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No Going Back

POLICIES FOR
AN EQUITABLE
AND INCLUSIVE
LOS ANGELES

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Foreword

#NOGOINGBACKLA

Prior to the stay-at-home public health directive, civic boosters promoted Los Angeles as a metropolis that was confronting its problems and making progress. Local and state governments enjoyed budget surpluses, unprecedented investments were committed by Angelenos to respond to homelessness, and access to health care and high school graduation rates were at historically high levels, while unemployment and crime rates were at celebrated lows. But behind this glossy view of LA, a closer look at the data would have revealed a very different reality, where decades of structural and systemic racism resulted in significant social, economic, and racial inequality. Just a few months into a global pandemic, the cracks in the broken systems have become gaping holes, widening each day. Today, the calls for systemic change are loud, consequential, and urgent.

Early in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ten foundations wisely convened a diverse group of community, civic, non-profit, labor, and business leaders to identify the systemic issues emerging from the crisis and to offer up a blueprint for building a more equitable and inclusive LA. Their past philanthropic work had made it clear that Los Angeles was becoming increasingly inequitable, and they feared the acceleration of disparate impact centered on income and race. Thus, the Committee for Greater LA was formed, and for the past five months, it has steered the analytical work completed by two of LA's leading institutions, UCLA and USC, supported by a team of consultants. The report that follows reflects our discourse, analysis, and discovery.

Throughout this process we were often overwhelmed by the truth behind the data and were intentional in inviting diverse members of the community to share their lived experience. From immigrants to youth organizers, we listened to the stories, dreams, and fears of people who have been most impacted by this crisis, but more importantly, have been marginalized for decades. Through focus groups and panelists at our weekly 90-minute sessions, we listened to the voices behind the numbers. It was by far the most powerful part of this process. The youth voice gives our work meaning, purpose, and urgency. It is their voice that gives us hope. From young people, we heard a moral clarity that is the bedrock of our work ahead.

It is important to recognize the historic context from which this work emerges. Early in the pandemic, the Committee was briefed on the untold story of people of color disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus. From uneven federal economic relief efforts excluding families with mixed legal status, to rapidly increasing cases within communities of color in Los Angeles County, the Committee learned in real-time the consequences of decades of inequities. The Advancement Project sounded the alarm about the growing number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths projected to occur in more dense and poorer zip codes in LA County. As the economy reopened and essential workers were called back to work, disparate impact grew exponentially, while wealthier communities maintained the privilege of working from home. Schools struggled to support students in a virtual environment, and the consequences of learning loss on low-income Black, Indigenous, Latino, and other students of color were devastating. Not surprisingly, the pandemic began to reveal the two Los Angeles Counties that have existed underneath us all along.

The public outrage over the execution of George Floyd added greater urgency to our work and called for a focus on the legacy of injustices against the Black community. The overrepresentation of African Americans who are incarcerated or among the homeless population is a result of anti-Black racist systems. Our work focuses on this issue and calls for a proactive agenda that explicitly dismantles anti-Black racism and an independent study on the state of African Americans in Los Angeles County.

Our collective work is not a report to be shelved but a mandate for action that is intended to endorse, amplify, and support the ongoing work of an emerging movement of advocates, young people, community-based, and civic leaders calling for systemic change. Our mantra is our purpose: NO GOING BACK LA!

Where do we go from here? LA before COVID-19 was not a place to celebrate or revere. What we learned, and what the data and analysis clearly shows, is that our region was built on structures designed to maintain the privileged by intentionally excluding and marginalizing others. Real and necessary change is often blocked by holders of the status quo unable or unwilling to listen and respond to the people and communities most impacted by the very systems they maintain. Going back to the Los Angeles of the past is not progress. We propose dismantling those structures and prioritizing how resources will be directed in order to achieve a more accountable Los Angeles driven by outcomes centered on racial equity. This work should not be limited to the issues raised in this report, for there are many others that call for systems change. Such issues include police

reform and the dismantling of the school to prison pipeline, and achieving greater equity for women, LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities, and Native American communities.

We are committed to continuing the work of the Committee and being part of the movement for change as agitators, disruptors, and truth-tellers. We invite a broad coalition of leaders, activists, residents, academics, practitioners and experts who are outraged by the region's inequalities and seek to drive data-driven systemic change. While we now have a road map in hand, how we get there matters. We will lead with values that reflect our desired outcomes by placing our commitment to racial equity and inclusion at the center of our work and collective agenda. We will hold ourselves and those in positions of authority accountable to systemic change by asking: What is our part? We will further engage cross-sector perspectives, knowing that while we may not always agree, we will always maintain a safe environment for shared learning, research, support, and advocacy. We will respect communities and community engagement by amplifying the voices and work of those with lived experience – as only they can tell us when real progress is achieved. We will adapt our role as needed to move an issue forward, supporting others in their work and leading at the forefront when it is called upon. We will not give up, knowing that this work is hard, long-term, and with no easy answers or one-off fixes.

#NOGOINGBACKLA is not just a hashtag, it is a promise. The late Congressman John Lewis urged us to say something, to do something when we see something that is not right. The future work of the Committee will do just that. The release of this work is a milestone on the journey to a more inclusive and equitable Los Angeles.

We would like to thank Dr. Gary Segura, Dean of the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and Dr. Manuel Pastor, Director of the USC Equity Research Institute for their patience and brilliance. Their insights and stewardship were central to the work of the committee. They were supported by Rhonda Ortiz, Edward-Michael Muña, and many other faculty, staff, and students at USC and UCLA. The urgency to bring attention to the disparate impacts of COVID-19 was a result of the work of the capable team at The Advancement Project, led by John Kim, Co-Director. We also acknowledge the work of the Bold Vision 2028 initiative that guided our work on youth. In addition, the Nonprofit Finance Fund provided valuable information and insight on the challenges faced by the non-profit sector.

Our work was carefully facilitated by Robin Engel, Founder and President of Star Insights, and enriched by the contributions of a dynamic team including Cielo Castro, Neel Garlapati, Karlo Marcelo, and Kamina Smith. We were able to communicate our work with the broader community thanks to the expertise of Patricia Pérez, CEO of VPE Tradigital Communications and Marie Condron, Josh Kamensky and their team at Ocean & Mountain. Photographer Kemal Cilengir captured life in Los Angeles in 2020 with his powerful images. Chris Essel, President and CEO at Southern California Grantmakers and her team were essential in keeping us connected with funders and providing backbone support.

We would like to thank the funders of this initiative for the foresight to bring together a diverse group of Angelenos to develop an ambitious but essential blueprint for a more equitable and diverse LA. Our funders are: Annenberg Foundation, Ballmer Group, The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, California Community Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation, The Smidt Foundation and Weingart Foundation. Thank you.

Our work was driven by the voices of scores of Angelenos, community activists, and young people who not only shared their voice, but challenged us to be bold in our recommendations and to continue with our work after the release of the report. We want to thank them for their participation and for their work in building a greater LA.

Thank you for joining us in this effort,

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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the area now called Los Angeles County is on the traditional homelands of the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneño, and Luiseño People and Tongva people. We pay our respects to the traditional caretakers of the land, the Tongva Nation, their ancestors, elders, and relations past, present, and forthcoming.

This report encourages everyone to consider the many impacts—past and present— of colonization, genocide, slavery, violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us here today. Native people continue to reside in and around what we now call Los Angeles County—the county that is currently home to the largest population of Native people in the United States. We recognize this land acknowledgment is limited, and requires us to engage in an ongoing process of learning and accountability.

For more information on and resources on Native American/indigenous organizing please visit the California Native Vote Project, the Los Angeles City/County Native American Commission, Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, UCLA American Indian Studies Center, and United American Indian Involvement.

Acknowledgements

This is one of two reports that are a product of the Committee for Greater LA. The Committee for Greater LA is a collaboration of local governments in Los Angeles including Los Angeles County, the City of Los Angeles, and others along with the help and support of philanthropy, and input and guidance of community based organizations. All these different organizations, sectors, and government agencies are deeply involved in recovery efforts from COVID-19 and some are also involved in immediate, emergency relief efforts. The Committee's charge is to help ease the burden of those essential workers who are in the trenches fighting to save lives from the pandemic and to help provide a roadmap for an equitable and inclusive recovery once the pandemic is over.

The two reports we offer are a starting contribution by the Committee and they lay the foundation for future committee action and advocacy for a more equitable future after COVID-19. The researchers that put together these reports are based mostly at the Luskin School for Public Policy at the University of California Los Angeles and the Equity Research Institute at the University of Southern California. Both institutions would like to thank each and every committee member who volunteered countless hours to contribute to the entire endeavor, as well as provide guidance, writing, and feedback for these reports. Thank you to Ashley K Thomas and Joanna Lee for their feedback and guidance. The design of this project was completed by Julianna Beckert with coordination from Sabrina Kim.

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Executive Summary

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, families across Los Angeles County have endured multiple waves of sickness, insecurity, joblessness, learning loss, and challenges to mental health. These impacts have been felt across Angelenos of all spectrums including communities of color: Black Angelenos, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as well as women, LGBTQIA communities, the young, seniors, and people with disabilities. As of late August, the County was reporting over 225,000 cases and nearly 5,500 deaths, with the case and death rates sharply up in Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander communities as seen later in this report. These are even possibly more alarming as race/ethnicity data is still not identified for many cases. Economic costs have been uneven as well, with the state reporting that nearly half of Black workers have filed for unemployment since the crisis began through the end of July, well above the twenty-seven percent figure for white workers.

Meanwhile, undocumented Angelenos – 70 percent of whom have been in the United States for a decade

or longer – have been largely frozen out of relief. With them and their immediate family members comprising roughly 18 percent of the County, this has been a recipe for regional economic disaster. Add to that the stresses of making rent, the learning loss Black, Latino, and Native American kids on the wrong side of the digital divide, the physical and mental trauma visited on communities by the pandemic, and a lack of health care, and you have a recipe for deepening distress and inequality.

Yet this pattern of pain should have been expected: In many ways, COVID-19 is the disease that has revealed our social illnesses of anti-Black racism, precarious employment, sharp racial gaps in wealth and digital access, unaffordable housing, growing homelessness, unresponsive government, and so much more. Communities shattered, health battered, and businesses shuttered – these are the real costs of the crisis. But these outcomes are not the result of bad luck and misfortune; rather than a bug in the system, they are a feature in which structural racism has long set the fortunes and limited the potential of communities of color, particularly Black and



Indigenous people.

The role of racism in our country has been driven home by the most recent rash of murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Elijah McClain, Rayshard Brooks, Anthony McClain, Dijon Kizzee, and so many others. But with that has come a deeper realization: Police brutality is just the tip of a racist iceberg that extends to systems of education, the economy, and health care. Public consciousness has shifted. Many Americans are coming to understand that confronting anti-Black racism is key *and* that the same forces that marginalize Black people also blame Asian Americans for COVID-19 and refuse to extend full support to immigrants.

As a result, we cannot think of the task ahead for Los Angeles as recovery from COVID-19. We cannot go back to an old “normal” that has failed so many. There is no return to a system that over-policed, over-incarcerated, and under-delivered. We should have no nostalgia for an economy that did not reward truly essential workers such as agricultural laborers, grocery store clerks, truck drivers, elder care specialists, and others. We should hold no affection for a system that has long stripped assets from communities through stolen land from Native Americans, discrimination, and redlining, rather than built them up through public and private investment.

This is not the first time Los Angeles has weathered an economic shock or been forced to face its own systemic racism. The Watts Rebellion of 1965 and the Uprisings in 1992 were both sparked by acts of police brutality and signaled the need to reckon

with entrenched disparities and anti-Black racism. In both instances, reports were written and plans were launched to deal with the under-investment that gave rise to unrest—but little fundamentally changed, particularly for Black Angelenos. So what might be different this time?

Three factors may make a difference. The first is simply the profundity of the moment: In the midst of a pandemic, protests against anti-Blackness were held in all 50 states and the national dialogue on race shifted, with some saying this has been the most widespread awareness of systemic racism since the Civil Rights movement. A second is the growing recognition – by the public, policy makers, and business leaders – that the current levels of inequality and racial disparity threaten public health in the short-run and prosperity in the long-run. A final factor is the depth and expertise of the community-based organizations that can propel a seismic change for the better in Los Angeles. Indeed, they have already helped make what was once unthinkable – restraining police spending, emptying our jails, delivering aid regardless of status – part of a new status quo.

To make a better Los Angeles, we must center racial equity, align systems and hold them accountable for more effective delivery, and stir a new civic conversation and commitment for change. In the accompanying context report, we note how to do these three things across a wide variety of issues. Here, we emphasize ten important principles for a reinvention of Los Angeles:

Ten Important Principles for a Reinvention of Los Angeles

1

Address anti-Black racism in all its forms.

Statistic after statistic on homelessness, education, family wealth, health and well-being, and the criminal justice system show ample evidence of the systemic racism impacting Black Angelenos. Leaders must be committed to understanding the history that has produced these outcomes and devoted to making progress on an anti-racist agenda.

2

Build an economy that prioritizes those who have been left or kept behind.

Business can be a force for good in this arena, particularly by shifting hiring practices and opening up procurement systems to businesses owned by people of color. But there is also a need to protect workers, promote a “caring economy,” address long-standing racial disparities in labor markets, overcome discrimination against people with disabilities, and ensure affordable digital access for all.

3

Support the health of communities and individuals living with the trauma of systemic neglect and oppression.

This requires a combination of community-based care and attention to insuring sufficient reimbursement for providers serving the least advantaged. Everyone should be able to connect to health and mental health services, regardless of status. And mental health systems should promote healing and also empower communities to press for change in the systems that cause hurt.

4

Create housing for all and end unsheltered homelessness.

Black people represent eight percent of the County population but a full third of those who are homeless, while the share of Native Americans who are experiencing homelessness is roughly five-fold their share of the County. The COVID-19 crisis has worsened already existing housing insecurity, with many an eviction away from the streets. Change will require that the scale of the response reflect the scale of the crisis, that we tackle the legacies and realities of structural racism, and that the region as a whole take action and hold these structures accountable.

5

Ensure access, mobility, and voice for immigrants regardless of status.

We need disaster relief that can get to all Angelenos, we need a right to work which does not depend on documentation, and we need small business promotion that includes firms owned by Black, Indigenous, and immigrant entrepreneurs. Political systems should open to include local voting by non-citizens and we need an aggressive campaign to naturalize all who are eligible.

6

Support education access for all children and all communities.

In the current situation, this means closing the digital divide, securing remote access for all families, and taking special steps to address the learning loss that has occurred in this period of disconnection. More broadly, we need an equity-oriented and anti-racist student performance framework that addresses community-based disparities.

7

Celebrate and support youth leadership and empowerment.

Youth who have intersectional identities of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity experience discriminatory disciplinary responses in education, child welfare, and juvenile justice. Changing this will require investments in youth leadership to challenge systems as well as training to ensure employment and entrepreneurship.

8

Strengthen the non-profit sector as a key part of civil society.

Local philanthropy has stepped in to provide emergency support for non-profits who provide services and promote leadership but this cannot be a one-time infusion. Ensuring resources, harmonizing application and reporting requirements, providing multi-year funding, and supporting less visible sectors, like organizations supporting Native Americans, will all be critical.

9

Build community power and develop accompanying metrics to hold systems accountable.

Those who are closest to the problem are closest to the solution – but they are often furthest from the power needed to impact public policy. We need to support youth and community organizing, develop and deploy accurate and inclusive metrics that can measure progress on racial equity, and hold systems accountable to performance not promises.

10

Align business, community, philanthropy, and government for equity.

Justice is everyone’s business and we need more effective and integrated governance structures, data, and information sharing across systems. But we also need a new sense of public will that what was once deemed politically unfeasible – reducing police budgets, achieving digital equality, and investing fully in education – is now imperative.

COVID-19 continues to ravage the nation and the state, with pain and death ripping through communities with the fewest protections. Recovery will be slow, pain will be persistent, and, unless addressed, income inequality may grow. Yet there is also an extraordinary opening as residents and leaders recognize the pandemic's wake-up call: that our failure to act in solidarity with one another – to value Black lives, to treasure immigrant families, to declare homelessness unacceptable, to be willing to shoulder the burdens of mutual support – has left our whole region far more vulnerable than necessary.

This moment begs of us to create something better. We can prioritize Black wellbeing, we can support immigrant inclusion, and we can highlight the needs of groups like Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and people with disabilities – all of which are so often invisibilized. We can make work pay a living wage, we can help entrepreneurs build wealth, and we can find new solutions to housing. We can redefine community safety, make schools hubs of learning and connection, and support youth and community organizing.

To do all this, the region, the state, and the nation will need to have a frank discussion about how to raise revenues, drive dollars to more effectively address needs, and forge a new civic commitment to equity and accountability. The time is now. We cannot go back to a past that never really worked; we must move forward together for an equitable and inclusive Los Angeles.

TOGETHER FOR AN EQUITABLE
AND INCLUSIVE LOS ANGELES



Context: Los Angeles and the State Budget

Part of that revenue discussion indicated above involves an examination of the relationship to state resources. Los Angeles comprises a disproportionate share of California by any measure or indicator. As Los Angeles goes, so goes our state. But, Los Angeles cannot afford to go it alone. State and federal assistance are imperative to responding to the health and economic effects of COVID-19 and to building a greater Los Angeles, one that reimagines, reinvests, and restructures what the economy looks like to ensure that all Los Angelenos can thrive.

In June 2020, Governor Newsom and state Legislative leaders enacted a budget for fiscal year 2020-21. While meeting constitutional requirements for a balanced budget and avoiding some of the worst-case outcomes envisioned early in this crisis, the enacted budget fails to recognize the urgency of the

moment and that our economic and fiscal future is already at an inflection point. The economic prospects of millions of Angelenos and Californians – particularly low-income households and Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, immigrants, and other people of color – already hang in the balance, exacerbated by structural racism and systems of inequity that locked them out of our state’s prosperity even before the pandemic.

Bolder and more visionary action will be needed from our state leaders to put Los Angeles, and all of California, on a path to more robust, equitable, and sustainable growth.

The 2020-21 budget deal reached by state leaders closed a \$54 billion shortfall that emerged between the Governor’s January proposal and the May revision to that proposal. Much of that shortfall was covered through the use of reserve funds built up over the last decade, federal relief funds enacted in March and April of 2020, temporary revenues, and borrowing from internal state funds. However, even after employing those budgetary tools, state leaders faced a sizeable remaining state shortfall. Instead of raising additional revenue through taxes and/or availing themselves of available and responsible borrowing options, state leaders chose a path of cutting vital supports and deferring state spending on schools and community colleges to future years.

Ultimately, the 2020-21 state budget was balanced through more than \$11 billion in cuts and deferrals – austerity measures that state leaders agreed could be triggered off if the state receives \$14 billion in federal fiscal relief by October 15, 2020.





The \$11.1 billion in total cuts and deferrals includes:

- \$6.6 billion in payment delays, or “deferrals,” to K-14 education (\$5.8 billion for K-12 schools and \$791.1 million for community colleges).
- \$1.9 billion in cuts to state employee compensation.
- \$498.1 million in cuts to the California State University (CSU) system.
- \$471.6 million in cuts to the University of California (UC) system.
- \$203 million in cuts to the infrastructure grant program operated by the state Department of Housing and Community Development.
- \$150 million in cuts to the judicial branch.
- \$88.4 million in cuts to the Golden State Teacher Grant Program operated by the California Student Aid Commission.
- \$46.4 million in cuts to the operation of the child support program.
- \$45 million in cuts for moderate-income housing production.
- A \$1.9 million cut to the Hastings College of the Law.

In other words, state leaders primarily balanced the budget on the backs of the state’s education systems – from early care and learning, to K-12, to higher education. What is more, the deferrals to K-12 schools will particularly fall disproportionately on schools and students. Why? Because deferrals are different than cuts in that they technically maintain the level of funding provided by the state, but defer the actual payments to later years. The schools are allowed to make up the difference by using their own reserves and borrowing – options that are more viable for school districts in higher-income districts that are more likely to serve white students. Districts in lower-income areas more likely to serve students of color tend to have fewer options to make up the loss of deferred state funding and will be forced to cut service to students.

As with all things California, a disproportionate share of those cuts will fall on Los Angeles.



There are a few bright spots in the 2020-21 state budget that signal pathways, if scaled up as part of a larger reinvestment strategy, by broadening inclusion and eligibility for state supports including:

- Immigrant families, with an adult with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), with children age 5 or younger will be able to access the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) and Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) for the first time in tax year 2020. This policy expansion helps immigrant families who earn little from their jobs and are shut out of federal relief to make ends meet.
- The budget agreement restores, starting in 2022, parents' lifetime limit for receiving CalWORKs (California's welfare-to-work program) cash support to 60 months, the maximum allowed for federally funded support and an increase over the current 48-month time limit, which was adopted in 2011 to address a state budget shortfall in the wake of the Great Recession. The budget agreement also eliminates confusing CalWORKs "time clock" requirements, which limited parents to only 24 months to focus on addressing serious barriers to finding work or completing an education.

Both policy advances are examples of how the state can restructure existing systems to be more inclusive and equitable and provide support to the households and families most likely to have been harmed by the health and economic effects of COVID-19. However, state leaders will need to take much bolder action across a broader range of services, and at a much larger scale, than is reflected in the 2020-21 budget.

The bottom line is that moving toward a greater Los Angeles, and a greater California, requires significant investment. State leaders cannot ignore how quickly COVID-19 has changed the fiscal outlook. Nor can they look away from the high price Angelenos and Californians are paying as they shoulder the economic impact of this crisis. Austerity measures will not move us forward. The clearest path requires the state to help the people, families, and organizations in Los Angeles that have been economically harmed by the crisis not just survive but recover and thrive. This requires significant public investment.

Policymakers have options to avoid cutting vital public supports and deferring payments that will cause further harm at a time when so many Californians are struggling with the health and economic implications of COVID-19. Beyond requesting additional federal fiscal relief, policymakers should borrow appropriately and raise taxes in ways that produce significant additional revenue and make the state's tax system more equitable.

We are living in unusual times that demand extraordinary responses. Doing what Angelenos need will mean making some difficult choices so that the state can provide and maintain targeted assistance to the individuals, families, and organizations most affected by the crisis and help to build future economic opportunity. These decisions may be big and daunting for state leaders, but they are our best shot at bending the curve of this pandemic and economic downturn in a direction that will benefit Angelenos and all Californians as quickly as possible and improve the state's economic and fiscal outlook.

Civic leaders in Los Angeles should use their collective leverage and power to ensure that state leaders recognize the gravity of this moment, its implications for the future, and take action to enable and ensure a greater Los Angeles.



Framing Principle: Infusing Equity into all Policies

Getting equity right in the lives of Angelenos is a complicated task. Questions about which policy areas and how they should be prioritized are important. However, as stated before this effort is the beginning of a conversation on how to create a Los Angeles that prioritizes those who have been left behind in so many areas of public and private life. Below we try to offer a starting point for that conversation by outlining a set of issue areas that will be important areas of reform for a new Los Angeles. We discuss building economic systems that prioritize those who have been previously excluded, creating a housing resilient Los Angeles, ending unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles, establishing cradle to grave core health care access, and to ensuring access, mobility, and voice for immigrants regardless of status.

We then turn to plans for developing culturally responsive interventions to improve wellbeing,

creating educational supports and access to a high-quality education for all students, investing in permanent alternatives to incarceration, supporting youth leadership and empowerment, strengthening the non-profit sector, and developing a transportation system that creates community and access.

In each section we provide an analysis of pre-existing inequalities that often exacerbated the impacts of COVID-19 and then detail how the effects of the disease and its aftermath have manifested in communities of color. We then close each section by providing a guiding vision for a way forward into a system that redresses these inequities. Each vision is supported by specific policies that operate at multiple levels, including recommendations to federal, state, and local government, as well as sectoral recommendations for private sector actors, community-based organizations and philanthropy.

This report is not the final word on the future for Los Angeles County. Instead it is an invitation to a conversation that examines our institutions and how they operate to exclude and to imagine a new future where the school to prison pipeline does not exist and communities can drive change for good. In fact, much of this report reflects the voice and beautiful thinking of many leaders across Los Angeles as they worked to discuss many of these complicated issues with sincerity and care. We gained insight and built on the contributions of these partners and seek to provide a framework and logic for the strategy and hope that this report spurs more ideas, honest conversation, and policy innovation.



POLICY SECTION 1

Economic Stress

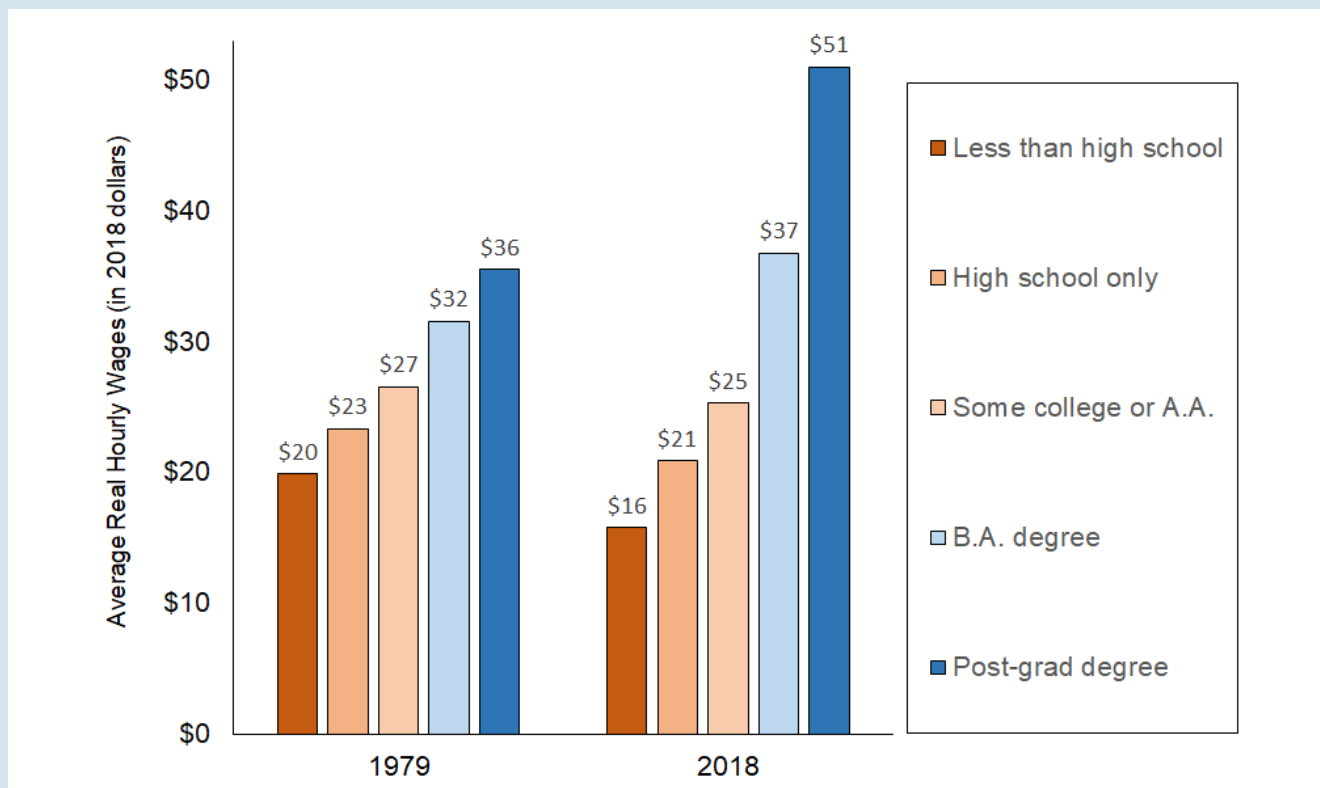
Economic Stress before the Pandemic

The public health and economic effects of COVID-19 have been particularly severe in Los Angeles County because of persistent social, economic, and racial inequities that were present prior to the current crisis. Prior to COVID-19, many economists were already worried about the prospects of a recession (Trentman 2019). Housing prices were still rising although at a slower rate and many could not afford housing with around 58 percent of renter households paying over 30 percent of their income on rent. Housing burden was unevenly distributed with the rates higher for many communities of color. Latino households and Black households were experiencing rent burden rates of 61 and 63 percent respectively and severe rent burden rates of 31 percent and 37 percent. In contrast, white households experience a rent burden rate of 53 percent and a severe rent burden rate of 30 percent (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a).

Wage inequality was also as high as it has ever been. Figure 1-1 shows while indeed having a college education leads to higher wages, in California, those with less than a high school degree today earn less now than they did in 1979, while those with a bachelors degree or post-graduate degree earn considerably more than in the past. Indeed, the inflation adjusted average hourly wage gap between the most and least educated worker has risen from \$16 to \$35.

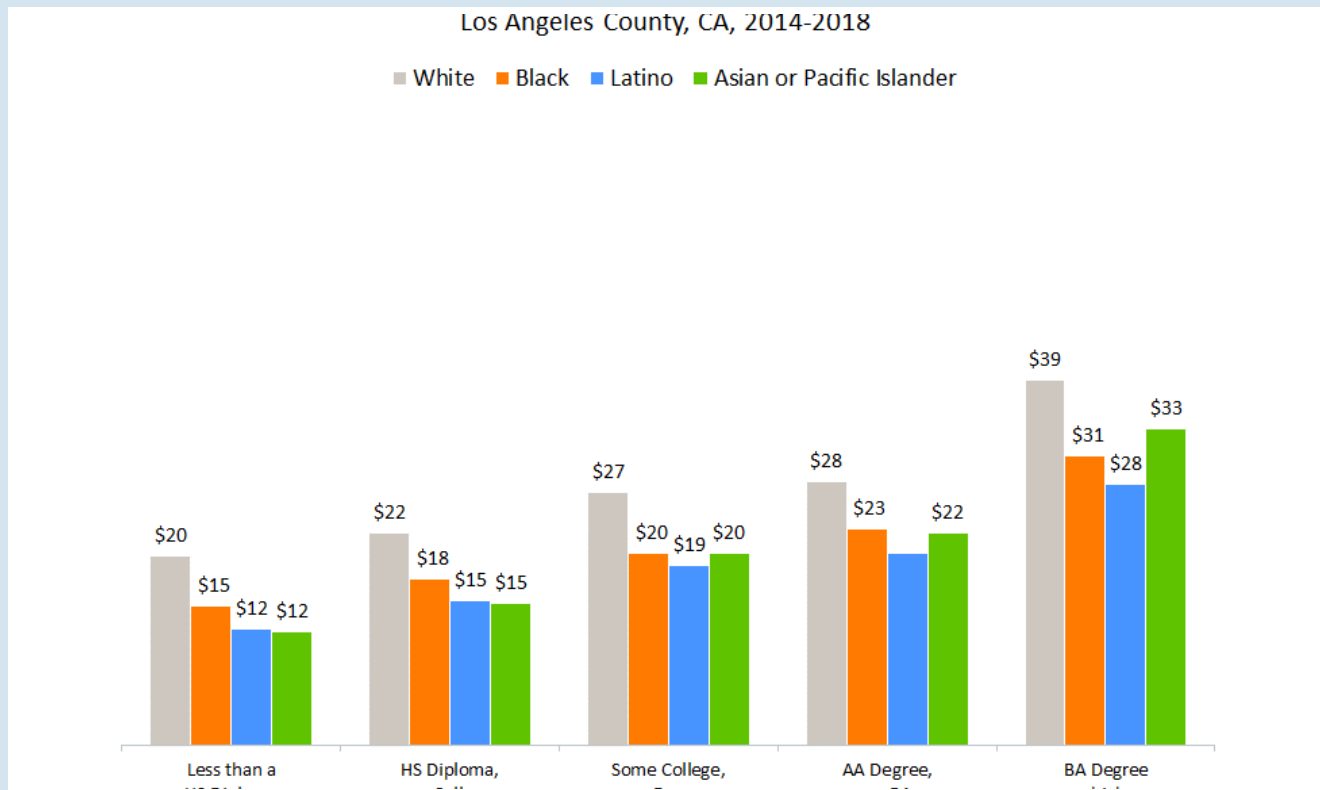
But looking at income disparity by race and education is only part of the story. In 2018, Black and Latino Angelenos with a bachelor's degree made \$31 and \$27 dollars per hour, while the median wage for their white counterparts with similar qualifications was \$39 per hour (see Figure 1-2) . Perhaps as striking: the pay disparities at every education level by race have actually grown since 1990 in today's inflation-adjusted

FIGURE 1-1: SHIFTING RETURNS TO EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA, 1979-2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of data from the 1980 and 2019 years of the March Supplement of the Current Population Survey from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes all people ages 25-64 who worked and had earnings during the year prior to the survey. Average wages were calculated by dividing annual earnings by weeks and hours worked in the previous year.

FIGURE 1-2: MEDIAN WAGE BY EDUCATION LEVEL, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute Analysis of 2018 5 year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes full-time wage and salary workers ages 25-64. Note: Data reflects a 2014-2018 average.

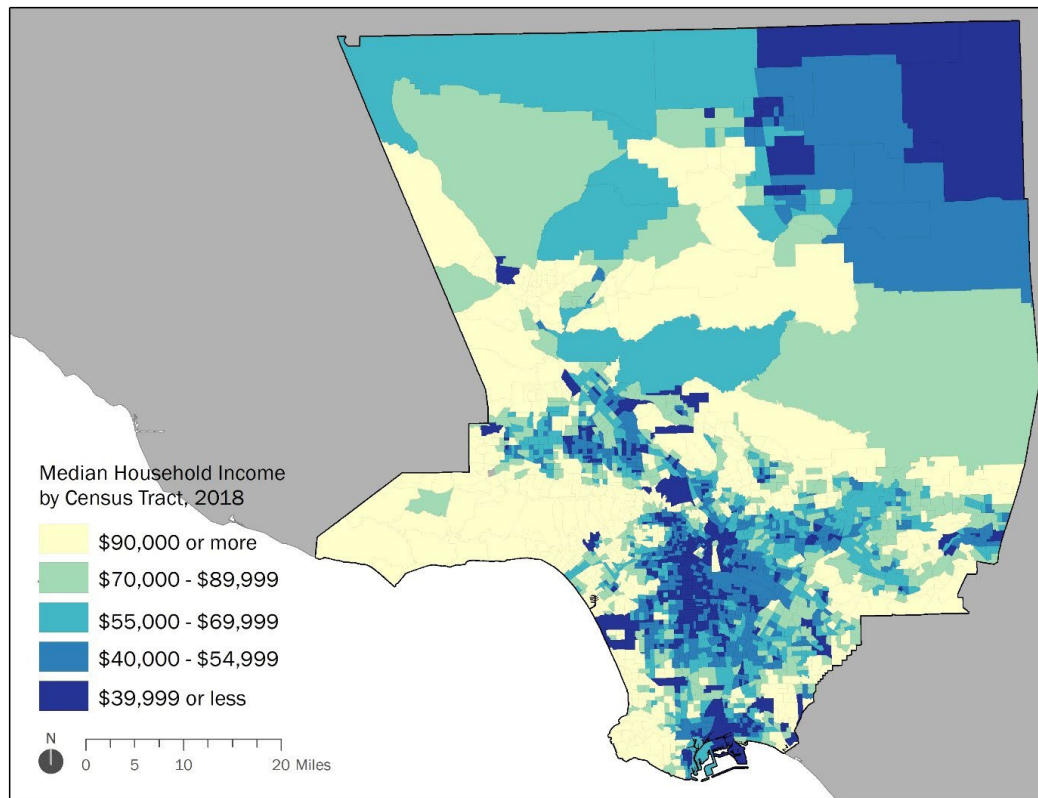
dollars. This pay disparity is all the more troubling considering MIT places the living wage to support a family of four at \$32.12 (Glasmeier 2020).

Economic fortunes were particularly uneven for families with children. In 2018, the median income for white households was around \$83,000 while the median income for African American and Latino households were around \$46,000 and \$52,000, respectively. But if we limit our analysis to households with at least one child under the age of five, that gap more than doubles (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). With families starting off at such a disparate place, Los Angeles is cementing poverty into the future of its children.

Upward mobility has been constrained for our county's entrepreneurs as well. Given the high costs of starting businesses and dearth of wealth in many communities of color, many small businesses,

particularly Black- and Latino-owned businesses have difficulties accessing capital (Pastor, Ortiz, and Lopez 2018). This wall of access can be an impenetrable force that depresses employment, considering that many minority entrepreneurs often create employment opportunities, employ, and locate their businesses in communities of color (Bates 2006).

Based on data from the National Survey of Business Owners in 2012 the rate of African American business owners per 1,000 African Americans in the labor force was 12, while the rate for whites is 83, creating a business ownership gap of 70 points (Policylink 2019). Because segregation has played such a part in the spatial formation of Los Angeles County, racial disparities often play themselves out geographically as well. As seen in Figure 1-3, many of the neighborhoods with the lowest incomes are centered in areas occupied by Black and Latino residents, particularly in South LA, the Southeast cities, the San Fernando

FIGURE 1-3: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS TRACT, 2018

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey summary file from the U.S. Census Bureau, TomTom, ESRI, HERE, Garmin, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community. Note: Data reflects a 2014-2018 average. Values are in 2018 dollars.

Valley and portions of the Antelope Valley. Other low-income communities include areas in Central Los Angeles around downtown, like Pico Union and portions of the San Fernando Valley.

How did we get here? For our recovery efforts, it is important to understand that many of the dynamics driving our inequality are national in scale. The education premium illustrated above is not just statewide but national. And yet even as education has come to matter more, achievement gaps for students of color, particularly Black students, have not been fully addressed or addressed at all. Employer discrimination, particularly against African Americans, remains persistent. Union membership often an indicator of worker power has been sinking. Between 1983 and 2019, the rate of private sector unionization in the Los Angeles Metro Area (which includes Orange County) was sliced by a third (from about 15 percent to 10 percent); public sector unionization rose from 48 percent to 55 percent, but this has added to a resentment of such workers as a drain on taxpayers,

a trend that sets up competition rather than solidarity (Hirsch and Macpherson 2020). Added to all of this turmoil have been the dynamics of globalization, outsourcing, and automation, all of which create economic uncertainty.

All of these trends have contributed to a decline in worker power. While increasing worker voice can help to create opportunities to safeguard worker safety and to ensure that industries appropriately compensate employees, the notion of worker voice has changed as the nature of work has changed. The rise of the gig economy as well as the rise in automation in a globalized economy pose significant obstacles for the way that labor unions currently operate – which is part of the reason for the significant decline referenced above. Partly as a result, unions have turned to a broader perspective, including raising the minimum wage for workers they do not represent and considering models where they can also advocate for issues that workers care about, including more socially responsible procurement, as well as

environmental and safety regulations.

As labor and communities of color were rethinking their strategies in this current historical moment, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The economic sectors that are the most vulnerable to the effects of the current recession employ close to 1.7 million people in the Los Angeles metropolitan area alone, and the majority of these workers were already in precarious economic conditions prior to the virus’s outbreak (Berube and

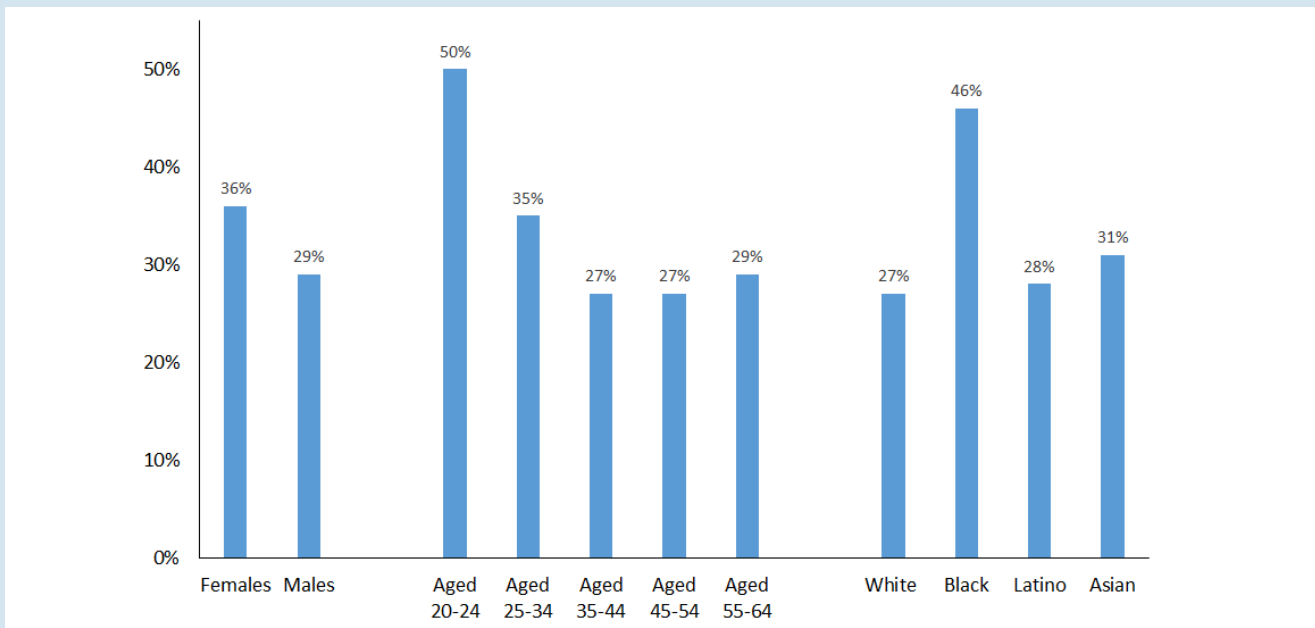
Bateman 2020). Workers of color are disproportionately represented in the essential workforce and the service, retail and hospitality industries. This implies a double risk for workers and communities of color: for those in the essential workforce, the risk of being disproportionately impacted by exposure to the coronavirus because of their jobs and for those in the non-essential service sector, the risk of being disproportionately affected by the economic downturn (Schneider and Harknett 2020).

The Pandemic and its Effects

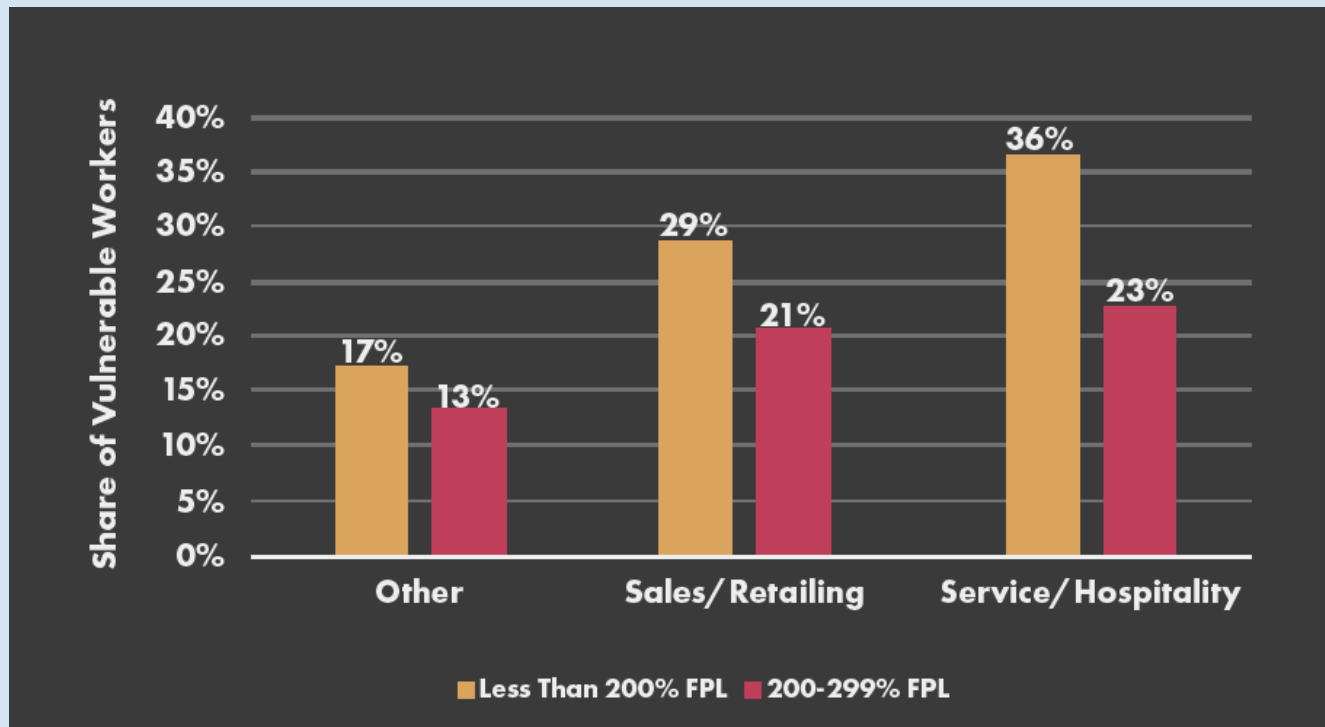
In the early months of the pandemic we saw the beginning of this unevenness fallout. Cities throughout Los Angeles County engaged in a mandatory lock down starting on March 19th, creating ripple effects throughout the economy. Businesses shuttered, offices moved to remote work environments, and everything appeared to stop. In the first month of the lockdown the economic effects were quick and lopsided.

According to the Los Angeles Economic Development Association, 90,750 people lost their jobs during the month of March pushing the county unemployment rate from 4.4 percent to 6.4 percent (Markle 2020). This was the largest spike in unemployment experienced by the county in decades. Businesses in leisure and hospitality industries were among the hardest hit (Markle 2020). As seen in Figure 1-4, the unemployment claims since March 15th

FIGURE 1-4: SHARE OF CALIFORNIA LABOR FORCE HAVING FILED FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



Source: California Policy Lab, California Unemployment Insurance Claims During the COVID-19 Pandemic. August 6, 2020. Available at: <https://www.capolicylab.org/california-unemployment-insurance-claims-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/#int-aug-6>. Note: Data counts the number of unique individuals filing claims between 3/15 and 7/25 as a share of each group’s pre-crisis (February) labor force. Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) claimants are included.

FIGURE 1-5: SHARE OF VULNERABLE WORKERS AT OR NEAR THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BY SECTOR.

Source: Ong, Paul, Silvia Gonzalez, and Carla Vasquez-Noriega. 2020. Implications of COVID-19 on At-Risk Workers by Neighborhood in Los Angeles. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative.

revealed that younger people, women, and Black workers were the hardest hit groups; Latinos were also sharply impacted but a significant share lack the documentation necessary to file unemployment claims. Without timely and bold policy intervention, low-income service sector workers and communities of color in Los Angeles will bear the brunt of the worst effects of the pandemic and the related economic recession. This will in turn magnify the severe structural inequities that existed prior to the pandemic.

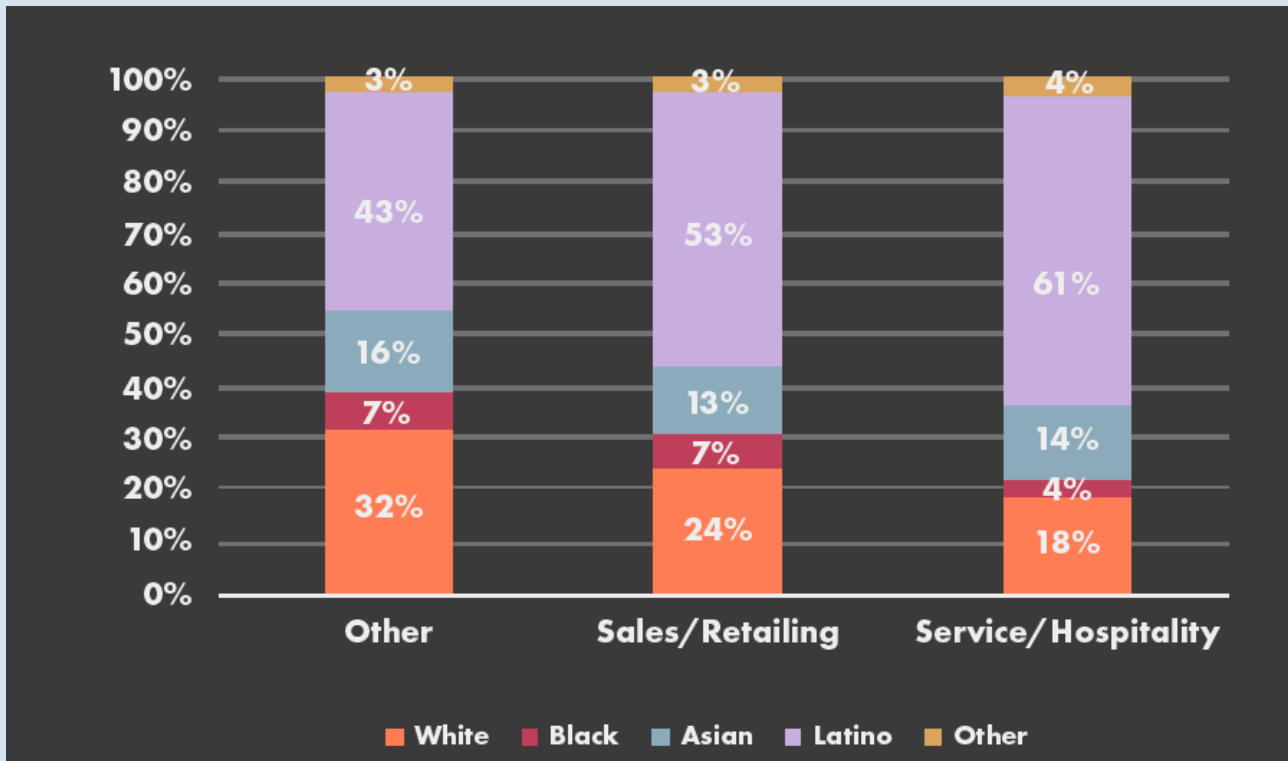
A research study conducted by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge brings attention to the precarious conditions in two of the most vulnerable industries to the effects of the current economic recession: retail and hospitality. As of 2018, workers in these industries were generally part of the “working poor,” meaning their incomes were typically below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. Looking at Figure 1-5 about 29 percent of sales/retail workers and 36 percent of hospitality workers earn below 200

percent of the poverty line, compared with only about 17 percent of those in other industries (Ong, Gonzalez, and Vasquez-Noriega 2020).

Overall, in the California service sector about half of workers still earn less than \$15 per hour, which due to the high-cost living in the state is substantially below a living wage. Moreover, 35 percent of workers in this sector are underemployed, meaning they are involuntarily working part-time hours. In addition to low wages and underemployment, workers in the service sector have limited access to paid sick leave, which in the midst of a global pandemic is more crucial than ever before.

On the health side, in California most workers are only legally entitled to 3 days of paid sick leave which is inadequate to adequately follow current health procedures related to COVID-19 and can put many workers in a compromising position if they were to contract the virus. Furthermore, 14 percent of workers in the service sector are not covered by health

FIGURE 1-6: RACIAL-ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF VULNERABLE WORKERS BY SECTOR IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CA



Source: Ong, Paul, Silvia Gonzalez, and Carla Vasquez-Noriega. 2020. Implications of COVID-19 on At-Risk Workers by Neighborhood in Los Angeles. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative.

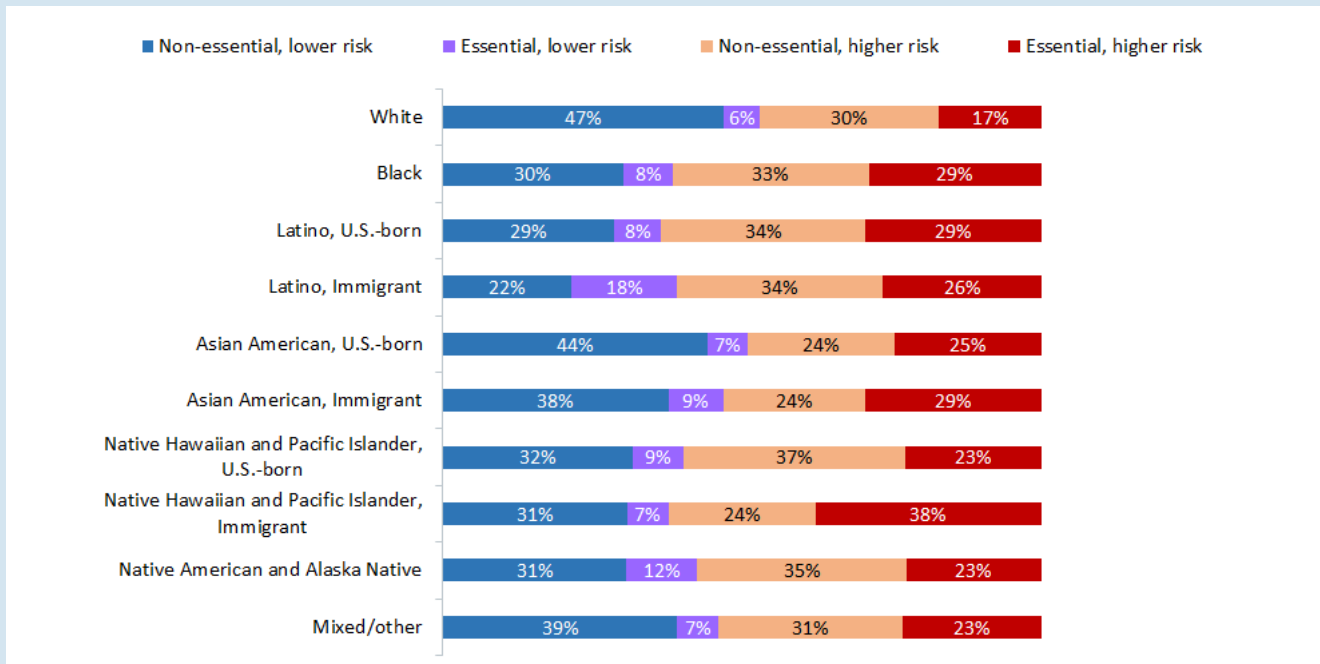
insurance which would put them at risk of acquiring expensive hospital bills if exposed to COVID-19 (Schneider and Harknett 2020). Compounding the effects of this unstable economic and health situation for workers in the service sector is the fact that these workers are often part of a family unit; 82 percent of sales/retail workers and 75 percent of hospitality workers live in a family household (Ong, Gonzalez, et al. 2020).

Workers of color are overrepresented in both the essential workforce and the economically vulnerable retail and hospitality industries. In particular, there is a disproportionate share of Latino workers in these industries. Figure 1-6 shows that Latinos make up 53

percent of the workers in the sales/retail sector and 61 percent of the hospitality sector in Los Angeles County (Ong, Gonzalez, et al. 2020).

When considering essential workers who are at risk of being exposed to the negative health consequences of contracting COVID-19, workers of color are also overrepresented. As demonstrated in Figure 1-7, around 30 percent of Black, U.S.-born Latino and immigrant Asian American workers in Los Angeles County fall in that category while about a quarter of immigrant Latino, U.S.-born Asian American and Pacific Islander, Native American and workers of mixed or another race do. The figure is a striking 38 percent for Pacific Islander immigrants; by contrast, only 17 percent of

FIGURE 1-7: WORKERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY/NATIVITY, EMPLOYMENT IN ESSENTIAL OCCUPATIONS AND OCCUPATIONAL COVID-19 RISK, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



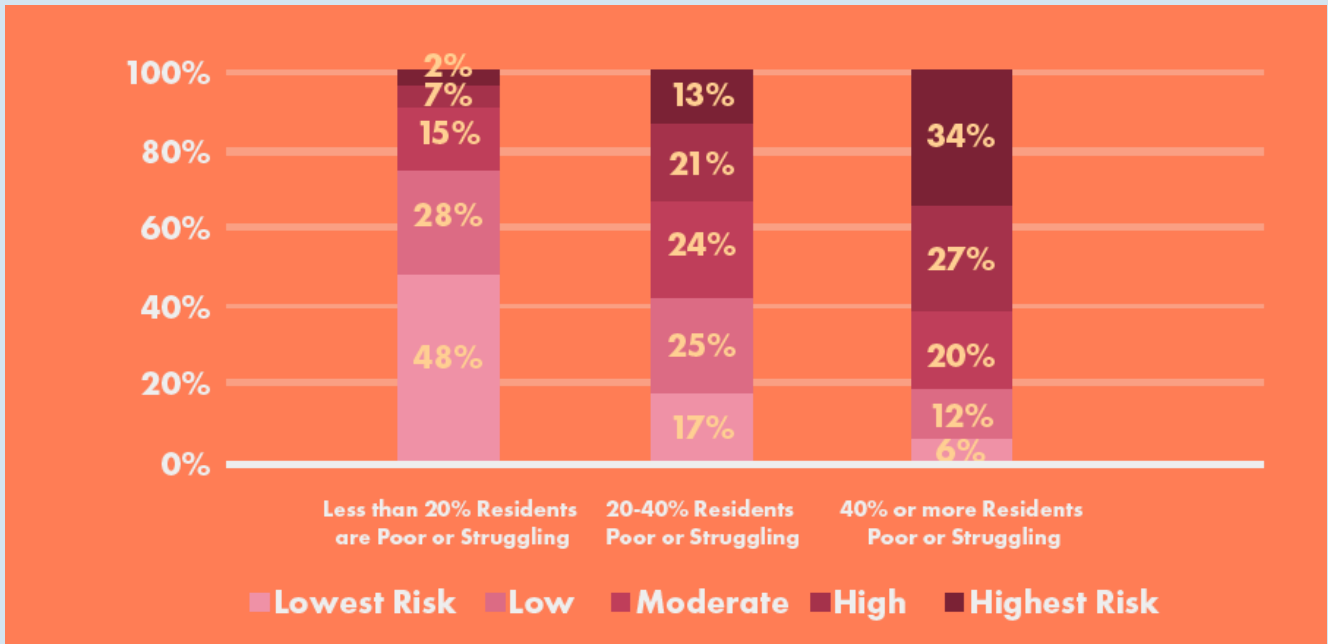
Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of data from the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA and O*NET. Note: Universe includes employed civilian noninstitutional population age 16 or older in occupations with valid data for the O*NET physical proximity score. Essential occupations were identified based on an assessment of information from federal and state sources. Higher-risk occupations are defined as having an O*NET physical proximity score of greater than 3.25.

white workers are in essential, higher risk work.

Low-income neighborhoods are also at a disproportionately high risk of suffering the negative consequences of the ongoing economic crisis. Neighborhoods with the highest rate of workers with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty line are also home to the highest share of at-risk service and retail workers (Ong, Gonzalez, et al. 2020). Figure 1-8 shows that in neighborhoods where

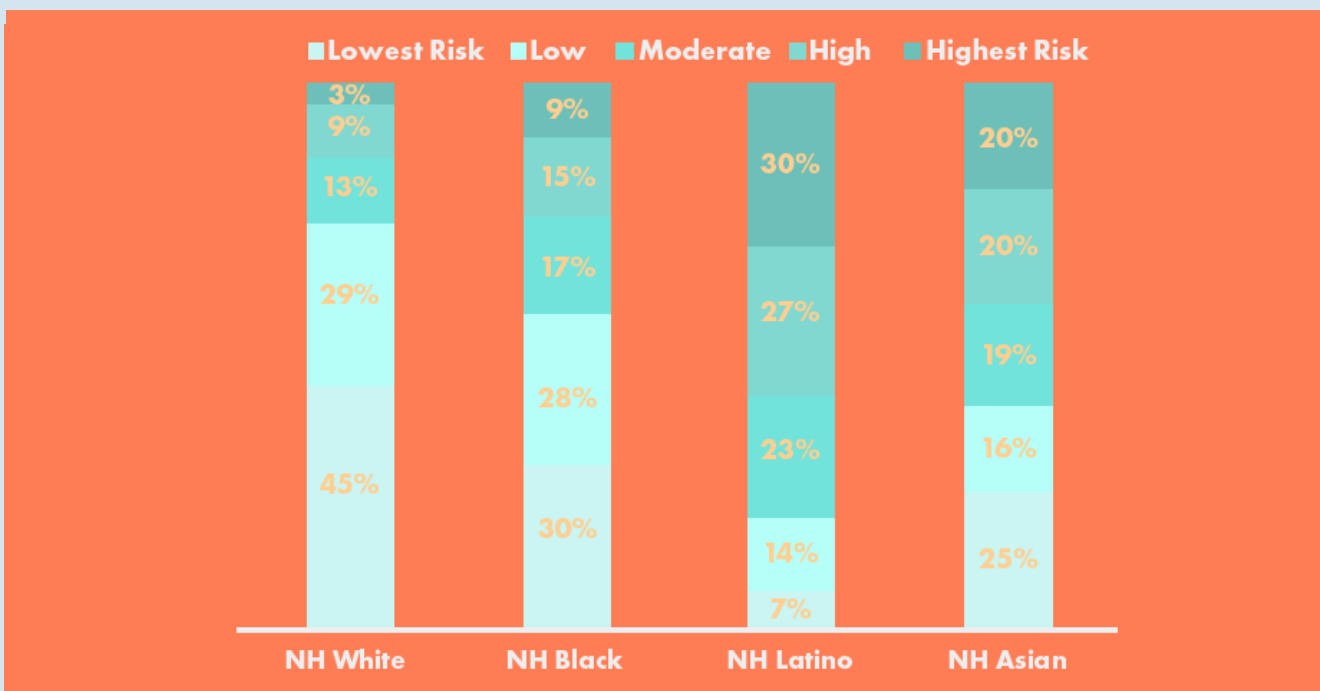
40 percent or more of the residents are below that income threshold, the share of at-risk workers is over 61 percent. In comparison, neighborhoods with 20 percent or less workers below that threshold are home to only 9 percent of at-risk workers. This is compounded by the fact that the wages of workers in these sectors are less than half of those in other sectors of the economy. These figures further confirm that those who are already most vulnerable to income loss and economic instability will carry a heavier

FIGURE 1-8: BREAKDOWN OF COVID-19 RISK CATEGORIES OF VULNERABLE WORKERS BY PROPORTION OF POOR OR STRUGGLING RESIDENTS IN A NEIGHBORHOOD IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CA



Source: Ong, Paul, Silvia Gonzalez, and Carla Vasquez-Noriega. 2020. Implications of COVID-19 on At-Risk Workers by Neighborhood in Los Angeles. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative.

FIGURE 1-9: BREAKDOWN OF COVID-19 RISK CATEGORIES OF RETAIL AND SERVICE WORKERS ACROSS ETHNIC-MAJORITY NEIGHBORHOODS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CA



Source: Ong, Paul, Silvia Gonzalez, and Carla Vasquez-Noriega. 2020. Implications of COVID-19 on At-Risk Workers by Neighborhood in Los Angeles. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative.

burden from the effects of the pandemic (Ong, Gonzalez, et al. 2020).

