



**COVID-19'S
IMPACT
ON BLACK
COMMUNICATIONS
PROFESSIONALS**

PRESENTED BY

**MEDIA
FRENZY**
GLOBAL

B|P|R|S
ATLANTA

ABOUT OUR RESEARCH

As recent headlines and supporting data have revealed, Blacks have overwhelmingly endured the socioeconomic brunt of the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19. Blacks in communications are being uniquely impacted by organizational shifts due to the virus combined with the heightened social justice climate. With that, Media Frenzy Global™ (MFG) proposed partnering with BPRS Atlanta to uncover unique challenges and pain points faced by Black communications due to COVID-19.

In February 2020, when the overall unemployment rate was 3.5% (a 50-year low), the unemployment rate among Black Americans was 5.8% (compared to the 3.1% White unemployment rate). From an economic standpoint, prior to COVID-19, the overall unemployment rate hit record lows; however, Black Americans had an unemployment rate that was almost twice the national rate. Now, it is predicted that Black professionals across America will make up a substantial portion of the recent 26M unemployed.

As if the said pressures weren't enough for Blacks, the social injustice conditions faced when the Black Lives Matter movement exploded has left many in a tailspin of duress. Couple this with the current pandemic, mental health concerns are on the rise among Blacks, as this community has reportedly experienced increased anxiety levels.



METHODOLOGY

COVID-19's Impact on Black Communications Professionals survey was designed in May 2020 by the MFG/BPRS Atlanta working group, which includes public relations and marketing professionals serving private-sector industries such as media and technology, and public-sector industries including education and government. The survey intended to uncover potential roadblocks experienced by Black Americans working in communications-related professional settings during COVID-19's arrival in the United States and subsequent spread between January 2020 and the present.

The survey was administered online from June 9, 2020 to July 6, 2020, surveying 216 communications professionals with connections to seven (7) regional affiliate chapters of the National Black Public Relations Society (NBPRS), an organization of agency, corporate and independent practitioners in Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

Our survey explored five core areas:

01

Experiences related to their professional standing since the onset of COVID-19;

02

Job status changes as a result of organizational restructuring;

03

Gain/loss of support from employers through the pandemic;

04

Racial disparities felt or experienced in the workplace;

05

Physical and mental well-being changes resulting from the virus.

The survey included 17 qualitative and quantitative multiple-choice questions focused on understanding the personal, professional, and community impacts felt by Black communications professionals, following the economic downturn associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In Spring 2020 alone, more than 40 million Americans overall experienced job loss or furlough.

OUR FINDINGS

Overall, the survey presented the working group with a number of insights that prove valuable to better understand the challenges faced by Black professionals during the pandemic:

52%

More than 52 percent of respondents said they **felt more pressure to perform** at a higher level than their white counterparts during the pandemic;

72%

Almost 72 percent of those surveyed said they **felt stressors** from the surrounding community that **impacted their job performance**;

76%

While nearly 76 percent of respondents said **stress at their jobs increased** during the pandemic, perceived declines in productivity were even across the board;

77%

More than 77 percent of surveys were completed by women professionals, many of whom also **balanced work in the new normal with family responsibilities** such as homeschooling or childcare, all while transitioning to a work-from-home environment;

50%

Nearly half of respondents have decided to add to their professional portfolios **to become more marketable** in the industry.



Nearly all those surveyed transitioned to or continued remote work status following the stay-at-home order and **most felt connected with their co-workers and managers**;

54%

54 percent of respondents **felt no change** or less support from their organizations;

CONCLUSION

Black communications professionals are not unlike other American minorities navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that Blacks are 5 times more likely to be hospitalized by the virus than Whites. Job loss and insecurity, underemployment and increased stress are also among the major impacts felt by this group and reported in the survey. Upon the completion of this survey, it's critical for agencies and organizations to consider the following:



Identify and prioritize health-related resources such as free family testing, increased sick and family leave, personal protective equipment (PPE), access to mental health resources and other employee assistance for Black and minority professionals in the workplace;



Monitor and avoid implicit bias at all costs; i.e. hair discrimination, (Crown Act) or name bias.



Reconsider hiring and firing decisions, particularly for Black women, who are less paid and face higher unemployment rates, and are more likely to be responsible for their children's health insurance coverage;



Provide additional technological and ergonomic resources that foster remote work, increased productivity and close the digital divide.

The impacts of COVID-19 felt by Black and other minority populations should not surprise the consumers of this report. This survey and its findings serve as reminders that disparate impacts to the Black community have been experienced at all levels, even the professional class. Public relations agencies and corporate entities employing Black men and women should continue working diligently to address these impacts and support their employees at a greater level than before the pandemic, and not abandon this support after things return to "normal."

RESOURCES

Black America is Suffering from the Coronavirus – Washington Post
[washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/11/coronavirus-black-america-racism/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/04/11/coronavirus-black-america-racism/)

Household Pulse Survey: Mental Health - Centers for Disease Control
[cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/pulse/mental-health.htm)

Working From Home While Black – Harvard Business Review
hbr.org/2020/06/working-from-home-while-black

Job Losses Higher Among People of Color During Coronavirus Pandemic
[npr.org/2020/04/22/840276956/minorities-often-work-these-jobs-they-were-among-first-to-go-in-coronavirus-layo](https://www.npr.org/2020/04/22/840276956/minorities-often-work-these-jobs-they-were-among-first-to-go-in-coronavirus-layo)



An award-winning agency, Media Frenzy Global (MFG) grows total company value for technology companies by increasing market awareness and connecting that to revenue. MFG is the only internationally focused boutique PR and Marketing agency in Atlanta whose sole focus is to build innovative and disruptive brands across continents. Its international cross-border expertise, diverse team, multi-award-winning campaigns, and 5-star customer testimonials make MFG a leading choice for brands seeking to tell progressive stories that connect with a multicultural and multigenerational audience.

For more information on Media Frenzy Global, visit [mediafrenzyglobal.com](https://www.mediafrenzyglobal.com).



The Black Public Relations Society of Atlanta (BPRS Atlanta) is a non-profit professional organization established in 2001 to increase the active participation and employment of people of color in the professional practice and the study of Public Relations by providing professional development, scholarship, and networking opportunities.

For more information on BPRS Atlanta, visit [bprsatlanta.org](https://www.bprsatlanta.org)