

The Prevalence of Mistreatment Black Women Face While Seeking Healthcare in the United States

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Introduction

Why are doctors not hearing the voices of women that put their trust in them? Why are the voices of African American women being dismissed because of racist and outdated theories still being held standard? Researcher Amy Roder reiterates the role slavery plays in the medicine practiced today stating, “if Blacks had poorer health outcomes than Whites, the differences must be due to inherent racial weaknesses, if not disparities in economic circumstance; when constructing a narrative of race in the United States, the repercussions are which are still being felt in the lives and health of African Americans today.”

Research Question: Why do African American women tend to experience targeted mistreatment while seeking healthcare in the U.S.?

Thesis Statement: The prevalence of mistreatment Black women face while seeking healthcare in the U.S. reflect systematic racism and both implicit and explicit biases within the healthcare system. These micro aggressions highlight deeper problems that need to be addressed.

Background

Black women have faced exploitation and discrimination in healthcare. Enslaved Black women were subjected to painful medical experiments without consent, notably by Dr. J. Marion Sims. According to “PBS.org,” eugenics programs forcibly sterilized many Black women to control populations deemed “unfit” in the 20th century. Racial segregation limited their access to quality healthcare, with disparities persisting even after the Civil Rights Act. The case of Henrietta Lacks, whose cells were taken without consent in 1951 and became crucial for research, highlights ongoing exploitation in medical research. These events have continued to involve significant social issues such as dismissive, neglectful, and carelessness which can be identified as obstetric violence targeted towards Black women in the healthcare field.

Social Biases in healthcare were discussed by Nancy Krieger, a professor of social epidemiology, explaining that Jim Crow laws from 1870-1960 later correlated to health effects decades later. Her research revealed that growing up under Jim Crow laws heightened the risk of a Black woman being diagnosed with estrogen-receptor negative breast tumors, which are significantly less responsive to chemotherapy than an average cancer diagnosis. Krieger’s research also found that Jim Crow laws led to lack of access to quality healthcare, explaining the inequities faced by African American women today. The discrimination and mistreatment towards African American women in healthcare has been a prevailing problem since slavery, and should be addressed to stop allowing history to repeat itself.

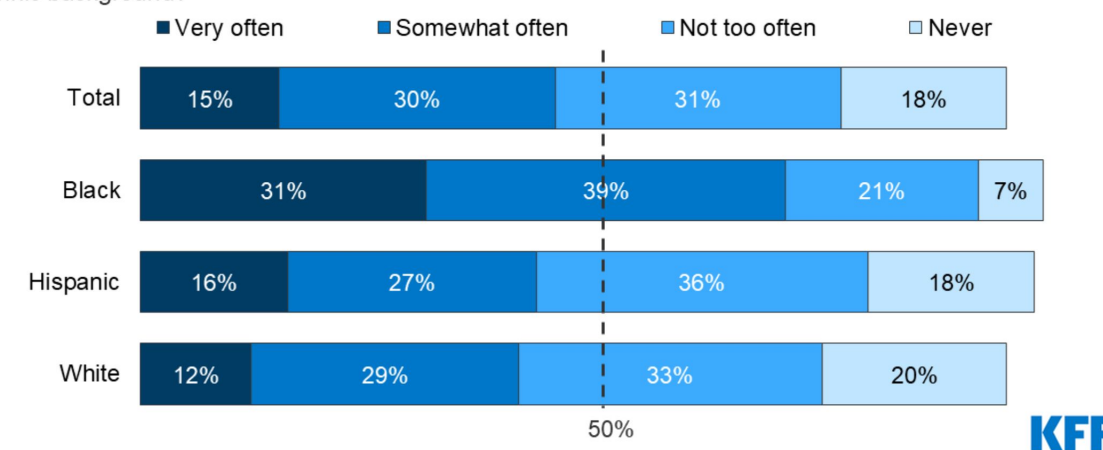
Data Analysis

When discussing topics of medical disparities faced by African American women are brought up, questions of economic correlation arise regarding whether the treatment has to do with the quality of healthcare. Kaiser Family Foundation, which sampled 1,000 Americans from diverse backgrounds. The results of this study revealed that Black women are 21% more likely than 13% of Black men to report they have been treated unfairly by a health care provider because of their racial or ethnic background are seven times more likely to report this compared to White women. These findings suggest that racial biases are more of a significant disparity than financial status.

Figure 20

Black Adults More Likely To Perceive Discrimination In U.S. Health Care System

Generally speaking, how often do you think our health care system treats people unfairly based on their race or ethnic background?

