

Frontline Essential Workers

A Review of Policy and Programs to Support, Inform Recovery
and Future Preparation

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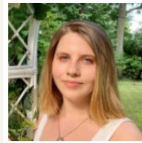
Agenda

- Who are frontline essential workers?
- Impact of COVID-19
- Social Determinants of Health and Inequities
- Policy and Program Response
- Questions and Discussion



Frontline Essential Workers

NEWS
HOUR



By –
**Isabella
Isaacs-
Thomas**

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For health care workers fighting COVID-19, crisis spurred innovation

Health Mar 31, 2020 6:48 PM EDT



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Frontline Essential Workers

EDUCATION

COVID-19 brings new responsibilities for school bus drivers

Drivers have always had a big responsibility keeping kids safe on the road, now they'll be the ones enforcing coronavirus health guidelines, too.

wncn.com
Bus drivers worried about student safety



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Frontline Essential Workers

TABLE 1

Essential worker employment, by DHS sector, 2018

DHS sector	Total employment	Share of essential workers
Other Community and Government Operations and Essential Functions*	23,225,120	25.8%
Healthcare/Public Health	21,128,600	23.4%
Transportation and Logistics	10,152,850	11.3%
Critical Manufacturing	8,372,530	9.3%
Commercial Facilities	8,061,300	8.9%
Financial Services	5,890,370	6.5%
Food and Agriculture**	5,367,890	6.0%
Energy	1,917,200	2.1%
Communications and Information Technology	1,625,220	1.8%
Public Works	1,330,190	1.5%
Chemical	926,980	1.0%
Defense Industrial Base	911,320	1.0%
Residential and Shelter	774,080	0.9%
Hygiene Products and Services	293,490	0.3%
Hazardous Materials	147,580	0.2%
Water and Wastewater***	49,160	0.1%
Essential worker employment	90,173,880	
Total U.S. employment	144,733,270	

*Note that a separate DHS sector not shown--law enforcement and public safety--is captured under this category due to statistical limitations

**Note that restaurants are mostly excluded from this sector

***Note that many water workers are captured under government operations and public works

Source: Brookings analysis of Department of Homeland Security and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

B Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS



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Impact of COVID -19

Table 2. Cont.

