

# HEALTH DISPARITIES



## African-American or Black Population

African-Americans or Blacks represent approximately 13.2 percent of the United States population.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau defines the terms “African-American or Black” as any person who “has origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.”

Although the African-American or Black population has a long history in the United States, this population remains diverse due to the various locations of historic origin. Approximately 10 percent of the African-American or Black population in the United States is foreign-born, immigrants of African descent, who migrated from countries such as the Caribbean and Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

### What are the disparities?

As a group, the African-American or Black population experiences significant disparities with chronic conditions, access to care, preventive screenings, and mental health. The following is a sampling of some of the health disparities that exist for the African-American or Black population in comparison to the White population.

#### Obesity and childhood obesity

- › 48 percent of adults are **obese**.<sup>3</sup>
- › High rates of severe **childhood obesity**.<sup>4</sup>

#### Diabetes

- › 80 percent more likely to be **diagnosed** with diabetes.
- › 2.4 times more likely to begin treatment for **end-stage renal disease**.<sup>5</sup>
- › 1.7 times more likely to be **hospitalized**.<sup>5</sup>
- › 20 percent more likely to have **visual impairments**.<sup>5</sup>

#### Heart disease

- › Men are 30 percent and women 60 percent more likely to **have high blood pressure**.<sup>6</sup>
- › Less likely to keep their **blood pressure under control**.<sup>7</sup>
- › Men have twice the risk of first time **stroke**.<sup>8</sup>

#### Cancer

- › Women are 40 percent more likely to die of **breast cancer**.<sup>9</sup>
- › Men are 1.3 times more likely to have new cases of **colorectal cancer**.<sup>9</sup>

#### Maternal and child health

- › Children are 1.8 times more likely to have ever been told they have **asthma**.<sup>10</sup>
- › 3.5 times as likely to die as infants due to complications related to **low birthweight**.<sup>11</sup>
- › 2.2 times higher **infant mortality** rate.<sup>11</sup>

#### Mental health

- › 20 percent more likely to report **psychological distress**.<sup>12</sup>
- › 50 percent less likely to receive counseling or **mental health treatment**.<sup>12</sup>

### What are the causes?

The underlying causes of the health disparities have been linked to genetics, lack of economic resources, limited access to health care, delay in treatment, cultural beliefs, low literacy and health literacy rates, and certain environmental factors.

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## What is Cigna doing?

Cigna understands the importance of addressing health disparities that are affecting the African-American or Black community and is working to close these gaps. Our efforts include clinical interventions, diversity and inclusion activities, cultural competency training and resources, as well as community outreach.

### Customers

- ▶ Collaborated with the American Cancer Society to provide culturally-tailored outreach to educate African-Americans on colorectal cancer screening.
- ▶ Piloted incentives for African-American women to obtain cervical and breast cancer screening.
- ▶ Increased physician visits and hypertension control in African-Americans through an outreach campaign.
- ▶ Improved case management outreach to Haitian Creole customers through the use of using a tri-lingual pictorial.

### Clients

- ▶ Created a worksite campaign to promote hypertension management among African-American employees.
- ▶ Conducted a study and wrote a white paper on improving health assessment completion rates among clients with large African-American employee populations participating on our Health Disparities Advisory Council.
- ▶ Reduced avoidable emergency room visits for African-Americans employees in an urban center.

### Cigna Foundation has provided grants to:

- ▶ University of Maryland to [promote colorectal cancer screening](#) in Black barber shops.
- ▶ Methodist Healthcare Foundation to address health disparities in south Memphis.

### Employees

#### African-American/Black Colleague Resource Group

- ▶ Celebrates Black History Month by highlighting health facts about African-Americans.
- ▶ Created multi-cultural teams to review communications aimed at improving African-American health.

#### Cultural Competency Training

- ▶ Host Cultural Diversity Forums for clinical staff to discuss clinically managing a diverse patient base.
- ▶ Provide staff access to an online cultural resource center to gain insights on multiple cultural communities.
- ▶ Provide cultural competency training on how to better serve and engage our customers of Haitian descent.

### Health care professionals

- ▶ Offered the [Cultural Awareness Designation](#) to network health care professionals to increase their cultural competency in serving Cigna's diverse customer base.
- ▶ Provide the Cultural Competency Training and Resources [web page](#) on cigna.com to support understanding of the diverse values, beliefs, behaviors, and linguistic needs of patients.

For more information please visit our [Corporate Responsibility Report](#) on Cigna.com.

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2. USCB ASEC Supplement 2012
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12. Mental Health and African American. Modified 2014. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=24>



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