STRUGGLING TO STAY HOME:

How COVID-19 Shelter in Place Policies Affect Los Angeles County's Black and Latino Neighborhoods

Paul Ong, PhD, Silvia Gonzalez, PhD Candidate, Chhandara Pech, MURP, Sonja Diaz, JD, MPP, Jonathan Ong, BA, Elena Ong, PHN, MS, and Julie Aguilar, MPP Candidate
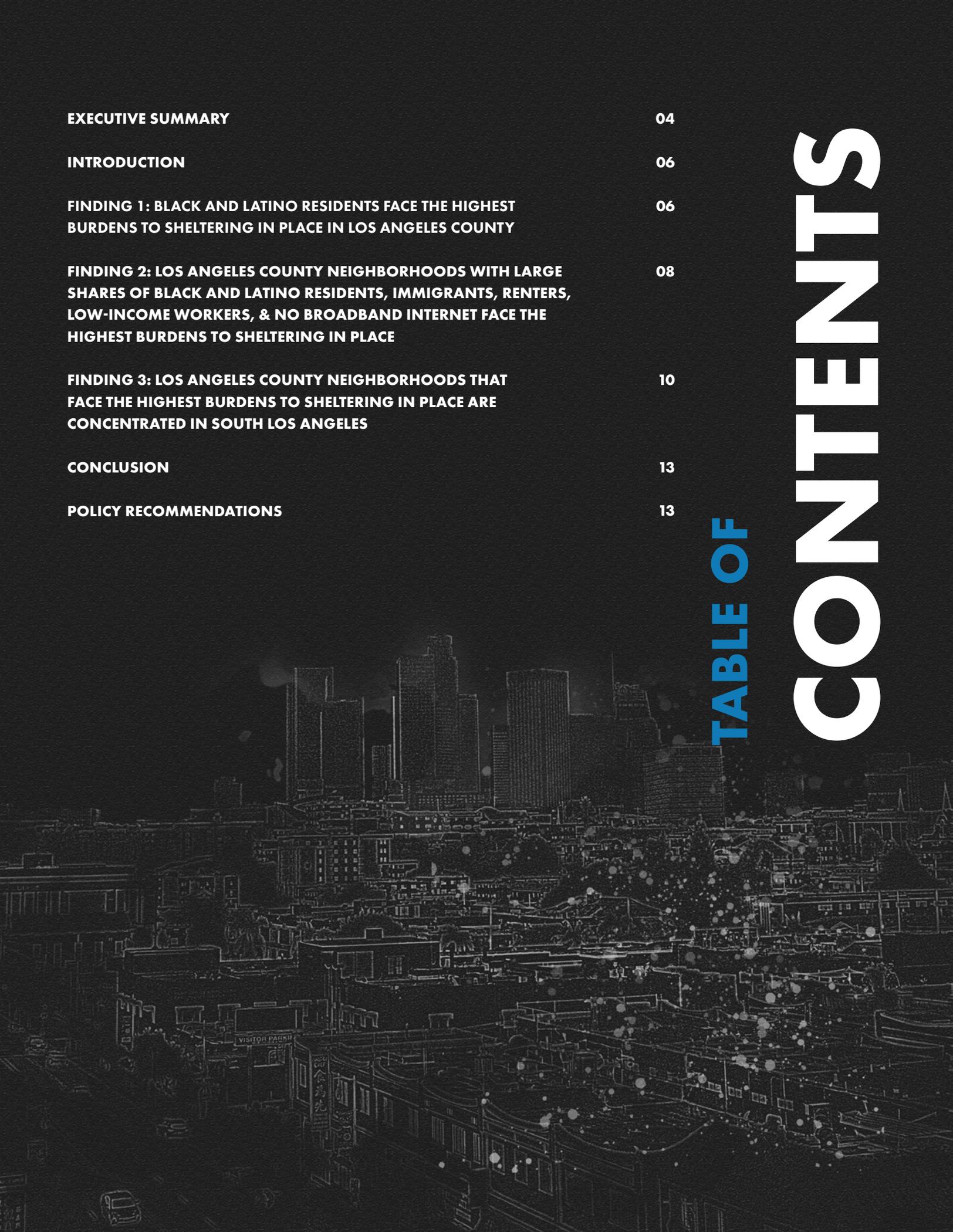
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the relative difficulty or ease of complying with mandates to stay home in Los Angeles County. State, local, and municipal officials are managing the spread of COVID-19 through "shelter in place" or "stay at home" orders.[1] As California starts to reopen the economy by lessening restrictions to some lower-risk businesses,[2] the burdens for sheltering in place adds to mounting evidence about the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color.[3] For the nation's largest jurisdiction, confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to rise, even as other California regions have seen a decline in the number of reported infections and deaths.[4] The ability for some residents and neighborhoods to shelter in place reflects entrenched inequalities in resources, health, environment, and access to care. This report provides empirical evidence to support policies and programs that address inequities facing residents and neighborhoods unable to comply with shelter in place mandates, and provides genuine opportunity as California rebuilds in the wake of COVID-19.