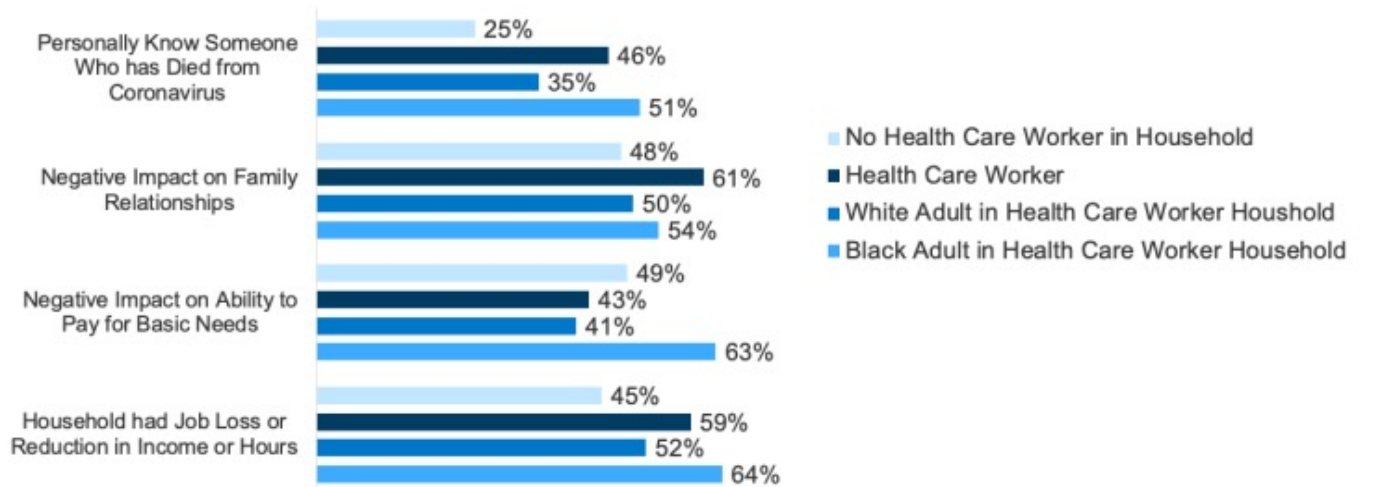
Workers	Risk Factors Reported in Cited References	Reported Deaths/Reported Infections	Time Frame (Report Date)	Citation
Grocery store workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily exposure to high volume of customers Inability to social distance Limited PPE * Politicization of masks leading to some customers refusing to wear Failure of government to enforce safety standards 	68 deaths and > 10,000 infected in US	20 May 2020	Bradley [34]
		82 deaths and over 11,000 infected or exposed in first 100 days of pandemic in US	26 June 2020	Redman [35]
		21 of 104 (20%) workers infected in a single U.S. grocery store	Data collected in early May 2020	Lan [36]
Grocery, retail, pharmacy, meatpacking, and other essential industries (UFCW ** members)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak safety standards 	72 worker deaths and 5322 U.S. union workers “directly impacted” (tested positive for COVID-19, missed work due to self-quarantine, awaiting test results, or have been hospitalized, and/or are symptomatic)	11 September 2020	UFCW [37]
Law Enforcement/ Public Safety/First responders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction with public, including close contact during transport Administration of aerosol-generating treatments by emergency services personnel Suggested improper use of PPE 	53 deaths in New York City emergency responders (fire and police)	20 May 2020	Guse [38]
		4 deaths and 5175 infections among 14,290 New York City firefighters and emergency services personnel (paramedics and emergency medical service technicians)	Based on data through 31 May 2020	Weiden [39]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of testing Lack of resources High rates of infection among prisoners (40% in one California prison) 	Over 5000 infections among state and federal correctional officers	5 May 2020	Barr [40]
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction with public Passengers not wearing masks Inability to social distance Limited availability of PPE and other safety supplies 	6 deaths and 2169 infections in New York State	12 December 2020	New York State [41]
		120 deaths in New York City mass transit workers	20 May 2020	Guse [38]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24% of approximately 3000 New York transit workers reported infection (compared to 19.9% in general population) 		Data collected in August 2020	Gershon [42]
Airline industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crowded working conditions Shortage of PPE (mask wearing reportedly banned initially) Non-notification of exposure to infected co-workers 	15 U.S. deaths in nine days in April	20 April 2020	Feldman [43]



Social Determinants of Health and Inequities

- Identifying and protecting *all* essential workers is key

COVID-19 Impacts by Health Care Worker Status and Race



NOTES: Negative impact includes the share reporting a major or minor negative impact. Adults in health care worker households include adults who report working in a health care delivery setting or living in a household with someone who works in a health care delivery setting.

SOURCE: KFF/The Undeclared Survey on Race and Health (Conducted Aug. 20-Sept. 14, 2020), <https://www.kff.org/report-section/kff-the-undeclared-survey-on-race-and-health-main-findings/>.

