

COVID-19 illness personally affected nearly 97 million U.S. adults



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More than one-third of adult population knows someone killed by the coronavirus

Even before the latest wave of the coronavirus pandemic, driven by the highly contagious Delta variant, nearly 97 million U.S. adults reported knowing someone killed by COVID-19. Roughly the same number of people reported that they or another immediate family member had caught the virus. Those estimates are based on a SHADAC COVID-19 survey, conducted as part of the AmeriSpeak omnibus survey by NORC at the University of Chicago, in April 2021.

An estimated one-third of the U.S. adult population reported a COVID-19 infection occurring in their immediate family, and about one-third also reported knowing someone who died of the virus. However, there were few statistically significant differences across demographic subgroups. The main exceptions were by race and ethnicity, with Black and Hispanic adults significantly more likely to report knowing someone who died from COVID-19 than White adults, and Hispanic adults significantly more likely to report a COVID-19 infection within their immediate families.

Almost 40 percent of U.S. adults knew someone who died of COVID-19

In April 2021, 37.7 percent of U.S. adults reported that they knew someone who had died of COVID-19. Across demographic subgroups, Black and Hispanic people reported higher rates of knowing someone who died of COVID-19 than did White people, but these were the only groups that differed significantly.

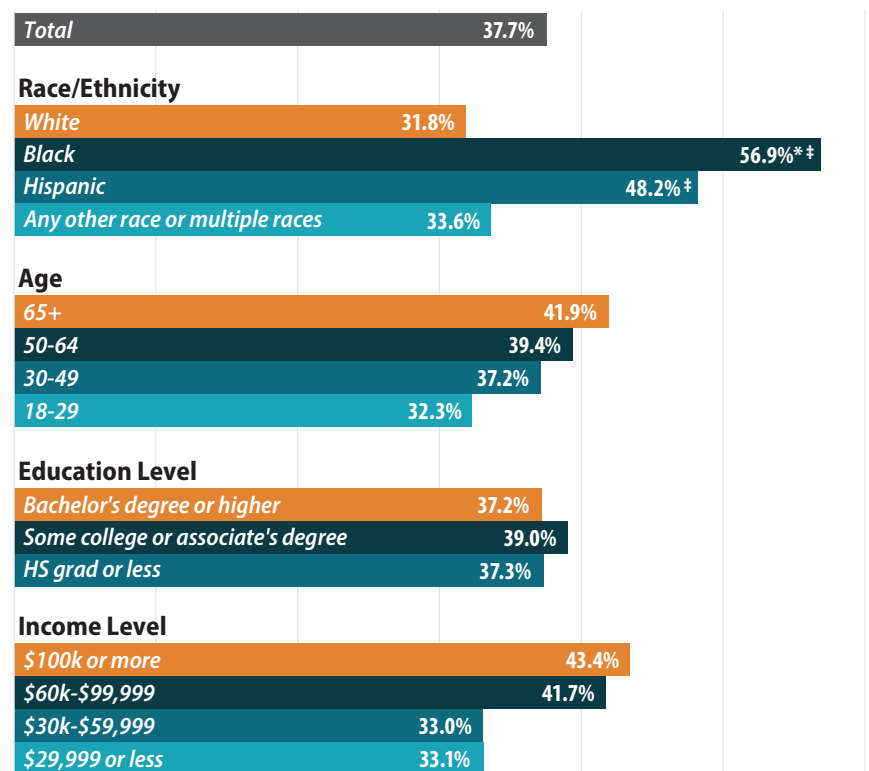
Roughly half of Black and Hispanic adults knew someone who died of COVID-19

Among Black adults, 56.9 percent reported knowing someone who died of COVID-19, while 48.2 percent of Hispanic adults reported the same. Both rates were significantly higher than the 31.8 percent rate reported by White adults. The rate of people identifying as any other race or multiple races, 33.6 percent, was not significantly different from the rate reported by White adults.¹

Adults reported similar rates across age, income, education categories

Across age, income, and education categories, U.S. adults reported similar rates of knowing someone who died of COVID-19. While an apparently larger percentage of those age 65 years and older reported knowing someone who died of COVID, neither they nor any other of these subgroups reported rates that differed significantly from the total adult population rate of 37.7 percent.

Figure 1. Know someone who died of COVID-19, April 2021



* Statistically significant difference from total rate at 95% level.

‡ Statistically significant difference from reference group (Race=White; Age=65+; Education=bachelor's degree or higher; Income=\$100k or more) rate at 95% level.

Source: SHADAC analysis of SHADAC COVID-19 Survey, conducted as part of the AmeriSpeak omnibus survey by NORC at the University of Chicago in April 2021.

Almost 40 percent got COVID-19 or had an immediate family member with COVID-19

In the same survey, 37.6 percent of U.S. adults reported that they had caught COVID-19 themselves or had an immediate family member who caught the virus. Across demographic sub-groups, Hispanic people reported higher rates of personally catching COVID-19 or having an immediate family member who did, and adults with some college or an associate’s degree also reported higher rates, but these were the only groups that differed significantly.

