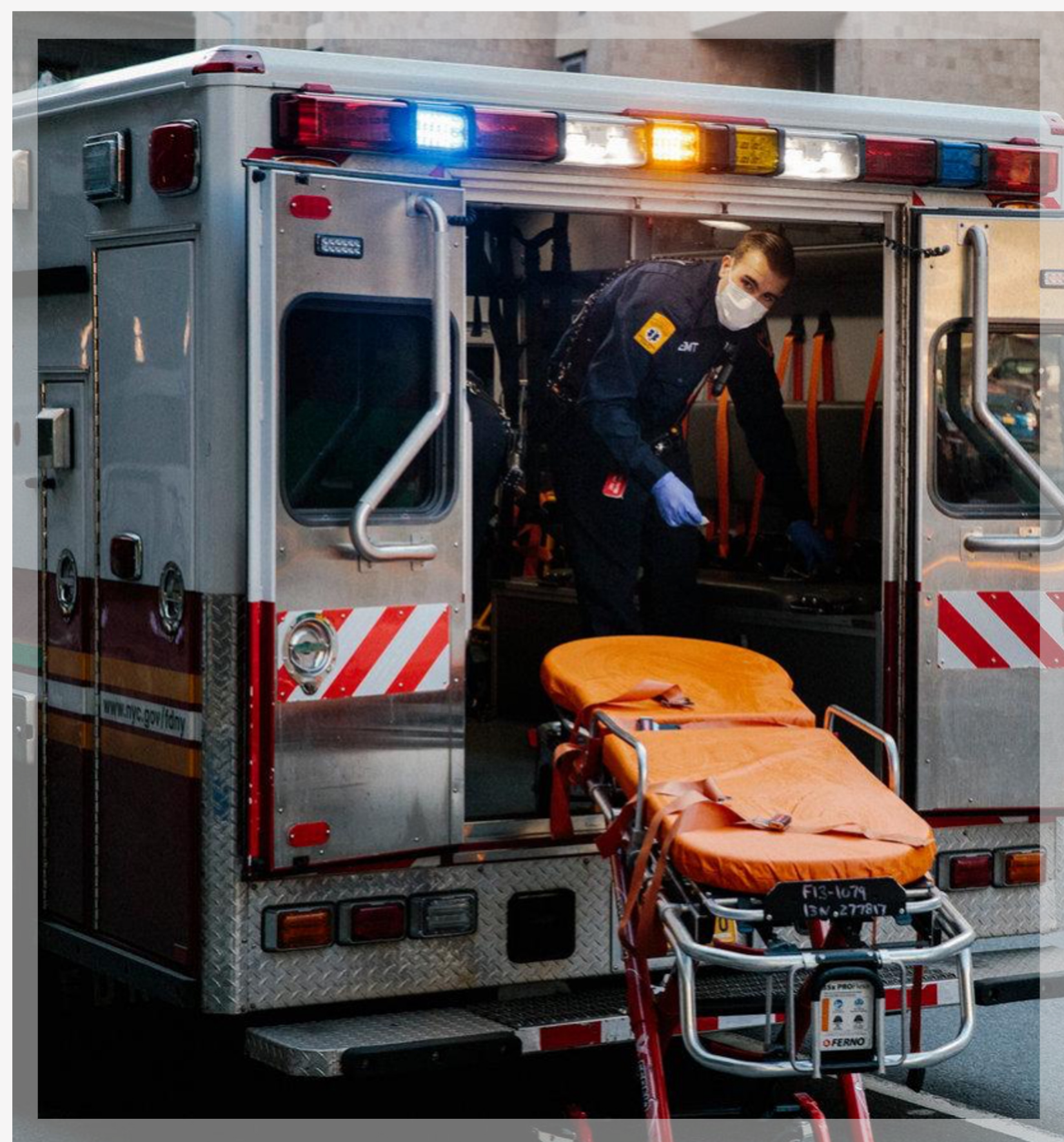


Learning from Our Community about the Racially Inequitable Impacts of COVID-19

“What if they don't have a lot of money to pay for the ambulance? It's not fair for people who are sick.”

Youth participants ages 11 – 14 were shocked that uninsured, and even insured individuals, may end up with insurmountable medical bills for necessary treatment.



“The teachers didn't care so we didn't care either.”

Youth participants ages 15 – 17 surfaced their school experience as one of the most challenging aspects of living through the pandemic, with a strong shared belief that the school system had failed them.



Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. SDOH are linked to a lack of opportunity and resources to protect, improve, and maintain health. Taken together, these factors create health inequities — types of health disparities that stem from unfair and unjust systems, policies, and practices, and limit access to the opportunities and resources needed to live the healthiest life possible. (credit: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/socialdeterminants/index.html>)

The New York Hall of Science and ElmcOR Youth and Adult Activities, Inc. conducted four focus groups with community members from Corona, Elmhurst, East Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and LeFrak City in Queens, New York to learn more about community members' lived experiences during the pandemic, and the kinds of culturally responsive public health interventions needed to better serve our community.

These focus groups were conducted as part of our Year 1 community needs assessment for our NIH-SEPA project, *Preventable Differences: Exploring Public Health Careers with Black and Latino Youth*. Our community needs assessment will give NYSCI and ElmcOR insight into the rich

intersections between scientific and personal perspectives, knowledge and experience that are promising areas to explore and elaborate on through upcoming youth workshops and exhibit development.

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“We were scared of getting it... dying, losing our jobs, paying for food and rent. If we can't pay rent we'll have nowhere to live.”

Parents/caregivers shared their many fears about trying to run a household during a time of panic, fear, and overall economic insecurity.

Population Demographics of Corona, Queens, New York*

| | | |
|------------------------|--------|-------|
| Asian | 13,103 | 11.2% |
| Black/African American | 8,173 | 7.0% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 89,021 | 75.9% |
| White | 4,440 | 3.8% |
| Other | 2,519 | 2.1% |

*source: 2020 Census
<https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/explorer /selection/ f94f27d8844 21a31f1aa887052d837b e29b905a7>

“When an epidemic happens the old people get pushed aside and left to die because they don't think you keep living after 65.”

Older adults shared memories of long periods of isolation they had to endure. They also shared memories of living through other epidemics, and their perception that the elderly are cast aside by the medical system due to less chances of them surviving from and thriving after an illness.