



April 15, 2020
SCPH Media Contact Phone Number: (330) 812-3700

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
A Preliminary Look at Covid-19 and Race in Summit County

[Akron, OH] – Coronavirus is infecting and killing black people in the United States at disproportionately high rates according to an article in the NYT published on April 7, 2020. This disparity highlights inequalities in resources, health, and access to care. Preliminary analysis in Summit County shows similar trends.

Based on 2018 estimates from the American Community Survey, 78% of Summit County residents identify as white, 15% as African-American, 4% as Asian, and 3% as other racial groups or as mixed race (Figure 1). As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, other communities in the United States have reported racial disparities in reported COVID19 cases: African-Americans make up a larger proportion of confirmed COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

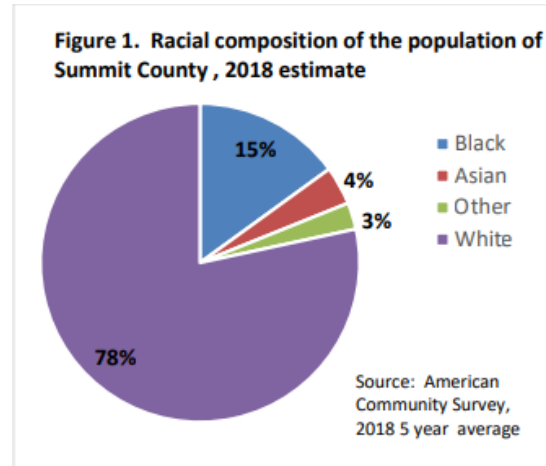
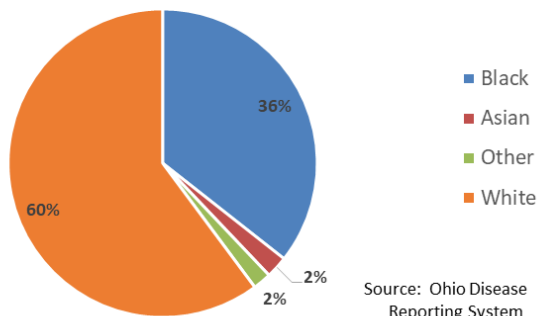


Figure 2. Race of COVID-19 cases in Summit County, as of April 15, 2020 (cases with identified race only, n = 261)



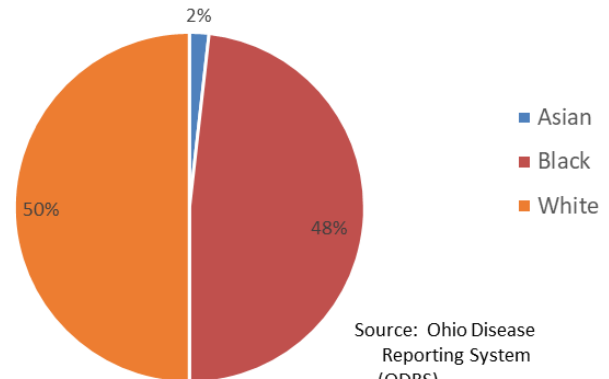
This preliminary analysis examines the racial make-up of COVID-19 cases in Summit County, where the racial identity of the patient is identified. For confirmed cases, 36% are African-American, which is over twice the percentage of African-American in the general population (15%) (Figure 2).





For COVID-19 hospitalizations with race identified, 48% were African-American (Figure 3). Of the COVID-19 deaths with race identified (6 of 16), 38% were African American. Analysis of these preliminary results will continue as COVID-19 cases continue to be reported, and efforts will continue to improve the quality and completeness of the case data.

Figure 3. COVID-19 hospitalizations in Summit County by race, as of April 15, 2020 (cases with identified race only, n = 112)



Although there is still much to learn specifically about COVID-19, we have historically seen similar racial disparities across a wide range of health outcomes. The causes of these are hard to define precisely, but there is a strong body of research showing that racial health disparities are strongly influenced by social, cultural, economic and environmental factors and have little to do with biology or individual behaviors. Furthermore, there is some research showing that larger cultural conditions, such as institutionalized racism, are major factors in creating these disparities. We can assume all of these factors are affecting the disparities we are seeing with COVID-19. The following are some informative resources on the issue of racial disparities in health outcomes:

- [CDC Health Disparities & Inequalities Report](#)
- [Healthy People 2020 – Health Disparities](#)
- [HealthAffairs.org – Social Sources of Racial Disparities in Health](#)

Eliminating health disparities has been a major focus of Summit County Public Health for many years, and health equity is considered in all of our interventions, programs and services. This will be true of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well.

###