Key Findings

1. Blacks and Latinos face the highest burdens to sheltering in place. Over 40% of each group's population reside in neighborhoods designated as most burdened by shelter-in-place (SIP) policies. In contrast, nearly half of the County's white population reside in the least SIP burdened neighborhoods.

2. In addition to the concentration of Blacks and Latinos, neighborhoods that are facing high burden from SIP policies are predominantly renter neighborhoods, with severe housing cost burden, and have higher share of households with no vehicles and access to broadband internet when compared to the least burden neighborhoods. Nearly 2 in 5 residents of high burden neighborhoods are immigrants with many households being limited English proficient.

3. Of the 15 neighborhoods ranked highest by the Shelter-in-Place-Burden (SIPB) Index, 12 are located in South Los Angeles. In contrast, the 15 neighborhoods ranked lowest in the index are dispersed throughout the County with clusters in the affluent coastal and mountain areas such as Malibu and La Canada Flintridge.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 crisis has exposed and deepened race and class inequalities in Los Angeles. This report examines the vulnerability of neighborhoods in Los Angeles by shelter-in-place mandates using SIPB devised by Professor Paul Ong, director of the Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, and colleagues.[5] The SIPB was used to classify neighborhoods (census tracts) into three categories of burden (low, middle, and high). In our first analysis, we estimate the share of the County's racial and ethnic groups in these three types of neighborhoods and find the burden to sheltering in place is unevenly distributed. We estimate that 3.39 million residents in Los Angeles County reside in high SIPB neighborhoods. We then take a closer look at the differences and disparities in the neighborhoods facing the highest burden to sheltering in comparison to the least burdened, and show a disproportionate concentration of people of color, immigrants, renters, households without vehicles and access to broadband Internet in the highest burden areas. Finally, using the Los Angeles Times neighborhood boundaries,[6] we identify the top 15 neighborhoods with the highest SIPB and find these are mostly concentrated in South Los Angeles whereas the least burdened tend to be more affluent coastal and mountain neighborhoods. The findings have significant implications for shelter-in-place policy interventions that will be needed to address such burdens.

The SIPB includes three variables that measure the relative difficulty or ease of complying with countywide shelter-in-place mandates: (1) the population density in an area (densely populated neighborhoods increases the odds and frequency of encountering people thereby decreasing the chances of maintaining social distancing); (2) availability of public-park space per person; and, (3) the relative number of households without access to a nearby supermarket. Neighborhood types by burden were classified as follows: the high burden represents the top 33% percentile of SIPB index scores; the low burden areas represent the bottom 33% percentile of scores, and all other scores represent the middle range. The difference in neighborhood resources means that residents in high-burden areas face greater risk of exposure to COVID19 if they have to leave their neighborhood to access basic needs such as groceries and healthcare services. The lack of safe outdoor recreational space and high population density in these high-burden neighborhoods raise both mental and physical health concerns. Furthermore, the most burdened neighborhoods also have high concentrations of households without cars, creating further stress to access basic needs and increases the risk of infection through the reliance of public transportation. While the stay at home orders are necessary to maintain public safety and reduce the spread of the coronavirus, this report suggests that not all neighborhoods in Los Angeles County are set up to comply with these mandates given unequal access to food, green space, and the necessary conditions to practice physical distancing.

