

How Are You Getting Through COVID-19?



Detroit Seniors' Response From a Telephone Outreach Program | APRIL - JULY 2020

HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER

Our telephone outreach project aims to address the implications of loneliness, social isolation, and limited access to resources among older African American adults living in Detroit during Covid-19. By capturing both positive and negative experiences of the pandemic in their own voices, our telephone outreach records the impact on physical and emotional wellbeing, and resilience of the members of the Healthier Black Elders Center (HBEC). These members are African American, ages 55 years and older, and reside in Metro-Detroit, Michigan. Members of HBEC participate in a research registry as a resource pool for gerontological research. This fact sheet includes responses from 315 HBEC members that were interviewed via telephone survey.

"I miss not being able to go out when I want to."

"I don't really have help at this time because I cannot let anyone in the house. Some days are harder than others."

"I have not been able to see or talk to my daughter. She has Covid-19."

"Every time I go to the store, I have to put on the mask and gloves and it's a lot of trouble."

"I am afraid to pass away."

"I miss taking care of myself."

"I have had to comfort my family and friends who are emotionally and mentally affected by Covid-19."

"I am trying to stay alive for my kids."

"I had to accept that things were not in my control and that I have to do the best that I can."

"I get my strength from family, friends, and neighbors. They have made me appreciate having family and friends that love me back and I know they will be there for me."

"My faith and belief in God have been my biggest strength."

"I focus on taking care of myself and my environment"

"I just take life one day at a time!"

Fact sheet content compiled by AeYanna Yett

Impact on Physical Wellbeing – When asked what the biggest challenge has been for you, many reported concerns for their physical wellbeing and the inability to be in physical spaces and contact with others. Almost half of those surveyed (n = 147) responded with the inability to go outside and participate in activities, including the stress associated with essential activities such as shopping. Several respondents shared concerns on becoming infected with Covid-19 and worry for family members and friends who either were infected by the virus or lost their life as a result. Following CDC recommendations of social distancing and wearing masks and gloves were particularly difficult for these seniors, as many discussed dealing with isolation and upset for not being able to receive help, have physical contact with family and friends, and not being able to mourn the loss of loved ones.

Impact on Emotional Wellbeing – Majority of respondents feel Covid-19 has been a significant change to many activities of daily living, primarily limiting attending religious services, community meetings and gatherings, medical appointments, and personal care services. Secondly, many shared that they feel increasingly stressed to remember adhering to the CDC recommendations to wear masks and gloves, and to remain social distanced. These disruptions to daily living routines have impacted seniors' emotional wellbeing as reflected by their feelings of stress, loss, and being socially disconnected. 65 seniors out of 315 also reflected on the importance of family and friends during the pandemic. "It is difficult to wear a mask and not touch our hug my family and friends" was a common response to how their lives have changed socially.

Coping through Covid-19 – A strong majority (n = 187) reported that their faith and relationship with God has significantly contributed to their strength during the Covid-19 pandemic. A common response is, "I get my strength from God" and "God gives me strength". Additionally, many report that staying positive and taking care of self and body while quarantining at home has contributed to remaining strong. Other responses include connecting and reconnecting with family and friends, reflecting on life, and being able to use streaming platforms and social media to connect with their community. When asked "how are you getting through this?", 119 out of 315 reported that support from families, friends, neighbors, and religious communities has significantly impacted their experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many reported that social media and streaming platforms have been a significant help to connect with family, friends, and church community. Support from their social community has helped majority of seniors to remain positive and continue efforts in connecting with family and friends.

