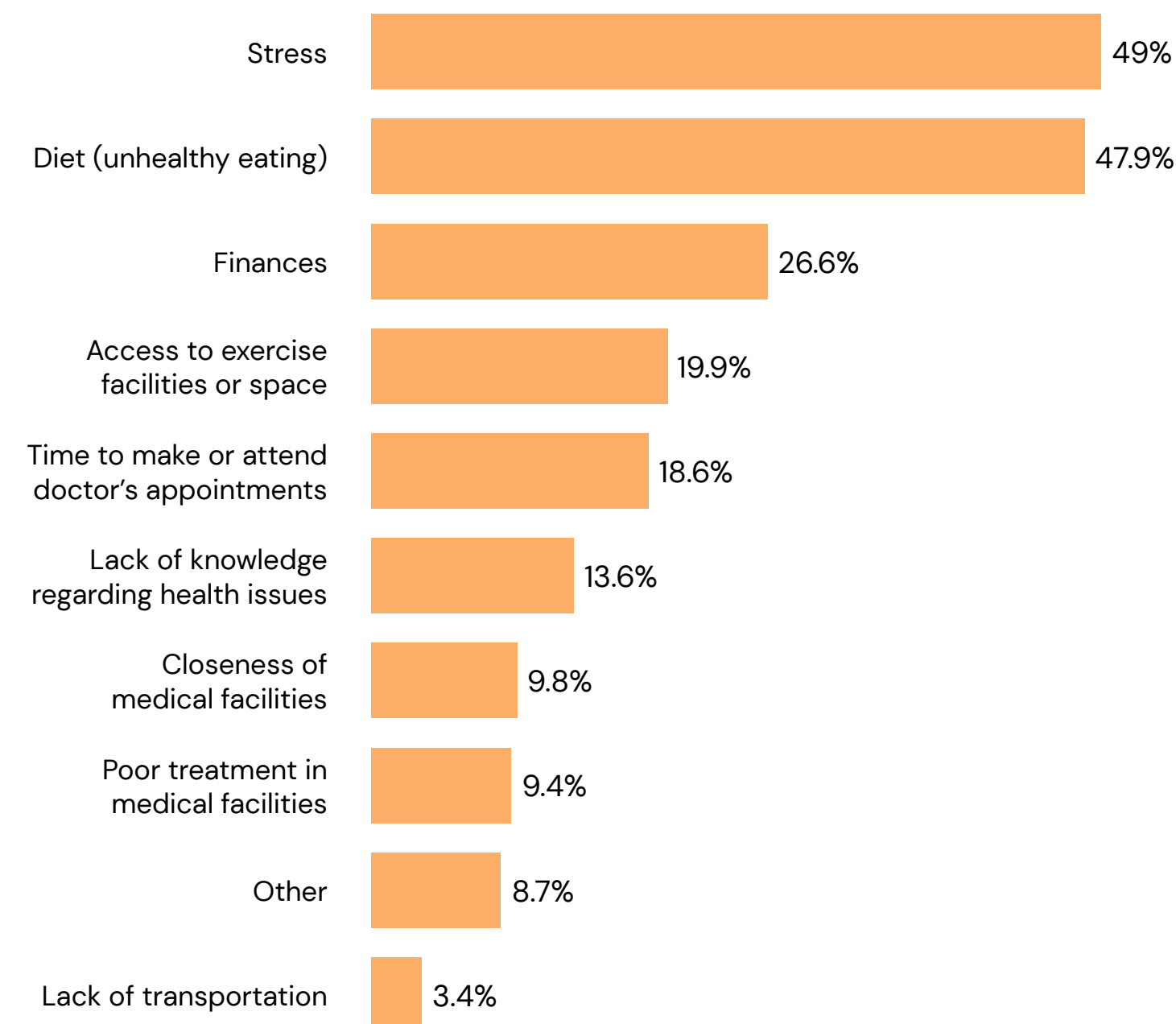
In Orange County, 16% of Black Americans surveyed either were not able to purchase the foods that they wanted or did not have enough food.

A big factor in food insecurity within the Black community in America is the amount of food deserts and food swamps. A food desert is an area without access to fresh foods, that is underserved by food retailers due to limited economic power, and where there

is a lack of public education on what's healthy, local grown, fresh food and what is unhealthy food. Food swamps are areas where fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, and other sources of cheap, processed food opportunistically move in. Both factors have a negative impact on the health of Black American communities as revealed in the HEAAL Survey, which showed that 47.9% of Black Americans surveyed in Orange County felt that diet and unhealthy eating significantly impacts their health.

