



Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative

The pandemic as portal*

Finding radical hope in tragic times

Manisha Anantharaman

With, Josh Alpert, Halina Brown, Daniel Fischer and Philip J. Vergragt

SCORAI International Conference 2020

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Research and Action Trajectories

Provocation for the SCORAI Strategy Session

SCORAI in the pandemic and post-pandemic world:

What can we learn from the current evidence from sustainable consumption research to shape a more sustainable post-pandemic world? Where are the urgent research needs that future work in our field should address? This perspective was prepared by the SCORAI Board members. It does not present final conclusions but is intended to trigger a broader discussion amongst the conference participants. A potential outcome of the discussion may be an invited editorial in a high visibility journal.

— *Manisha Anantharaman, Josh Alpert, Halina Brown, Daniel Fischer, Philip Vergragt (May 28, 2020)*

Assertion 1

Large-scale and rapid behavior change is possible

- When tech-fixes are not available and threat imminent, practices can change quickly
- Substantial drops in greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of environmental pollution

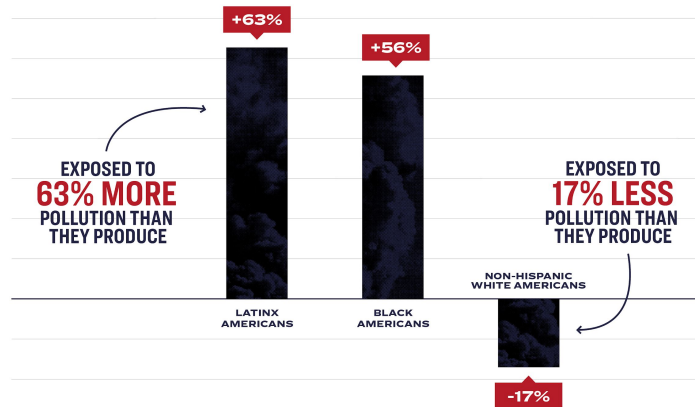


Assertion 2

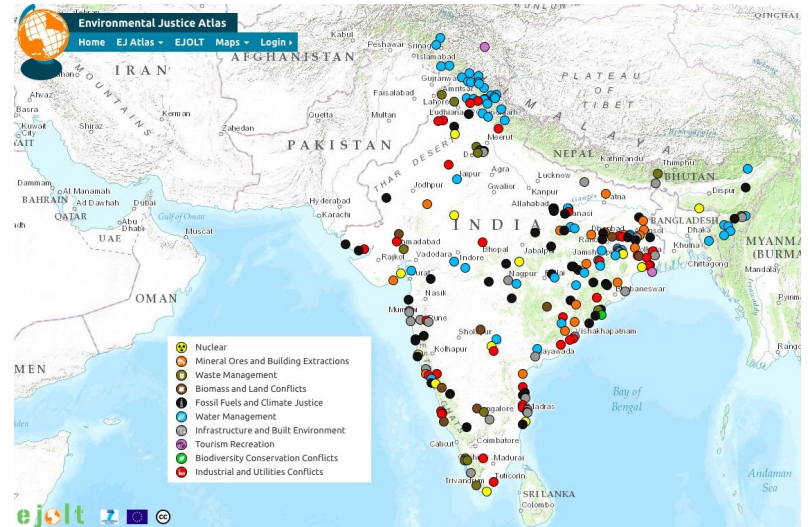
Consumer society is a fundamentally unequal society

- That displaces risks and burdens onto historically marginalized communities (majority world, indigenous, black and brown, rural)
- These already-oppressed and exploited communities are the hardest hit by the pandemic
- Enshrines inequitable access to basic needs/well-being determinants (eg. healthcare in the US)

POLLUTION EXPOSURE BY POPULATION (2003–2015)