Figure 1-9 shows that as a consequence of the overrepresentation of workers of colors in vulnerable industries, neighborhoods where Latino, Black, and Asian American residents are a majority have a larger proportion of workers at risk of being laid-off or who could experience income losses due to the economic downturn than white neighborhoods. Majority-Latino neighborhoods have a share of 57 percent of workers in vulnerable occupations in the sales/retail and hospitality industries. While Asian American-majority neighborhoods have a 40 percent share and majority-Black neighborhoods have a 24 percent share. In contrast, white-majority neighborhoods only have a 12 percent share of workers in vulnerable sectors (Ong, Gonzalez, et al. 2020). This suggests, and is evident in the early unemployment numbers laid out above, that the effects of the epidemic will be lopsided and will have a potentially devastating effect on working-class communities of color in Los Angeles County.

Another consequence of the economic downturn caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 is increased vulnerability for renters in Los Angeles County who were already reeling from years of rent increases and affordable housing shortages. This increased vulnerability is heavily concentrated in working-class communities of color in Los Angeles County. While state and local officials have taken temporary measures to alleviate the immediate threat of a massive wave of evictions, these measures do not address this concerning issue and its potential long-term negative economic effects.

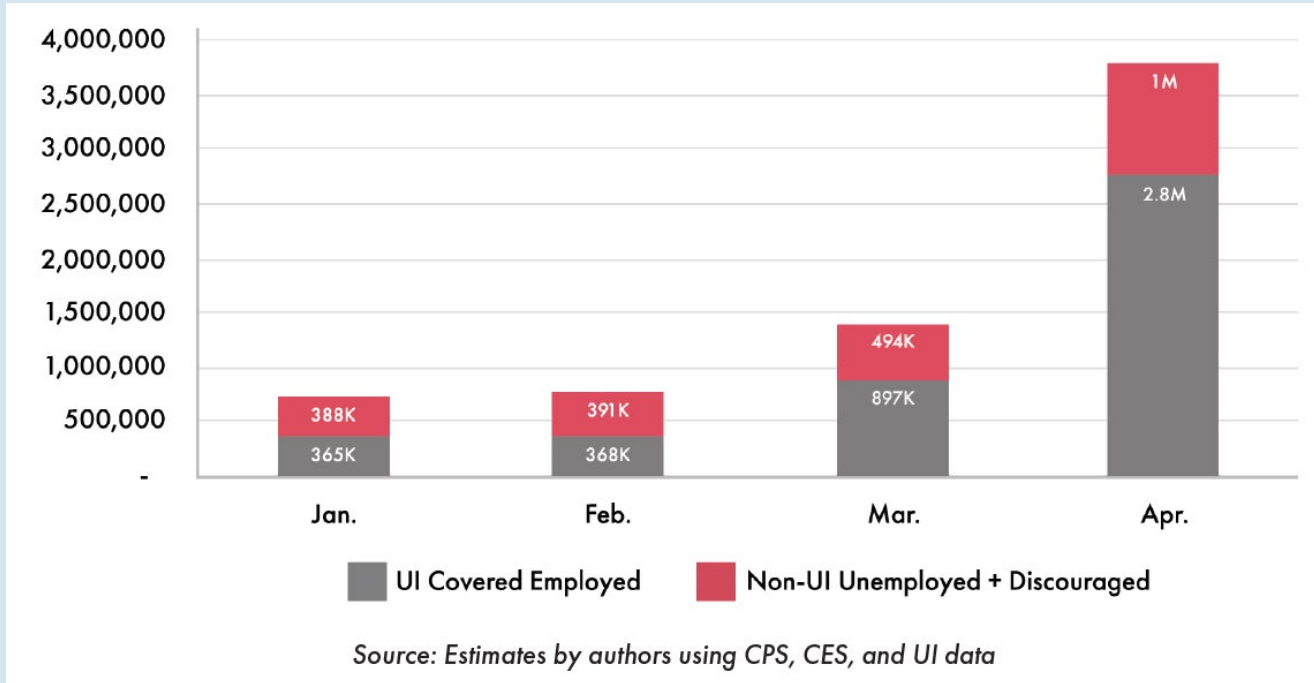
A study of renter vulnerability factors in Los Angeles County neighborhoods such as high unemployment rates, high rates of renters spending over 50 percent of their income on rent, and workers in at-risk occupations found that the most vulnerable neighborhoods have a disproportionate share of Black and Latino residents as seen in Table 1-1. As well as a disproportionately high share of residents with incomes below \$35,000 annually and with educational attainments below high-school

TABLE 1-1: NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS BY RENTER VULNERABILITY INDEX

	Lowest Vulnerability	Low	Moderate	High	Highest Vulnerability
% White renters	45%	33%	23%	18%	12%
% Asian renters	14%	14%	12%	11%	10%
% Black renters	8%	11%	12%	15%	15%
% Latinx renters	29%	39%	51%	54%	61%
% Immigrants	27%	33%	37%	41%	45%
% Renters with less than \$35K	25%	34%	41%	47%	55%
% Households with assets	25%	17%	12%	8%	6%
% Renters with less than high school education	9%	17%	26%	32%	39%
% Renters with college education	44%	33%	24%	19%	16%
Number of census tracts	300	300	299	297	304

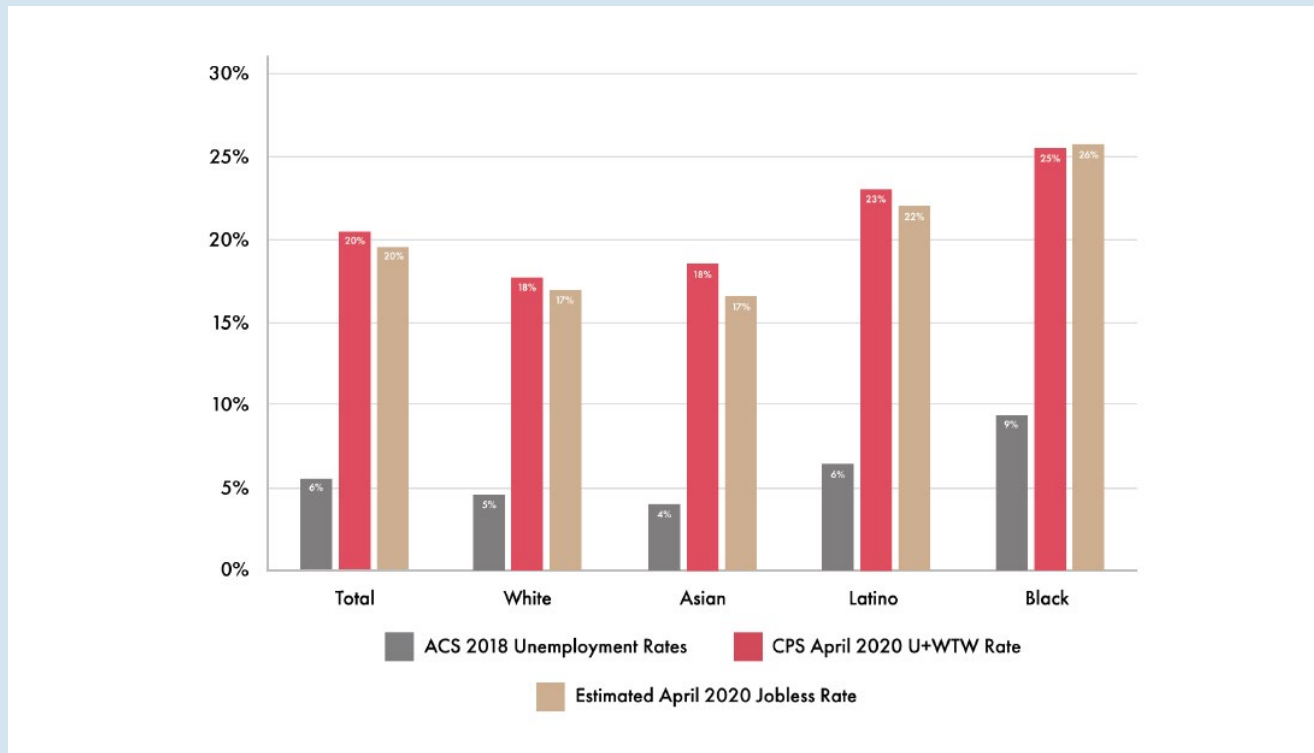
Source: Ong, Paul M., Chhandara Pech, Elena Ong, Silvia Gonzalez, and Jonathan Ong. 2020. L.A.'s COVID-19 Crisis: The Most At-Risk Neighborhoods, Ranked by Demographic, SocioEconomic and Housing Characteristics. UCLA Ziman Center for Real Estate and the UCLA Anderson Forecast. Note: The reported values in the table represents the average (mean) of all the census tracts in each neighborhood type.

FIGURE 1-10: CALIFORNIA JOBLESS WORKER COUNTS, JANUARY- APRIL 2020



Source: Ong, Paul, Chhandara Pech, Silvia Gonzalez, Sonja Diaz, Jonathan Ong, Elena Ong, and Julie Aguilar. 2020. Jobless During a Global Pandemic. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative.

FIGURE 1-11: CALIFORNIA UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOBLESS RATES, 2018 AND APRIL 2020



Source: Ong, Paul, Chhandara Pech, Silvia Gonzalez, Sonja Diaz, Jonathan Ong, Elena Ong, and Julie Aguilar. 2020. Jobless During a Global Pandemic. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative.

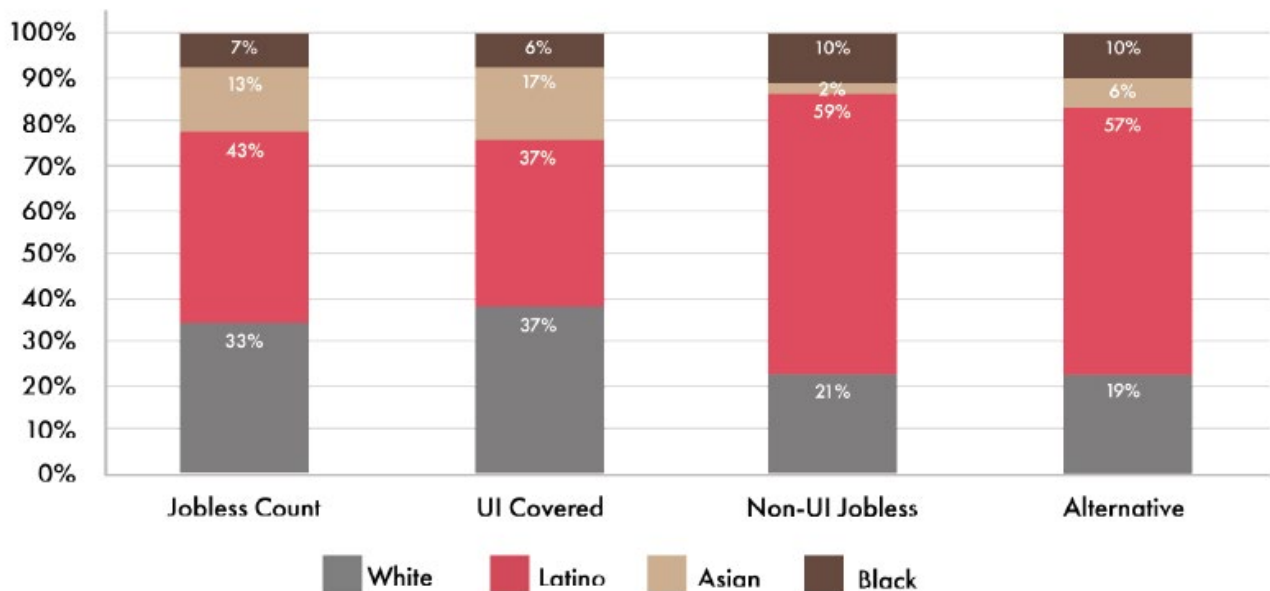
education. Additionally, immigrant residents are highly concentrated in neighborhoods with the highest levels of renter vulnerability (Ong, Paul M. et al. 2020). According to researchers at UCLA working on another report on evictions, about 449,000 of those unemployed and with no income live in about 365,000 units of rental housing and are at risk of eviction many of which are People of Color (Blasi 2020).

Equally concerning is the fact that many workers in these communities are excluded from unemployment insurance which could help lessen the blow of the economic recession. Between March and April 2020, total job losses in California numbered around 2.3 million, the most of any state in the country (Employment Development Department, State of California 2020). A research study by the UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge estimates that 27 percent of those who lost their jobs in April 2020, about 1 million people, were not covered by unemployment insurance. Furthermore, job losses affected workers of color disproportionately, with the jobless rate reaching 22 percent and 26 percent for Black and Latino Californians, respectively. In comparison, the jobless rates for white and Asian

American Californians reached 17 percent (Figure 1-12) (Ong, Pech, Gonzalez, et al. 2020).

Aggravating the situation is the fact that Latinos are disproportionately excluded from unemployment insurance. Latinos in California comprise 43 percent of the jobless population due to COVID-19 but make up 59 percent of jobless workers who did not receive unemployment insurance coverage (Figure 1-12). Similarly, Black Californians comprise 7 percent of the jobless population but are 10 percent of those who did not receive unemployment insurance coverage. These figures indicate that Black and Latino Californians combined are one and a half times more likely to be excluded from unemployment insurance coverage than other racial/ethnic groups (Ong, Pech, Gonzalez, et al. 2020). Lack of access to unemployment insurance, particularly for Latino and Black Californians, has the potential of exacerbating the negative economic impact of the ongoing economic crisis and will have long-term ramifications, which will magnify existing economic and racial inequalities.

FIGURE 1-12: CALIFORNIA'S APRIL 2020 SHARE OF JOBLESS INDIVIDUALS BY UI COVERAGE AND BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Source: Estimates by authors data from DOLETA and California Policy Lab

Source: Ong, Paul, Chhandara Pech, Silvia Gonzalez, Sonja Diaz, Jonathan Ong, Elena Ong, and Julie Aguilar. 2020. Jobless During a Global Pandemic. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge and UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Initiative.

Building a New Economy for All

Our goal is to build an economy that prioritizes those who have been left behind, particularly low-income communities of color. While the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities, they existed prior to it. We believe that the unprecedented crisis communities are facing presents an opportunity to not just provide temporary relief to those most affected by the pandemic but to begin setting the foundations for a more just society.

Current policy approaches have focused on mitigating the most immediate effects of the health and economic crisis. This has meant a reliance on temporary measures such as eviction moratoriums, temporary economic relief such as stimulus checks, and increased unemployment benefits. Yet, it is not clear that these measures will be enough to avoid catastrophic effects for working-class communities of color in Los Angeles. More significantly, these measures do little to address long-standing structural inequities which have made these communities particularly vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic and related economic recession.

As Los Angeles seeks to recover from the current crisis, the status quo will not suffice. As Ibram X. Kendi notes in his book *Stamped from the Beginning*, “when you truly believe that the racial groups are equal, then you also believe that racial disparities must be the result of racial discrimination.” A complete recovery must prioritize lifting those who are the most vulnerable and who have disproportionately suffered the harmful effects of the crisis. An economy that works for the people, roots out discrimination in our economy and society. A new economy would acknowledge that geographic disparities and racial disparities are inherently linked through segregation and seek to distribute state and local tax revenues back to the people of California rather than to specific jurisdictions. The business sector has both interest and a role in this more equitable future; as we argue earlier, less inequality and segregation can generate sustainable job growth and closing the racial income gap could yield over \$300 billion in additional regional GDP (USC Equity Research Institute 2020b). Together, we must see this moment of crisis as an opportunity

to boldly move into a new direction and finally take steps towards undoing the systemic barriers that have prevented Los Angeles from achieving social and economic equity for all. This effort will require a massive movement for the following recommendations:

Provide Cash Assistance to Low-Income Workers and Those Who Have Lost Work or Experienced Reduced Hours.

The most urgent need for displaced workers and workers who have seen their hours and wages reduced is, simply, cash. Their ability to pay rent, put food on the table, and afford other basic necessities requires cash assistance for them to bridge the period of time when they are out of work or have seen their hours and wages cut back. While many families are struggling with income losses, BIPOC are disproportionately affected -- since mid-March, 64.8 percent of Latino and 55.6 percent of Black households in California reported a loss of employment income, compared to just under half of white households (Allegretto and Liedtke 2020).

Expand and increase access to Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits and close UI eligibility and earnings/wage replacement gaps. Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits, provided by federal and state governments, are the first line of defense -- providing cash assistance in direct response to workers losing employment. The CARES act enacted in March 2020 temporarily expanded unemployment insurance eligibility to include gig workers, part-time workers, and self-employed individuals; added up to 13 weeks of eligibility beyond state-level duration limits; and, expanded and extended federal UI benefits, providing an additional \$600/week on top of benefits provided by individual states. In California, the maximum weekly benefit is \$450/week and the average benefit level is approximately \$300, meaning that California workers who lost employment in recent months were eligible for around \$1,000/week. However, the extension of the expanded federal benefits expired

at the end of July without further federal action. Continued expansion of UI benefits, ideally at the federal level and in combination with state efforts, is imperative in the near-to-medium term. State efforts, in particular, should seek to fill gaps in federal benefits and shortcomings with the current state-level benefits, including:

- Ensuring that benefits are available to all workers, regardless of immigration status.
- Increase funding to support outreach efforts to ensure all eligible workers have access to culturally and linguistically competent information and technical assistance to successfully apply for UI benefits, particularly in the most vulnerable areas (Ong, Pech, Gonzalez, et al. 2020).
- Increasing the earnings/wage replacement rate (most workers are only receiving about one-half of their pre-unemployment earnings absent the recent federal benefits expansion).
- Increasing the UI “earnings disregard” – the amount of earnings/wages that are disregarded for determining UI eligibility, allowing people to work temporarily and part-time while unemployed.
- Create a State fund to extend help to workers excluded from unemployment insurance coverage, regardless of immigration status.
- Extend wage-gap assistance for workers who take leave to quarantine themselves, care for a family member, or are unable to perform their normal job duties due to risk of infection.

Provide basic income support to low-income workers in California through the CalEITC and Young Child Tax Credit. Our current systems of safety net benefits and cash assistance provide temporary relief (unemployment) or have a mix of eligibility requirements and restrictions that don’t align, or provide relief for specific purposes (being out of work, a senior, for housing, etc.). We need a system that doesn’t base levels of benefits on work and recognizes that the people affected are most able to determine how to make ends meet for their households and provide them with the cash to make the best decisions for their households/families. In short, we need a basic income policy for

low-income households. We can do this using the state’s combination of an EITC (CalEITC) and Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) by including all immigrant households regardless of status, giving the credits to caregivers (those unable to work due to caring for children, seniors, and people with disabilities), low-income adult-age students, and increasing the EITC for childless adults. These policy changes would essentially turn the CalEITC/YCTC into a basic income program providing cash assistance to low-income households regardless of immigration status, work status, and household composition.

Protect workers by ensuring paid leave, schedule stability, and benefit systems.

Ensure paid sick leave for workers. The US lags behind other countries in the world in ensuring workers have access to paid time off to care for themselves or their families (World Policy Analysis Center 2020). This forces workers to make difficult choices between paying the bills or caring for themselves or their families. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics study, paid-leave disparities exist particularly for Latino workers who have lower rates of paid-leave access to any paid family or medical leave, as well as to specific types of leave, such as paid parental leave and paid leave to care for a sick family member, for one’s own illness, and for eldercare (Bartel et al. 2019). While California has been at the forefront in requiring that employers provide paid sick leave, the state now lags most other states in minimum requirements for employers and the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more urgent than ever to increase paid leave for particularly vulnerable workers. As the law currently stands, many workers would not have enough paid leave to comply with health policies and guidelines in the case that they contracted COVID-19. Low-income workers and in particular workers who are providing essential services, should not be economically pressured to work when sick or have to make choices between foregoing essential needs such as food and shelter to care for their health. Thus, we should expand paid sick leave statewide to at least 2 weeks for all workers and particularly for workers in the essential industries who are required to work during the pandemic (Schneider and Harknett 2020).

Expand paid family leave (PFL) benefits for workers.

The United States also lags behind its global peers in establishing national policies that allow workers paid time off work to care for their family. California was the first state in the nation to provide paid family leave (enacted 2002; started 2004) and remains at the forefront of this policy, but the state's policy still fails to protect many low-wage workers, particularly Black and Latino workers (Schumacher and Davalos 2019). The California Paid Family Leave program was recently expanded so caregivers will be allowed to take up to eight weeks of paid time off, effective July 1, 2020. Currently, the vast majority of workers in California contribute to paid family leave and are eligible for the benefits they have earned. However, the state's family leave program does not include adequate job protections. Workers do qualify for job protections under either the CA Family Rights Act or the New Parent Leave Act. The former only applies to organizations with 50 or more employees. The latter applies to organizations with 20+ employees. So, if a worker needs to care for a spouse with cancer, she can't use paid family leave feeling secure she will have a job when she returns if she works for an organization with less than 50 employees. If she takes leave to bond with a child, she doesn't have job protections if she works for an employer with less than 20 employees. Additional state action will almost certainly be necessary to make sure workers have adequate access to paid time off during this pandemic to care for themselves or for their family, including:

- Extending job protections to all workers who use family or medical leave, regardless of the size of the employer (depending on what happens with SB 1383, currently pending in the state Legislature).
- Increasing the wage/earnings replacement rate in the state program, which currently covers only 60-70 percent of workers' wages when they take paid family leave.
- Expanding the period of time, beyond 8 weeks, that caregivers have available to care for a family member.

Ensure fair work week and scheduling practices.

State policymakers can pass comprehensive fair-workweek legislation that gives employees predictable schedules with stable hours. Without a predictable

schedule with consistent hours, families have difficulty arranging child care and balancing their household budget. Unpredictable work schedules also make it hard for parents to go back to school or engage in job training, limiting economic mobility.

Create industry worker safety boards. These boards which could bring together employers and employees to set safe operating conditions; such efforts have been useful in both the building cleaning and grocery industries. Sectoral efforts would make it possible to alleviate the sporadic nature of individual bargaining units creating industry wide safety standards that eliminate free-riders. This approach could create a platform for subsequent industry wide bargaining over wages and working conditions in sectors where formal worker representation through unions is weak.

Develop systems of portable benefits. As the pandemic weighs on, more and more people are becoming dislocated from their health care coverage as well as other benefit systems. This is part of a bigger trend as many workers go through multiple jobs in their career and may even change industries, and so lose benefits they have accrued. A new system could tie benefits to the individual and can be carried through multiple jobs, with the flexibility to fund the benefit package through multiple sources. This would have to happen at the state level but the time is right.

Invest in mutually beneficial initiatives that redress chronic community conditions and grow the economy.

Invest in high-speed connectivity. Weaving through the pros and cons of supporting any given sector during this time can be daunting, however there are clear areas where investment can create win-win situations. Some of the most obvious areas deal with investments to address crucial sectors impacted by COVID-19 like housing and in education. Recognizing the uneven access to computers or wireless internet, the state and county could make unprecedented investments in expanding wireless access. Already the county has invested in creating wireless hotspots to serve families, but if we could connect every community to high-speed wired or wireless internet

we could create new jobs to meet the infrastructure demand as well as create new markets for the online economy. To make the promise of digital access real, we will also have to consider subsidies for low-income internet users, investments in distributed equipment, and development of programs to enhance user expertise in low-income communities of color.

Continue with workforce development partnerships that tackle key growing sectors, such as health, biomedical, and advanced manufacturing. Work closely with the community college system to create pathways to those sectors for students of color, particularly Black students. Develop programs like the “cloud certificate” program operating in L.A.’s community colleges and high schools that provide relatively quick access to decent-paying jobs in growing high-tech sectors (Smith 2019).

Stabilize the Rental Market by ensuring that landlords stay in business and tenants do not get displaced. Consider a *Blueprint for Rent Market Stabilization* like the one proposed by Gary Painter of USC (Painter 2020). This blueprint notes that a long term solution requires a plan that tenants, landlords, and creditors can respond to. It requires a financing mechanism for the accrued back rent so that landlords can get paid now. Finally, it requires a formula to take into account ability to pay for renters. If implemented, the financed back rent could be paid off over 10 years at low or no interest.

Infuse more money into building housing. Housing is a crucial key to the economic recovery as well as safeguarding our future health. In order to adequately house people who are both vulnerable to COVID-19 and experiencing homelessness, 15,000 units will need to be created or converted. Beyond that, another 45,000 units will need to be created to house the entirety of population experiencing homelessness. Just as significant, Los Angeles is roughly half a million units short of meeting affordable housing needs.

Push for more rental subsidies. If the housing market is able build more units at the median rent, people with low and moderate incomes could be subsidized to reduce their rent burden. Currently, almost 1 million households in the Los Angeles Metro region pay more than 50 percent of their income as rent on rents that are below the median. Estimates ranging from 1 in 4 to 1 in 8 of eligible households for

federal housing choice vouchers, receive them. We must do more for eligible households that do not receive vouchers to reduce their housing precarity.

Address the stark racial wealth gap by encouraging homeownership through grants and funding first time buyer programs that account for Los Angeles’s higher cost of living. While reparations will require federal intervention, programs that allow appropriate assessments of credit worthiness are needed to allow equitable access to start-up capital, down payments, and low interest loans.

Invest in the “caring economy.” The largest demographic changes affecting California’s future are the aging of our population and the size and diversity of California’s child-and youth-aged population: These realities will require a massive expansion in care workers, including in childcare as working parents in the “sandwich generation” find themselves pressed with concerns about both their parents and their kids. This is a part of the workforce with a high representation of Black and immigrant women; improving training, wages, and conditions would be a win-win for consumers and workers alike. Policy advances needed include:

- A significant expansion of the number of slots in the state-subsidized child care system.
- Increases in the reimbursement rates and wages for childcare and in-home support services (IHSS) providers to ensure that caregivers can earn a living wage while providing vital caregiving services.
- Investment in facilities to ensure that child and senior care facilities are safe for caregivers and those being cared for, particularly amid the realities of the pandemic.

Fund, maintain, and prioritize public transportation. The rapid move to work from home and the enforcement of quarantine measures dealt a devastating blow to the public transportation system. As transit agencies move to stop the bleeding service cuts are most certainly in order. The result is that when workers are finally able to return to work transportation ease and reliability are not ensured. In order to keep this vital lifeline available we need to develop funding strategies that help to fill the gap that transit agencies are experiencing.

Prevent families from falling through the cracks.

Many programs that aid families have often changing and conflicting eligibility requirements leaving certain families and family members without support or creating complicated hoops for families to jump through. We need to develop program supports for the entire family without segmentation of programs to provide the resources the family as a whole needs. In order to do this successfully, the governments can embrace sliding scale programs where funding support will continue until the individual or family reaches a stable income level.

Support businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and women.

Overhaul and simplify procurement and certification processes for all cities and the county, including the consideration of a shared application system that could make small business connections simpler.

Encourage businesses to diversify supply chains and expand opportunities for business owners of color. For example, Kaiser Permanente and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, have teamed up for a \$60 million partnership to help support 2,000 businesses Black- and people of color-owned businesses nationwide, and Kaiser has committed to continue with its efforts to purchase up to \$2 billion a year of businesses owned by veterans, women, people of color, disabled individuals, and LGBTQ individuals (Kaiser Permanente 2020).

Engage banks in a major effort to increase lending to viable small businesses, particularly those owned by BIPOC and operating in communities of color, in order to make it through this emergency and thrive. Recent changes to the Community Reinvestment Act created fears that banks would no longer honor their responsibilities to ensure lending in communities of color (Masunaga and Avery 2020). Local efforts must encourage banks to continue to engage communities of color and expand fair access to capital for businesses owned by BIPOC. In addition, further advocacy must be done on the national level to reduce discrimination and expand asset building for communities of color.

Support social enterprise. Most social enterprises are in non-profit organizations. While these have access to grant funding, they do not have equal access to investment capital. Those social enterprises that are organized as for profit entities are often disadvantaged in the capital markets because they focus on a social rate of return, rather than a private rate of return. Impact investing ecosystems need to be cultivated to include equity explicitly as a metric of success and to recognize that actions taken by social enterprises have ancillary benefits in our systems of social support. Finally, social enterprises must be included within systems of social change, rather than viewed as separate entities that are not well linked to the diffusion of social change strategies.

Encourage businesses to recruit, hire and promote Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Create a campaign to overhaul hiring practices to ensure better representation and recruitment of communities of color. Work with chambers, business associations, and businesses themselves to uncover and eliminate the sort of bias that stops hiring, stalls promotion, and yields divergent wages for BIPOC even when they have the same education level as white counterparts.

Enlist business support to overturn Proposition 209. The elimination of Affirmative Action stripped a tool out of the toolbox of racial and economic justice. Business should affirm its support for moving past that era and creating the ability to achieve hiring and promotion goals with the most robust and effective tools available.

Reform our revenue base

Consider reform to our state tax system. California's tax system is dysfunctional. Proposition 13 has insured that property assessments are based on length of ownership not market values, creating explicit inequality between new and long-time residents. Commercial and industrial property also secure a benefit that was initially aimed at homeowners, one which shortchanges the fiscal

coffers and also means that commercial property is not driven by the market to its highest and best use. With the property tax spigot partially plugged, the state has become dependent on a highly progressive income tax to help backfill local revenues and which has led to volatility in revenues. Rethinking the state's tax system would help with revenue enhancement and stability.

Consider redistributing local tax revenue to Jurisdictions in need. Local property taxes and sales taxes both accrue disproportionately to wealthier jurisdictions – well-to-do communities have higher property values and therefore greater property tax collections while sales tax revenues often accrue to those jurisdictions that have often been employment, retail, and entertainment centers that have generated revenue from economic activity from people outside of their city boundaries (called “tax importing”). However, given the increasing regionalization of economies it may be worth considering how to more equitably distribute the fruits of economic prosperity. Creating a tax base-sharing scheme that could be used to distribute local taxes among jurisdictions based on population and need could be used to bring funds back to people. Areas with more population density would be able to provide more resources so that they can provide more public goods to their residents. These infusions would be mutually beneficial and help to stabilize economies and create better living conditions and educational outcomes for much of the workforce many of whom commute from suburbs and exurbs into downtown areas.

Consider increasing taxes on the very highest-income households. Between 1987 and 2017, the richest 1 percent of Californians saw their incomes increase by 134.4 percent on average, while the middle fifth of Californians saw their incomes decrease by 14.6 percent on average (Anderson et al. 2020). Wage and income inequality have been exacerbated in stark ways by COVID-19; California's 166 billionaires have seen their net worth increase by \$235 billion since the

start of the pandemic, while 2 million low- and middle-income Californians have lost their jobs (Anderson et al. 2020). While California's income tax is progressive – taxing higher income households at higher rates – the structure has not kept up with the high concentration of income and wealth in the hands of very few at the top. The state's personal income tax (PIT) rate could be increased to an even higher rate for the very highest-income households who have benefitted disproportionately from the state's economic successes, continue to benefit despite the current pandemic-fueled downturn, and who have received significant tax breaks from the federal government in recent years. There may also be room for a tax on wealth, at least in the form of an inheritance or phased estate tax.

Reconsider corporate tax breaks. Today, corporations in California are paying about half of what they would have paid in corporate taxes today as compared to the 1980s due to policy decisions – cutting the state corporate tax rate and providing a series of additional tax breaks (Anderson et al. 2020). California's state budget would have received \$11.2 billion more revenue (as of 2017) had corporations paid the same share of their income in taxes as they did in the early 1980s (Anderson et al. 2020). Corporate tax breaks – many without expiration dates -- alone amount to \$5.7 billion annually in foregone revenue (Anderson et al. 2020). With corporations the overwhelming beneficiaries of the federal tax cuts passed in 2017 and further tax breaks provided in response to COVID-19, there may be room for state-level action to reduce corporate tax breaks.

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POLICY SECTION 2

Black Life in Los Angeles

The same conditions that drive the pandemic drove the Black mass exodus

The social conditions that are exacerbating the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black Americans are the same pre-existing conditions that contributed to a pandemic of mass exodus for Black Angelenos.

Los Angeles has long had a significant Black presence, from its earliest predominantly Black founders to the prominent role of “Biddy” Mason, a formerly enslaved Black woman who became a wealthy landowner and co-founded the city’s iconic First African Methodist Episcopal church (Robinson 2010). When in 1913, W.E.B. Du Bois visited Los Angeles, he declared that its Black population was “without doubt the most beautifully housed group of colored people in the United States” (as cited by Hunt and Ramón 2010:12). While overt racism and racial covenants limited exactly what properties could be purchased, by 1910, 40 percent of African Americans in Los Angeles were homeowners—compared to only 2.4 percent of African Americans in New York City and 8 percent in Chicago (Sides 2006:16).

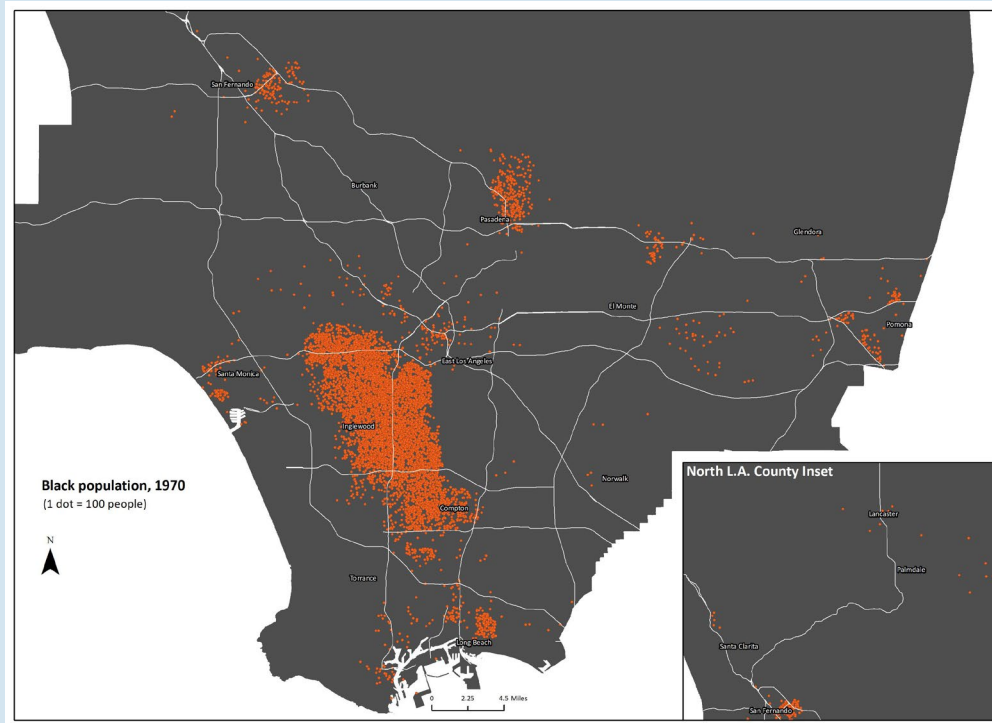
By the 1920s, African Americans had indeed built a vibrant community just south of downtown Los Angeles, with the geography also defined because of forced segregation. Central Avenue became “the primary artery of Black life, and the intersection with 12th Street remained the center of things...” (Flamming 2005:261). Black-owned businesses and buildings— now-famous as markers of Black cultural life— sprung up, including the Lincoln Theater in 1926 and the Somerville Hotel. Built in 1928 for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) convention, the hotel was renamed the Dunbar Hotel in 1930 and became the West Coast entertainment mecca for Black performers and elites. Black architect Paul Williams designed architecturally and historically significant buildings in the area including Second Baptist Church, a new Elks Hall, and the 28th Street YMCA during this era.

Black Los Angeles grew dramatically with the coming of the Second World War. Black migrants came from the South, especially from Texas and Louisiana, seeking jobs in wartime munitions plants, which later transitioned to automobile, tire, and steel jobs that were often in or near South LA. After racially restrictive housing covenants were formally struck down in the late 1940s, the Black community moved south and west, providing much needed relief from residential overcrowding. The residential spread was facilitated by the 1965 Watts Rebellion, itself triggered by police violence and grounded in economic and social discrimination. While little improved on either the policing or economic dimensions, one result was a “white flight” that effectively opened up new territory. By 1970, the area now known as South LA—stretching from the 10 freeway to the north, the Alameda Corridor to the east, Imperial Highway to the south, and Baldwin Hills to the west—was nearly 80 percent African American.

I’m originally from Atlanta, Georgia. So, coming from a perspective of living in that reality and a transplant to Los Angeles and LA County, I’ve been trying to adjust for many years, and I feel a great adjustment about how things happen. Bottom line, cost of living. So, pre-COVID realities were just always pushing, always pressing to get it done and make it happen. And I’m so glad they froze utilities; I’m hoping, praying that, there is some level of recognition that even after COVID, if there is a such thing that there is, a level of reform to how we approached the just essentials. I mean there were, there were some essential needs that we needed way before COVID and, a lot of people were going out without those essentials causing stressors to the reality of their existence.

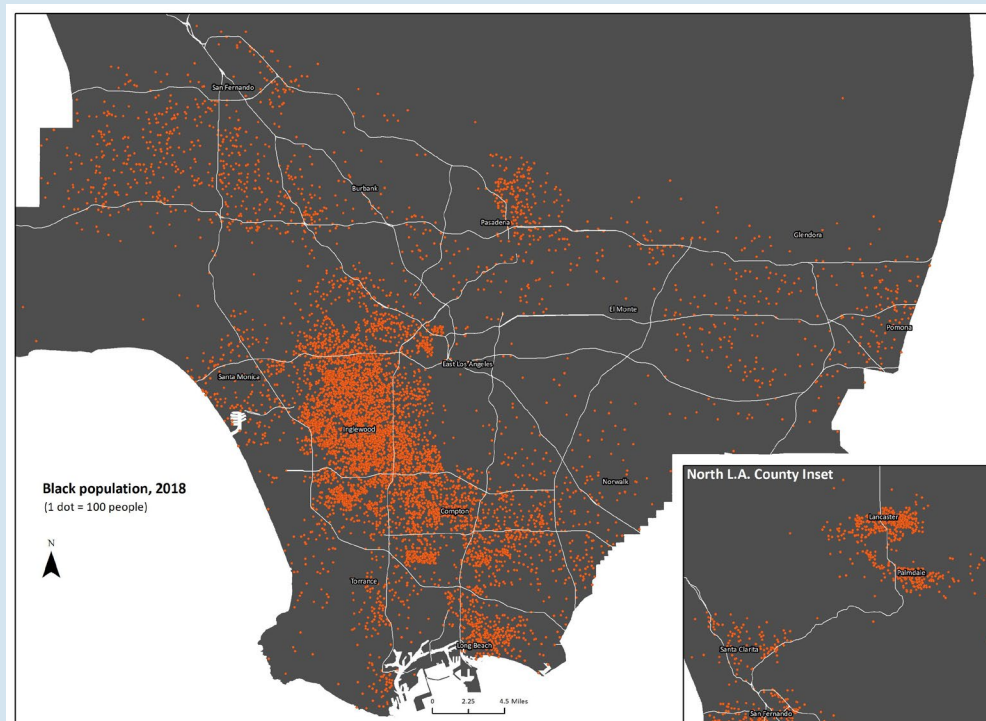
- Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 2-1: BLACK POPULATION IN LA COUNTY, 1970



Source: USC Equity Research Institute Analysis of the data from GeoLytics, Inc.

FIGURE 2-2: BLACK POPULATION IN LA COUNTY, 2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute Analysis of the data from 2018 5-year American Community Survey Summary File.

Time—and demographics—did not stand still. While deindustrialization became a national and regional crisis in the 1980s, African Americans were losing manufacturing employment as early as the 1970s (Sides 2006:180). And when the 1980s and 1990s brought the full force of deindustrialization to Los Angeles County, Black Angelenos were the biggest relative losers in terms of the higher-paid (often unionized) jobs in durable manufacturing (Pastor 2018:68). Economic stress rose and with it the introduction of crack cocaine and the rise of militarized gangs – leading to new epidemics of addiction and violence. All three met Los Angeles’ long tradition of over-policing, including spectacular incidents such as the 1988 raid on Dalton Avenue by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in which the police rounded up dozens, smashed furniture and sprayed graffiti, and never charged anyone with a crime (Mitchell 2001; Davis 1990).

As the 1990s began, the frustrations over discrimination, policing, and economic exclusion in South LA were more than ready to boil over. The murder of 15-year-old Latasha Harlins by a Korean-born store owner in 1991 added to the sorrow and rage, particularly when the store owner was convicted of voluntary manslaughter, then given probation, community service, and a \$500 fine. When the officers that beat Rodney King in 1991 were acquitted in April 1992, the toxic mixture exploded into the most damaging civil unrest in U.S. history. And while that gave birth to a set of community-based organizations eager to finally address the inequalities and over-policing that had given rise to unrest, it also added fuel to the desire of many Black Angelenos to leave South LA.

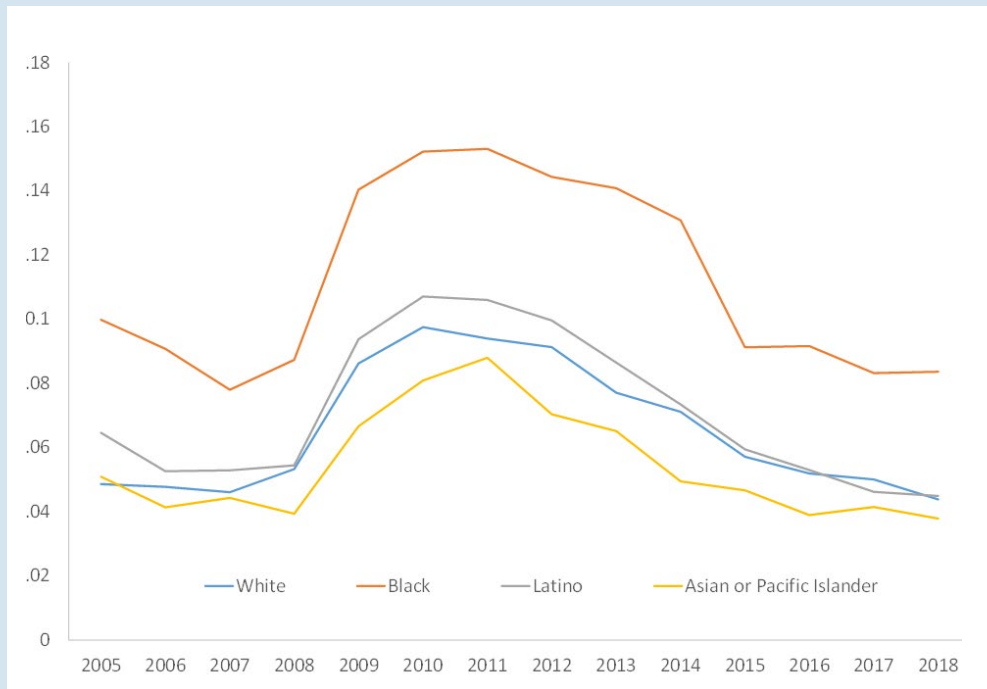
By the 1990s, African Americans were moving to “the northern reaches of the county in Palmdale and Lancaster, and east into Riverside County” (Sides 2006:3). The eastern environs outside Los Angeles County were especially popular: the Black population in Fontana, Rialto, Victorville, and Moreno Valley (all in the Inland Empire, a collection of two counties to the east of Los Angeles) grew sixfold between 1980 and 2000 (Pastor, De Lara, and Scoggins 2011:12). Meanwhile, Latinos – both immigrants and U.S.-born – began a migration into South LA, particularly its eastern and central sides. As a result, South LA is now around two-thirds Latino.

While the demographic shift has enriched the area in many ways and propelled new and exciting developments in Black-Brown movement building, it has also contributed to a sense of loss of Black space and cultural heritage. This has been driven not only by demographic change but also by continued disinvestment, the contemporary pressures of gentrification, and the longer-term shrinkage of the Black population in Los Angeles County. While the overall County population grew from around 7.5 million in 1980 to 10.1 million in 2018, the Black population actually fell from 936,000 to 788,000; as a result, while African Americans comprised 12.5 percent of the County population in 1980, the figure now is 7.8 percent. Particularly significant is the decline in Black youth: while 15.4 percent of the County population under the age of 18 was Black in 1980, the figure is now 6.8 percent (USC Equity Research Institute 2020).

Figure 2-1 and Figure 2-2 show both the declining presence and perhaps more important the changing geography of the Black population in Los Angeles County. In 1970, the Black population was highly concentrated in South LA and Mid-City, parts of Long Beach, Pacoima/San Fernando, and Northwest Pasadena/Altadena. By 2018, there was a big spread, including to Palmdale and Lancaster, but also to many other areas of the County. One telling statistic: in 1970, roughly two-thirds of all Black county residents lived in South LA; today, only about a quarter of Black county residents reside in South LA. And while the geographic expansion suggests less residential segregation, the downside is that less concentrated populations – particularly when they are shrinking as a share of the population – are less able to garner political power and insure that their concerns are reflected in policy.

Those policy concerns are many. While one would have hoped for progress in closing the economic gap, Black family income held steady at about 62-63 percent of white family income between 1970 to 2010 – and then fell to around 54 percent in 2018 as the impacts of both the Great Recession and the growth in higher-income earners and gentrifiers came to dominate the Los Angeles economy. The pattern of recent unemployment is also shown in Figure 2-3; as can be seen, Black unemployment has been consistently higher than that of other groups and Black workers suffered a particularly hard hit between 2008 and 2015. The worst effects were for young Black workers

FIGURE 2-3: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY RACE/ETHNICITY FOR WORKERS AGED 25-64, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CA, 2005-2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of American Community Survey for 2005-2018 1-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes the civilian noninstitutionalized labor force ages 25-64.

(aged 18-24) who saw their unemployment rate rise to 37 percent in 2008 and more or less remained that high until 2014.¹ Even for full-time year-round workers, disparities exist: Black Angelenos are roughly twice as likely as white Angelenos to have a job paying less than \$15 an hour (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a).²

Low incomes, high unemployment, and continuing discrimination in labor and housing markets has meant that it has been hard for Black Angelenos to acquire wealth. One recent study found that the median net worth of Los Angeles white households is roughly 100 times larger than that of Black and Latino families, a disparity well above the ratio for the nation as a whole. This pattern reflects a legacy of redlining, economic exclusion, and the structural limits on the ability of Black families to obtain a sustainable and secure financial future (De La Cruz-Viesca et al. 2016). And that

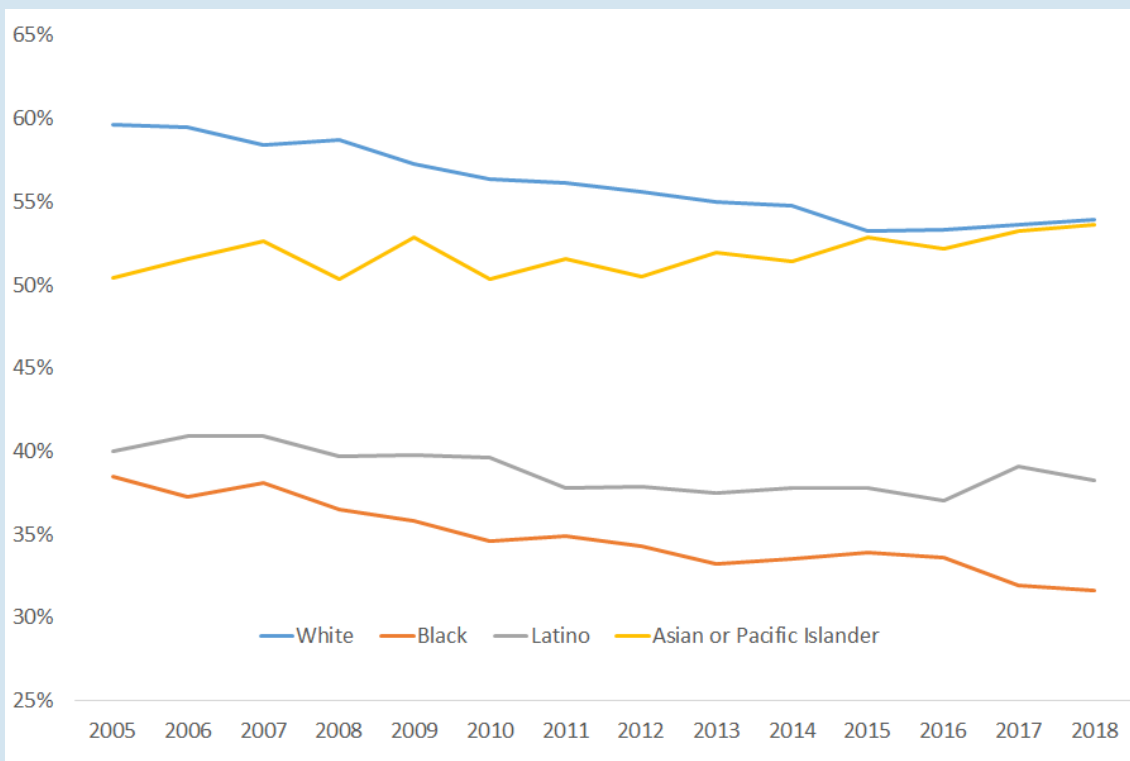
lack of wealth is evidenced by the extraordinarily low rates of Black home ownership – and the precipitous decline since the mid-2000s – evidenced in Figure 2-4. And while everyone who rents faces a tough market in Los Angeles, the share of Black households who are severely rent-burdened – paying more than fifty percent of household income in rent in 2018 – is far higher at 37 percent than for any other ethnic group (who all hover between 28-31 percent of households experiencing that degree of burden).

The explosion of homelessness in the past decade is the inevitable outcome of unstable financial conditions facing Black families. The first of its kind report by Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) in 2018 on Black People Experiencing Homeless laid out the problem clearly (LAHSA 2020). The most recent 2020 count reports that Black people are 33.7 percent of the

1 Calculations by the Equity Research Institute using US Census data for 1970-2000 and the American Community Survey for 2005-2018. Perhaps unsurprisingly given that unemployment pattern, the share of Black youth between the ages of 16 and 24 that are considered “disconnected” – that is, neither in school nor working – was 19 percent in 2018, more than twice as high as for white youth, about three times higher than for Asian American youth, and well above the 13 percent rate for Latino and Native American youth.

2 Calculations by the USC Equity Research Institute using the 2014-2018 American Community Survey in \$2018. The universe consists of civilian non-institutional wage and salary workers, ages 25-64, working at least 50 weeks a year and 35 hours a week.

FIGURE 2-4: HOME OWNERSHIP RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN LA COUNTY, 2005-2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2005-2018 1-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.
 Note: Universe includes all households.

homeless population, well above their 7.8 percent share of the county’s population (LAHSA 2020). And while rates of homelessness map across geography in ways that seem predictable, with the 2018 report noting that 86 percent of South LA’s homeless population were Black, homelessness is also entrenched in the “exodus communities” of the South Bay and Antelope Valley. Most importantly, the 2018 report argues that “the circumstances that lead Black people to disproportionately experience homelessness cannot be untangled from the impact of institutional and structural racism in education, criminal justice, housing, employment, health care, and access to opportunities.”

While the economic and housing trends have been important, one important manifestation of systemic racism has been the over-incarceration of Black people. In 2017, nearly 30 percent of California’s male prisoners were Black, far above the 5.6 percent share of the state’s male population. The share for Black women was nearly 26 percent, well above their 5.7 percent share of the state’s female population (Harris et al.

2019). These extraordinary disparities reflect many factors; most importantly for policy-making: economic inequality, discriminatory policing, and disparate sentencing.

The policing aspect is particularly worrisome for Black Angelenos. An investigation by the Los Angeles Times revealed that the LAPD’s elite Metro Division was stopping Black drivers at a rate five times higher than their share of the population (Chang and Poston 2019). One-third of those killed in police shootings in 2019 were Black, well above the nine percent figure for the Black share of the city’s population (Rector 2020). The national protests about police violence and anti-Black racism have resonated with a County population scarred by a century of exactly the same set of issues at the local level.

COVID-19 has exasperated all the issues systemic racism created

In short, the landscape onto which COVID-19 landed was structurally contoured by anti-Black racism. Black Angelenos had long been plagued by lagging income and disproportionate unemployment. Black wealth and savings – the necessary cushions for an emergency – had been stripped by years of discriminatory real estate practices, deindustrialization, and the racial disparate impact of the Great Recession's foreclosure crisis. Communities had deconcentrated, partly driven away by violence and economic distress and in more recent years by gentrification pressures, with a sense that political visibility was also on the decline. Distrust of official authorities, the result of violent over-policing, was rampant.

I live alone with my two cats, so it's pretty much the same pre COVID, but, I did have someone staying with me for the last four months because she could not find housing and she was with a newborn, um, that really shook things up, but happy to say I'm back alone.

- Focus Group Participant

The ongoing racial disparities constituted a set of pre-existing conditions that made Black Angelenos vulnerable to a global pandemic and particularly vulnerable to the consequent national response (or non-response) to the crisis. As a result, it is little wonder that the age-adjusted death rates from COVID-19 for Black Angelenos have been double that for white Angelenos. And while some want to attribute the pattern of health issues, such as diabetes and hyper-tension, those conditions are themselves a result of living and working conditions that include

poverty, poor food quality, lack of park access, and job characteristics that reflect patterns of structural racism (Walker, Strom Williams, and Egede 2016; Dr. D. R. Williams 2020; Yancy 2020). COVID-19, in short, has been a wake-up call for many observers about the role of race and racism in public health.

Indeed, Black people are also far more present than whites (and about as much as Latinos) in the essential work that also involves close contact with the public, clearly adding to health risk. As noted above, homelessness is its own epidemic, with Black people constituting a third of Los Angeles County's homeless population even though they are only eight percent of the County population (LAHSA 2020). And the over-representation in the incarcerated population has also left many at risk of exposures in that system – or at risk of bringing home the disease as the County undertook an effort to shrink the jail population.

In addition, because of the geographic dispersion we noted above, there is a much higher likelihood that families will be separated and elders will be living alone. This creates the conditions for a very isolated Black senior population who will also need access to the kind of care economy that they may not be able to afford. In Los Angeles County, more Black seniors (36 percent) are living alone (without family members and not in assisted living) than any other group. Living alone is a risk factor because it can create a lack of access to resources and social support (Steinhauer 2006). There is also a great deal of stress experienced by individuals and households that worry that the current economic troubles will force them to move away from a neighborhood they love, one that is already threatened by and increasingly unaffordable because of gentrification pressures.

I got the coronavirus. So, that was really, really horrible. I passed it on to my mom's boyfriend, passed it onto my mom and passed it onto my dad. My dad just turned 72. My mom about to turn 62, they were sick for almost three months. My mom's bronchitis flared up. I couldn't move from the couch. I couldn't eat, I couldn't do anything. And I refused to go to the hospital because I couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. So, I made it through that. My parents made it through that.

- Focus Group Participant

While the picture is one of distress, it is also important to realize that Los Angeles also has a proud history of Black-led political struggle. Charlotta Bass, the editor and publisher of the California Eagle, was a key figure in employment and housing integration struggles from the 1920s through the 1940s and helped build important multi-cultural coalitions with Latinos and others, creating a style of organizing that persists to this day (Abdullah and Freer 2010; Freer 2004; Gottlieb et al. 2006; Pulido 2006). Partly reflecting that political tradition, Los Angeles was the first major city without a Black majority to be led by a Black mayor, Tom Bradley.

Creating space to reimagine a Black Future

Today's Los Angeles is home to one of the nation's most active chapters of Black Lives Matter (indeed, Los Angeles hosts the first local chapter of BLM) as well as dozens of historic and contemporary organizations founded to uplift Black Angelenos. Many of these groups came together in April 2020 to produce a coherent and collective set of demands with regard to COVID-19 testing and treatment in Black communities, support for Black workers and businesses, housing, healthcare, community safety and more (Black Lives Matter Los Angeles 2020). In spite, or maybe because, of the conditions facing Black Angelenos, they have cultivated significant civic and political power, and diverse sets of clear-eyed demands to address the substantial impacts of structural and institutional racism.

We draw actively on those policy demands below. But it is also important to note that all this awareness around race and racism in the context of COVID-19 has also been deeply impacted by the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Elijah McClain,

among many others. This is a season of racial reckoning but reckoning must be about more than this moment in which COVID-19 and police brutality have made so much so clear; it must also be about the long history of oppression, asset-stripping and wealth extraction, and denial of basic humanity that has gotten us to this point.

. . . and now I'm having some downtime to really rethink them along with all that is coming to the fore with realities of injustice and systems of injustice, so that we can rethink how we enter in to never a normal of that. Again, whatever that was because it was benefiting no one.

- Focus Group Participant

Creating a space to reimagine Black Life in Los Angeles

COVID-19 has unleashed tragedy in the United States, and it has unveiled how systemic racism plays out and has put racial inequities on display for the world to see. Any discussion about how to rebuild our economy must center those who have consistently been harmed the most. Anti-Black racism is the reason for wealth and income inequality, inability to afford or access healthcare, increased risk of the school to prison pipeline, and higher chances of entering the criminal justice system. Black people have been fighting this fight, and it is time for Los Angeles County to invest in its Black communities. While there seems to be more awareness and willingness to tackle anti-Black racism, we are long past the moment for supportive words if they do not accompany action.

“It sounds like none of us are well until all of us are well, and the underserved communities need to be served more because it also puts stress on the communities that are overserved.”

- Focus Group Participant

Thus our goal is to **address anti-Black racism in all its forms**. Every policy recommendation about how to recover and rebuild must first answer: how does this impact Black families? And we must also stress how this can lead to a common good; in the words of April Verrett, a member of the Committee for Greater LA: “When you fix our economy for Black people, you fix it for everyone.”

Safety in public and private space

Codify and implement the Breathe Act. Authored by the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of multiple Black-led organizations across the country, the Breathe Act is legislation that will divest federal

taxpayer dollars from the criminal-legal system and invest in alternative, non-punitive approaches to public safety (Movement for Black Lives 2020). Local leaders should support this initiative at the national level and consider local policy changes to support its aims.

De-criminalize and address poverty and houselessness.

As noted, Black people disproportionately experience homelessness. Instead of receiving services, Black Angelenos are more likely to be arrested. We must give our community members experiencing homelessness health and economic resources and stop arresting them. As Black Lives Matter Los Angeles highlights, this can be done by stopping sweeps of houseless settlements during the pandemic (Black Lives Matter Los Angeles 2020). As the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority states, de-criminalization requires shifting the narrative and approach to funding to focus on systemic changes rather than assuming individual behavior can combat systemic racism. We must always allow those with lived experience to be included in the program design (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) 2018b). Critically, we must continue the active march towards ending homelessness and addressing the economic, health, and social precursors that lead to homelessness.

Invest in the safety and education of Black students and students of color.

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is one of the largest school districts in the country and, thus, has one of the largest school policing systems. Given the history of racism and violence with policing, school police create a unsafe learning environment for students of color, particularly Black students who account for 25 percent of the arrests, citations, and diversions in LAUSD even as they comprise only nine percent of the student population (Burke 2020b). Under community pressure, LAUSD has decided to trim the school police budget by a third in this academic year (Burke

2020a). The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) should work with other school districts within their jurisdiction to follow suit. LACOE could also seek to invest more funding to systems of care including, but not limited to, mental health counseling, financial scholarships, and mentorship programs. Importantly, the reduction of police will not mean less policing of Black students if the remaining officers are concentrated in schools with higher Black populations. An equity lens is necessary through implementation of these changes. Schools should also include culturally relevant curriculum and a more diverse set of instructors, issues taken up in the education policy section below.

“Reparations. We need reparations, it only makes perfect sense for our healing. In total, we need reparations, we need police reform. So, the culture of the police needs total reformation. We need housing to be a human right. We need for all the social service organizations to have a standard way of serving, whether it be them looking at their culture within the organization and how they serve their staff and using the model of allowing their clients to be a part of designing of their programs and services. So, allowing those who are being impacted by the social services to have some say in the services that are being designed and implemented in communities, we need a lot more spaces of conversations for healing, for validation, for what folks are experiencing.”

-Focus Group Participant

Stop discriminatory policing and continue de-incarceration. Black communities are concerned about safety but they are deeply concerned about over-policing. The statistics on disproportionate stops and police shootings noted above suggest a deeply rooted problem that needs to be addressed. Shifting funding from police to essential social services is one part of a strategy along with mechanisms to force police accountability. The recent efforts to reduce the jail population to reduce exposure to COVID-19 should not be viewed as simply a response to a pandemic but rather a first step to moving away from the epidemic

of incarceration that has damaged so many lives. The County Board of Supervisors has requested a report on closing Men’s Central Jail and this is a good first step (Tchekmedyian 2020). Additionally, de-incarceration should be coupled with direct services to those re-entering communities, including both health, social, and economic support. Without them, the formerly incarcerated will be left to deal with the trauma of incarceration and the attendant social and economic isolation that our society heaps on those with a prior conviction. The policy section in this report on incarceration is relevant to the road forward as is the work of the Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group that led to the motion by the County to create an office to promote such alternatives (Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group 2020).

Create Systems of Care

Address the systematic anti-Black racism in healthcare. As aforementioned, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the health and death rate of Black people locally and nationally. In addition to highlighting the health disparity made evident by the pandemic, we must question the reasons as to why there are trends of pre-existing health conditions in Black communities prior to the pandemic. We should not let this moment pass without seriously addressing the anti-Black racism that is rooted in the field of medicine, the racist barriers to healthcare access and affordability, and other obstacles that impede a healthy lifestyle such as lack of access to affordable and nutritional food as well as the unavailability of open, green spaces. In the section on medical care, colleagues offer excellent ideas on how to promote universal healthcare, close the gap in reimbursements, and revise medical education and training to reduce anti-Black bias.

Destigmatize mental health and invest in mental health infrastructure. As noted in an accompanying policy section on mental health, “Racism is a public health issue. The socioemotional toll of systemic racism is measured in the health outcome disparities within the Black community. Genetic evidence shows that the way stress manifests in the body is higher in Black and African Americans than in white people. We must design an ecosystem of community care in

which Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities may not only survive but thrive.” This racial trauma is a co-occurring condition to general lack of mental health care, and trauma associated with gang-violence, domestic violence, and other traumas that impact Black communities disproportionately. Investing in free, readily accessible, and culturally competent mental health services would be key.

