Potential Risk of Exposure to the Coronavirus Among California Workers

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UC Berkeley Labor Center
What are you most interested in learning from us about the pandemic and workers?

*Type your response in the Zoom chat*
Agenda

● Impact of the pandemic on labor market (15 minutes)
● Potential risk of exposure on the job (15 minutes)
● Looking forward (5 minutes)
● Q & A (25 minutes)
Impact of the pandemic on workers
An employment crisis caused by the pandemic

- A part of the bigger humanitarian crisis
- Disproportionally affects certain industries
- Low wage vs high wage
- Women are more likely to lose jobs than men
Percent Change in Employment, Jan to Sep 2020, California

-30.00%  -25.00%  -20.00%  -15.00%  -10.00%  -5.00%  0.00%

Government
Other Services
Leisure & Hospitality
Educational & Health Services
Professional & Business Services
Financial Activities
Information
Trade, Transportation & Utilities
Manufacturing
Construction
Mining and Logging

Source: BLS Current Employment Statistics
Low-wage workers are disproportionately hit (nation-wide)

Note: Based on a three-month average to show the trend in volatile data.
Source: Labor Department via IPUMS
The unemployment rate for women is greater than the rate for men in the COVID-19 downturn

*Unemployment rate (%)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>February 2020</th>
<th>May 2020</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All workers</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The unemployment rate is the share of workers in the labor force actively looking for work. Estimates refer to workers ages 16 and older, nonseasonally adjusted. Estimates for the Great Recession refer to the highest unemployment rate recorded for each group around that downturn – in January 2010 for all workers and men, and July 2010 for women.


People of color are more likely to lose jobs than white people (nationwide).
Economy won’t recover unless the health concern is addressed

- Uneven impacts likely make racial and gender inequalities worse
- Public health crisis → economic downturn and unemployment
- Urgent needs to protect workers in workplaces, and everyone in the community
Potential risk of exposure on the job
Data and knowledge are limited

- Lack of data on infections by occupation for California
- Incomplete understanding of how the coronavirus is transmitted and the weight of each risk factors
Early evidence suggests....

- The workplace is a common site of transmission
  - Studies in Europe and Asia suggest that workplace transmission accounted for 15 to 25 percent of infections
  - San Diego County reports that from 10/25-11/7, the workplace was the likely site of infection for 30 percent of individuals
- Physical proximity to others on the job is a key risk factor
  - A study of infections by occupation in Europe found that workers with higher levels of physical proximity had a higher risk of infection
Forthcoming Labor Center Research Brief

Physical Proximity to Others in California’s Workplaces: Occupational Estimates and Demographic and Job Characteristics

- Based on occupational survey rather than actual infection data
- Reflects labor market characteristics pre-pandemic

This research was supported by grants from The James Irvine Foundation and The California Wellness Foundation.
California Workers by Physical Proximity on the Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLIGHTLY CLOSE</th>
<th>MODERATELY CLOSE</th>
<th>VERY CLOSE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 percent</td>
<td>48 percent</td>
<td>22 percent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Most common occupations:**

- Managers
- Secretaries, administrative assistants, and admin support supervisors
- Janitors and building cleaners
- Software developers
- Accountants and auditors
- Agricultural workers
- Maids and housekeeping cleaners

**Most common occupations:**

- Retail salespersons & supervisors
- Cashiers
- Driver/sales workers and truck drivers
- Customer service representatives
- Cooks
- Laborers and material movers
- Construction laborers

**Most common occupations:**

- Elementary and middle school teachers
- Registered nurses
- Personal care aides
- Waiters and waitresses
- Teaching assistants
- Nursing assistants
- Childcare workers

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Low-wage workers were more likely to be employed in occupations with moderately or very close physical proximity to others.

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
In California, many occupations are segregated by race, ethnicity and gender
Women were more likely to have very close proximity to others on the job.

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Men were more likely to have moderately close proximity to others on the job.

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Black and Latinx workers were more likely to have moderately or very close physical proximity to others on the job.

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Which workers are able to work remotely?
Men are less likely to be able to work remotely

Proportion of California Workers in an occupation that can likely be done remotely, 2018

Women: 49%
Men: 37%

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Black, Latinx, and American Indian workers are less likely to be able to work remotely.

Proportion of California Workers in an occupation that can likely be done remotely, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America Indian &amp; Alaskan Native</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Low-wage workers are less likely to be able to work remotely.

Proportion of California Workers in an occupation that can likely be done remotely, 2018

Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
Frontline essential workers are less likely to be able to work from home.

Proportion of California Workers in an occupation that can likely be done remotely, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All workers</th>
<th>Front-line essential workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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Source: UC Berkeley Labor Center analysis of 2018 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and 2018 Occupational Information Network data (O*NET).
The pandemic has deepened health and economic inequities

- Some of the hardest hit industries have a workforce that is disproportionately women and people of color
- Low-wage workers, workers of color, and women have higher relative physical proximity on the job
As workers return to their job sites, their actual risk of exposure will be determined by...

- Public health measures and policies
- Employer practices
- Mechanisms to allow for worker voice
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Additional resources from the UC Berkeley Labor Center: 
COVID-19 Series: Resources, Data, and Analysis for California