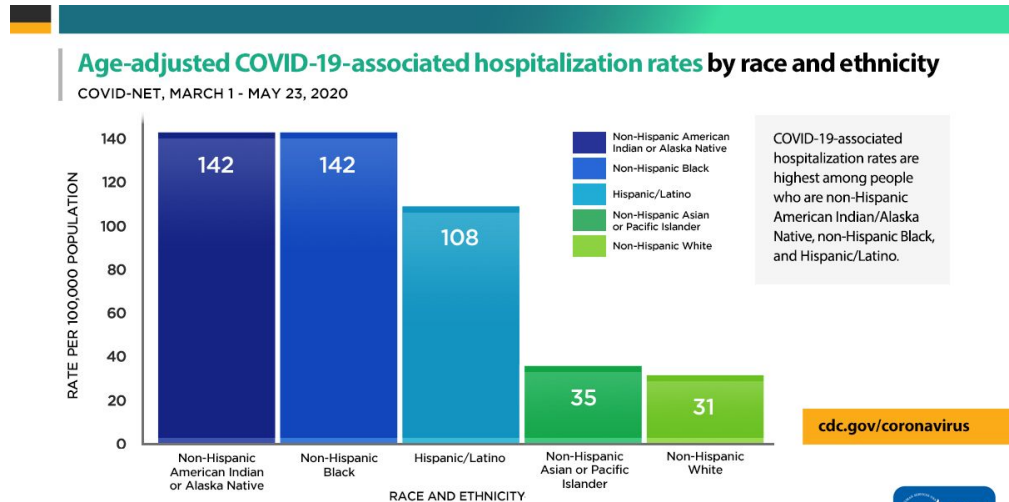


Source: Christopher W. Tessum et al., "Inequity in consumption of goods and services adds to racial-ethnic disparities in air pollution exposure," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (March 2019).



Assertion 2 Consumer society is a fundamentally unequal society

- a. That displaces risks and burdens onto historically marginalized communities (majority world, indigenous, black and brown, rural)
- b. **Already-oppressed and exploited communities are the hardest hit by the pandemic, compounding injustice**
- c. Enshrines inequitable access to basic needs/well-being determinants (eg. healthcare in the US)



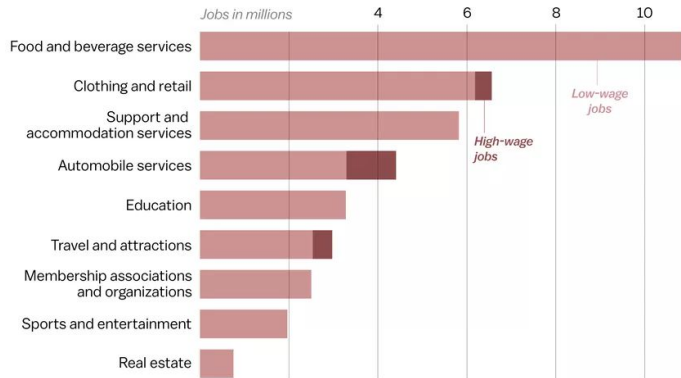
Rates are statistically adjusted to account for differences in age distributions within race and ethnicity strata in the COVID-NET catchment area. Rates are based on available race and ethnicity data which is now complete in 83% of cases from COVID-NET sites. COVID-19-associated hospitalization rates for American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) may be impacted by recent outbreaks among specific communities within this population and the small numbers of AI/AN cases included in COVID-NET.



Assertion 2

- a. That displaces risks and burdens onto historically marginalized communities (majority world, indigenous, black and brown, rural)
- b. These already-oppressed and exploited communities are the hardest hit by the pandemic
- c. Enshrines inequitable access to basic needs/well-being determinants (eg. healthcare in the US)

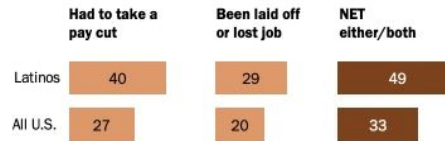
Jobs vulnerable to layoffs during the Covid-19 pandemic in the US by industry



Note: "Low income" jobs are defined as making a weekly income of less than \$801.47. Values are rounded.
Source: US Private Sector Job Quality Index

More Latinos than U.S. adults overall say someone in their household has had pay cut or lost a job due to COVID-19