Support community-based health systems, particularly in this crisis. An early (and continually updated) report by the Advancement Project, *How Race, Class, and Place Fuel a Pandemic*, pointed to the ways in which COVID-19 was moving from wealthier and whiter communities to working-class communities of color (Cabildo et al. 2020). In collaboration with a range of community-based organizations, the authors call for culturally appropriate public education as well as a surge in funding and equipment for these communities. The authors also note that outreach will work better when it is not coupled with distrusted police forces given concerns about criminalization; as a result, the best actors to provide education and encourage the use of local clinics are community-based organizations and health promoters. This sort of approach is good for a crisis – and good for systemic reform as well.

Invest in a care economy and social service sector. Several challenges we are facing as a region - including isolated seniors, homeless foster youth, trafficked women and girls, poor and disabled people, victims of domestic violence, and single-mothers facing poverty – impact Black families at disproportionate rates. There is a deep need to invest in a care economy and social service sector that can provide the kind of resources necessary to support the most vulnerable Angelenos. These resources should be invested with a lens towards remedying anti-Black racism in both the distribution of funding but in the cultivation of services that are culturally appropriate and do not contribute to incarceration and control. Attending to these communities, will impact Black families, and will create a stronger, interconnected region able to weather the kind of storms, like COVID-19, that we are bound to see in the future.

Evolve to an economy of solidarity that generates improved income and wealth for Black Angelenos

Create affordable housing and opportunities for homeownership. Black households have lower ownership rates, are more rent burdened, and many are one paycheck away from eviction and homelessness. We need to make sure that both renters and homeowners can stay in their homes and avoid mass evictions as well as the loss of assets from foreclosure that typified the Great Recession. The policy section on housing offers numerous ideas but the bottom line is that a combination of eviction moratoria and mortgage forbearance will be necessary. In addition to shoring up the safety-net, we need to promote homeownership for Black families particularly when the high-cost of living in Los Angeles makes it less and less accessible. Finally, policy makers should consider creative approaches to supporting community ownership as a buffer to gentrification.

Create access to quality jobs that prioritize Black workers’ and small business owners’ growth and leadership. The statistics demonstrate that Black people in Los Angeles are more likely to be unemployed or in low-wage employment. The region could counter that with an aggressive program to promote hiring Black workers in multiple areas, particularly construction. As the Los Angeles Black Worker Center points out, hiring is not enough unless you also train and provide support to Black workers to advocate for their rights. In addition, procurement systems need to be restructured to allow for prioritizing Black-owned businesses.

Apply a racial equity lens to all budget decisions. As some of the nation’s leading economists argue, there is nothing that Black individuals or households can do to effectively reduce the racial wealth gap; it can only be reduced and eliminated through policy (Darity Jr. et al. 2018). This means budget and policy decision-makers must first ask, how does this impact Black families and does this promote Black access to wealth, income, and other opportunities? Applying a racial equity lens to all governmental decisions is an important first step and it is one both the City and the County seem ready to implement with their current plans, including the County’s recent call for an annual

report on the State of Black Los Angeles County (Cosgrove 2020).

Support Black immigrants. In both the immigrant rights field and with funders and non-profits engaged in immigration issues, Black immigrants are often invisibilized. But while Black immigrants often comprise a small share of the immigrant population, they are a disproportionate share of immigrants facing criminalization and deportation (Sanchez-Lopez et al. 2018). Moreover, immigration is actually an important part of the Black experience: about one in five Black Angelenos are either immigrants themselves or the US-born child of immigrants. We need to make sure that Black immigrants are fully incorporated in immigrant-serving activities and organizations, including City and County Offices of Immigrant Affairs. This also requires providing philanthropic and other support to groups like the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI).

Support and Invest in Black-led organizations that are already doing the important work of racial equity

Provide philanthropic support for Black-led organizations. We need not look far to identify those who can lead with and for Black Los Angeles. As noted earlier, the region is home to a wealth of historic and contemporary organizations founded to uplift Black Angelenos. But while strong Black leadership at the political and community level is abundant, there is a need for more consistent philanthropic investments in the Black community groups and grassroots leadership that can help realize a more inclusive L.A. Groups need multi-year operating support to do their work along with latitude to make

necessary investments in leadership development, nation-wide networking, and other strategies to build power. Black leadership and staff also need to be paid enough to stay in their own communities, particularly given well-documented pressures of gentrification and displacement. Special attention should be paid to youth organizing and Black youth leadership development. Black groups also need the support of Black-led research and policy centers and this is also an important set of needed investments by philanthropy and our local universities.

Provide philanthropic and other support to displaced Black communities. As mentioned throughout this report, Black communities are quite dispersed across the county, yet much of their political and social infrastructure is concentrated in communities that were historically Black. There is a great need for civic infrastructure in communities across the Antelope Valley, South East cities, and the South Bay. The leadership exists and philanthropic support can help to cultivate an ecosystem of civic infrastructure. Government should also conduct special outreach efforts in the so-called “exodus” communities.

Support work that tackles anti-Black racism. While the focus of investment should be on building a stronger and better-resourced Black-led set of community organizations, funders could also build in requirements in their calls for proposals to query how other organizations are taking up the work of challenging anti-Black racism and promoting racial equity. Such a screen could insure that investments in other groups and strands of work would be complementary to promoting the well-being of Black Angelenos. Tackling the systems of anti-Black racism that have produced such disparate and unfair outcomes should be a priority for everyone.

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POLICY SECTION 3

Housing Affordability

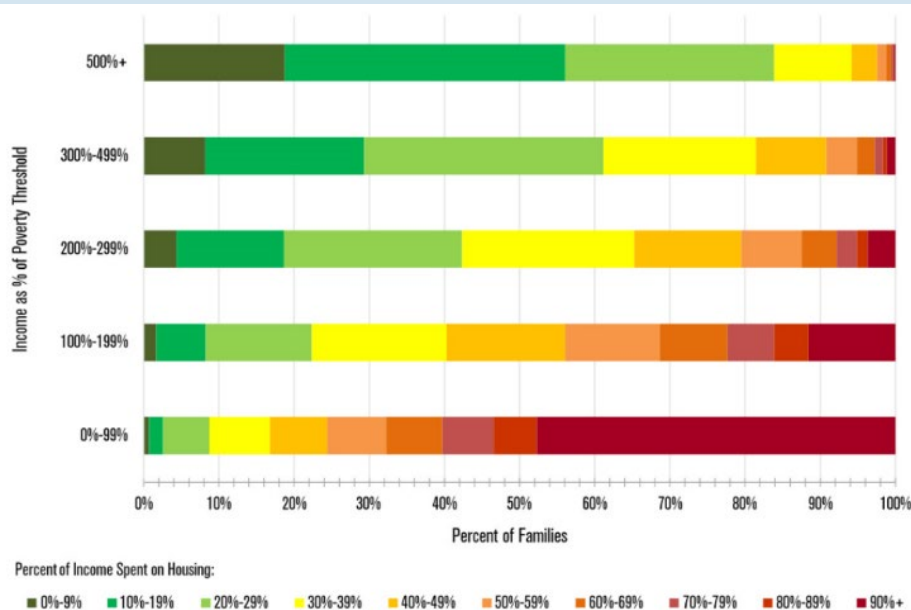
High Rent, High Risk Before COVID-19

The devastating health and economic impacts of the outbreak of COVID-19 have been felt by every community in the United States and globally. In Los Angeles County, the effects of the pandemic have been particularly severe. Los Angeles County consistently leads the state and the country in the number of infections, deaths, and job losses (Employment Development Department 2020; LA County Public Health Department and USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research 2020). In particular, the pandemic has wreaked havoc in working-class communities of color which have suffered disproportionately high numbers of infections, death rates, and job losses (LA County Public Health Department and USC Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research 2020; Ong, Pech, Gonzalez, et al. 2020). The financial instability that comes with job loss and inability to work at full capacity puts Angelenos, especially vulnerable communities who already bear long-standing effects of systemic inequality, in a precarious position regarding their housing. Prior to the outbreak of

the COVID-19, Los Angeles County residents were already in the midst of a profound crisis of housing affordability and chronic housing shortages. The effects of the pandemic threaten to push Los Angeles from a housing crisis into a housing disaster.

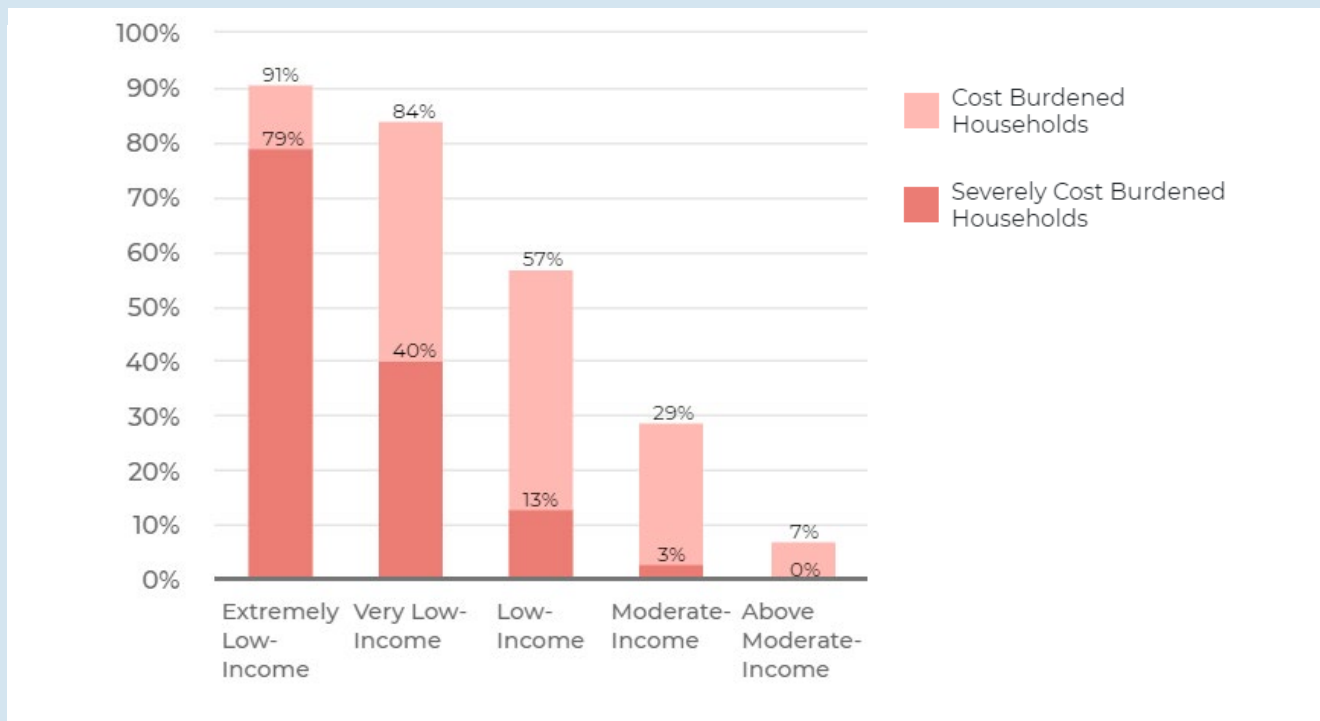
The Los Angeles metropolitan area has the second highest share of renter households in the country at 54.2 percent (Blasi 2020). It is estimated that there are more than half a million renter households in Los Angeles County with an annual income of less than \$35,000 who are potentially one paycheck away from being unable to cover their housing costs and other basic necessities. These households are home to nearly two-thirds of a million people in Los Angeles, with one-in-three being a child (Ong, Pech, Ong, et al. 2020). Figure 3-1 further illustrates there are approximately over half a million Los Angeles County residents who are in poverty and spend 90 percent or more of their income on housing costs (Flaming, Burns, and Carlen 2018).

FIGURE 3-1: PERCENT OF INCOME SPENT FOR HOUSING BY FAMILY INCOME



Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, County of Los Angeles, 2011-2015. Individuals in Group Quarters excluded. Data includes both renters and owners, and is for families and one-person households.

Source: Flaming, Daniel, Patrick Burns, and Jane Carlen. 2018. Escape Routes: Meta-Analysis of Homelessness in L.A. Economic Roundtable.

FIGURE 3-2: HOUSING COST BURDEN BY INCOME LEVELS

Source: California Housing Partnership. (2020). "Housing Needs Dashboard." California Housing Partnership. Retrieved August 13, 2020 (<http://chpc.net/housingneeds/>).

Additionally, close to 80 percent of households with extremely low incomes spend over half of their income on housing costs, in contrast only 3 percent of moderate-income households spend the same percentage of their income on housing as shown in Figure 3-2 (California Housing Partnership 2020b). In recent decades, wages have not kept pace with increases in rents. An analysis by the California Housing Partnership indicates that renters in Los Angeles County would need to earn \$41.96 per hour to afford the average monthly asking rent of \$2,182 (California Housing Partnership 2020b). Further complicating matters is the fact that the workers in these households are low-wage employees disproportionately concentrated in the sectors of the economy that are at high-risk of experiencing substantial job losses due to COVID-19 (Ong, Pech, Ong, et al. 2020).

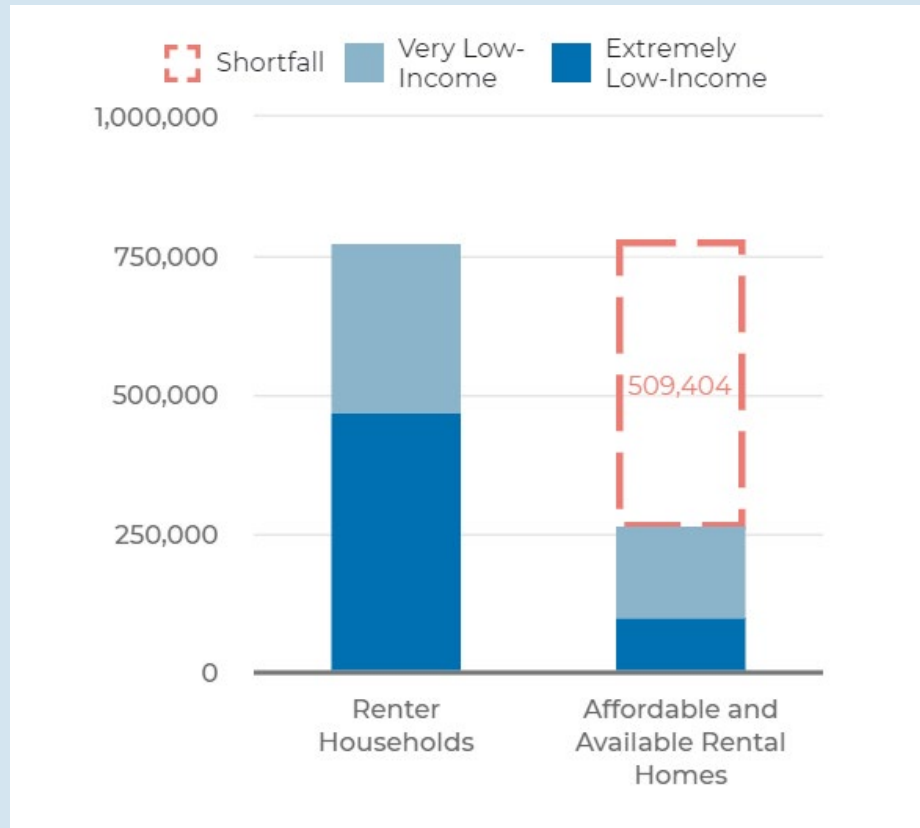
The housing crisis has been particularly severe for residents and communities of color in Los Angeles. During the Great Recession, American households lost \$7.7 trillion in wealth and approximately 9 million households lost their homes to foreclosure. Black and Latino homeowners were 71 to 76 percent more

likely to lose their homes after the crash than white homeowners (Healthy LA Coalition 2020). After the Great Recession, private equity purchased more than 200,000 homes nationwide which they converted into rental properties, often increasing rents by drastic amounts (Healthy LA Coalition 2020). Not surprisingly, this contributed to a disproportionately high concentration of severely rent burdened households in Black, Latino, and immigrant communities of Los Angeles (Ong, Pech, Ong, et al. 2020).

"There's no way that you can live in Los Angeles or Los Angeles County and not know when there is a clear demarcation between places and spaces that reflect those who are with and those who are without ... there are a lot of preexisting realities that needed a change ... I think that COVID has only exacerbated the recognition of where those inequities were already and definitely will continue to exist if great change is not brought"

- Focus Group participant

FIGURE 3-3: SHORTFALL IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING, LOS ANGELES COUNTY



Source: California Housing Partnership. 2020. "Housing Needs Dashboard." California Housing Partnership. Retrieved August 13, 2020 (<http://chpc.net/housingneeds/>).

Los Angeles County has also been suffering from a consistent shortage of affordable housing units. Los Angeles County continuously under-produces both market rate and affordable housing. According to the County's recently assigned Regional Housing Needs goals, the County should be producing 60,000 market rate housing units and 40,000 affordable units per year to meet housing needs. Yet, in recent years the County has produced less than 20,000 market rate units and 3,000 affordable units annually on average, far below its goals (California Department of Housing and Community Development 2020). As shown in Figure 3-3, this has led to over half a million low-income renters in Los Angeles County not having access to an affordable home (California Housing Partnership

2020b). Given these conditions, it is not surprising that the homeless count in Los Angeles County went from 58,936 in 2019 to 66,436 in 2020, a 13 percent increase (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) 2020). Particularly amongst Black residents in the County who, due to structural racism, are four times more likely to experience homelessness. Furthermore, 59 percent of newly homeless people cite economic hardship as the reason (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority) (LAHSA 2020). Given the magnitude of the current economic disruption and its disproportionate impact on communities of color, it is an alarming prospect to consider how this issue could be magnified by the health and economic effects of the pandemic and continuous failure to meet housing needs.

The Potential for a Housing Disaster

The outbreak of COVID-19 has led to historically-high levels of unemployment, which will put hundreds of thousands of families at risk of not being able to meet their housing costs and other basic necessities. The human, social, and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been particularly severe in Los Angeles County. In Los Angeles County close to 1.2 million workers filed unemployment insurance claims between March 15 and May 9, 2020 (Hedin, Schnorr, and von Wachter 2020). According to official figures, the unemployment rate reached a peak of 21.1 percent in May 2020 and remained at 19.4 percent as of June 2020 (Employment Development Department 2020). These unemployment numbers are higher than California and the United States, and much higher than the worst unemployment numbers from the Great Recession (Employment Development Department 2020).

However, there is reason to believe that the number of applicants understates the actual number of people who lost their jobs, many of whom do not apply for unemployment insurance benefits. This is particularly true in Los Angeles County, where those who do not apply include the 13 percent of the labor force who are undocumented, and thus ineligible for unemployment benefits, as well as those who are self-employed in the formal economy (Blasi 2020). Job losses have affected working-class people of color disproportionately. The unemployment rate was higher amongst Black and Latino workers, likely due to the fact that both groups are overrepresented in the most vulnerable sectors of the economy (Ong, Pech, Gonzalez, et al. 2020). The jobless rate for Black and Latino Californians was 22 percent and 26 percent, respectively. In comparison, the jobless rates for white and Asian American and Pacific Islander Californians reached 17 percent (Ong, Pech, Gonzalez, et al. 2020).

As a result of this massive job loss, thousands of families in Los Angeles County are struggling to meet their basic needs and pay rent. A report by the UCLA Institute on Inequality and Democracy estimated that in Los Angeles County there are at least 365,000 renter households with no adult who is employed or

has sufficient replacement income to pay rent. The report estimates that from that total between 36,000 and 120,000 households, with the latter including 184,000 children, could become homeless (Blasi 2020). In particular, low-income renters and communities of color have become increasingly vulnerable to this issue.

“My household usually is eight and right now, because of COVID, it’s 14 ... that’s because my sister and her kids ... couldn’t afford with what happened. She lost her job. So now we’re at 14 in my household and just imagine that 14 and in one house when we’re supposed to ... not be around so many people yet. Some of us still work, some of us don’t, we still go out ... we have to go out and make sure we come back and clean our clothes ... disinfect everything. I have other people in my house, including my mother where she smoked cigarettes, so she’s very vulnerable to it.”

- Focus Group participant

Another study by UCLA researchers analyzed several factors related to renter vulnerability in neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, such as high unemployment rates, high rates of renters spending over 50 percent of their income on rent, and disproportionate shares of workers in at-risk occupations. Based on these factors, the researchers found that the most vulnerable neighborhoods have a disproportionate share of Black and Latino residents, as well as disproportionately high shares of residents with incomes below 35,000 annually and with educational attainments below high-school education (Table 1). Additionally, Table 3-1 shows that immigrant residents are highly concentrated in neighborhoods with the highest levels of renter vulnerability (Ong, Pech, Ong, et al. 2020).

TABLE 3-1: NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS BY RENTER VULNERABILITY INDEX

	Lowest Vulnerability	Low	Moderate	High	Highest Vulnerability
% White renters	45%	33%	23%	18%	12%
% Asian renters	14%	14%	12%	11%	10%
% Black renters	8%	11%	12%	15%	15%
% Latinx renters	29%	39%	51%	54%	61%
% Immigrants	27%	33%	37%	41%	45%
% Renters with less than \$35K	25%	34%	41%	47%	55%
% Households with assets	25%	17%	12%	8%	6%
% Renters with less than high school education	9%	17%	26%	32%	39%
% Renters with college education	44%	33%	24%	19%	16%
Number of census tracts	300	300	299	297	304

Source: Neighborhood characteristics are derived from 2014–18 5-year ACS.

Note: The reported values in the table represents the average (mean) of all the census tracts in each neighborhood type.

Source: Ong et al. 2020. Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis in Los Angeles: Identifying Renter-Vulnerable Neighborhoods. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge; Ong & Associates.

TABLE 3-2: NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS BY RENTER VULNERABILITY INDEX

	Lowest Vulnerability	Low	Moderate	High	Highest Vulnerability
Rented units as % of all occupied units in tract	58%	66%	71%	77%	84%
% Overcrowding (1.51 or more persons per room)	3%	6%	8%	10%	14%
Average household size renter	2.53	2.75	3.02	3.13	3.27
% Renter households with children	57%	60%	72%	75%	79%
% Limited English-proficient households	8%	12%	16%	20%	25%
% Households without broadband	22%	30%	35%	41%	46%
% Section 8 rental units	3%	5%	6%	8%	8%
Number of census tracts	300	300	299	297	304

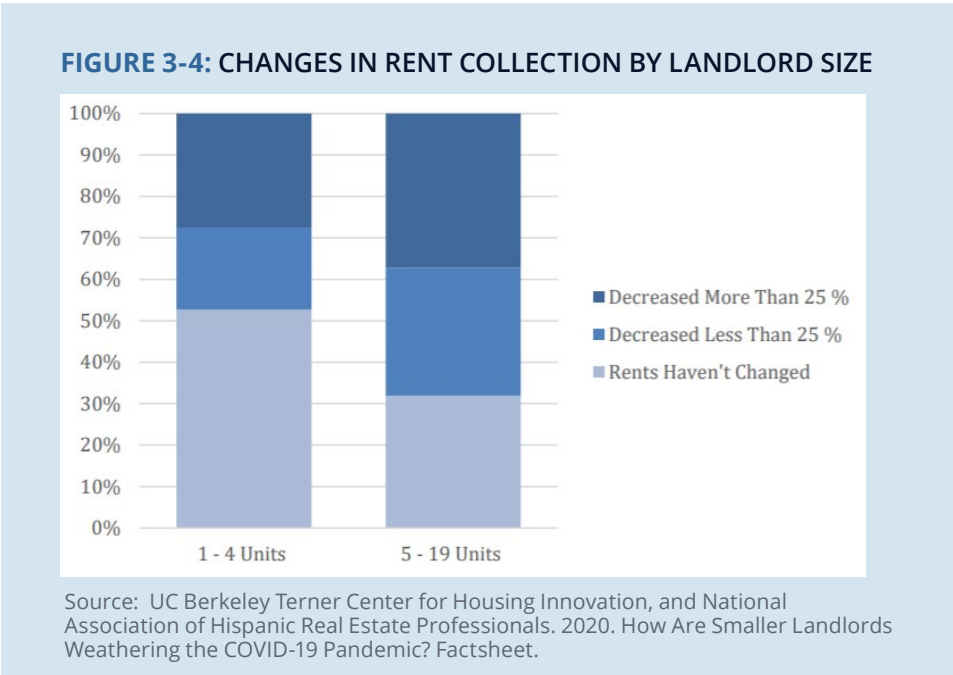
Note: The reported values in the table represents the average (mean) of all the census tracts in each neighborhood type; Section 8 data comes from HUD’s Picture of Subsidized Housing for 2019; and all other neighborhood characteristics are derived from 2014–18 5-year ACS.

Source: Ong et al. 2020. Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis in Los Angeles: Identifying Renter-Vulnerable Neighborhoods. UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge; Ong & Associates. Located at: https://www.anderson.ucla.edu/documents/areas/ctr/ziman/UCLA-CNK_OngAssoc._LA_Renter_Vulnerability_4-30-20.pdf

Currently, there are moratoriums on evictions preventing renters in Los Angeles County from being evicted from their homes as a result of non-payment (Healthy LA Coalition 2020). As of now, the decision by the California Judicial Council to stop all courts in the state from issuing Summons on Unlawful Detainer Complaints has prevented this disastrous outcome. Yet, it is alarming to think that soon after that restriction is lifted, hundreds of thousands of people in Los Angeles County could be facing imminent eviction. The current Judicial Council Order will expire 90 days after the Governor declares that the state of emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic is lifted. As of now there are no policy measures in place to prepare for those impending evictions (Blasi 2020).

The effects of the pandemic also threaten to destabilize the finances of small landlords, who may not have large amounts of capital to cover expenses in the event of tenants not being able to pay their rent. A recent survey conducted by UCLA found that between 15-30 percent of households are not paying rent in Los Angeles. Those unable to meet their rent obligations are disproportionately low-income, Black, and Latino (Committee for Greater LA 2020b). These results are in line with a similar survey conducted by UC Berkeley and the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals that found that 52 percent of landlords in the survey had at least one tenant not pay rent in June 2020. Additionally, 30 percent of landlords reported their rent collection decreasing by 25 percent in the same month. While the results of this particular survey may not necessarily be representative of all landlords, they may provide an indication of the magnitude of the problem (UC Berkeley Turner Center for Housing Innovation and National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals 2020).

These results suggest that eviction moratoriums could potentially affect some property owners and landlords, particularly landlords operating less than 20 units. If rent collection decreases dramatically and



small landlords are still liable for their bills, this could lead to landlords laying off workers and contractors, missing mortgage obligations, and in some cases being forced to sell their property. More concerning, landlords may resort to evicting tenants through other methods, including by shutting off utilities or taking units off the market through the Ellis Act. Thus, policy approaches must be designed that seek to prevent a widespread disruption of the rental market which could worsen the housing affordability crisis by reducing the number of available units or allowing the concentration of rental units in large corporate entities (Painter 2020).

The upheaval caused by the pandemic did not happen in a vacuum in Los Angeles County, rather it happened in the midst of a long-standing housing crisis (Blasi 2020). Those who have been the most affected by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were already in a precarious housing position prior to the current crisis. While state and local officials have taken temporary measures to alleviate the immediate threat of a massive wave of evictions, these measures do not address this concerning issue and its potential long-term negative social and economic effects. For that reason, this issue must be addressed beyond simply providing temporary relief and seeking a return to the status quo. Los Angeles County must substantially address the root causes of the housing crisis and begin to create a housing resilient Los Angeles for all.

The Need for a Housing Resilient Los Angeles

The pandemic has revealed the depth and breadth of the underlying crisis of housing affordability and a chronic housing shortage in Los Angeles County. This crisis has resulted in ever increasing numbers of people who are on the brink of not being able to pay for their housing costs and basic necessities, and becoming vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. The ongoing failure to provide adequate affordable housing for all Angelenos builds upon historic intentional discrimination and unconstitutional federal housing policies that have resulted in unequal access to housing and property rights for communities of color.

"I think COVID highlighted the issues... the problem is like a big economic strain that we're all feeling and it's like this looming thing and it's very problematic. So when you talk about affordable housing or like housing costs, like renter's rights, um, and things like that, like those are things that people were fighting for beforehand and that's why people are so stressed".

- Focus Group Participant

In order to address the historic legacy and current effects of these injustices, we must work to ensure to keep all Angelenos in their homes. No one should lose their housing as a result of COVID-19. To achieve that, the response to this crisis cannot be limited to providing temporary relief but must boldly tackle the issue of housing affordability, both in the short and long-term, and protect those communities which are most heavily affected by addressing historic social and racial inequities.

Current moratoriums on evictions have prevented a catastrophic wave of evictions and dramatic increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness. Yet, there is no clarity as to how officials at all levels of government plan to address the housing affordability crisis after those moratoria expire. The ongoing social

and economic crisis caused by COVID-19 will have long-lasting effects. In Los Angeles County, this will certainly lead to a worsening of the already drastic housing affordability crisis. In particular, the most vulnerable communities will disproportionately bear the brunt of this crisis. We must therefore work to build a housing resilient Los Angeles by addressing the root causes of the housing affordability crisis and continuous housing scarcity.

"The thing that I'm most concerned with in this moment is protection for tenants and eviction defense because I was very compelled by the potential tsunami that will come with the lifting of the eviction moratoria ... it is very significant and has to be addressed immediately"

- Fred Ali, Committee for Greater LA

A return to the status quo prior to the pandemic will not suffice. There must be a new approach that boldly tackles the crisis of housing affordability and makes meaningful progress to create a housing resilient Los Angeles. To take steps toward that goal, every decision must involve lived expertise. We must recognize the historic legacy of intentional discrimination in housing and housing systems. Meaningful progress must address long-standing structural racism and unconstitutional discrimination. We must have a data-driven focus to drive assistance to historically marginalized groups. There must be clear accountability at the core of oversight - the whole region is responsible. The scale of our response must meet the scale of the crisis and challenges facing us.

FIGURE 3-3: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS CHART

Policy Recommendations	Immediately		Medium-Term		Long-Term	
Strengthen Tenant Protections	■	■	■	■	■	■
Extend Eviction Moratoria	■	■	■	□	□	□
Provide Rental Assistance to Vulnerable Tenants	■	■	■	□	□	□
Stabilize the Rental Market	□	□	■	■	□	□
Acquire Hotels and Motels and Convert Into Permanent Supportive Housing	□	□	■	■	■	■
Public Acquisition of Distressed Properties and Land-Banking for Affordable Housing	□	□	■	■	■	■
Increase and Align Funding Streams for Affordable Housing	□	□	■	■	■	■
Streamline the Development Process and Remove Barriers to Construction of New Housing	□	□	■	■	■	■
Restructure Governance and Implement Meaningful Accountability At All Levels to Meet Housing Needs	□	□	■	■	■	■
Center Racial Equity and Dismantle Legacy of Historic Systemic Racism	■	■	■	■	■	■

A Bold, Long-term Plan for an Affordable Los Angeles

The crisis of housing affordability in Los Angeles County is not a new issue. This issue existed prior and will continue to affect our communities. Yet, the onset of the pandemic has brought new urgency to this matter. It has highlighted, once again, the systemic inequalities that have led to the uneven burden that communities of color in Los Angeles County carry.

The following recommendations are the result of years of experience working to undo the damaging effects of the unequal systems that have brought us to this point. These recommendations are the product of multiple meetings and comprehensive discussions. We seek to challenge ourselves and all stakeholders in Los Angeles County to think beyond a recovery that only focuses on temporary relief measures but rather a recovery that boldly addresses the long-standing systemic inequities that have fed this crisis for generations.

“The upside of what has happened as a result of all of this is that we’ve seen what happens, if you help people ... if you help people stay afloat, they actually continue to function and actually push forward... [COVID-19] has also shown you just how hard people are working just to make sure that everything stays afloat, not to get rich, not that much, just to stay afloat. So now that we know this, what can we do as a society with that information? What can the government do? What can we do with everything else?”

- Focus Group Participant

Immediate Term:

Extend Eviction Moratoria and Strengthen Tenant Protections. A sudden lifting of eviction moratoria would lead to potentially catastrophic

results. Hundreds of thousands of Los Angeles’ most vulnerable residents and families would be facing the imminent threat of eviction and homelessness. Moreover, those who were unable to pay their rents due to job and income losses caused by the economic fallout of the pandemic will have accrued substantial amounts of rental debt which they will most likely be unable to pay immediately following the end of eviction moratoria. Thus, it is imperative that eviction moratoria remain in place until policies are established to stabilize the rental market and protect vulnerable tenants from imminent eviction. Thus, the Los Angeles City and County governments must immediately begin plans to establish a program to provide legal assistance to all vulnerable tenants facing eviction orders once the moratoria are lifted.

Provide Rental Assistance Prioritizing Most Vulnerable Tenants. Tenants facing eviction proceedings, severely cost-burdened low-income tenants, and low-income tenants in rent-stabilized units should be prioritized for assistance. While Los Angeles County and City have each offered \$100 million in rental assistance, the need for assistance will continue as the outbreak of COVID-19 continues to reach record numbers of infections and deaths in Los Angeles County. As further stimulus funds or other emergency funding related to the pandemic becomes available, additional funds should be directed towards rental assistance prioritizing the most vulnerable tenants (Los Angeles County Development Authority 2020; Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department 2020; Phillips 2020).

Medium Term:

Rental Market Stabilization Program. Tenants who have been unable to pay rent for months will have accrued substantial amounts of debt when the eviction moratoria expire. In addition, some landlords may experience financial distress, particularly small landlords who may not have large amounts of capital

to continue paying their operating costs if several of their tenants stop paying rent. Therefore, the City and County of Los Angeles should establish a rental market stabilization plan to avoid a wave of eviction proceedings and the potential negative implications they may have on renters and small landlords (Painter 2020).

Public Acquisition of Hotels and Motels for Conversion into Permanent Supportive Housing.

The City and County of Los Angeles must utilize existing public authority to acquire hotels and motels and convert them into permanent affordable housing. Currently, there are programs such as “Project Room-Key” to provide temporary shelter for 15,000 unhoused Angelenos. However, the effects of the ongoing crisis will be long-lasting. Therefore, those programs should be made permanent and their scope should be expanded in order to effectively house and provide supportive services for an additional 45,000 unhoused Angelenos. Additionally, these programs should focus on acquiring properties in neighborhoods with a high share of rent-burdened tenants who are vulnerable to eviction and displacement (Blasi et al. 2020).

Property Acquisition and Land Banking for Affordable Housing Development. The effects of the ongoing economic crisis could lead to small landlords and non-profit affordable housing providers losing their properties. The City and County of Los Angeles must prevent these properties from being acquired by corporate landlords who will increase prices and reduce the number of affordable units available for renters. The County and City of Los Angeles should implement immediate and long-term plans to bank and develop land for affordable housing preservation and production. These plans should also prioritize the most vulnerable to eviction, such as low-income communities of color (Healthy LA Coalition 2020).

Long Term:

Increase and Align Funding Streams and Generate Revenue from New Sources for Construction of Affordable Housing. Increase and align acquisition funding streams by leveraging federal, state, local, private and philanthropic capital. The County should

set aside a portion of federal COVID-19 relief and recovery funds for the acquisition and rehabilitation of distressed properties and underutilized land. Disaster relief money should be utilized as ‘soft debt’ to help cover financing gaps for predevelopment, acquisition, and rehabilitation; this will also help attract private capital. Additionally, ensure that existing capital tools such as the New Generation Fund (NGF), Metro Affordable Transit Connected Housing Program (MATCH), and Golden State Acquisition Fund (GSAF) are used efficiently to purchase vacant land, finance predevelopment activities, and acquire multifamily properties of all sizes (Healthy LA Coalition 2020).

Generating new revenue should also take priority. New funding streams for acquisition can be generated from the following untapped or underutilized sources:

- **Transfer Tax:** A second-best alternative to property tax reform, sharing many of its benefits and requiring only majority approval by voters, is to update the real estate transfer tax with higher and more progressive rates. This could increase transfer tax revenues to \$560 million to \$970 million per year in the city of Los Angeles from today’s annual revenues of approximately \$210 million. Similar revenue increases, adjusted for population and local property values, are possible in cities across Southern California. These new funds could support a variety of efforts that are currently on the chopping block, including many that were underfunded even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Proposition 15:** Californians will have the opportunity to vote on a reform to Proposition 13 in this upcoming November election. Proposition 15 would create a constitutional amendment changing the way property taxes are assessed for commercial and industrial properties over \$3 million in value. The measure is expected to raise close to \$12 billion in additional revenue, a substantial portion of which will be directed to local governments. In order to truly reverse the damaging effects of Proposition 13, there should be a significant amount of funding directed towards the construction of affordable housing.
- **Out-of-State Property Transaction Tax:** Levy fees against property sales made by individuals or entities located outside of the state of California.

- **Emergency Bonding Authority:** The County could research the viability of utilizing bonding authority by public entities to generate resources necessary to expand acquisition (Healthy LA Coalition 2020).

Streamline the Development Process and Remove Barriers to Achieve Construction of 500,000 New Housing Units. Planning and land use policies should be streamlined to facilitate greater density near transit and expedited construction of affordable housing.

- **Zoning Reforms:** Los Angeles City was downzoned from a zoning capacity of over 10 million housing units to less than 4 million presently. Exclusionary zoning laws represent another barrier to the production and availability of all housing, and disproportionately benefit wealthy homeowners. In order to make inroads into meeting Los Angeles County's housing needs, there must be zoning reform that dramatically increases zoning capacity, is racially equitable, and does not cause displacement.
- **CEQA Reforms:** The State of California should consider reforms to the CEQA process to allow affordable housing to be fast-tracked through the environmental review and entitlement process. In the face of continuous failure to meet a massive shortage in affordable housing, the State should find appropriate ways to ensure that affordable housing is built as quickly as possible.

Restructure Governance and Implement Meaningful Regional Accountability. In the face of a continuous failure to meet local and regional housing goals, there must be renewed urgency to restructure the governance systems that have brought us

to this point of crisis and implement meaningful regional accountability measures to ensure that all jurisdictions are meeting their housing needs. The City and County of Los Angeles should take steps to clarify accountability to meet regional housing goals. There are a variety of options to be considered such as increasing Joint Powers Authority and creating an Economic Development Corporation to better manage the housing delivery system. The consistent failure to produce sufficient housing is a regional problem and we are facing a crisis of major proportions. Therefore, there must be bold action to implement meaningful regional accountability by restructuring governance.

Center Racial Equity. Each and all of the preceding recommendations must be grounded on an intentional effort to address and dismantle the racial inequity systems that culminated in our current set of crises. It is not an accident that in each facet of both the housing affordability crisis and the pandemic, people of color are disproportionately affected. Rather, this is the result of historic and intentional exclusion and discrimination. From the effects of redlining and racial covenants, the disproportionate wealth loss caused by the Great Recession and the unequal recovery from it, communities of color have continuously suffered the worst effects of structural inequity in times of crisis. Today, once again, people of color in Los Angeles County face disproportionate infection rates, death rates, job losses and housing vulnerability in the midst of a global pandemic. In order to begin moving away from this unacceptable pattern of consistent inequality, we must be bold and demand meaningful progress that finally addresses long-standing structural racism and unconstitutional discrimination in our housing system.

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POLICY SECTION 4

Homelessness

Lack of Investment at Scale Pre-dating COVID-19

A useful analogy about scale: With the current wildfires consuming 1.25 million acres (and growing) in CA, it would be plainly absurd to view a civilian, a firefighter, or even a team of firefighters attempting to fight to put out the fire armed with only a fire extinguisher, or even a single fire engine. The clear inadequacy of such a response would be dangerous and absurd, as is our response to the housing and homelessness crisis ravaging households across the Southland.

Los Angeles County is the epicenter of the American housing and homelessness crisis. Despite a modest decrease in homelessness in 2017 following the passage of Measure H and Proposition HHH, Los Angeles County has experienced two consecutive years of 12 percent or greater increases in homelessness, driven primarily by economic hardship (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2018a, 2019; see Figure 4-1).

People experiencing homelessness continues to rise. As a result, the housing and homelessness crisis in Los Angeles County was an internationally recognized disaster, where unhoused residents faced conditions that fell short of the minimum standards for refugee camps in emergency situations (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2018). Prior to the pandemic, the economic, social, and governmental landscape of Greater Los Angeles was characterized by high costs and housing scarcity, combined with hurdles to re-housing.

FIGURE 4-1: THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS BY REGION BY YEAR



Source: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). 2020. 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

The high cost of housing has made shelter unaffordable and homelessness a reality. In Los Angeles County, the community with the second-highest rent burden in the country, nearly 6 percent of residents are in poverty and spend 90 percent or more of their income on housing (Blasi 2020; Flaming et al. 2018). As of 2018, 31 percent of all households in Los Angeles County were severely rent burdened (paying more than 50 percent of household income on rent and utilities), and an additional 27 percent were moderately cost burdened (paying between 30 percent – 50 percent of household income on rent and utilities) (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). This figure, while dramatic, obscures the immense inequality in cost burden. While only 0.2 percent of households above moderate income are severely cost burdened, 92 percent of deeply low-income households spend at least half of their income on rent and utilities.

Construction has fallen far short of need, worsening housing scarcity and exacerbating the loss of affordable housing through conversions, evictions, the loss of adult residential facilities, and the prohibition of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units. In the 1970s and 1980s, the downzoning of Los Angeles reduced the city’s planned population housing capacity from 10 million people down to 4 million (Curbed Staff 2015). This more restrictive zoning drastically lowered the number of allowed units in many neighborhoods, even going so far as to reduce the zoning capacity to below the density of pre-existing units. Like so many other policy choices, the effects of downzoning caused disproportionate harm to lower-income and communities of color.

While it was mostly affluent areas that were downzoned, areas that were already suffering from overcrowding, less open space, and struggling schools were upzoned to provide a disproportionate share of needed housing. This resulted in disproportionate displacement in lower-

income communities. As a second-order effect, the upzoning of residential areas far from areas of employment and services contributes to increased traffic and pollution that, while affecting everybody, disproportionately harms the communities already vulnerable to displacement including lower-income communities of color.

The unaffordability and shortage of housing has contributed to the displacement and homelessness of Angelenos. It is imperative to acknowledge that anti-Black racism and the discrimination of marginalized groups play a key role in the disproportionate likelihood an individual will experience homelessness. Though Black people comprise approximately 8 percent of Los Angeles County’s population, they are four times more likely than whites to experience homelessness, representing 33.7 percent of the unhoused population (LAHSA 2020). Other marginalized groups including, but not limited to Native Americans, the LGBTQ community, and other communities of color face similar disparities (Figure 4-2) Homelessness is compounded and perpetuated by an increased interaction with the criminal justice system. Unsheltered persons are 11 times more likely to be arrested and comprise a significant number of people housed in jails (Vera Institute of Justice 2020b). Thus, highlighting yet another barrier to future housing.

TABLE 4-1: PERCENT OF HOMELESS POPULATION IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BY RACE

	L.A. CoC Homeless Population	L.A. County Population*
Hispanic/Latino	36.1%	48.5%
Black/African-American	33.7%	7.9%
White	25.5%	26.3%
American-Indian/Alaskan Native	1.1%	0.2%
Asian	1.2%	14.4%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.2%
Multi-Racial/Other	2.1%	2.5%

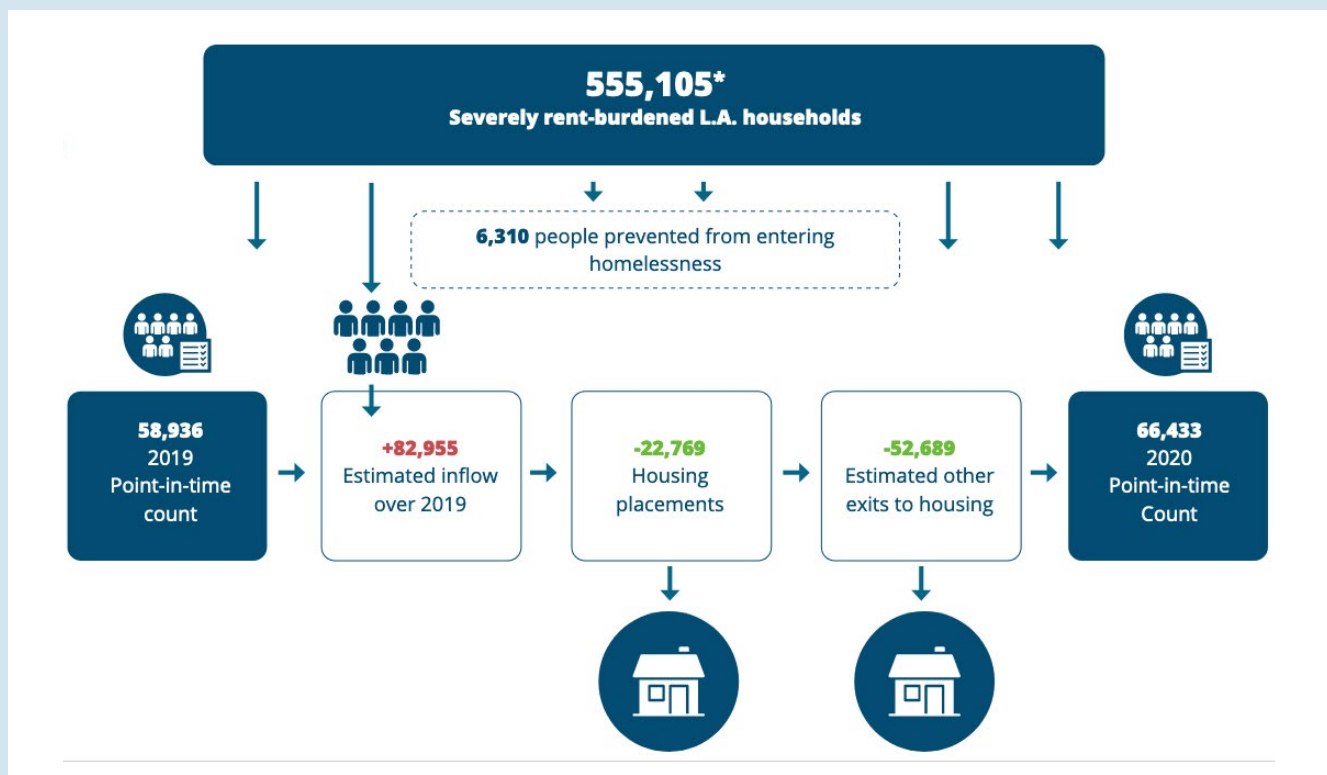
Source: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). 2020. 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

“If my brother had access to housing and effective mental health services when he was experiencing homelessness on the streets of LA County in his 20s and 30s, his life would have taken a completely different trajectory. Instead, he is now in his mid-40s with a lengthy criminal record struggling to rebuild his life. As a sister, the brokenness of the system made me feel helpless, but as an advocate, I am committed to solutions for him and for the thousands of Angelenos counting on us.”

– Sarah Dusseault, Committee for Greater LA

Significant advances in rehousing and services in the three years following the passage of Measure H and Proposition HHH in 2017, as well as increased state funding, have staunched the bleeding of this crisis; however, these efforts failed to make inroads in remedying the root causes of homelessness or building a system at scale necessary to address the crises. This is not from lack of awareness nor is it the result of lack of effort from tireless service providers and advocates. Rather, these failures are borne of uneven political will, systems designed to obscure responsibility and prevent accountability, and decades of federal and state cuts totaling over 76 percent of housing funds (California Housing Partnership 2020c, 2020a). While local and state funding to solve homelessness has greatly increased over the past few years, it pales in comparison to the need. Recent investments—though accurately described as unprecedented—are not sufficient to reverse the rise in homelessness.

FIGURE 4-2: LAHSA FLOW OF HOUSING BURDEN INTO HOMELESSNESS



Source: Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). 2020. 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count. Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Impacts of COVID-19 on the Unhoused in Los Angeles County

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the depth and breadth of the underlying sickness of a chronic and severe housing shortage exacerbated by an insufficient, failed social safety net. The onset of the pandemic has caused severe, ongoing economic fallout. Unemployment in Los Angeles County is hovering around 20 percent, with recent analysis suggesting that as many as 1.8 million people have lost their jobs, disproportionately affecting communities of color (Hedin et al. 2020). On any given day nearly 70,000 of our neighbors are unhoused (LAHSA 2020). The 2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count showed a 12.7 percent increase in homelessness (LAHSA 2020). In this regard, the pandemic has not so much created new problems as it has increased the magnitude of existing problems and demonstrated the inadequacy of current “solutions.”

As of August 7, at least 1,203 unhoused Angelenos have tested positive for COVID-19. Recent estimates from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health predict that as many as 400 unhoused Los Angeles County residents could die, and as many as 2,600 could be hospitalized from the disease (Smith 2020). Unhoused individuals face an awful catch-22, weighing the substantial health risks associated with sleeping outdoors or in encampments (such as lack of environmental protection or access to hygiene and sanitation facilities) against the risks inherent in congregating in indoor settings like emergency shelters and bridge housing facilities. Preventative measures such as practicing social distancing and regular handwashing are nearly impossible for unhoused people in current conditions. For severely rent-burdened households and those on the cusp of homelessness, there are equally difficult decisions to be made; reliance on wages from jobs that require close contact, public transportation, and the increased vulnerability of elderly family members in multigenerational homes further endanger low-income Angelenos, who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC).

In response to COVID-19, Los Angeles County now faces two tasks in addressing homelessness: 1) ensure all residents are housed as quickly as possible ; and 2) rethink and restructure the upstream interventions that have permitted the housing and homelessness crisis to reach such disastrous proportions, particularly among marginalized communities. Despite the historically low unemployment at the time, a 2019 report from the Federal Reserve suggested that 38 percent of Americans would be unable to pay an unexpected expenditure of \$400, and in 2020, 59 percent of the newly unhoused cited economic hardship as the main reason for their experiencing homelessness (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System 2019). Therefore, it is reasonable, absent any major intervention, to anticipate a significant increase in homelessness in light of an unprecedented economic collapse and surge in joblessness. At the time of this writing there is little indication of sustained relief en route from the federal or state governments, underscoring the necessity of local action.

“...homelessness is definitely an issue...a lot of homeless people use the library as a resource, for shelter, for information, and different things like we take for granted...homeless people use places like public areas for a lot of those things that we have in our house...so I think that’s definitely something that has like, impacted like that group of people, like COVID has impacted them.”

- Focus Group Participant

Thus far, the response to COVID-19 as it pertains to housing and homelessness has fallen short of the scale of comprehensive solutions necessary. The primary responses include Project Roomkey, eviction moratoria, and unemployment insurance (either through the State Employment Development Department or through

the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Insurance). Each of these measures is a short-term, temporary effort that does not adequately protect Los Angeles County's unhoused population or those at high risk of becoming homeless.

Project Roomkey is a program implemented at the state, county, and city level which negotiates occupancy agreements with hotels to use vacant rooms as shelter for unhoused people. In Los Angeles County, Project Roomkey has the goal of housing 15,000 unhoused people in the highest-risk categories for COVID-19, representing 25 percent of the unhoused population. A goal that is based upon data on the number of unhoused who meet the eligibility criteria of either being over the age of 65 or vulnerable to COVID-19. As of August 18, 4,177 rooms were contracted, 3,760 of which were occupied at a 90 percent occupancy rate serving 4,304 clients (Los Angeles County Emergency Operations Center 2020).

Though any progress ought to be celebrated, one cannot characterize Project Roomkey as an unqualified success. Specifically, the lack of willing or eligible hotels in the southern region of the city of Los Angeles covered by Service Planning Area (SPA) 6, coupled with the reliance on negotiated agreements with hotels as opposed to using the full might of government to deploy bold public acquisition strategies, proved to be a significant obstacle. Moreover, while many larger hotel owners or managers wanted to participate in the program, if their lender or insurance carrier refused on the basis of it being a "change of use," that could be considered a breach of contract (Committee for Greater LA 2020b). This experience, and its dire consequences for unsheltered Angelenos, underscores the importance of clarifying the civic requirement of participation in emergency shelter programs and the proactive clearing of legal hurdles for future use.

The Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (LAHSA) has pledged not to allow any resident housed through Project Roomkey to be sent back to the streets after the COVID-19 emergency has ended. Additionally, in response to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor and Los Angeles City Council motions, LAHSA has unveiled a plan to continue to permanently house 15,000 people, which includes transitioning people living in temporary rooms through Project Roomkey into permanent housing options (Smith and

Oreskes 2020). This plan is estimated to cost \$800 million over the next three years. Both the County and City are looking at ways to fund pieces of the plan, but it has not yet been fully funded (Smith and Oreskes 2020).

"A lot of people are on the cliff edge of homelessness every day, and if you are poor and a person of color, you're always with your feet half off that edge."

-Jacqueline Waggoner, Committee for Greater LA

Project Roomkey demonstrated that the City and County are indeed capable of quickly housing thousands, but needs to meet its goal of housing 15,000 people and expand through various programs to serve all unhoused residents of Los Angeles County. With the recent launch of Project Homekey, Los Angeles County and many of the cities therein have applied for 40 sites totaling over \$367 million in funds to convert hotels, motels, and other potential housing options into housing stock (Committee for Greater LA 2020b). However, with property developers and other private entities monitoring the market for distressed assets which they can purchase and use for profit, further perpetuating cycles of displacement and lowering the already paltry housing stock, these jurisdictions must act quickly to seize the moment and rapidly increase our housing supply.

Eviction moratoria implemented at the city, county, and state level offer temporary protections against eviction to economically vulnerable residents, but is similarly a stopgap measure at best. First, in order to qualify for relief, tenants must prove a causal connection between COVID-19 and their inability to pay rent as well as technical procedural requirements with which a tenant must fully and accurately comply. In the City of Los Angeles, tenants must similarly establish the causal connection between COVID-19 (as opposed to the general economic fallout caused by COVID-19) and their nonpayment of rent. Though the City's moratorium affords tenants 12 months to pay back rent, it does not include protections for a transitional period at the end of the local emergency. This means that the inability to pay any rent due on or after three days from the expiration of the Mayor's emergency declaration could result in the issuance of an unlawful

TABLE 4-2: CHARACTERISTICS OF AT-RISK ZIP CODES

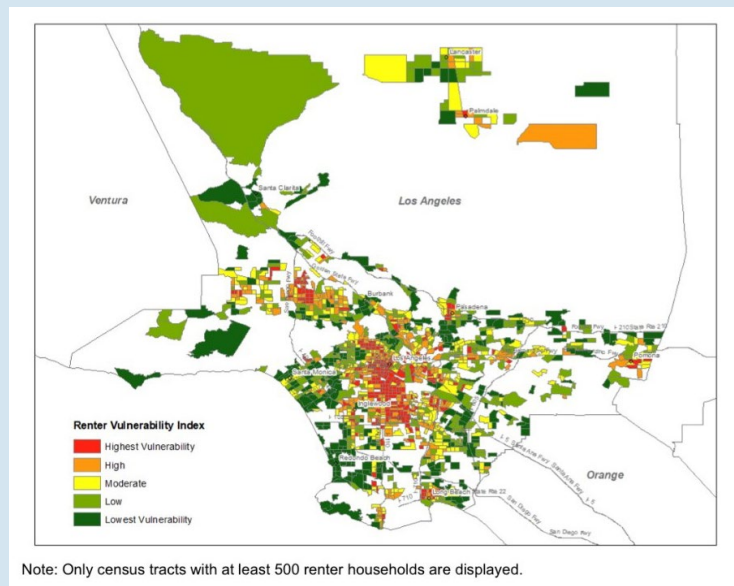
Zip Codes	Neighborhood	% Renter-Occupied Units	% non-Hispanic Black or African-American	% Hispanic or Latino	% Foreign Born	% Poor-Struggling*	% Rent-Burdened HHs**	% Company-Owned Residential Units***
90001	Florence-Firestone	64%	9%	90%	41%	65%	62%	9%
90003	Broadway-Manchester	72%	22%	77%	38%	67%	72%	17%
90006	Pico Union	92%	3%	74%	57%	66%	61%	53%
90011	Historic South Central	74%	8%	91%	46%	68%	66%	16%
90037	Vermont Square	76%	17%	79%	43%	66%	70%	25%
90057	Westlake	96%	4%	70%	60%	65%	60%	76%
91405	Van Nuys	73%	4%	63%	47%	53%	61%	50%
Los Angeles County		54%	8%	49%	34%	37%	56%	—

* Percentage of population with income below 200% of the federal poverty level (ratio-to-income in poverty-level)
 ** Percentage of all households paying more than 30% of income on rent
 *** Percentage of all residential units owned by LLC, LP, Corp or Inc. entities.

Source: UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy; table prepared by Joel Montano. Data from 2018 American Community Survey (5-year estimates) and ORProFarm database.a

detainer (UD) complaint four days later (Blasi 2020). Most importantly, however, these moratoria only prevent the potential end result of the process—the actual eviction—not the initiation of unlawful detainer complaints. That is to say that landlords are fully able to file complaints and begin litigation as soon as the Judicial Council first permits the issuance of such summons. Barring any further protections, recent analysis from UCLA’s Institute on Inequality and Democracy suggests that as many as 365,000 renter households are at risk for eviction, resulting in anywhere from 36,000 to 120,000 tenant households falling into homelessness (Blasi 2020). In addition, their study shows in Table 4-2 that many of the neighborhoods or zip codes that are most at risk are often overwhelmingly Black or Latino, experiencing poverty and have a significant number of Company-Owned Residential Units. Another analysis of Renter Vulnerability also shows in Figure 4-3 that many vulnerable renters are concentrated throughout Los Angeles from the San Fernando Valley, in and around Central LA and in South LA.

FIGURE 4-3: LOS ANGELES COUNTY NEIGHBORHOODS BY RENTER VULNERABILITY INDEX



Source: Ong et. al. (2020) Los Angeles County Neighborhoods by Renter Vulnerability Index.

The Harsh Reality of Homelessness and Our Goal to End It

Housing is a matter of life and death. While the average housed woman and man in Los Angeles have life expectancies of 83 years and 79 years, respectively, the life expectancies for unhoused women and men are 48 years and 51 years (Gorman and Rowan 2019). In 2019, more than 1,000 of our unhoused neighbors died in Los Angeles County (Goodheart 2020). Each of these lives lost is attributable to failed policies and an acceptance of a morally repugnant status quo built on structural racism and the prioritization of private profit over the lives of our brothers and sisters.

The initial responses to COVID-19 are little more than a stopgap measure to buy time. Between the onset of the pandemic in mid-March through May 9, estimates suggest that 1.8 million workers in Los Angeles County became unemployed, nearly 600,000 of whom would be expected to neither apply for nor receive any replacement income from state or federal services (Blasi 2020). While the current eviction moratoria imposed by Governor Newsom, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the City of Los Angeles, and many other cities across the county have offered some respite, they only cover a relatively narrow range of tenants, place significant burdens on tenants, and only temporarily prevent the issuance of unlawful detainer summons. There are no provisions that prevent a landlord from filing an unlawful detainer complaint or preparing to litigate the case immediately upon the expiration of the emergency protections. While we have largely been spared a crushing wave of pandemic-related evictions so far, its specter looms on the horizon.

Though there is still time to increase tenant protections, landlords have already begun to file UD complaints for non-payment of rent. In the vast majority of cases, for every tenant who reaches out for assistance, there are many more who opt not to contest the UD complaint to avoid navigating a complex, costly process. Further, the lack of clarity as to what, exactly, relief entails muddies the water for

tenants. For example, in the current framework, a Los Angeles County resident could legally have until fall of 2021 (or, contingent on the passage of AB3088, until spring of 2022) to pay back any missed rent, but could be legally evicted starting in September of 2020 for failing to pay at least 25 percent of their current rent. As already dire economic situations worsen across the region and prospects for our local, regional, and national economic recovery remain unclear, we stand poised to face an unprecedented eviction crisis with significant human cost.

“I’ve been thinking a lot about how it’s a known-fact that the population of Black people is the smallest number, but the population of homelessness is the highest in Black people. Um, then thinking about how, if you’re born in a certain zip code, you already have been determined, a shorter lifespan.”

- Focus Group Participant

The historic and persistent prioritization of the private economic benefit of developers and vocal ‘Not In My Backyard’ (NIMBY) opposition over social wellbeing manifests as real human suffering, with ever-increasing numbers of our neighbors falling into homelessness or trapped in the hopeless purgatory of interim housing including, notably, jails. The wretched harvest we reap today comes from the seeds sown by historic, intentional, systemic discrimination and unconstitutional federal housing policies that have allowed unequal access to housing and property rights to take root.

As such, we must not only end unsheltered homelessness in Los Angeles County, but also disrupt, dismantle, and rebuild the systems that allow our neighbors to fall into homelessness. We must increase the supply of affordable housing to meet current demand, root out the pernicious effects of

systemic racism that create disparities in housing and homelessness, and ensure that wages keep pace with the cost of rent. Using a data-driven, race-centered approach, we can build on the momentum of the COVID-19 crisis response to transform our homelessness infrastructure from palliative to curative.

Los Angeles County faced a humanitarian catastrophe prior to an unprecedented economic downturn and mass unemployment; without bold action, we risk an unfathomable disaster, with an estimated 365,000 renter households—including approximately

558,000 children—at imminent danger of eviction and homelessness (Blasi 2020). Los Angeles County is at a critical juncture. With an existing crisis ready to become an all-out catastrophe, we must act now and address the roots of the crisis while preventing its worsening. Ending homelessness is possible. A greater, more just Los Angeles County is possible. The time is now.

A Bold and Necessary Plan

The economic fallout from COVID-19 necessitates policy responses that can be broadly sorted into three categories: housing supply, housing affordability, and tenant protections. Critically, each of these policy responses must be informed by a race-centered approach, so as to meaningfully unwind the legacies of institutional and structural racism in education, criminal justice, housing, employment, healthcare, and access to opportunities that have contributed to the disproportionate representation of Black people in Los Angeles County's unhoused population.

Housing Supply and Affordability

It is important to note that Los Angeles County is currently 509,000 units short of its current demand for affordable housing units. Any solution to homelessness must prioritize increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing if we are to turn the tide against the housing and homelessness crisis. In order to build a system at scale, for every one temporary unit of housing, we need five permanent housing options. The current extreme scarcity and loss of specific types of housing such as Single Room Occupancy and board and care, or adult residential facilities, for those with severe mental illness puts intense pressure on the market for extremely low-income units. It should come as no surprise that our

most vulnerable—those over age 65, those suffering with mental illness or substance abuse, and young families—are on our streets. This is not a bug, but rather a feature of a system with severe housing scarcity.

