

Snapshot: STATE OF HEALTH EQUITY IN KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN



GRAND RAPIDS
African American
Health Institute

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71% increase in poor mental health among Black residents (2017–2023)



82% increase in stroke mortality among Black residents (2019–2023)



12 per 1,000 Infant mortality for Black babies, still triple the White rate (2021–2023)



60% of Michigan 3rd graders read below grade level (2023–2024)



54% of Black renters in Kent County spend more than 30% of income on housing

This summary highlights key insights from the full **State of Health Equity in Kent County, Michigan Report**. It is designed to inform discussions and understanding at GRAAHI's 2025 Health Transformation Summit.

Why Health Equity Still Matters

Health equity means everyone should have a fair chance at health, regardless of race, income, or zip code. Despite progress, inequities persist in Kent County, especially for Black residents, in health outcomes, education, and economic stability.

Key Findings

Framed by Our Summit Theme: Unite. Learn. Empower. Act. Transform.

UNITE

Health inequities impact all of us. Stroke mortality rose sharply for both Black (82%) and White (50%) residents between 2019–2023. Poor mental health also increased across races—by 71% for Black people and 32% for White people—underscoring the need to unite in addressing shared challenges.

LEARN

Data shows progress and setbacks. Poverty rates fell significantly (39% for Black residents; 24% for White residents; 30% for Hispanic residents), yet systemic barriers in education persist. Black and Hispanic children continue to lag behind in reading and math due to inequities in school resources and lead exposure. Learning from these patterns allows us to target real solutions.

EMPOWER

Positive health outcomes are possible. Diabetes rates among Black residents dropped by 55% and obesity by 22%, proving that prevention and intervention efforts can succeed when communities are empowered with resources and support.

ACT

Policy changes threaten to widen inequities. The “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” proposes cuts to Medicaid and new restrictions on SNAP benefits, potentially leaving thousands in Kent County without essential healthcare and food access. We must act collectively to defend and expand supports for vulnerable populations.

TRANSFORM

Lasting transformation requires systemic change. Housing affordability, wage growth, educational opportunity, and racial justice are all tied to health outcomes. Transforming Kent County into a place where all residents thrive demands bold collaboration across sectors.

This snapshot is only the beginning. The full report provides deeper data, context, and recommendations. Download it at: