

The Caucus Corner

The National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, Inc. (NCBA)
Monthly Newsletter
February 2024

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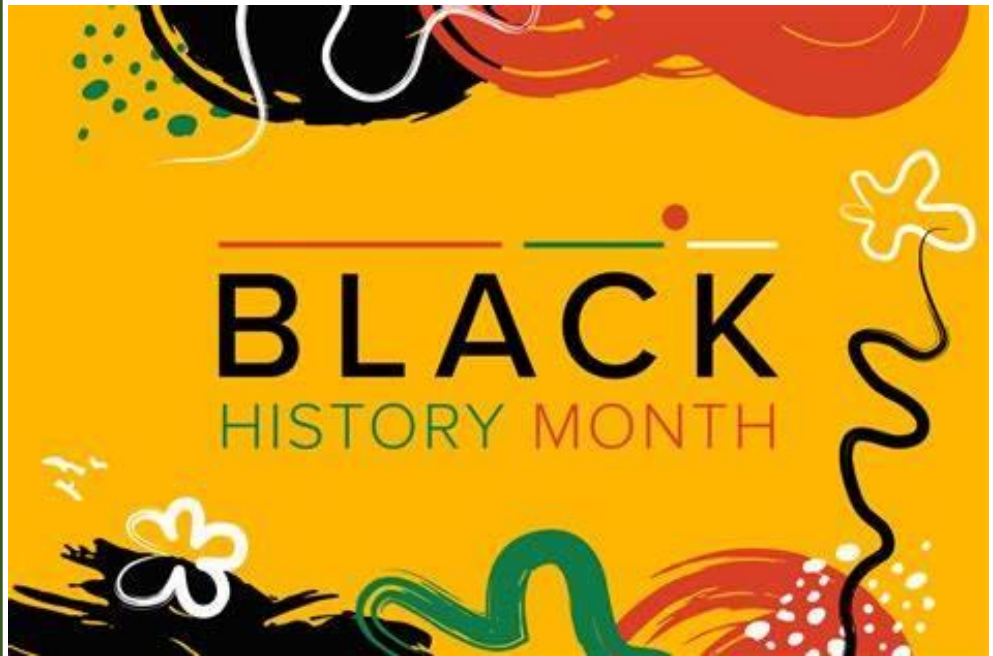
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A Proclamation on National Black History Month, 2024

This National Black History Month, we celebrate the vast contributions of Black Americans to our country and recognize that Black history is American history, and that Black culture, stories, and triumphs are at the core of who we are as a Nation.

The soul of America is what makes us unique among all nations. We are the only country in the world founded on an idea. It is the idea that we are all created equal and deserve to be treated with equal dignity throughout our lives. While we still grapple today with the moral stain and vestiges of slavery – our country’s original sin – we have never walked away from the fight to fully realize the promise of America for all Americans. Throughout our history, Black Americans have never given up on the promise of America.

Unbowed by the forces of hate and undaunted as they fought for centuries against slavery, segregation, and injustice, Black Americans have held a mirror up to our Nation, allowing our country to confront hard truths about who we are and pushing us to live up to our founding ideals. They have helped redeem the soul of our Nation, ensuring the promises in our founding documents were not just words on a page but a lived reality for all people. In the process, the vibrancy of Black history and culture has enriched every aspect of American life.

Since taking office, the Vice President and I have worked to continue this legacy of progress and lay down a foundation for a stronger, more equitable Nation. On my first day as President, I signed a historic Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity

and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. In February 2023, I signed an additional Executive Order to acknowledge the unbearable human costs of systemic racism and to direct the entire Federal Government to advance equity for those who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent discrimination, poverty, and inequality, including the Black community. That includes building an economy that grows from the middle out and bottom up, not the top down. So far, we have created over 14 million jobs and in 2023, the Black unemployment rate was lower than in any other year on record.

We are addressing historic health inequities for Black Americans by making systemic changes to our health care systems that increase healthcare access while lowering costs. Today, more Black Americans have health insurance than at any previous time in American history. We are working to address the Black maternal health crisis – ensuring dignity, safety, and support for Black moms. The Vice President has helped elevate this critical issue to a national priority by calling on States to extend Medicaid postpartum coverage from two months to one year.

My Administration is also working to close racial gaps in education and economic opportunity. To that end, we have delivered over \$7 billion in funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and are working to expand access to home-ownership – a major source of generational wealth for families – while aggressively combating racial discrimination in housing.

Our update to the Thrifty Food Plan is keeping 400,000 Black kids out of poverty every month and making sure millions more have enough food to eat. By 2025, we are working to ensure that 15 percent of Federal contracting dollars goes to small, disadvantaged businesses, including Black-owned small businesses. We are also replacing poisonous lead pipes so every American can turn on a faucet at home or school and drink clean water.

To deliver equal justice under the law, we are appointing judges to the Federal bench who reflect all of America, including Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and more Black women to the Federal circuit courts than all previous administrations combined. I also signed a historic Executive Order that implemented key elements of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act: banning chokeholds and restricting no knock warrants by Federal law enforcement, creating a national database of officer misconduct, and promoting effective and accountable community policing that advances public trust and safety.

I also signed the first major gun safety legislation in nearly 30 years as well as a long-overdue law to make lynching a Federal hate crime in Emmett Till's name. My Administration continues to call on the Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act to secure the right to vote for every American.

Today, I am reminded of something Amelia Boynton said when reflecting on her march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on what would be known as Bloody Sunday: "You can never know where you're going unless you know where you've been." America is a great Nation because we choose to learn the good, the bad, and the full truth of the history of our country – histories and truths that we must preserve and protect for the next generation. This National Black History Month, as we remember where we have been, may we also recognize that our only way forward is by marching together.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 2024 as National Black History Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with relevant programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirty-first day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.

-JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

What You Need to Know About the Origins of Black History Month

Black History Month is considered one of the nation's oldest organized history celebrations decades and has been recognized by U.S. presidents for through proclamations and celebrations. Here is some information about the history of [Black History Month](#).