About half of Hispanic adults said they or an immediate family member had COVID-19

Among Hispanic adults, 51.5 percent reported that they or an immediate family member contracted COVID-19, which was significantly higher than the rate of 35.6 percent reported by White adults. The rate of Black adults (35.8 percent) and people identifying as any other race or multiple races (28.6 percent) were not significantly different from the rate reported by White adults.

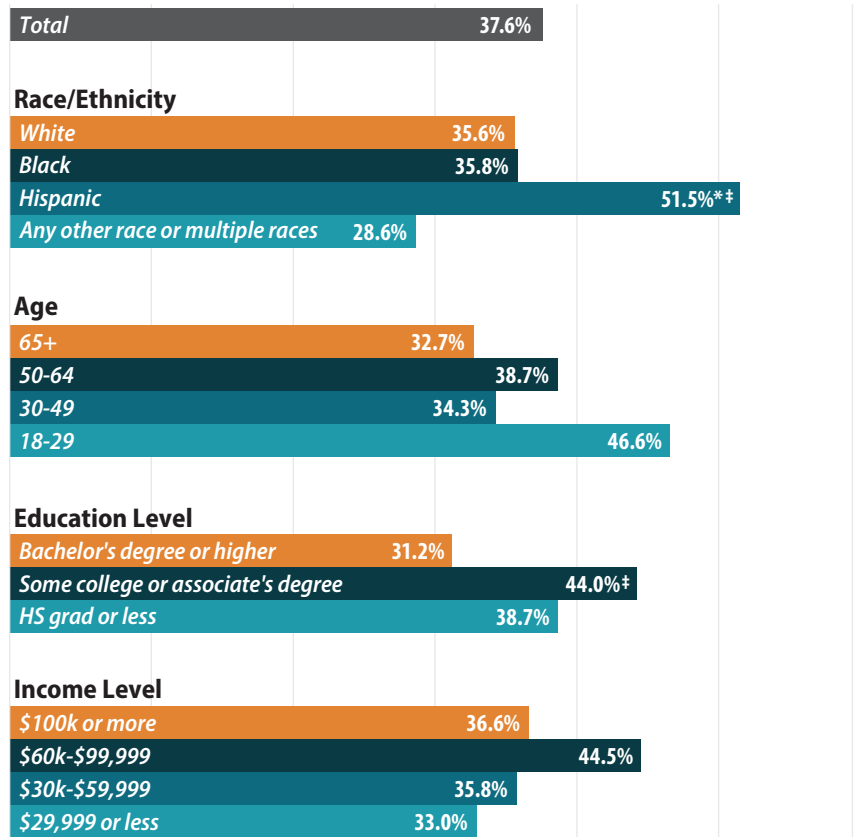
Adults with some college or associate’s degree more likely to report they or an immediate family member had COVID-19

Among adults with some college or an associate’s degree, 44.0 percent reported that they or an immediate family member contracted COVID-19, which was significantly higher than the rate of 31.2 percent reported by adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher. The rate among adults with a high school diploma or less education (38.7 percent) was not significantly different from adults with a bachelor’s degree.

Adults reported similar rates across age, income categories

Across age and income categories, U.S. adults reported similar rates of either having COVID-19 themselves or knowing an immediate family member who did. No subgroups in either category reported rates that differed significantly from the total adult population rate of 37.6 percent.

Figure 2. Respondent or immediate family member contracted COVID-19, April 2021



* Statistically significant difference from total rate at 95% level.
 ‡ Statistically significant difference from reference group (Race=White; Age=65+; Education=bachelor's degree or higher; Income=\$100k or more) rate at 95% level.
 Source: SHADAC analysis of SHADAC COVID-19 Survey, conducted as part of the AmeriSpeak omnibus survey by NORC at the University of Chicago in April 2021.

Conclusion

Overall, the SHADAC COVID-19 survey found that demographic subgroups within the U.S. adult population reported similar rates of having COVID-19 infections within their immediate families and knowing someone who died of the virus. Among the few statistically significant differences that were uncovered by this analysis, Black and Hispanic adults were more likely to report knowing someone who died from COVID-19 than White adults, and Hispanic adults were more likely to report a COVID-19 infection within their immediate families—a pattern that is consistent with other data showing the pandemic has imposed disparities of illness and death on those communities.^{2,3} This report reinforces the importance of pursuing health equity in vaccination campaigns and other public health measures to prevent marginalized groups from continuing to suffer disproportionate burdens from this and any potential future pandemics.

¹ Due to sample size limitations of the AmeriSpeak survey, we were unable to produce standalone estimates for certain racial and ethnic groups, such as American Indians and Alaska Native people and Asian people. We included these individuals in the category for individuals reporting “any other race or multiple races.”

² Romano, S.D., Blackstock, A.J., Taylor, E.V., El Burai Felix, S., Adjei, S., Singleton, C., Fuld, J., Bruce, B.B., Boehmer, T.K. (2021, April 16). Trends in racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 hospitalizations, by region — United States, March–December 2020. *MMWR*, 70(15), 560-565. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7015e2-H.pdf>

³ National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases. (2020, December 10). *Disparities in deaths from COVID-19: Racial and ethnic health disparities*. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/disparities-deaths.html>