FINDING 1: BLACK AND LATINO RESIDENTS FACE THE HIGHEST BURDENS TO SHELTERING IN PLACE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Los Angeles County's residents who are burdened by the coronavirus' shelter-in-place policies are unevenly distributed across different racial/ethnic groups. **Table 1** shows the burden of sheltering in place by race/ethnicity. We find disproportionately high burdens of shelter-in-place are being borne by Black and Latino Angelenos. Key findings are noted below:

- Black residents, who represent only 8% of the County's population, face the highest shelter in place burdens of any racial/ethnic group. About 2 out of 5 Black residents face high burdens to sheltering in place (44%). Blacks are twice as likely to face high burden than low burden.

- Latino residents, who represent 48% of the County's population, are the second most burdened racial/ethnic group in the County. Approximately 41% of Latinos face high burdens to sheltering in place, compared to only 23% of Latinos who face low burdens.

- Asian residents are overrepresented in the high burden category (27%) compared to their share of the County's population (14%). Yet, nearly 2 in 5 Asian residents in the County face low burdens to sheltering in place.

- White residents, who represent 26% of the County's population, are the least burdened of any racial/ethnic group in the County. Almost half of all white residents in the County experience low burden (48%) compared to the 22% of white residents who face high burdens to sheltering in place.

Only 1 out of 5 white residents in Los Angeles County are burdened by SIP policies. Blacks and Latinos in Los Angeles County are twice as likely as their white peers to experience high burden relative to whites.

Table 1: Burden of Shelter in Place by Race/Ethnicity as Share of the Population

SHARE OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S POPULATION

RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP	LOW BURDEN	MIDDLE BURDEN	HIGH BURDEN	COUNTY SHARE
WHITE	48%	30%	22%	26%
BLACK	23%	33%	44%	8%
ASIAN	39%	34%	27%	14%
LATINO	23%	37%	41%	48%
% OF COUNTY POP.	32%	34%	34%	~100%

Approximately 34% of the County's residents are most burdened by the shelter in place policies; this translates to about 3.39 million Angelenos. **Table 2** shows the population counts of shelter-in-place burden by race/ethnicity for the County as a whole. Key findings are below:

- Latinos are the plurality in Los Angeles County and in absolute numbers, they are the group with the highest burden to sheltering in place.

- Approximately 1.9 million Latinos in the County face a high burden; this is three times the number of white residents.

Table 2: Los Angeles County Population Counts of Shelter in Place Burden by Race/Ethnicity

POPULATION COUNTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP	LOW BURDEN	MIDDLE BURDEN	HIGH BURDEN	COUNTY TOTAL
WHITE	1,285,781	796,548	576,723	2,659,052
BLACK	183,379	263,818	348,308	795,505
ASIAN	569,279	491,717	390,564	1,451,560
LATINO	1,113,866	1,790,125	1,989,612	4,893,603
EST. TOTAL POPULATION	3,272,424	3,440,186	3,385,442	10,098,052

FINDING 2: LOS ANGELES COUNTY NEIGHBORHOODS WITH LARGE SHARES OF BLACK AND LATINO RESIDENTS, IMMIGRANTS, RENTERS, LOW-INCOME WORKERS, & NO BROADBAND INTERNET FACE THE HIGHEST BURDENS TO SHELTERING IN PLACE

In addition to the outsized shares of Black and Latino residents, neighborhoods that are facing high burden from SIP policies are predominantly renter neighborhoods with severe housing cost burden, and have a higher share of households with no vehicles nor access to broadband internet when compared to the least burden neighborhoods. **Table 3** shows the average profile of Los Angeles County neighborhoods facing the highest and lowest burdens to sheltering in place. On average, neighborhoods most burdened by the mandated shelter-in-place policies have more Black and Latino residents than those group's shares of the population, and fewer white residents. Further, neighborhoods facing the highest burden to SIP have a larger share of immigrants and residents that are limited-English proficient than neighborhoods with the lowest risk to SIP. The most burdened neighborhoods are twice as likely to have households that are limited English proficient compared to the least burdened neighborhoods.

Table 3: Neighborhood Characteristics by SIP Burden in Los Angeles County

NEIGHBORHOOD SIP BURDEN		
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (%)	**LOW**	**HIGH**
WHITE	40%	17%
BLACK	6%	10%
ASIAN	17%	12%
LATINO	34%	58%
IMMIGRANT	28%	39%
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER	41%	23%
AT-RISK WORKERS	14%	18%
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (%)		
LIMITED-ENGLISH PROFICIENT	9%	18%
RENTERS	38%	68%
SEVERELY RENT-BURDENED	26%	32%
OVERCROWDED RENTER	4%	9%
NO BROADBAND INTERNET	24%	38%
NO VEHICLES	5%	13%
LESS THAN $30K ANNUAL	18%	31%
SIPB INDEX	240	458
NEIGHBORHOODS (TRACTS)	792	773

Note: The reported values in the table represent the average (mean) of all the census tracts in each neighborhood type.