How did Black History Month start?

It was [Carter G. Woodson](#), a founder of the Assn. for the Study of African American History, who first came up with the idea of the celebration that became Black History Month. Woodson, the son of freed Virginia slaves, who went on to earn a PhD in history from Harvard, originally came up with the idea of Negro History Week to encourage Black Americans to become more interested in their own history

and heritage. Woodson worried that Black children were not being taught about their ancestors' achievements in American schools in the early 1900s.

"If a race has no history, if it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated," Woodson said.



Wreaths are laid in front of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington.

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Why is Black History Month in February?

Woodson chose February because it had the birthdays of President Lincoln and the activist, author and speaker Frederick Douglass. Lincoln was born Feb. 12, and Douglass, a former slave who did not know his exact birthday, celebrated his on Feb. 14.

Daryl Michael Scott, a Howard University history professor and former president of the Assn. for the Study of African American History, said Woodson chose that week because Black Americans were already celebrating Lincoln's and Douglass' birthdays. With the help of Black newspapers, he promoted that week as a time to focus on African American history as part of the celebrations that were already ongoing. The first Negro History Week was announced in February 1926.

"This was a community effort spearheaded by Woodson that built on tradition and built on Black institutional life and structures to create a new celebration that was a weeklong, and it took off like a rocket," Scott said.

Why the change from a week to a month?

Negro History Week was wildly successful, but Woodson felt it needed more. Woodson's original idea was for it to be a time for student showcases of the African American history they learned the rest of the year, not as the only week Black history would be discussed, Scott said. Woodson later advocated starting a "Negro History Year," saying that during a school year "a subject that receives attention one week out of 36 will not mean much to anyone."

Individually several places, including West Virginia in the 1940s and Chicago in the 1960s, expanded the celebration into a month. The civil rights and Black Power movement advocated for an official shift from Black History Week to Black History Month, Scott said, and, in 1976, on the 50th anniversary of the beginning of Negro History Week, the Assn. for the Study of African American History made the shift to Black History Month

Presidential Recognition

Every president since Gerald R. Ford through Joe Biden has issued a statement honoring the spirit of Black History Month. Ford first honored Black History Week in 1975, calling the recognition "most appropriate," as the country developed "a healthy awareness on the part of all of us of achievements that have too long been obscured and unsung."

The next year, in 1976, Ford issued the first Black History Month commemoration, saying with the celebration “we can seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

President Carter added in 1978 that the celebration “provides for all Americans a chance to rejoice and express pride in a heritage that adds so much to our way of life.” President Reagan said in 1981 that “understanding the history of Black Americans is a key to understanding the strength of our nation.”

For more information, visit: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2024-02-03/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-origins-of-black-history-month>

Key Facts About the Nation's 47.9 Million Black Americans

The number of Black people living in the United States reached a new high of 47.9 million in 2022, up about a third (32%) since 2000, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of government data. This group is diverse, with a growing number and share born outside the U.S. and an increasing number saying they are of two or more races.

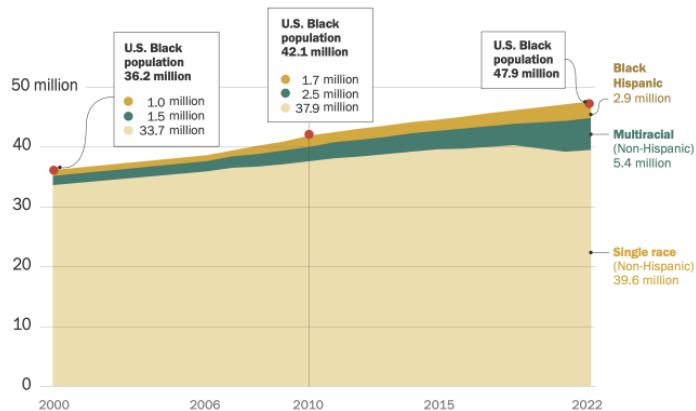
For Black History Month, here are key facts about the nation's Black population. In this analysis, the Black population is made up of three main groups: single-race, non-Hispanic Black people; non-Hispanic, multiracial Black people; and Black Hispanics. You can also read our newly updated fact sheet about [Black Americans in 2022](#).

1. The Black population in the U.S. has grown by 32% since 2000, rising from 36.2 million then to 47.9 million in 2022. Notably, the number of people self-identifying as another race in addition to Black has increased nearly 254% since 2000. This reflects a broader [national shift in the number of Americans identifying as multiracial](#), as well as [changes to how the U.S. Census Bureau asks about race and ethnicity](#). The number of Black Americans who say they are Hispanic has also risen sharply over this period, up 199% since 2000.

2. The arrival of new immigrants from [Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere](#) has been an important contributor to Black population growth. In 2022, there were 5.1 million Black immigrants in the U.S., up from 2.4 million in 2000, according to our analysis of Census Bureau data. Immigrants accounted for 11% of the Black population in 2022, up from 7% in 2000.

The number of Black Americans who identify as multiracial or Hispanic has grown sharply since 2000

U.S. Black population



Note: Populations rounded to the nearest 100,000. Populations may not sum to total for a given year due to rounding. “U.S. Black population” refers to all people who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. “Single race” refers to people who self-identify as Black alone and do not identify as Hispanic or Latino. “Multiracial” refers to people who self-identify as Black and one or more other races in combination but do not identify as Hispanic or Latino. “Black Hispanic” refers to people who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino and as Black (multiracial or otherwise).

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2000 decennial census (5% IPUMS) and 2006-2019 and 2021-2022 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).

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3. The Black population has grown fastest in states that historically have *not* had large numbers of Black residents. Utah experienced the fastest growth in its Black population between 2010 and 2022, with an increase of 86%. The Black populations of Hawaii and Nevada increased by 57% and 56%, respectively, during that span. (This only counts states with Black populations of at least 25,000 in 2010.)

