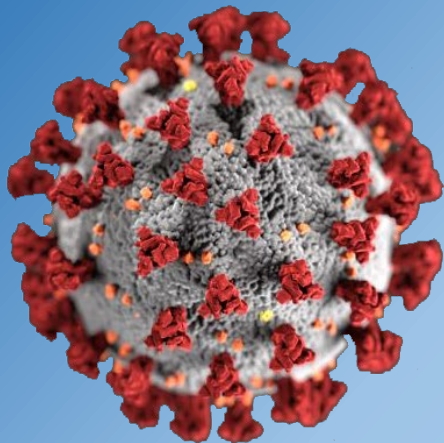
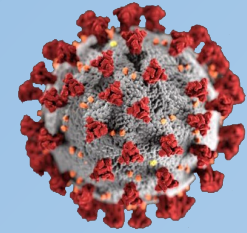


The Story of the United States



**Elaine
Bernard, PhD
Harvard
University**





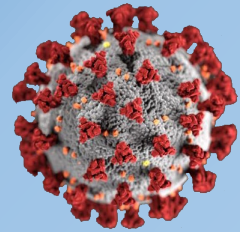
U.S. Before Covid-19

High Level of Income Inequality



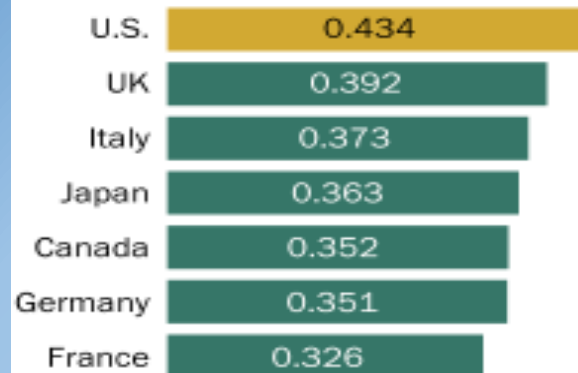
U.S. Before Covid-19

High Level of Income Inequality



U.S. has highest level of income inequality among G7 countries

Gini coefficient of gross income inequality, latest year available

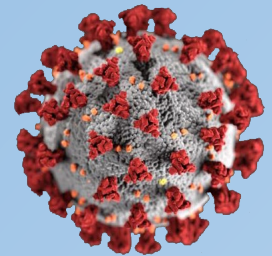


Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

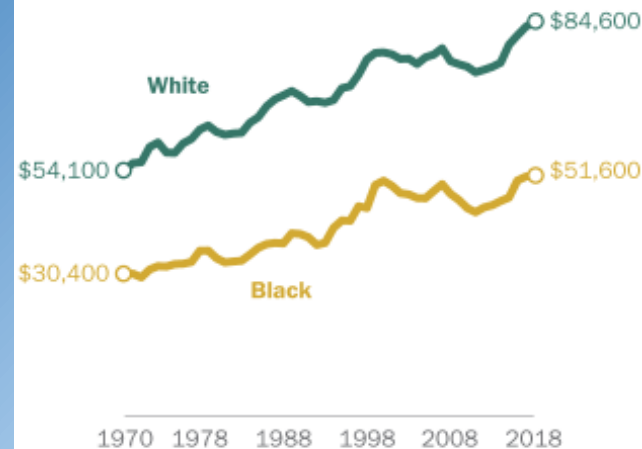
U.S. Before Covid-19