In terms of socioeconomic status, the high burdened neighborhoods have a greater concentration of lower income households as indicated by the share of households with less than $35,OOO (for comparison purposes, LA County's median household income is $64,251). High burden neighborhoods also have fewer residents with a college education. Households located in these neighborhoods also have fewer resources and the ability to connect to resources beyond their immediate area. For example, the high burdened neighborhoods have a larger share of households without access to a vehicle; on average 13% of households have no access to vehicles compared to 5% in the least burdened neighborhoods. The most burdened neighborhoods also have a disproportionately higher share of households without broadband Internet connection.

High burdened neighborhoods have a larger share of renters, 68% on average compared to 38% for low-burdened neighborhoods. These renters are severely burdened by housing costs (paying more than half of their income towards housing) and live in overcrowded housing. The Census Bureau defines overcrowded households as having more than 1.51 persons per room. Given this definition, renter households in the high burden neighborhoods are twice as likely to live in overcrowded conditions compared to renters residing in low burden areas.

Another complication situation even more, is the proportion of workers at risk of job displacement due to closures in sectors impacted by COVID-19. For this analysis, these include sales workers in retail, service workers in hospitality, and workers in personal care and service occupations.

High burden neighborhoods have greater rates of workers in these sectors than the least burdened neighborhood (18% and 14%, respectively).

FINDING 3: LOS ANGELES COUNTY NEIGHBORHOODS THAT FACE THE HIGHEST BURDENS TO SHELTERING IN PLACE ARE CONCENTRATED IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

In addition to the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics that distinguish Los Angeles County neighborhoods facing high burdens to sheltering in place, a spatial analysis finds that the most burdened neighborhoods are geographically compact. **Map 1** displays the allocation of the SIPB index to the Los Angeles Times neighborhood boundaries. The top 15 neighborhoods with the highest SIPB are concentrated in South Los Angeles, an area that has historically experienced socioeconomic vulnerability.[7] The least burdened are dispersed throughout the county's more affluent coastal and mountain neighborhoods such as Malibu and Pacific Palisades.

Map 1: Shelter-in-Place Burden by Neighborhood

Lake Los Angeles

Agua Dulce

Foothill Fwy

I- 210 Foothill Fwy

I-5

Hansen Dam

Shadow Hills

La Canada Flintridge

Duarte
Bradbury

I-210

San Diego Fwy

Westlake Village

Calabasas

Topanga

Pacific Palisades

Koreatown

I- 10

I- 10

San Dimas
West San Dimas

West Puente Valley

I-10

Mid-City

Jefferson Park

Exposition Park

Vermont Square

Vermont-Slauson

Hyde Park

Florence

I-405

Malibu

I- 10

Westmont

Vermont Vista

Watts

South Diamond Bar

Broadway-Manchester

Santa Ana Fwy

I-110

I-710

I-710

Neighborhoods Most Burdened by
Shelter-in-Place Policies in LA County.

Neighborhoods Least Burdened by
Shelter-in-Place Policies in LA County.

Source: SIPB data derived from Ong & Associates and neighborhood boundary from Los Angeles Times

The spatial analysis only reinforces clear disparities in the share of the County's Latino, Black, and immigrant populations in neighborhoods that face the highest burdens to sheltering in place, and the overrepresentation of white residents in neighborhoods that face the lowest burdens. **Tables 4** and **5** identify the top 15 neighborhoods facing the highest and lowest burdens to sheltering in place with respect to their share of racial/ethnic residents and share of immigrants. Of the County's neighborhoods ranked highest on the SIPB index, 11 of the 15 are majority-Latino, and only 1 neighborhood has a white population above 10%.