The states that experienced the largest *numerical* increases in Black residents between 2010 and 2022 are also those with the largest Black populations overall: Texas (which saw growth of 1 million Black residents between 2010 and 2022); Florida (up 745,000) and Georgia (up 595,000). Each of these states now has a Black population larger than that of New York, which ranked first in 2010.

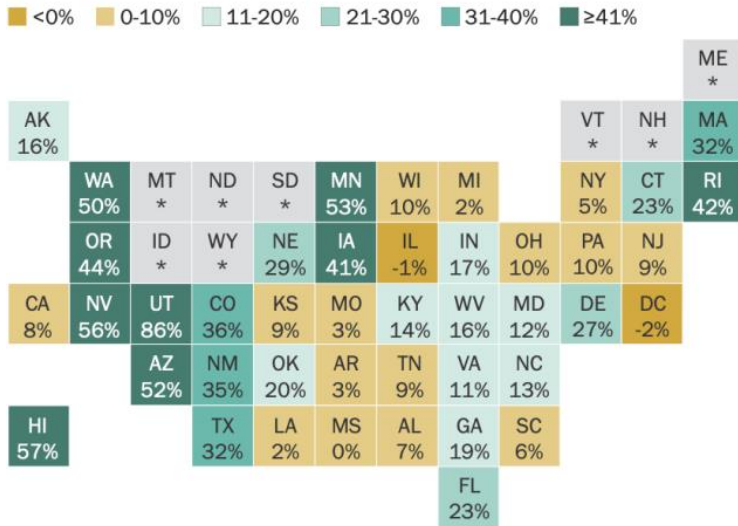
Meanwhile, the Black population declined in the District of Columbia (-2%) and Illinois (-1%) between 2010 and 2022.

4. New York City has more Black residents than any other metropolitan area. About 3.6 million Black Americans live in the New York metro area. Other metro areas with large Black populations include Atlanta (2.2 million), Chicago (1.7 million) and Washington, D.C. (1.6 million).

As a *share* of the population, the Atlanta area is home to a higher percentage of Black people than any other metro area with at least 1 million Black residents. Nearly four-in-ten residents of the Atlanta metro area (36%) are Black. The next highest shares are the metro areas of Washington (28%), Detroit (24%) and Philadelphia (23%).

The Black population has grown fastest in Utah, Hawaii and Nevada since 2010

% change of the Black population by state from 2010 to 2022



* Percent changes not shown for states with Black populations less than 25,000 in 2010. Note: "Black population" refers to all people who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. Percent changes were calculated using unrounded numbers. Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2010 and 2022 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).

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New York, Atlanta, Chicago and Washington had the largest Black populations among U.S. metropolitan areas in 2022

Metropolitan area	Black population	% of metro pop. that is Black	Black pop. % change from 2010
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	3.6 million	19%	-1%
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	2.2	36	28
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI	1.7	18	-4
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	1.6	28	4
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1.3	18	30
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	1.3	23	-5
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	1.2	20	17
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, FL	1.2	22	1
Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI	1.0	24	-6
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	0.9	8	-7

Note: "Black population" refers to all people who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. Metropolitan areas are defined by IPUMS using 2013 Office of Management and Budget definitions. Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2010 and 2022 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).

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5. The Black population of the U.S. is relatively young. In 2022, the median age of Black Americans was 32.1 years, meaning half of the nation's Black population was younger than that age and half was older. By comparison, the median age of the nation overall was 38.0 that year.

The median age among single-race, non-Hispanic Black Americans was 34.9 in 2022, compared with 21.0 among Black Hispanics and 19.5 among multiracial, non-Hispanic Black Americans.

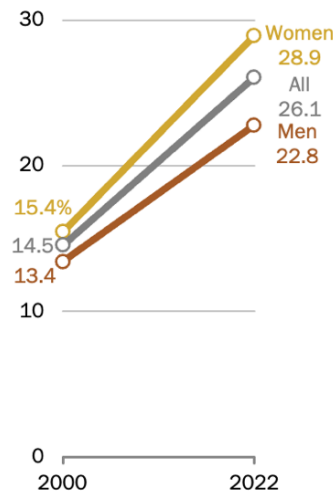
6. Educational attainment among Black Americans is on the rise. In 2022, 26.1% of Black adults ages 25 and older – 7.8 million people – had earned at least a bachelor's degree. That was up from 14.5% in 2000.

Growing shares of Black women and Black men alike have earned at least a bachelor's degree. But Black women have made faster gains than Black men. In 2022, 28.9% of Black women ages 25 and older had earned at least a bachelor's degree, up from 15.4% in 2000. Among Black men in the same age range, by comparison, 22.8% had earned at least a bachelor's degree in 2022, up from 13.4% in 2000.

7. Black Americans are less likely than other Americans to be married. About a third of Black adults (32%) are currently married. That compares with 53% of adults who are not Black. Among Black adults, 36% of men are married, compared with 29% of women. Black women, in turn, are slightly more likely than Black men to be divorced (14% vs. 10%) or widowed (8% vs. 2%).

A growing share of Black adults ages 25 and older have a bachelor's degree

% of U.S. Black population ages 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher

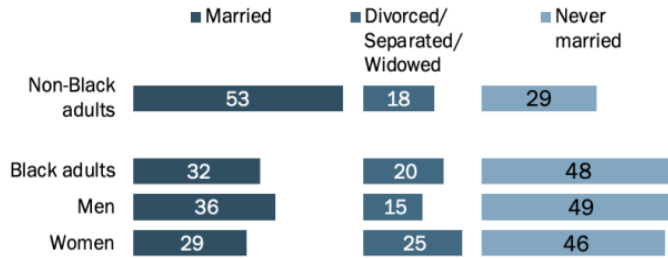


Note: "U.S. Black population" refers to all people who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2000 decennial census (5% IPUMS) and 2022 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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Black men in the U.S. are more likely than Black women to be married

Among U.S. adults, % who are ...



