

**Forum:** Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee

**Issue #14-01:** Addressing the increase of racial inequity during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## Introduction

For the past few hundred years, discrimination against different races has been causing several issues. However, these past few years, there has been an increase in protests, newspaper headlines, and other events that have brought awareness to this racial discrimination. Once COVID-19 started at the beginning of 2020, the gap between different races widened even more, causing the rise of a new set of problems. The number of deaths has increased, the amount of hate has also heightened, and in general, the amount of inequity amongst the people has also increased. COVID-19 gave new ways as well as new reasons for people to discriminate against those of other races. These include things such as unequal health care treatment, continued and increased violence, unfair access to vaccines used to fight covid, and many others. According to BBC News, "people of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, and other Asian, black Caribbean, and other black ethnicity had between a 10% to 50% higher risk of death when compared with white British people" ("Covid has Thrived..."). In turn, because of these numbers, various countries have been greatly suffering and so have their people. The increased percent of deaths can be caused for numerous reasons but one of them has been observed to be unequal health care for these people. And so, not only do individuals being discriminated against suffer but so do their countries. This inequality has been going on for an extensive amount of

time, after the COVID-19 hit, it wasn't as big of a surprise to see such numbers appearing in the news. With these unpleasant numbers, some governments have shifted their focus on stopping COVID-19 as a whole and bringing back their countries as close as they can to "normal". Due to this shift in priorities, many governments have turned a blind eye to protests such as the black lives matter and stop Asian hate. Nevertheless, because of its long history, trying to diminish the amount of discrimination and inequality against different races hasn't been easy.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **COVID-19**

An infectious respiratory disease originating in Wuhan, China, causing mild to moderate illness

### **Pandemic**

An outbreak of a disease that impacts a wide range of geographic area and the population

### **Inequity**

Lack of justice; unfairness

### **Inequality**

Difference or unbalanced conditions and circumstances; lack of equality

### **Racial Minority**

A group of people in a certain race that is in the minority (smaller number) compared to a larger group

## **Racism**

Prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes against a certain group of people or a person based on race or ethnicity, especially the groups that are a minority

## **BAME**

Stands for black, Asian, and minority ethnic

## **Discrimination**

Unjust treatment towards different groups of people, especially depending on their race, sex, or age

## **Hate Crime**

A crime (especially involving violence) caused by stereotypes or prejudice on a specific race, sex, religion...etc

## **Vaccination**

Treatment to produce immunity against a disease

## **Health Insurance**

A type of insurance system that covers medical expenses, such as costs of hospitalization, medicines, or doctor consultation

## **General Overview**

Racial inequity has been revealed since the outbreak of COVID-19. People are treated differently by their racial groups, and the death rates and infection rates caused by COVID-19 also differ. Racial inequity is obvious in the United States, but it is also a worldwide issue since different types of racial groups are treated

differently. Furthermore, the rates of hate crimes also increased, especially targeting Asians, and these hate crimes are being justified in some countries.

### **Outbreak of COVID-19**

On January 30, 2020, WHO Director-General declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern regarding COVID-19. COVID-19 virus primarily spreads through saliva, especially when an infected person coughs. More than 3 million people died, and more than 140 million people were confirmed from this virus worldwide.

The outbreak of COVID-19 revealed the hidden racism and racial inequity and worsened conflicts between different racial and ethnic groups. However, the government's focus is more on resolving COVID-19, rather than inequity and disparities among different racial and ethnic groups.

### **Stop Asian Hate Protest**

COVID-19 originating from Wuhan, China, gave an unacceptable reason to justify racism and violence against Asians, thus, a lot of Asian Americans were blamed for bringing and spreading the virus. More than 2,800 first-hand accounts of hate crimes occurred between the end of 2020 and March 2021 in the United States, and 503 anti-Asian hate incidents happened between January and February. The majority of these incidents were verbal harassment, and 20 percent were shunning and avoidance while approximately 11 percent involved physical violence. On March 16, 2021, 6 Asian women including 4 Koreans were killed by shooting in Spas in Atlanta. In addition, a woman of Filipino descent was punched, an old Asian man was violated, and another woman was struck by a metal object in the United States.

Hate crimes towards Asians are not happening only in the US but in other European countries such as the UK. In order to spread awareness, the hashtag

#StopAsianHate spread on Social Media, and people protested on the streets against the hate crimes against people of Asian descent.

### **Black Lives Matter Protest**

On May 25th, 2020, a black man named “George Floyd” was arrested by the police in Minneapolis. The police officer was kneeling on his neck which led Floyd to death. The video of the arrest was shared worldwide through social media and shocked numerous people. The repetition of police brutality towards Black people led hundreds of people in Minneapolis to protest and raise their voices. The protest in order to protect black lives and resist police brutality spread to other states such as Los Angeles, and further spread worldwide. Protesters were chanting “I can’t breathe” and “Black Lives Matter”.

International protests against police brutality implemented some changes. Measures to ban Minneapolis police officers from using choke holds and restraints were agreed upon. Despite these changes being made, there are still numerous issues against a race to resolve which requires international attention.