Huge Racial Disparities



In the U.S., black-white income gap has held steady since 1970

Median U.S. household income, in 2018 dollars

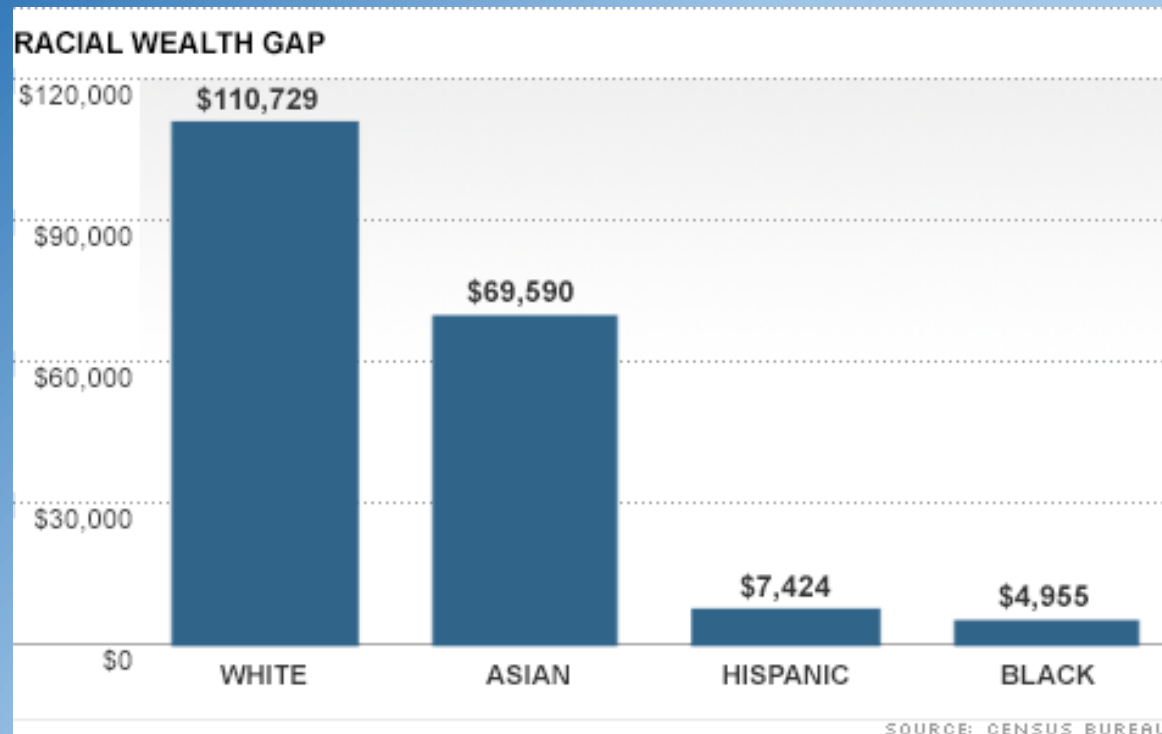
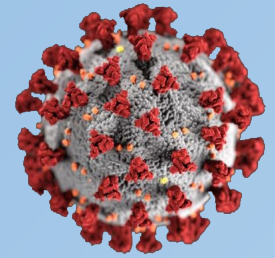


Note: Income is adjusted for household size and scaled to reflect a three-person household. Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1970 to 2019 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

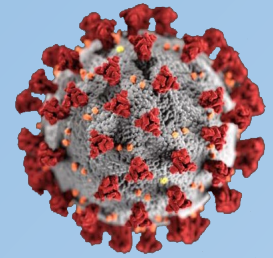
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

U.S. Before Covid-19

Huge Racial Disparities



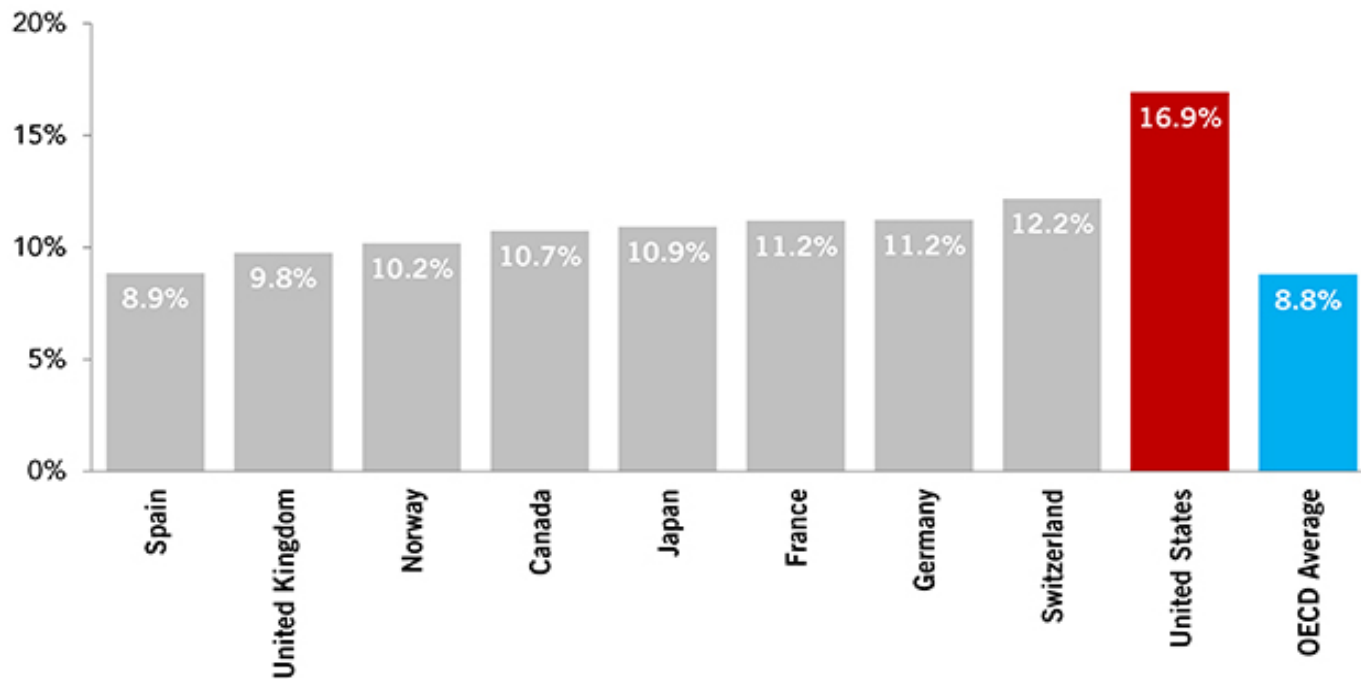
U.S. Before Covid-19 Highest Healthcare Expenditures