Note: Adults are ages 18 and older. "Black adults" refers to those ages 18 and older who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. Marriages include same-sex marriages.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2022 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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8. About a sixth of married Black adults (17%) are married to someone who is not Black. This includes 21% of married Black men and 13% of married Black women. These shares only consider those who are married and whose spouses live in the same households.

Married Black women, in turn, are more likely than married Black men to have a spouse who is also Black (87% vs. 79%). This includes spouses who are single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic.

Black men in the U.S. are more likely than Black women to be married to someone who is not Black

Among married Black adults, * % who are married to someone who is ...



* Race of spouse is only available for spouses living in the same household.

Note: "Black adults" refers to those ages 18 and older who self-identify as Black, inclusive of single-race Black, multiracial Black and Black Hispanic people. Marriages include same-sex marriages.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2022 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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9. Black households had a median annual income of \$50,000 in 2022. That included a median income of \$60,000 among multiracial Black households, \$56,500 among Black Hispanic households and \$49,500 among single-race Black households.

Looked at another way, about half of all Black households (51%) had a household income of \$50,000 or more in 2022, while 49% earned less than that.

Meanwhile, a recent Pew Research Center analysis found that Black households made gains during the pandemic when it comes to *wealth* – the difference between the value of assets owned and debts owed. The typical single-race, non-Hispanic Black household saw a 77% increase in its wealth from December 2019 (\$15,300) to December 2021 (\$27,100).



For more information, visit:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/01/18/key-facts-about-black-americans/>



Looking for Unique Volunteer Opportunities

Unshackle your imagination and follow it to volunteer experiences you never thought you'd have, from the Super Bowl to the Rose Parade

Mary Nimer of Brookfield, Connecticut, has helped with crowd control at the Super Bowl in Phoenix, walked a balloon in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York and decorated floats for the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California.

This year, she has applied to be among the volunteers who decorate the White House for the holidays. A retired teacher, Nimer is living her best life by seeking out exciting, out-of-the-box volunteer positions at major events. Her motivation: "I enjoy meeting people and participating in new experiences outside of my personal world," she says.

I myself have worked the "Green Room" for actors and directors at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York and provided on-stage help to chefs at the Greenwich Wine + Food Festival in Connecticut, top-notch events where I got to be up close and personal with celebrities.

Think of an event, and it's highly likely it's looking for volunteers to help staff it, creating wonderful opportunities for retirees and older adults. If you love theater, for instance, consider being an usher.

"Ushering gives me the opportunity to see plays, dance and music shows at no cost," says Pat DeMatteo, a retired teacher who volunteers at The Shubert Theater in New Haven, Connecticut. She adds that she usually sits during the show if it isn't sold out.

"The Shubert asks that you commit to doing at least 10 shows a year, so I try to do one or two shows a month," she adds.

- Start with a Google search. Volunteering typically starts with finding a suitable opportunity and applying online. "I am not a computer whiz," says Nimer, "but I Google 'how to volunteer to do X,' depending on my interest at the time, and that starts my search." While well-known national events are enticing, consider more-local venues if you are on a budget and can't afford the expense of traveling to out-of-town events (most organizations expect you to pay your own travel and hotel costs).
- Apply far in advance. Popular events like decorating the White House and volunteering at sporting events get lots of volunteer applications. "Don't be discouraged if you don't get in the first year," says Nimer. "I've applied a few times for different events before being selected."
- Review volunteer expectations. Most groups require professional conduct and reliability from volunteers. Also be sure you are up to the task of work you sign up for — you may be asked to stand for hours a day, be out in the cold or heat or get up super early or stay up late into the night. Be certain you understand whatever "onboarding" requirements the organization has, too, meaning if they expect you to be in town or online for training prior to the event.
- Highlight your skills and talents. Think about what you can bring to the table at an event in terms of skills: Are you proficient with computers? Would you be comfortable driving others? Do you have decorating experience? Do you know how to repair costumes? Think about your work and volunteer histories as well as your hobbies so you can mention them in your application.
- Be prepared for scrutiny. Many events require background checks to ensure the security of guests, performers, and athletes.

Opportunities to Consider

The Super Bowl. The 2024 Super Bowl will be played on February 11th in Las Vegas, Nevada, and [The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority](#) is looking to recruit 10,000 local volunteers for game day. You can also sign up to volunteer for other sports and entertainment events in Las Vegas through the Authority at this [link](#).

Sports Teams. Football, basketball, baseball, hockey, tennis, pickleball, golf — whatever sport you enjoy watching on television or playing yourself, you may be able to help your local professional and amateur teams out.

National Parks. Our national parks rely on volunteers to supplement their employees. It's a great way to enjoy nature, whether you want to volunteer for a day or all year round, near your home or somewhere exotic (to you). Opportunities are available in all U.S. states and territories and range from educating visitors to maintaining and rebuilding trails or historic buildings, helping to conduct research, serving as a campground host, or producing art as part of an Artist-in-Residence program.

Parades. Americans love parades, so there are lots of them to volunteer for, both locally and nationally. For the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, you have to be referred by a Macy's employee or one of their parade partner organizations to be a balloon holder or clown. For The Tournament of Roses Parade, a New Year's Day tradition held in Pasadena, California, you can sign up to apply flowers to floats under the guidance of professional floral designers.

Decorating the White House. Each year, volunteers come to Washington to help decorate the White House for the holiday season and work on or perform at Holiday Open Houses, held throughout December. Applications typically are open through early September and volunteers are notified by the end of September if they've been selected. Competition is fierce and many people have to apply several years in a row before gaining a spot.