% who say they, or someone in their household, have ___ because of the coronavirus outbreak



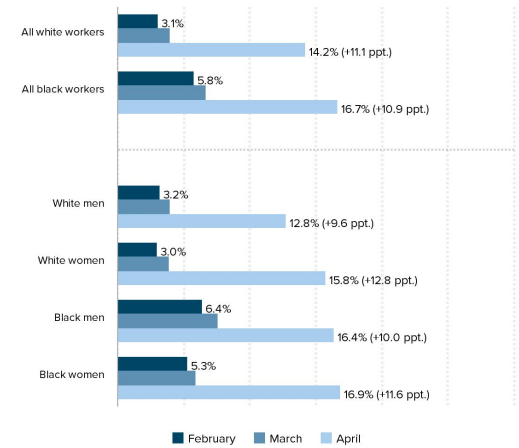
Notes: Hispanics are of any race. Share of respondents who didn't provide an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 19-24, 2020

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

While unemployment skyrocketed for black and white workers in the COVID-19 labor market, the unemployment rate is higher for black workers

Unemployment rates by race, and by race and gender, February–April 2020



Note: White refers to non-Hispanic whites, black refers to blacks alone.

Source: EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey public data.

Economic Policy Institute

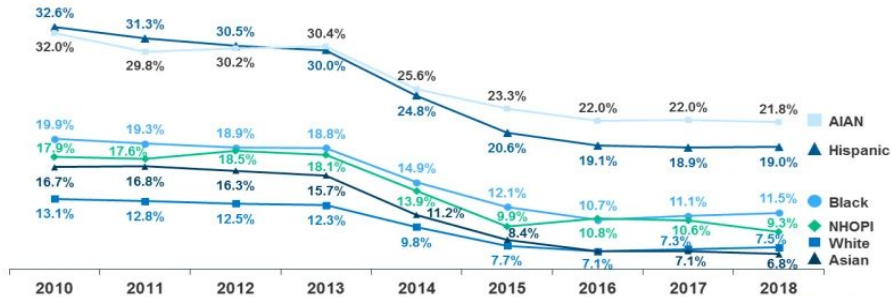
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Figure 4

Uninsured Rates for the Nonelderly Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2010-2018



NOTE: Includes individuals ages 0 to 64. AIAN refers to American Indians and Alaska Natives, NHOPI refers to Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders.
SOURCE: KFF analysis of the 2010-2016 American Community Survey.



CORONAVIRUS

'If you don't have running water, how can you wash your hands?': Lack of running water complicates coronavirus suppression on Navajo Nation

30% of homes on the Navajo Nation didn't have running water before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it's contributing to the spread of the virus.

WRI's World Resources Report documented how one slum in Bangalore is **12 times denser than the city average**, housing 140,000 people per square kilometer. In 2018, **only 60% of residents** could access piped water — and even then, water was only available in taps for an average of two hours per day, two to three days a week.

Assertion 3

“Free-market” cannot meet well-being needs

- a. Panic hoarding, fears of running out, each person on their own
- b. Scarcity of supplies for essential workers
- c. No social safety-nets in countries like the United States

3 x 3 Questions

The whats

1. What sorts of long-lasting changes in everyday life and consumption can we expect to see?
2. What does the crisis reveal in terms of what types of *work, economic activities and consumption practices* are “essential” for inclusive social well-being?
3. What does the crisis suggest in terms of the role of the state in supporting inclusive well-being within ecological boundaries?

The hows

1. How is/does the SCORAI community research these trends, using what tools and in what spaces?
2. How do we leverage this moment to support a transition to a more socially-just and ecologically-safe world, and not further ecological destruction and inequity?
3. How do we build the partnerships, collaboration and community needed to do this work?

Brave space guidelines

1. Welcome multiple viewpoints
2. Break it down
3. Own your intentions and impacts
4. Take risks- lean into discomfort
5. Work to recognize your privileges
6. Step up, step back, share the air
7. Actively listen
8. Challenge with care