A recent report from UCLA researchers suggests that a forthcoming decline in hotel occupancy will result in 36,000 to 70,000 hotel and motel rooms that will be vacant and can be acquired as housing (Blasi et al. 2020). While the history of eminent domain in Los Angeles County is one of the displacement of low-income BIPOC to enrich property developers, it is long past time that local officials use their power to prevent the homelessness and deaths of our neighbors. Public acquisition strategies, previously used to displace subaltern communities in the name of development, ought to be deployed to advance the necessary social good of housing. There is mounting evidence of private capital's interest in acquiring distressed assets, further contributing to community disruption and displacement (Blasi et al. 2020). It is incumbent upon local, county, and state officials to act now to prevent this secondary crisis.

As mentioned previously, Los Angeles County has long suffered the second-highest rent burden in the nation. Increases in the cost of rent have far outpaced wages. In California, COVID-19 related unemployment has ravaged lower-wage sectors of the economy

and individuals with low educational attainment—in both instances resulting in disproportionate harm to communities of color. As economic hardship is by far the primary driver of homelessness in Los Angeles County, all options to promote affordable housing should be on the table, including, but not limited to: the creation of new sources of funding for public housing and rental support; the establishment of universal rent control; the elimination of red tape that slows development (i.e. CEQA reform); expediting the release of publicly owned land; the establishment of caps for development costs and subsidies; and the advancement of policies to promote housing density.

Tenant Protections

In order to prevent future increases in homelessness, robust tenant protections must be implemented. Specifically, a meaningful, supported right to counsel for tenants litigating unlawful detainer complaints will help keep people in their homes. Further, eviction moratoria should be revised to ease the administrative burden and cost to at-risk tenants to promote fair proceedings under the law, as opposed to favoring wealthier, powerful parties. In short, Los Angeles County should follow the suggestions made in LAHSA's COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Homelessness dated June 23, 2020.

Ensuring Racial Equity

Any policies or actions directed toward increasing the supply and affordability of housing and protecting tenants must reckon with the vestiges of redlining and exclusionary zoning that have led to Los Angeles County's ignominious distinction as one of the most segregated metropolitan areas in the country. Segregation is not simply a matter of ethnic enclaves staying to themselves—it is a pernicious pattern that upholds oppressive systems and leads to lower homeownership, lower wealth accumulation, and higher rent burdens for Black communities and other communities of color. While homeownership has increased over the last 50 years for every other group, Black homeownership has fallen to levels similar to those seen before the passage of the Fair

Housing Act. The wounds of segregation have been and continue to be aggravated and compounded by racist, discriminatory policy and allowed to fester, resulting in Black Angelenos composing 33.7 percent of the unhoused population despite only accounting for 8.7 percent of the total county population (LAHSA 2020). Beyond the moral outrage such disparities ought to inspire, any practical approach to ending homelessness in Los Angeles County must include an equal solution to this shameful inequality, prioritizing the population most disproportionately experiencing or at risk for homelessness.

The existing structures used to address the housing and homelessness crisis have resulted in treading water. We must rethink and restructure our response to the housing and homelessness crisis to avoid returning to a status quo that enabled consecutive years of double-digit increases in homelessness and failed to address structural racism. We must expand our triage approach to solving homelessness launched during the COVID-19 crisis into a permanently expanded, equity-focused, and results-driven safety net in Los Angeles County.

Ending homelessness in Los Angeles County will take immediate, short-term, and long-term actions and strategies:

Immediate Term:

For the unhoused: Access to land that is temporarily not in use for safe parking for cars and RVs.

One example includes putting the Coliseum and its parking lot to use during the triple emergency of the pandemic, homelessness, and enduring racial inequity.

For the unhoused: Fund and execute the current plan to move 15,000 of the most vulnerable people into permanent housing, including those age 65 or older.

For those in temporary housing: Ensure that no one housed temporarily returns to the streets.

For people in housing: Provide rent and mortgage relief beyond that offered through the Coronavirus

Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act, extend the eviction moratoria through Spring 2022 and increase tenant protections through universal rent control. Restructure the eviction process to protect tenants so that it includes, but is not limited to, establishing a right to counsel for eviction proceedings, lowering or eliminating tenant filing fees, and empowering mediators to resolve past debt.

For elected officials and service providers: Employ other immediate plans utilizing land or buildings not in use because of COVID-19 or otherwise under government control.

Short Term:

- Use Project Homekey to increase acquisitions of hotels, modular, board, and care units.
- Launch culturally competent education campaign for housing retention for those in housing to prevent homelessness
- Implement and fund plans to house all residents over age 65.
- Shore up financial support for board- and care-assisted residential facilities for people with mental illness experiencing homelessness.
- Streamline processes and begin anti-racist rezoning work including reversing the effect of downzoning.
 - Specific examples of the types of streamlining required in the rehousing movement include waivers of document requirements for placements, mandated time frames to place people into vacant units, waivers of the layers of review by multiple agencies, and implementing universal review or universal applications that skip steps. There must be a cross-sector mediator empowered to clear hurdles.
- Minimums on per unit square footage per unit or density caps that preclude SRO or Affordable micro-units should be eliminated.
- Develop a campaign and dashboard to publicly monitor construction of housing and hold elected officials accountable.
- Fully implement the recommendations and work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness (LAHSA 2018b).
- Secure additional resources to fund solutions at the scale of need, including the creation of new state and local funding sources for permanent supportive housing, including:
 - Reforming California's property tax system.
 - Implementing a county-wide real estate transfer tax similar to what currently exists in Culver City, which would generate as much as \$1 billion per year in Los Angeles County.
 - Supporting the proposed \$2 billion allocation for supportive and adult residential housing.
 - Creating additional state tax credits for permanent supportive housing.
- Incentivize private investment:
 - Eliminate or significantly modify obstacles to the creation of Single Room Occupancy and micro-units. These obstacles include:
 - Adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance to allow and expedite conversion from commercial property into permanent supportive housing.
 - Remove complicatedness in code compliance due to the combined requirements tied to public funding sources affecting minimum dwelling sizes, clearances, closet spaces that are overlaid upon the building code itself, which makes the approvals process extremely time-consuming and burdensome and adds to cost of each unit.

Long Term:

- Establish or designate a regional centralized

agency that, among other things, holds all local governments accountable for funding and siting permanent supportive housing.

- Every local government should have an action plan to build 25 percent of their very low-income Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) number as permanent supportive housing (PSH).
 - Beverly Hills, for example, is expected to build 1,005 very low-income units, 678 low-income units, 600 moderate-income units, and 813 market-rate units. The total Very Low Income units for Los Angeles County are 217,000 which, with a 25 percent required rate, implies 54,000 Permanent Supportive Housing units. Beverly Hills would be responsible for 251. Any such plans must include timelines and accountability mechanisms.
- Re-start the national campaign to end American homelessness by increasing federal funding and erasing decades of cuts. For example, double Section 8 housing vouchers.

- Waive burdensome federal rules that unconstitutionally exclude immigrants and citizen families from housing.
- Increase access to health and mental health through Social Connection Hubs and other efforts described in the Access to Health section.
- Ensure access to housing for those exiting jails, foster care, and other institutions through effective use of the regional accountability described above.

Though these actions, where appropriate, ought to include cost-saving measures, we must not lose track of the unbearable cost of the status quo. There is extremely low return on investment under the current broken regime—it is extremely expensive and creates unnecessary, inefficient, and ineffective spending on police, jail, sanitation services, health care, and other emergency services. Beyond this fiscal cost, which is often obscured through its dispersal across sectors, there is a repugnant moral cost to carrying on as we have. Achieving justice for our homeless population will require our collective political will, courage, and a vision that eliminates suffering.

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POLICY SECTION 5

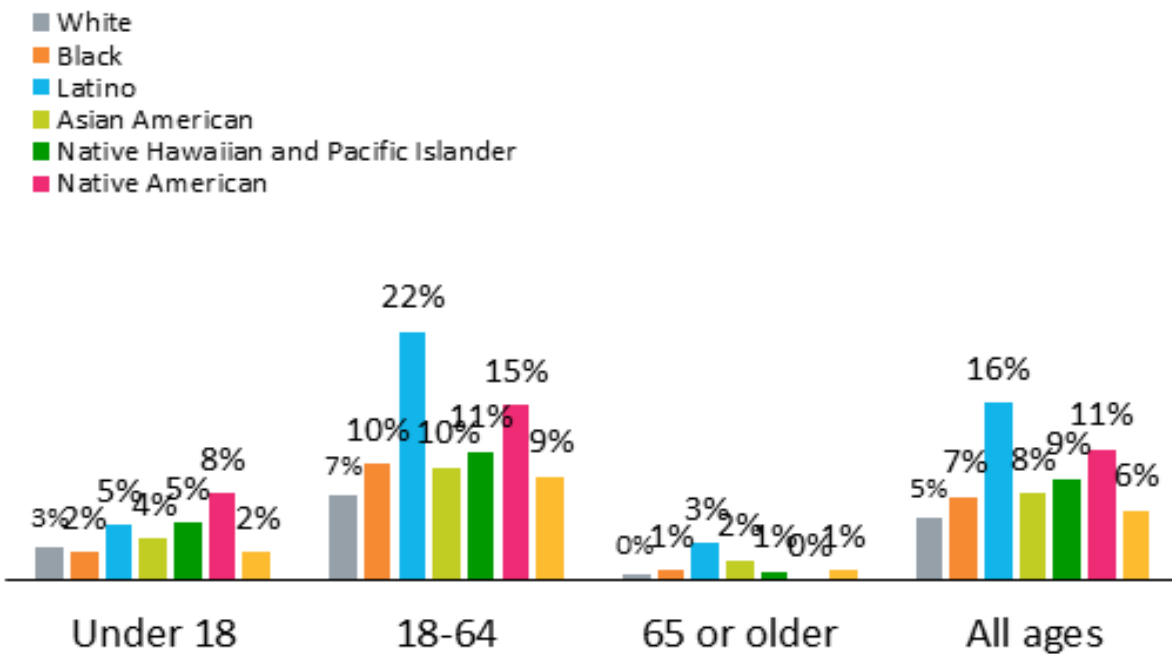
Healthcare Access

Healthcare Access

Prior to the emergence of COVID-19 and the destruction it has visited on communities of color, immigrants, and others, Los Angeles County faced a long-standing set of structural disadvantages in access to quality, affordable healthcare. Those disadvantages resulted in worse outcomes, poorer care, fewer doctors per population, and a set of communities sufficiently under-cared for, and manifesting considerable non-

COVID-19 morbidities. The impact of the pandemic would inevitably be catastrophic and far worse for these communities than in others. The low income and working class communities of Los Angeles were, and are, disadvantaged by a series of structural disadvantages in the healthcare system which limit their access to care, its quality, and its effectiveness.

FIGURE 5-1: RATES OF UNINSURED IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND AGE, 2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Data reflects a 2014-2018 average.

No, or Lower Quality, Health Insurance

Evidence from the Census shows the disadvantage communities of color face in medical coverage even after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. In Los Angeles County, despite the expansion of MediCal, the on-boarding of undocumented minors, and the establishment of Covered California exchange, 7 percent of African Americans, 8 percent of Asian Americans, 11 percent of Native Americans, and 16 percent of Latinos lack health insurance coverage. Importantly, there are dramatic age dimensions to who is uninsured. Among adults of labor-force age, uninsured rates are higher, at 22 percent and 15 percent for Latinos and Natives, respectively (Figure 5-1). Immigration status is a partial but not full explanation of that shortfall.

There is no question that shortfalls in coverage have two critical effects:

1. They cause individuals to delay or defer medical attention for problems, often making them worse, and;
2. They result in flooded emergency departments as improvised sites of primary care.

Even with coverage, the type of coverage available to most patients, impacts the quality of care. There are at least two reasons for this. First, MediCal reimbursement rates are lower than Medicare and private insurance for identical treatments and

procedures. This has the effect of making care for the elderly and higher income patients more financially rewarding than care for the non-elderly poor. Because of the age structure of our population, this actually devotes greater public resources to middle and upper-middle class and elderly white patients and fewer resources to working-class and poor patients of all ages, who are far more likely to be Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) patients, as a matter of policy. Second, and related to the first, federal funding for graduate medical training—residencies—is driven by Medicare patient volume, and not by Medicaid volume. Once again, the net effect is to redistribute public health-care resources upward, that is, to patients and communities who do not need them.

Health Care Work Force

Compounding the access issue created by health insurance undercoverage is the extraordinary shortage of BIPOC physicians, nationwide and in California (Alltucker 2020). While the medical profession has been concerned for some time about an overall shortage of physicians, the effects are unevenly experienced by communities, and the shortage of BIPOC physicians is particularly acute. A report this summer by the Association of American Medical Colleges found that African American doctors were just 2.6 percent of the national total, compared with a national population share of 13 percent (Association of American Medical Colleges 2019). Likewise, the Latino physician shortage is even more acute, with 3.8 percent of all doctors being Latino compared to a population share of more than 18 percent. Not much change is anticipated, as only 7.1 percent of enrollments in medical school last year were African American and only 6.2 percent were Latino (Association of American Medical Colleges 2019).

There are at least three dimensions to the importance of co-ethnic matches in ethnicity or race between doctor and patient. First, patients are more comfortable with doctors who are ethno-racial matches. Such a match reduces social distance, relieves anxiety, and therefore may increase the frequency or promptness of care for BIPOC. Second, there are well-documented differences in quality of care related to the race and ethnicity of a patient, ranging

from the willingness of a physician to believe patients with respect to complaints, pain, and self-reported symptoms, all the way to the prescribing of pain medication and the attentiveness of post-operative recovery (Laveist and Nuru-Jeter 2002). The results of this disconnect between provider and patient can be fatal. Whether as a consequence of physician inattentiveness or the patient-doctor social distance leading to late medical care, outcomes of similarly situated patients often are poorer for low-income and BIPOC patients.

Finally, a third dimension of importance is sharing the same language between provider and patient. Significant shares of Latino adults are Spanish dominant and, even if partly or mostly English-fluent, will be better served by physicians who can communicate in their native language. In this area of language, the data are equally bad. According to the Latino Policy Institute at UCLA there is a tremendous shortage of Spanish speaking physicians in California. The number of Latino doctors and medical students—as well as non-Latinos with Spanish skills sufficient to the clinical task—is far behind the needed volume (Artiga, Orgera, and Pham 2020; Detz et al. 2014; Kanter et al. 2009; Laveist and Nuru-Jeter 2002; Powe and Cooper 2004; Vargas Bustamante, Martinez, and Baldera-Medina Anaya 2020).

Underinvestment in outpatient care, prevention, and disease management

Under-resourced populations in Los Angeles County, even prior to the current crisis, have faced persistent and on-going denial of care. Beyond the shortage of co-ethnic providers, the structural disadvantage in funding criteria, and the challenge of uninsured residents, the health care infrastructure in Los Angeles has not been up to the task of providing the necessary services. The shortage of physicians directly affects Los Angeles — to have the necessary medical work force, Los Angeles needs 500 additional primary care physicians and 700 specialists in a variety of areas.

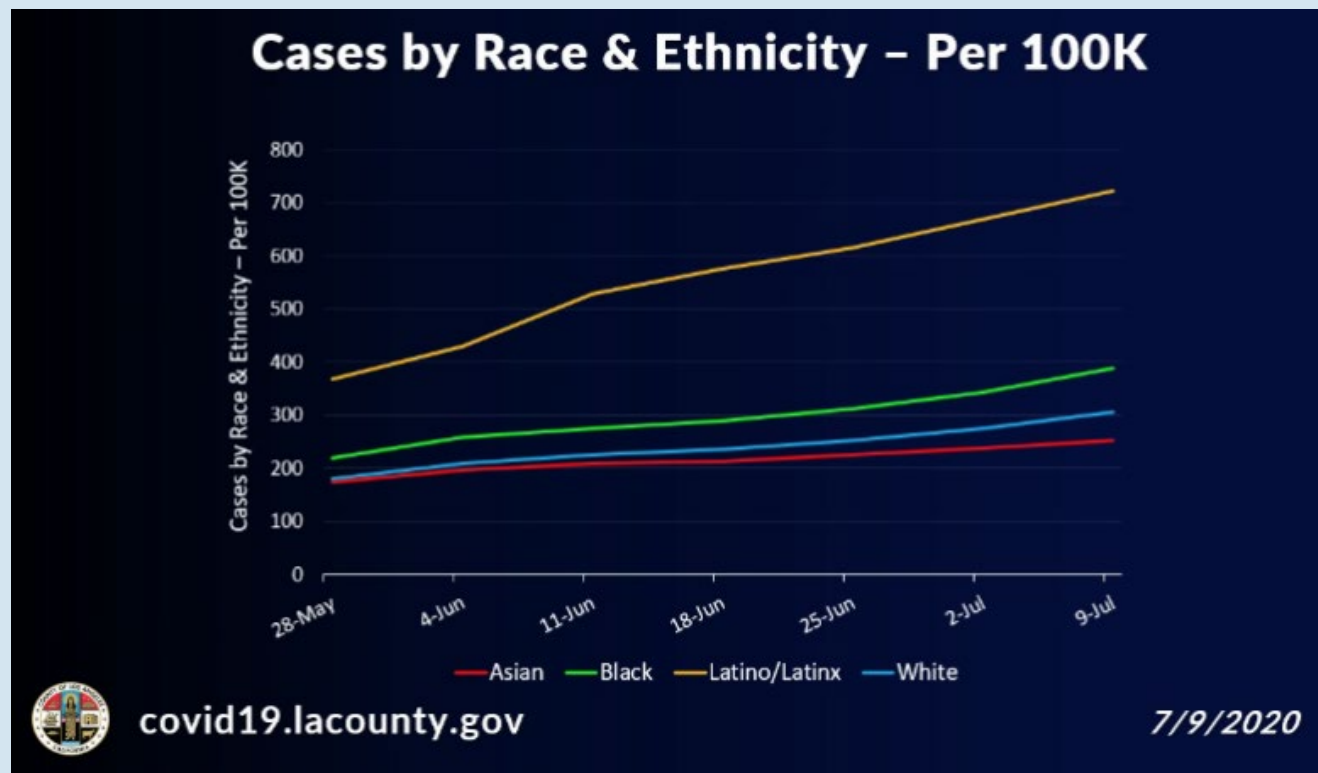
The existing roster of primary care physicians, allied health professionals, and Federally Qualified Health Clinics simply cannot meet the needs of a large, diverse, and underinsured population. The result is the utter absence of preventative care and wellness support and the inevitable reliance on the emergency room as the site of overdue primary care.

COVID-19 and the Health Effects in Los Angeles County

In the earliest stages of the epidemic in the United States, African American infection and mortality rates were shocking and the focus of considerable attention. By June 2020, it was clear deaths among African Americans were substantially and disproportionately higher (Ford, Reber, and Reeves 2020). More recently, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported rates of infection among

Latinos above 30 percent of all cases in the United States, while representing 18 percent of the national population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also stated that African Americans, comprised just under 20 percent of infections while only making up 13 percent of the national population (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020).

FIGURE 5-2: LATINO AND BLACK RESIDENTS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY HAVE CONTRACTED COVID-19 AT HIGHER RATES THAN WHITE RESIDENTS



SOURCE: Lin II, Rong-Gong. 2020. "Latinos Now Twice as Likely as Whites to Get Coronavirus in L.A. County." Los Angeles Times, July 10.

TABLE 5-1: AGE-ADJUSTED DEATH RATES DUE TO COVID-19 PER 100K, AUGUST 18, 2020

		Mortality Rate
Los Angeles County Total		49
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	38
	Black/African American	57
	Hispanic/Latino	75
	White	28
Area Poverty	<10% area poverty	25
	10% to <20% area poverty	49
	20% to <30% area poverty	67
	30% to 100% area poverty	103

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). "Age-Adjusted Death Rates Due to COVID-19 per 100k."

Disproportionality in Los Angeles is also extreme. For every 100,000 Latino residents in Los Angeles County, more than 700 have been infected with the coronavirus; and for every 100,000 Black residents, nearly 400 have been infected, according to an age-adjusted analysis by County officials (Curtin and Klein 1995). By contrast, for every 100,000 white residents, more than 300 have been infected with the virus; and for every 100,000 Asian American residents, about 250 have been infected.

Higher infection rates are yielding higher death rates. Moreover, residents of color are experiencing higher mortality among the infected—that is, conditioned on viral exposure, residents of color in Los Angeles are more likely to succumb to the disease than white residents exposed to COVID-19.

Why are more Black and Brown Angelenos dying? Dr. Elaine Batchlor, CEO of the MLK Community Hospital, offers a handful of reasons. Many working-class BIPOC are employed in occupations where they experience greater contact with other populations, putting them at greater risk. The inadequacy of protection and unavailability of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the early months of the pandemic exacerbated these risks.

The insufficient availability of testing and contact

tracing was, and is, a national embarrassment that deeply set back efforts to contain and control the spread. But lack of testing availability for the uninsured, to working class persons, to individuals with limited transportation options, all contributed to the disparate impact.

As Paul Ong and his team noted, higher density populations and relatively larger household sizes in smaller dwelling units made “safer at home” far less effective in African American and particularly Latino populations. This impact is twofold—larger household sizes in smaller spaces make within-family quarantine far more difficult— and in many cases impossible. Meanwhile, higher density neighborhoods make physical isolation harder to achieve (Gonzalez 2020).

The presence of long-standing co-morbidities, including mental health and substance challenges, are markers of increased vulnerability. For working-class and BIPOC communities, those long-standing conditions include higher than usual rates of diabetes and juvenile asthma, exacerbated by the environmental degradation that has occurred in industrial and commercial sites and transportation corridors adjacent to these communities. Low incomes and lack of health insurance delay the seeking of medical care and reduce the quality. All other things being equal, a working class BIPOC resident is more

likely to die of COVID-19 infection when their disease process is further along and their symptoms are more severe, both as a consequence of delayed and inadequate medical treatment.

Shockingly, the policy apparatus has used the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity—not to redress the longstanding shortfalls in medical care resources for low-income populations, but—to double down on the pre-existing inequities. Federal COVID-19 funding was disproportionately given to hospitals in whiter, more insured, and more affluent communities because the distribution formulas were not unlike those for graduate medical education—that is, based on Medicare patient volume and historical revenue.

Our goal is that all residents of California, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, must enjoy health care access at a rate they can afford from gestational periods to end of life care. Health care is a human right. To do this we recommend:

Creating Universal healthcare access. All Californians should have access to reliable, affordable, health care services from professionals familiar with their cultural practices and language. Achieving universal access may occur in a variety of ways including:

- **Statewide Single Payer.** California should adopt a Medicare-for-all model that sets rates for all medical services and supplants the existing for-profit insurance structure.
- **Medi-Cal Expansion**—In the absence of single-payer, and following the national model of Medicaid expansion as part of the Affordable Care Act, California should expand Medi-Cal to all individuals who are unable to afford private insurance or do not receive such an option from their employer.
- **Covered California Expansion to include undocumented adults.** Currently, Children Health Insurance Program’s and Medi-Cal cover undocumented minors. Expand the opportunity for

undocumented adults to purchase low-cost health insurance through the Covered California exchange, with the state providing the subsidy the federal program does not.

Increase Medi-Cal payments to the same level as Medicare. Doing so would equalize funding to providers and practitioners whose practice is principally among BIPOC and immigrant patients.

Pay more for outpatient care, disease management, and population health (and not just to Federally Qualified Health Centers). Wellness and preventive medicine cannot and should not be a luxury reserved for higher income persons. All members of the community, as well as the community as a whole, should benefit from rigorous preventive care and community health promotion.

Inegrate funding and delivery of medical and behavioral health care, and fund mental health care at the same rate as physical healthcare.

Reduce barriers and increase payments for telehealth services. Telehealth provides dramatically increased access to healthcare provision, making access easier for individuals with childcare, eldercare, or mobility challenges, and making specialized services available in a manner that is not geographically constrained.

Provide more equitable funding for medical training by distributing resources for graduate medical education based on patient load and service demand rather than revenues or services to an age-limited cohort of patients.

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POLICY SECTION 6

Healthcare Interventions

Communities of color suffered significant health disparities prior to the pandemic

Throughout the United States, rates of diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic conditions are higher in Black and Latino communities, and Los Angeles County is no exception (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2019; Los Angeles Department of Public Health 2020). As of 2010, life expectancy was approximately 6 years shorter among Black Angelenos compared to their white counterparts (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health 2010b). The social determinants of health, reinforced through historic and ongoing systemic racism can be seen when comparing affluent, white communities to low-income Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). For example, in 2010 the average resident of La Cañada Flintridge could expect to live 15 years longer than the average resident of Westmont, despite a separation of approximately 25 miles.

Substance use disorder creates another axis of inequality in Los Angeles. While Southern California has been spared the worst of the opioid epidemic faced by other parts of the United States, Angelenos have nevertheless experienced increasing rates of opioid usage, alongside heavy burdens of methamphetamine, alcohol, and cocaine use disorders (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health 2010a). These epidemics both affect marginalized communities at higher rates and increase marginalization by draining resources, exposing residents to drug-related violence, and inviting violent policing into affected neighborhoods.

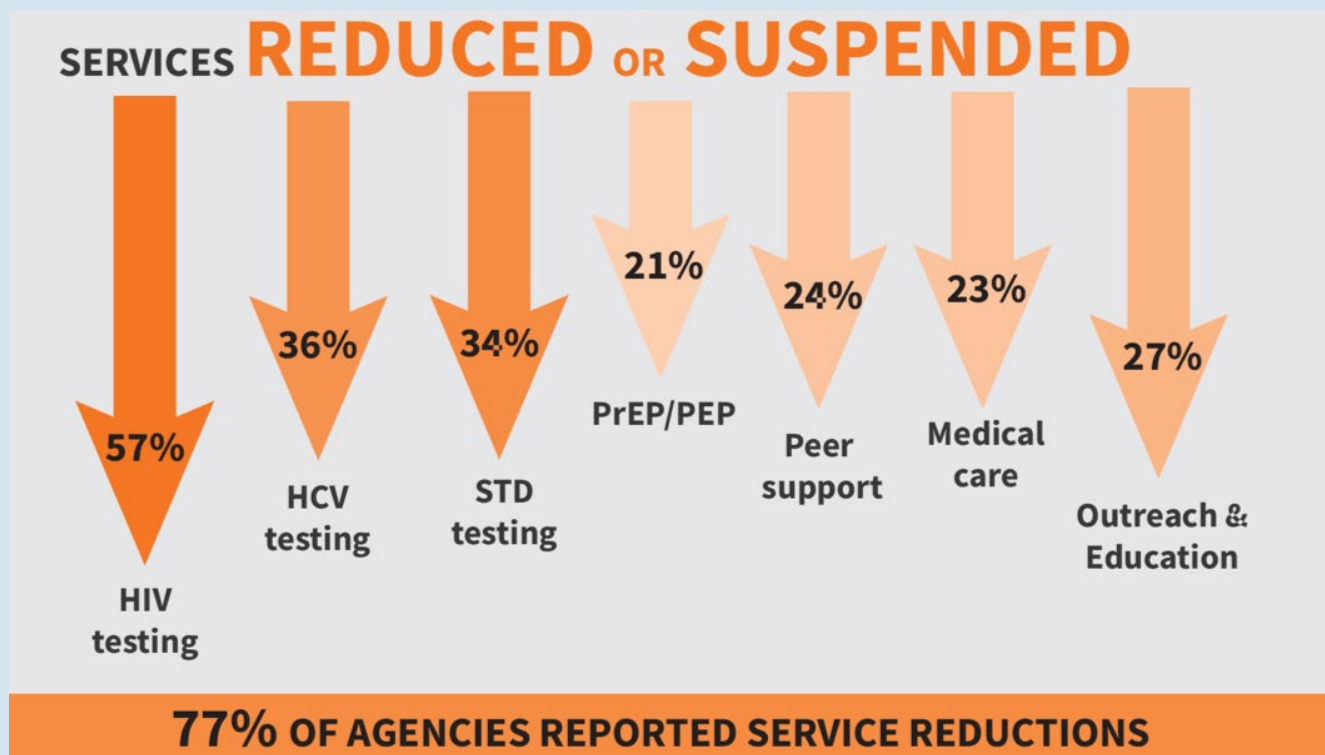
Los Angeles County has fought hard against these health disparities through healthcare and public health interventions. Healthcare in Los Angeles County is provided by an array of public and private services, ranging from community health centers (both federally qualified health centers [FQHCs] and FQHC-look-alikes), private practice providers, community hospitals, academic centers, and a robust network of County-funded facilities run by the Department of Health Services. In 2017, Los Angeles County made Medicaid (Medi-Cal) available to all low-income Angelenos regardless of immigration status and in 2018 Los Angeles County had achieved an insurance coverage rate of approximately 89 percent (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health 2017; USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). This coverage rate, like so many other elements of American life, was not equal across racial and ethnic groups. The percentage of uninsured Latino adults in 2018 was 22 percent, compared to 7 percent of white residents and 10 percent of Black residents (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). True access to care, however, depends on much more than a person's insurance status, and universal quality care would not be possible without the private and non-profit health centers that serve millions of Angelenos (Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County 2017).

COVID-19 threatens Los Angeles' healthcare system

Sadly, the flood of COVID-19 patients filling up County Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and hospital wards in the summer of 2020 was only the tip of the iceberg (Karlomagla 2020). COVID-19 will have a much longer-term impact on our healthcare system by (a) dramatically reducing revenue through reductions in patient visits and elective procedures, (b) increasing up-front costs in the transition to virtual care, and high prices for personal protective equipment (PPE),

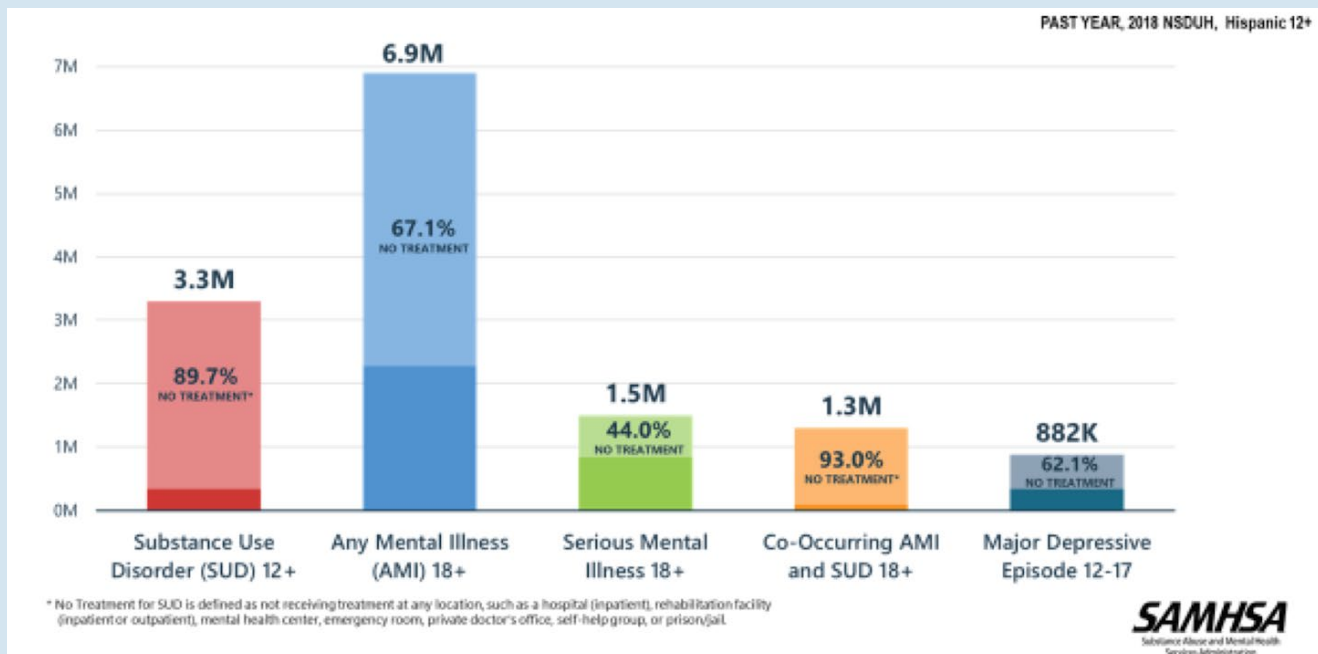
and (c) eroding patients' willingness and ability to come to clinics and access preventative services like cancer screenings, diabetes care, and nutritional counseling (Boerger 2020; Melnick and Maerki 2020). As with so many effects of COVID-19, these impacts fell disproportionately on BIPOC and the providers that serve them, further widening the gap in rates of access to preventative health care.

FIGURE 6-1: REDUCTION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES DUE TO COVID-19



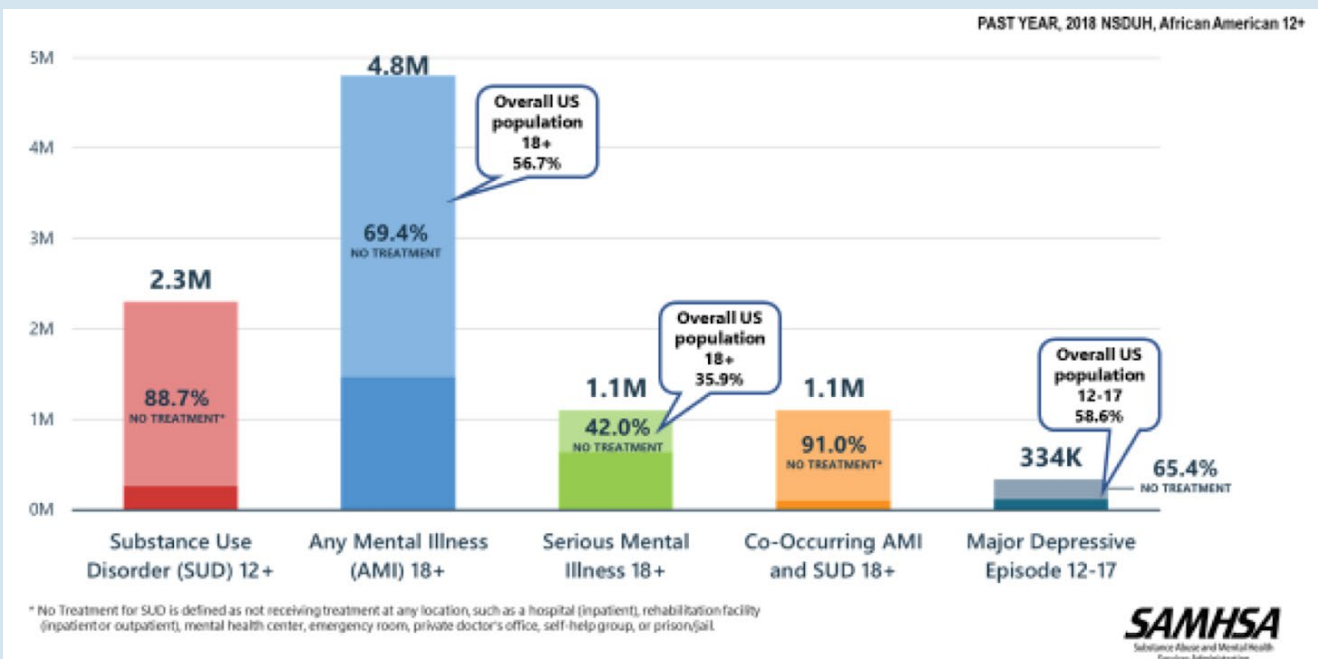
Source: California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Centers. 2020. "COVID-19 Organizational Health Survey" <https://www.chprc.org/covid-19-organizational-health-survey/>.

FIGURE 6-2: DESPITE CONSEQUENCES AND DISEASE BURDEN, TREATMENT GAPS AMONG LATINOS REMAIN VAST



Source: California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Centers. 2020. "COVID-19 Organizational Health Survey." Note: Results of online survey of healthcare and social service providers working to address HIV, Hepatitis C, and sexually transmitted diseases conducted by the California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Centers, reflecting the direct impact of COVID-19 on services: <https://www.chprc.org/covid-19-organizational-health-survey/>

FIGURE 6-3: DESPITE CONSEQUENCES AND DISEASE BURDEN. TREATMENT GAPS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS REMAIN VAST



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2020 Double Jeopardy: COVID-19 and Behavioral Health Disparities for Black and Latino Communities in the U.S.

The Impacts of COVID-19

California has been particularly hard hit by COVID-19, with an estimated \$1.5 billion in lost revenue, around 21,000 lost community health center jobs, and nearly 7 million lost patient visits (National Association of Community Health Centers 2020). This loss made it harder to provide healthcare, increased the likelihood of negative health outcomes in patients, and, barring intervention, could result in the closure of community health centers.

While health outcomes were racialized prior to the onset of COVID-19, the pandemic exacerbated health inequities in Los Angeles County. The death count for Native Americans is about 1.5 times that of whites, while it is two times as high for African Americans, 2.7 times for Latinos, and over 3 times for Pacific Islanders (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health 2020).

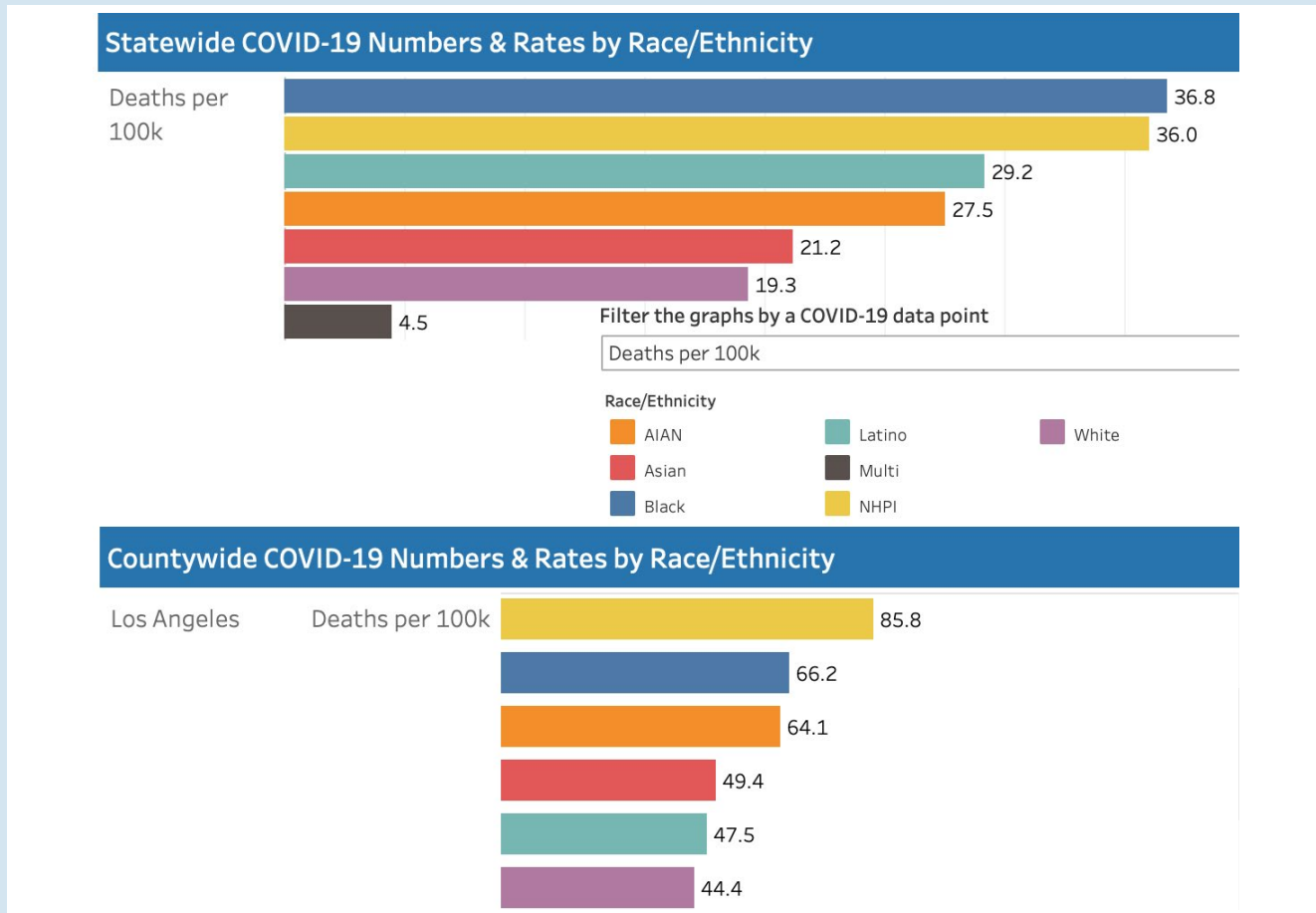
Though some primary care providers have been able to pivot rather seamlessly to telehealth visits, prohibitive Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rules, combined with the difficulty of navigating prescribing laws and regulations at the federal and state levels, created burdens for the FQHCs that provide healthcare to lower-income communities in Los Angeles.

Chronic non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and sickle cell disease all increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19. While cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death for Black, Native American, Latino and white men, other comorbidities tend to disproportionately impact communities of color (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2019). For example, approximately 9.7 percent of Black

and Latino adults in California have Type 2 diabetes, compared to 6.8 percent of white Californians (Chronic Disease Control Branch 2019). According to the American Diabetes Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, diabetics face a higher chance of serious complications from COVID-19 (American Diabetes Association 2020:19).

Current evidence suggests that individuals living with HIV/AIDS who are on an effective treatment regimen are no more susceptible to COVID-19 than individuals who do not have HIV/AIDS. However, among the many knock-on effects of COVID-19 is the disruption in healthcare and social service provision. A recent report from the California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Centers underscores the significant disruption caused by the pandemic in the reduction or suspension of critical services throughout California. HIV testing decreased by 57 percent, Hepatitis C testing dropped by 36 percent, PrEP/PEP services dropped by 21 percent, and outreach & education initiatives have decreased 27 percent (California HIV/AIDS Policy Research Centers 2020). The 2019 HIV Surveillance Report shows that while Latino males account for 24.3 percent of the Los Angeles County population, they represent nearly 40 percent of all people living with or diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Similarly, while only 8.5 percent of Los Angeles County's residents are Black, Black people comprise around 20 percent of all people living with or diagnosed with HIV/AIDS (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health 2019). The disruptions to HIV testing, PrEP/PEP services, and outreach efforts are a massive setback in the state's collective early detection and prophylactic services that, as in so many other sectors, causes disproportionate harm to BIPOC.

FIGURE 6-4: STATEWIDE COVID-19 NUMBERS AND RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Source: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. 2020. "COVID-19 Rates and Risk Factors by California County Dashboard Presented by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research's California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)." Retrieved (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research).

TABLE 6-1: ESTIMATED COVID-19 IMPACTS ON HEALTH CENTER REVENUE, EMPLOYMENT, AND VISITS BY STATE

State	Lost Revenue (in millions)	Lost Jobs	Lost Patient Visits
US Total	\$7,594	100,499	34,165,790
AK	\$203	2,846	163,856
AL	\$34	482	339,899
AR	\$46	639	259,907
AZ	\$157	2,195	691,087
CA	\$1,514	21,197	6,955,986

Source: National Association of Community Health Centers. 2020. "Health Centers on the Front Lines of COVID-19: \$7.6 Billion in Los Revenue and Devastating Impacts on Patients and Staff."

Protecting communities suffering from health disparities

We must prevent the pandemic from worsening health disparities and ensure access to critical services for communities with serious comorbidities. Los Angeles County has been a national leader in providing access to healthcare for all residents, regardless of socioeconomic status. Serving an incredibly diverse population experiencing inequality, the Department of Health Services and the Department of Public Health—along with many private and non-profit service providers—strive to serve all Angelenos without regard to documentation status, income, race or ethnicity, language, or health status.

However, COVID-19 and the effects of the global pandemic threaten this progress. Both the virus and the related shutdowns run the risk of entrenching inequities resulting from the social determinants of health, creating challenges and undoing the gains made by expansive public policy in recent years.

The massive economic losses to FQHCs and Community Health Centers that comprise the clinical safety net jeopardize Los Angeles County's ability to continue its leadership in healthcare and puts individuals with serious comorbidities at grave risk. Setbacks in outreach, detection, and prevention create the possibility of future waves of disease once (if) COVID-19 is no longer the foremost public health priority.

In order to maintain and advance progress against health inequality and realize a greater Los Angeles County, **public authorities must commit to preserving the ability of community health centers and other crucial providers to serve communities experiencing marginalization**, enabling the transition to remote care or “telehealth” by investing in technology and skills, and mitigating the direct impact of the novel coronavirus on marginalized communities. We can help to protect that communities that are vulnerable by moving to:

Preserve the ability of community health centers and other crucial providers to serve marginalized communities.

- Mitigate impact of lost revenue for FQHCs and FQHC-look-alikes.
- Ensure adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other tools essential to fighting COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.
- Provide interest-free loans to private service providers and clinics hard hit by COVID-19 shutdowns, like substance use treatment facilities.

Enable the transition to remote care or “telehealth” by investing in technology and skills.

- At the county level: ensure that the Department of Health Services' outpatient clinic facilities, including both primary and specialty care, are able to maximize patient care and compensation through telephone and video visits.
- At community health centers (FQHCs and FQHC-look-alikes): promote the adoption of video services to maximize Medicare and private insurer compensation.
- In the broader community:
 - Promote the adoption of video services for providers that serve patients with substance use, such as buprenorphine prescribers and therapists.
 - Enable organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and other support services to provide virtual care by investing in technology for both the organization and the patients they serve.

Mitigate the direct impact of the novel coronavirus on marginalized communities.

- Dramatically improve testing capacity and access to testing.
 - Make testing widely available in medical and non-medical settings in communities otherwise underserved by the health system.
 - Work with trusted community leaders to encourage testing in communities with otherwise low testing rates, especially when test positivity rates in certain communities begin to rise.
- Provide temporary isolated housing for all people with COVID-19 who do not live alone. In addition, childcare and eldercare resources should be offered as well, to reduce the likelihood of transmission to vulnerable Angelenos.
- When it is safe to do so, fund outreach efforts to bring patients back to their healthcare providers for preventative care, especially cancer screening, HIV and STD testing, diabetes screening and care, and nutrition counseling.

The pandemic has underscored the importance of public health. With a disease that spread so alarmingly fast and wide, we are only as secure as the most vulnerable among us. Angelenos with serious comorbidities such as substance use disorders, homelessness, or more every day health challenges that increase risk of serious illness are not abstract figures -- they are our brothers and sisters, our grocery clerks, and bus drivers. They are members of our greater Los Angeles community. We are connected by shared vulnerability, shared experiences, and shared dreams, and a robust public health infrastructure is necessary for us to not only return to the pre-COVID-19 status quo, but to build a greater, more equitable Los Angeles County.

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POLICY SECTION 7

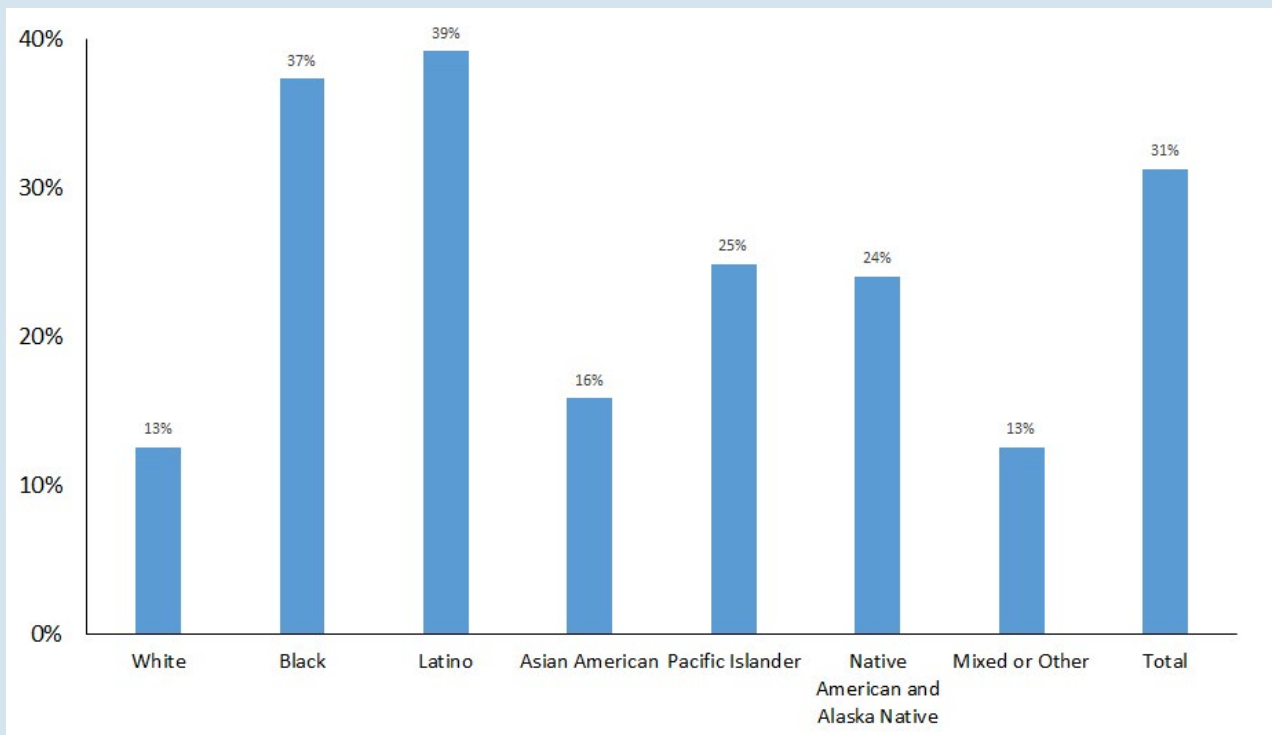
Internet as a Right

The Internet as an Essential Component of Everyday Life

Educational disadvantages exacerbated by remote instruction drew important attention to the role of the internet in daily life, and what it means to have such uneven access across society. In the educational sphere, severe shortfalls in both equipment and broadband access dramatically limit access to education for low-income and Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) and their children. However, this impact is neither new nor unique to education. The internet is now a segment of Main Street in our daily lives. The internet is not only the site of most personal communication and news distribution (itself a critical part of equal membership in society), but it also has a pivotal role in research and teaching that have made

it indispensable to the contemporary educational experience, with or without COVID-19. In addition, we should be mindful that a huge portion of American commerce takes place on the web, most interactions with government including car registration payments, property tax payments and other crucial government services. It is nearly impossible and at an increasing cost to conduct most forms of business over the phone instead of on-line, including utilities, travel, college applications and registration, and on and on. Indeed, even finding the schedules and addresses of brick-and-mortar businesses make the web an auxiliary part of in-person commerce.

FIGURE 7-1: PERCENT OF CHILDREN UNDER 18 WHO ATTEND K-12 THAT LACK A COMPUTER AND HIGH SPEED INTERNET AT HOME BY RACE



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data reflects a 2014-2018 average.

Even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, E-commerce shipments were 67.3 percent of all manufacturing shipments in 2018, up from 66.7 percent in 2017 (United States Census Bureau 2020a). In 2020, U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the second quarter rose to \$211.5 billion, an increase of just under 32 percent from the previous quarter and around 45 percent year-over-year (United States Census Bureau 2020b). E-Commerce sales in the retail industry represented over 16 percent of total sales in the second quarter of 2020, up 10 percent year-over-year (United States Census Bureau 2020b). This trend will continue moving forward and therefore, the internet will increasingly become an essential tool to engage in commerce. Those who are without access to an internet connection will be at a disadvantage to engage in commerce both as consumers and as producers of goods.

The pandemic has also revealed the importance of the internet as a means to communicate with government agencies and access critical government services and information. An internet connection is an essential tool to access services such as making an appointment at the DMV appointments, applying for Unemployment Insurance, and even attending local government hearings which are now held virtually. As of 2014, 18 percent of Americans reported using the internet to renew their driver's license or pay their car registration, 13 percent to apply for government benefits, and 11 percent to pay a parking ticket or fine (Horrigan and

Rainie 2015). These numbers have surely increased dramatically since then, particularly as the outbreak of COVID-19 has substantially shifted many of these activities online rather than in person. Additionally, agencies often distribute important information regarding emergencies or other vital health information via the internet, a survey conducted by PEW found that 70 percent of Americans report searching online for information about COVID-19 (Anderson and Vogels 2020).

Another important trend is the increased usage of the internet as a means to access news and other critical information. A 2018 survey by the PEW Center found that 53 percent of Americans reported accessing their news via news websites and social media, a 7 percent increase from 2016 (Geiger 2019). The share of people that reported using television to access news decreased from 57 percent in 2016 to 49 percent in 2018, according to the same survey (Geiger 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that 53 percent of Americans found the internet to be an "essential" need during the pandemic (Vogels et al. 2020). Additionally, nine-in-ten Americans (93 percent) expressed that an outage in their Internet or cellphone service would create a major problem in their daily life (Anderson and Vogels 2020).

The Internet as Luxury, Utility or Civil Right?

When initially becoming part of our social fabric, many regarded access to the internet as a recreational and a luxury good. Most early adopters worked in academic or corporate spaces where intranets preceded genuine connection to the web as we understand it today. Initially, as telecommunications and entertainment media companies entered the market, internet service providers (ISPs) delivered the internet on a fee-for-service delivery model. Many telecommunications and entertainment media companies then began to acquire these ISPs, forming large communications conglomerates that created content and delivered internet services for profit.

The apparent ubiquity of internet access, where internet service is often mentally bundled with electricity, gas, water and cable television in the set of start-up services that renters and home-buyers contract for, hides the reality that large portions of the American public do not actually have this service. While other utilities are also nominally “optional,” none is so expendable as the internet (when compared with water or electricity, for example). For large numbers of Americans, the internet remains a luxury good that is unaffordable for low income and fixed income individuals and families struggling to cover survival needs.

The Pew Research Center on Internet and Technology estimates that 79 percent of self-identified whites use broadband internet at home, compared with 66 percent of African Americans and only 61 percent of Latinos (Pew Research Center 2019). Note that this is NOT to say that these individuals are not on-line at all, just that access is not through a home based access to the web or device at home. Many low income Americans access the web principally through smart-phones, which often are not user friendly for the completion of complex tasks and are not an appropriate or workable approach to at-home distance education.

These trends indicate that access to the Internet is becoming an increasingly essential part of everyday life. The Internet has become the medium through

which most people are able to access the most crucial of services and the primary way they interact with each other and with government institutions. Access to the Internet will play an ever-increasing role in the ability of all people in the United States to become fully-participating members of society. Therefore, it is no longer appropriate to think of broadband internet access as a luxury or a consumer good. Rather, the internet should be viewed as basic infrastructure, a critical public good whose provision to all is among the foundational responsibilities of governing a society of equals.

The importance of the Internet has been recognized by governments all over the world. The United Nations passed several non-binding resolutions encouraging the “promotion, protection, and enjoyment of human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, on the Internet and other information and communication technology” (United Nations General Assembly 2016). Some countries have recognized access to the Internet as a right. For instance, the European Union has stated that access to the Internet is a fundamental right and that access to it should be affordable and non-discriminatory (Council of Europe 2014). Furthermore, local governments within the European Union are encouraged and financially supported to provide free access to Wi-Fi connectivity for citizens in public spaces including parks, squares, public buildings, libraries, health centers and museums in municipalities throughout Europe (Council of Europe 2020).

The United States has stopped short of declaring access to the Internet a fundamental right, but it has established the “preservation and advancement” of “Universal Service” for telecommunications, which includes the Internet through the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (Pressler 1996). Additionally, in 2009, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the federal government required the Federal Communications Commission to create “a detailed strategy for achieving affordability and maximizing use of broadband” and provided 7.2 billion to upgrade broadband infrastructure (Obey 2009). This led to

the Federal Communications Commission releasing a “National Broadband Plan” in 2010 with the goal of providing access to at least 100 million U.S. homes to actual download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second and actual upload speeds of at least 50 megabits per second by the year 2020. Also, with the goal that every American should have affordable access to robust broadband service, and the means and skills to subscribe if they so choose (Federal Communications Commission 2010). In 2010, California established the California Broadband Council through the passage of Senate Bill 1462. The aim of this council is to “promote broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas of the state as defined by the Public Utilities Commission, and broadband adoption throughout the state (California Broadband Council 2020).” Additionally, the council is tasked with advancing Digital Equity in the State by increasing access to broadband connection in rural and low-income areas (California Broadband Council 2020). And in 2016, project Lifeline—a federal program designed to expand phone service to low income Americans at a subsidized rate—was expanded to include broadband.

Yet, in spite of these laws, there is still a persistent “digital divide” in California and the United States, particularly, between rural and urban communities and low-income people who cannot afford access to a broadband connection. This digital divide also manifests itself across racial and ethnic lines, with people of color often having less resources to access fast and affordable connections to the internet and often relying on cellphones as their primary way to access it (Perrin and Turner 2019). Approximately 82 percent of white Americans reported owning a desktop or laptop computer, compared with 58 percent of Black and 57 percent of Latino Americans (Perrin and Turner 2019). There are also substantial racial and ethnic differences in broadband adoption, with white Americans being more likely than either African Americans or Latinos to have a broadband connection at home (Perrin and Turner 2019). In California, disparities in access remain for low-income, less educated, rural, African American, and Latino residents. Between 54 percent and 67 percent of these households had broadband subscriptions in 2017, compared to 74 percent for all households. Particularly, 25 percent of low-income households without broadband cite affordability as the main obstacle (Public Policy Institute of California 2019).

While in California, laws have been passed to promote low-cost alternatives and to fund infrastructure to reach rural areas, 25 percent of the population is still without access to broadband connection (Public Policy Institute of California 2019). The creation and success of the Rural Electrification Administration during the New Deal is an example of federal investment in the expansion of utility services to places and persons where it is not financially profitable for companies to do so voluntarily. The issue here, of course, is different in that Los Angeles urban neighborhoods are easily reachable by internet utilities. It is the ability of working class populations to pay which are at issue.

Researchers at the University of California Riverside’s School of Public Policy argue that programs to outreach to low-income folks will not alone solve the digital divide. Their research indicates that “cost of service” and “cost of device” are the main reasons why people cannot access broadband connections, not lack of awareness about lower-cost services which they may still be unable to afford. In addition to an internet connection, access to equipment is of vital importance. There is also a disparity in access to equipment often related to income, race, and ethnicity. EdSource reported that according to a survey conducted by the Department of Education in California there is a shortage of 708,400 laptops and 322,100 Wi-Fi hotspots to connect all students to the internet from home (Johnson 2020). In light of school closures and the shifting of many vital government services to the internet, they argue that the internet should be classified as a public utility, like water and electricity, and thus fees can be regulated to ensure that those who cannot pay for service receive low or no-cost access (Eyrich 2020).

Classifying the Internet as a public utility under Title II of the Communications Act of 1934 has been the subject of intense debate in the United States. The debate usually centered around “Net Neutrality” rules which prevented ISPs from charging differential rates for different types of Internet traffic. Under the Obama administration, the FCC reclassified the Internet as a utility, but mainly with the purpose of maintaining net neutrality rules. Furthermore, the classification of the internet as a public utility was promptly reversed under the current federal administration (Litan 2014).

Guaranteeing Internet as a Right

Properly understood, full and functional access to the internet is a civil rights issue. The internet is the public conveyance of our generation. Uneven access to broadband in serves to thwart full participation in the economy, society, the job market, commerce, governance, and the information environment.

The clearest goal is accessible in-home broadband on a device more usable than a smart phone for each household in Los Angeles. Recognizing that there are a variety of methods to reach a more inclusive level of broadband access, and that we must think in terms of both access and device, the challenges require investment from City, County, and State authorities and a strategy that mobilizes resources from multiple sectors of society.

As we develop strategies to expand access, we must be certain not to create unintentional monopoly benefits for existing for-profit corporations operating ISPs (Wheeler 2020). A recent study from Brookings Institution noted the extreme benefits reaped by companies in existing internet-for-all policies, in which they noted that those programs had become “a corporate entitlement for incumbent telephone companies.” But a great deal of existing policy is devoted to assuring broadband presence—that is, its mere availability, which is a huge issue in rural America but is not the challenge in Los Angeles.

The Committee for Greater LA urges the consideration of the following strategies to reach our bright-line goal of broadband access on a fully functional device in every household:

- **Declare meaningful access to the internet as a civil rights issue in California.**
- **Call for the City, County, and State to make a policy commitment to 100% meaningful and usable broadband web access in five years' time.**

Within the existing internet economy:

- Broadband service should be made available to every household through expansion of, and enrollment in, the existing Lifeline subsidy and an infusion of state and local resources.
 - Those resources, in turn, may be secured through tax, franchise fees and levies directed at for-profit ISPs and their corporate owners.
- The provision of every school-child in California with a moderate to low cost device to provide functional access to the web and its resources from home.
 - This will require the collaboration of school districts and other agencies of state and local government. Schools should think of internet-ready devices as a critical individual-level resource for every child in k-12 education.
- One-time investment of state-level funds to provide a voucher for the purchase of cost-efficient equipment for households without school aged children, conditioned on income and, like Lifeline, limited to families making 135 percent or less of the federal poverty level income.

A more comprehensive break from the past would:

- Establish the internet as a publicly held utility.
- The City or County should become the ISP of first resort at minimum pricing and with broad and generous cross-subsidy programs funded by higher-income rate payers.
 - While a number of states have prohibitions on this strategy, California does not.
 - Such a policy might, in fact, lower the cost of provision for many city and County services and reduce the need for office space for the provision of in-person administrative services.
- Use the return of revenue to subsidize machinery purchase vouchers or accomplish goals beyond universal broadband access.

An Equal Society through Equal Access

The outbreak of COVID-19 has reminded us of the absolute importance of access to the Internet in every aspect of our daily lives. Given the widespread school closures and transition to online learning as well as the increase in government services being offered exclusively online, classifying the Internet as a public utility has once again become a subject of debate; this time, not only in terms of Net Neutrality rules, but in terms of guaranteeing universal access, particularly for those who cannot afford it (Andriole 2020). While at the federal level the classification as a utility was reversed, a recent federal court ruling indicated that the federal government cannot prevent state governments or local municipalities from passing laws that regulate access to the Internet as a public utility (Shepardson 2019). Therefore, it is crucial that local and state governments take steps towards guaranteeing access to this critical infrastructure for all. Hundreds of municipalities in the United States have taken steps to guarantee access to the Internet by establishing publicly owned municipal networks to provide affordable access to those who cannot otherwise afford it or in areas where traditional companies are unwilling to provide access (Next Century Cities 2019). The outbreak of COVID-19 has only accelerated an already existing dynamic, the increased use of the Internet as a vital part of engaging as a full member of society.(Livni 2020; Pickard and Elliot Berman 2019). This trend will not stop, it will only continue and it is unacceptable that 25 percent of people in California lack access to an affordable and fast connection to the internet. In the 21st century we cannot have an equal society without equal access to the Internet.

