THE COLOR OF CORONAVIRUS
APM RESEARCH LAB’S MORTALITY MONITORING PROJECT, WITH A FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY

APM RESEARCH LAB
GABRIEL CORTES, DATA JOURNALIST
ANDI EGBERT, INTERIM DIRECTOR
PRESENTATION TO THE BUILD RESEARCH COLLABORATORY
AUGUST 3, 2020 | VIA WEBINAR
MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

Gabriel Cortes

Andi Egbert

A brief word about how we got to where we are, professionally speaking...
Our Mission: To foster an engaged democracy by inspiring curiosity, inquiry and discussion through fact-driven, credible research and analysis.

What do we do? We inform journalists, community leaders, and all Americans about challenges and opportunities facing families and communities throughout the nation.

How do we do it? Through original surveys, demographic and economic analysis, data visualization, and more. We also work in partnership with media outlets across the country.

Founded in 2017, the APM Research Lab strengthens the work of the American Public Media Group family, including Marketplace, APM Reports, Minnesota Public Radio News, Southern California Public Radio, The Water Main and Call to Mind. We are based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The APM Research Lab is generously supported by an anonymous fund of the Dorsey & Whitney Foundation, as well as individual and philanthropic giving.
CONNECT WITH US ONLINE AT APMRESEARCHLAB.ORG

AND ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM & TWITTER @APMRESEARCH
AGENDA FOR OUR TIME TOGETHER

- THE COLOR OF CORONAVIRUS: What is it?
- THE BEGINNING: How and why we began this work
- THE FINDINGS: What have we seen in the data to date?
- THE METHODS: Data collection, analysis, presentation
- THE IMPACT: Media, policy coverage, & other responses
- THE BEST PART: Your questions & comments

apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race
THE COLOR OF CORONAVIRUS: WHAT IS IT?

- A mortality monitoring project, with a focus on equitable deaths. (Shorthand, CoC)
- Original data collection, analysis, and presentation by the APM Research Lab
- Data presented state-by-state and aggregated for the nation as a whole
- The most painful and most gratifying and most cited work we've ever done.

apmresearchlab.org/covid/deaths-by-race
THE BEGINNING:
HOW & WHY WE BEGAN THIS WORK
EARLY APRIL 2020: 4 SHORT (BUT VERY LONG) MONTHS AGO

- April 1 article in *The Atlantic*: “Why Don’t We Know Who The Coronavirus Victims Are” by Dr. Ibram X. Kendi
- Consulted with APM Reports (our investigative and documentary division at APM)
- **APM Reports** began doing traditional reporting about how cities & states were responding or not, and consequences (link below)
- We began a scan of available data and published first installment of CoC on April 9
- The CDC did not (and still does not) present data with the robustness or timeliness of our project.
- COVID Racial Tracker also does similar work—without aligned denominators and without age-adjustment and less interpretation

apmreports.org/story/2020/07/15/washington-dc-response-to-coronavirus
Data about the racial background of Americans who died from COVID-19 available for only 38% of all deaths. (35% were Black).

- In Chicago, 73% of all deaths were among Black residents, although they represent only 30% of the city's population.

Geographies reporting:
- 7 states: Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina
- Chicago, New York City, and Milwaukee County
THE FINDINGS: BROAD & DEEP PATTERNS OF INEQUITABLE DEATHS FROM COVID-19
JULY 22, 2020: THE COLOR OF CORONAVIRUS

- 16 editions of CoC later
- Growing data transparency by states (46 + DC)
- 91% of deaths have racial ethnic detail
- Clear patterns of racial inequity

**Black & Indigenous Americans experience highest death tolls from COVID-19**

Cumulative actual COVID-19 mortality rates per 100,000, by race and ethnicity, April 13-July 21, 2020

Note: Dates are not consistently scaled, but reflect data collection intervals for our Color of Coronavirus project.
July 22, 2020: The Color of Coronavirus

Adjusted for age, other racial groups are this many times more likely to have died of COVID-19 than White Americans

Reflects mortality rates calculated through July 21.

- Aggregated picture of the virus’ toll on communities of color in the U.S.
- Relative to White mortality, Blacks are 3.7X as high, Indigenous are 3.5X, Pacific Islanders are 2.8X, Latinos are 2.5X

Indirect age-adjustment has been used.
Indirect age-adjustment began with our July releases
Why did we do this? What impact did it have?
White Americans: Age-adjusted COVID-19 mortality rates, through July 21

Deaths per 100,000. For all U.S. states with available data, where 15 or more known deaths have occurred. Sorted from highest to lowest rate.

- Massachusetts: 104
- Connecticut: 99
- New Jersey: 81
- Rhode Island: 71
- New York: 70
- Louisiana: 52
- Delaware: 38
- Pennsylvania: 38
- Maryland: 38
- Michigan: 36
- Illinois: 34
- District of Columbia: 34
- Indiana: 29
- Mississippi: 28
- Colorado: 27
- US TOTAL: 27
INTERACTIVE STATE-LEVEL GRAPHS

- Data also available grouped by state/nation for actual (crude) rates, age-adjusted rates, and counts/estimates.
THE METHODS: DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION
METHODS

- On Tuesday in production week, we do original data collection at each state website.
- On Wednesday we aggregate, age-adjust, summarize, narrate and visualize the results for the public.
- Our denominators are sensitive and aligned to the uneven landscape of states’ data: treatment of Latino ethnicity, race alone or in combination, merged racial groups such as APIs.
- “Unknown” races are removed from the denominator. If only percentages given, deaths by race are estimated.
- We engage in “data advocacy,” helping states improve their presentation of the racial data. (e.g. no Latinos, unclear labeling, group disaggregation, requesting counts instead of percentages)

apmreports.org/story/2020/07/15/washington-dc-response-to-coronavirus
**METHODS**

- NM sends us data by special arrangement. For non-reporting states (ND, SD, WV, HI), we rely upon lagged, partial CDC data. Also supplement public data for FL (Asians) & TX (all groups).
- We are still hampered by poor reporting by states. E.g. New York has XXXX “other” deaths.
- 2018 (latest) American Community Survey data used for denominators, percentages, and age-adjustment.
- Age-adjustment relies upon latest national age-specific mortality rates from the CDC, latest state- and race-specific age group distributions from the ACS, latest actual/crude rates from our data collection, and a super-charged spreadsheet (+ coffee\(^5\))
- We chose not to calculate rates if below 15 deaths, but provide complete unsuppressed data in our data file.
THE IMPACT: MEDIA & OTHER COVERAGE
RESPONSES TO OUR WORK

- Garnered half a million pageviews in 3 months’ time and growing
- Cited in congressional testimony at least 3 times & in articles about policy responses such as Sen. Kamala Harris’ bill
- Utilized in college and high school curricula, health professionals’ continuing education (Mayo Clinic), and webinars
- Cited in hundreds of national and international media stories, and several peer-reviewed journals including JAMA
- Equipped equity champions with data to drive their work
- Coming soon: An online “response panel” including Dr. Mehta and others with perspectives on this work

apmresearchlab.org/media-mentions-list
thegrio.com/2020/07/15/kamala-harri-anti-racism-bill-covid-19/
YOUR QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Explore more of our work at: apmresearchlab.org/topics
THANK YOU!
LET’S STAY IN TOUCH...

Gabriel:
gcortes@apmresearchlab.org

Andi:
aegbert@apmresearchlab.org
Twitter @DataANDInfo