Table 4: Characteristics of the Top 15 Los Angeles County Neighborhoods Most Burdened by Shelter-in-Place Policies

NEIGHBORHOOD	SIPB INDEX	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	LATINO	IMMIGRANTS
WESTMONT	553	2%	44%	0%	53%	27%
BROADWAY-MANCHESTER	530	0%	27%	0%	70%	34%
HYDE PARK	488	4%	54%	1%	39%	25%
FLORENCE	488	1%	18%	0%	80%	39%
VERMONT VISTA	487	1%	34%	0%	64%	30%
WATTS	480	1%	23%	1%	74%	32%
VERMONT SQUARE	477	2%	25%	1%	70%	41%
EXPOSITION PARK	470	4%	22%	5%	67%	43%
MANCHESTER SQUARE	467	2%	69%	1%	26%	16%
JEFFERSON PARK	467	6%	32%	4%	55%	35%
VERMONT KNOLLS	463	1%	33%	1%	63%	32%
WEST PUENTE VALLEY	456	4%	2%	11%	82%	35%
MID-CITY	454	18%	23%	7%	48%	33%
KOREATOWN	454	9%	5%	37%	46%	59%
VERMONT-SLAUSON	452	1%	23%	1%	75%	39%

With respect to the County's neighborhoods least burdened by sheltering in place mandates, 9 of the 15 neighborhoods are majority-white, and only 3 are majority-Latino.

Table 5: Characteristics of the 15 Los Angeles County Neighborhoods Least Burdened by Shelter-in-Place Policies

NEIGHBORHOOD	SIPB INDEX	WHITE	BLACK	ASIAN	LATINO	IMMIGRANTS
BRADBURY	151	50%	1%	33%	14%	30%
SOUTH DIAMOND BAR	177	21%	5%	58%	14%	45%
LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE	189	55%	1%	30%	10%	26%
WESTLAKE VILLAGE	194	78%	3%	8%	8%	16%
CALABASAS	200	76%	1%	10%	8%	25%
HANSEN DAM	200	32%	5%	4%	58%	28%
MALIBU	201	83%	1%	3%	10%	11%
PACIFIC PALISADES	202	82%	0%	6%	6%	13%
WEST SAN DIMAS	208	46%	2%	22%	25%	21%
SAN DIMAS	208	45%	3%	14%	35%	19%
DUARTE	208	24%	6%	17%	50%	33%
SHADOW HILLS	211	64%	2%	9%	24%	36%
AGUA DULCE	211	73%	1%	4%	18%	10%
LAKE LOS ANGELES	213	31%	9%	1%	57%	11%
TOPANGA	213	82%	1%	5%	8%	15%

CONCLUSION

The spread of COVID-19 has created unprecedented direct and indirect disruptions, including enormous financial and personal hardships to workers, families, businesses and communities. Shelter-in-place and stay at home mandates designed to minimize the speed and extent of the spread of the novel coronavirus have not only transformed how we live but have also magnified the precarious economic standing of vulnerable communities, especially people of color and immigrants. Our analysis of Los Angeles County shows the burden to sheltering in place is unevenly distributed across neighborhoods and racial and ethnic groups, with black and brown communities bearing a disproportionate burden during this global pandemic.

At the neighborhood level, areas with the highest burden to sheltering in place are home to people of color, immigrants, renters, and households without vehicle or broadband Internet access. These neighborhoods are mostly concentrated in South Los Angeles. Additionally, the least burdened are white residents and the County's more affluent coastal and mountain neighborhoods such as Malibu and San Dimas. These spatial and socioeconomic inequalities have significant implications for COVID-19 relief and recovery efforts since these patterns are a product of structural inequalities that reproduce over time. By recognizing the social inequalities that are being reproduced during COVID-19, policymakers can make sure the most vulnerable communities, who are usually black and brown, are meaningfully integrated into relief and recovery efforts to offset their unequal burden of the pandemic and recognize their critical role in rebuilding the economy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This report finds that low-income, immigrant, and black and brown communities face the highest burdens to sheltering in place. This analysis reinforces the structural inequities communities of color are experiencing during this pandemic: higher risks of COVID-19 exposure, restricted access to open spaces, and limited access to food. The need to address these inequities has heightened as government leaders redesign national stimulus packages to include essential workers and state leaders focus on economic recovery. It is crucial that state and local government leaders consider policies that minimize SIP burden for vulnerable communities, especially communities of color and immigrant communities. The following policy recommendations aim to support and protect marginalized communities who face the highest burdens to sheltering in place:

Improve Public Health & Safety Measures for Vulnerable Communities

1. Increase COVID-19 testing availability and frequency across Los Angeles County to focus on neighborhoods who face the highest risks to sheltering in place.

    a. Ensure that testing is free and accessible at state hospitals, community clinics, and if possible, private providers.

    b. Encourage testing among all working community members, even those with lower-risk of contracting the virus.

    c. Integrate culturally and linguistically competent practices and local hire policies for tracers to limit the spread of coronavirus and lower the risk of unnecessary loss of life faced by black and brown communities.