Which of the following significantly impacts your health?

2023



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

Health Disparities

While much of the attention around African American health disadvantages has recently been on COVID-19 death and vaccination rates, there are still many chronic illnesses and preventable deaths that are directly tied to the inadequate health care Black Americans experience in this country. Access to healthcare and primary care providers is essential to every community as expressed by almost 80% of Black Americans in Orange County who were asked to rank the top three most important factors of a "healthy community."

When compared to their White counterparts, Black Americans are at a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, HIV/AIDS, asthma, influenza, diabetes, as well as pneumonia, according to the [Office of Minority Health](#). While some of these illnesses are not preventable, some can be reduced in severity with proper screenings, tests, and lifestyle changes. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [states](#) that Black Americans are sometimes suffering through diseases that are typically more common at older ages for other races. This means that young Black Americans are experiencing health concerns and diseases

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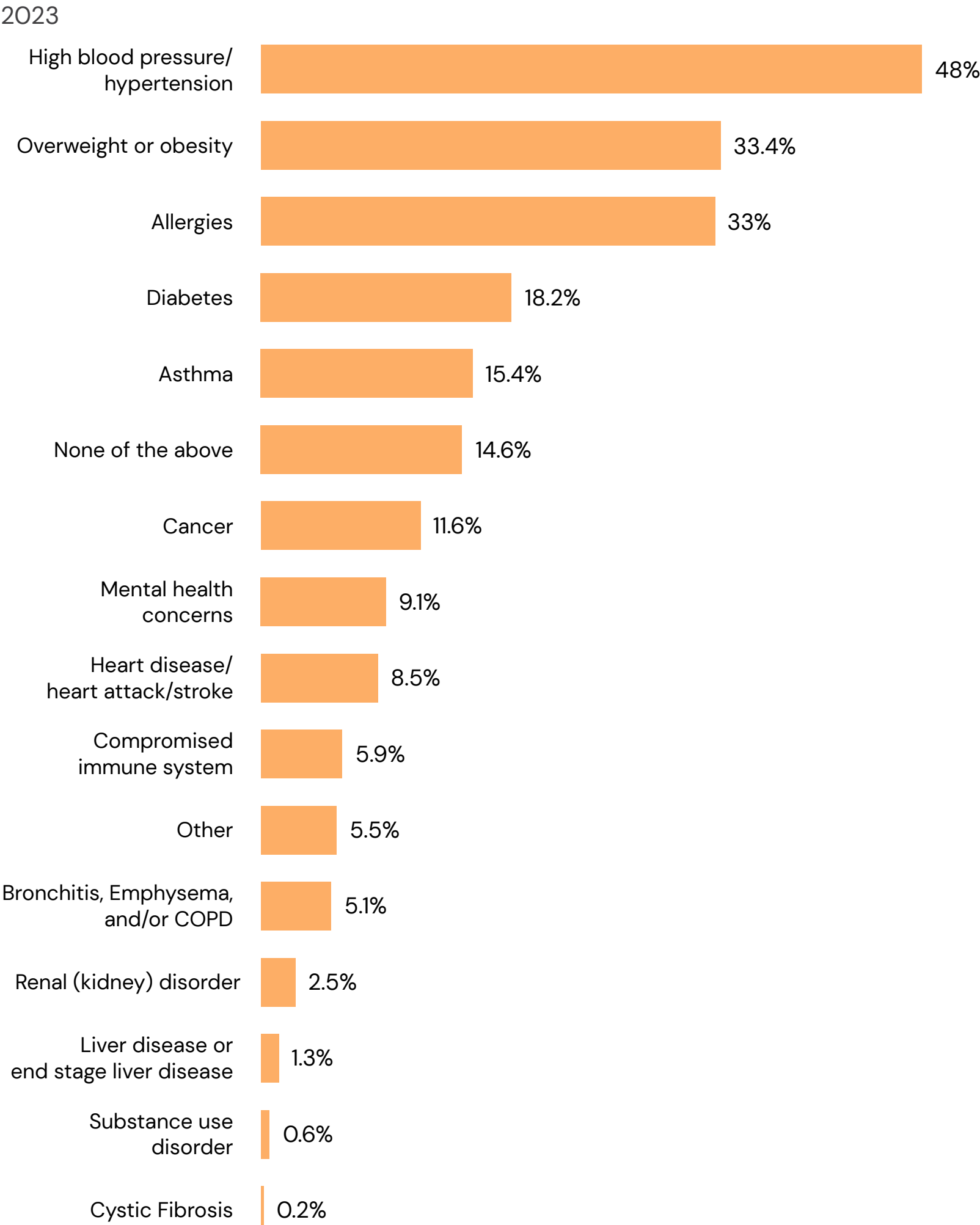
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SDoH Impacting Black Community (continued)

Has a doctor or healthcare provider ever told you that you have any of the following?