Film Festivals. If you're interested in independent films, the Sundance Film Festival is an exclusive and exciting event held in Park City, Utah, every January. The festival, founded by actor Robert Redford, is looking for volunteers to do 6- to 8-hour shifts as ticket takers, ushers, drivers, computer operators and Lost & Found personnel, among other jobs. You can commit to working the entire festival or just specific days, but you will need to be available for training ahead of time. Sundance also needs volunteers for its year-round programs at the Sundance Institute. Other noteworthy film festivals are the Atlanta Film Festival, Austin Film Festival, New York Film Festival, Palm Springs International Film Festival, South by Southwest TV & Film Festival and Telluride Film Festival.

Educational Events. If you are looking to learn, South by Southwest also hosts a conference for digital creatives in Austin featuring high-profile speakers where you can both volunteer and attend lectures. TED Talks, the nonprofit sponsor of conferences and presentations about the latest ideas in technology, education, design and other topics, are looking for volunteers who can transcribe and translate talks into different languages and may soon seek volunteers in various cities to assist on its events.

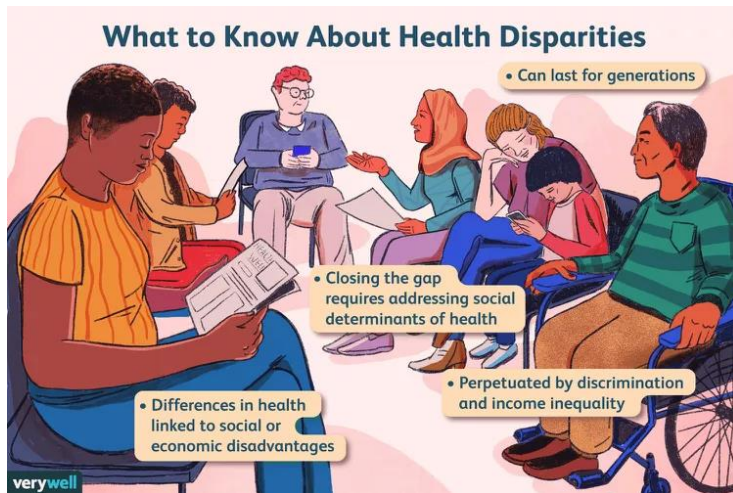
For more information, visit:
<https://www.nextavenue.org/unique-volunteer-opportunities/>





Health Disparities: What They Are and Why They Matter

Different groups and communities can have markedly different levels of health. Some populations can have higher rates of cancer, for example, while others might be more likely to be obese or use tobacco. These differences in health or medical conditions are called health disparities, and they can have a profound impact on the public health of a community.



Definition

The U.S. government defines health disparity as “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social or economic disadvantage.” These disparities negatively impact whole groups of people that already face significantly more obstacles to maintaining good health, often because of specific social or economic factors, such as:

- Socioeconomic status or income
- Race or ethnicity
- Age
- Sex or gender
- Geography, ex. rural vs. urban
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Immigrant status
- Religion
- Mental health status

Historically, these characteristics have been linked to discrimination or exclusion. When a particular group of people doesn't have the same kind of access to health care, education, or healthy behaviors, it can cause them to fall behind their peers on all kinds of health measures. These disparities can often persist for generations.

Impact

The negative repercussions of health disparities go beyond just the individual and extend to their children, whole communities, and society at large. Health disparities are often self-perpetuating. Parents too sick to work, for example, can become low-income. Unemployed, low-income individuals are less likely to have access to health insurance. If they're unable to afford health care, they could get sicker, making them even less able to find a new job, and so on. Getting healthy and out of poverty becomes increasingly difficult.

Examples

Health disparities exist all over the world, including in the United States, and affect every age, race/ethnicity, and sex. Here are just a few examples:

- **Infant mortality:** Babies born to Black women in the United States die at more than double the rate of babies born to white women.
- **Dementia:** Black people also have the highest risk for dementia, and are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than whites in the United States.
- **Cancer:** People with lower incomes and education levels are more likely to get cancer and to die from it compared to their more affluent peers, and that gap appears to be widening.
- **Obesity:** Even after controlling for family income, rates of obesity in Black women and Mexican-American men are substantially higher than in other races or ethnic groups.
- **Smoking:** Native American/Alaska Native men and women have disproportionately higher rates of smoking, as do individuals living below the federal poverty level and those who are unemployed.
- **Binge drinking:** Young white men are more likely than other groups to binge drink (5+ drinks in a two-hour period).

Causes

Like many aspects of public health, the root causes of health disparities are complex. Health is influenced by so many factors that it can be difficult to pinpoint just why a gap between two groups is so wide. That said, disparities are often the result of health inequities—that is, differences in how resources are distributed among different groups. These resources could be tangible, like in the case of physical parks where kids can exercise safely, or intangible opportunities, such as being able to see a doctor when ill. Disparities often have multiple root causes, but there are a few major inequities in the United States that are known to contribute to health gaps between groups.

Income Inequality

The U.S. healthcare system is one of the most expensive in the world, spending roughly twice as much on health care as other high-income nations. On average, the country as a whole spent an estimated \$10,348 per person in 2016, and healthcare spending accounts for nearly 18% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), a rate that's increased year after year. Americans pay more for health services like clinic visits, hospital stays, and prescription drugs.

A growing income gap between the rich and the poor in the United States has made it harder for poor Americans to keep up. While top incomes skyrocketed between 1980 and 2015, real wages for low-income individuals fell, making it increasingly difficult for poor people in the United States to afford basic medical care or engage in healthy behaviors. This, in turn, makes it harder to stay healthy or treat and manage health conditions.

Systemic Discrimination or Exclusion

Social drivers—like racism, sexism, ableism, classism, or homophobia—can perpetuate inequities by prioritizing one group over another. These forces are so deeply ingrained in cultural practices and norms that many people might not realize they're happening. Oftentimes, these forces are the result of past inequities that still affect communities today.

Take, for example, mid-20th-century discriminatory housing practices. These policies forced many minority families into neighborhoods without nearby access to community resources, like public transportation, quality education, or job opportunities—all of which affect a family's financial stability and, therefore, long-term health.