### **Racial Disparities on Vaccination**

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the COVID-19 case was lower in young people (under age 25) from non-Hispanic White people than young people from ethnic and racial minority groups. The gap of COVID-19 infection was caused by different working and living conditions, wealth, and healthcare systems. However, Hispanic and black Americans are less likely to get vaccinated compared to whites. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) study proves that white people’s vaccination rate is almost twice higher than black Americans, and in some states such as Georgia, white people’s vaccination rate is almost five times. In Pennsylvania, 13 percent of COVID-19 deaths are in blacks, but only 3 percent of blacks were vaccinated. Surprisingly, white people’s vaccination rate is four times higher. The disparities in

vaccination were normally caused by wealth since vaccination required access to the internet in order to sign up online, and transportation to a vaccination clinic, and having time to schedule the vaccination.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **United States**

As one of the active countries with concerns about the COVID-19 vaccination, the number of proportional deaths is astonishing. A large share of Americans that aren't white lack insurance compared to those who are white as well as makeup for more deaths due to coronavirus. The United States has recognized racial inequity and its current president is trying to change and raise awareness of some of the issues. Many citizens have been taking part in different protests such as the stop Asian hate protest. These raise awareness and at times be beneficial, but have also proved to be counterproductive.

### **China**

Those of a different race in China have also been suffering further during the COVID pandemic. In some places of China, those of African descent or African nationals were forced to take a covid test and enforce a 14-day quarantine in a designated hotel for all of them ("China: COVID-19..."). Nonetheless, in more recent times, the government of China wrote a 28-page report on the racial discrimination that has been occurring during the past year. Many of the Chinese citizens are being racially discriminated against outside of their countries which has lead to protests to stop their discrimination.

### **United Kingdom**

In the United Kingdom those of black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds have also been having a tough time. Doreen Lawrence, Baroness in the upper house of Parliament, the House of Lords, wrote a report where she said "We are in the middle of an avoidable crisis. And this report is a rallying cry

to break that clear and tragic pattern” (“Racism worsens COVID-19 toll”). This report has raised a lot of awareness among the citizens of the United Kingdom. The police of the UK, who are taking care of crimes relating to Asian hate, stated that they are monitoring these types of crimes since their rise began during covid.

## India

In India, many people have suffered the most from hate speech against Muslims. This was already an issue, however, the pandemic served as fuel for these people to be discriminated against even further. When Indian authorities announced the large number of people who were infected with covid, the hate against Muslims grew even more. The Indian government has yet to take adequate steps in stopping the hate speech against the many Muslims of its country.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
November 17, 2019	The first known case of COVID-19 in the world happened at this time
January 30, 2020	WHO Director-General declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern regarding COVID-19
May 5, 2020	Intensive Care National Audit and Research Centre reported that ⅓ of COVID-19 patients admitted to critical care units are part of BAME groups in the UK alone

May 25, 2020	George Floyd, a black American, was killed by a police officer after repeatedly telling him he couldn't breathe
Summer of 2020	Largest amount and size of protests in America ever recorded in history
December 2020	Labor force participation for black women was recorded to go down 4.3 percent and 3.8 percent for Latin women since February compared to a decrease of 1.6 percent for white women
March 16, 2021	6 Asian women including 4 Koreans were killed by shooting in Spas in Atlanta

## **UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

The United Nations is aware of the increase of racial inequity during the pandemic and further calls for international cooperation.

On April 2, 2020, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution that recognizes the unprecedented effects, which emphasizes international cooperation during COVID-19. This resolution recognizes the serious harm to societies and economies held by COVID-19 and further emphasizes the importance of opposing racism, discrimination, and xenophobia during the pandemic.

Furthermore, On April 6, 2020, the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent proposed a statement on COVID-19, addressing that racial equity and equality must guide State action. The statement addresses the lack of healthcare, racial discrimination, and implicit bias...etc.

The UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies warned States to take action in order to ensure protection against racism and xenophobia and stated that the fear from COVID-19 might lead to prejudice.

## Past action

Racial inequity has been an issue throughout the world for several years and countries have tried different measures in the past to relieve the discrimination. Countries had adopted action plans and other measures such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Italy, Peru, Serbia, Honduras, Lithuania, and Uruguay all adopting nationwide plans against discrimination. Other countries had also been creating monitoring bodies and mechanisms for complaints in order to address the issue. For instance, the Netherlands establishes a discrimination hotline for those who were victims of xenophobic and racist crimes.

Nonetheless, in 2019, after COVID-19 began, the crimes against races have increased at alarming rates. Seeing from the UN involvement, there have been actions taken in order to decrease inequality. Nevertheless, the involvement from the UN has been to warn states and countries to take action. Overall, there has been a rise in awareness of the current state of inequality but not enough. A 2020 UN report on the racial inequalities expressed that reports from countries highlighted three “building blocks” when addressing strategies about the issue at hand. These included addressing the root causes, creating policies for the reduction of inequity, and to be able to reduce the inequality, countries needed to focus on addressing discrimination and prejudice as well as promote the participation of the groups facing inequity. As seen through these, countries have been coming up and creating strategies in order to take action. However, countries have taken actions such as making speeches or protests from citizens. Major actions are yet to be taken and up to the countries to decide how to handle them.

