

# AUDIENCE SNAPSHOT: BLACK AMERICANS WHO ARE VACCINE HESITANT

Black Americans report a high level of hesitancy to COVID-19 vaccines in part due to historical unethical practices in medical research (i.e. Tuskegee experiments) as well as systemic health care inequities, especially laid bare by the pandemic. Like other Americans, they are also concerned about the vaccine's safety, side effects and development speed and there is considerable distrust of government and corporate motives.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Distrust is especially salient in Black communities because of medical and government mistreatment (e.g. Tuskegee experiments) that has contributed to cultural trauma.
- Black Americans tend to question just how open, diverse and transparent vaccine conversations will be as they often feel excluded from other health-related discussions.
- While Black Americans report a higher rate of hesitancy, messaging should not be framed this way nor imply that vaccination uptake rests entirely on their shoulders.

### BLACK MOVABLE MIDDLE CHARACTERISTICS

#### 20 MILLION AMERICANS

##### Demographic Skews

- Women
- Married/living with a partner
- Suburban
- Resides in a predominantly Black or diverse neighborhood
- Resides in the South
- Employed as an essential worker
- Limited access to high quality healthcare
- Overall health is fair to poor

##### Psychographic Skews

- Low trust in government
- Suspicious of being "guinea pigs"
- Democrat

**Note:** These are statistical skews but these characteristics by no means describe every Black movable middle American.

#### Defining the Movable Middle:

We define the movable middle as those who are "skeptical" or "open but uncertain" compared to "intending" and "resistant." Sixty-two percent of Black Americans are considered part of the movable middle, compared to 50% of total population.

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## TRUSTED MESSENGERS

The messenger is just as important as the message, and messengers who have personal touchpoints and health care expertise are especially influential.

- **Medical experts, personal doctors and other health care providers** are generally the most trusted sources of information for COVID-19 vaccination information and advice. Our research shows that over half of Black Americans who are hesitant will be more likely to get the vaccine if they receive a strong recommendation from their doctor.
- **Institutions** like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention carry credibility. In our research, CDC only ranked behind personal doctors, medical & public health experts in terms of the ability to influence Black Americans' likelihood to get the vaccine.
- **Word of mouth** from those whom people trust, including those within one's close personal network, is a powerful form of "social proof" (i.e. "if my family, friends and neighbors and others I admire intend to get vaccinated, I am more likely, too"). Black Americans are more responsive to messages from faith-based leaders compared to other groups.
- **Celebrities** can be useful when they feature health experts on their channels to share educational information.

## DOCTORS AND MEDICAL EXPERTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE INFLUENTIAL

If you heard a strong recommendation to get the COVID-19 vaccine from the following, do you think you would be more or less likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine?  
% More Likely