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POLICY SECTION 8

Education

A Divided Education in Los Angeles County

Educating our students is vital to ensure an equitable future for Los Angeles. And yet many students in Los Angeles County face numerous obstacles that pose significant challenges to their ability to thrive and learn. Around 67,718 students are experiencing homelessness, 30,121 are in foster care, 182,708 are in Special Education, and 272,914 are English learners (Duardo 2020). Over 70 percent of students in Los Angeles County are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Los Angeles Unified School District 2020).

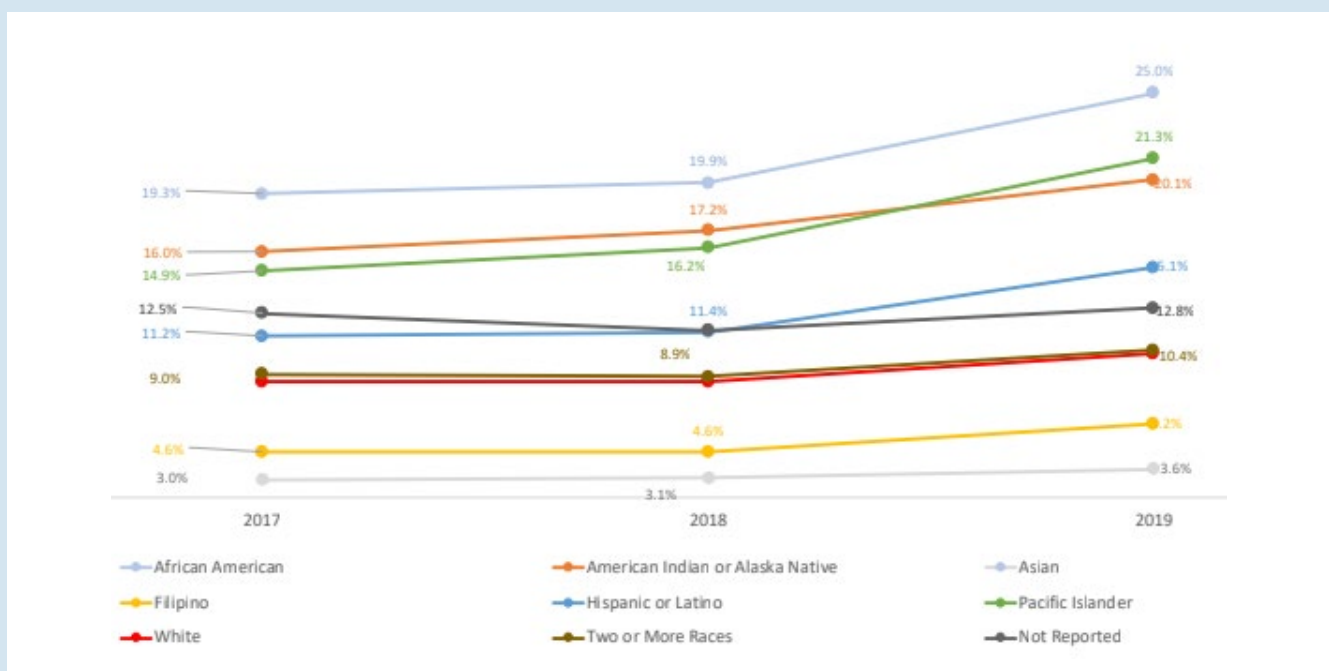
“Children cannot learn if they’re not housed and fed and feel emotionally safe in their community.”

-Debra Duardo, Committee for Greater LA

Disparities in educational needs and outcomes exist along stark racial lines. Race predicts graduation rates, drop-out patterns, chronic absenteeism, and standardized assessment scores. When the data

is disaggregated, Black, Latino, Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native students have among the lowest graduation rates, while white and Asian American students have the highest (Committee for Greater LA 2020a). Chronic absenteeism is a leading indicator of whether or not a student will graduate, and absentee rates are also higher for Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander students (Figure 8-1). Of those who were chronically absent, 25 percent were African American, 21 percent Pacific Islander and 20 percent were Native American. In addition to missing out on the lesson material covered when they are absent, children who regularly miss school are more likely to be disengaged and less likely to experience a sense of belonging. Foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged youth all experience higher absentee rates. Until our schools direct an intense focus to the unique challenges preventing these vulnerable student populations from staying in school, historic patterns of inequality will persist (Committee for Greater LA 2020a).

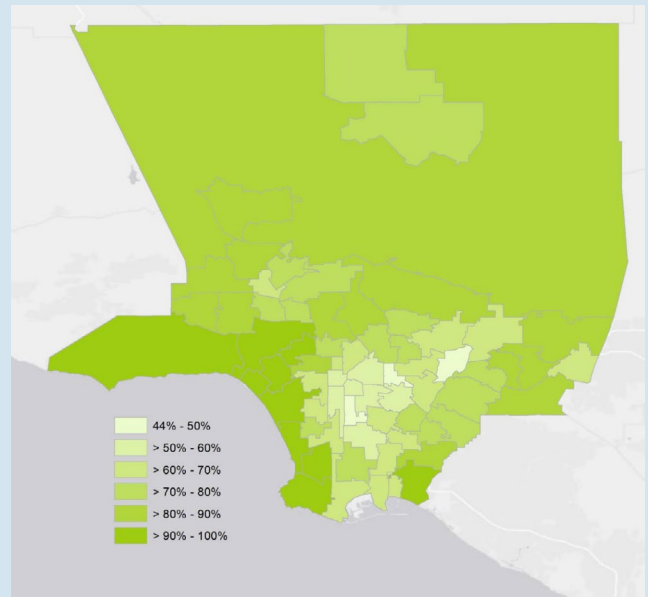
FIGURE 8-1: CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM: ETHNICITY & STUDENT POPULATIONS



Source: Duardo, Debra. 2020. “Equity in Los Angeles Public Schools: Before and After COVID-19,” June 26, Los Angeles.

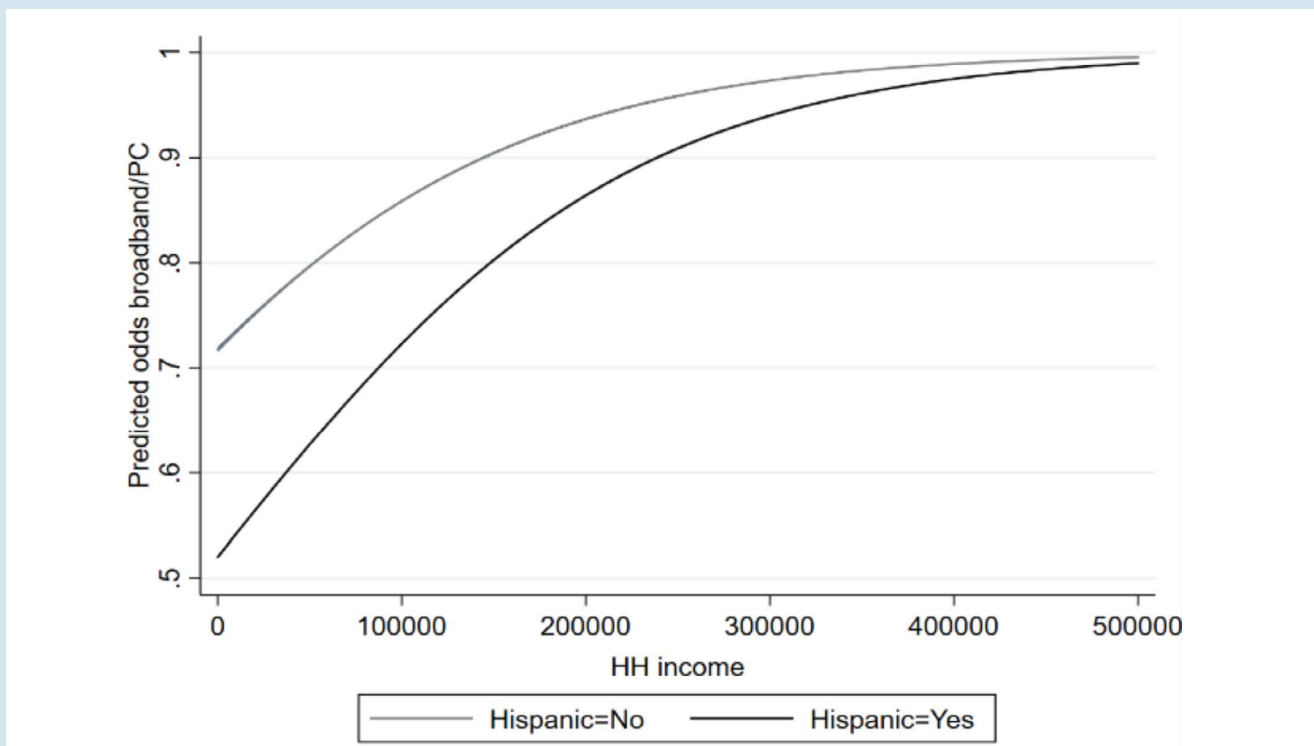
Geography is another key predictor of student achievement. In Los Angeles, children of color are often concentrated in highly segregated schools that lack the resources necessary to fully support them, such as access to counselors, social workers, and after-school programs (Noguera et al. 2019). Furthermore, research is increasingly showing how place-based environmental factors, such as increased exposure to air pollution or elevated blood-lead levels, correlate with worse academic outcomes (Noguera et al. 2019). The USC Annenberg Research Network’s recently released policy brief, COVID-19 and the Distance Learning Gap, illustrated the geographic nature of the digital divide for K-12 students in Los Angeles (see Figure 8-2) (Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth 2020). There we can see that distance learning resources are least available in portions of Central and South LA as well as the San Fernando Valley, Antelope Valley and the San Gabriel Valley. Their research also shows (Figure 8-3) that the odds of having broadband closely track with income, revealing that income inequality may deeply affect educational equity as well. The academic disadvantages of growing up in an impoverished community are almost certainly cumulative, yet the place-based strategies that could help address these issues are not widely implemented.

FIGURE 8-2: AVAILABILITY OF DISTANCE LEARNING RESOURCES AMONG K-12 HOUSEHOLDS (%) BY PUMA



Source: Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth. 2020. COVID-19 and the Distance Learning Gap. USC Annenberg Research Network on International Communication and USC Price Spatial Analysis Lab. Angeles Public Schools: Before and After COVID-19,” June 26, Los Angeles.

FIGURE 8-3: PROBABILITY OF RESIDENTIAL BROADBAND/PC BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME POPULATIONS



Source: Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth. 2020. COVID-19 and the Distance Learning Gap. USC Annenberg Research Network on International Communication and USC Price Spatial Analysis Lab.

Young Learners Being Left Behind

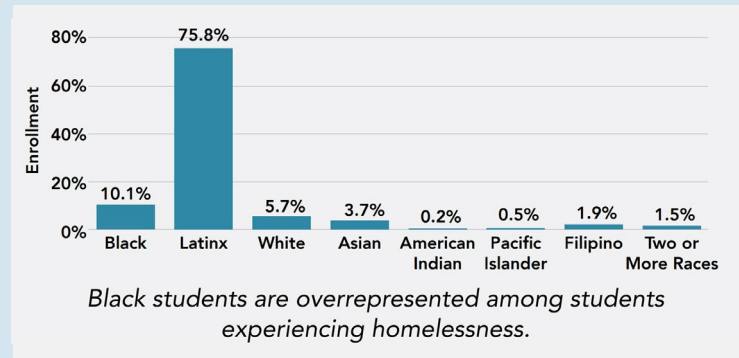
Data from the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools' *Beyond the Schoolhouse* policy report shed light on some of the disparities present across student populations. The disparity patterns are sharply racialized. One finding is that homeless and foster care students are disproportionately Black and Latino. Figure 8-4 and Figure 8-5 display the composition of these especially vulnerable groups by race and ethnicity, using data from the 2017-2018 school year in Los Angeles. According to the data, around 76 percent of students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County were Latino, and 10 percent were African American. Of the students in foster care, around 62 percent of students were Latino and around 25 percent were African American.

"it's not just the school, it's the community."

- Charisse Bremond Weaver, Committee for Greater LA

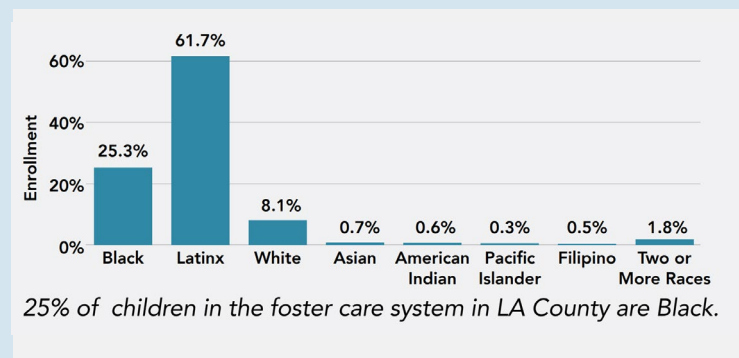
Black and Latino students are vastly over-represented among students experiencing these hardships, and the associated physical and emotional stress can substantially increase the difficulty of focusing on schoolwork and staying in school. Not every environment is equally conducive to learning. Many students lack access to even the most basic resources, and by failing to address this, our school system is failing our most vulnerable students. Students in Los Angeles County face a number of challenges—including food insecurity, health issues stemming from environmental injustice, and unmet social emotional needs—with indisputable impacts on their learning and development. When our school system is not equipped to address these realities, already marginalized students fall even further behind.

FIGURE 8-4: ENROLLMENT RATES FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS IN LOS ANGELES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN 2017-2018



Source: Noguera, Pedro, Joseph Bishop, Tyrone Howard, and Stanley Johnson. 2019. *Beyond the Schoolhouse: Overcoming Challenges & Expanding Opportunity for Black Youth in L.A. County*. Center for the Transformation of Schools, Black Male Institute, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles.

FIGURE 8-5: ENROLLMENT RATES FOR FOSTER CARE STUDENTS IN LOS ANGELES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN 2017-2018



Source: Noguera, Pedro, Joseph Bishop, Tyrone Howard, and Stanley Johnson. 2019. *Beyond the Schoolhouse: Overcoming Challenges & Expanding Opportunity for Black Youth in L.A. County*. Center for the Transformation of Schools, Black Male Institute, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles.

Worsening Education as a Result of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has amplified preexisting disparities, reminding us how much work still remains to be done to achieve equity in K-12 education. As schools rely on remote learning to slow the spread of the pandemic, different students will receive different learning experiences based on where they live and what school they attend. Many students will face challenges; however, low-income and minority students face particularly acute risks of falling behind academically, as their challenges are more often compounded by a lack of material resources and a host of additional stressors disruptive to focus and learning. UCLA Professor Lucretia Santibañez examines how increased absenteeism from virtual schooling can negatively impact both social-emotional development and cognitive outcomes, and finds that the learning loss sustained due to COVID-19 will likely be even more pronounced for students with disabilities and students experiencing homelessness or foster youth (Santibanez and Guarino 2020). Learning Loss Mitigation funding is available through the state to provide schools with financial assistance for corrective measures, such as diagnostic assessments, intensive instruction, and integrated pupil support, and address other barriers to learning. Schools will need targeted strategies and resources to support vulnerable students; otherwise, resuming virtual instruction this fall may further increase disparities in student outcomes. The question of eventually re-opening schools will also pose new challenges and uncertainties.

"Families are fractured. It takes a community to raise a child. We don't have enough heads that are able to effectively guide these youth into a better direction."

- Focus Group Participant

Among the injustices exposed and exacerbated by COVID-19 is the gap in access to basic technology. The virtual learning model assumes students have both residential internet access and a laptop or desktop computer. However, in Los Angeles, 27 percent of K-12 households lack one or both of these resources (Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth 2020). This "digital divide" exists along clear ethnic, racial, and

geographic lines and could worsen existing disparities in achievement and absenteeism. In Los Angeles, "the chances of a Hispanic student having residential broadband and a desktop or laptop computer at home are only about half of those of a non-Hispanic student. Similarly, the odds of a Black student having the resources for distance learning are about 65 percent of a non-Black student, regardless of income or location" (Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth 2020). Black and Latino students are more likely to live in economically distressed neighborhoods where the broadband infrastructure is less advanced. In the Los Angeles region, the neighborhoods with the lowest availability of distance learning resources were largely concentrated in South and East Los Angeles (Connected Cities and Inclusive Growth 2020).

"[The digital divide is] just something that needs to be fixed... And it is as basic as having a pencil or paper. This case is as basic as having a classroom."

- Miguel Santana, Committee for Greater LA

School closures have also shifted greater responsibility onto parents and guardians. However, not all parents have equal capacity to support their children's learning and not all parents are able to work from home. Parents have not received adequate training or support to assume increased educational responsibilities. Furthermore, before the transition to remote learning, many working parents took comfort in knowing their children would be well-supervised in school. Now, the young children of essential workers may lack access to adult support and guidance during the school day. Older students may find their distance learning undermined by the increased responsibility of caring for other family members. In addition, inequality may widen as those who can afford to supplement, or even replace, their children's remote education with tutoring (Thompson and Gomez Licon 2020). This could potentially lead to funding inequities and the de-professionalization of teachers (Thompson and Gomez Licon 2020). For many students, teachers provide not only education, but also mentorship, inspiration, and encouragement, yet such trusting relationships

will be more difficult to establish virtually and will be difficult to replace for low-income students and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students.

Psychological stress affects students' ability to focus and impairs the areas of the brain responsible for decision-making, learning, and memory. Prior to the pandemic, students with lower socioeconomic status experienced heightened stress levels. Now, the increased risks of trauma associated with COVID-19 may disproportionately impact vulnerable students. For example, communities with more essential workers face increased exposure to the virus, and families living in overcrowded housing are less able to maintain physical distancing. As a result, students from already-disadvantaged groups are also more likely than others to be dealing with the illness or death of loved ones due to COVID-19. Moreover, the economic effects of the virus, such as reduced work hours or unemployment, may exacerbate tensions in some households. Distress related to housing insecurity, food insecurity, immigration status, or a lack of access to healthcare in the family can distract and exhaust students, understandably decreasing their ability to focus on schoolwork. Furthermore, the killing of George Floyd and other manifestations of systemic racism have triggered significant emotional turmoil for students. Unsurprisingly, given these compounding social inequities, a national student survey of 5th-12th graders found that Latino, Multiracial, and Black students were the least able to focus on learning while their schools were closed (Lake 2020). Students suffering from the effects of systemic inequality often lack even the most basic support from counselors and social workers at school.

The question of reopening schools in the midst of a global pandemic poses a number of challenges and uncertainties. Infection rates across the county are still troubling, and there is no clear end in sight. In Los Angeles County, instruction continued on in a remote format when schools opened. However, County leaders must plan for eventual school re-openings. In doing so, they must consider the fears and anxieties of parents, staff and students, as well as public health orders, such as maintaining social distance, face coverings, temperature checks, and disinfecting surfaces. COVID-19 will create new expenses, straining school budgets at a time when California is already ranked 41st in the nation in education spending. Any budget shortfalls will directly impact already underfunded

efforts such as cleaning, personal protective equipment (PPE), student and family meals, technology devices, hotspot connections, and professional development for teachers and school leadership.

“And so why are the school systems now broken, but 40 years ago, they weren’t? Because we had proper routine, we had after school programming, the schools were the hubs, if a family is working or a single parent, she knew that the school would be there to support. And so looking at how you look at youth development, looking at maybe Black [and] Latinx academies where [culturally competent programming] ties in to the community and ties into the school.”

- Charisse Bremond Weaver, Committee for Greater LA

The transition to remote learning requires students to have access to basic technology, the cost of which presents significant financial hardship for many low-income families. Los Angeles resident Tamara Solis shared with the LA Times how she was forced to decide between paying for rent and groceries or paying for internet access so her children could continue their studies remotely. Facing a challenging choice, she resorted to taking her children to a friend’s home in Watts to access internet; however, practicing social distancing became a challenge (Blume, Kohli, and Esquivel 2020).

Even before the pandemic, educational institutions were failing to meet the needs of vulnerable K-12 students in Los Angeles County, as demonstrated by long-standing gaps in achievement and graduation rates. Now with the COVID-19 pandemic, hardships are compounding and student vulnerability is increasing. In these uncertain times, ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education will require a clear understanding of the conditions that threaten equitable outcomes and the political courage to respond with bold but sustained system changes. In analyzing recent educational data and listening to the wisdom and experiences of local leaders, one thing is clear: when our schools fail to center policy and program designs around racial equity, approach education holistically, and engage deeply with local communities, we leave behind young learners in greatest need of support.

Goals for Transforming the Los Angeles County Educational System

Every student—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, disability, family income, or zip code— should feel supported and have access to a high-quality education. Equity in education means that structural advantages will no longer exist, and race will no longer predict student outcomes. Every family will have access to the basic resources and social support systems necessary for their students to not only stay in school, but to thrive. We imagine learning environments in which all students feel safe and experience a sense of belonging. We envision educational programming that affirms and celebrates diversity. We dream of a Los Angeles in which entire neighborhoods—parents, teachers, and community partners—collaborate to educate and support our youth. Equity in education means that all students will graduate from high school with the competency and sense of empowerment they need to pursue meaningful careers, postsecondary learning, and civic engagement.

“It’s really leveraging all of these different things and saying, ‘This is two things, this is our pathway to lift people out of poverty, but it’s also, we see it as a way of diversion, where we’re not sending kids to prison. We’re identifying issues early. We’re providing them the resources, whether it’s counseling, housing, school meals.’ Whatever the issue is, we do that assessment and we get the families and the students the supports that they need”

- Debra Duardo, Committee for Greater LA

We envision the expansion of the **Community School Model**. Under this model, schools play a dual role as both learning institutions and access points for the various health and social services that help lay an essential foundation for students’ learning and wellbeing. Through strong local, county, and regional partnerships, schools can approach education holistically and can help connect families with

community organizations such as food banks, mental health care providers, and non-profits offering after-school programming.

“So there are lots of things that we can do for families, but I think the main thing is we have to listen, genuinely listen, to what they want.”

- Debra Duardo, Committee for Greater LA

Supporting students from vulnerable populations should begin with understanding and end with empowerment. Schools should use inclusive processes that offer space for students and parents to share their experiences, their needs, and their ideas. The current moment presents an opportunity to reimagine education and, in doing so, think about how to look at populations like English Learners. In those cases schools and institutions should consider how they can uplift the assets that immigrant families have. Uplifting parents from marginalized communities as valuable partners in their children’s learning means giving them regular opportunities to meet with school and community leaders as well as greater influence over institutional resources and spending priorities. Permanent processes that facilitate broad civic conversations and deeper collaboration will allow parents to share ideas, actively shape the educational programs that support their students, and ensure these programs are well-tailored to the communities they serve.

“We have to increase per-pupil funding for education, so that’s number one – Number two is we have to target additional funding resources for our most impacted and needy schools and students [by] enforcing and strengthening [the distribution of funding according to the Students Equity Needs Index]”

- Fred Ali, Committee for Greater LA

To ensure that all K-12 students receive a high-quality educational experience during COVID-19 and beyond, our schools must center policy and program designs around race and equity, approach education holistically, and engage deeply with local communities. This requires a clear understanding of the issues that exist, the political will to target funding where it is needed most, and educational and social programming that ties into the community and school.

Support students, families, and school staff during remote instruction:

Closing the digital divide is essential and urgent. Policy makers must ensure that all students have the devices and internet access they need, which may include providing free public broadband in underserved communities. Although the state has set minimum standards for remote learning this fall, it will be imperative for district administrators to monitor how well schools are meeting those standards. Administrators must provide professional development and ongoing support to teachers, so that they are well-prepared to deliver high quality instruction in a remote environment. Schools will also need to reach out to absent students and their families to assess their needs and help them engage in remote instruction. Moreover, parents and guardians will need clear and frequent communication about how to best support their children, including help navigating online schooling platforms and understanding teachers' expectations.

Support equity-based funding policies:

New programs and investments should be targeted to the people and places most left behind. Equity-based funding means providing underperforming schools with additional resources and access to great teachers, especially teachers of color. It means creating strong literacy programs for high-need students. It means ensuring students receive the extra academic support they need to stem learning loss due to remote instruction, through programs like high-quality tutoring. These supports will be especially critical for students with the highest needs, such as students with disabilities or students experiencing

homelessness. Policy makers should ensure money goes directly to the neediest schools, based on the Local Control Funding Formula, and they should require greater transparency regarding the use of these funds for evidence-based interventions.

"I think we need to do a much better job of ensuring that our instruction is culturally relevant, and that we have ethnic studies ... So many people I've talked to recently, some African-American, said that, «I didn't know what Juneteenth was.» If you're not from Texas or you don't learn these things, how do we empower children to feel proud of who they are and their heritage, and not just hear all the negative outcomes like, «Yeah, we're underperforming in every area?» Well, there's a reason for that, and it was systemically created. It's not something that has to do with who you are. So I think we need to have a lot more work done to empower children to feel pride and hope."

- Debra Duardo, Committee for Greater LA

Focus on cultural competency:

Schools should look to culturally sustaining pedagogical models to make classes more relevant, foster a greater sense of inclusion among students of color, and increase student motivation. Educators should "reposition our pedagogies to focus on the practices and knowledge's of communities of color [and] do so with the understanding that fostering linguistic and cultural flexibility has become an educational imperative" (Paris and Alim 2014:95). Schools should develop integrated English Learner strategies that uplift home languages as an asset. After-school programming, too, can be designed with the community in mind. In addition, schools should focus on hiring more teachers of color, who can serve as positive role models and are better able to relate to the life experiences of the students they teach and help foster a culture of inclusion.

Engage parents and students:

Develop processes for students and parents to participate in decision-making to ensure that local programs are aligned with community needs. Families can often identify place-based needs, and community members often have big ideas about how to improve the education system. For example, focus group participants recommended working to provide greater funding, qualified educators, incentives for high school graduation rates, high schools linked with community colleges, and incentives/tuition debt relief for college students going into education (Committee for Greater LA 2020c). Schools can further engage parents by connecting them with community and institutional partners that offer supplemental learning activities. In a grander sense we can also give student and parents greater opportunities for engagement by expanding the electorate. This includes giving youth ages 16 and above as well as immigrant parents the right to vote in local school board elections.

Expand the Community Schools Model:

Schools should serve as hubs where families can easily access a variety of health and social service programs that promote students' learning, mental health, and family well-being. With the help of the County and community partnerships, schools can identify issues early and provide students with the support they need to succeed. This model can enhance learner-centered strategies that promote applied learning, social-emotional skills, and culturally relevant project-based learning opportunities. Policy makers should support Community Schools in the use of data for continuous improvement strategies.

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POLICY SECTION 9

Child and Family Well-Being

Predicted Rise in Violence and Maltreatment During COVID-19

Preserving child and family well-being, in any period, is a challenge for which government alone must ultimately be responsible. The intersection of parental rights, law enforcement, mental health, and social work requires state authority (even if implemented under contract by non-profits and others). The sheer breadth of responsibilities are daunting under any circumstances, including child protection, elder protection, intimate-partner violence, foster care management and supervision, and countless other responsibilities.

Social dysfunctions of all varieties have long been found to co-vary with other forms of social stress, including short-term economic distress, proximity to crime, poverty and other environmental factors. The emergence of COVID-19 creates a perfect storm of additional stress from medical threat, lost income, physical isolation and confinement, and poor communication beyond the boundaries of the household. The combination of these factors creates a genuine expectation for rapid increases in intimate partner violence (IPV) and child abuse.

***“[In] my recovery journey and during my domestic violence situation, not only did I deal with the violence that was physical, but I also dealt with the financial abuse. Every time I got a job, he would lose his cool, he would go and threaten my coworkers and start fights with me. I stopped going to school. I stopped going to work thinking that that would minimize the fight. [After] leaving from the abuser, not having a home, not having the savings, not having anything to work from, now I have two teenagers who are both graduating from high school and I’m trying to create the best experience for them.*”**

-Focus Group Participant

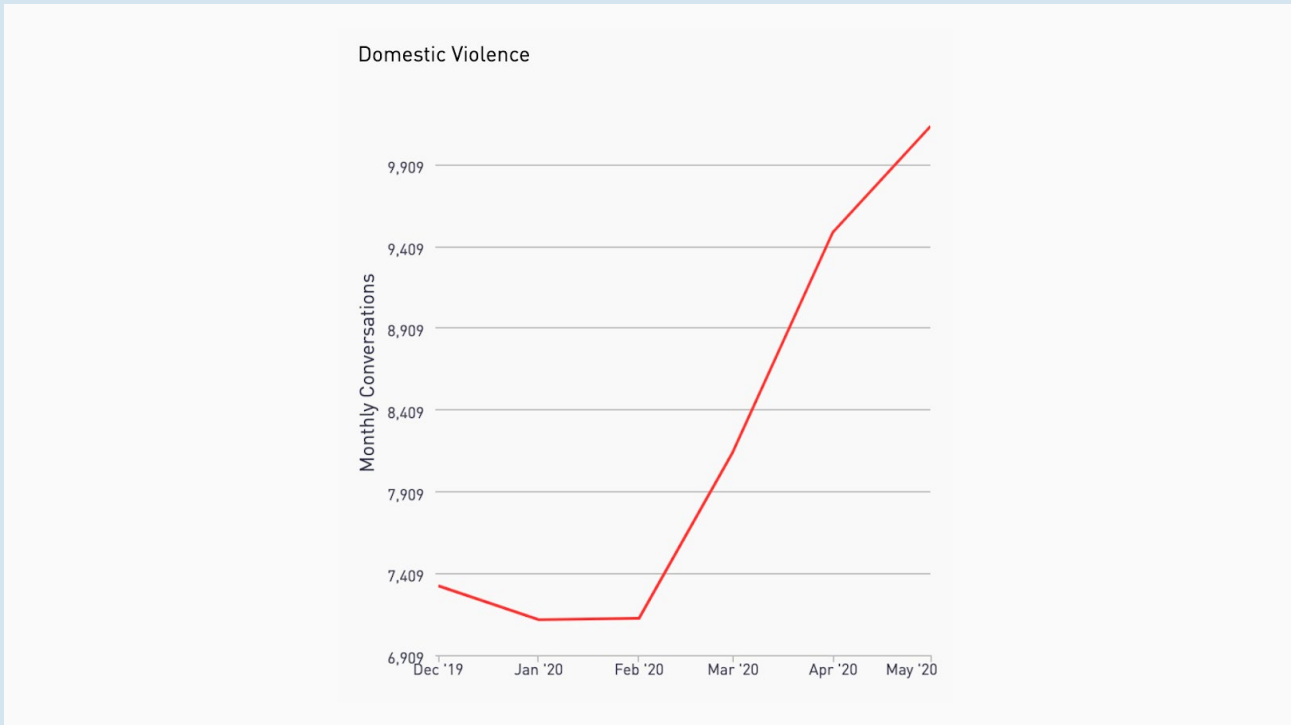
Advocates and health professionals predict the COVID-19 pandemic -- coupled by stress, social isolation

and financial strain -- will result in an exponential increase in child maltreatment and IPV at rates as seen during the Great Recession (Agrawal 2020). Without adequate relief from the domestic space, family violence fueled by economic stressors could result in new incidents and increased severity of violence, as well as homelessness, and/or homicide (Downtown Women’s Center 2019; Zara and Gino 2018). According to the National Association of Social Workers, the poorer the household, the higher the rate of IPV. Moreover, Black and Indigenous women experience IPV at higher rates than other women. Black women are three times as likely to die from partner violence than white women. Limited data estimates that one in two Native women experience physical partner violence (Wilson and Webb 2018).

The data appears to document a rapid rise in domestic IPV. Looking at national data from the Crisis Text Line, a resource for individuals seeking emergency support and counseling across the US and Canada, “conversations” or text exchanges with clients mentioning domestic violence, sexual abuse, and substance abuse continue to increase (Lublin 2020). During the period of COVID-19 lockdown, proximity between partners with a history of violence is increased in duration, while exit-options for women receiving maltreatment are limited by the public health crisis.

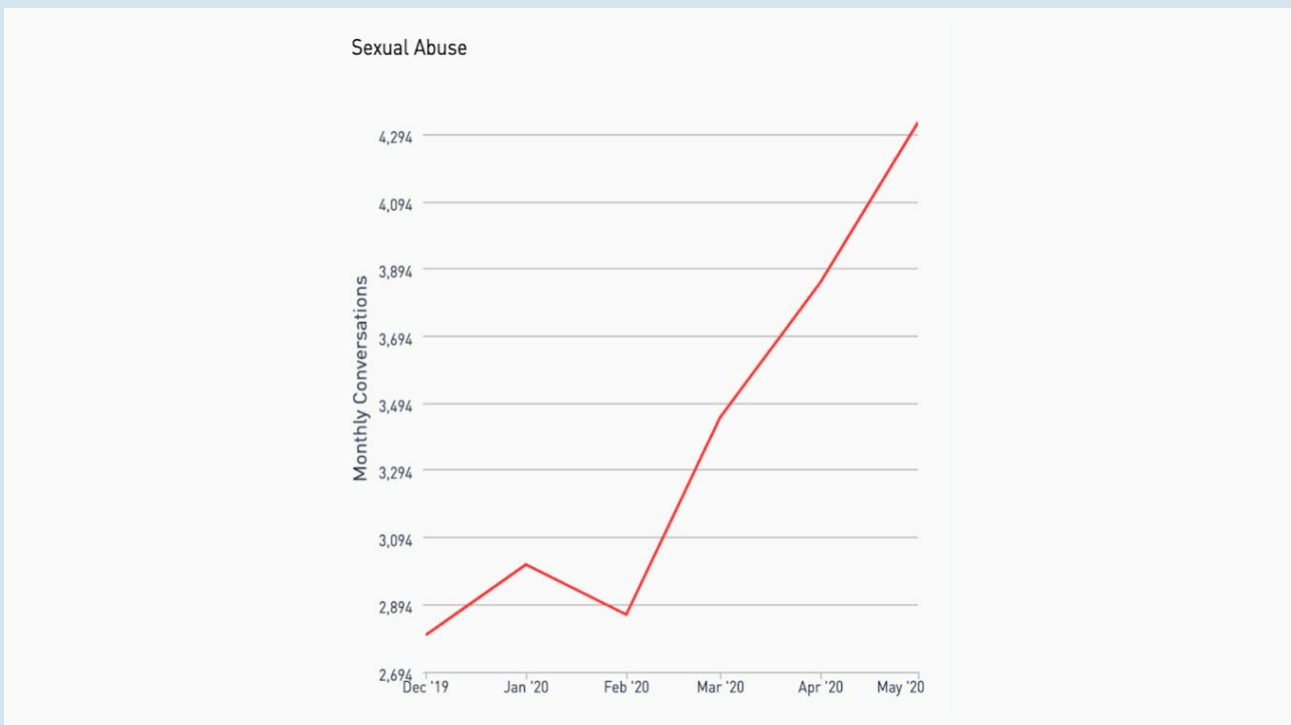
In response to COVID-19, the National Domestic Violence Hotline reports a similar exponential rise in hotline contacts each week. In the first two months of stay-at-home executive orders, the hotline saw a 9 percent increase in total contacts; by April, there was a 12 percent increase. 90 percent of contacts report emotional/verbal abuse which often preludes the cycle of violence; 61 percent of contacts report physical abuse. Service providers anticipate spikes to continue as stay-at-home orders lift and survivors attempt to seek safety outside the home (National Domestic Violence Hotline 2020). Moreover, the effects of COVID-19 extend beyond the households and child protective systems to the courts. Court shutdowns and delays due to the pandemic, and their decision not to use remote technology, have dramatically slowed the rate of case resolution (Haskins 2020:19).

FIGURE 9-1: CONTACTS TO CRISIS TEXT LINE MENTIONING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, UNITED STATES, 2020



Source: Lublin, Nancy. 2020. "Coronavirus: How Is America Feeling? Part 10." Retrieved (<https://www.crisistextline.org/>).

FIGURE 9-1B: CONTACTS TO CRISIS TEXT LINE MENTIONING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, UNITED STATES, 2020



Source: Lublin, Nancy. 2020. "Coronavirus: How Is America Feeling? Part 10." Retrieved (<https://www.crisistextline.org/>).

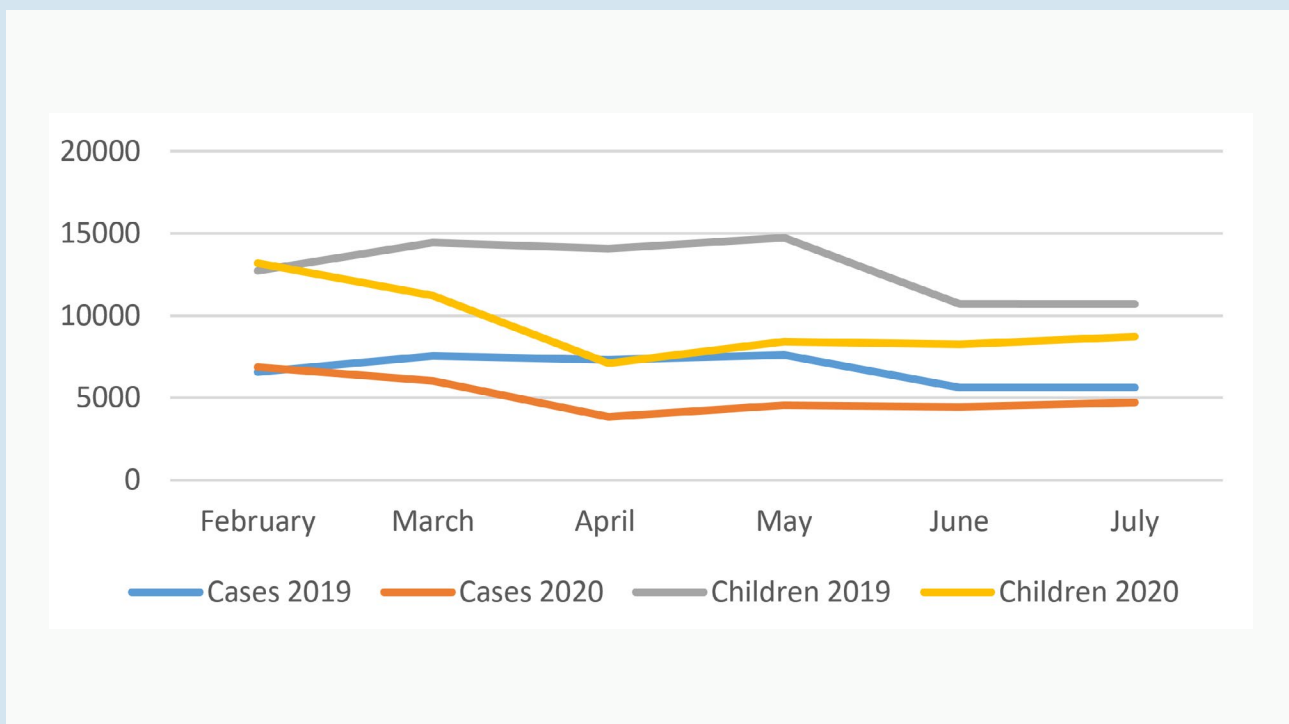
Child Abuse and an Overburdened System

For child victims, who are seldom the reporters of their own abuse, the realities may be far worse (Schmidt 2020). Los Angeles County saw a profound and troubling decline in reported cases of child abuse in the early months of the epidemic, a change that has remained as the COVID-19 crisis progresses (Winton 2020). In this case, decline is NOT good, as it is an indication that most of the victims are going unassisted. The lockdown has effectively shielded children from the mandatory reporters—teachers, coaches, others outside the home—who normally would have sounded the alarm when evidence of abuse appears. So at precisely the moment where social stresses suggest that family abuse and violence is likely increasing, the absence of reports should be alarming.

This decline is national, and as reported in the Washington Post, there are literally tens of thousands

of children who we would have expected to need services that the system has not seen. It is likely an epidemic of abuse outside the gaze of mandatory reporters and public agencies. Figure 9-2 reports the number of case reports and the number of children affected, by month, for the period of the epidemic and for a similar period one year ago. In February of 2020, both reports and the number of total children affected exceeded the number from the same month the previous year. Beginning in March and continuing through today, both the total number of reports and the total number of children affected has dropped, in April by 47 percent and May by 40 percent. While the difference has declined in the summer months (in which under-reporting is always a concern with children out of school), we have every reason to expect that the decline relative to the previous year will continue to be substantial.

FIGURE 9-2: DROPS IN CHILD ABUSE REPORTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2020



Source: Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services, "Data and Monthly Fact Sheets," <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/resources/data-and-monthly-fact-sheets/>.

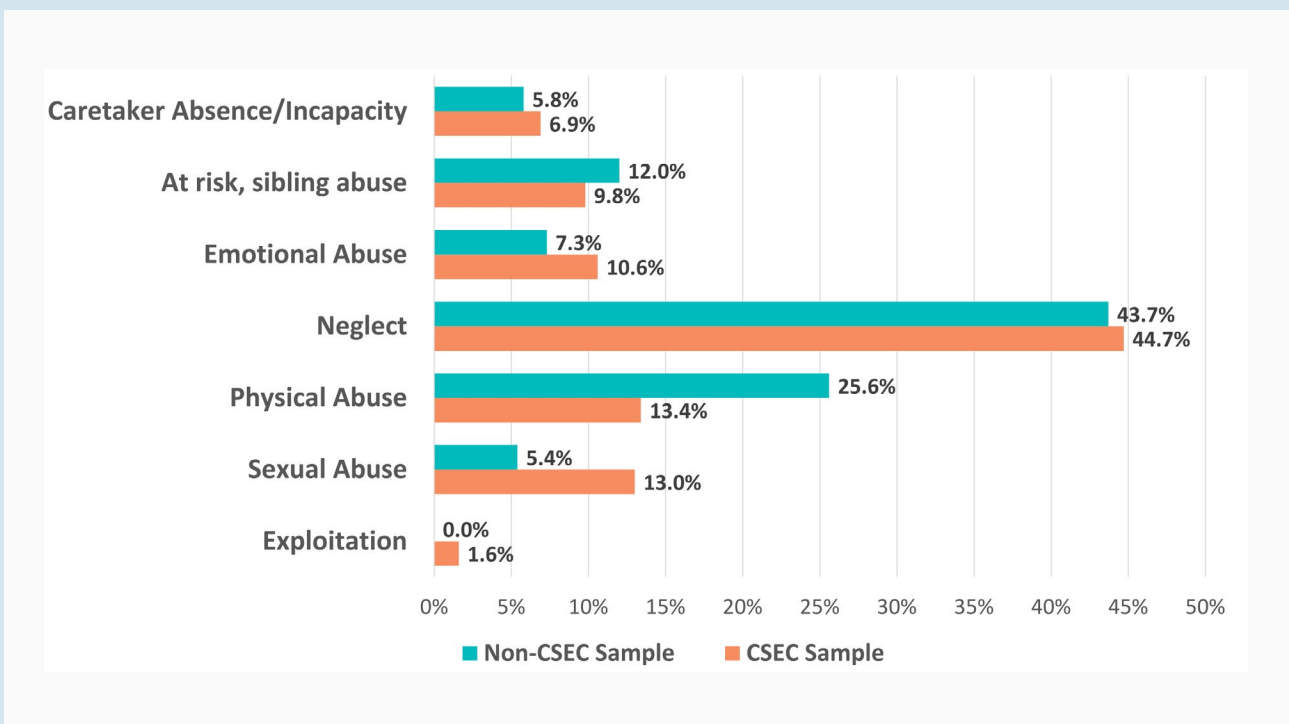
Degree to Which Foster Youth System is Poverty Punishment

Children found to be the victims of abuse and neglect may end up in the foster care system. However, evidence for child removal varies, as does, rigor of enforcement, resulting in wild disparities in the likelihood a child will be removed and placed in care. Racial disproportionality can be a consequence of uneven distributions of factors contributing to the abuse, including especially poverty, but much of the evidence suggests that the disproportionality is also visited in each decision-making stage (Children’s Bureau 2016). Simply stated, it is not merely that children of color are more likely to come from homes with other challenges. It is also the case that when confronted with similarly situated families, the systems nationwide have shown a marked tendency for more rigorous enforcement and more frequent removal for Black, indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) families and children.

The system sets in motion adverse downstream consequences as well, including increased exposure to drug use, sexual exploitation, and other problems, so the over-representation of children of color in the system has disparate and negative impacts.

In Los Angeles County, Black youth make up slightly over 7 percent of the total population and yet 25 percent of foster youth are Black (California Department of Finance 2018; Child Welfare Services 2020). Involvement in foster care is at least correlated with Black youth being at risk for a multitude of challenges and adverse experiences such as commercial sexual exploitation and juvenile justice system involvement. In Los Angeles County, 85 percent of youth “recovered” by probation from commercial sexual exploitation were foster youth. Of this group, 71 percent are Black (Fithyan, Guymon, and Wegener 2019).

FIGURE 9-3: FIRST SUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATION TYPE



Source: Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services, “Data and Monthly Fact Sheets,” <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/resources/data-and-monthly-fact-sheets/>.

Similarly in a sample of youth exiting probation, 83 percent reported, on average, five referrals alleging child maltreatment. As seen in Table 9-1, compared to their peers, Black youth and young girls were most likely to ultimately have cases opened and be placed in out-of-home foster care (McCroskey, Herz, and Putnam-Hornstein 2017).

The entire system of removal and supervision needs improvement. The disproportionate representation of Black foster youth in the juvenile justice system and commercial sexual exploitation calls for a critical analysis of the circumstances that lead to removal. While there is no question that some children need the protection of the foster care system, from physical and sexual abuse or more, we should be certain that

this over-burdened system is reserved for cases when other forms of redress and family support are not an appropriate alternative remedy.

Almost one in three alleged child maltreatment cases involve “general neglect” or a family’s inability to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or child supervision. Rather than address the underlying poverty, and circumstances in which parents are unable to care for their children, we remove the children. Of course, in some instances removal is the correct decision, even if only to provide sufficient time for family recovery and improved circumstances and to prevent further immediate harm, but such a decision should not obviate our responsibility for addressing the root causes of neglect.

TABLE 9-1: PROBATION YOUTH WITH PREVIOUS REFERRALS TO CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

	MALE YOUTH (N=318)	FEMALE YOUTH (N=69)
Past referral of maltreatment*	80.8%	94.2%
Mean age at the first referral	6.7	7.0
Mean Number of referrals	5.3	6.9
Past substantiation as a victim*	34.6%	55.1%
Past case opening*	32.1%	47.8%
Past out of home placement*	26.7%	33.3%
*p<.05		

	BLACK YOUTH (N=116)	LATINO YOUTH (N=249)	WHITE YOUTH (N=18)
Past referral of maltreatment*	90%	80%	83%
Mean age at the first referral*	5.6	7.3	7.5
Mean Number of referrals*	6.5	5.1	7.8
Past substantiation as a victim*	41%	37%	--
Past case opening*	43%	30%	--
Past out of home placement*	24%	17%	--
*p<.05 [--] = cell masked due to small sizes of less than 10; “Other” race not presented. Note: Case openings may include those where families requested voluntary services and therefore did not include a substantiated victim.			

Source: McCroskey, J., Herz, D., & Putnam-Hornstein, E. (2017). Crossover Youth Los Angeles County Probation Youth with Previous Referrals to Child Protective Services. <https://www.datanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/CrossoverYouth.pdf>

We need to do everything possible to accommodate families' needs, not try to fit their needs into our systems. The main thing is we have to listen - genuinely listen - to what they want."

- Debra Duardo, Committee for Greater LA

In California, nearly one in three Black children (28 percent) and one in three Latino children (31 percent)

live in poverty (California Policy and Research Initiative 2019). Although reports of child maltreatment are disturbingly down, since COVID-19, the rise of food-insecure households continues, exacerbated by the unemployment and financial distress of the current circumstances and, nationally, is at an all-time high (Brookings Institution 2020). Racial justice advocates challenge that "general neglect" as defined, is a symptom of families of color experiencing extreme poverty without connection to adequate community resources.

An Opportunity to Reimagine Systems

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed latent health and economic crises in Los Angeles County and beyond: our current systems of care do not serve the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families. In addition, the epidemic has exposed structural obstacles to family supervision and child protection during a health emergency. At this moment, we have the opportunity to reimagine preventative systems that foster genuine community care in place of systemic harm against vulnerable children and families. Prevention models and community-based care are our best tools to connect the highest need families to resources and mitigate risk to Black foster youth.

Profile: Faith Foster Families Network (3FN) is an example of a community-designed, community-led agency—in this case, one serving resource foster families based in South Los Angeles. 3FN, in partnership with the Department of Children and Family Services, trained volunteers to monitor supervised visits within the community they live in. 3FN is able to provide in-person visits despite the formal court suspension. Under the watchful eye of resident neighbors as community care workers, families build connections to local support systems to find stress relief from the severe social isolation that can result in child maltreatment and intimate partner

violence. Community care leverages the power of the collective to transform social conditions through monetary donations, volunteerism, and political participation.

Source: Faith Foster Families Network

In order to get equity right and to heal the inequities created we must **invest in the permanency of community-based care models for the highest-need families and at-risk youth**. While the COVID-19 crisis has unmasked several systemic problems with our service to families and children in crisis, many of these burdens predate the crisis. The protection of victims and IPV, and the care and supervision of children who are struggling with families in crisis, are of even greater importance during this period of extraordinary stress, economic adversity, and health threat.

The systems we use to provide services to these victims and to their families must be reexamined with the goal of creating networks of support, protection, and mutual assistance that will lower the need for government, CPS, and law enforcement intervention and, when that becomes necessary, makes sure that intervention comes quickly to minimize harm. Moreover, reliance on a web of social connectedness as a method for harm reduction and prevention can continue even in periods like this, where the usual patterns of monitoring and enforcement are constrained. In an effort to reexamine these systems and reimagine how systems help

children and families we must:

Initiate a community-led process to design and implement these localized prevention support systems, which will address the strengths and needs of each identified community

Collaborative process should include and compensate private, public, philanthropic and community partners. We must hear directly from foster youth regarding their experiences, and partner as appropriate with the recently created Los Angeles Youth Advisory Board.

Priority service areas:

- **Family Resource Centers:** Build localized hubs of care for community based organizations and service providers.
- **Child Care:** increase access to quality, reputable childcare and early childhood education for families -- particularly young working parents. Young, often single, parents are most often low-income and tend to work in essential sectors without adequate child care (Sick 2020). Expedite review and certification for child care centers and child care providers to meet the needs of young parents.
- **Telehealth Counseling:** Operationalize infrastructure to certify clinicians in telehealth to best outreach and assess families in need. Telehealth allows people to find relief from the domestic space where stressors like unemployment, no child care/summer activities, parents working from home, virtual school, crowded living situations can result in interpersonal violence or child maltreatment. Clinicians report an increase in new clients seeking therapy from the comfort of their homes. Even 12 step meetings are now tele-accessible for individuals with a substance abuse history. Telehealth invites clinicians into the home.

Prevent systems from punishing families for social determinants

We must disentangle poverty from genuine neglect and work to alleviate root causes of family struggle, including nutritional assistance, before resorting to child removal and exposing those children to new perils.

“So, my advocacy work was with organizations about how they [can] create a space for people who come from these traumatic backgrounds into the workforce. Organizations don’t know how to support them, being inclusive, having diversity in the income rate that they were paying folks. [I am] advocating for the wealth of women, the wellbeing of Black folks, [and] trauma informed practices. These are things that came out of this journey of living for me. It pulled at my heartstrings and I was like, who’s doing something about it? That’s how I started to get into the social justice work.”

- Focus Group Participant

Create a professional development track for Community Health Workers

Individuals with lived experiences related to substance use, mental health, justice, and foster care often volunteer to be of service as peer mentors and navigators in their communities. Due to prior records or lack of educational achievement, they are unable to enter high-demand service fields like social work and education. This proposed professional development track puts community care workers on track to be granted full-time employment and become leaders able to transform the culture of historically racially inequitable systems of care.

Invest in and launch Mutual aid projects

Mutual aid projects are a promising example of community-based care. As the pandemic progresses, mutual aid projects have been exceedingly successful social experiments in fulfilling the unmet needs of children and families. Further research on mutual aid project design and leadership is needed to develop a genuine model for community-based care.

- Conduct a scan of community-driven prevention initiatives within Los Angeles County, California, and other States so that communities can be informed by models/strategies that have been successfully implemented and also benefit from lessons learned.
- Enhance monitoring and reporting systems beyond the CWS/CMS system currently in place to protect victims, particularly children. Those systems should be more resilient to mobility disruptions affecting social workers and other professionals like the ones presented in the COVID-19 crisis.

Allocate funding to prevention as opposed to enforcement

True investment in a community-based system of care demands reallocation from enforcement to prevention. Moreover, since prevention dollars are most effective in preventing noteworthy occurrences, they often are victims of their own success. Care and prevention need to remain a priority even if apparent success diminishes the perception of need. Direct the Los Angeles County Department of Child & Family Services (DCFS), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Department of

Public Social Service (DPSS), Office of Child Protection (OCP), and Department of Public Health (DPH) to sponsor community based care projects through contracts and referrals.

- **County Abuse Prevention Funding:** County Board must protect the prevention dollars directed to any or all County agencies, and specifically the OCP. Prevention dollars are invested in community agencies already working on the ground. DCFS provides more latitude to community agencies that are already connected to their communities in place of mandating guidelines that put service before determining community needs. Note that in the 2014 Blue Ribbon Commission report, a specific recommendation for cooperation between philanthropy and the non-profit sector on the one hand and government on the other was identified as a key and important strategy (Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection 2014).
- Provide funding for innovations and expansions of peer support models in the areas of substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence (victim and perpetrator) and child welfare.
- Prioritize funding to support children and families before they experience a crisis such as universal home visiting, family resource centers, and helplines/warm lines.
- Increase public, private and philanthropic investments in affordable, quality early care and education in high need communities.

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POLICY SECTION 10

Mental Health

Broken Mental Health Systems Prior to COVID-19

Mental health impacts a wide sector of Californians and Angelenos. According to a 2013 report from California Health Care Foundation, nearly one in six Californians have a form of mental illness and one out of every 24 California residents have a mental illness so serious it becomes difficult for them to function in daily life (Holt and Adams 2013). In Los Angeles County, the numbers are nearly one in seven have a form of mental illness and one out of every 20 Angelenos suffer from a serious mental illness (Technical Assistance Collaborative and Human Services Research Institute 2012). In the 2018 Los Angeles County Health Survey, before the COVID-19 epidemic and its impacts, Los Angeles County residents reported an average of 4 poor mental health days in the past month. In Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) communities, the average number of poor mental health days in a month's span was 4.3 days for Black Angelenos and a staggering 9.3 days for Indigenous (American Indian/ Alaska Native) peoples. Compared to white children (6.7 percent), Black (12.1 percent) and Latino (10.6 percent) children were nearly twice as likely to be under the care of a parent or guardian at-risk for major depression (County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health 2018). Without access to proper care, these mental illnesses will have a negative impact on an individual's quality of life and longevity. On average Americans with untreated, serious mental illnesses, have a life expectancy 25 years shorter than the general population.

Yet despite these vast needs, California's mental health care system has been dysfunctional for decades and has been described as "struggling" and "broken" (McEwen and Seeman 2009). This reality has been brought into sharp relief, especially with respect to racial and economic inequities, as a result of the population-wide traumatic experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and uprisings against systemic racism. In Los Angeles County, we can see clear consequences of the lack of access to mental health prevention and treatment services and its disproportionate impact on African American, Latino, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander and other communities without resources. These are communities who already experience social

disinvestment, racism, homophobia and transphobia, and other types of discrimination shown to be related to poor health and mental health outcomes, especially when compared to their white counterparts. And, while mental illness may impact individuals on the entire socio-economic spectrum, members of BIPOC communities who experience mental illness are more likely to live in poverty and lack access to early or preventive care. For this reason, they are overrepresented within hospital emergency rooms, the child welfare system, criminal justice system, and in the population experiencing homelessness.

"Even if you're in Los Angeles and that person was murdered in Minnesota, it has a real impact on you either way because you identify with that person. And so there is a community trauma that has been going on for generations that needs to be talked about and needs to be approached. And maybe the answer is a community approach, because it is a community shared experience."

-Miguel Santana, Committee for Greater LA

A significant percentage of mental illnesses first appears before the age of 25, highlighting the need for screening, prevention, and early intervention during childhood and adolescence. Adverse childhood experiences, including exposure to physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, or domestic violence and other traumatic events, greatly increase the risk for the development of both physical and mental health problems across the lifespan (Cronholm et al. 2015; Felitti et al. 1998; Finkelhor et al. 2015). Early exposure to trauma and adversity increases the risk for a range of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, all of which are linked to increased risk for suicide and addictions. A concerning trend is that suicides have increased dramatically over the past two decades, with more than 4,300 Californians committing suicide in 2017, a 52 percent increase from 2001. Suicides among

adolescents aged 15 to 19 increased 63 percent during this same time period, and LGBTQ+ young adults who have reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to report suicide attempts than their counterparts not experiencing family rejection (Ryan et al. 2009). This background should give us fuel to work to intervene at a young age.

For individuals with serious mental illness, co-morbid alcohol and drug use disorders are frequently a complicating factor. In Los Angeles County, nearly two-thirds, approximately 66 percent of adults who received treatment through County mental health services for substance use disorders, have a serious mental illness (County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health 2017). Sadly, people with substance use disorders are almost six times more likely to attempt suicide than those without.

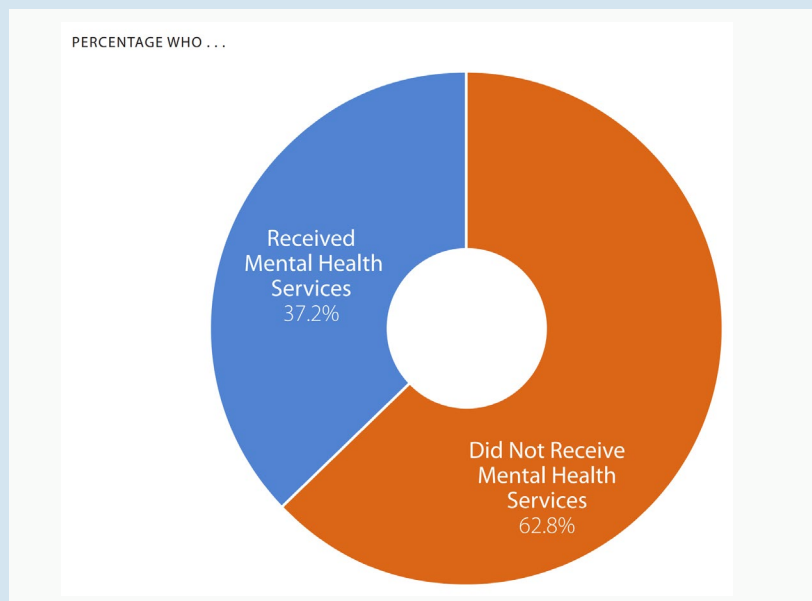
“We need to have systems put in place to help with the mental health of our community. The restructuring that our population has had to go through has taken a toll mentally, and you can see it everywhere. It’s like this little dark cloud over our seat. So, there needs to be some mental health services to get us through these times and push us forward.”

-Focus Group Participant

In an almost paradoxical state, it is widely agreed that the largest psychiatric institutions in the state and nation are not hospitals, but rather jails and prisons (and streets). Over 30 percent of California prisoners are diagnosed with a serious mental disorder and about one third of people experiencing homelessness across the county have a serious mental illness. With California’s unhoused population nearing 130,000, data suggests that an estimated 43,000 suffer from serious mental illness.

Not surprisingly, polls show that Californians consider mental illness a top health issue. And, they believe that making treatment available for people with mental health problems is extremely or very important. However, most Californians also believe that treatment is not widely available, particularly if they have tried to access services. Nearly two thirds of adults with a mental illness did not receive mental health services due to barriers ranging from personal stigma to systemic access (California HealthCare Foundation 2018). The geographic distribution of mental health clinical services often creates substantial distance for those in need, further exacerbating the gap between need and delivery. As with other needs documented here, BIPOC residents appear to have the greatest gap between need and receipt of services, whether by distance, awareness, access, or other factors.

FIGURE 10-1: TREATMENT FOR MENTAL ILLNESS, ADULTS WITH AMI, CALIFORNIA, 2011-2015



Source: California Health Care Foundation. (2018). Mental Health in California: For Too Many, Care Not There California Healthcare Almanac. Located at: <https://www.chcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/MentalHealthCalifornia2018.pdf>

Racism, Financial Insecurity, COVID-19 and Mental Health

Experts agree that racial discrimination and other types of oppression have a causal link with morbidity and mortality of Black Americans and other minority-status groups. Unfortunately, the issue is rarely addressed from a mental health perspective despite how intertwined mental health is with racism. Racism affects individuals seeking treatment on various levels: institutional racism is a structural and legalized system that results in inequitable access to adequate mental health care; cultural racism refers to the negative stereotypes, that result in poorer psychological and physiological wellbeing of the impacted individuals and interpersonal racism refers to the persistence of racial prejudice that seriously undermines the relationship between the service provider and the individual consumer of mental health services (Cobbina and Lewis 2018). Addressing racism requires service providers to shift their work from exclusively focusing on the individual they are treating, and to simultaneously address the racist systems, which are causing the harm. Any effort to improve equity in mental health care and wellbeing of marginalized communities must address these issues.

Racial/ethnic minority-status individuals are exposed to a higher prevalence of oppression and discrimination linked to premature mortality, productivity loss, high rates of disability, and increased risk for chronic disease. Compounding the negative effects of racism and discrimination on health are the impact of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing systemic racism. Most recently, viral videos of acts of police brutality, which have resulted in the deaths of Black people have also exacerbated mental stress. First, these acts of anti-Black violence that trigger civil unrest are, themselves, triggers for additional stress and accompanying mental health challenges. Second, long-standing and purposefully created systems of power and privilege provide socially advantaged groups with more resources to limit their exposure

to, and cope with, stressors caused by social disruptions such as these, but leave marginalized communities further exposed.

"I was struggling with mental health. I came out of the mental health hospital last year and I was struggling with classes and everything. So really moving out of my mom's house and into the university really helped me out a lot: I was happy on campus. I had a work study job. I had enough financial aid to cover me for housing. I was socializing with friends. I was, you know, just having a better life than what I did at my mom's house. So then when all of this hit... I just regret it [!] went back to where I started."