Source: 2023 HEAAL Black Health Equity Survey

Hate Crimes

In Orange County, Black men and women have been subjected to hate crimes at a rate far greater than their share of the population, according to the recently released [2020 Hate Crime Report](#) by the Orange County Human Relations Commission. In the county, Black people account for 2% of the general population but experienced nearly one-third (33%) of all targeted hate crimes in the year 2020. Since 2003, the Human Rights Commission has reported that Black people have nearly always been targeted more often and/or disproportionately victimized than any other community. [In 2019](#), members of the Black community were victims of 53% of all recorded hate crimes in Orange County.

With the momentum created by the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 and the protests that occurred within the United States, government officials have moved forward with “[comprehensive reparations](#)” created for those “harmed by history of government-sanctioned oppression.” These so-called reparations are meant to address past harms and potential future ones to help eligible Black Californians experience a better tomorrow.

Although this sounds advantageous in theory, there is still no budget on this project since the second report has yet to be released. However, the first report does a successful job at recounting the history of California’s mistreatment of Black Americans, tracing all the way back to the enforcement of fugitive slave laws that required the return of enslaved people who sought freedom in California—a “free state” admitted and approved to the union. With all the wrongdoings that have been inflicted on Black Americans in this country, and specifically in Orange County, it is promising to see legislation moving to right these evident wrongs.

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Economics and Education (continued)

Educational Attainment in Orange County

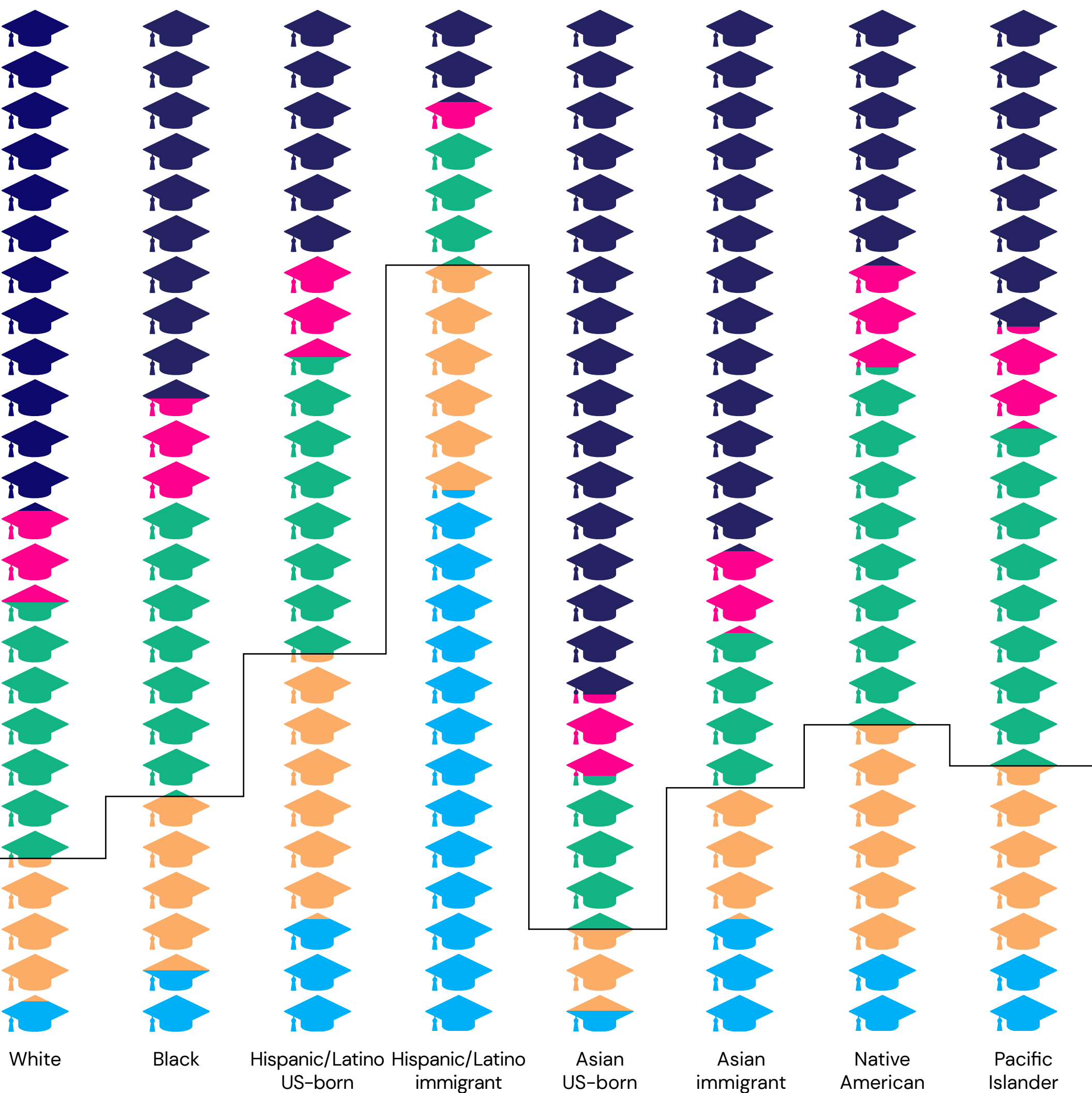
According to the 2021 U.S. Census, 90.3% of the Black Americans in the U.S. who are 25 years and older had at least a high school diploma when compared to 74.2% of non-Hispanic Whites.