Researcher Camara Phyllis Jones used a gardening analogy in the *American Journal of Public Health* to illustrate just how this happens. Imagine, for generations to come.

Environmental Factors

Many health outcomes are the result of personal choices, like eating healthy foods or getting enough exercise. But many of those choices are shaped, influenced, or made for us by the environment we're in. Environmental health is the physical, chemical, and biological forces that can impact our health, and they can be a driving force behind health disparities. It's hard for people to eat healthy food, for example, when they don't have access to it in their neighborhood (areas known as food deserts).

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are an example of environmentally driven health disparities. This collection of 20+ conditions primarily impact the poorest of the poor, both in the United States and worldwide, often due to a lack of clean water or bathrooms. These conditions make it harder for kids to learn and adults to work, exacerbating the effects of poverty on people's health and well-being.

Addressing Health Disparities

Closing the gap in health outcomes is no easy task. Causes are often multi-layered. Solutions would need to address not only the root cause of a given disparity but also the context that made it possible in the first place.

For its part, the Healthy People 2020 objectives—a set of goals laid out by the U.S. government to improve the health of Americans by the year 2020—aims to reduce health disparities by addressing key factors known as social determinants of health.

Social determinants of health are the environmental conditions and circumstances that affect and shape how healthy we are. Many things in our social circles and environment can impact our behaviors and limit our ability to make healthy choices. These include things like cultural norms (ex. distrust of authority figures) or community design (ex. bike lanes). There are dozens of social factors exacerbating health disparities, but the Healthy People 2020 objectives have put just five front and center: economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

A Social Determinant of Health Category

Improve Economic Stability

Economic stability refers to things like food security, income or wealth, housing stability, and employment opportunities, and research shows addressing some of these issues could help reduce disparities associated with a whole range of health issues. Providing housing assistance, for example, has been shown to improve both the psychological and physical health of individuals. Similarly, providing influenza vaccination in poorer neighborhoods could help reduce gaps in hospitalization due to flu. And increasing economic opportunities for financially insecure women might help prevent the disproportionately high number of cases of HIV in that population.

Ensure Everyone Receives a Quality Education

Investing in things like language and literacy, early childhood education, high school graduation, and higher education could help close health gaps in a number of ways. Increased access to center-based early childhood education, for example, has been shown to decrease crime *and* teen births. High school completion programs also have strong returns on investment—often resulting in improved economic benefits that exceed any costs associated with the program—in part because of averted healthcare costs.

Address Issues Within a Social and Community Context

While not always apparent, social influences and dynamics can significantly impact the health of both individuals and the overall community. These include things like incarceration, discrimination, civic participation, and social cohesion. Because incarceration can disrupt families and impact access to things like education, employment, and housing, some researchers have called for policy changes that address sentencing laws that disproportionately impact certain Black communities as a means to reduce several disparities, including HIV.

Expand Access to Health Care and Improve Health Literacy

Helping ensure people are able to see a medical professional when they're sick is important for curbing health disparities. But perhaps equally important is their ability to see a doctor when they're healthy. Many medical issues in the United States could be prevented with routine, preventive care like health screenings, vaccinations, and lifestyle changes.

The Affordable Care Act attempted to expand access to primary care by making it easier to get health insurance and requiring insurance companies to cover the whole cost of preventive services, like blood pressure screenings and obesity counseling. The law also called on medical and public health professionals to address health literacy by ensuring everyone can obtain, understand, and communicate information essential to health decisions. More than 28 million people, however, still lack health insurance, and more can be done to ensure increased access to health care in the United States.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Just like a person's social environment can impact their health and well-being, so can their physical surroundings. Improving access to healthy foods, supporting healthy eating behaviors, improving the quality of housing, reducing crime and violence, and protecting the environment are all things that can be done to improve the environmental health of a community and reduce health disparities as a result.

One important example of ways the United States could reduce health disparities in obesity rates is addressing the issue of food deserts and food swamps. Building partnerships between local governments, food retailers (such as grocery stores), and communities could help bring more affordable and healthier food options to areas where such foods are scarce. This, combined with increased targeted education on why and how to incorporate healthy foods into a family's favorite meals, could go a long way to cutting disparities in obesity rates.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/health-disparities-4173220>



How Does Homelessness Impact Seniors?

Experiencing homelessness is a challenge, and often a traumatic experience, for individuals at any age. For elderly people, the experience of aging exacerbates health and social challenges.

Homeless elders face significant health challenges. Diagnosing and treating homeless seniors and older people can be difficult due to lack of money or insurance to pay for treatment. Some older people experience distrust of health care and social service providers. Getting to public assistance programs can also be daunting to homeless elders who have limited mobility. Once in the door, some get discouraged by lengthy application processes or ultimately refuse help.

Not only is homelessness a barrier to health care, but it can also increase the risk for health conditions. The aging homeless population experiences high rates of diabetes and hypertension. Age also puts people at further risk for complications from COVID-19.

This is likely for a number of reasons including:

- Emotional stress (e.g., being scared)
- Physical stress (e.g., walking long distances or sleeping uncomfortably on streets), and
- Inadequate nutrition

Many older homeless individuals have difficulty with self-care and keeping up with hygiene which can cause infection. Due to stress and social isolation, the experience of homelessness may also exacerbate mental health conditions. Sadly, homeless seniors in urban centers have disproportionately high rates of premature death.

Elderly people who are homeless will likely present increasing challenges for behavioral health and medical systems.

Social Relationships Are Vital for Elderly People

Health isn't the only key to wellbeing. In addition to health, experiencing homelessness can make it hard for older individuals to maintain their social relationships. People may feel ashamed about being homeless and distance themselves from family and friends. Homeless seniors may not want to be a burden to their children, nieces, or nephews. Moreover, without a stable place to live, an address, or consistent access to a phone or the Internet, people can lose contact with their support system.