- Focus Group Participant

The COVID-19 pandemic has further fueled additional stressors that take a toll on mental health. Financial insecurity is a well-established risk factor for mental illness such as unemployment or insufficient income to meet basic needs. It can also be set off by the mere perception of a threat to an individual's financial security, such as fearing the loss of a job, even without directly experiencing this. Some evidence suggests that financial insecurity and the persistent fears it creates can be even more detrimental (Purtle 2020). Additionally, higher levels of income inequality are also associated with poorer population mental health, particularly among low-income segments of the population. It is no surprise then that the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 economic fallout is likely to be substantial, particularly for marginalized communities who are already underresourced. These communities have experienced the financial ramifications of the pandemic more immediately and severely than their socially advantaged counterparts. Data from the

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that, between April 2019 and April 2020, the unemployment rate increased from 3.6 to 14.7 for the U.S. as a whole but from 11.5 to 31.2 among African Americans and from 3.7 to 16.7 among Latinos (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020).

While social limitations implied by shelter-in-place orders are important tools to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, these have the potential to dramatically exacerbate the mental health challenges of low-income BIPOC communities. Mental health professionals and service providers in all sectors report an overwhelming influx of calls from people of all ages experiencing grief, isolation, substance use, intimate partner violence, and homelessness. The burdens of isolation, worries about a precarious future, and economic stressors have created an environment of uncertainty and instability. The SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline provides crisis counseling for people in distress

related to events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing racial uprisings across the world. The Disaster Distress Helpline reported an 890 percent increase in calls in March 2020 versus March 2019 (Jackson 2020).

According to the Shelter-In-Place Burden Index (SIPBI), In Los Angeles County, low-income neighborhoods with high numbers of people of color such as Westmont, Lynwood, Montebello, and Pacoima are most burdened by the stay-at-home order (2020). The index, created in partnership between the UCLA Institute for Inequality and Democracy and Paul Ong Associates, determines the rank of burden placed on neighborhoods based on population density, public-park space, and access to a nearby supermarket. People living in communities with high SIPBI ratings have limited access to green open spaces to safely engage in self-care practice outside their homes and neighborhoods.

The Particular Effects of Anti-Black Racism

While mental health challenges are present for all communities, how those challenges are met vary considerably across the race and resources of the patients. Access to quality mental health or psychiatric medical care, not unlike access to all care, is heavily indexed on the availability of resources and insurance to pay for such care. The likelihood that mental health challenges are addressed early and effectively vary with these disparities. When mental health problems are not identified and treated early, there can be potentially catastrophic effects. For example, African American patients are twice as likely to have police involvement during their first episode of psychosis than white patients and are less likely to have a general practitioner involved (Anderson et al. 2014).

The social challenges associated with both racism and poverty are immense. The stress of life and the resulting health consequences are estimated through a measure called allostatic load (McEwen and Seeman 2009). Numerous studies show that African Americans

have higher allostatic load than whites, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors and also that gender plays a critical and intersectional role. That is, the greatest disparity from whites is observed among African American women.

The recent and highly publicized police killings of unarmed Black persons illustrate a specific aspect of social stress that appears to have a particular impact on African Americans. Apart from the specific families experiencing these traumas, these deaths have significant spillover effects on the mental health of African Americans. In a population-based, quasi-experimental study published in the *Lancet*, researchers found that police killings of unarmed African Americans and unarmed whites had a significant effect in increasing the number of days African American respondents reported being in poor mental health (Bor et al. 2018). Interestingly, there is no effect on the mental health of white respondents, even when the unarmed victims are white.

A New Vision for Wellbeing

The available data reflects some of the most important issues affecting people with lived experience of mental health challenges. These include systemic oppression, underresourced communities, lack of meaningful work with livable wages, disenfranchisement with regard to educational opportunities and significant civic involvement. Mental health and wellbeing represent the cornerstone to improved quality of life.

Racism is a public health issue. The socioemotional toll of systemic racism is measured in the health disparate health outcomes within communities of color. African Americans are conditioned to internalize the stress of daily discrimination down to their cells. Genetic evidence shows that the way stress manifests in the body is higher in African Americans than in white people (Neel 1997). In the current climate of the mass protest and resistance to modes of anti-Black oppression, African Americans report larger numbers of poor mental health days which speaks to the notion of despair and despondency related to the pervasiveness of discrimination effects.

The time to invest in the wellbeing of Black lives is now. In order to move away from a culture of saviors—that is, external and self-appointed ‘reformers’ instead of mutuality—we must design an ecosystem of community care in which BIPOC, may not only survive but thrive.

Mental health wellbeing begins long before a mental health crisis. We must develop culturally responsive interventions to improve wellbeing at individual and community levels within all community ecosystems, such as educational, faith-based and health care environments. We must use a preventative model with a person-centered approach to assess and support the whole person within their environment.

Achieve Mental Health Funding Parity

There is no health without brain health, therefore we must achieve parity in funding and coverage between physical and mental health, in accordance with existing federal law. This includes reforming systems such as private health insurance, Medi Cal and Medi Care to provide equitable and flexible funding for mental health services. Practically speaking, this means that any individual is able to access mental health services on demand, without having to be labeled, pathologized or stigmatized by psychiatric diagnoses, which may negatively impact employment or educational opportunities. In order to achieve this reality, the following conditions must be in place:

- We promote prevention, early access to care and a culture of thriving by developing and implementing creative programs, which include community voice from, design to implementation and evaluation, as well as resource allocation.
- Flexible funding is available to include reimbursement for paraprofessionals (peer providers) as a way to spread mental health knowledge and interventions, engage individuals at risk, and expand mental health services. Without these additional resources and systems of support in place, paraprofessionals (peer providers) are prone to professional burnout.

We dismantle inequitable practices and policies related to financing within County services and increase funding for successful mental health diversion interventions such as the Psychiatric Mobile Response Team; increase Med-Cal payments to the same level as Medicare; integrate funding and delivery of medical and behavioral care; and reduce barriers and increase payments for telehealth services.

Address Basic Needs

In order for individuals to achieve or maintain mental wellbeing, all systems must support fulfillment of basic needs, including:

- Access to housing, safety in the home and in the community and healthy habits and behaviors;
- Meaningful employment opportunities with livable wages and career paths for people with lived experience of mental illness or lived experience of caring for someone with mental illness;
- Trauma and resilience informed learning environments for all children, early childhood through adolescence, and lifelong learning opportunities across the lifespan;
- Social connections and support networks including Social Connection Hubs to coordinate broad-based community services, activities, and organizations that could reduce social isolation, improve mental and physical health, and enhance the sense of community.
- Civic involvement wherein the community is empowered to advocate for equitable resources in their communities, address community safety, and improve community infrastructure to improve quality of life;

Encourage Mental Health Education and Wellbeing Promotion as a Preventive Strategy

Prevention in mental health aims to reduce the incidence, prevalence and recurrence of mental illness and associated disabilities. Mental health education in this context targets risk factors population-wide and provides information on early access to services, serving to destigmatize mental health problems and actively engage individuals and families where they live. Wellbeing promotion aims to improve healthy habits, increase the achievement of developmental

milestones across the lifespan, and strengthen protective factors, which help individuals and communities be more resilient in their response to adversity. Strategies, which support these efforts, must be widely available across systems and service platforms, and accessible by all, including children, parents, individuals, communities, service providers, as well as those involved in policy development and implementation.

- Provide education on specific mental health risk factors which is readily accessible to all. This includes providing information in languages that are native to the targeted community, which are culturally appropriate and take into account different levels of formal education.
- Provide on-going training for professionals and para-professionals which supports their educational development and helps them evolve in terms of racial, cultural, and other socio-political factors impacting the communities within which they work.
- Develop multiple access platforms wherein this educational material may be accessed (e.g., on-line, in-person)
- Use Public Health Critical Race Praxis (PHCRP) to promote racial equity in public health research, policy development, and advocacy

Support the LACDMH + UCLA Public Partnership for Wellbeing

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) and UCLA have developed a partnership which leverages the strengths of these two world-class public institutions to build a stronger and more resilient safety net for those most in need and at risk, the Public Partnership for Wellbeing (PPFW). LACDMH is the nation's largest provider of public mental health services, and uses a "heart-forward" approach to support recovery and wellbeing. UCLA is a premier public research university which aims to create, disseminate, preserve and apply knowledge for the betterment of society. These two institutions have come together with three main goals:

- Strengthen communities by preventing the impact of trauma and promoting the resilience of individuals and communities
- Reengineer systems through the process of engaging marginalized communities to improve inequitable systems
- Revitalize policy by building equity into societal structures through policy

Drawing upon mental health, social welfare, education and policy experts at UCLA, the PPFW provides training and development to the L.A. countywide workforce. This training enables professionals across multiple service platforms (e.g., schools, child welfare, mental health, public health, libraries, parks, etc.) to identify and address the impact of trauma, while promoting individual and community empowerment and wellbeing. Information which can be directly provided to parents and other individuals is also available. Educational and practice tools are easily accessed via the internet (learn.wellbeing4LA.org) and are supported by on-line learning communities to support shared learning and practice change. Another program under this umbrella partnership trains and mentors para-professionals working specifically in the Community Ambassador Network (CAN) described below. Through this program curriculum development, training and mentoring is provided in culturally and linguistically relevant forms. A final example of how the PPFW benefits the communities in Los Angeles County is the use of data to inform policy recommendations. As demonstrated by these select examples, the PPFW partnership is a strategy in mental illness prevention and wellbeing promotion.

Build a Community Ambassador Network

Gita Murthy Consulting, in collaboration with the LA County Department of Mental Health (DMH), has designed and received Board approval for

the Community Ambassadors Network (CAN), a community outreach and empowerment effort to both strengthen communities and create a career path for community members with lived experience of mental illness or of caring for someone with mental illness. By providing living wage jobs, training, and a career path for lay mental wellbeing workers, the CANs serve as local economic stimulus packages, increasing both the financial resources available to the Community Ambassadors (CA) and their families, but also building up the capacity of these communities and their members to advocate and care for each other.

The CAN will initially focus on communities which have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, systemic racism and the resulting civil unrest, or that are otherwise marginalized. This includes, but is not limited to, BIPOC communities.

Fundamentally, the role of the Community Ambassador is to educate and identify and link individuals to the right care at the right time by the right people. Previous experience with the Mental Health Promoters program has shown that Promoters can be essential to reducing stigma around mental health and improving health equity throughout Los Angeles County. Through the CAN we will expand that impact by training Community Ambassadors on coalition building, critical race theory, social determinants of mental health, COVID-19 trauma recovery, COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, and civic participation and advocacy, including voting. The CAN will deliver services and create a career pathway, as illustrated below:

Finally, as part of its ongoing advocacy for mental health parity in funding and reimbursement, DMH will take the learnings from the implementation of the CAN to provide proof that including paraprofessional and lay mental health workers can: help spread mental health knowledge and interventions, expand care, prevent professional burnout, facilitate early access to care.

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that impact by training Community Ambassadors on coalition building, critical race theory, social determinants of mental health, COVID-19 trauma recovery, COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, and civic participation and advocacy, including voting. The CAN will deliver services and create a career pathway, as illustrated below:

▶ **PROMOTERS**

Educating: Mental and physical health, equity, empowerment, social determinants and access to services

Outreach and Engagement: Assessing community strengths, needs and priorities

Linkage: Connection to services that are responsive and accessible

▶ **AMBASSADORS**

Screening: Identify needs of individuals, families and neighborhoods

Organizing: Engage the community in advocating for increased, equitable resources

Navigating: Connect those in need to the right services at the right time

▶ **SENIOR AMBASSADORS**

Organizing: Collaborate with residents to develop their voice for long-term involvement in creating positive change in systems impacting their wellbeing

Building: Facilitate collaboration between leaders and organizations to form coalitions that empower communities

Finally, as part of its ongoing advocacy for mental health parity in funding and reimbursement, DMH will take the learnings from the implementation of the CAN to provide proof that including paraprofessional and lay mental health workers can: help spread mental health knowledge and interventions, expand care, prevent professional burnout, facilitate early access to care.

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POLICY SECTION 11

Youth

"... pointing back to mental health, I believe that that was one of the things that youth struggle with. This is the reality that we live in. I feel like it's not talked about as much, myself I've actually before COVID, and you know, this is very personal, so I will still share it, I've had suicidal thoughts, you know, and that's nothing that I really share with anybody, but me as an older youth, because I am 23 like I had that at age 22, you know, so it's something that's very real. I had to go to a psychologist and, you know, some therapy. So those things I had never been to in my life before. I think that I'm able to relate to a lot of people because it's not talked about as much, but I try to talk about it now because I've been through a lot. I feel like that's one thing that, you know, everybody goes through like the racism that goes on, the inequality, the injustices that are happening, that happened before. So those types of things play into it. Even with ICE, immigration and all of that. As youth we're kind of expected to be the future and the present. So we have to make sure that we're doing our part right now and later on. We're like in the center of people who are younger than us, like up towards people who are older than us look to us, so as youth we have to make sure that our mental health is at the right state, but it's not always in the right state. So I feel like that's one thing before COVID, that is a very big struggle."

- Focus Group Participant

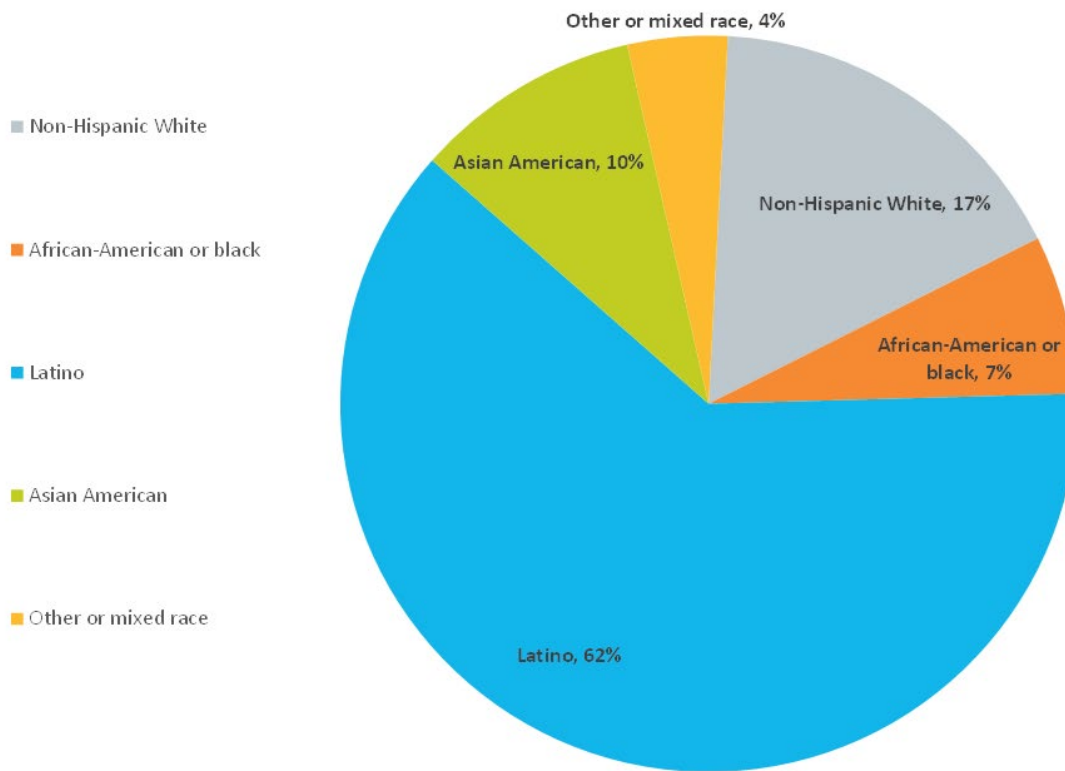
Youth Power Breaking out of the Margins

Prior to COVID-19, youth were living at the margins, already experiencing social inequities without many official avenues to directly partake in decision-making processes that impact their future and wellbeing. In response, many young adults are building unique forms of power and organizing on unofficial channels like social media, carving out creative spaces for political mobilization. The young and diverse population of Los Angeles County is coming of age in a region characterized by economic, racial, and social inequality. The rising costs of higher education, the housing affordability crisis, lack of access to health and mental health services, and the lack of access to living wages

were taunting young adults who will bear the future of Los Angeles County. These conditions, coupled with the added challenges of criminalization, are further marginalizing youth of color, and in particular, Black youth.

Across Los Angeles County, youth (individuals under the age of 18) comprise 22 percent of the population.¹ Figure 11-1 shows that the County's youth are majority youth of color, as Latino youth comprise the majority, or 62 percent, Asian American youth comprise 10 percent, and Black youth comprise 7 percent, compared to white youth who comprise 17 percent.

FIGURE 11-1: PERCENT OF YOUTH (UNDER 18) BY RACE/ETHNICITY, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

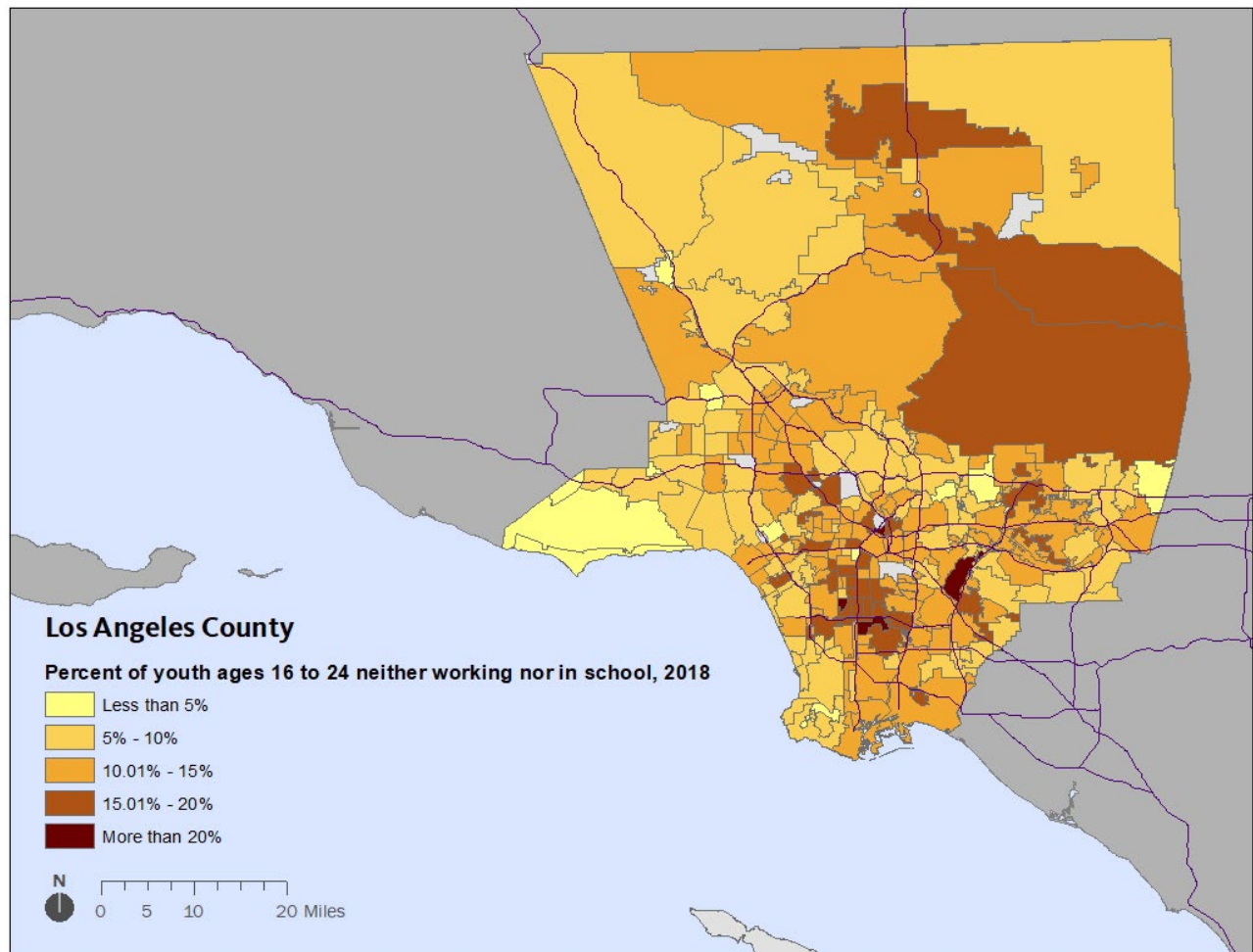
¹ USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

While race/ethnicity are important identities to point out, individuals often have multiple identities. Studies have shown that youth who have intersectional identities of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, are disproportionately subject to experiencing disciplinary responses across systems like education, child welfare, and juvenile justice, as compared to their white cisgender, and gender-conforming peers (Children’s Defense Fund - California 2018). In Los Angeles County, a majority of justice-involved youth are youth of color. Black youth represent 34 percent of justice-involved students (Children’s Defense Fund - California 2018).

Los Angeles County has a large share of youth who are categorized as opportunity youth, or youth between the ages of 16-24 who are neither working nor in school. In Los Angeles City, opportunity youth account for nearly 14 percent of youth between the ages of

16-24 (Painter et al. 2017). When disaggregating by race and ethnicity, Black youth are disproportionately represented in this population, due to factors like employment discrimination which is a barrier to entering the workforce (Schoen 2017). For example, while Black youth only compromise 7 percent of 16-24 year olds, Black youth represent 22 percent of opportunity youth, followed by Latino youth (15 percent), Asian American youth (9 percent), and white youth (9 percent) (Schoen 2017). As illustrated by Figure 11-2, there are pockets throughout the County with larger concentrations of opportunity youth, such as South LA, Lancaster, Palmdale, the San Fernando Valley, and the San Gabriel Valley. This stark reality demonstrates that Los Angeles County is falling short on providing young adults with the necessary supports to ensure their health and wellbeing, which impacts their ability to thrive.

FIGURE 11-2: OPPORTUNITY YOUTH, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



Source: Center for Social Innovation at the University of Southern California

Source: Neighborhood Data for Social Change, <https://usc.data.socrata.com/stories/s/6xuj-27g8>. Note: Opportunity youth are defined as youth ages 16-24 who are neither working nor in school.

In addition, many of the county's youth also face the criminalization of their families that comes from immigration status. In Los Angeles County, nearly 490,000 minor children are living with at least one parent who is undocumented and about 200,000 children are living in households where one parent is undocumented and the other is not.² The fear of deportation is very present for these families, creating an additional layer of anxiety for young adults. In Los Angeles County, about 59,000 Angelenos are Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients (USC Equity Research Institute 2020). During the pandemic, fees to renew this status can cause added economic stress. Not to mention, the temporary nature of that status coupled with an administration continuously aiming to remove the program, has created anxiety for these young adults, many who are the sole providers of their households (Galvan 2020).

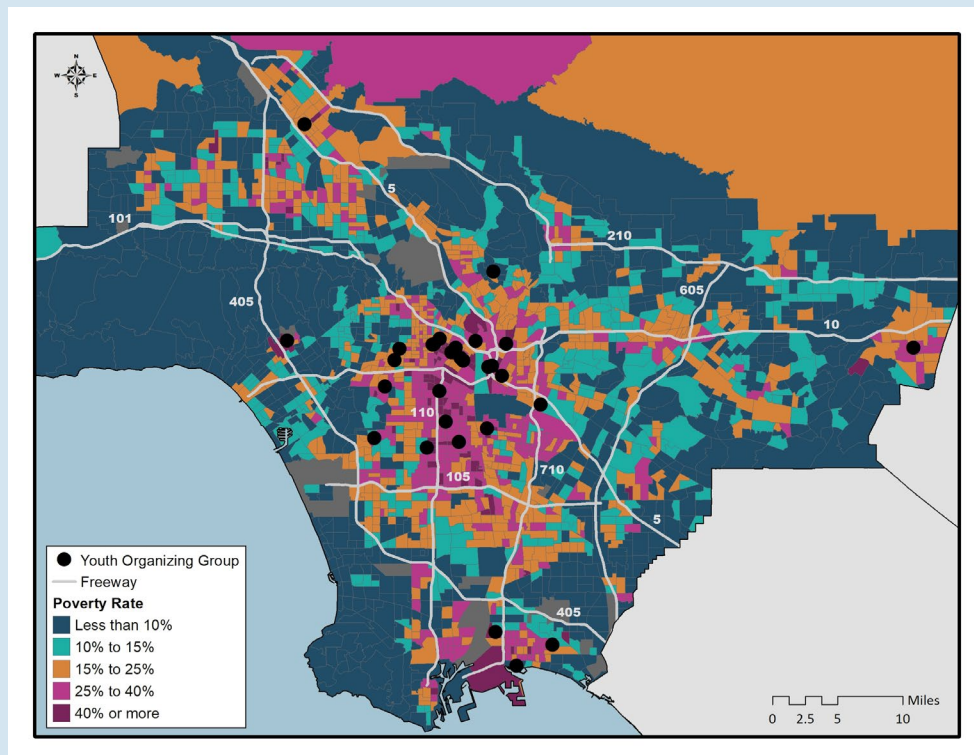
Nevertheless, these young Angelenos have become a

“before the COVID lockdown, I was honestly really struggling. I was living like paycheck to paycheck, literally negative balances in all my accounts all the time. My car broke down literally a week before it started, before the lock-down started ... just everything going on, I just felt like it wasn't going to end. And then, I couldn't even come up with the money to get my DACA renewed in March. And so that was another set of like messed up problems.”

– Focus Group Participant

strong base of advocates that are actively organizing and mobilizing their communities around issues impacting them. Mobilizing youth at such a critical stage of the life course yields long-term benefits of empowered communities, engaged young voters, and

FIGURE 11-3: STATUS OF YOUTH ORGANIZING IN LOS ANGELES



Source: Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing National Scan, 2019

LA YOUTH ORGANIZING

- API Equality-LA
- Brotherhood Crusade
- Brothers Sons Selves
- Coalition
- CHIRLA CDN & WiseUp!
- CA Native Vote Project
- Californians for Justice
- CARECEN
- Changeist
- CBE
- Community Coalition
- East Yard Communities
- Esperanza
- Filipino Migrant Center
- GSA Network
- Gente Organizada
- InnerCity Struggle
- Khmer Girls in Action
- Labor Community Strategy Center
- Latino Equality Alliance
- Legacy LA
- Pacoima Beautiful
- Power California
- Roots for Peace
- Schools LA Students
- Deserve
- Social Justice Learning Institute
- SEACA
- UCLA Dream Resource Center
- Weingart East LA YMCA
- Young Invincibles
- Youth Justice Coalition

² USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average. Overall population numbers may be slightly higher than in usually reported statistics because of adjusted weights used to account for undercount of undocumented Californians.

political efficacy across generations. For example, a survey conducted on the impacts of youth organizing on health behaviors in Los Angeles County revealed that more than half of youth organizing members reported a significant impact in taking better care of their emotional well-being (Terriquez 2020). Moreover nearly 40 percent of youth reported a significant impact in taking better care of their physical health (Terriquez 2020). Los Angeles County is home to youth organizing groups with over two decades of demonstrated track records in training leaders to inject youth voices into years-long campaigns around education justice, immigrant rights, criminal justice reform, and environmental justice. It is also home to more recently established groups that are targeting new constituencies in this large region.

Figure 11-3 shows youth organizing groups, mostly based in high-poverty communities who are successfully preparing a powerful base of young Los Angeles residents to address some of these structural challenges. Through regular meetings and leadership development programming, these groups typically provide young people with a critical civics education, develop their basic civic skills, and guide them through civic action. To varying degrees, these groups also offer culturally appropriate supports that enhance their educational achievement and career prospects (Terriquez 2017). They also incorporate healing and self-care strategies that correspond with self-reported physical health, mental health, and other developmental outcomes (Terriquez, Betania, and Lin Forthcoming).

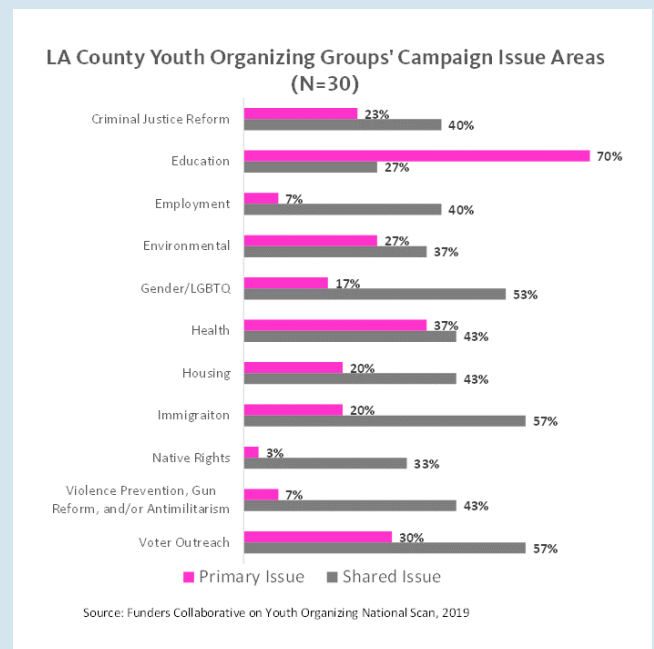
These grassroots youth groups are supported by the region’s social movement infrastructure, offering training, policy analysis, social media outreach, and coordination for policy reform campaigns and voter education. Youth organizing groups also contribute to the pipeline preparing the next generation of movement leaders, systems leaders, and elected officials. Yet these groups remain fairly small and largely reliant on foundation money. Very few young people have the exposure to comprehensive leadership development that occurs in youth organizing groups, and opportunities to share best practices with other groups and schools are often missed. In consideration of these issues, in 2019 the Weingart Foundation began an initiative designed to build youth organizing capacity throughout Southern California. More support for this work, however, is needed.

Youth organizing groups have engaged young people to weigh in on issues raised in other sections of this larger report. In a Fall 2019 survey, groups were asked to report the primary issues their campaigns addressed, as well as shared issues they sometimes support through partnerships. Figure 11-4 shows that the most common primary issues were education-related (70 percent), with 37 percent also working on health-related campaigns prior to the pandemic. The majority of youth organizations have involved members in supportive roles in shared campaigns focused on immigration, voter outreach, and gender equity/ LGBTQ-related campaigns.

“Police interactions with people of color shouldn’t be so aggressive. They shouldn’t have to start with being at gunpoint or start with being yelled at, or just being threatened. It should be a lot more calm, a lot more steps until you have to pull out your service weapon. It shouldn’t be as many people dying the way they are, over nothing.”

– Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 11-4: L.A. COUNTY YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS’ CAMPAIGN ISSUE AREAS

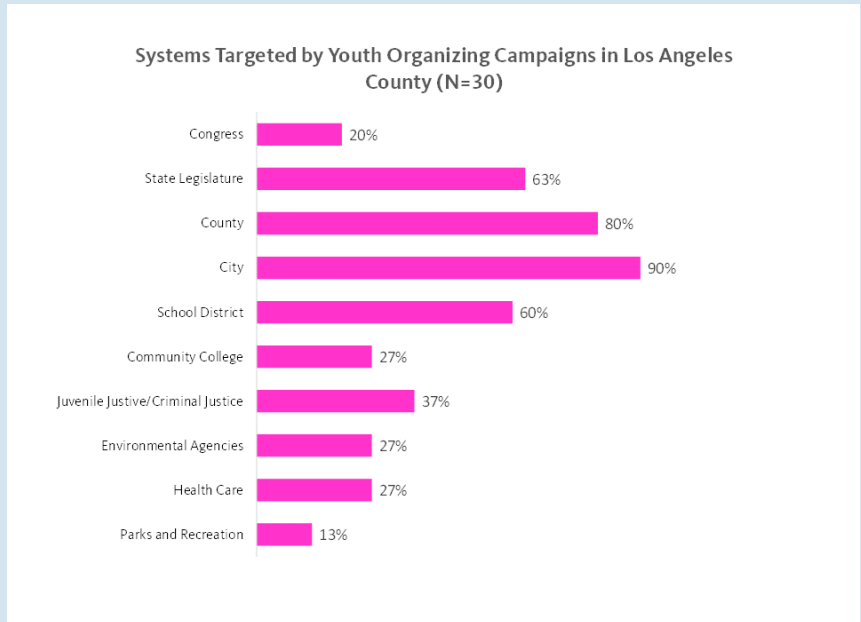


Source: Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing National Scan, 2019

As illustrated by Figure 11-5, youth-led campaigns target the City and County primarily, aiming to hold them and other government agencies accountable. Groups also help give youth leaders a formative experience in how these systems work and how policy change occurs. Beyond holding systems accountable and providing a formative experience for the youth – these youth-led efforts are actually transforming systems towards equity. For example, in 2018 youth from South and East LA led a movement for the Student Equity Need Index which was later passed by L.A. Unified Board of Education and successfully shifted over \$25 million a year to the highest need schools using an equity-based need formula (Los Angeles Unified School District 2018). Even through the pandemic youth organizing groups played a central role in persuading the LAUSD to redirect \$25 million from the school police budget to primary schools with the highest proportion of Black students, a victory that reflects at least two decades of organizing to combat the criminalization of Black and Latino students.

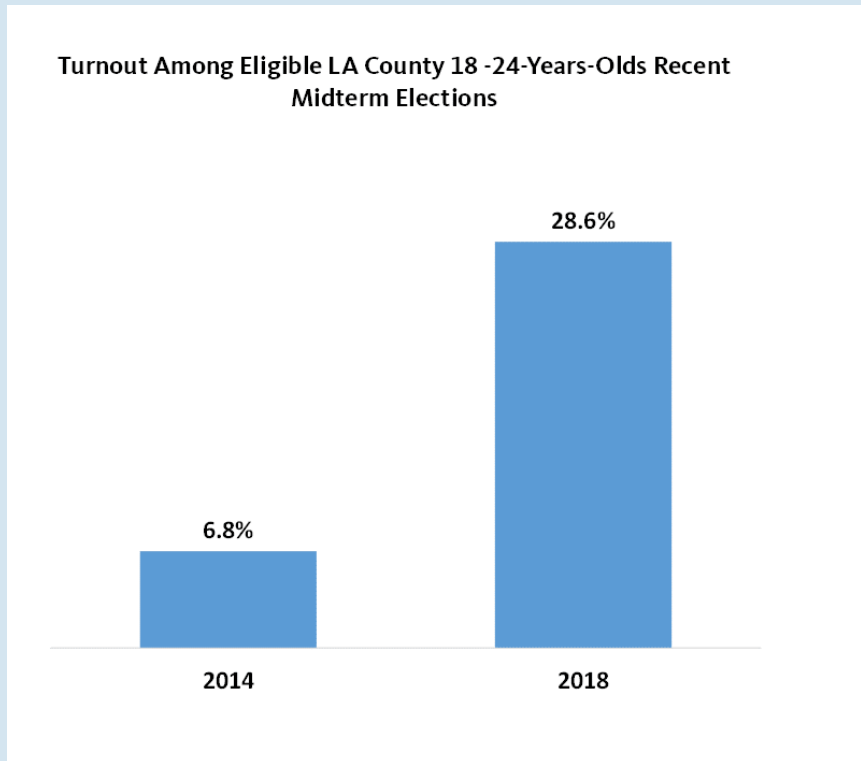
As a result of efforts by youth organizing groups, thousands of new voters were registered and received reminders to submit their ballots before the 2018 election. Figure 6 shows that voter turnout in Los Angeles County among the youngest voters aged 18-24 quadrupled between the 2014 and 2018, more than in any other California county. As part of the Power California Network, nine groups coordinated campaigns (often in partnership with LAUSD and the County Registrar of Voters as part of the LA Youth Vote), and another 17 groups supported young voter engagement efforts.

FIGURE 11-5: SYSTEMS TARGETED BY YOUTH, LOS ANGELES COUNTY



Source: California Youth Organizing Survey, 2019

FIGURE 11-6: TURNOUT AMONG ELIGIBLE 18-24-YEAR-OLDS RECENT MIDTERM ELECTIONS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY



Source: 2014 California Civic Engagement Project and 2018 Political Data, Inc. & ACS

Youth Inequities at the Core of the Pandemic

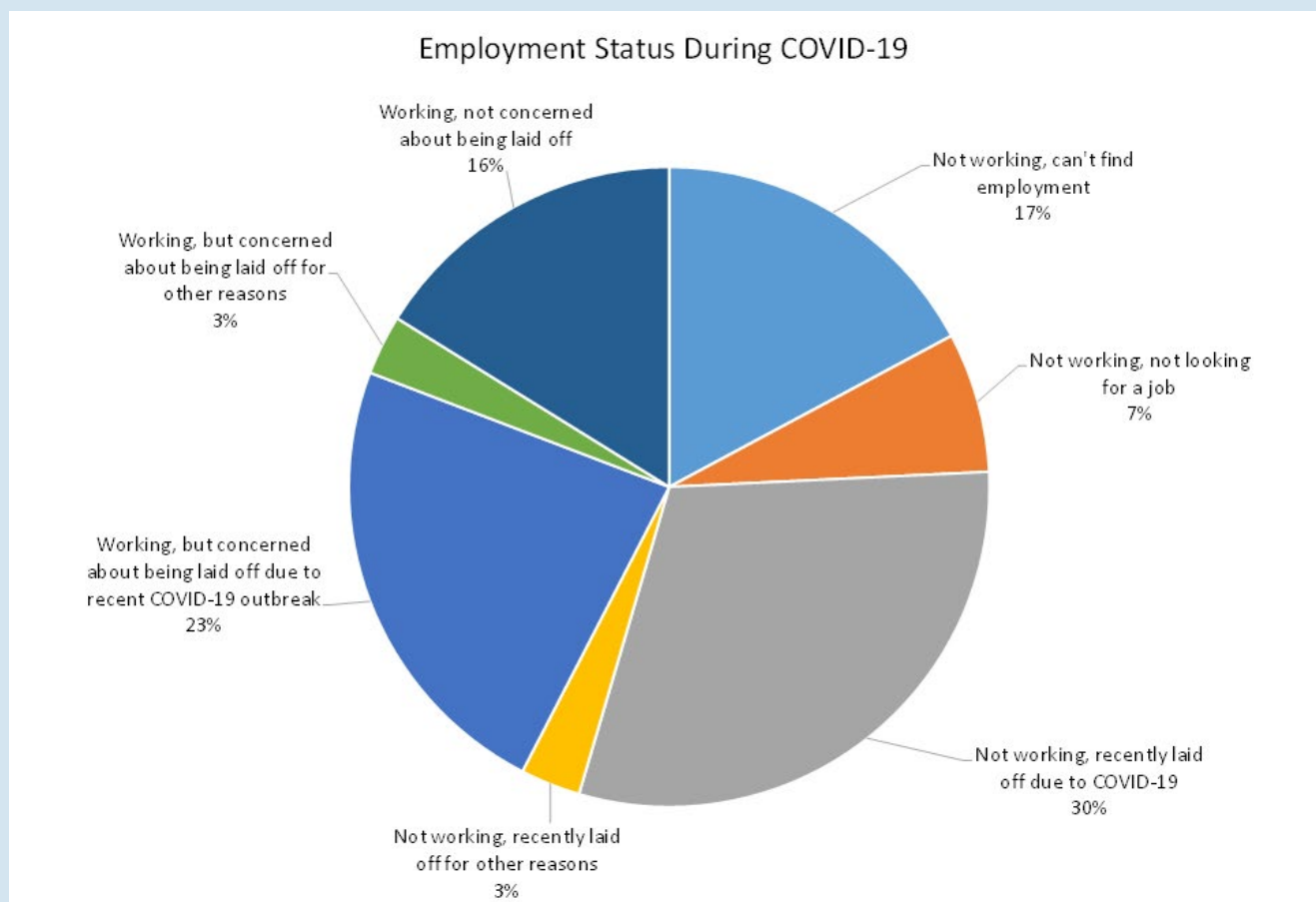
Throughout this pandemic it has been evident that Black and Latino youth, along with their families have suffered disproportionately in terms of exposure to the virus, lack of access to adequate health insurance and care, and negative economic impacts. A survey of 18-29 year olds conducted in late June – early July by Latino Decisions on behalf of Power California revealed that in Los Angeles County, about half of respondents have faced challenges buying basic necessities, and 2 out of 5 find it difficult to pay rent. Youth are also experiencing unprecedented rates of unemployment due to COVID-19, impacting their ability to pay for these necessities that can include

housing, student loans, and groceries. Figure 11-7 shows that 30 percent of young adults surveyed had been recently laid off due to COVID-19. Moreover, 23 percent of young adults surveyed were still working but were concerned about being laid off due to the pandemic.

“I’m personally experiencing student housing insecurity. I’m in a position where I’m almost unable to graduate [due to financial resources]. No job, no car, limited access to food”.

– Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 11-7: EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF YOUTH DURING COVID-19 IN CHICAGO, LOS ANGELES, AND SAN FRANCISCO, 2020



Source: KCET and USC Price Center for Social Innovation, “Young Adults and the Economic Impact of COVID-19,” <https://www.kcet.org/neighborhood-data-for-social-change/young-adults-and-the-economic-impact-of-covid-19>

In regards to the concurrent racial unrest tied to police violence, the poll by Latino Decisions revealed that statewide, 49 percent of Black young adults have had a negative encounter with the police, as compared to 29 percent of Latino, and 20 percent Asian American and Pacific Islander youth. The pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of young people, especially those most impacted (Fegert et al. 2020; Lund 2020). As suggested by prior research on police violence and mental health, the escalation and visibility of racial violence has likely exacerbated racial trauma in Black communities (Smith Lee and Robinson 2019).

“I used to live at the university because my home situation is actually very toxic for me and I had to get away for my own mental health. I didn’t want to go back to that. So having to go back to the place that I had run away from in a sense has really impacted my mental health.”

– Focus Group Participant

In focus groups conducted with youth 18-24 years of age, many shared that they were forced to move back home due to loss of secure housing, loss of internships, or unemployment, taking a toll on their mental health, as many returned to toxic housing situations (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). These mental health challenges plaguing

youth are exacerbated by the social distancing orders imposed during the pandemic that have created sentiments of disappointment and isolation (Kohli 2020). For youth identifying as LGBTQ in particular, physical distancing means that there is a loss of social interactions that protect many from suicidality (Green, Price_Feeney, and Dorison 2020). In addition, focus group participants shared that the pandemic has halted their progress toward a better life (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). For many, attending college and entering the workforce was the start to a path toward a better life, and these aspirations represented the hopes and dreams of their family members to succeed (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). As students many of these youth are also experiencing increasing anxiety over an uncertain future, as many have lost jobs and internships and as many worry about the ability to secure a job in the future and obtain unemployment benefits (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020).

Taking this into account as the County moves forward in its recovery from the pandemic and pre-existing racial and economic inequality, the County’s government and civic institutions must—and will—give young people, especially those most negatively impacted, opportunities to participate in determining the region’s future. The choices we make as we recover from the pandemic will affect their entire lives and the future of the County.

A Future Built for and by Youth

Los Angeles County must celebrate and support youth leadership and empowerment.

The evidence highlighted here clearly indicates that prior to COVID-19 the structures and institutions in place were not conducive to supporting the wellbeing and leadership of youth. Taking this moment as an opportunity to re-align our priorities as a County, moving forward we must ensure that we celebrate and support youth leadership and empowerment. Achieving the bold vision of equality in Los Angeles County will demand that we recruit people of color and their communities in seeking and implementing solutions. Evidence demonstrates that Los Angeles' diverse youth can be mobilized to influence policy and program decisions.

To participate most effectively, young people will need: a critical civic knowledge of the region's problems, the skills and mechanisms to exercise their voice, and developmental supports to collectively lead and thrive. Youth organizing groups bring experience to inspiring and supporting the efforts of low-income, racially diverse, immigrant, refugee, and LGBTQ youth. These groups stand ready to guide the response in this vision. Drawing on youth-organizing experience with workshops and other educational programs, various sectors (including government agencies, schools, media, social media, entertainment industry, non-governmental community organizations, philanthropy) will collaborate to help youth understand the root causes of social and economic challenges. With this knowledge, young people will be able to see how these challenges impact different groups of peers, among them African Americans, immigrants and refugees, those in the foster system, and those who identify as queer or trans.

An important component, and one that must not be overlooked, are the proper developmental supports that enable young people to exercise their leadership and thrive, including access to collective healing strategies, culturally appropriate professional mental health and health services, a quality and affordable education, career training opportunities, and stable and affordable housing. Again, some youth organizing

groups in the region have a record of success in this area and offer viable models. Well-equipped, youth will envision for themselves creative policy solutions that attend to the intersectional needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized among them.

"Children cannot learn if they're not housed and fed and feel emotionally safe in their community. I mean, it's hard to separate these things out. And that's why I think it's so critical that we're working together to ensure that we're addressing the high rates of homelessness that are disproportionately impacting our families of color, that we're looking at immigration issues that are impeding our students' ability to learn."

– Debra Duardo, Committee for Greater LA

As a next step, young people (regardless of immigration status) will take action, not only through the ballot box, but through grassroots organizing and participation in decision-making bodies. Collaborative campaigns by governmental and nonpartisan civic organizations—including youth organizing groups—will ensure that all eligible young residents age 16 and over register and vote in local elections. Through organizing efforts, young people will join—or even take the lead—in community and relationship building among diverse residents, collectively, determining what is best for their communities. County, city, and school district agencies will enlist youth for commissions where they can speak out on the policies and initiatives that affect their lives.

As part of the development of these recommendations, the Committee for Greater LA sought to engage both youth and youth advocates as well as to lift up the work youth are already doing to organize for change. What follows are a set of recommendations that are informed by community and youth engagement process of the Bold Vision initiative as well as the cross-pollination of ideas with the partners in the Committee for Greater LA and the youth who shared their stories.

As youth transition into adulthood, our diverse young

people bring an enthusiasm and openness to their efforts that may have been dampened among their elders by long experience with an inequitable society. Youth can inspire their families and their communities to join in the transformative effort of the bright Los Angeles County we envision. **Our vision to celebrate and support youth leadership and empowerment requires a commitment to.**

Boost Youth Programs and services

Shift funding from punitive juvenile systems to community-based supportive services. Centering racial equity and ensuring the County is supporting the health and wellbeing of youth signifies that we take a bold and clear stand to shift away from the systems that have criminalized our youth and their development to focus on prevention work that is critical in ensuring better outcomes for youth. As illustrated throughout this report, Black youth are disproportionately impacted by the punitive approaches in our current systems, and ensuring we re-assess our approaches to support those that are the most marginalized is critical. It is imperative to understand that re-aligning the juvenile system does not equate to shifting budgets to similar departments like probation departments. Shifting to community-based justice means we shift our resources to community-based organizations working with youth to ensure their needs are met and to ensure they can access opportunities to thrive. A good example and one we can build upon as we move forward in our recovery, was the \$25 million that LAUSD redirected from the school police budget to primary schools with the highest proportion of Black students. Moving dollars from criminalization to health, wellness, and education are critical in supporting youth development. We have witnessed the failures of our current criminal justice system and the fact that it has not led to positive outcomes, so our focus should shift to supporting successful programs that cater to youth. Through focus groups, youth themselves expressed their eagerness for criminal justice reform as many have an underlying fears that negative interactions with police can result in prison time or death (MOLA Market

Research & Consulting, LLC 2020).

Fund youth centers, youth programming, and youth-serving organizations. Youth centers are important and safe spaces for youth to learn, grow, heal, and develop. As the County reallocates funds away from enforcement, they should invest in these holistic spaces to go deeper in prevention, rather than focusing on criminalizing youth. In addition, educating youth on job/career opportunities including, trade, and offering robust after school programs can help break the school to prison pipeline (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). The County should stabilize funding for these youth-serving organizations and consider procuring these organizations to do the work on behalf of the County.

Develop economic opportunities for youth. As illustrated earlier in the section, opportunity youth, comprise 14 percent of young people ages 14-26 in Los Angeles City alone, a substantial share that identify as Black or Latino (Painter et al. 2017). The County has an opportunity to engage this population and create the necessary avenues to allow youth to thrive. Literature shows that young people were adversely impacted by the 2008 recession, experiencing the most drop in employment, as compared to older workers, whose employment-to-population ratio remained close to stagnant, following the 2008 recession (Greenstone and Looney 2010). Past research also shows that workers unemployed during a recession tend to earn lower wages for years to come due to forgone work experience and missed opportunities to develop their skills (Steinberg 2013). Moving forward in our economic recovery, we must think strategically about the ways in which we can center young people in city, county, and state economic development strategies. This is where expanding technical skill training programs can help support young people's need to work while also continuing to support their skill training. Through partnerships of local government and community organizations, technical skill training programs can act as bridges for youth who need to continue working. The Smidt Foundation's program Harbor Freight Tools for School found that individuals who participated in technical education are a vital source of workers

(Standing Intergovernmental Panel and Performance Infrastructure Review Committee Forthcoming).

Build Youth organizing capacity and skills

Incorporate elements of youth organizing to school curriculums and other youth serving programs.

Youth organizing groups educate their members about the importance of voting and the voting process, as well as how to make informed decisions as they go to the polls. To varying degrees, groups offer their members a critical civics education that enables them to understand the historical, economic, and political causes of issues affecting their communities. In this area, they have filled a gap in the social science curricula of many public high schools. Also, to varying extents, youth organizing groups instill ethnic pride and give members an intersectional understanding of how experiences vary among peers in their diverse communalities, something that is too often missing from the public school or community college agenda. Now, the best of this civics education curriculum, with an added level of intellectual rigor, can be incorporated into new requirements for social science and ethnic studies curricula in the high schools and community colleges, starting in the institutions with the highest concentrations of marginalized and vulnerable students. Including community organizing in school curriculums is important to continue the movements that are led primarily by youth.

Invest in youth data collection. Data is critical in assessing the needs of youth and determining approaches to better support them. Partnerships with researchers and individuals in higher education are key, as collaborative efforts can ensure alignment across the County. And, data systems should be integrated and shared across County departments, so that social workers and others working with youth and their families, can have a more holistic understanding of the person. This should extend to city departments, and across different cities as well, so that health departments in Los Angeles and Long Beach, for example are sharing information on youth that may be moving around.

Invest in youth organizing. City and County funds can be set aside to expand existing organizing groups and create new ones. The City, County, as well as philanthropy can invest in initiatives like Bold Vision 2028 supported by a coalition of funders. This decade long, multi-funder initiative aims to fundamentally improve the lives of a generation of children and youth of color throughout Los Angeles. The initiative is grounded in a set of principles that include: community driven, youth centered, race focused, and driven works to significantly expand economic vitality and shared

prosperity for Los Angeles County residents, focusing on collaborating across sectors to improve the systems that influence the life outcomes for marginalized youth of color (Blue Shield of California Foundation 2019). With their track record of engaging young people from marginalized and vulnerable communities in systems change efforts, youth organizing groups can train upcoming cohorts of adolescents and young adults to participate in the electoral process and to propose inclusive policy changes that address the needs of their communities. As mentioned earlier in this section, youth organizing groups incorporate healing and self-care strategies that yield important benefits to mental health and wellbeing, contributing to both individual and community-wide benefits. Additionally, new organizing groups can reach young people in high-poverty neighborhoods and communities that are still underserved. Investments in youth organizing must allow for training and capacity building, as well as coordination of new organizations and staff. This will encourage continuing expansion in the number of young people who receive the training and supports to lead their communities.

Democratize government to value youth voice

Incorporate youth councils in every form of government. Mandating to include the voices of youth at the local and state level around important processes such as the budget, can make a difference in the outcomes. Youth want to engage with their communities and have a clear understanding of their power. Every form of government, and as appropriate, philanthropy as well as non-profit organizations, should have a youth council with decision-making power as youth are very aware of the issues and how they should be addressed. For example, right now, we are trying to shift funds away from school police. Listening to young people, helping them become leaders within their community, and supporting their brilliance can help close some of the institutional gaps we are observing.

Lower the voting age to 16. The survey conducted by Latino Decisions on behalf of Power California revealed that 69 percent of Los Angeles County's youth believe in lowering the voting age to 16. Lowering the voting age will allow more youth to be involved in advocacy and decision-making. Not to mention, lowering the voting age also helps immigrant families who are ineligible to vote, to have a voice and be civically engaged (Kohli 2019:16). Youth age 16 and 17 are similar to their older 18-19-year-old peers in citizenship competencies (as measured by tolerance of others, civic knowledge, political interest, political efficacy). Thus, they display the maturity to make political decisions (Hart and

Robert 2010). There is precedent across the U.S. for non-citizen voting in local elections (Hayduk and Coll 2018). In Los Angeles County, noncitizen adolescents are often citizens-in-waiting and have an investment in the long-term direction of their communities. Since voting at an early age can create life-long habits, enabling 16-17-year-olds in this way places individuals on a trajectory of active participation in the democratic processes that shape the direction of their communities (Coppock and Green 2015). Further, the active and more equitable participation of Los Angeles County's diverse young population is likely to promote greater attention to their interests and needs among elected leaders. Thanks in part to efforts by youth organizing groups, Los Angeles County has a youth commission comprised of youth with lived experience in foster care, juvenile justice, homelessness, and mental health programs. Established this year, it stands alone among more than

160 County commissions in intentionally recruiting youth members. The County, as well as included cities and school districts, can learn from this youth commission to further incorporate the perspectives of youth from marginalized and vulnerable communities in policy processes.

Youth have been left out of important conversations and have not been given the space to voice their concerns that could significantly change the trajectory of their experiences. Accountability to our County's youth is a key component in ensuring that approaches and solutions serve our youth and lead to positive outcomes. Recognizing that the issues plaguing our youth are intersectional, it is important that the County moves forward in alignment. After all, this structural work can be more powerful and far-reaching if it is done together.

Youth voice in all policies a case study- Bold Vision

Youth are often accustomed to being excluded from major conversations that affect them whether it is education, criminalization, the environment or the housing crisis. Bold Vision works to give the mic to youth to create their own policy agenda. What follows are some of the areas and policies prioritized by youth:

- (Housing Built Environment) **End Displacement and create housing for all.** Given the inflated pricing of rents and the rapidly changing nature of Los Angeles neighborhoods it is no surprise that youth wanted to tackle the issue of housing. A youth minded approach to housing reform would keep tenants in place through implementation of vacancy or rent control as well as measures to ensure "just cause eviction." In addition, recognizing major gaps in the housing stock, youth wanted to include opportunities to increase gap financing for affordable projects and the funding of affordable housing.
- (Systems Impacted Youth) **Stop the Criminalization of youth behaviors.** Another huge issue that youth highlighted was the increasing

impunity with which systems treat common youth behaviors. These types of policing ensure a strong school to prison pipeline and continue to fuel the prison industrial complex. A plan to help youth must be a plan that eliminates criminalization of curfew violations, runaway behavior, and a reconsideration or elimination of low level offences and misdemeanor infractions.

- (Education) **Prioritize building and retaining a local, qualified, and diverse educator pipeline.** This body of recommendations makes the case for policies like prioritizing placement of the highest quality educators in highest need schools.
- (Food Insecurity) **Increase access to fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant food options.** Along with general health concerns, food insecurity was among one of the top issues raised by youth. To create greater access to healthy, fresh foods urban agriculture zones could be incentivized as well as corner store conversions. In addition, institutions could evaluate and change their food purchasing policies, especially in large institutions like government buildings, hospitals, school districts, and universities.

“And so all of that is connected to poverty, education, changing the narrative of, to me, the systems that are broken. In that scorecard that should be reported out from K-5th, middle and high school of how if we are addressing these shortfalls, not from a punitive standpoint, of looking at bringing in social workers as coaches for family members. If there are schools with a high level of Black populations because again, 25 percent of the absenteeism is Black youth, then how can we align some of those dollars to reinvest from police officers to maybe coaches to support families. Having them understand the importance early on, that if a student misses more than five days of school during a school year, than they are already going to be behind from an academic standpoint. Our students need support.”

- Charisse Bremond Weaver, Committee for Greater LA

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POLICY SECTION 12

Immigrants

Story: Compounding Stressors for Immigrant Families

COVID-19 is only one of multiple stressors that undocumented Angelenos face. Victoria Galindo Lopez was featured in the L.A. times as a critical essential worker. Employed as a hotel cleaner for a hotel that participates in Los Angeles' Project Roomkey, a program that houses homeless individuals in Los Angeles, she faces not only the threat of catching COVID-19 but of bringing it home to her family. During this time, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has issued a deportation date for her. Like most undocumented Angelenos, she has been in the country long-term, raised a family, and developed deep ties to the community. None of which protected her from a deportation. All of which stands to be further disrupted and distressed in the middle of a pandemic outbreak. While her lawyer attempts to fight this deportation order, her family continues to work in essential services.

Source: "She's an essential worker, helping the homeless. But ICE plans to deport her next week." <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-04/la-me-coronavirus-essential-worker-to-be-deported>.

Compounding Forms of Pre-existing Stress for a Diverse Sector of Immigrants

A pre-existing threat to immigrant communities' well-being has been the existence of a series of harsh immigration policies and enforcement. Since the onset of the Trump administration, there have been well over 400 executive actions on immigration policy, ranging from refugee resettlement and the asylum system, immigration courts, border enforcement, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and more (Pierce and Bolter 2020). With the threat of COVID-19, the administration quickly pushed forward the remaining anti-immigrant policy items, including travel bans, suspension of most family and employer-based visas like H-1B, and an end to asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border (Pierce and Bolter 2020). In the early months of the pandemic, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced their shift away from conducting random enforcement operations, yet the agency has been unresponsive in reducing the numbers of those in detention centers: as of June 2020, the detained population stood at 23,000 people (Pierce and Bolter 2020).

This pandemic only further revealed the failures of the current immigration system, the failure of an anti-immigrant administration, and the failure of institutions rooted in white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Time and time again, we have witnessed how these agencies have created irreparable damage for immigrant families, and this year, as we are witnessing our nation rise up against systems of oppression that perpetuate many injustices, like police brutality, the failure and oppressive nature of these systems could not be any clearer. Earlier this July, in light of protests against police brutality, we all turned our heads to witness Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents snatching protestors and tossing them in vans for hours at a time (Levinson and Wilson 2020). Now that the whole nation is paying attention, we are at a time where we can re-imagine and eradicate the oppressive systems that continue to impact our communities. The same structures and systems that are at play in detaining immigrants, and separating families at the border, are the same ones that are

terrorizing Black and Brown communities within our cities.

Throughout Los Angeles County and beyond, immigrants form an essential fabric of society, and in this moment they have played a critical role in helping the rest of us weather through this pandemic. Home to over 10 million residents, Angeleno immigrants compose one third of the County's population (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). Many are essential workers, helping communities heal and respond to the effects of COVID-19, caring for our County's elderly, growing our food, and ensuring that Angelenos have access to crucial services. Yet the way our federal immigration system, as well as our economic system rewards and treats immigrants, reveals a crisis of priorities and inherent discrimination common throughout Los Angeles County.

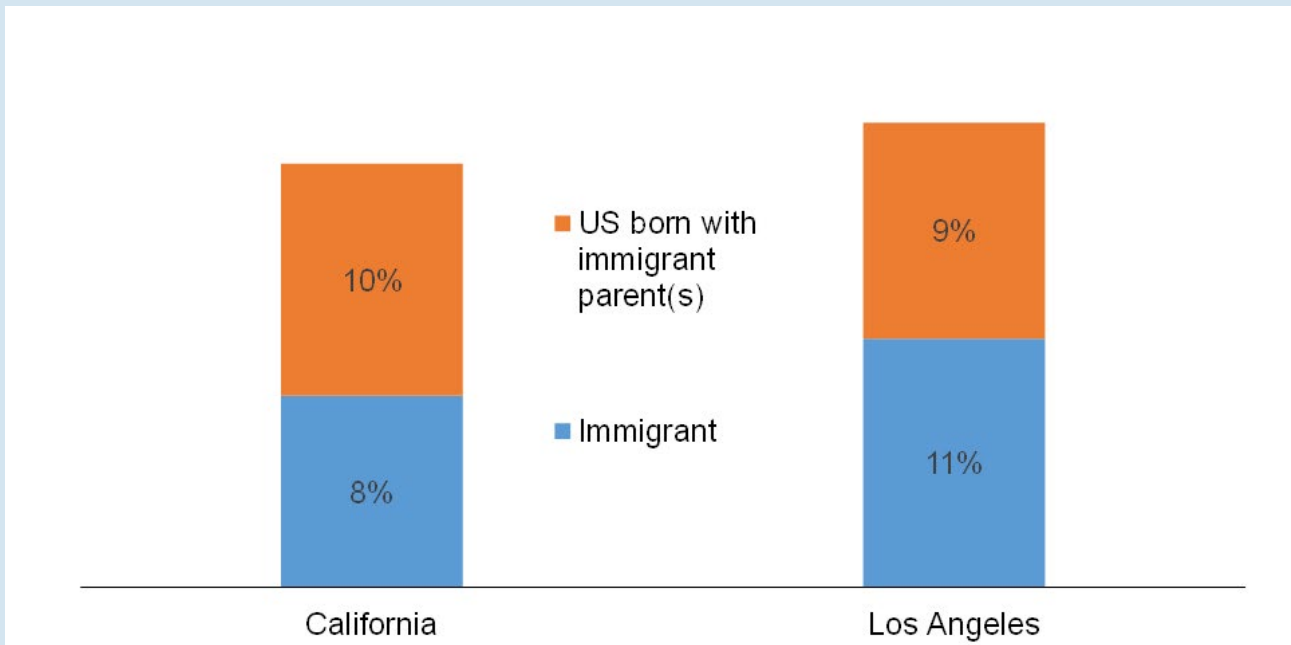
Throughout the County, 56 percent of Angeleno immigrants identify as Latino, followed by nearly 30 percent who identify as AAPI, and 14 percent who identify as white (Council on Immigrant Integration and USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2020). It is imperative to underscore that certain groups of immigrants such as Black immigrants and

indigenous migrants, tend to be underrepresented in data, contributing to the invisibilization of these communities. Across Los Angeles County, Black immigrants do not comprise a large portion of the immigrant population, but they do compose a sizable percentage of Black residents. As shown in Figure 12-1, about one in five Black Angelenos are either immigrants themselves or the U.S.-born children of immigrants.

“Coronavirus has attacked all the families of the world, but as they say, different boats in the same storm. I am listening to all that you all are saying and others who are losing everything, including losing their lives, and it is sad. But, I feel like it has really hit the Latinos harder, because, for example, Latinos don’t have the different governmental programs of the country, due to documentation and all of that, and I don’t think it is due to lack of sensitivity, but rather due to lack of access.”