When compared to 20.6% of non-Hispanic Whites, 28.1% of Black Americans had earned at lease a bachelor’s degree.

According to the U.S. Census, 88% of Blacks have a high school diploma, and 26% a bachelor’s degree. A major reason for the skyrocketing high school attainment is universal compulsory education. This educational attainment provides a glimpse of future trends.

- BA degree or higher
- Associate’s degree
- Some college
- High school diploma
- Less than HS diploma

Source: [Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 12.0 \[dataset\]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2022. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0](#)



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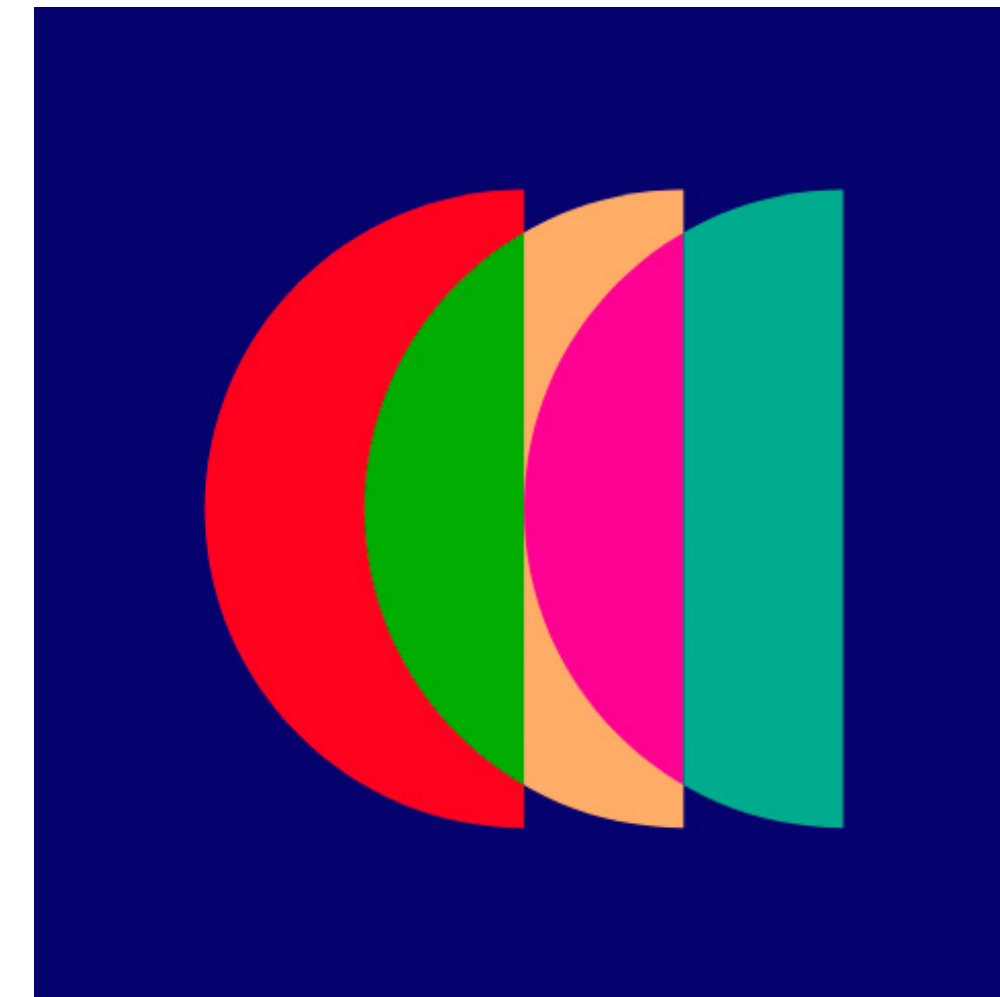
Health is a shared value. Your involvement will help create a healthier, more resilient, and equitable Orange County.