Safety Net Programs for Homeless Seniors

What exists to help homeless seniors survive and cope? In terms of health, older people have several safety net programs specifically designed for them, such as subsidized housing, Medicare, and Social Security. Subsidized housing is housing that is paid for partially by a government "subsidy"—a paid for portion of the cost.

The number of safety net programs that are available to seniors is helpful. However, those who fall between the ages of 50 and 65 are a group of individuals who are not old enough to qualify for programs like Medicare. They often fall through the cracks despite having similar physical health to those much older due to daily stress, poor nutrition, and living conditions.

For more information, visit: <https://invisiblepeople.tv/effect-of-homelessness-on-elderly-people/>

GrandFamilies

My Grandma Raised Me By Herself. I Wouldn't Have Had It Any Other Way

- Millions of children are raised by their grandparents in the US.
- People felt sorry for me for being raised by my grandmother, and I didn't understand why.
- She already knew who she was and how she wanted to raise me.

I was raised by my grandmother. But I'm no exception. According to the US Census, 7.1 million grandparents live with their grandchildren under 18. Kids raised by grandparents are often considered disadvantaged, but now that I'm an adult, I think it was actually a huge advantage.

For a time, I was too young to notice that I had a "different" family situation. I was just 3 years old when my mother put me on the train to my grandmother's from NYC by myself. It sounds unbelievable, I know. But it was the 80s, and a random stranger was tasked with ensuring I got off at the correct stop.

It was supposed to be a weekend visit, but for months, my mother couldn't be reached. That, combined with my untreated ear and bladder infections – and bruises – spurred my grandma to take custody of me.

As I got older, I started catching onto the fact that most adults felt really sorry for me – even though they didn't know the details, just that my grandma was raising me.

I enjoyed being with my grandma

My first memory of being pitied and condescended to was by a friend's mother when I was in kindergarten. Her words were sympathetic, but I could sense her veiled disgust. Though I didn't understand why, she thought less of me because my mother wasn't around.

She wasn't the only one. Throughout my childhood, I learned from TV shows, ads, and conversations around me that two-parent families, or at least living with mom, was the "right way" for a kid to be raised. Teachers or neighbors often told me that it was "such a shame" or that they were "so sorry" that I wasn't with my mom. Their words felt like lies, covering up for other, uglier feelings they had toward me.

I was so happy to be with my grandma, who made me feel loved every day with the "Good Morning" song upon waking, notes in my lunchbox, and handmade clothes that I got to pick the fabric for. We traveled the world, and she taught me to garden, care for dogs and cats, sew, love books, change a tire, and be a strong, independent woman like she was.

It wasn't until I went off to a good college that the whispers of other parents and faux pity from people in my community finally stopped. Months before graduation, my grandma died. At her memorial, I said that I felt lucky to be raised by her, and I meant it, and not just because I missed her.

My grandma was an experienced parent by the time I came to live with her. She had raised my father and uncle, and she had seen the long-term ramifications of her own and her fellow parents' choices. That helped her have a more sanguine and relaxed view of parenting.

She knew who she was. She also knew herself. I've seen many of my friends learn and grow tremendously in their 20s and 30s – often concurrently with having kids. Parents figuring out who they are at the same time as they raise their children can be hard on everyone's mental health.

But my grandmother was in her mid-to-late 60s and 70s when she raised me – she already knew herself well. I was relieved of the often-heavy burden of teaching someone how to be a parent.

I was never subjected to any "trendy" parenting advice either. Grandma had seen trends come and go and knew most of them were pretty useless.

Looking back, I would never trade my experienced, self-knowing grandma for two people who hardly knew who they were and certainly had no clue about parenting.

Presidents Obama and Clinton. Carol Burnett, Maya Angelou, and Oprah are just some of the impactful human beings raised by their grandparents. "I am where I am today because my grandmother gave me the foundations for success," said Oprah.

I feel the same.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/was-raised-only-by-my-grandma-2023-9>



Founded in 1970, The National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, Inc. (NCBA) is a national 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Headquartered in Washington, DC, NCBA is the only national aging organization who meets and addresses the social and economic challenges of low-income African American and Black older adults, their families, and caregivers.

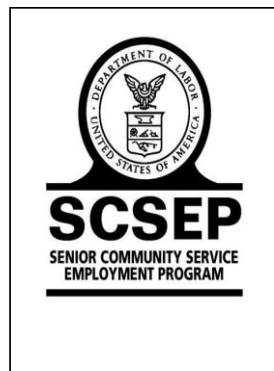
NCBA Supportive Services include:

Job Training & Employment

NCBA administers Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to over 3,500 older adults, age 60+ in North Carolina, Arkansas, Washington, DC, Illinois, Missouri, Michigan, Ohio, Florida, and Mississippi.

SCSEP is a part-time community service and work-based job training program that offers older adults the opportunity to return or remain active in the workforce through on the job training in community-based organizations in identified growth industries.

Priority is given to Veterans and their qualified spouses, then to individuals who: are over age 65; have a disability; have low literacy skills or limited English proficiency; reside in a rural area; may be homeless or at risk for homelessness; have low employment prospects; failed to find employment after using services through the American Job Center system.



Annually, NCBA and CVS partner to host job fairs to orient SCSEP participants about the benefits of working at CVS as a mature worker.

To learn more about the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), visit: <https://ncba-aging.org/employment-program-resources>

NCBA administers the Environmental Employment (SEE) Program with funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Agency (EPA) to older adults, age 55+ with professional backgrounds in engineering, public information, chemistry, writing and administration the opportunity to remain active in the workforce while sharing their talents with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Washington, DC, and at EPA Regional Offices and Environmental Laboratories in NC, OK, FL, and GA.

To learn more about the Senior Employment Environment Program (SEE), visit: <https://www.ncba-aging.org/environmental-employment-program-resources>



Health

The NCBA Health and Wellness Program offers continual education, resources, and technical assistance either in-person, online, or through self-paced learning opportunities. The program offers a wide variety of social and economic services and support including, the delivery and coordination of national health education and promotion activities, and the dissemination of and referral to resources.