2. Institute pandemic related transportation vouchers to residents in neighborhoods at high risk of not being able to SIP for public transit and install health protections at transit stops and in vehicles in those neighborhoods.

   a. Make hand sanitizer and masks available at public transit hubs within high-risk neighborhoods unable to SIP.

3. Expand and enforce workplace safety regulations and protection for workers, especially low-wage workers and essential workers.

   a. Allow all essential workers, including independent contractors and gig workers, to utilize universal paid sick leave, family leave, and medical leave.

   b. Offer hazard pay for workers who are at high-risk of contracting coronavirus.

   c. Increase enforcement of workers' rights for especially vulnerable workers, including farmworkers, delivery workers, grocery store workers, custodial workers, and other low-wage workers.

Expand & Increase Public Benefits for SIP-Burdened Communities

4. Introduce pandemic related food benefits in neighborhoods at high risk of not being able to SIP.

   a. Provide food vouchers or benefit programs to Instacart and other food delivery services to expand food delivery services to SIP-burdened neighborhoods who face barriers to accessing fresh food.

   b. Expand the $365 one-time payment, for each child eligible for free or reduced lunch, to be a recurring monthly payment until stay at home orders are lifted.

5. Expand social safety net to include more relief and high-speed internet access.

   a. Expand eligibility and elongate benefit period, if necessary, for social safety net services and programs, including Medi-Cal, childcare and early childhood education programs like Headstart, and other programs to provide direct economic and social relief to vulnerable Californians.

   b. Require internet providers to expand broadband internet access to vulnerable communities, and provide government support to cover the costs of this technology for households with students, including college students.

ENDNOTES

[1] California issued a stay-at-home order on March 19, 2020, whereby all individuals residing in the state are ordered to stay home or at their place of residence, except for permitted work, permitted errands, or as otherwise authorized under the state's public health order. On May 8, 2020 the stay at home order was modified, allowing curbside retail, and, as of May 12th, some offices, limited services, and outdoor museums were permitted to open.

[2] Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, "Governor Newsom Releases Updated Industry Guidance," May 7, 2020, available at: https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/05/07/governor-newsom-releases-updated-industry-guidance/.

[3] See U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups," available at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html; see also California Department of Public Health, "COVID-19 Race and Ethnicity Data," May 13, 2020, available at: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Race-Ethnicity.aspx; see also David E. Hayes-Bautista and Paul Hsu, "COVID-19 and Diversity: The Emerging Picture in California," UCLA Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture, available at: https://www.uclahealth.org/ceslac/workfiles/Research/COVID19/05-14-COVID-and-Diversity.pdf.

[4] Colleen Shalby and Sarah Parvini, "L.A. County Could Keep Stay-at-home Orders in Place Well into Summer, Depending on Conditions," Los Angeles Times, May 12, 2020, available at: https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-05-12/coronavirus-beaches-reopen-los-angeles-county-move-toward-new-normal.

[5] For more details on the index, see Paul M. Ong, Jonathan Ong, Elena Ong, and Andres Carrasquillo, "Neighborhood Inequality in Shelter-in-Place Burden: Impacts of COVID-19 in Los Angeles," Ong & Associates and the Institute on Inequality and Democracy, April 22, 2020, Available at: https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/2020/04/22/neighborhood-inequality-in-shelter-in-place-burden.

[6] See Los Angeles Times, "Mapping L.A. Boundaries API," available at: http://boundaries.latimes.com/sets/.

[7] Paul M. Ong, Andre Comandon, Alycia Cheng, Silvia R. Gonzalez, "South Los Angeles Since the Sixties: Half a Century of Progress?" UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, 2018. available at: https://knowledge.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SLA-since-the-60s.pdf.

UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge

🐦 **KnowledgeLuskin**

f **UCLACenterforNeighborhoodKnowledge**

knowledge@luskin.ucla.edu

UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative

🐦 **UCLAlatino**

f **UCLAlatino**

latino@luskin.ucla.edu