## Possible Solutions

It is clear that racial inequality has become more severe since the COVID-19, but the end of the pandemic does not eliminate this problem. There are numerous people suffering from racial inequity during this pandemic, but there were inequities even before the virus. Therefore, cooperation and good solutions from all countries must come out as soon as possible. First of all, it is essential to spread awareness. There are still a lot of people who are not aware of this issue, and in order to come up with a solution, it is important to make more people engaged. Education of children, non-violent protests are all types of solutions that could be held in order to spread awareness. Second, there should be more government involvement on this issue. Disparities in vaccination and healthcare are some of the issues that require government intervention. Giving everything in the same amount is not always equal. The government needs flexible handling depending on the situation. However, international cooperation is paramount since there are various races in a global society, and all nations have an obligation to protect them without discrimination. Without cooperation between countries, racial inequity will continue, or be worsened even after the pandemic.

## Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

This issue relates to the sustainable development goal number 10; reduced inequalities. This sustainable development goal (SDG) aims to reduce the inequalities and help groups that are in need. It aims to create a space where people can feel included and not discriminated against. In our issue, the different races are being discriminated against and even belittled. As mentioned in the bulleting in previous sections, these groups have become highly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the hate and

discrimination have increased instead of decreased as the SDG aims. Through this debate, we aim for countries to find ways to reduce the disparity of the increased discrimination cases and in doing so, getting one step closed to achieving our SDG.

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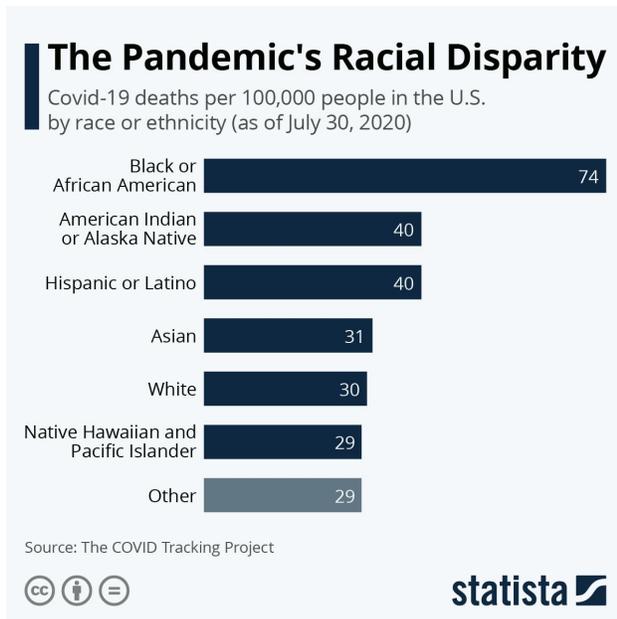
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## Appendix

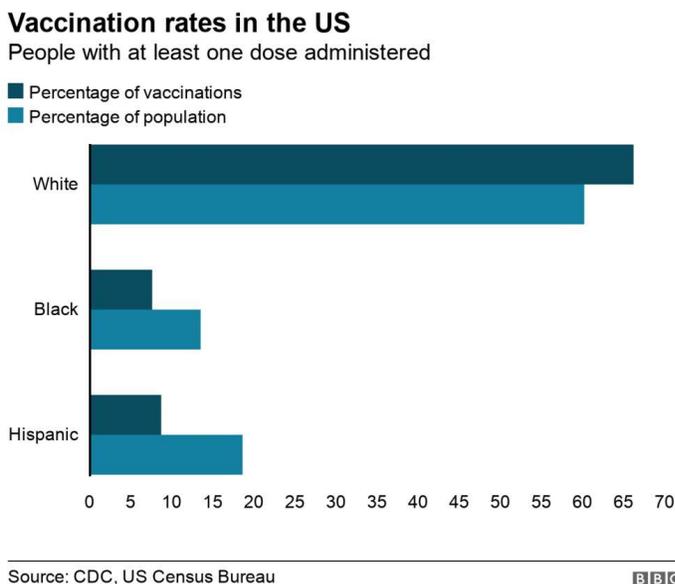
- I. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12xAxX1Xvpk>
  - A. Data show that specific races have higher death rates for the COVID-19. This video addresses that biological characteristics among races are not high relative to racial disparities during the pandemic.
- II. <https://www.statista.com/chart/22430/coronavirus-deaths-by-race-in-the-us/>



A.

B. The graph indicates that Black or African American suffer the most from COVID-19 deaths, giving evidence of the increased racial disparity since the outbreak of the virus.

III. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56405199>



A.

B. According to this graph, even if black and other minority ethnic groups have the highest death rates, the percentage of Blacks and

Hispanic groups are getting vaccinated at a slower rate.

IV. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptMZfekZNT0>

A. The video addresses the increased Anti-Asian hate crimes during the pandemic.