KFF



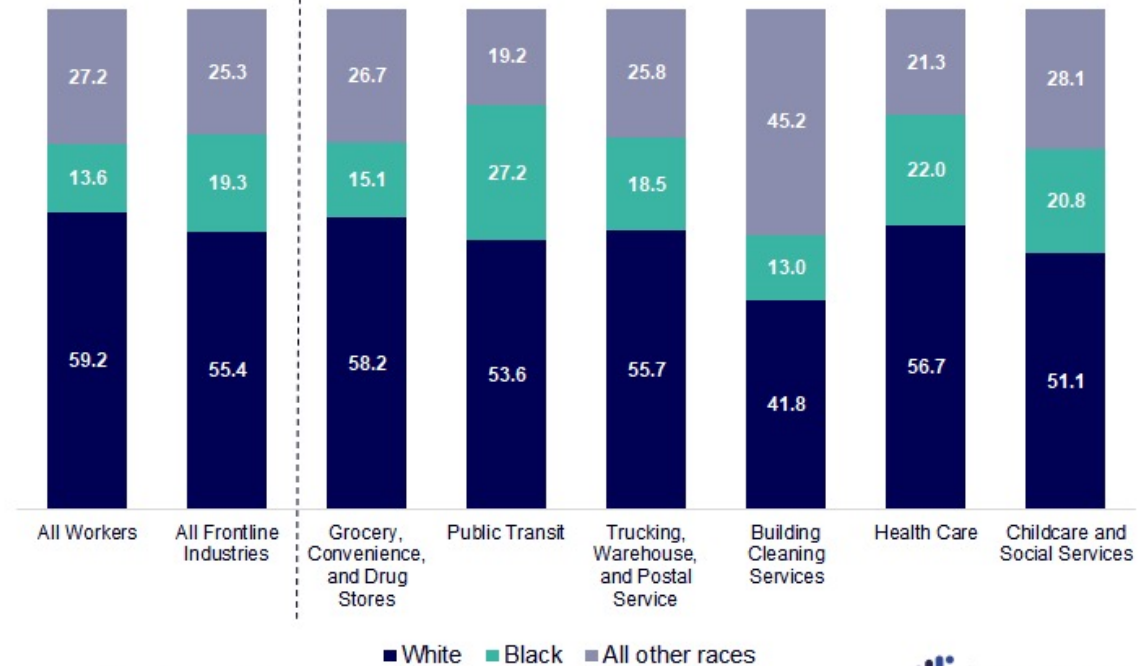
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Social Determinants of Health and Inequities

- Address Inequities

Black workers are overrepresented in the frontline working-class.

Workers Without a Bachelor's Degree in Frontline Industries by Race



Source: CEPR's Analysis of American Community Survey, 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates



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Policy and Program Response

- Public health and Public policy are connected
- Department of Homeland Security:

“Protecting our workforce protects our critical infrastructures, our local communities, and speeds our Nation’s progress toward recovery.”

- Shared definition of frontline and/ or essential worker

Does the definition of an essential industry change depending on the public health emergency?

“The industries that essential workers support represent, but are not limited to, medical and healthcare, telecommunications, information technology systems, defense, food and agriculture, transportation and logistics, energy, water and wastewater, and law enforcement. State, local, tribal, and territorial governments are responsible for designing, implementing and executing response activities in their communities, while the Federal Government remains in a supporting role. Officials should use their own judgment in making decisions regarding resource allocation and other public health measures.”



Policy and Program Response

- American Rescue Plan Act
- Economic Support

Unemployment

Child Tax Credits

Paycheck Protection

Stimulus Check

Student Loan Repayment

- Further Steps?

Raising minimum wage

*Federal funding directed to localities → understand
population needs*



Policy and Program Response

- Nutrition and Agriculture
 - WIC*
 - SNAP*
 - Farm Loans*



Policy and Program Response

- Childcare
- Additional funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant



Policy and Program Response

- Healthcare and Coverage Support
- Affordable Care Act

Financial Assistance

Special Enrollment Period

- OSHA Worker Protections
- Medicaid

5 percent FMAP "Bump" for non-expansion states



Policy and Program Response

- Build Back Better

Addresses Equity

Expand Medicare

"Federal Fix" for non-expansion states

*60 percent of people in the Medicaid gap are
people of color*

Paid Family and Medical Leave

Expand the Child Tax Credit

Affordable Housing

- Further Steps?

Unemployment



Questions and Discussion