Here's how you can get involved:



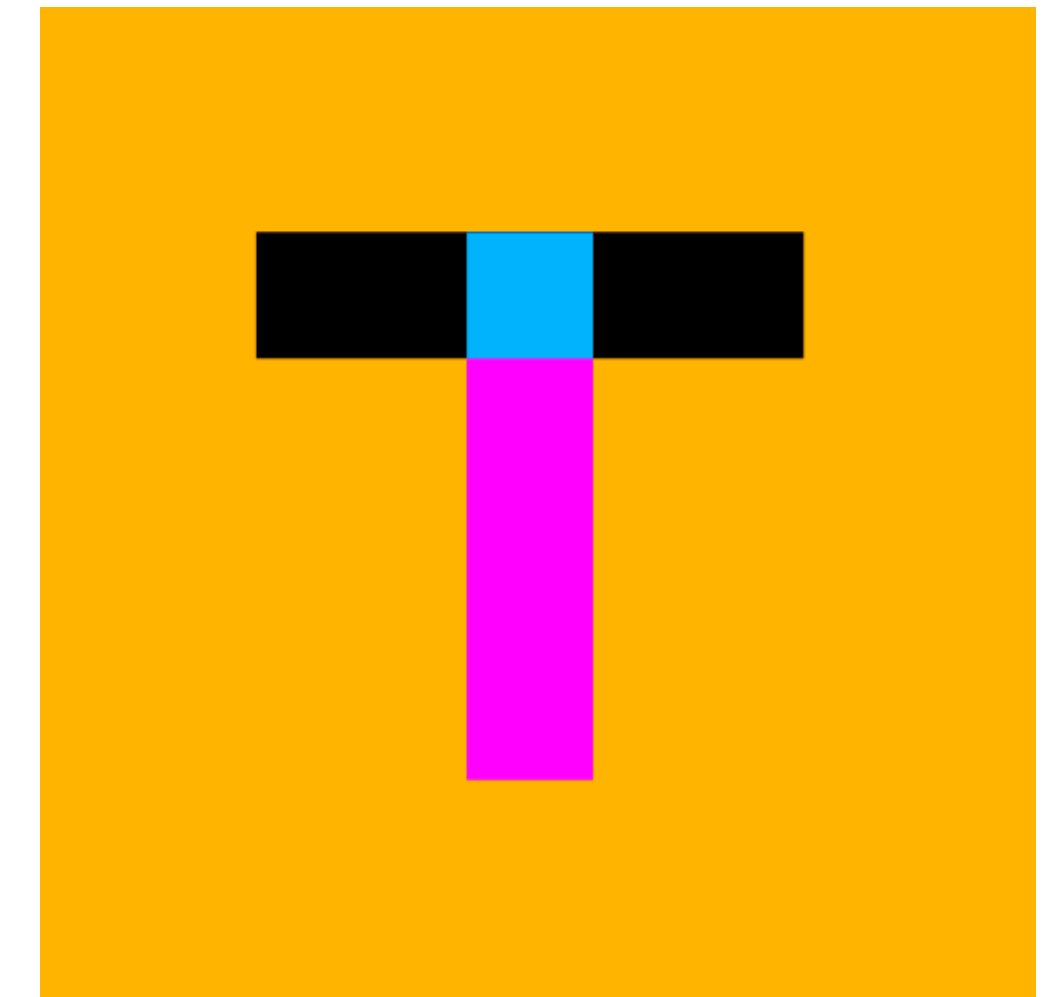
**Participate in the EiOC Action
and Learning Community**

[Learn More](#)



**Join a Population Health
Equity Collective**

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**Make your voice heard at
EiOC Taskforce Meetings**

[View Events](#)