-Focus Group Participant

FIGURE 12-1: SHARE OF BLACK RESIDENTS WHO ARE EITHER IMMIGRANTS OR SECOND-GENERATION U.S.-BORN CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS, CALIFORNIA AND LOS ANGELES, 2018



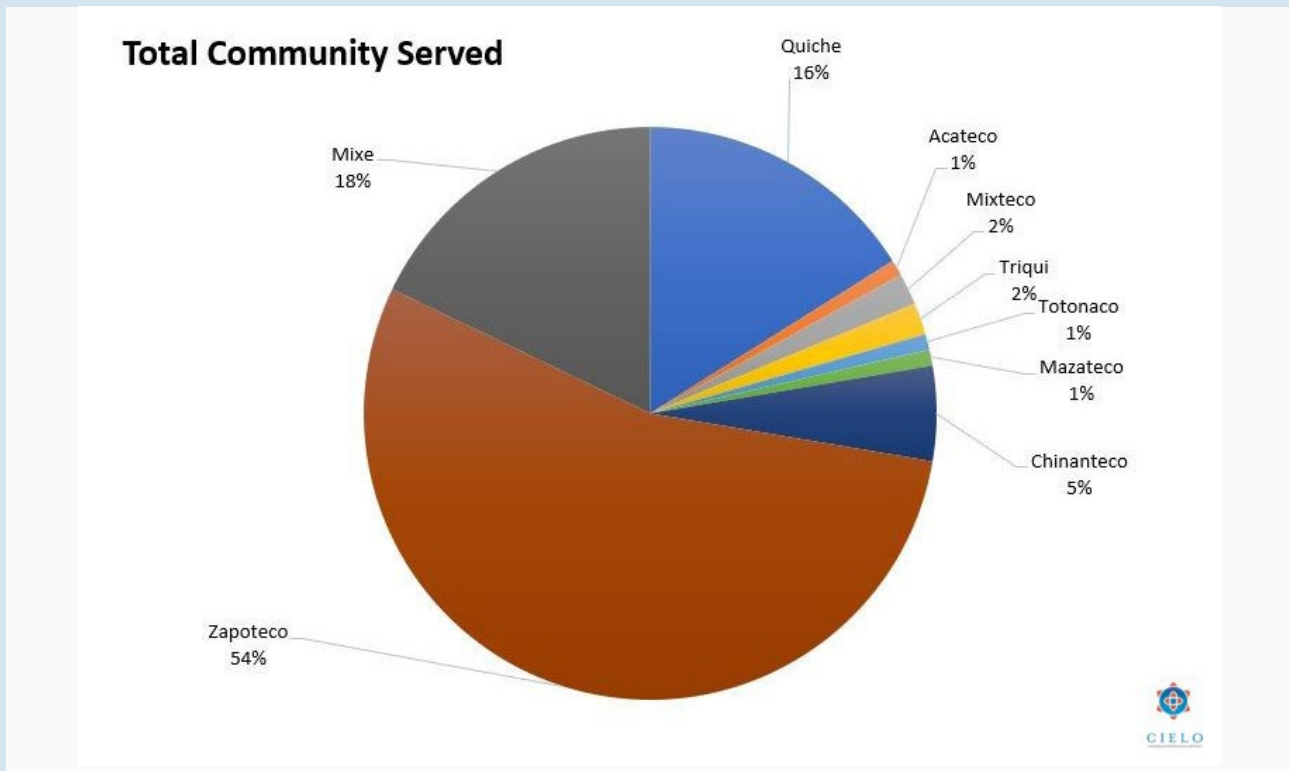
Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of data from the 2014 through 2018 March Supplement of the Current Population Survey from IPUMS USA. Note: Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average. For this calculation, «Black» refers to all people identifying as Black alone or in combination with another race, including those who identify as Hispanic Black.

Indigenous migrants are another underrepresented population that are not only undercounted but also underrepresented, as they tend to be lumped into the Latino racial group. However, efforts by Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo (CIELO), an indigenous-led organization, have recently collected a data sample of indigenous communities living throughout Los Angeles. Figure 12-2 illustrates these demographics and the diversity of indigenous communities, originating from places like Mexico and Guatemala (Martinez 2020). Across Los Angeles, 54 percent of indigenous communities identify as Zapoteco, 18 percent identify as Mixed, 16 percent identify as Quiche, and 5 percent identify as Chinanteco. As we think about racial equity and centering those most marginalized, we must think about how to ensure these communities are represented.

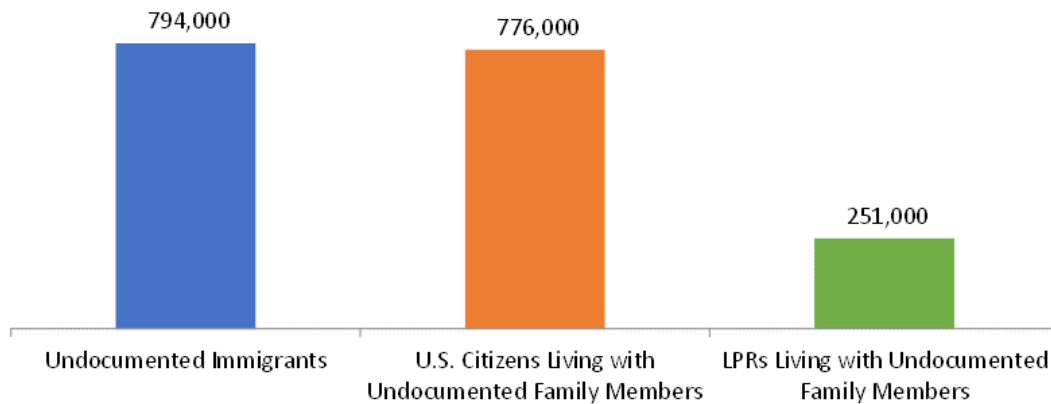
In addition to being racially diverse, Angelenos also hold varying immigration statuses, impacting family dynamics. For example, 17 percent of Angelenos are naturalized citizens, 10 percent are legal permanent

residents (LPRs) and 8 percent are undocumented (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). Around 70 percent of undocumented and LPR Angelenos have been in the United States for longer than ten years, forming an essential fabric of Los Angeles County, establishing families, becoming our neighbors and friends, and sending their children to Los Angeles schools. About 18 percent of Angelenos are either undocumented themselves or live with a family member who is. Despite how essential immigrants are in carrying us through this pandemic, we must remember that this public health crisis did not shield our immigrant communities from the susceptibility of deportation. In Los Angeles County alone, approximately 490,000 children, nearly 90 percent of whom are U.S. citizens, live with at least one undocumented parent, meaning these children face an imminent threat of family separation due to deportation (Council on Immigrant Integration and USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2020).

FIGURE 12-2: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, LOS ANGELES, 2020



Source: CIELO, "Indigenous Grocery Fund," April 28, 2020, <https://mycielo.org/2020/04/28/indigenous-grocery-fund/>.

FIGURE 12-3: IMMIGRATION STATUS AND FAMILY RIPPLE EFFECTS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

For DACA recipients, the legal battle with the Trump administration over the termination of the DACA program was in the courts, in the midst of this pandemic. Had the Supreme Court ruled to terminate the program, DACA recipients would have no longer been eligible to work and would have faced a higher risk of deportation. The state of California alone would have stood to lose nearly 190,000 DACA recipients.¹ Although the Supreme Court ruled otherwise,² the state would have faced significant losses, as nearly 57,000 DACA recipients are working in occupations at the forefront of the pandemic response (Svajlenka 2020). Even more importantly, the termination of DACA would have created ripple effects for families, meaning they play a significant and economic role in their families, as many DACA recipients are often the only individuals in their families with work permits (Jaimes Pérez 2015). Although the Trump administration lost that battle, the anxiety and fear associated with the impending decision further created anxiety and fear, impacting the mental health of this young population already dealing with the impacts of the pandemic (Galvan 2020).

Another group facing a similar situation are those

who have been granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). Many of these individuals with TPS or DED have been in the United States for a long time, and are also deeply rooted in our social and economic fabric, as some of the requirements for these statuses necessitate individuals to have been present in the U.S. as early as the 1990s. These statuses, also temporary in nature as it is only granted for 6, 12, or 18 months at a time, were established to protect individuals from the impacts of ongoing armed conflict, natural disasters, and other extenuating circumstances in their home countries (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2019). However, since 2016 there have been numerous attacks on behalf of the Trump administration to terminate the program and at the moment, these decisions are impending in the courts (Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. 2020). Across California, there are nearly 28,000 TPS recipients working in occupations at the forefront of the pandemic response (Svajlenka and Jawetz 2020). Ultimately, temporary statuses while offering some form of safety continue to place primarily immigrants and their families, in a precarious position, creating ripple effects for those who depend on immigrants.

1 USC Equity Research Institute analysis of the 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data reflect a 2014 through 2018 average. Overall population numbers may be slightly higher than in usually reported statistics because of adjusted weights used to account for undercount of undocumented Californians.

2 On June 18, 2020 the Supreme Court ruled that the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to end the DACA program were not valid, restoring the DACA program. Since then, the Trump administration has responded, releasing a memo to significantly limit the availability of the program to first-time applicants. See, <https://www.nilc.org/issues/daca/>.

Particularly difficult to reckon with during a health crisis is the fact that immigrants are structurally excluded from obtaining healthcare insurance. Before this crisis, the Migration Policy Institute predicted that at a national level around 7.7 million immigrants did not have public or private health insurance (Capps and Gelatt 2020:19). Federally funded healthcare programs like Medi-Cal continue to exclude undocumented immigrants (California Immigrant Policy Center 2020). In California, coalitions like Health4All have actively advocated for government to provide insurance for undocumented immigrants. This would result in significant wins like Medi-Cal for low-income children regardless of status and the expansion of Medi-Cal to include young adults regardless of status (California Immigrant Policy Center 2020). While seniors are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, California has yet to extend access to healthcare to older adults and seniors regardless of status.

Finally, in light of the recent passage of a new public charge definition, immigrant families have avoided non-cash government aid due to fear of being deemed a public charge that can impede undocumented immigrants from obtaining legal status. While USCIS did announce in March that testing, treatment, and preventative care will not be considered in the public charge test, “chilling effects” have effectively occurred since the government changed the definition of public charge, creating fear and preventing individuals from interacting with any form of government agency (Bernstein, Karpman, et al. 2020). In the time of COVID-19, it is clear that immigrants remain a critical part of Los Angeles County yet they are barred from and even discouraged from accessing crucial services and aid in the midst of a public health crisis. The next section outlines COVID-created challenges and impacts for our immigrant communities.

COVID-19 Exacerbating Inequalities and Fueling Discrimination

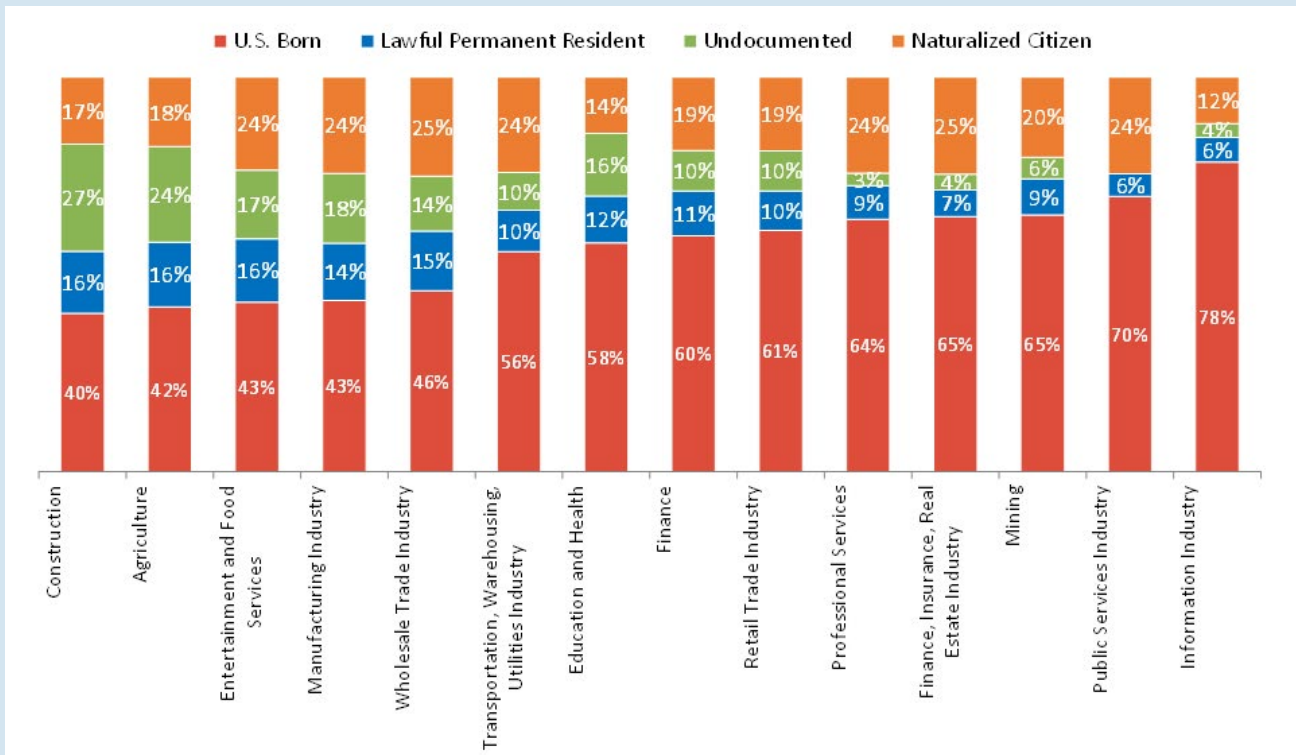
COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on immigrant communities. Undocumented Latino immigrants and indigenous migrants are disproportionately impacted by disasters, due to racial discrimination, financial hardship, language barriers, and fear of deportation (Méndez, Flores-Haro, and Zucker 2020). It is also often the case that emergency response efforts overlook the needs of undocumented immigrants and indigenous migrants, relying on community-based organizations to provide critical services like linguistically appropriate information in indigenous tongues and Spanish and private disaster relief funds for those ineligible for federal programs (Méndez et al. 2020).

Immigrants, and particularly immigrant women, are also concentrated in hard-hit service industries such as retail trade, leisure, and hospitality (Anderson 2020; Capps, Batalova, and Gelatt 2020). These workers face the loss of work without the usual unemployment benefits that are offered to unemployed workers. At the same time, the essential workforce depends significantly on immigrants;

approximately half of the essential workforce is made up of immigrants (Thomason and Bernhardt 2020), including half of the healthcare essential workforce (Batalova 2020). And as the meatpacking plant outbreak in Vernon laid clear, the costs of being an essential worker are high risk of infection and the consequences of catching COVID-19 are equally, if not more, severe (Ryan 2020).

Angeleno immigrants make up around 46 percent of all workers in Los Angeles (Council on Immigrant Integration and USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2020). As illustrated in Figure 12-4, immigrant workers are more than 20 percent of workers in all sectors but concentrated in some key areas like construction, agriculture, entertainment and food service, and manufacturing. At the state level, in many industries, including construction, agriculture, other services (except public administration), manufacturing, and wholesale trade, immigrants account for over half of the essential workforce (Thomason and Bernhardt 2020).

FIGURE 12-4: WORKERS BY INDUSTRY/OCCUPATION AND IMMIGRATION STATUS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

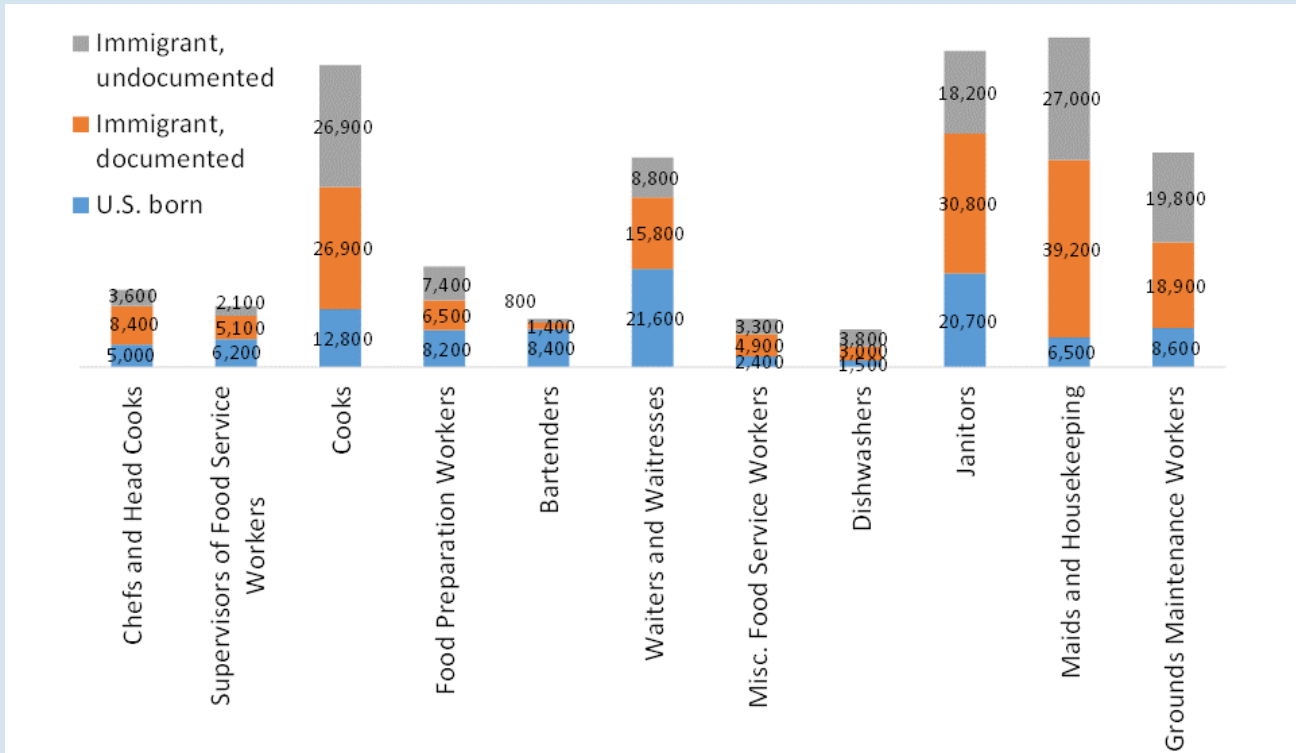
In addition to this, immigrant workers compose a large number of Angelenos employed in key food and janitorial areas. For example, Figure 12-5 shows that a large share of immigrants work as cooks, waiters and waitresses, janitors, maids and housekeeping, and grounds maintenance workers. Many of these jobs are essential, meaning they are forced to continue to work, risking exposing themselves and their families to COVID-19. For others working in hard-hit industries like food service, the closure of restaurants and bars means no income, and for undocumented workers there are no safety net options, as they are excluded from unemployment benefits.

“We have to work which is why we get sick. I’ve never asked the government for help but now I have to ask for help for my daughter’s college.”

–Latino Focus Group Participant

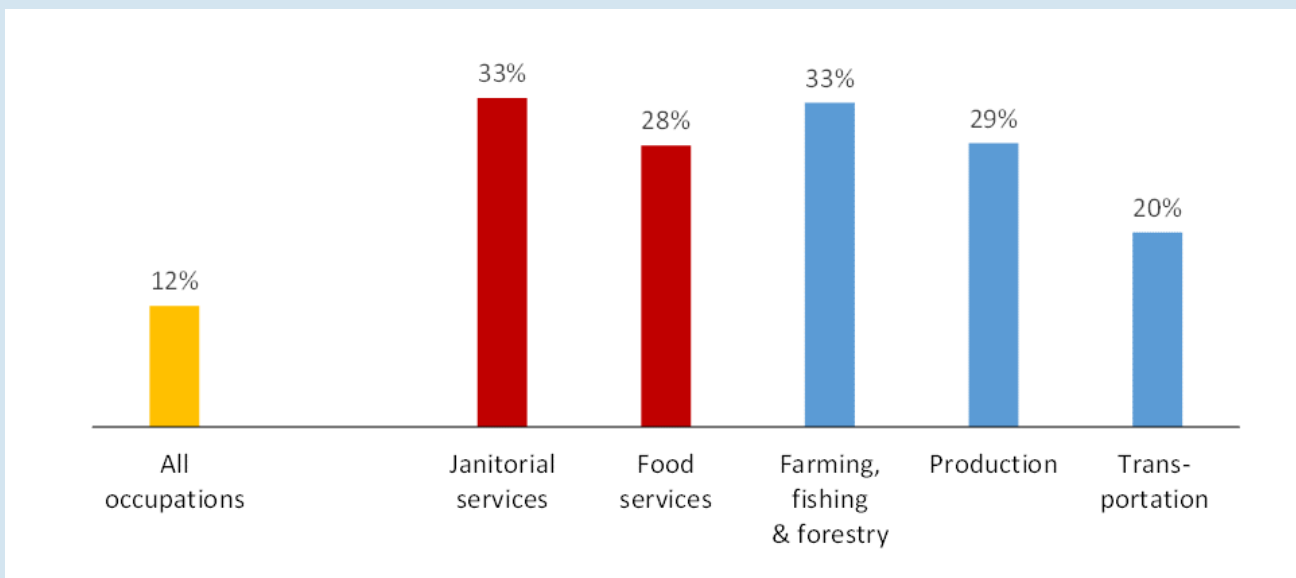
Undocumented workers comprise 12 percent of the workforce in Los Angeles County, 16 percent of the workforce in Los Angeles City, and nearly one third of the workforce in South LA (USC Equity Research Institute 2020a). To further emphasize the impacts for undocumented workers, Figure 12-6, shows that undocumented workers comprise about one third of the workers in janitorial services, food services, farming, fishing and forestry, and production. Recent research has also revealed that undocumented workers have experienced the highest rates of unemployment across California and Los Angeles County (Hinojosa Ojeda et al. 2020:19). By April of 2020, over 25 percent of undocumented workers in Los Angeles County were unemployed (Hinojosa Ojeda et al. 2020:19). As the County started to re-open in May and June, there was a slight recovery as some workers returned to work; however, as businesses closed again due to the rise in cases, it is projected that unemployment for undocumented workers increased in July and August (Hinojosa Ojeda et al. 2020).

FIGURE 12-5: WORKERS BY IMMIGRATION STATUS, SELECTED FOOD AND JANITORIAL SERVICES OCCUPATIONS IN L.A. COUNTY, 2017



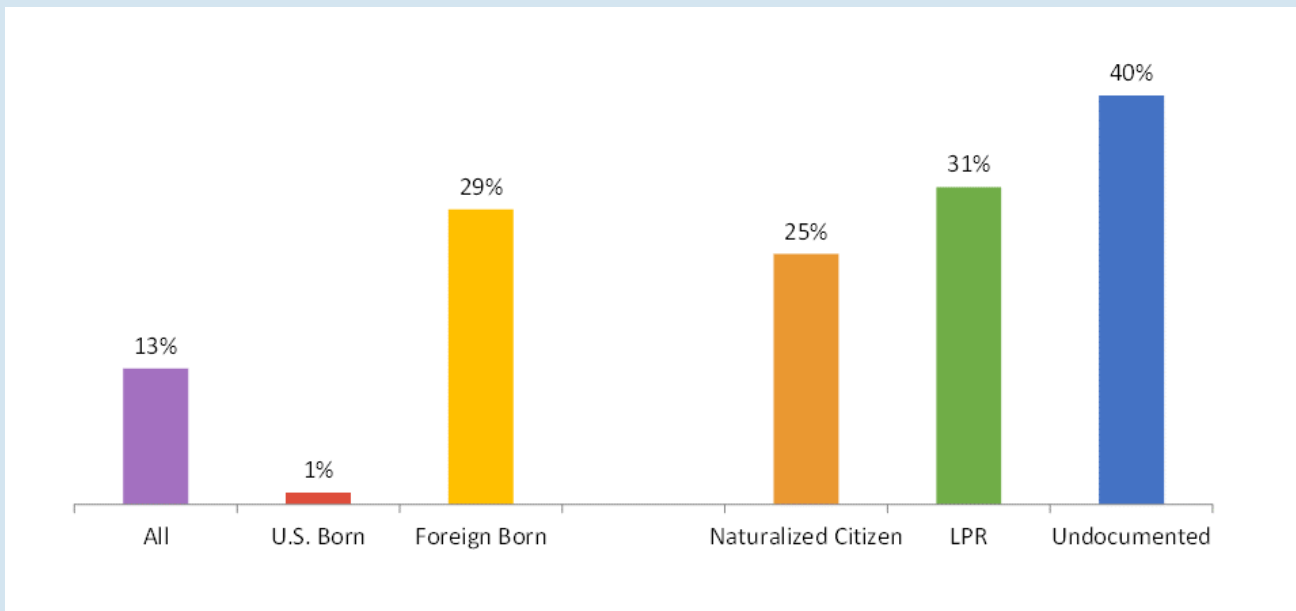
Source: USC ERI analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

FIGURE 12-6: PERCENT OF EMPLOYED WORKERS (AGE 25-64) WHO LACK LEGAL STATUS, SELECTED OCCUPATIONS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2017



Source: USC ERI analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

FIGURE 12-7: PERCENT LINGUISTICALLY ISOLATED HOUSEHOLDS BY STATUS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Data represent a 2014 through 2018 average.

Prior to COVID-19, while immigrants had a generally high employment rate, they were also experiencing poverty, a condition that was only exacerbated by the pandemic. About one in five foreign-born workers and more than one in three undocumented workers experienced working poverty, meaning that even while working full-time they had a family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (Council on Immigrant Integration and USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2020). For immigrants, undergoing this pandemic while experiencing poverty or the loss of an income, necessities like paying for rent and buying groceries may not be feasible. Despite these disproportionate effects, undocumented immigrants are excluded from federal relief.

In addition to employment and health challenges, transitioning to remote learning during this pandemic has been difficult for English Language learners and immigrant students who face technological barriers (Lazarín 2020). Across Los Angeles County, one in three immigrant households is linguistically isolated, meaning no member age 14 or older speaks English at least "very well." As shown in Figure 12-7, when disaggregating by

status, there are disproportionate differences in the households that are linguistically isolated: forty percent of undocumented households are linguistically isolated, followed by thirty percent of LPR households, and a quarter of naturalized citizen households. In the focus groups that were conducted, immigrant Spanish speakers shared that they have less access to information and education related to the virus and a lack of experience and access to technology only furthers the problem (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). Challenges for these households lie ahead as children continue their education remotely.

In March of 2020, the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a congressional stimulus package, excluded undocumented individuals and mixed-status families from receiving a stimulus check aimed to provide economic relief (National Immigration Law Center 2020). For mixed-status households filing taxes jointly, this means that even if one parent files taxes with a Social Security Number (SSN) and if the other parent files taxes with an Independent Tax Identification Number (ITIN)¹, this family is automatically barred from obtaining this aid (National Immigration Law

1 An ITIN number was created for immigrants who do not have or do not qualify for a SSN to still pay taxes. See, <https://www.law360.com/tax-authority/articles/1257333/immigrants-cut-out-of-senate-s-covid-19-stimulus-package>.

TABLE 12-1: INDIVIDUAL, HOUSEHOLD, AND FAMILY STATISTICS FOR CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, AND LOS ANGELES CITY, 2018

Individual, Household, and Family Statistics for California, Los Angeles County, & Los Angeles City, 2018	Numbers by Geography			Share in Geography	
	California	LA County	LA City	LA County	LA City
Number of Residents	39,521,000	10,221,000	4,019,000	26%	10%
Number of Undocumented Californians	2,381,000	794,000	407,000	33%	17%
Of which, Number of DACA Recipients	185,000	59,000	27,000	32%	15%
Number of Households	12,936,000	3,299,000	1,364,000	26%	11%
Households with at least one undocumented adult	1,201,000	399,000	200,000	33%	17%
Number of Families	14,857,000	3,803,000	1,621,000	26%	11%
Families with at least one undocumented adult	1,441,000	480,000	246,000	33%	17%
How many minor children by geography?	9,096,000	2,252,000	838,000	25%	9%
How many minor children with at least one parent who is undocumented?	1,592,000	489,000	238,000	31%	15%
How many married adult couples?	7,007,000	1,656,000	590,000	24%	8%
How many married adult couples are mixed status, where one spouse is undocumented and the other spouse is a LPR or US citizen?	470,000	135,000	59,000	29%	13%
How many children with mixed status parents (one parent undocumented, the other not)?	707,000	199,000	87,000	28%	12%

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Data represent a 2014-2018 average. Overall population numbers may be slightly higher than in usually reported statistics because of adjusted weights used to account for undercount of undocumented Californians.

Center 2020). As shown in Table 12-1, this means that across California over 2 million undocumented individuals are impacted and over 1.2 million households with at least one undocumented adult will be impacted. In focus groups that were conducted, undocumented immigrants were the group most hesitant to seek aid or support and without unemployment benefits or stimulus checks, they are forced to rely on support from family, friends, church, or community (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020).

“Thank God that we have our health, but work has been very slow. It’s kind of like when the recession came, you could go and find a job, but now, you can’t even get close to someone because in the first place there isn’t any work, and second, you’re probably going to get fired.”

– Focus Group Participant

In response to the explicit discrimination on behalf of the federal government, California passed the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Disaster Relief Assistance, a fund to support undocumented individuals excluded

from the CARES Act (Department of Social Services 2020). However, with only enough aid for 250,000 individuals, the organizations responsible for disbursing the funds were receiving up to 200,000 calls a day, signaling that demand by far exceeds supply (Westervelt and Penalosa 2020).

In regards to healthcare, as mentioned earlier in this section, many undocumented immigrants do not have access to health insurance. In addition, there are inherent fears of accessing healthcare services due to public charge. While the CARES Act also included provisions in regards to healthcare, announcing that testing and treatment for the virus would not be counted in the determination of public charge, the fear of interacting with institutions and government agencies nevertheless persists (National Immigration Law Center 2020). In focus groups conducted with undocumented immigrants, interviewees shared that a lack of healthcare insurance makes them even more fearful of contracting the virus, but they have no choice other than to continue working as jobs become available, even if they are high risk (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020).

Fears of contracting the virus are also very present for immigrants who are currently in detention

centers. This threat begins with the constant threat of interior immigration enforcement manifesting in poorer health outcomes (Hacker et al. 2012). Being apprehended and locked in a detention center is a dire threat to health and wellbeing. Detention centers were already known as notorious failures in regards to ensuring the health and safety of detainees prior to the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated these conditions, posing a higher risk of death to detainees, which will disproportionately impact Black immigrants who make up 7 percent of the non-citizen foreign-born population but almost 11 percent of immigrants in removal proceedings proceedings (Morgan-Trostle, Zheng, and Lipscombe 2016). Although ICE has claimed to have begun testing as early as February, by the beginning of June, they had tested a very low percentage of immigrants in detention centers (Center for Migration Studies 2020:19). A simulation by the Vera Institute revealed that the data ICE has reported to the public may not be representative of the entirety of the spread of COVID-19 (Kuo et al. 2020). Vera's estimates show that 19 percent of all immigrants in detention centers between mid-March and mid-May 2020 would have contracted COVID-19, a figure 15 times higher than the number of confirmed cases by ICE in mid-May (Kuo et al. 2020). In addition, detention centers are not following CDC guidelines for dealing with COVID-19,

prompting multiple immigrant rights organizations to file lawsuits to prompt the release of vulnerable detainees (American Medical Association 2020).

As mentioned throughout this report, this pandemic has made the racism rooted in our society very apparent. At the onset of the pandemic, Asian American immigrants and U.S.-born Asian Americans experienced heightened racial discrimination and xenophobia (Lee and Yadav 2020:19). A poll by the Center for Public Integrity and IPSOS reported that one third-of respondents had witnessed someone blaming Asian Americans for the COVID-19 pandemic (Center for Public Integrity and IPSOS 2020). In addition to that, STOP AAPI Hate Reporting Center revealed that over the course of three months, 832 incidents of COVID-19- related discrimination and harassment were reported, revealing a pattern of anti-Asian American hate (Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council, Chinese for Affirmative Action, and San Francisco State University Asian American Studies 2020). Moreover, across Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations shared that civic groups and other agencies had fielded over 100 reports of hate incidents toward Asian Americans between February and April (Ormseth 2020).

A Path to Committing to the Wellbeing of Immigrants

Moving forward, Los Angeles County must commit to insure accessibility, mobility, and voice for immigrants regardless of status.

Safeguarding the livelihoods of all Angelenos requires the recognition that immigrants are an integral part of not just the economy, but the social fabric, and moving forward, bold policies must uplift and support immigrant communities. It requires continued interventions against a federal government that intends on excluding and punishing immigrants and their families. The federal government should not use

status as a qualifier to access aid, relief, education, and healthcare. A response at the local level requires creative solutions that eliminate discrimination and xenophobia from our systems to ensure that immigrant communities have equal access to the same social safety net. And while short-term Band-Aids for the undocumented are welcome – such as the Angeleno Card launched out of the Mayor's Fund or the Governor's \$125 million relief fund – the failure to provide a sustained wage backstop is likely one reason why COVID-19 has ripped its way through immigrant communities (Abramsky 2020; Luna and McGreevy 2020). Finally, the push for immigration reform, one that

recognizes how integral migrants are to the fabric of the nation needs to occur so that families are protected from the current discrimination.

Our vision to insuring access, mobility, and voice for immigrants regardless of status requires a commitment to:

Protect and bolster the safety net:

- **Allocate disaster response funds for immediate economic support.** As mentioned throughout this section, despite comprising a significant portion of the labor force, certain immigrants are barred from accessing unemployment insurance and other forms of economic relief. To fill this gap, we need local alternatives like wage replacement and alternate forms of unemployment insurance. For example, the County can build on the Angeleno Campaign, an effort to provide financial assistance to all Angelenos in the City of Los Angeles, regardless of status for up to 20,000 recipients (Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles 2020). This program can be extended to the whole County and permanently so that all Angelenos can access a safety net whenever possible, not just to weather through a public health crisis.
- **Increase access to capital for street vendors and small businesses.** The 2020-2021 California state budget included a \$10 million General Fund investment for the Social Entrepreneurs for Economic Development initiative (SEED), an initiative aimed at supporting economically disadvantaged communities by providing entrepreneurial opportunities and training, regardless of immigration status (Governor Gavin Newsom 2020:2020–21). Funds like these can ensure our immigrant communities are provided with the necessary supports and adequate resources they need to thrive.
- **Provide quality, accurate, multilingual, and culturally appropriate information to immigrants.** A lack of quality translation services can create barriers for immigrants in accessing important information related to medical care. This is especially true for Black and indigenous immigrant populations, who due to their smaller population sizes, are often denied documents or services in the appropriate language. During a public health crisis, quality and

"We're not going wait for the federal government to get it together. As California and as a region, we are acknowledging that there is this gap and that we are going to be very intentional to close that gap. We're establishing a statement, a purpose, that the disparities we're seeing among immigrant communities is not acceptable, and that we're going to fill in the investments necessary and [work on the] problematic infrastructure to reduce those disparities while the federal government figures it out. So, we're saying that this is a community that's part of the greater community, and even though federal funding may limit or prohibit certain immigrants of receiving support, that we're just going to have to make up that difference."

-Miguel Santana, Committee for Greater LA

timely information can make a significant difference. In light of public charge and the various changing rulings and practices of USCIS and ICE, it is important that accurate information is provided to immigrant families on accessing adequate social services, medical screening, and treatments. Additionally, using creative platforms might yield a more efficient messaging. Instead of relying on home computers with internet access as a tool to get the message across, authorities should consider what immigrants regularly use such as WhatsApp messaging (Bernstein, McTarnaghan, et al. 2020). In a letter to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles Immigration Task Force outlined recommendations to partner with local ethnic media and community-based organizations to distribute timely information in a linguistically appropriate manner, as these entities have a cultural and linguistic understanding of these communities (Los Angeles Immigration Task Force 2020). One way to do this is to ensure that all ethnic and local media are included in City and County distribution lists and partnering with these outlets to disseminate public information in multiple languages (Los Angeles Immigration Task Force 2020).

- **Support local health care clinics serving immigrant communities regardless of status.**

Supporting health care clinics, an often vital and trusted resource, is vital for the health and wellbeing of undocumented communities. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several healthcare providers throughout Los Angeles, had adopted “sanctuary status” after adopting a protocol for protecting immigrants from the threat of immigration enforcement (Garcia and Gaglianone 2019). Supporting these clinics and adopting similar methods across other agencies and institutions is critical in ensuring immigrant Angelenos can access the necessary services they need without fear.

- **Expand healthcare to all immigrants.** Along with their employment, many immigrants also lost access to healthcare. Undocumented workers, older adults and seniors remain excluded from accessing healthcare throughout California. About one in seven essential workers in the nation lacks health insurance despite their participation in the labor force (Kearney and Munana 2020). Earlier this year, Governor Newsom unveiled the inclusion of the expansion of healthcare to seniors regardless of status in the 2020-2021 budget proposal, yet this provision was ultimately excluded from the final budget (Rivlin-Nadler 2020). At the federal level, Congress must ensure that immigration status is not a barrier for accessing emergency Medicaid. At the County level, funding should be prioritized for MyHealth LA to continue to serve immigrant Angelenos who are excluded from healthcare programs at the state and federal level (Health Services Los Angeles County 2020). In addition, the County should support advocacy efforts to expand access of this critical service for all at the state level.

- **Integrate systems that serve immigrants into the same systems that serve citizens across all sectors, from mental health to public education, and beyond, and prioritize local funding streams.**

We must align and consolidate local systems so that immigrants can access the same systems that citizens do. Often times systems catering to immigrants are designed in a bifurcated way, reducing this confusion can result in more effective service delivery. Although some systems are often tied to the restrictions of federal funding, advocating for more local funding sources through bonds or local taxes can help resolve this dilemma. For example, undocumented

immigrants are ineligible for federal housing vouchers, however, under Measure H, funds are more flexible and can thus cover more people that would otherwise be ineligible.

“[We have been hit] financially due to the lack of work. We don’t have any money coming in ... It has affected my kids because they are not used to doing classes online. And, I have to help the younger one, like be the teacher. It has impacted the oldest one because she couldn’t get financial aid for college and she can’t work right now and so she can’t pay tuition and that makes us very sad to not be able to fulfill the dream of my daughter to go to university. That is what is difficult for us. We have started to grow our own food, like nopales (edible cactus), as a way to survive.”

– Focus Group Participant

Root out discrimination

- **Uplift the voices of underrepresented immigrant groups such as Black and indigenous immigrants.**

Across the U.S., Black immigrants are also seldom visibilized in the immigrant rights’ movement, and Black immigrants often comprise a small share of the immigrant population, but a disproportionate share of immigrants facing deportation. The immigrant rights movement, primarily led by Latino immigrants, has also contributed to the invisibilization of the voices of indigenous migrants due to internalized racism (Romero and Corpeño 2019). As mentioned earlier, indigenous migrants are also incorrectly categorized as Latino, further invisibilizing their diversity and distinct needs. Moving forward, we must ensure that we uplift the voices of these immigrant groups to ensure they are represented and included in the immigrant rights movement and decision-making bodies.

- **Work to eliminate the usage of E-Verify for non-government businesses.** California has already moved to curb the abuses of E-Verify, a flawed system, by passing AB-622. Under this piece of

legislation, employers can only verify the status of applicants who have received an offer but have not started working, unless it is a federal requirement or a condition to receiving federal funds (Polsky 2015). In addition, employers must notify employees promptly if the E-Verify system does not confirm that they are authorized to work in the U.S. However, more needs to be done, especially as the number of unemployed workers rises. For example, a campaign can be set forth to dissuade employers from participating in E-Verify when they are not required to do so.

- **Increase wages, extend emergency paid sick leave and paid family leave, and implement stronger protections for immigrant workers.** Despite being forced to continue their work, immigrant Angelenos often have low wages, as compared to their U.S.-born counterparts. When disaggregating by status, wage disparities are even larger. For example, across Los Angeles County, the median wage in 2018 for undocumented workers is \$12, followed by \$15 for LPRs, \$22 for naturalized citizens and \$25 for their U.S.-born counterparts (USC Equity Research Institute 2020b). Increasing wages for immigrant workers, particularly undocumented workers, will ensure their wages keep up with the rising cost of living. While paid sick days and paid family leave are available to all workers regardless of status, there is no federal requirement to do so (National Employment Law Project, National Immigration Law Center, and OSH Law Project 2020). In light of COVID-19, Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), requiring certain employers to provide paid sick leave and paid family leave for reasons related to COVID-19 to all workers regardless of status through the end of 2020 (National Employment Law Project et al. 2020). Building on this, these protections should be extended to continue past 2020. In addition, protections for undocumented workers must be set in place to ensure job security, as undocumented workers can face threats of deportation from employers when demanding fair wages for example.
- **Expand universal Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) and CalFresh to immigrants regardless of status.** During this public health crisis, many immigrants have lost their jobs, impacting their ability to pay for necessities like groceries and rent. Expanding access to EBT at the state level, regardless of immigration status can play a significant role in preventing food insecurity during the pandemic.

During the focus groups, multiple participants shared their experiences with food insecurity, relying on food grown at home as a survival mechanism (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). Expanding access to CalFresh at the state level can also play a crucial role in addressing food insecurity. Organizations like the California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC) have set the groundwork for these efforts and supporting these organizations already leading these advocacy efforts is critical.

- **Expand access to legal resources and representation.** Many families throughout the County are impacted by the detention and deportation system that separates families and creates irreparable damage. A report examining immigration cases in California immigration courts between 2012 and 2015 revealed that in Los Angeles, 68 percent of immigrants who were detained and 26 percent of immigrants not detained, lacked access to counsel (The California Coalition for Universal Representation 2016). More importantly, many families lack access to legal counsel that can make a significant difference in the outcome of their cases. For example, immigrants with representation who were detained and released obtained positive outcomes more than 5 times as often as immigrants who were detained but had no representation (The California Coalition for Universal Representation 2016). Among immigrants with representation who were not detained, they had positive outcomes more than 4 times as often as those without representation (The California Coalition for Universal Representation 2016). Expanding access to legal resources and representation can contribute to diminishing the disruption of family dynamics and better outcomes for Angeleno families. The County can build and improve existing programs like the L.A. Justice Fund. For example, the L.A. Justice Fund, a private-public partnership, launched in 2017, allocated \$7.4 million to provide immigrant individuals and families across Los Angeles County with access to legal representation during deportation and removal proceedings (California Community Foundation 2019). This year, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors renewed the fund, asking for one more year (City News Service 2020). However, the program fell short of including immigrants with former convictions. In many cases, immigrants who have been charged with deportable offenses are often better off pleading to a more serious crime, they did not commit, but that

may not automatically trigger deportation (Akio-Woodhouse 2017). Moving forward, as we think about a racially just recovery, we can build on funds like this by expanding access to all immigrants, without exclusions, and implementing a multi-year version of this fund.

Expand civic participation

- **Implement virtual local assistance centers for naturalization.** Naturalization is an important avenue that leads to increased wages, better employment opportunities, and access to civic and electoral processes. Throughout the years, the naturalization process has become all the more cumbersome as fee increases and backlogs in naturalization applications are creating a “second wall” to naturalization (National Partnership for New Americans 2019). Not to mention there are numerous barriers to naturalization including knowledge of the process, eligibility screenings, lack of access to legal support, lack of access to financial support, and lack of access to naturalization test support (Le et al. 2019). Now with the onset of COVID-19, many individuals seeking to naturalize cannot access support with the naturalization process in person. Across Los Angeles County, there are about 764,000 immigrant adults eligible to naturalize who have not yet done so (Council on Immigrant Integration and USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2020). The County should invest in implementing virtual local assistance centers to support these individuals navigating the naturalization process. As the proposal to increase fees looms before us, it is critical that the County commits their support in ensuring immigrant Angelenos can navigate the barriers to this process.
- **Expanding voting opportunities to immigrants.** The voices of our immigrant communities are often excluded as they cannot partake in important decision-making processes that will impact their lives. Expanding opportunities to immigrants ineligible to vote can ensure we eliminate barriers to civic participation and ensure immigrants can feel welcome, reducing barriers to participating in important processes like the Census. For example, cities like San Francisco already allow non-citizens to vote in school board elections (Pakdaman 2019). Following their lead, the County can engage in proactive efforts to extend voting beyond school

board elections, expanding opportunities for immigrants to also serve on boards, commissions, and other decision-making bodies.

- **Implement De Facto county citizenship.** The integral presence of undocumented immigrants and some of the county policies have somewhat created a de facto citizenship, the result of cumulative pro-immigrant integration policies and law in the region, for undocumented Angelenos (Council on Immigrant Integration and USC Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration 2020; Ramakrishnan and Colbern 2015). The County can expand on this idea and implement it across the board to allow undocumented immigrants to participate in civic engagement activities like voting and also eliminate the requirement to ask about status prior to employment.

This pandemic has laid bare the disproportionate impact on immigrants who comprise a significant share of the County’s population and who have played a significant role in shaping the social and economic fabric of our County. The recommendations set forth will prepare Los Angeles County for an equitable recovery that can help us better navigate future crises. After all, this pandemic is only one of the many fires to come.

Amidst this public health crisis, USCIS, which obtains its funding from application fees, has announced a budget deficit, due to the suspension of in-person services in light of the pandemic (Pierce and Meissner 2020). In response, the Trump administration is instituting an average fee increase of 20 percent to certain USCIS applications, with a much larger increase in the naturalization application fee, to take effect on October 3, 2020 (Department of Homeland Security 2020). Not to mention, the Trump administration has also announced efforts to remove undocumented immigrants from Census data, a task deemed inaccurate and error-prone and one that could also exclude nearly 20 million U.S. citizens (Capps, Hook, and Gelatt 2020). Nevertheless, we must confront our present responsibly, to be well-equipped for the future. Moving forward, we must recognize the power of immigrants so we can support and uplift our Angeleno immigrants. It is time to re-imagine the narrative and framing of our immigrant communities by recognizing something beyond their economic contributions: their humanity and existence.

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POLICY SECTION 13

Alternatives to Incarceration

An Unsustainable Jail System

On any given day, Los Angeles jails house from 16,000 to over 25,000 people in the largest jail system in the world. Nearly half of this detained population is awaiting trial (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department 2020). With every day spent in pretrial risk, people separated from home risk losing employment, housing, and, in many cases, children while in detention. The longer a person is detained pre-trial, the greater the likelihood of later arrest. This effect is particularly significant for low-risk defendants – even 48 hours in jail was shown to increase recidivism for first-time offenders by almost 40 percent (Lowenkamp, VanNostrand, and Holsinger 2013). The median length of pretrial detention in County is ten days – a long enough time to interrupt a stable person's responsibility, but yet too short to provide meaningful interventions to those who have high-needs.

"I send this child off to college. So, he goes from the hood to Humboldt State, which is a great transition. And he deals with racism and he's calling me and he's telling me, mom, I don't know how to deal with this. They said this to me, they reacted like this. Even my white friends who aren't racist, they don't know how to respond when the racist remarks come or when the police come and I feel so afraid that my phone is by my leg. And wondering if they're going to shoot me because my phone is by my leg."

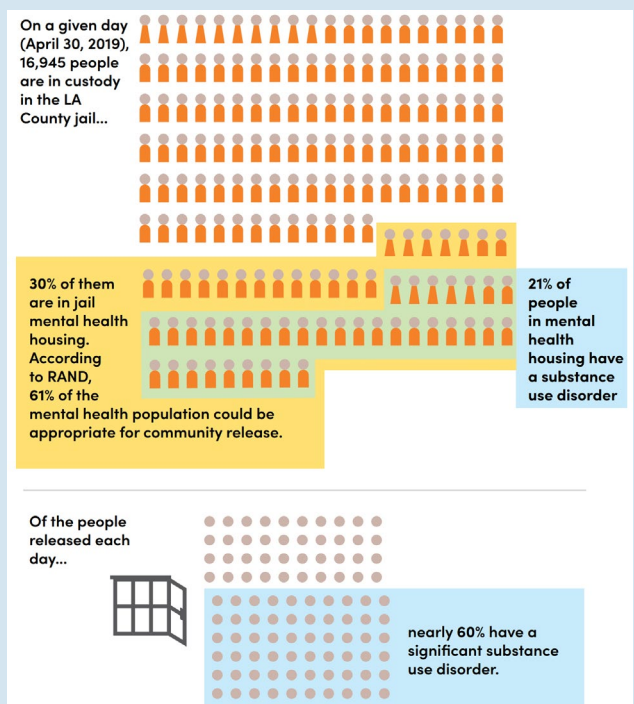
- Focus Group Participant

Many of those detained are vulnerable Angelenos and are a reflection of larger systemic racism. They experience chronic homelessness, severe mental illness, and substance use disorders. Over half of the pretrial population have a severe mental illness deemed appropriate for release to community-based care, yet continue to remain detained (Holliday et al. 2020).

Incarceration is a disproportionate punishment in Los Angeles. People in County jails come from over-policed, under-invested neighborhoods, primarily South Central, Compton, Long Beach, and Antelope Valley. The County jail population is overwhelmingly Black and Latino. Black people make up less than 10 percent of the County population, yet 29 percent of the jail population is Black and similar to trends nationwide, women's incarceration is increasing (Swavola, Riley, and Subramanian 2016). In Los Angeles County, Black women make up one-third of the women's jail population. To move forward, incarceration must be recognized as a source of oppressive discrimination.

Still, the State and County have made some strides towards some alternatives and breaking from this unsustainable and dangerous reliance on incarceration. Since 2015, the County has taken bold

FIGURE 13-1: IMMIGRATION STATUS AND FAMILY RIPPLE EFFECTS, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2018



Source: Los Angeles County, and Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group. 2020. Care First, Jails Last: Health and Racial Justice Strategies for Safer Communities.

action to adopt a “Care First, Jails Last” approach for those impacted by the justice system (Los Angeles County and Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group 2020). The County moved to break away from inefficient and racist incarceration practices, declaring that the County should provide care and treatment whenever possible. Last year, Governor Newsom banned for-profit carceral facilities in California, including immigrant detention centers (Office of Governor Gavin Newsom 2019).

Yet critical challenges remain. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency responsible for immigrant detention, defied the state order and began soliciting new contracts citing they remain “compliant with federal contract and acquisition regulations” (Castillo 2019). This federal act alongside the militarized occupation of U.S. cities like Portland and Chicago against public will is for lack of a better word, concerning.

COVID-19 and Incarceration: A Dangerous Mix

The outbreak of COVID-19 in carceral facilities, be it jails, prisons, or immigrant detention centers, is a uniquely American epidemic within a pandemic. Public health crises in carceral facilities have long preceded COVID-19. These facilities regularly experience outbreaks of diseases, such as hepatitis and tuberculosis. The physical design, tendency towards exceeding capacity, and unsanitary, inhumane conditions create the environment for the quick spread of any disease.

“We all know that LAPD is the biggest gang anyway.”

- Focus Group Participant

It is no wonder that these facilities struggle with COVID-19, but this pandemic heightens the dangers and risks, primarily for those incarcerated, but also for surrounding communities. People incarcerated and detained report being denied COVID-19 tests due to a shortage and as a result many speculate that COVID-19 positive cases are being underreported. COVID-19 was introduced to carceral facilities by correction officers and nurses entering and exiting the facilities threatening surrounding communities as well. In Los Angeles County Jail alone, researchers estimate that 3,322 additional deaths would result in the surrounding community if an epidemic occurred within jail (Ollove 2020). Additionally, the regular practice of transferring people between prisons, although originally intended to decrease

overcrowding, helped spread the virus causing more outbreak.

Parallel to prison and jails, the conditions inside immigration detention centers are inhumane, unsanitary, and unsafe. Of the 38,000 people nationwide in detention, legal advocates believe that over 20 percent are COVID-19 positive (International Rescue Committee 2020). ICE has failed to take executive action to stop the spread of the disease and instead, through its inaction, spreads the disease here and abroad (Kassie and Marcolini 2020). Immigration lawyers and immigrant advocates have therefore, taken the task to try to release as many immigrants as possible. Immigration lawyers working on behalf of their clients believe ICE is drastically underreporting the number of positive cases and refusing to test detainees with COVID-19 symptoms. Over 3,000 medical professionals have written a letter to ICE advocating for the release of detainees amid the pandemic (New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Medical and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Medical Providers Network and Doctors for Camp Closure 2020). One detainee emailed her lawyer that she was denied a test despite having a temperature of 104 degrees (New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Medical and New York Lawyers for the Public Interest Medical Providers Network and Doctors for Camp Closure 2020). While state and county officials have permitted early release, and lawyers have had slow success in petitioning the court for compassionate release based on medical fragility, ICE has no plan

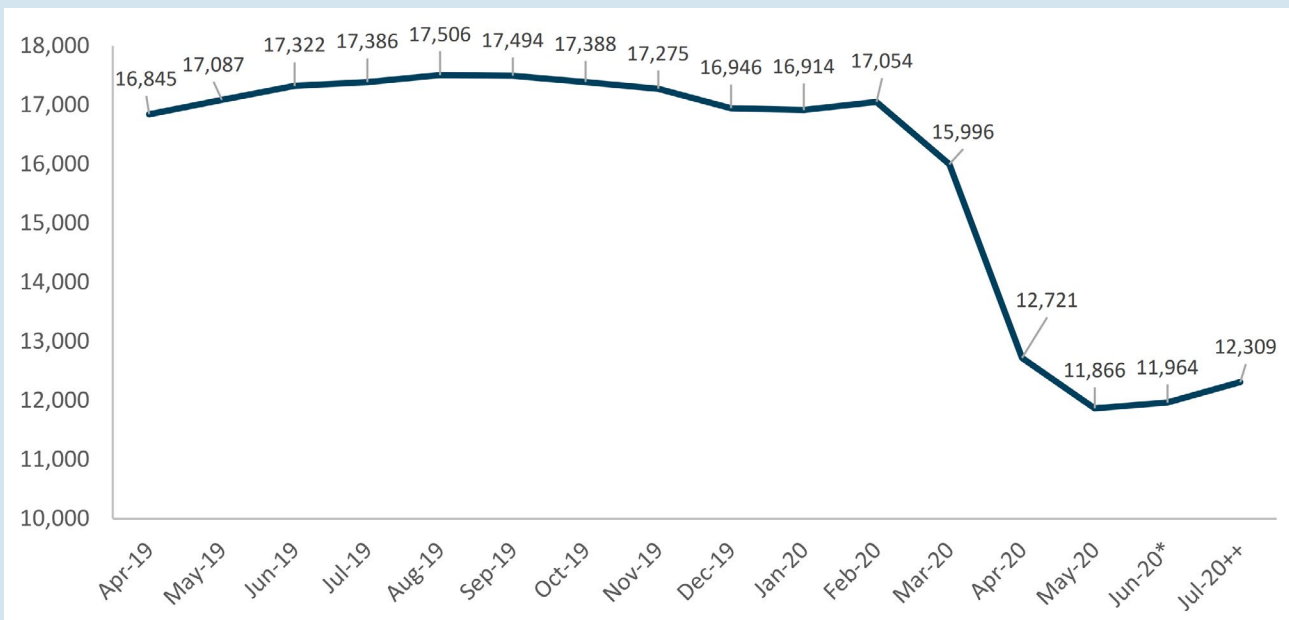
for COVID-19 driven release of immunocompromised detainees (Gelardi 2020).

ICE's failure to be compassionate, humane, and even rational, continues to put communities at risk. In an August 2020 press release, the International Rescue Committee reports ICE has continued to deport immigrants to nearly a dozen countries in Central America and the Caribbean. These countries have reported receiving COVID-19 positive deportees (International Rescue Committee 2020). This is not due to a lack of resources but rather a deliberate approach. Congresswoman Lorena Gonzalez's office gathered masks to donate to the facility, which is located in her district. ICE staff not only refused to accept the donations but denied the Congresswoman entry, stating they had adequate supplies and requests to enter would have to be made to the federal office (Morrissey 2020). Allowing ICE, and other carceral systems, to continue these practices unchecked, puts communities at risk but especially those within these systems.

To me there's, because of COVID, there's some immediate stuff that just feels like, «God, we've got to knock this out, get this done.» To me, it's just like, why are folks still in prison? And with the increase of COVID spreading, the detention centers, all the stuff that is really perpetuating and becoming a cesspool of spreading. And so many people work in those areas, so they're coming in and out. It's not like it's contained... I think sometimes people think it's like a contained space, but there's so many workers that come in and out. It's the same thing... 'cause I think the Governor recently put out that he wants to close down all the youth jails. And so to me, let's get moving.

-Lian Cheun, Committee for Greater LA

FIGURE 13-2: AVERAGE DAILY JAIL POPULATION APRIL 2019-JULY 2020



Source: Ghaly, Christina. Maintaining a Reduced Jail Population Post-COVID-19 (Item #2, June 9, 2020). Available at: <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/146427.pdf> Note: April 2019-March 2020 data are monthly averages from LASD Custody Division Population Quarterly Report January-March 2020; April 2020 and May 2020 are monthly averages; June 2020 reflects the jail population on June 11, 2020; April, May and June 2020 data are from LASD data provided to Jail Reduction Field Bookings Workgroup on June 18, 2020; July 2020 reflects the jail population on July 8, 2020 as reported in the LASD Custody Division COVID-19 Fact Sheet for July 8, 2020.

TABLE 13-1: PEOPLE RELEASED EARLY BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Race/ethnicity	People released early by race/ethnicity		January 2020 population demographics ¹⁴	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Black	389	23.5%	4,935	29.2%
Hispanic	887	53.7%	8,752	51.7%
White	298	18.0%	2,546	15.0%
All Others	79	4.8%	687	4.1%
Total	1,653		16,920	

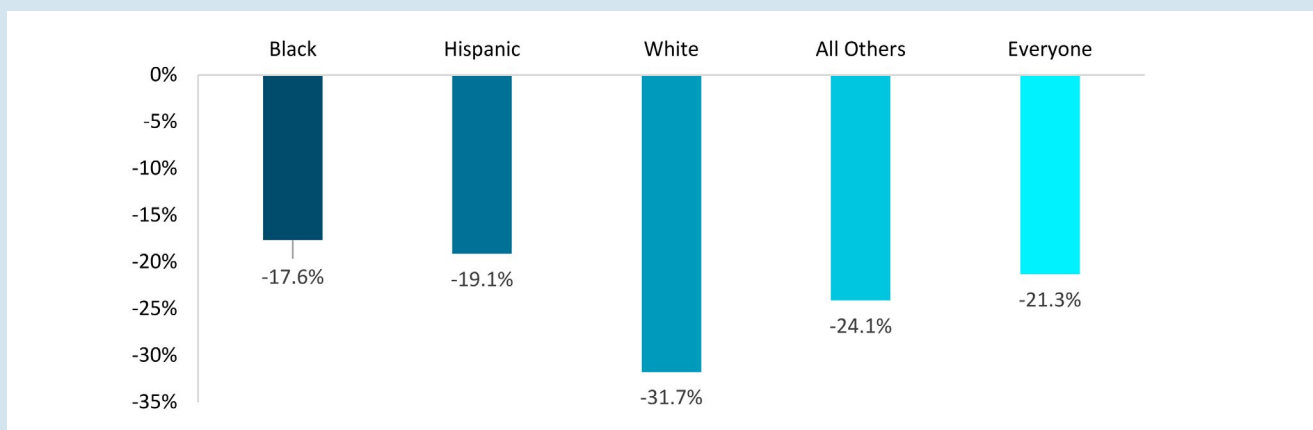
Source: Ghaly, Christina. Maintaining a Reduced Jail Population Post-COVID-19 (Item #2, June 9, 2020). Available at: <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/146427.pdf>

Without precedent, the County jail population is the lowest it has been since the 1990s. In March the Superior Court, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Alternative Public Defender determined criteria to identify those eligible for early release (Ghaly 2020). The Los Angeles Sheriff Department created an additional list of individuals based on their eligibility criteria. These justice partners led without input from the Department of Health Services (DHS) and in an alarming move, the determined eligibility criteria did not advocate for the release of medically fragile populations. Later, DHS created its list of individual’s eligible based upon medical vulnerability to COVID-19 (e.g., age, immunocompromised). Despite this step forward, DHS agencies cite a 1-2 week lag in a notification from LASD regarding early release complicating their ability to provide release planning, meaning many individuals are being released from prison without the proper links to services. As such, we are continuing to fail those entrapped by this system.

Yet racism continues to haunt even these progressive approaches. Sample analysis (n=1,653) reveals racial disparities in COVID-19 driven release in Los Angeles County Jails (Ghaly 2020). Black people are 9 percent of the County population but 29 percent of the jail population, however, only 23.5 percent of total people granted COVID-19 release were Black. Meaning that even under these de-incarceration processes, Black people continue to be detained more and released less. Anti-Blackness continues to deeply penetrate the system of incarceration.

On top of this, and in light of COVID-19, the incarceration system fails to respond yet again to mental health needs in a racist manner. Black and Latino people with mental health needs were released at lower rates than white people. Of those granted release, Black women, in particular, spent more average days incarcerated than every other group by race/ethnicity and by gender.

FIGURE 13-3: RELEASE RATES FOR THOSE WITH MENTAL NEEDS



Source: Ghaly, Christina. Maintaining a Reduced Jail Population Post-COVID-19 (Item #2, June 9, 2020)

TABLE 13-2: AVERAGE DAYS INCARCERATED OF PEOPLE RELEASED EARLY BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER.

Race/Ethnicity	Male	Female	Everyone
Black	99.7	139.9	104.2
Hispanic	106.1	104.5	105.9
White	106.1	102.1	105.6
All Others	130.7	131.4	130.8
All race/ethnicities	105.5	114.3	106.6

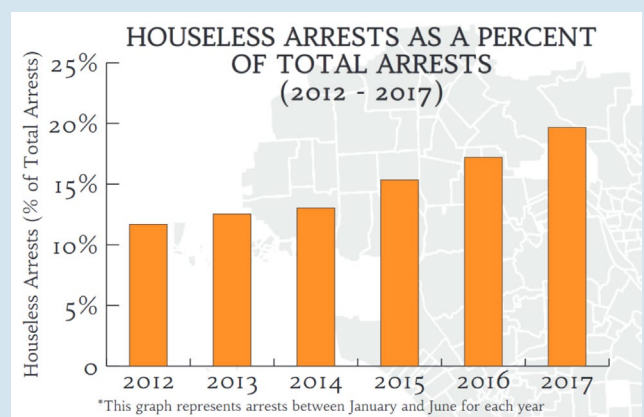
Source: Bryan, Isaac. (2020). Policing Black Los Angeles: A Critical Look at the Policing of Black Students and Communities. Committee for Greater LA.

The Vera Institute for Justice surveyed service providers providing re-entry support to those released from jail (Vera Institute of Justice 2020). Housing is the overwhelming need for those released from jail. Ninety-one percent cited access to housing/beds in underserved areas with concentrations of individuals impacted by incarceration; 88 percent cited the need for short-term housing options; 87 percent cited the need for long-term housing. The need is especially harsh for transgender people accessing housing options and is overlooked (Vera Institute of Justice 2020).

