

Pandemic Homelessness Hits Those with Diabetes 48 Times Harder Than Other Americans

Public health crisis makes lack of access to healthy food, medical appointments worse for minority groups

ARLINGTON, Va. (July 28, 2021) – According to a national survey released by the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) in partnership with the real-time market research platform Thrivable, those with diabetes reported financial, housing, food and medical access challenges of crisis proportions, at numbers well beyond the impact on the public at large. Fully **7.6% percent** of respondents said they had become temporarily or permanently homeless since the start of the public health emergency—a figure **48 times higher** than the national average—while almost 16 percent went into default on mortgages and other debt or said they would soon be in default. That figure is about **twice the national rate**.

The disproportionate share of the adverse economic impact on people with diabetes has been felt by communities of color:

- Some **47% of Native American respondents** said they were in default or near it, while more than **20% of Black respondents** faced this situation, versus **14% of white respondents**.
- Latinx respondents reported being **26% more likely** than whites to be in or near default on debt.
- Meanwhile, about **twice as many Native Americans (14.3%)** as whites (7.7%) became homeless since the pandemic began, while **Asians were 69%** and **Blacks were 6.5%** more likely than whites to have become homeless.

“People with diabetes—and particularly those in communities of color—continue to feel an alarming disproportionate impact as a result of the pandemic,” said Tracey D. Brown, President and CEO of the ADA. “With the data indicating such devastating figures, the tremendous resource gaps between our community and the rest of the nation must be immediately addressed.”

While low-income Americans reported far higher rates of homelessness and debt default, the economic strains have been serious even for those who earn \$75,000 to \$100,000 a year, the survey showed. Further, **nearly 70%** of those who reported having financial difficulty during the pandemic said a key cause was the cost of medical expenses, including the cost of medical care, prescription drugs, and diabetes supplies.



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“Our initial research in partnership with the ADA last year showed how quickly and significantly the pandemic affected those living with diabetes,” notes Thrivable Research Lead, Maria Muccioli, PhD. “The current study reveals that, even with a recovery underway, the long-term impacts are considerable and require an ongoing effort to provide much-needed relief to the countless Americans who are struggling to manage their diabetes.”

Other important findings among people with diabetes during the pandemic are:

- An outsize number of those who became homeless since the pandemic are male (**12.8% of men** said they had become homeless), aged **25-34 (16.6%)** and/or **living with type 2 diabetes (9.6%)**.
- Latinx Americans with diabetes were most likely to have missed health care visits—**54% more likely than whites**—while Black respondents also missed more visits than white respondents. Though race did correlate with the likelihood of missing visits, income did not: respondents earning \$75,000 - \$150,000 per year missed appointments over **40% more often** than those with incomes between \$15,000 and \$74,999 per year.
 - Of those who missed health visits during the pandemic, about a **third** said that a key cause was the lack of transportation.
- Nearly **19%** of respondents said the pandemic greatly or somewhat reduced their ability to access healthy food, a situation that raises serious health concerns for a person with diabetes.
 - This challenge was substantially more acute for people of color: more than **52% of Native American respondents** said they had some or a great deal of difficulty accessing healthy food since COVID-19 began, **nearly 26% of Asian respondents** had these challenges, and almost **21% of both Black and Latinx respondents** did as well. This compared to **17.6% of white respondents** who said they had a hard time accessing healthy food.
- White people are substantially more likely to see an endocrinologist or specialist to care for their diabetes, while Black and Native Americans are the least likely to get care from a specialist.

While these facts are striking, they shouldn't be surprising—although COVID-19 cast a bright spotlight on health disparities in the U.S., they existed long before the outbreak of the pandemic. There's much we can do at all levels of government to bridge gaps in health equity and access, and we urge both state and federal policymakers to help us make [#HealthEquityNow](#) a reality for all Americans living with diabetes—irrespective of who they are, where they're from, or what they look like.

The Thrivable results were based on a national online survey of over 3,500 people living with diabetes, between June 11, 2021 and June 25, 2021.

View the full findings from the [survey here](#).

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About the American Diabetes Association

Every day more than 4,000 people are newly diagnosed with diabetes in America. More than 122 million Americans have diabetes or prediabetes and are striving to manage their lives while living with the disease. The American Diabetes Association (ADA) is the nation's leading voluntary health organization fighting to bend the curve on the diabetes epidemic and help people living with diabetes thrive. For 80 years the ADA has been driving discovery and research to treat, manage and prevent diabetes, while working relentlessly for a cure. We help people with diabetes thrive by fighting for their rights and developing programs, advocacy and education designed to improve their quality of life. Diabetes has brought us together. What we do next will make us Connected for Life. To learn more or to get involved, visit us at diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383). Join the fight with us on Facebook ([American Diabetes Association](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanDiabetesAssociation)), Twitter ([@AmDiabetesAssn](https://twitter.com/AmDiabetesAssn)) and Instagram ([@AmDiabetesAssn](https://www.instagram.com/AmDiabetesAssn)).

About Thrivable - Real-Time Patient Insight Platform

[Thrivable](#) connects patients and companies to create better products and services for the next generation of health care. Our real-time market research platform makes it easy for patients to be their own advocates by sharing their insights, stories, and perspectives via surveys, interviews, focus groups, and usability studies. Health care companies turn to Thrivable to ensure the voice of the customer drives important business decisions every day. Thrivable also helps millions of people touched by diabetes connect and thrive through the [Diabetes Daily](#) online community.