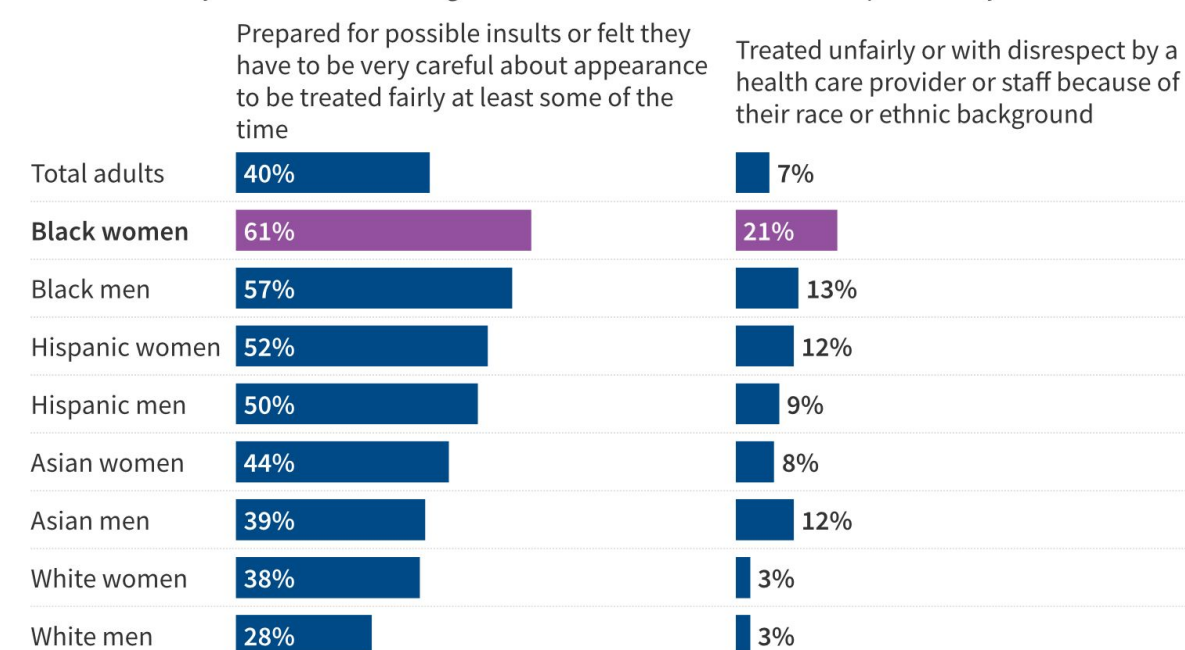


SOURCE: KFF/The Undeclared Survey on Race and Health (conducted Aug. 20-Sept. 14, 2020). See topline for full question wording.

KFF

Black Women More Likely Than Other Groups To Report Unfair Treatment and Practicing Vigilant Behaviors in Health Care Settings

Percent who say each of the following about their health care visits in the past three years:



Data from KFF.org

Methodology

The methodology of this qualitative secondary study involves a survey conducted by Kaiser Family Foundation article, “Clinician's dismiss Black women’s pain, Consequences are dire”, focusing on health policies. The survey sampled 1,000 Americans from diverse backgrounds aiming to identify perceptions of unfair treatments based on racial and ethnic background. By comparing the responses of Black women, Black men, and White women, the study found significant disparities, indicating that biases in healthcare are more related to race than financial background.

Results

The results show the level of discrimination against Black women compared to their White counterparts. The graph also is a representation of different economic backgrounds, revealing that the mistreatment and income correlation isn’t as strong as assumed.

How does the Dismissive Behavior of Medical Professionals Towards Black Women Cause Long-Term Health Complications?

Perceived discrimination can be identified as unfair treatment, judgment, and negative attitude. In article, “we’re not taken seriously”, research reveals that Black women have the highest mortality rate for cervical cancer, 56% of those diagnoses being discovered in the later stages. These late diagnoses are a result of the lack of patient-provider relationship between Black women and their doctor causing a lack of awareness of cervical cancer screening.

How Patient-Provider Communication Between a Medical Professional and a Black woman

In the article, “Patient-provider communication quality as a predictor of medical mistrust among young Black women, findings reveal that most patient-provider communication between doctors and Black women are 54% doctor centered, and studies reveal that patient centered communication is more effective when is to giving accurate diagnoses and medications.”

Conclusion

Based on the data and racial background, the conclusion is drawn that the mistreatment in the medical field is faced more towards Black women than any other group. This disparity is a prevalent issue and generational curse that needs to be brought to light. These social biases can ultimately lead to a decline in overall health, and also, an increased rate of death in the Black female community due to the lack of communication when it comes to regular screenings, blood tests, and checkups. Discriminatory behavior has no place in the workplace, let alone in the healthcare field where doctors are trusted with the lives of others. This social issue can lead to a deeper issue and needs to be addressed before petty racial discrimination turns into lives lost.

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