Although hampered by a lack of timely notification, the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) assessed and screened for needs, created emergency housing for around 211 new beds, and located additional beds. ODR implemented a quarantine/isolation protocol to effectively stop the spread of COVID-19. Fiscally and operationally limited service providers are scrambling to meet basic needs like food, clothing, and obtaining identification documents. Without a localized system of care in the community to meet individual needs, these individuals are being released into a heightened risk of chronic homelessness and unemployment. These conditions increase the risk of falling once more into the hands of policing. Being unhoused makes Black people more susceptible to arrest by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on charges. According to research led by the Black Policy Project at UCLA, unhoused individuals are 17 times more likely to be arrested by the LAPD. In Los Angeles, Black people represent 33.7 percent of the unhoused population. Of those who are unhoused and arrested, 43 percent are Black.

In order to adequately social distance, experts say incarcerated populations under quarantine protocols would have to drop to at least 80 percent maximum capacity to stop the spread of COVID-19 (AMEND Changing Correctional Culture and Berkeley Public Health 2020). This goal is far from realization. For example, California State Prison in Los Angeles County, designed to hold 2,300 people, as of August 19, 2020 has a population of 3,025 (132 percent capacity) (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Division of Correctional Policy Research and Internal Oversight Office of Research 2020). The data uplifts the words of advocates and prison abolitionists: no one can get well in a cell.

FIGURE 13-4: HOUSELESS ARRESTS AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL ARRESTS



Source: Dupuy, Danielle et al.(2020). Policing Black Los Angeles: Policing the Houseless 2.0. Available at: <https://ucla.app.box.com/s/ilcgtin6u6lb417e3c77qwz29zq4b732>.

Story: COVID-19 While Incarcerated

“I was COVID tested in late June in an attempt to transfer me to another prison. By this time, efforts have already been made to separate COVID positives from the negatives. That same day I was placed back into the same building with the same sick men. That same day I showered in that same sauna-like shower and listened to people discuss how sick they were. That same day I had to walk down the tier, down to the first tier to pick up my dinner tray in a line of 40 to 50 people then walk back up. Two days later I was showing symptoms. I washed my hands. I wore my mask. I was locked into a cell 23 hours a day. I slept head to foot with my celly and I still was infected with COVID19.”

Source: Tran, Thanh. “I am Incarcerated At San Quentin. I Have COVID-19.” Street Spirit.

Uprisings Further Motivating the Strides Forward

The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers sparked mass protests with calls to permanently divest from law enforcement and invest in alternate systems that provide care, counseling, and treatment. The following motions have been passed in Los Angeles amidst nationwide calls to divest from policing and prisons.

Remake 911

In June 2020, the County Board of Supervisors called for the Department of Mental Health to create a unique number for health and human services crisis and to reconfigure 911 to triage emergency calls to default to non-law enforcement as first responders. Again citing the death of two Black men murdered by police, George Floyd by Minneapolis police and Rayshard Brooks by Atlanta police (Motion by Supervisor Janice Hanh 2020).

Closing of Men’s Central Jail

In July 2020, the County Supervisors voted to close down Men’s Central Jail in Downtown Los Angeles. In a motion authored by Supervisor Hilda Solis and co-authored by Sheila Kuehl, the Board directs the Sheriff’s Department and Office of Diversion and Reentry to create a plan to develop community-based care alternatives to divert nearly half of the jail population with mental health issues. Solis notes that it would be fiscally irresponsible to continue to put money into a decrepit, inhumane facility (Motion by Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Sheila J. Kuehl 2020).

\$1 Billion for Community Investment

In Los Angeles, currently, 42 percent of the County budget goes toward policing and prosecution. The Reimagine LA Coalition, in partnership with the County Board, successfully submitted a ballot measure to amend the charter to invest over \$1B in promised funding for community investment and alternative practices to incarceration (Motion by Sheila Kuehl and Hilda Solis 2020).

POST COVID-19: Care First, Jail Last

Before the pandemic, Los Angeles County adopted a roadmap to create a permanent independent body, the Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative. This landmark effort began the narrative shift towards investing in a robust system of care for diversion in place of arrest and incarceration. The time to implement these key recommendations is now. We need a community-based system of care in place of County Social Services. A system of care in the community can prevent system involvement, create a pathway to diversion programs from jail, and provide the necessary support for reentry.

The following policy recommendations follow the original framework outlined in Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group Final Report. They are also informed by findings from the Vera Institute's COVID-19 Service Provider Survey:

1. **Community: Alternate Systems of Care.**

Expand and scale community-based, holistic care, and services through sustainable and equitable community capacity building and service coordination.

- a. **Supportive Housing.** Housing, both short and long term, is the primary need for people released from prison. The closing of Men's Central Jail (MCJ) calls for new construction of supportive housing. The number of housing units should correspond to the number of people caged at MCJ.
- b. **Reentry Planning.** Create and publicize a protocol to support people released from jail to meet physical needs and emotional needs in a way that promotes public health. Boost community-based systems of care through increased funding and provision of protective gear.
- c. **Service Delivery.** Centralize COVID-19 resources to increase coordination and access for service providers navigating the release of people from jail. We must streamline referrals and intakes to prevent people from experiencing homelessness and/or recidivism.

"My dad [was] a Detroit gang member and a drug dealer back in the day... My dad made those choices based on the fact that the War on Drugs was released into the community. And that was his means of being able to make a living and take care of the family with the factories shut down, us pushed into [living in] a concentrated area where they felt like Black people should be... I learned [this] is part of the strategic plan of Black people trying to create some sort of foundation to take care of each other."

- Focus Group Participant

2. **Alternatives for Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder.** Utilize mental health professionals and social workers to provide mental health interventions for individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorders with minimal involvement from law enforcement. Publicly direct law enforcement to drastically reduce contact with the community (arrest and book) by deferring to the use of mental health professionals to reduce the number of people arrested and booked.
3. **Pretrial Diversion/Compassionate Release.** Provide effective treatment in a community-based setting instead of jail time. Nearly half the people in County jail are detained on pretrial on any given day. We must develop meaningful pretrial release and diversion services to significantly reduce the prison/jail population. Now, more than ever, we must prioritize the release of high-need, medically vulnerable people in particular.
4. **Community Health Workers/Professional Development.** Authentically engage and compensate for the leadership of system-impacted individuals to be Community Health Workers (CHWs). CHWs are best-suited as peer navigators to connect people released from prison

- to essential services and provide mentorship. Create a professional track for system-impacted CHWs.
5. **Reimagine LA Ballot Measure.** Permanently allocate funds towards community investment and alternative practices such as rental assistance, youth organizing, and restorative justice. Community-based service providers at this moment need flexible, unrestricted funding to serve their communities, clients, and staff.
 6. **Immigrant Detention Centers.** Enforce the detention center ban and strengthen refusals to participate with any federal efforts. Despite the passage of AB 32 which effectively put a ban on the construction of new detention centers (Castillo 2020).

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POLICY SECTION 14

Non-Profit Sector

The Important Role of Non-Profits before the Pandemic

The non-profit sector, throughout the state of California has played a crucial role in providing essential services to the most marginalized populations, and governments often rely on this sector to deliver critical public services (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Across California there are nearly 110,000 registered non-profits (defined as 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charities), focusing on issues that range from health to education to the environment and span strategies like advocacy, organizing, and legal assistance (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Apart from the critical services that they provide within the state, the non-profit sector plays a key economic role.

Non-profits employ a substantial share of Californians, many whom are people of color. The non-profit sector is the fourth largest employer by number of jobs among key industries throughout California, employing more than 1.2 million people with about one in 14 jobs in California coming from the sector (CalNonprofits 2020; CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Not to mention, the non-profit sector employs comparatively larger shares of women and people of color than the civilian workforce (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Unsurprisingly, with those levels of employment, the sector generates approximately 15 percent of California's Gross State Product (CalNonprofits 2020). The potential civic reach of non-profits is also much larger when accounting for the fact that a significant share of labor in the non-profit sectors comes from volunteers. California volunteers contribute the equivalent to about 331,000 full-time jobs or \$16.6 billion in unpaid labor (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019).

"I think that you have to invest in the infrastructure of these community groups on the ground that are already centered around people and equity. So that might vary from community to community, group to group, but there needs to be more intentionality on the communities we're serving, the leaders we're serving. We need deeper targets, because if we just sprinkle a little here, a little bit there, we do not get meaningful results."

-Jacqueline Waggoner, Committee for Greater LA

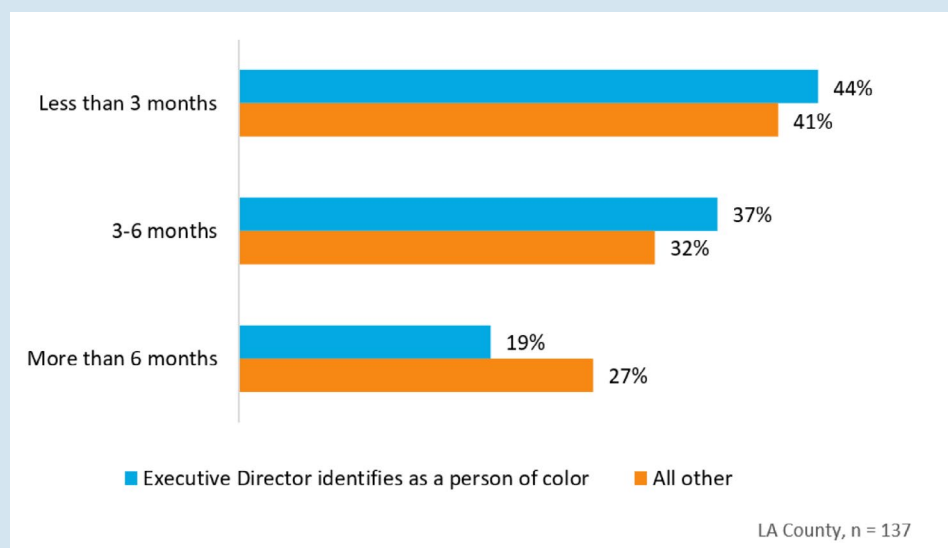
Inequities within the Non-Profit Sector

Prior to COVID-19, resource disparities in the non-profit sector were evident, as revenues, assets, and grant funding are not distributed evenly for rural regions, communities of color, and certain subsectors (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Regions like the Bay Area, followed by Los Angeles, often receive more government and philanthropic funding than other regions. Nevertheless, in a region like Los Angeles with a population of over 10 million residents, the funds the government allocates to these non-profits may not be proportionate to the number of residents that can be served. For example, in the L.A. region, there are about 1,400 non-profit organizations that receive government funding: equivalent to over 7,600 residents per government-funded organization (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019).

Furthermore, there are racial inequities embedded across non-profits that will come to bear in the after-effects of COVID-19, in the sector's ability to aid in broader recovery efforts, as well as the ability of non-profits to endure the economic downturn. It is no secret that many non-profits are underprepared for financial emergencies. However, non-profits in communities of color tend to have even less resources than non-profits elsewhere (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Figure 14-1 displays results from a national survey conducted by the Nonprofit Finance Fund, illustrating that about 44 percent of non-profits led by people of color, have less than three months of operating funds while around 41 percent of all other organizations had less than three months of funding. Among those who were more financially secure, meaning they had more than six months of funding, only

19 percent were led by people of color, compared to 27 percent of all other organizations. Disaggregating these results shows that Black-led non-profits tend to have less average revenues and unrestricted net assets than white-led non-profits (Dorsey, Bradach, and Kim 2020). Also, a \$20 million racial funding gap exists between white-led and Black-led early-stage organizations. Recent grant data by Candid reveals that prior to 2020, only 6 percent of grants allocated for racial equity across the U.S., came from corporate funders (Koob 2020). Moreover, funding in support of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) across the U.S. ranges from 9 to 12 percent and funding focusing on African Americans only accounts for 2 percent of overall philanthropic funding (Koob 2020). Fast-track to 2020, Candid revealed that corporate funders now account for nearly 80 percent of the funds allocated for racial equity (Koob 2020). Capitalizing on this momentum, and as we look to address racial equity in our recovery, it is critical to root out racial disparities in funding practices, as the non-profit sector will play an essential role in the recovery, providing services on behalf of government, connecting communities of color to crucial resources, and employing thousands of people across California.

FIGURE 14-1: MONTHS OF CASH ON HAND, LOS ANGELES COUNTY



Source: Nonprofit Finance Fund. (2018). "State of Nonprofit Sector Survey."

Threats to the Non-Profit Sector in Light of COVID-19

Amidst COVID-19, the non-profit sector is facing a multitude of threats to their existence while demand for their services is at an all-time high. We have consistently relied on the non-profit sector to create transformational and highly effective impacts without funding them in a sustainable way. As a result, Los Angeles County and the rest of California, faces a sector that was already stretched thin, and is now at a breaking point.

The non-profit infrastructure has taken years to build and it would be disadvantageous to allow the increased capacity of the sector to disseminate, as it would be very difficult to rebuild. Nevertheless, this is a real possibility as 20 percent of community-based organizations across California have shut down (Center for Nonprofit Management 2020). In Los Angeles, non-profits are struggling with maintaining payrolls and continuing their much-needed services (Espinoza 2020). Across Los Angeles County, 42 percent of non-profits surveyed had enacted a hiring freeze, while 29 percent eliminated staff raises, and 20 percent conducted layoffs (Knowlton and Gracian 2020). Moreover, a different survey conducted by CalNonprofits revealed that 83 percent of non-profits across Los Angeles County were suffering financially while simultaneously, 50 percent of non-profits reported an increase in demand for their services, amidst these revenue losses, as shown in Figure 14-2.

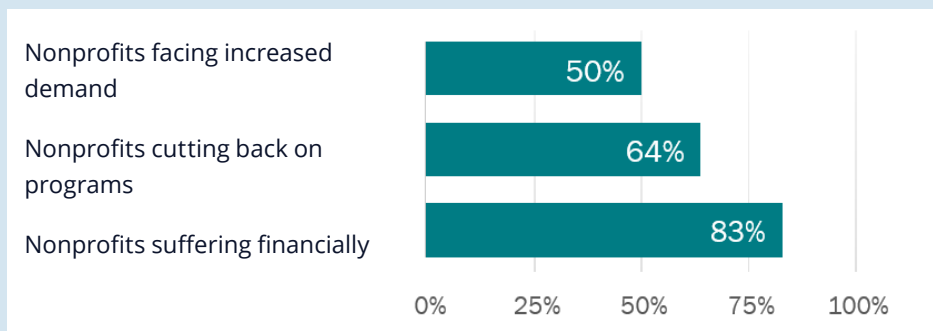
With a strain in capacity and resources, disruption to operations and the economic stress from the pandemic are an additional layer to existing crises from systemic racism (Knowlton and Gracian 2020).

A two month survey conducted by La Piana in March, revealed that 90 percent of non-profits nationally, have lost revenue, which is not surprising given the importance of in-person fundraising for non-profit budgets (La Piana Consulting 2020). Due to the limitations on large public gatherings many of these in-person fundraisers were cancelled. To mitigate damaging cost saving measures like layoffs, reductions in hours and salaries, some non-profits are considering partnerships, such as merging with other non-profits, as a method to stay afloat during this pandemic (La Piana Consulting 2020).

In addition to revenue losses, organizations have shifted and altered their work to meet the changes associated with COVID-19 and although initial data shows that non-profits are adapting quickly to continue serving those in need, there are still negative impacts (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). For example, in light of the stay at home orders, non-profits have also had to shift to virtual methods in their service work or in the case of many direct service providers, curtail their services. The pandemic also comes at a time when non-profits

and the communities they serve have already been exhausted by the presidential administration. Across Los Angeles County, a survey conducted in 2018 revealed that 80 percent of non-profits shared that federal policies had created more challenges for their clients since 2016 (Knowlton and Gracian 2020). It is clear that there continues to be the need to balance the focus on rapid-response and long-term sustainability.

FIGURE 14-2: NEGATIVE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR, LOS ANGELES COUNTY, 2020



Source: Cause IQ, 2020; Charity Navigator national survey of nonprofits, April 2020. CalNonprofits, April 2020.

More importantly, the challenges facing non-profits across different sub-sectors vary significantly. For example, organizations serving tribal communities are witnessing a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on their communities, due to existing health disparities while also facing economic challenges, as they are experiencing revenue losses from sources like casinos. Moreover, many tribes are not federally-recognized, meaning these groups are rendered invisible and many do not end up receiving federal relief funding.

Similarly, advocacy organizations working with LGBTQ communities are witnessing similarly exacerbated impacts due to pre-existing health conditions and the discrimination this population has been facing from healthcare providers. In addition, organizations serving LGBTQ populations are concerned that a lack of data may hide the extent of this LGBTQ vulnerability. Table 14-1 below reveals the challenges that other sectors are also experiencing.

Sector	Challenges
Fiscally Sponsored Organizations	Small, grassroots, and community-centered organizations rely on fiscal sponsors for crucial operational support. The impact of this pandemic has placed fiscal sponsors at risk, creating potential ripple effects for communities.
Disability Rights and Services Organizations	These organizations face additional challenges in serving a population at a greater health risk, coupled with other risks related to housing security, banking, communication, and social issues (National Disability Institute 2020).
LGBTQ-Serving Organizations	For LGBTQ communities, the threat of contracting COVID-19 is higher, due to higher tobacco use rates, higher rates of HIV and cancer, and discrimination from healthcare providers. Service providers are concerned about the vulnerability of their community, particularly when there is a lack of data to show the impacts (National LGBT Cancer Network and GLMA Health Professionals Advancing LGBTQ Equality 2020).
Immigrant-Serving Organizations	Due to changes in federal policies, non-profit organizations are facing extreme challenges since the 2016 presidential election. Throughout California, there is high demand for non-profit and public assistance to individuals ineligible for federal relief during the pandemic. The state of California relied on non-profits to meet this need by distributing state relief to undocumented immigrants (McGreevy 2020).
Youth Serving Organizations	At the start of the pandemic, children were sent home from schools, forced to continue their education remotely. Educational programs also closed due to closed campuses and re-opening remains uncertain.
Organizations Serving Tribal Communities	Native American communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 due to existing health disparities. At the same time these communities are experiencing loss in core revenue sources such as casinos (Scott 2020). In addition, a lack of data and the fact that some tribes are not federally-recognized, further invisibilizes these communities.

Sector	Challenges
Supportive and Affordable Housing Developers and Operators	Once eviction moratoriums and funding for temporary shelters in hotels are lifted, these organizations are preparing to face the massive increase in demand for supportive and affordable housing (Rojc 2020).
Organizations Serving Justice System Impacted Families	Prior to the pandemic, criminal justice reform efforts were already in the works, as resources were being directed toward reform efforts. These efforts have recently been catalyzed and organizations are balancing an influx in funding with momentum to create lasting change (Rocj 2020).
Domestic Violence Organizations	Domestic violence victims face a higher risk of abuse due to “shelter-in-place” orders. Organizations are continuing to support clients virtually. They are also anticipating a shortage in shelter beds, as fewer people cycle out of these shelters due to the uncertainty of the pandemic (Newberry 2020).
Organizations Serving Child Welfare-Impacted Families	The closure of courts has made it challenging and time-consuming for children to move through the system. In addition, with the closure of schools, child abuse reporting has significantly decreased. Amidst the pandemic and an economic crisis, group facilities for foster children are facing challenges like lack of access to technology for at-home instruction, delays in court systems, and supporting those aging out of the system (Associated Press 2020).
Policy, Advocacy, and Civic Engagement Organizations	These organizations were also forced to adapt rapidly to virtual organizing. Due to the pandemic, many of their activities and revenue around the Census and the upcoming election, will be impacted.
Community Health	This sector was forced to transition to telehealth without a clear answer on whether or not telehealth would be allowable for reimbursements. During this transition, clinics faced increased costs and as they think about re-opening, they are thinking through patient flow, physical space, and PPE.
Behavioral Health	This sector was forced to transition to providing services remotely, exerting a strain on both service providers and clients. While providers had to purchase new technology for this transition, clients face challenges in maintaining privacy for services as a result of overcrowded housing.
Arts and Culture	Due to social distancing measures, galleries, museums, and performances have closed; while others have pivoted to virtual content. Many are experiencing revenue losses as fundraisers have been cancelled, imposing a financial stress on these organizations.
Organizations Serving Older Adults	Clients and staff of elder care homes and programs have lost friends and family while experiencing increased isolation. Organizations serving this population have to mitigate this intense mental trauma while also experiencing less access to volunteers and needs for facility improvements to meet health standards (LaMantia 2020).

Another area of concern are the challenges of returning to the workplace after the pandemic. For example, many non-profits are direct service providers and many are unable to provide services remotely, and in other cases, clients are unable to comply with social distancing guidelines due to circumstances like mental health illnesses and disabilities (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020). As these organizations start re-opening, not all organizations may be equipped with the necessary resources for a safe re-opening (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020).

Additionally, the economic shocks like the one we are currently experiencing, pose an uneven threat to the non-profit landscape. Looking back to the 2008 recession, larger non-profits had better trajectories of recovery, with some even ending up in better shape, while some smaller non-profits lost assets,

experienced revenue declines, and further, many non-profits never recovered at all (McMambridge and Dietz 2020). Currently there is a funneling of rapid response money, but the upcoming recession will impact philanthropic donations in the long-term (Waggoner et al. 2020). Local funds have been made available to Los Angeles County non-profits such as Paycheck Protection Program from the U.S. Small Business Administration, COVID-19 LA County Response Fund from the California Community Foundation, Emergency COVID-19 Crisis Fund from the Los Angeles Mayor's office, Pandemic Relief Fund from the United Way of Greater LA, and Ballmer Group's PPP Partnership with the Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF), among others. Still despite the availability of these funds, non-profits report they have struggled to access both local Los Angeles relief funding designated for small businesses and federal Small Business Administration relief (Knowlton and Gracian 2020).

Case Study: Ballmer Group's PPP Partnership with the Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF)

In April 2020, shortly after banks began making forgivable loans under SBA's new Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), it became clear that there was a problem. Many non-profits that were eligible for the program were unable to apply, in part because many large commercial banks were prioritizing existing clients in the application process. Others submitted applications but were unable to secure funding before the PPP funds ran out, due to a backlog of applications at their bank.

After hearing similar stories from several of their grantees, and in preparation for a second round of PPP funding from Congress, Ballmer Group entered into a partnership with Community Reinvestment Fund, USA (CRF), the largest non-profit lender in the country. Ballmer Group provided CRF with a \$25 million zero-interest loan, with the goal of making PPP loans available to the organization's grantees and other eligible non-profits in three focus regions (Los Angeles County, Washington State, and Southeast Michigan) that were unlikely to receive loans without CRF's support. Ballmer Group also provided an operating grant to cover the cost of CRF's outreach, technical assistance, and high-touch loan servicing for non-profit borrowers.

The impact was immediate. CRF made PPP loans to 35 non-profits through the partnership, including loans to 13 California-based organizations totaling \$10.5 million. Within a week of launching the partnership, all of Ballmer Group's grantees who expressed interest in a PPP loan had either been funded or were at some stage of the application process. The leader of one LA-based non-profit who received a loan from CRF said that they had "never seen a funder work so quickly and effectively to help us meet the needs of any changing environment."

Building a Stronger Non-Profit Sector

Los Angeles County must strengthen the non-profit sector as a key part of civil society in the recovery. The non-profit sector has played a critical role in civic life, as organizations influence public policy and promote voter engagement (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019). Findings from a survey conducted by CalNonprofits (2019) demonstrated that respondents rated non-profits higher than for-profit businesses or government to operate efficiently, spend money responsibly, and represent the public. Moreover, the government often relies on the non-profit sector to manage programs and distribute services on their behalf, as these organizations are closest to communities the government seeks to serve. For instance, in response to COVID-19 and the gap in federal assistance from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for undocumented immigrants, the state of California issued relief assistance for undocumented immigrants (Department of Social Services 2020). To distribute the funds, the California Department of Social Services collaborated with twelve immigrant-serving non-profit organizations to help individuals obtain this assistance in their respective regions.

Even though non-profit organizations have been hard hit by COVID-19, this sector continues to play a critical role in ensuring the most marginalized communities can obtain the assistance and support they need during these unprecedented times. Addressing systemic racism by shifting power and wealth will ensure that recovery efforts center those most impacted by this pandemic (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). In particular, Black, Indigenous and People of Color-led-and-serving non-profits need a return of wealth, decision-making power on the flow of funding and capital, and resources that are controlled by and serve the community (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Advancing racial justice and mitigating inequities is heavily dependent on the work of these organizations not just in direct services but also in power building and in leveraging additional resources (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020).

Moving forward, it is not enough to get the “who” right when it comes to making this investment. We need to get the “how” right, meaning we must shift power. The non-profit sector must have full control over the dollars deployed to them. They need financial investment to rebuild and reimagine their work, and those investments need to be significant – multiple times an organization’s annual budget in many instances. This pandemic has unveiled the devastating consequences of failing to address systemic inequities. Thus, this is our opportunity to heed the voices who have repeatedly called for structural change, to strengthen the non-profit sector, and unleash transformative impact (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). The next section details specific recommendations to achieve our bold vision.

If we are going to depend on the non-profit sector to help deliver crucial safety net services, then we need to re-assess how we are valuing the sector, and how to align funds to support them accordingly. Our vision to strengthen the non-profit sector as a key part of civil society requires a commitment to:

Invest in transforming community power and wealth

- **Philanthropy must recognize the importance of the non-profit sector in addressing the negative impacts of COVID-19, including structural and systemic racism.** This will require that philanthropic dollars extend beyond direct service funding, to target resources toward structurally addressing the inherent social, political and economic contradictions exposed by this crisis. Funding for advocacy and organizing, as well as direct services is necessary. Most importantly, philanthropy must recognize the extenuating crisis, and distribute a larger share of their assets to supporting the vital work of the non-profit sector. Without this kind of support, the sector faces irreparable harm, and our recovery from this crisis will be imperiled.

- **Invest in community spaces, land trusts, and cooperatives that can be operated by non-profit, community-based organizations.** Investments must also be made to increase and support community wealth to increase control over community assets and offer protection from predatory market forces. This includes items like community spaces, land trusts, and cooperatives (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). For philanthropy, this could mean funding the purchase of land for community-based organizations and for the government, this could mean a direct transfer of real estate assets to expand public housing or transfer ownership to organizations that serve communities harmed by systemic racism (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020).

“In order to achieve meaningful results, organizations doing good work need multi-year resources. Period. These organizations are on the ground, supporting the most vulnerable residents in our community and they are doing it on a shoestring budget. We need to adequately resource their work and it might not come from the public agency partners. This is where philanthropy, banks, and other partners could step up and be more intentional about funding non-profits led by people of color, serving people of color.”

– Jacqueline Waggoner, Committee for Greater LA

- **Reorientation of government budgets and policies to justice.** A shift in government funding priorities away from law enforcement to programs and services can help mitigate cycles such as poverty (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). These services can also be furthered by implementing policies that allocate funding to non-profits and center those most impacted by the pandemic (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Service delivery can be more effective by implementing model policies like Measure A which included a non-profit maintenance policy, a servicing allocation policy, equity language, and a displacement avoidance policy (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). To achieve this, government should center non-profit and community voices to determine how funding is

spent. During this crisis, we have witnessed an increase in public engagement with the government through creative avenues such as virtual public meetings (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Coalitions and community organizations, who continue to play a vital role in maintaining public pressure, should be funded long-term to continue this crucial advocacy (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Redirecting some of this funding to community-based organizations closest to community may be more adept at creating transforming environments that focus on healing rather than criminalizing. For example, in light of continued police brutality, The People’s Budget L.A., a coalition convened by Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, developed the People’s Budget to cut the LAPD budget to instead fund proposals from Angelenos that result in clear changes (Peoples Budget LA 2020).

Back Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) – led and BIPOC – serving non-profits

“... it’s moving it to the community and having our non-profit organizations, our community groups help these kids get back on the right track, rather than continuing to fund our criminal justice system where we know there aren’t positive outcomes.”

– Judith Vasquez, Committee for Greater LA

- **Make transformative investments in BIPOC-led and serving non-profits dedicated to dismantling systemic racism.** Qualities of transformative investments include, four to five times an organization’s annual budget, the transfer of decision-making power to the organization, and the support for immediate stabilization as well as implementation of long-term strategies (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). In addition, entry-level funding opportunities must be made available to non-profits who are small in scale but significant in impact, who tend to be excluded from government funding (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020). For example, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided organizations with significant capital

infusions, peer learning, and financial as well as organizational consulting (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). The foundation first allocated unrestricted funds for stabilization for about 18 months and then allocated a second round of funding for the organizations long-term plans (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Transformative investments should come from foundations. In Los Angeles County alone, in 2019, foundations held about \$50 billion in assets (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Taking this into account, foundations should consider transferring more of their assets to support the survival of community organizations (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). BIPOC are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 crisis and they along with the community-based organizations that are serving them have lived experience and an understanding of the problems we are trying to solve. BIPOC-led-and-serving non-profits are also situated in communities most impacted by the pandemic and they represent the infrastructure that will be crucial in focusing recovery efforts on the communities most impacted (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). As exemplified throughout this section, BIPOC-led-and-serving non-profits face the greatest financial risks and the racist history of wealth distribution which means these non-profit organizations will likely face more challenges than their white counterparts in accessing recovery funds (Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). Which is why, these transformative investments must be directed to dismantle these disparities rooted in systematic racism that manifest themselves in funding. Beyond just service delivery, the intellectual capital of non-profit leaders must also be valued and compensated. These leaders should be compensated for the experiences and insights they contribute during convenings, conferences, and trainings, particularly among women and BIPOC leaders.

- **Include Native American groups in funding streams.** Amidst this pandemic, the Native American population is facing issues that have only been exacerbated due to COVID-19 like poverty, lack of access to healthcare, housing insecurity, and a lack of access to their own land and sacred waters (Mooney D'Arcy 2020; R. Williams 2020). Access to their own land is critical for medicine, rituals, and prayers, yet they are denied access due to state and local management of property during the pandemic (Mooney D'Arcy 2020). The economic

impact for these communities is significant, as Native American nation-states collect their revenue from casinos, and the pandemic forced them to close (Scott 2020). In addition, Native American communities are often further invisibilized as some tribes are not federally-recognized and are erased from data (Mooney D'Arcy 2020). Contributing to this underrepresentation, is the fact that last year there was a 5 percent undercount in the Census for the Native American population (Scott 2020). Amidst this pandemic there is a dire need to fund service providers that provide critical services to Native American communities, as they navigate this pandemic (2020). Some tribes do not have access to funding because they are not federally-recognized tribes (Mooney D'Arcy 2020). As guests on this land, we must ensure that we do not continue to perpetuate the erasure of Native American communities and ensure they are equipped with the resources they need to navigate this pandemic by ensuring the organizations servicing these communities are included in funding streams.

- **Build the capacity of indigenous-led groups.** Across the U.S., indigenous migrants originate from Mexican and Central American countries. Indigenous migrants are often invisibilized in data, as their population sizes are small and they are often incorrectly lumped into the Latino category, and are further invisibilized in the immigrant rights movement, a movement led primarily by Latino immigrants, due to internalized racism (Romero and Corpeño 2019). Moreover, indigenous communities across the U.S. are further invisibilized by philanthropy whose expectations of governing structures do not align with the organizing structures and worldview of indigenous communities (Romero and Corpeño 2019). Amidst this pandemic, indigenous migrants have been hard-hit by the pandemic: a data sample collected by Comunidades Indigenas en Liderazgo (CIELO) revealed that nearly 82 percent of indigenous families in Los Angeles worked in the restaurant industry, a sector heavily impacted by the pandemic (Martinez 2020). To address the invisibilization of indigenous migrants, Romero and Corpeño outline the role philanthropy can play in supporting indigenous-led organizations by building their capacity, as they are equipped with the culturally and linguistically appropriate programs to support indigenous communities (2019).

- **Understand and fund the full costs associated with effective non-profit service delivery.**

Local and regional government, philanthropy, and the private sector are all reliant on non-profit organizations to execute their valuable work, and to do it below cost. All sectors will need to play a role in shifting these standards and expectations. Shifting power and wealth, transforming how investments are made, and moving to support BIPOC-led and -serving non-profits at true costs will ensure moving towards a more sustainable model of non-profits. Rather, at the very least when facing this crisis, we should see investments that allow the non-profit sector to move into stabilization. This will require foundations to make long-term, multi-year investments. As organizations think about re-opening their doors, it is crucial that they are supported with the necessary funds they need to ensure they are well-equipped to open their doors safely (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020).

Adapt to non-profit's needs

- **Restructure contracts to multi-year contracts and reduce restrictions, as well as requirements that often add an administrative burden.**

Governments and foundations need to reimagine their invoicing process, consider using flat-fee services instead of line-item reimbursement, expedite reimbursements and cover full overhead and administrative costs, adjust compliance with delivery numbers that were established before COVID-19, rely on independent single audits to assure compliance, remove legal liabilities related to referrals, and advocate for state and federal reform to allow implementation of these recommendations (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020; Nonprofit Finance Fund 2020). To the maximum extent possible, foundations should also provide unrestricted operating support grants to provide non-profits with the flexible funding to navigate the dynamic nature of this crisis. Administrative burdens can add another layer of challenges and impact an organization's capacity at a time when it is already stretched thin. CalNonprofits reports that in light of COVID-19, non-profit organizations are facing issues with fulfilling state and local government contracts. And while there

has been some response from the government in adapting their contract requirements and procedures, this has been uneven (CalNonprofits: California Association of Nonprofits 2019:600). It comes as no surprise that CalNonprofit, along with thousands of non-profits as undersigners, wrote a letter urging the governor to support the non-profit sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"... philanthropy, as well as government, will need to look at policies around equitable funding, not only from a cost ratio, but also a cost ratio of ensuring that we have livable wages for our employees and our employees have the opportunity to retire with dignity."

– Charisse Bremond Weaver, Committee for Greater LA

- **Better coordination between City and County governments to effectively meet the needs of community organizations.** The current system is fragmented, creating additional labor for staff and non-profits that can add to the cost and can divest funds away from critical services (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020). Modernizing and aligning the current systems in place can eliminate unnecessary labor and more efficiently meet the needs of organizations (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020). One approach is to create a website, for community-based organizations to communicate with County staff about their County contracts and a similar website can be created for the City of Los Angeles (County of Los Angeles Coronavirus Economic Resiliency Task Force 2020).

This crisis, preceding COVID-19, but nevertheless exacerbated as a result, has long been in the making, further straining the non-profit sector. Scarce and Wang (2020) define non-profit organization resilience as "the ability to respond effectively to change and adapt successfully to new and unforeseen circumstances while staying true to mission ." We must continue and support that vision and resiliency.

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POLICY SECTION 15

Transportation

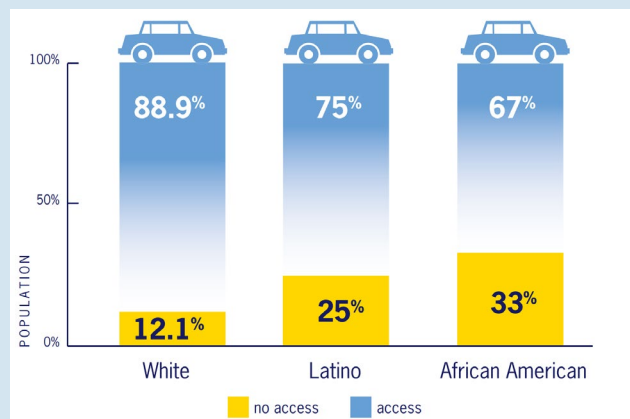
Inequitable Transportation Before COVID-19

The transportation system has long been failing communities of color, low-income households, unhoused residents, people with disabilities, women, children, and the elderly across Los Angeles County. Among these vulnerable populations, many people do not feel safe moving around the city. Whether walking, biking, taking public transit, or driving, people of color are regularly stopped and harassed or humiliated by the police. For example, Black people in particular are more likely to be killed by police during routine traffic stops (Shahum 2020). They are also more likely to be killed in traffic accidents, which in Los Angeles alone, cause thousands of injuries and hundreds of deaths each year.

Many streets feel unsafe for walking or biking, yet some people have no other option. Walking in a non-white census tract increases the probability of being killed or severely injured by a motor vehicle, disproportionately impacting Black Angelenos. While Black residents are only 8 percent of the Los Angeles population, they bear 20 percent of pedestrian fatalities (Canez 2020). Moreover, even after controlling for income, racial disparities in automobile access exist. As Figure 15-1 shows, among low-income Americans, just 12 percent of whites lack automobile access, in comparison with 25 percent of Latinos and 33 percent of African Americans (Zimmerman et al. 2015). Maintaining a system oriented around private automobile ownership exacerbates existing disparities, resulting in social and economic exclusion for those who are carless, who are disproportionately Black and Latino (Wachs and Taylor 2020).

Our current transportation system is so car-centric that for many, purchasing a vehicle feels like a prerequisite for participating in society and accessing basic social and economic opportunities. For low-income families, obtaining, insuring, fueling, maintaining, and repairing an automobile can be a heavy financial burden and significant source of stress. Furthermore, the disparate costs associated with vehicle ownership are a manifestation of systemic racism. Automobile insurance companies continue to

FIGURE 15-1: AUTOMOBILE ACCESS AMONG LOW-INCOME AMERICANS BY RACE, 2009



Source: PolicyLink, Convergence Partnership and Prevention Institute, 2009, <https://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/At-the-Intersection-of-Active-Transportation-and-Equity.pdf>.

engage in redlining practices, charging residents of high-minority and low-income neighborhoods higher premiums for similar policies (Ong and Stoll 2007). Moreover, people of color and low-income households tend to pay higher prices for lower quality vehicles, as they are more often steered into exploitative financing options (Sutton 2007). Despite the challenges of vehicle ownership, the transportation system has been designed in such a way that the alternative—not owning a car—is often worse. To move easily around the city, many struggling families feel forced to make sacrifices and take financial risks to take part in what is increasingly acknowledged as a dangerous and environmentally unsustainable mode of travel.

The noneconomic costs of an automobile-oriented transportation system also fall disproportionately on low-income families and communities of color. As shown in Figure 15-2 across the United States, African American children are twice as likely, and Latino children 40 percent more likely, to be killed while walking than are white children (Zimmerman et al. 2015). Similarly, African Americans are 30 percent more likely, and Latinos 23 percent more likely, to be killed while biking (Zimmerman et al. 2015). Low-

FIGURE 15-2: MOTOR VEHICLE FATALITIES BY RACE AND INCOME



Governing, August 2014

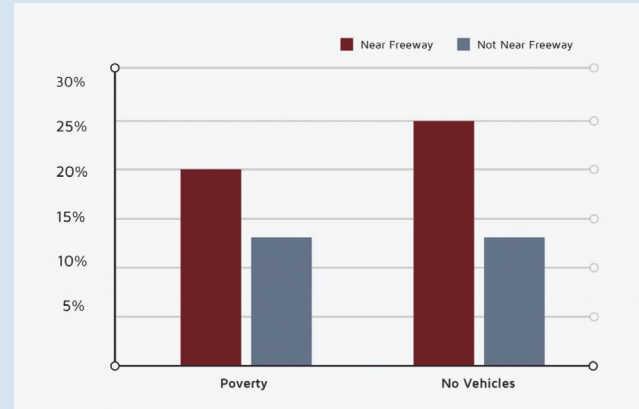
Dangerous by Design, 2011

Governing, August 2014

Source: Zimmerman, Sara, Michelle Lieberman, Karen Kramer, and Bill Sadler. 2015. At the Intersection of Active Transportation and Equity: Joining Forces to Make Communities Healthier and Fairer. Safe Routes to School National Partnership, <https://saferoutespartnership.org/sites/default/files/pdf/At-the-Intersection-of-Active-Transportation-and-Equity.pdf>.

income neighborhoods have pedestrian fatality rates twice as high as higher-income neighborhoods (Zimmerman et al. 2015). Low-income communities also live closer to freeways, suffer disproportionately from vehicular air pollution, and face higher risks of the associated negative health outcomes such as cancer, respiratory disease, heart disease, and

FIGURE 15-3: POVERTY STATUS AND VEHICLE OWNERSHIP RATES BY FREEWAY ADJACENCY, UNITED STATES' 10 MOST CONGESTED URBAN AREAS



Source: 2011 U.S. Census and 2009 National Household Travel Survey, <https://transfersmagazine.org/magazine-article/longer-view-the-fairness-of-congestion-pricing/>.

preterm birth (Manville 2019). Figure 15-3 displays poverty status and vehicle ownership rates by freeway adjacency.

Many of the most vulnerable members of society are unable to drive at all and must rely on walking, biking, or public transit to get around. People with disabilities are uniquely challenged by unsafe sidewalks and hazardous curb ramps. Even when public transit is wheelchair accessible, they often face barriers in the pedestrian environments of their own neighborhoods (Zimmerman et al. 2015). Physical mobility constraints can also preclude social mobility for those experiencing houselessness; transportation access was reported as the primary barrier to regular school attendance for youth experiencing houselessness and a significant barrier to employment for adults (Zimmerman et al. 2015). After years of overinvesting in automobile infrastructure, Los Angeles County has left many communities without accessible, affordable, and sustainable transportation

When cities do invest in sustainable transportation, wealthy neighborhoods and white residents often see the greatest benefits. For example, rather than prioritizing bus service for transit-dependents, who are disproportionately people of color, public transit agencies sometimes invest in expensive new rail projects, favored by white riders and politically powerful residents. Similarly, active transportation infrastructure—including sidewalks, good street lighting, and traffic calming devices—is much more

commonly found in high-income neighborhoods. When cities do invest in disadvantaged neighborhoods, they often fail to involve local residents in the process and fail to combat the displacement risk that accompanies rising property values. And displacement presents a new set of transportation challenges: when communities of color are priced out of dense, transit-rich neighborhoods, the more affluent newcomers are less likely to rely heavily on public transit, and under-resourced transit agencies struggle to provide high-quality service to a geographically dispersed ridership base (Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris 2019).

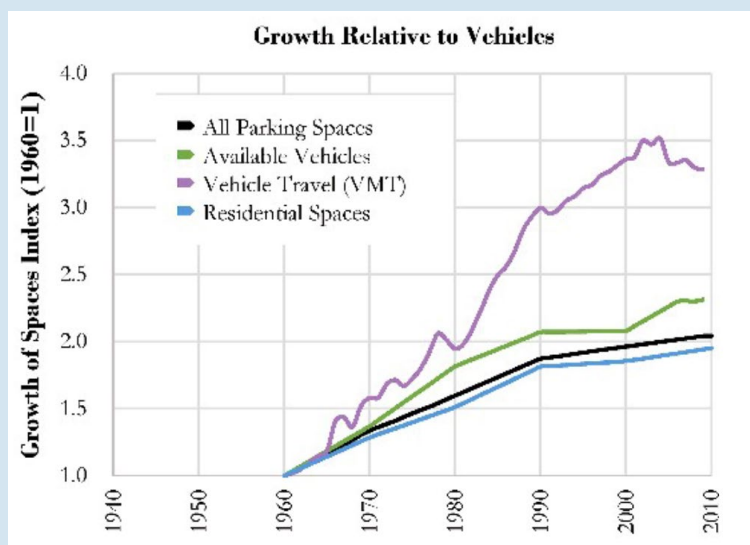
Meanwhile, government policies and infrastructure projects have made driving ever more attractive, and public transit has been steadily losing riders. Declines in ridership tend to result in less funding and decreased service, further harming the vulnerable residents who depend on transit for their basic needs. Researchers at UCLA have confirmed increasing vehicle ownership to be the primary factor behind the Southern California region's ridership loss (Manville, Taylor, and Blumenberg 2018). Over the years, increasing vehicle ownership has been made possible by similar increases in the parking supply, and due to misguided local policies, 14 percent of incorporated land in Los Angeles County is now covered with parking (Chester et al. 2015). Cities have long required a minimum number of spaces accompany each new development or change in land use, artificially lowering the cost of keeping a private vehicle, and conferring an immense structural advantage on those able to operate or afford one. From behind the scenes, these policies have contributed to urban sprawl, spread out destinations, and made pedestrian travel unpleasant or impossible, especially limiting the mobility of youth, the elderly, and the disabled.

The inequities in our current system are the result of years of transportation planning and policy-making in which decision makers have disregarded or even shown deliberate contempt for the needs of vulnerable populations. In the 1960's, planners destroyed Black and immigrant neighborhoods in Los Angeles and across the United States, forcibly displacing residents to make way for urban freeways. Today,

priorities seem unchanged. Even as thousands of residents are unhoused and made to feel unwelcome moving throughout public spaces, cities have managed to make room for every automobile.

Not only does our auto-oriented system produce disparate fatality rates, it also exacerbates health inequalities and severely limits the opportunities accessible to vulnerable residents. Before imagining a transportation system designed for justice, we must understand our current system and how it has been perpetuated. This means recognizing the powerful behind-the-scenes role of parking policies: Figure 15-4 shows how nearly vehicle growth has mirrored growth in the parking supply since 1960. Perhaps more than any other transportation policy, minimum parking requirements have served to quietly reinforce the dominant paradigm and its structural inequalities. In 1962, James Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*, "White people cannot, in the generality, be taken as models of how to live" (Baldwin 1993). Now, living in a system designed to produce ever more automobile infrastructure, racial minorities and immigrants who are able to afford a vehicle may see little choice but to "integrate into a burning house." The next section builds on the inequities outlined above that were only made more apparent by the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 15-4: POVERTY STATUS AND VEHICLE OWNERSHIP RATES BY FREEWAY ADJACENCY, UNITED STATES' 10 MOST CONGESTED URBAN AREAS



Source: Chester, Mikhail, Andrew Fraser, Juan Matute, Carolyn Flower, and Ram Pendyala. 2015. "Parking Infrastructure: A Constraint on or Opportunity for Urban Redevelopment? A Study of Los Angeles County Parking Supply and Growth." *Journal of The American Planning Association* 81(4):268-86, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2015.1092879>.

Widening Inequalities in the Face of COVID-19

COVID-19 has exposed just how far we are from the goal of inclusivity in planning. Black transportation planner and community organizer Destiny Thomas expressed her fear that rapid roll-outs of new pandemic response programs involved only token concern for Black residents and could actually deepen mistrust among historically disenfranchised communities. Other activists have also expressed frustration with typical community engagement processes, which can feel extractive, as if planners are more interested in validating preset agendas than in providing participants with opportunities to meaningfully influence program designs. Regardless of whether street closures were ultimately met with community approval, the simple fact that these programs were designed and deployed so rapidly lays bare the top-down approach that has dominated planning processes.

“Quick-build equity won’t pull us from the grips of structural racism that got us here [...] when cities offered miles of road closures as a policy response to the pandemic, many Black planners—women in particular—spoke up about the dangers of excluding entire communities from public processes.”

– Destiny Thomas

Source: Destiny Thomas, “‘Safe Streets’ are not Safe for Black Lives,” Bloomberg City Lab, June 8, 2020 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-08/safe-streets-are-not-safe-for-black-lives>.

When programs are designed without consulting the community, the needs of the most vulnerable populations are easily overlooked. For example, when Los Angeles rolled out free COVID-19 testing, about two-thirds of the testing locations were drive-through only—inaccessible to residents without vehicles. Evelyn Blumenberg and Madeleine Brozen with the UCLA Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies shared these findings with the LA Times, noting that those in greatest need of testing may be least able to access it: “If you live in a household without a car in Los Angeles County, you are much more likely to be poor, 65 or

older, Black, a recent immigrant, living with a disability, or uninsured. These same households also face higher risks of contracting COVID-19, so making sure they have access to testing is paramount” (Blumenberg and Brozen 2020). Blumenberg and Brozen estimated that only 9 percent of Los Angeles County’s population lived within a 20-minute walk of a walk-up site. Those who need testing but do not live within walking distance might still take the bus, but this would mean increasing their risk exposure to the virus.

“Being in LA without a vehicle and not having a safe access alternative. So around the end of January, I fished out a bicycle that my old roommate left in the garage to try, and that gets me to Whole Foods 365 quicker. So it’s a no car that for me has been the biggest challenge.”

– Focus Group Participant

In order to slow the spread of the virus, public health agencies have recommended people avoid public transit for nonessential trips and use forms of transportation that minimize close contact with others. As a result, public transit has seen ridership declines as steep as 50 to 90 percent in major metropolitan areas (Taylor and Wasserman 2020). During focus groups, participants expressed that everyday tasks such as going to the grocery store or the laundromat have been a challenge through this pandemic, as they rely on public transportation but are refraining from it due to safety concerns, and often times have no other alternatives (MOLA Market Research & Consulting, LLC 2020). In April, the Transit app surveyed its remaining users and found there had been a significant “white flight” from public transit; those still riding were more likely than ever to be Black or Latino (Transit 2020). In Los Angeles, language was another dividing line, with a sharp decline in use among English-speaking users but a much smaller decline among Spanish-speakers (Transit 2020). Those left riding public transit were primarily the “essential workers” society depends on, commonly employed in food distribution and healthcare jobs, and unable

to telecommute. Many transit agencies have taken measures to increase their safety—such as installing physical barriers for drivers, regularly disinfecting surfaces, improving air flow, reminding riders to maintain social distancing, and providing hand sanitizer and face masks—yet not everyone complies with safety guidelines. The disparities in COVID-19 outcomes for vulnerable populations are likely exacerbated by the disparities in who is left riding public transit during the pandemic.

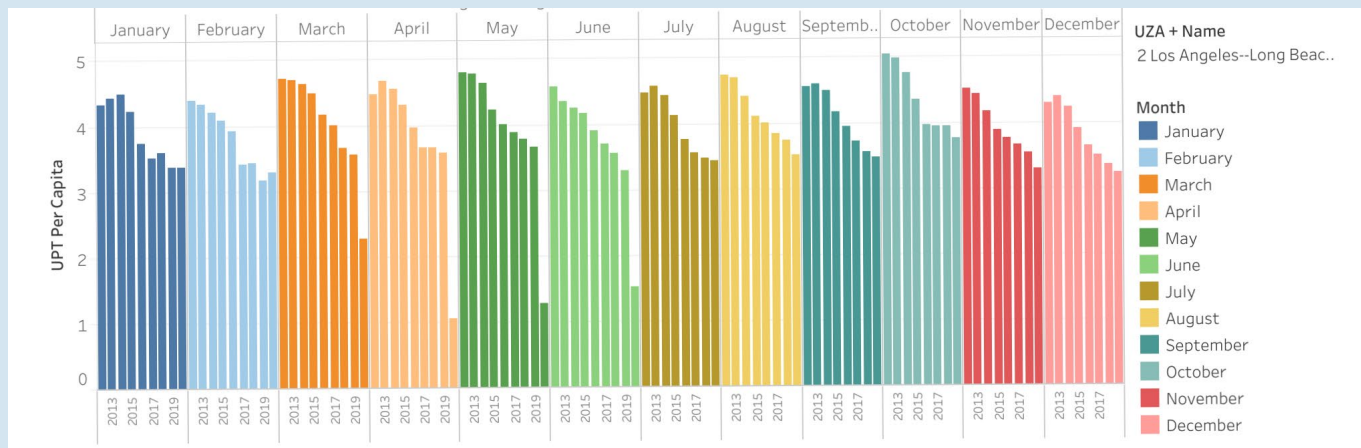
“[Prior to COVID-19] ... I don’t drive ... I ride share and I Metro from Long Beach to Little Tokyo for work. When shelter-in-place happened, I was like, great, I don’t have to ride. I’ll just work from home, no big deal. But the elimination of safety for taking a Lyft and public transport for health safety that really impacted me... Like normally I would take the bus to the laundromat and Lyft back home with my clean laundry, no big deal. When COVID-19 happened, I couldn’t go anywhere, I was like what am I supposed to do ... the logistics of everyday life have really been a pain.”

– Focus Group Participant

On top of the new public health challenges, COVID-19 has created serious financial challenges for transit agencies. Especially in Los Angeles, public transit service relies heavily on sales tax revenues, but due to the economic shutdown, these revenues are now down by a third (Wachs and Taylor 2020). Fare revenues have also decreased with falling ridership, and to minimize the chance of contagion, many agencies have stopped collecting any fares at all. Furthermore, expenses are increasing, as agencies work to enable social distancing and provide regular cleaning. It is hard to predict how the pandemic might impact ridership once it passes. On the one hand, some former riders may permanently adopt new travel habits they formed in response to the coronavirus. An IBM survey found that more than 20 percent of respondents who had regularly used public transportation before now said they no longer would, and another 28 percent said they will likely use it less often (IBM 2020). On the other hand, the economic downturn could force some individuals and families to give up their cars to return to public transit, and it might prevent others from purchasing new vehicles. Either way, the downstream effects of COVID-19 will likely include the widening of historical disparities in public transit ridership.

Public transit ridership was falling even before the coronavirus, but sank to historic lows after Safer-at-Home orders were issued in late March. Figure 15-5 shows how monthly ridership (measured in unlinked

FIGURE 15-5: YEAR-OVER-YEAR TRANSIT RIDERSHIP BY MONTH, LOS ANGELES-LONG BEACH-ANAHEIM URBANIZED AREA

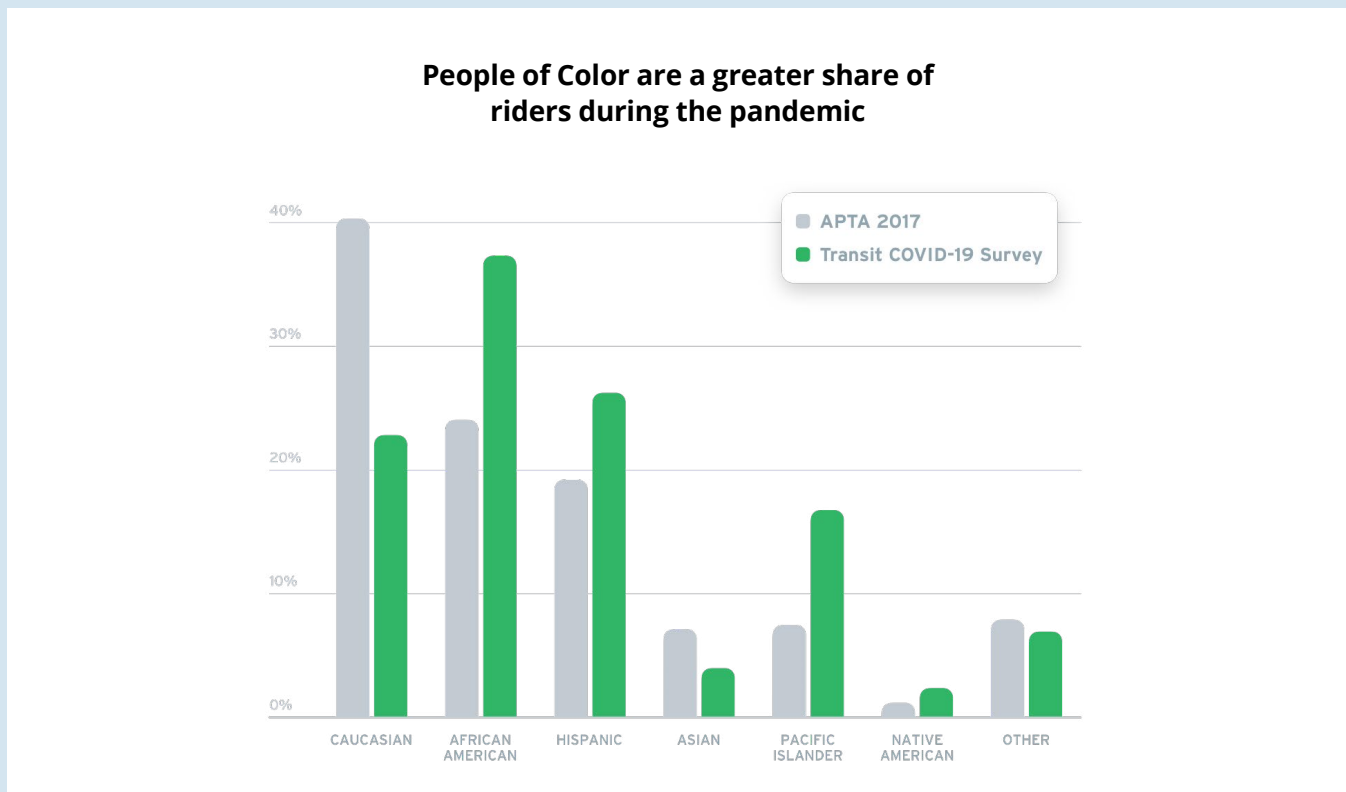


Source: Urban area population data updated annually from U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 1-yr estimates, except for urban areas less than about 65,000 people for which ACS 5-yr estimates were used. Population estimates extrapolated to current year by linear regression, https://www.transitwiki.org/TransitWiki/index.php/TransitWiki:Ridership_Visualization.

passenger trips per capita) in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim Urbanized Area has declined this past March, April, and May, in comparison with prior years. While public transit agencies usually find falling ridership worrisome, the recent ridership drops have actually helped to make social distancing possible. Even so, public transit is not an ideal mode of transportation during a pandemic, and the people still riding are often essential workers with no other option.

The likelihood of former riders having alternatives available seems to vary significantly by race. Figure 15-6 provides insight into how the racial makeup of riders has shifted, comparing the results of a 2017 study published by the American Public Transit Association and a user survey conducted by the Transit app in April 2020. This figure reveals that public transit ridership among the white population has significantly dropped, while Black and Latino riders now compose the majority of Transit users. Taking these impacts into account, the next section outlines our vision along with proactive recommendations, as we think through an equitable recovery.

FIGURE 15-6: SHARE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP BY RACE, BEFORE AND DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



Source: APTA, “Who Rides Public Transportation” (2017), Transit survey of U.S. users (April 2020), <https://medium.com/transit-app/whos-left-riding-public-transit-hint-it-s-not-white-people-d43695b3974a>.

Building a Transportation System for All

We envision a transportation future in which all people—of every age, ability, income, zip code, race, and ethnicity—feel safe and free, experience a sense of community, and can easily access their basic needs. Black people should experience a deep sense of belonging in the streets and be able to travel without a constant fear of police violence. Children in historically neglected neighborhoods should have clean air to breathe, safe places to play, and safe routes to school. People should be able to travel across the city without fear of being struck by a car, and without risk of injuring or killing someone else. Everyone should be welcomed onto public transit, regardless of ability to pay. Active transportation infrastructure should be accessible to all, designed particularly with the needs of the disabled and the elderly in mind. Anyone who wants to ride a bicycle should have access to one, along with a safe means of storage. Equity considerations and community voices should be at the forefront when allocating transportation funding, and strong anti-displacement measures must guarantee communities of color the right to remain in place and benefit from new infrastructure investments in their neighborhoods.

Before we can imagine a system that promotes justice, cities must acknowledge how undemocratic decision-making has resulted in many of the past and present injustices. We must learn from the past and transform the system to facilitate deep and continuous public participation. Transportation planners and policy makers should be well-intentioned and knowledgeable, but also humble enough to accept new perspectives and ideas from the community. Planners must listen to the voices of those who have long been marginalized and share information with them, but more importantly, they must also share power. If leaders hope to avoid repeating previous mistakes, such redistributions of power must occur

across organizations, including in the early stages of the decision-making process. Transportation departments should establish long-term partnerships with the grassroots organizations and activists already working for justice in their communities. Planners should work collaboratively with those who have suffered the greatest harm under the current system, to reimagine and co-create the next.

A just transportation system is one that also works in harmony with the people's wider vision for Los Angeles. The system should align with other citywide goals, increasing access to education, good jobs, healthcare, and civic engagement opportunities without endangering the lives of vulnerable residents or undermining the principles of environmental justice. The system must be transformed so that the healthy and sustainable modes of transportation traditionally associated with second-class citizenship—such as walking, biking, and public transit—are lifted up to be not only the most affordable, but also the most convenient and enjoyable. Public streets should be welcoming and inclusive spaces that support healthy, active, connected, and politically-engaged communities.

Systemic problems require systemic solutions. We must respond to this crisis with bold changes to promote equity in transportation and create a system that works for all. This means involving local communities in decision-making, prioritizing the transportation needs of vulnerable populations, and ensuring the transportation system aligns with other societal goals. **To achieve a future of transportation in which all people—of every age, ability, income, zip code, race, and ethnicity—feel safe and free, experience a sense of community, and can easily access their basic needs, we must commit to:**

Create new participatory structures:

Work closely with grassroots organizations to solve transportation issues. New transportation plans, policies, and infrastructure investments should be planned in collaboration with communities, including those who have historically been excluded from planning processes. Planners should aim to meet community members where they are, understand their needs, and then work together to determine the best ways to use available resources. Transportation agencies should create long-term partnerships with grassroots groups to understand local concerns and their role in protecting the rights of underinvested communities to remain in place.

Work for equity in active transportation:

Reduce barriers to active transportation and encourage choice. Walking and biking can serve as safe, healthy, enjoyable, and affordable modes of transportation. However, many people experience significant barriers to active transportation, and these barriers are not the same for every community. People of color may feel unsafe due to racial profiling and police brutality. Some neighborhoods may lack safe sidewalks and street lights, or safe bicycle routes and parking, while others may lack nearby destinations. Planners and policy makers should refrain from one-size-fits-all solutions, working with local residents to understand and respond to local needs. Resources should always be allocated with equity in mind, prioritizing the needs of communities most left behind.

Fill funding gaps for public transit:

Expand the use of toll lanes. As the pandemic eases and more riders return to public transit, agencies must have the resources to provide safe and reliable service to those who need it. Transit riders should not have to waste hours of their day or struggle to meet their basic needs simply because they are unable to operate or afford an automobile. One strategy to improve their experience, while also helping agencies recover from lost sales tax revenue, involves expanding the use of toll lanes. As UCLA Professor Donald Shoup explains in an article, “The toll revenue itself can finance the transit system, where service improvements can help draw even more cars off the road” (2020). Designating just a few more freeway lanes in which low-occupancy vehicles must pay to travel can help speed buses, fund transit, and reduce the advantages of solo driving.

Revisit parking policies:

Review minimum parking requirements. Minimum parking requirements force all of society to pay for an environmentally destructive transportation system that benefits only those with cars, quietly undermining racial equity. Without mandated parking, we might see fewer vehicles, fewer fatalities, less air pollution, more space for housing, and more widespread demand for safe and sustainable transportation options. Cities must revisit their parking policies, but they must do so in close collaboration with marginalized communities to ensure parking management strategies promote equity even in the short term. Among other strategies, this should involve giving local communities control over how their parking revenues are spent or distributed.

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