Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Experiences Among Older Adults with Disabling Conditions

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Disclaimer

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Motivation

COVID-19 has had unequal impacts
- Older adults
- Racial/ethnic minorities
- Geography (communities with low incomes)
- Intersectionality

People with disabilities may have more risk factors
Sparse evidence about the impacts for people with disabilities
Analysis overview

/ Explore experiences of older adults with disabling conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Document negative health, financial, and work experiences related to the pandemic
  - Explore intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and disability

/ Examine the role of contextual factors
  - Use county-level data to understand the contribution of structural/social factors that influence these disparities
Data

/ Health and Retirement Study (HRS)
  - COVID-19 module fielded May 2020-May 2021
  - Linked to previous years

/ County-level data
  - Contextual factors from publicly available sources
Sample

/ Older adults
- Limit sample to age 50 and older

/ Disability
- Activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)
- Alternative definitions (not presented)
  o Work limiting conditions
  o SSI/DI benefit receipt

/ Race/ethnicity
- Four subgroups: Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, Non-Hispanic Other, and Hispanic or Latino
Results

Center for Studying Disability Policy
Key findings

Health

- Older adults with disabilities were more likely to report delaying care compared to those without disabilities.
- Some differences persisted across race and ethnicity.

Finances

- More older adults with disabilities reported financial hardships than those without disabilities.
- Differences persisted across race and ethnicity.
- Difficulty accessing food was the most common financial hardships.

Work

- Older adults with disabilities were less likely to work prior to pandemic compared to those without disabilities.
- Among those with work impacts, more older adults with disabilities reported stopping work because of the pandemic.
- There were differences by race, ethnicity, and disability in moving to remote work.
Percentage of older adults who delayed health care since March 2020

- All older adults: 31%
- White: 31%
- Black: 31%
- Other: 34%
- Hispanic: 29%
- Any disabling condition: 36%
- No disabling condition: 27%

Difference by disabling condition: *** (p<0.001)
Difference in distribution across races: #### (p<0.001)

Center for Studying Disability Policy
Percentage of older adults who delayed health care since March 2020, by race and disability

Difference by disabling condition: * p<0.05  ** p<0.01  *** p<0.001

Difference in distribution across races: ### (p<0.001)
Percentage of older adults who delayed different types of health care since March 2020, among those with any delays

Difference by disabling condition: * p<0.05  ** p<0.01  *** p<0.001

Center for Studying Disability Policy
Key findings

**Health**
- Older adults with disabilities were more likely to report delaying care compared to those without disabilities
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**Finances**
- More older adults with disabilities reported financial hardships than those without disabilities
- All differences persisted across race and ethnicity
- Difficulty accessing food was the most common financial hardships

**Work**
- Older adults with disabilities were less likely to work prior to pandemic compared to those without disabilities
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Percentage of older adults with any financial hardships

Difference by disabling condition: *** (p<0.001)
Difference in distribution across races: ### (p<0.001)

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Percentage of older adults with any financial hardships, by race and disability

Difference by disabling condition: * p<0.05  ** p<0.01  *** p<0.001
Difference in distribution across races: ### (p<0.001)
Percentage of older adults who experienced different types of financial hardships, by disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Any disabling conditions</th>
<th>No disabling conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missed Rent Payment</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed Debt Payment</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed Other Payments</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t Pay Medical Bills</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t Buy Food</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had Trouble Getting Food</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Contextual factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual factor</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COVID cases per 100k (average monthly)</td>
<td>COVID Act Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic Vulnerability Index score</td>
<td>Pandemic Vulnerability Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital bed capacity</td>
<td>Pandemic Vulnerability Index sub-score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Vulnerability Index score</td>
<td>AHRQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial segregation, White vs. non-White</td>
<td>County Health Rankings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of potential life lost (premature mortality)</td>
<td>County Health Rankings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of people receiving government assistance (cash or SNAP)</td>
<td>American Community Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Older adults with disabling conditions live in areas with more inequalities

/ Differences in contextual factors by disability and race
- Higher COVID case counts per capita and premature mortality
- Higher pandemic and social vulnerability indices
- Higher unemployment rates

/ Contextual factors had few associations with outcomes

/ Individual race and disability remained significant after accounting for contextual factors
## Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Policy implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• COVID-19 had disparate impacts on older adults with disabilities</td>
<td>• Disability-inclusive public health response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Older adults with disabilities were more likely to live in counties with greater pandemic vulnerability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Black and Hispanic older adults with disabilities had more negative experiences</td>
<td>• Intersectionality lens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many older adults experienced financial hardships, and disparities were consistent across multiple identities</td>
<td>• Policies mitigating financial impacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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