PETER G.
PETERSON
FOUNDATION

Healthcare expenditures in the U.S. are significantly higher than those of other developed countries

NATIONAL HEALTH SPENDING (% OF GDP)

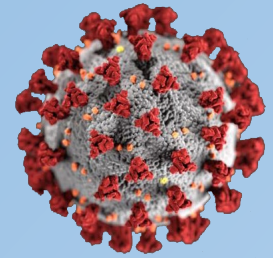


SOURCE: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *OECD Health Statistics 2019*, July 2019.
NOTE: Data are for 2018.

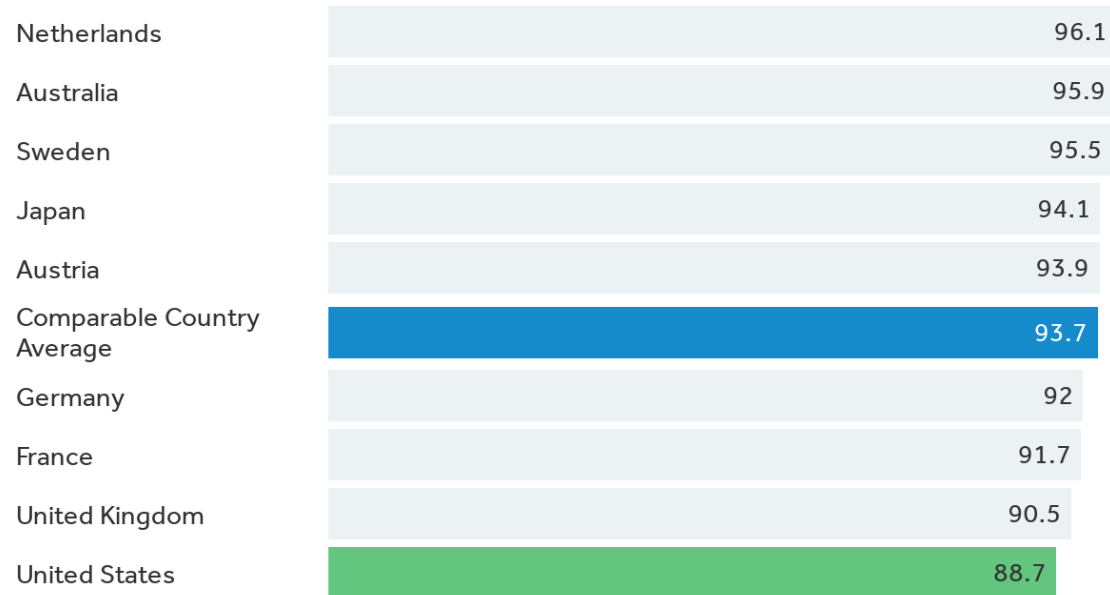
© 2019 Peter G. Peterson Foundation

PGPF.ORG

U.S. Before Covid-19 Highest Healthcare Expenditures



Healthcare Quality and Access (HAQ) Index Rating, 2016



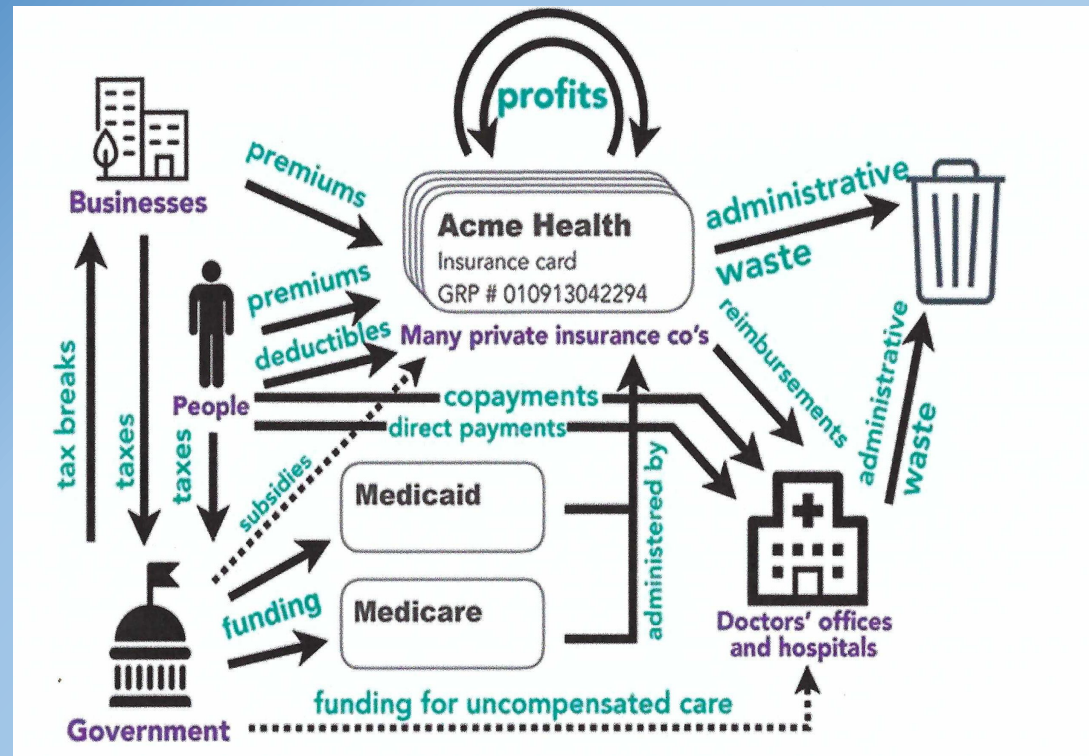
Source: KFF analysis of data from: "Measuring performance on the Healthcare Access and Quality Index for 195 countries and territories and selected subnational locations: a systematic analysis from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016," The Lancet, 23 May 2018.

Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

U.S. Before Covid-19

Profit Oriented & Fragmented Health Care System

- Less than **3%** of health spending dedicated to **public health**
- **Little coordination** between national, state and the 2,800 local health departments
- Hospitals and clinics use **proprietary electronic records** (don't communicate with health authorities)
- Health care an **individual responsibility** (with costs covered by purchase of insurance)





U.S. Before Covid-19

Weak Social Protections

Few Worker Rights



- **Three-quarters** of Americans live paycheck to paycheck
