

# Distrust of police is top reason latinos don't call 911 for cardiac arrest

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Fear of police, language barriers, lack of knowledge of cardiac arrest symptoms and financial concerns prevent Latinos - particularly those of lower socioeconomic status - from seeking emergency medical help and performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), according to a study published online yesterday in *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

"Residents of low-income, minority neighborhoods have two strikes against them: the incidence of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is much higher than average and rates of bystander CPR are below average," said lead study author Comilla Sasson, MD, PhD, FACEP of the American Heart Association and the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Aurora, Colo. "We need to do a better job of overcoming the significant barriers to timely medical care for Latinos suffering cardiac arrest. Culturally sensitive public education about cardiac arrest and CPR is a key first step."

Researchers conducted focus groups and interviews with residents of primarily lower-income Latino neighborhoods in Denver to determine why they underutilize 9-1-1 emergency services and how to increase knowledge and performance of CPR on people suffering cardiac arrest. General distrust of law enforcement, of which 9-1-1 services are bundled, was cited as a top reason for not calling 9-1-1 by most participants.

Many subjects also believed - incorrectly - that they would not be able to ride an ambulance to the hospital without first paying for it, as that is the

practice in Mexico where many participants came from. Subjects also expressed a lack of understanding about the symptoms of cardiac arrest and how CPR can save a life. Strong reticence about touching a stranger for fear that it might be misconstrued was a unique cultural barrier to performing CPR. Language barriers - either with 9-1-1 dispatchers or first responders - also inhibited subjects from getting involved with someone experiencing cardiac arrest.

In the interest of educating more people on how to perform CPR, participants widely supported policy changes that would make CPR either a high school graduation requirement or a pre-requisite for receiving a driver's license.

"Future research will need to be conducted to better understand how targeted, culturally-sensitive public education campaigns may improve the provision of bystander CPR and [cardiac arrest](#) survival rates in high-risk neighborhoods," said Dr. Sasson.

**More information:** ["Barriers to Calling 911 and Learning and Performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation \(CPR\) for Residents of Primarily Latino, High-Risk Neighborhoods in Denver, Colorado"](#)

Provided by American College of Emergency Physicians

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