

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Nancy Schroeder

nancy@intesacom.com

619-540-3751

New National Disaster Preparedness Poll Reveals How COVID-19 Worsens Systemic Barriers to Care for Medically Fragile Populations

Healthcare Ready's 7th Annual Survey Reveals Need to Increase Community Readiness Efforts across the US

Washington, D.C. – July 19, 2022 – Socioeconomic disparities and regional differences in preparedness education can impact a community's outcomes from disasters as shown in the seventh annual national poll released today by [Healthcare Ready](#). Each year, the nonprofit organization, which focuses on health preparedness and disaster response, surveys the nation to provide insights into how different communities perceive and prepare for disasters that could disrupt access to healthcare, or the critical infrastructure systems that power our nation's healthcare systems.

Healthcare Ready's [seventh annual "National Domestic Preparedness Survey"](#) places an emphasis on understanding how social determinants of health can contribute to disproportionate impacts from disasters for communities of color, low-income individuals, medically fragile communities, and other underserved constituencies who are more likely to be affected by systemic inequities in healthcare and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery resources. The poll was administered via an online survey to 2,596 adults (age 18+) residing in the US, with fieldwork conducted by YouGov between May 2-4, 2022.

"In the seven years that Healthcare Ready has conducted the National Disaster Preparedness Poll, we continue to see how the effects of systematic injustice are manifested in the impact of disasters and the availability of resiliency resources," said Tom Cotter, Executive Director of Healthcare Ready. "Our latest survey shows the compounded effect of COVID-19 on these inequities. Healthcare Ready calls on local and national leaders to use this data to allocate funding where it is needed most. As the serious impacts of these emergencies continue to rise due to climate change, we are out of time to start paying attention. The time for action was decades ago, but the second-best time is right now. The longer families go without additional tools to prepare themselves for the next crisis, the more preventable suffering is caused."

Consistent with findings in past years, this year's poll showed that 56 percent of Americans think a major disaster is likely to impact them or their family in the next five years, but less than half (40%) have an emergency plan in place. This year's poll also found that nearly half (49%) of those Americans requiring regular medications or medical equipment could go just one week or less without them before facing a personal medical crisis.¹ Assessed by race, Hispanic and Black respondents were most likely to respond that they could not go more than a week without access to their medications or devices (58% and 54%, respectively), compared to White respondents (47%).

Recent trends in [pharmacy closures](#) among other [investment declines for community resources](#) that support historically under-resourced communities paint a troublesome picture for how historically

¹ Excluding responses that selected Not Applicable, N=2,102

underserved communities will be able to withstand the next major disaster that disrupts healthcare without further investments in preparedness education.

When asked to identify the top way the COVID-19 pandemic is still impacting their households, the top selection among those still experiencing negative effects was emotional, mental, or physical health (37%), followed by concerns around the ability to pay for either food/other basic expenses or medical expenses (26%).² Separately, more than a quarter of Americans (27%) reported they would turn to federal, state or local governments in the next two years for support. Asked where they would be mostly likely to seek help in the next two years (from a provided list), Black (26%) and Hispanic (22%) Americans are more likely than others to identify the federal government as the source they would be most likely to turn to for help in the next two years. Comparatively, White respondents were more likely than others to report that they would most likely turn to family or friends for support within the next two years (29%). These findings suggest a division amongst race in feelings of access to support systems for help.

What disasters like the pandemic and other recent events have shown us is that long-standing structural inequities in healthcare lead to worse outcomes for historically underserved communities. Rebuilding hard-hit communities with greater resilience will require longer-term investments in preparedness and healthcare, improved coordination between the public and private sectors, and response and recovery efforts that are grounded in equity and operationalized through trusted networks and stakeholders .

Additional resources to support community preparedness are provided, below.

- **Bookmark resources** such as Rx Open to help find open, nearby pharmacies, health facilities, dialysis centers, and other healthcare resources during a crisis. Visit: <https://www.healthcareready.org/rxopen> or <https://www.rxopen.org>
- **Prepare an emergency supply kit** that includes protective gear (such as masks, gloves), food, water, flashlights, batteries, clothing, medical supplies, and most importantly all necessary medications in a resealable, waterproof bag for long term storage.
- **Have an evacuation plan** that covers meeting points, alternate routes, reunification plans, and emergency contacts especially for the medically fragile, who may need additional planning and assistance. For more information on hurricane season see our [blog](#).
- **Talk to your healthcare provider** to plan for chronic conditions you may have and to arrange for specific preparedness actions you should take to properly manage health conditions during a disaster.
- **Keep a written list of prescriptions** Using Rx on the Run to print a personalized wallet sized card that documents your prescriptions and other important medical information. Visit: [Healthcare Ready | Rx On The Run](#) to fill yours out!

² Excluding responses that selected None of the above, N=1,518.

For more details on poll results, please visit our community resilience page for a [full summary and findings of the 2022 National Domestic Preparedness Survey](#).

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About Healthcare Ready

Healthcare Ready is a nonprofit organization established in 2007 to help strengthen the US healthcare system and assist communities in planning for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and disease pandemics. It serves as a linkage point between industry, and local, state, and federal governments to help build resilient communities and safeguard patients before, during, and after public health emergencies. For more information, visit www.healthcareready.org or find us on [Twitter @HC_Ready](#)

About the YouGov survey

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,596 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2-4 May 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all US adults (aged 18+). New COVID-19 questions were included in the 2022 Domestic Preparedness Poll.