- **4 in 10** adults **unable to cover \$ 400 expense** in event of an emergency
- **Few** guaranteed employee benefits
- **No** federally legislated **paid vacation time**
- **No** federally legislated **paid leave**
 - for illness, pregnancy, family medical leave or other compassionate reasons
- **No** federally mandated requirement for **employers to provide health care*, pensions or other benefits** (55% covered by employer sponsored healthcare)



U.S. Before Covid-19

Weak Social Protections

Few Worker Rights



- **Americans work more hours** than workers in Europe & Japan
- **Low minimum wage** (\$ 7.25) **only 34%** of average full-time worker wage
- **10% of workers (about 25 million)** are classified as **independent contractors** or have other designations (therefore don't qualify for unemployment insurance, workers compensation or other employment-based benefits and protections.)
- Most private sector workers are “**at will**” employees
- **Only 10.3% of workers in a union** (6.2% of private sector workers)

Covid-19 - A System Stress Test



Not the first time in recent years that we've faced major disruptive challenge (2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis, HIV, Sars, climate change and life-threatening “wild weather” events)

But scale and impact of Covid-19 surpassed these earlier crises...hit U.S. especially hard because of **underfunded public health infrastructure, fragmented medical care system, and inadequate social and worker protections.**

Highlights weaknesses and failures...

