

November 2020



**Health Equity**

## AIR and IMPAQ's Response to COVID-19's Impact on Health Disparities

AIR and its subsidiary IMPAQ have convened experts and innovators to tackle problems related to COVID-19 that disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, such as low-income, minority, and rural populations. Prior to the pandemic, these groups faced less access to quality health care, safe housing, and stable nutrition, which have been further strained in 2020. These are examples of social determinants of health (SDoH) that can influence health outcomes within a community, leading to disproportionately high levels of mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We understand that to improve health outcomes of vulnerable populations, which is especially crucial during a public health crisis, a key piece of the puzzle is understanding and addressing SDoH. However, SDoH data and evidence-based practices to support communities are limited. To address this gap, **IMPAQ experts designed the SDoH Action Tool, a webinar series on health equity during COVID-19, and other health equity research** as resources to help academic researchers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and policymakers resolve health disparities.

## IMPAQ's Social Determinants of Health Action Tool

IMPAQ's [Social Determinant of Health Action Tool](#), named a semifinalist in the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Visualization Resources of Community-Level SDoH Challenge, is a series of three customizable Tableau dashboards (Exhibit 1). The Tool integrates:

- **Emerging data sources** (i.e., publicly available data at the census tract level),
- **SDoH variables** (e.g., neighborhood walkability, food insecurity, teenage birth rate), and
- **Health outcome measures** (e.g., diabetes, asthma, hypertension)

To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, IMPAQ researchers added COVID-19 as a health outcome within the tool to help users easily identify communities at risk for negative COVID-19 outcomes based on their associated SDoH.

### Equity Resources & Research

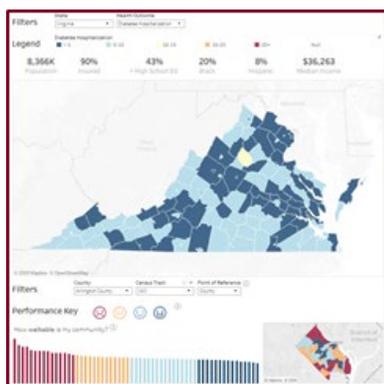
**SDoH Action Tool** is a customizable data visualization tool that helps users better understand which SDoH factors are affecting community health at the census tract level.

**Health Equity Webinars** covering actionable interventions to protect vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

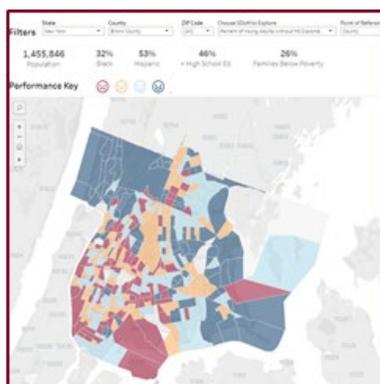
**COVID-19 Health Equity Research** examines the pandemic's impacts on vulnerable populations for a variety of topics, such as telehealth and Medicaid.

"For those who aren't used to working with [SDoH] data, this could be a useful tool and a way to get information for talking with stakeholders/decision makers."  
– Researcher

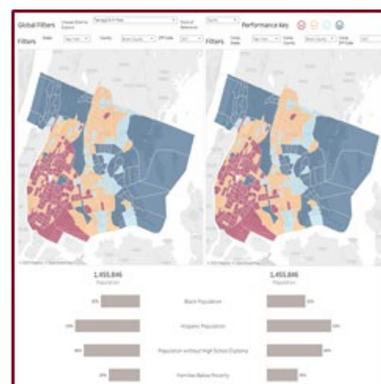
## Exhibit 1. SDoH Action Tool Dashboard Examples



The **Health Outcome Dashboard** allows users to select a health outcome to learn about evidence-based SDoH contributions in a community.



The **SDoH Drilldown Dashboard** allows users to explore an SDoH and how it affects different communities within a county.



The **Community Comparison Dashboard** allows users to explore how two communities compare on selected SDoH measures.

## AIR and IMPAQ Address the Health Disparities of COVID-19

In May, we convened experts from Community-Campus Partnerships for Health, Cook County Health, Unite Us, and AmeriHealth Caritas Louisiana for a [webinar examining how COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting communities of color](#). What began as a public health emergency quickly evolved into a crisis of health equity and racial justice as SDoH were further stressed, directly affecting COVID-19 health outcomes. There were three key takeaways on how to improve health equity amid the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Structural Racism must be Addressed.** To fix our broken systems, mass incarceration, a livable wage, unstable and crowded housing, homelessness, and the racism of both systems and individuals must be reexamined.
- **Data Gaps are Prevalent.** Measuring social services outcomes and collecting population health, demographic, and socioeconomic data should be a priority.
- **Network & Coalition Building are Essential for Community Investment.** Our panelists stressed the importance of developing community partnerships to improve the capture of federal and state funds and to support each other's work.

**New Stay Tuned for Upcoming Events:** IMPAQ is combining our expertise with [Public Health Institute \(PHI\)](#) to produce *Equity in COVID-19: Bridging the Gap Between Public Health and Policy*, a webinar series that will provide actionable insights on the pressing issues of the COVID-19 pandemic. The kickoff session [Connecting Public Health, Policy, & Equity in COVID-19: An Executive Conversation](#) hosted an informative conversation between [Dr. Adaeze Enekwechi](#), [Dr. Mary Pittman](#), and [Dr. Lisa Simpson](#) on how research, policy, and practice are grappling with issues of health equity during the crisis and where they see opportunities for progress.

## AIR and IMPAQ's COVID-19 Health Equity Research

Date	Topic Area/Type of Resource	Title
<b>New</b> 10/27/2020	Health Disparities Issue Brief	<a href="#">COVID-19 Prevalence and Mortality Rates in Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas</a>
<b>New</b> 10/14/2020	Health Disparities Q&A	<a href="#">An Emerging Narrative on Latino Health Disparities and its Implications in the COVID-19 Era</a>
<b>New</b> 10/8/2020	Mental Health Blog	<a href="#">Increasing Access to Mental Health Care in DC: An Interview with Dr. Rekha Varghese</a>
8/27/2020	Telehealth Issue Brief	<a href="#">The Expansion of Telehealth: Equity Considerations for Policymakers, Providers &amp; Payers</a>
7/22/2020	ACA Blog	<a href="#">COVID-19 and the ACA Payment Notice: How will State and Health Plan Decisions affect Vulnerable Populations?</a>
7/8/2020	Telehealth Blog	<a href="#">Telehealth Access, Value &amp; Equity: COVID-19 and Beyond</a>
6/24/2020	Medicaid Blog	<a href="#">COVID-19 and Medicaid: The Perfect Storm</a>
5/27/2020	Mental Health Blog	<a href="#">COVID-19 &amp; the Coming Mental Health Emergency: Why We Must Prepare</a>
5/7/2020	Opioid Blog	<a href="#">Fighting Two Battles: How CMS is Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in the Time of COVID-19</a>
4/29/2020	ACA Blog	<a href="#">COVID-19, Rising Unemployment, and Health Insurance Coverage: Will our ACA Safety Net Hold?</a>



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