To learn more visit <https://ncba-aging.org/health-and-wellness>



Stay Alert: Protect Your Social Security Number and Card!

Your Social Security number (SSN) is used to identify you in a lot of situations, like when you file your taxes, apply for a driver's license, open a bank account, or apply for a job. The Social Security Administration (SSA) reminds you to protect your number and card from thieves who want to take what's yours.

Every year, millions of Americans are victims of identity theft. Identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information -- like your SSN or Date of Birth -- and pretends to be you to gain some benefit. You may not find out that someone is using your SSN until you begin experiencing problems.

How Someone Can Steal Your Social Security Number

A person could steal your SSN by:

- Taking your purse, wallet, or mail;
- Getting personal information that you provide to an unsafe website on the internet;
- Looking through your trash; or
- Tricking you into sharing your number by pretending to be someone they are not.

How to Protect Your SSN

Someone illegally using your SSN or pretending to be you can cause a lot of harm. It is important that you take steps to protect your SSN from theft. If someone asks for your SSN, ask why your number is needed, how it will be used, and what will happen if you don't give it. The answers to these questions can help you decide if you really need to give them your SSN.

To lower the risk of identity theft, keep your Social Security card and any other paperwork that shows your SSN in a safe place. Do not carry your card or other paperwork that show your SSN with you unless you need them.

What To Do if Someone Used Your SSN

If you believe someone has or has used your SSN, immediately contact the three major credit bureaus to report it.

- [Equifax](http://Equifax.com) - 800-685-1111
- [Experian](http://Experian.com) - 888-EXPERIAN (888-397-3742)
- [TransUnion](http://TransUnion.com) - 888-909-8872

Also, report to the Federal Trade Commission at IdentityTheft.gov, the federal government's one-stop resource for identity theft victims. You may reach them by phone at **1-877-438-4338** or **1-866-653-4261 (TTY)**.

You may also want to confirm your earnings are posted correctly with SSA by reviewing your Social Security Statement on your personal *my* Social Security account. If you don't have my Social Security account, you can create one on ssa.gov, or contact SSA directly for help.

Finally, be sure to check your credit report from time to time. You can get free credit reports online at AnnualCreditReport.com. If you think someone is using your SSN, take action now!



What is a Government Imposter Scam?

A government imposter scam often starts with a fraudster targeting someone through phone, email, text, or social media. To gain your trust, the fraudster pretends to be from an agency like the Social Security Administration (SSA) or Office of the Inspector General (OIG). They might give you their “employee ID number” to sound official and have information about you like your name or home address. The caller ID may even make it appear like they are calling from an official government or business number.

Fraudsters often claim there is a problem or a prize and pressure you to act immediately. They attempt to get money, or personal, medical, or financial information from you. They may say they need information to settle a debt, verify medical claims, or provide grant money. Once these fraudsters have your information, they will use it to commit fraud.

How to Protect Yourself

Be careful about sending or sharing information with unknown people who claim to be government officials. Recognizing the signs of a scam gives you the power to ignore fraudsters and report the scam. SSA employees may contact you by telephone or mail if you have ongoing business with the agency. However, be mindful that SSA will not:

- Tell you that your Social Security number has been suspended.
- Contact you to demand an immediate payment.
- Take payments in prepaid debit cards, cash, retail gift cards, or wire transfer.
- Demand that you pay a debt without the ability to appeal the amount you owe.
- Promise to approve or increase your benefits in exchange for information or money.

How to Report Government Imposter Scams

You can report government imposter scams to SSA’s OIG using the online form, *Report Social Security Scams*, located at oig.ssa.gov. If you cannot report online, you can contact SSA and request the paper form titled, *SSA Scam Reporting Form*. Mail the completed form to P.O. Box 17785, Baltimore, MD, 21235; or fax to 410-597-0118. You can also report the scam to SSA OIG’s hotline at 1-800-269-0271. Press #5 to speak to an agent.

Upcoming Events

Heart Valve Disease: ITS EFFECTS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY



Join Our Webinar: Understanding Heart Valve Disease in the Black and African American Community

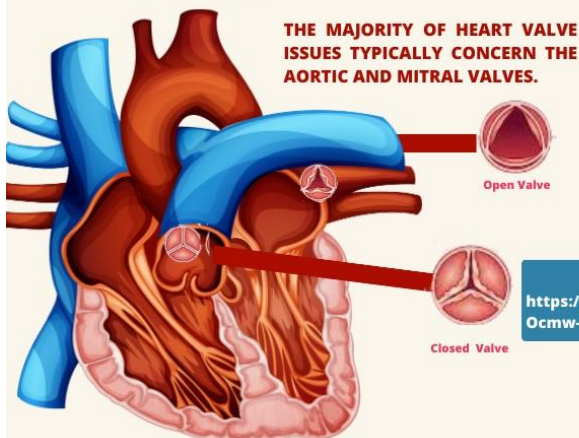
Discover the intricacies of heart valve disease and its specific risks for Blacks and African Americans. Explore its distinctions from other heart conditions and delve into preventive measures through healthy living.

KNOW YOUR VALVES

THURSDAY

FEB 22, 2024

1:00 - 2:00PM



THE MAJORITY OF HEART VALVE ISSUES TYPICALLY CONCERN THE AORTIC AND MITRAL VALVES.

Open Valve

Closed Valve

What is Heart Valve Disease?
How it Differs from Other Heart Diseases?
What are the risk?
What lifestyle choices can aid in the prevention of heart valve disease?

Register Here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ocmw-ISiRHOxWZgEANsBWw



Stevens Amendment
The Health and Wellness Program is supported by a total funding of \$26,463,855 of which the DOL funds 90% or 23,817,469 and 10% or \$2,646,386 is funded by non-federal sources.



Registration Link

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ocmw-ISiRHOxWZgEANsBWw