- **Political leadership**
- **Social Protections and worker rights**
- **Health care system**

Covid-19 - A System Stress Test



Political leadership

- **Identify the risk**, bring together appropriate **expertise** to **develop a plan of action**,
- Seek to **unite community** and gain **full participation** in dealing with risk,
- **Keep public informed** of development through **open and continuous communications** and **transparency on decision making**,
- Identify, find and deliver **necessary resources** - **where they are needed**,
- **Recovery** and **evaluate system fault lines** and **response** with an eye to “**build back better**”

Covid-19 - A System Stress Test



Urgent need to repair...

Social Protections and worker rights

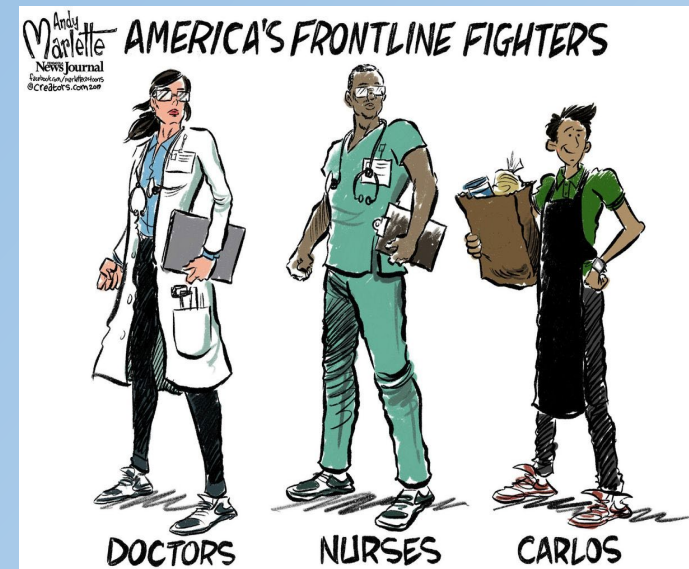
- programs and actions required to protect individuals and families from the economic impact of a natural disaster, pandemic or other large crisis
- Special attention to the needs of front line and essential workers

Health care system

- organization of people, institutions and resources to meet the health needs of all Americans

The Social Protections & Worker Rights

- **Jobs with decent pay**
(many **essential** workers are low paid)
- **Living wage** (in 1968 minimum wage was \$ 12
today's \$12.25 minimum wage is 98 cents in 1968
dollars)
- **Hazard pay**
- **Paid sick days**
- **Access to child and dependent care**
- **Enhanced unemployment benefits** (extended
to gig & contract workers)
- **Support** for people quarantined, ill or unable
to work (including housing and food support)
- **Presumptive Workers Comp** for covid-19
frontline workers



The Social Protections & Worker Rights

- **Enforce employer provision of PPE** (including education and training on protective gear)
- **Protect workers from retaliation** for exercising their rights (Just Cause, strength OHS rights)
- **Adopt 3 Rights on workplace health and safety**
 - Right to know
 - Right to participate
 - Right to refuse
- **Mandate Workplace Safety Committees** (with elected worker/union representatives, power to sign off/bargain workplace safety plans, protocols and precautions)
- **Mandate Safety Stewards** (elected employee representative for small business)
- Workplace safety plans to be based on the **precautionary principle**



Fixing our Health Care System

- **Protect** patients from **medical costs** due to Covid-19 (not just testing, but treatment)
- Universal health care coverage through **Medicare-for-All**
- **Stabilize hospital financing and stop closures** (move from fee for service to global budget funding)
- Restore and fund a strong **public health infrastructure**
- Establish **domestic capacity** for production of PPE, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals



Back to “Normal” Is Not Good Enough



What needs to happen
for everything to go back
to **normal**?

- Well funded public health infrastructure
- Medicare for all
- Expand social protections and worker rights

**Pandemic comes at a unique moment –
provides an opportunity and support for
large systemic change**