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Most Black Americans Believe Racial Conspiracy Theories About U.S. Institutions

Majorities say the criminal justice, political and economic systems were designed to hold Black people back

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to explore how Black Americans think about the factors that contribute to or hinder their success in the United States. An early 2024 report explored the success factors, and this current report focuses on the hindrances. Based on their real personal and collective historical experiences with racial discrimination, Black Americans might be suspicious of the actions of U.S. institutions.

These suspicions often circulate in Black spaces as stories about the intentional or negligent harm that hinders Black people from thriving. In this report, the phrase **racial conspiracy theories** refers to these stories of suspicion. Black adults were asked how familiar they are with these stories. Then, regardless of their familiarity, they were asked if they believed these things were restricted to the past or could also be happening today. Detailed examples of these ideas and corresponding survey results are discussed at length in Chapters 2-7.

We surveyed 4,736 U.S. adults who identify as Black and non-Hispanic, multiracial Black and non-Hispanic, or Black and Hispanic. The survey was conducted from Sept. 12 to 24, 2023, and includes 1,755 Black adults on the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP) and 2,981 Black adults on Ipsos' KnowledgePanel.

Respondents on both panels are recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. Recruiting panelists by mail ensures that nearly all U.S. Black adults have a chance of selection. This gives us confidence that any sample can represent the whole population (see our Methods 101 explainer on random sampling). For more information on this survey, refer to its methodology and questionnaire.

Terminology

To enhance readability, the phrase **racial conspiracy theories** is used throughout this report to refer to the suspicions that Black adults might have about the actions of U.S. institutions based on their personal and collective historical experiences with racial discrimination. From policing to media stereotypes to medical malpractice and more, Black adults were asked how familiar they are with these ideas and then, regardless of their familiarity, asked if they believed these things could be happening today. Detailed examples of these ideas and corresponding survey results are discussed at length in Chapters 2-7.

The terms **Black Americans**, **Black adults** and **Black people** are used interchangeably throughout this report to refer to U.S. adults who self-identify as Black, either alone or in combination with other races or Hispanic identity.

Throughout this report, **Black non-Hispanic** respondents are those who identify as single-race Black and say they have no Hispanic background. **Black Hispanic** respondents are those who identify as Black and say they have a Hispanic background. We use the terms **Black Hispanic** and **Hispanic Black** interchangeably. **Multiracial** respondents are those who indicate two or more racial backgrounds (one of which is Black) and say they are not Hispanic.

In this report, **immigrant** refers to people who were not U.S. citizens at birth – in other words, those born outside the U.S., Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories to parents who were not U.S. citizens.

To create the upper-, middle- and lower-income tiers, respondents' 2021 family incomes were adjusted for differences in purchasing power by geographic region and household size. Respondents were then placed into income tiers: **Middle income** is defined as two-thirds to double the median annual income for the entire survey sample. **Lower income** falls below that range, and **upper income** lies above it.

Throughout this report, **Black adults with upper incomes** are those who have family incomes in the upper-income tier. **Black adults with middle incomes** and **Black adults with lower incomes** have family incomes in the middle- and lower-income tier, respectively. For more information about how the income tiers were created, read the methodology.

Throughout this report, **Democrats** are respondents who identify politically with the Democratic Party or those who are independent or identify with some other party but lean toward the Democratic Party. Similarly, **Republicans** are those who identify politically with the Republican

Party and those who are independent or identify with some other party but lean toward the Republican Party.

Table of Contents

About Pew Research Center **2**

How we did this **3**

Terminology **4**

Most Black Americans Believe Racial Conspiracy TheoriesAbout U.S. Institutions **8**

1. Racial discrimination shapes how Black Americans view their progress and U.S. institutions **11**

Most Black adults say they experience racial discrimination 11

Black adults feel angry or undermined in the face of discrimination 13

Black adults say they must work more than everyone else to get ahead 15

2. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about the criminal justice system **17**

Black Americans believe the criminal justice system was designed to hold them back 18

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about policing and prisons 20

3. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about politics **22**

Many Black Americans believe the political system was designed to hold them back 22

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about political leaders 24

4. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about economics and business **26**

Black Americans believe the economic system was designed to hold them back 26

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about big businesses 28

5. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about the news media **29**

Black Americans believe the news media was designed to hold them back 30

Most Black adults believe racial conspiracy theories about the media 30

6. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about health care and medical research **31**

Some Black Americans believe the health care system was designed to hold them back 31

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about medical research 32

7. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about Black families and reproductive health **34**

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about Black families 35

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about reproductive health 37

Acknowledgments **39**

Methodology **40**

The American Trends Panel survey methodology 40

Topline Questionnaire **48**

Most Black Americans Believe Racial Conspiracy Theories About U.S. Institutions

Majorities say the criminal justice, political and economic systems were designed to hold Black people back

While many Black Americans view themselves as at least somewhat successful and are optimistic about their financial future, they are also critical of U.S. institutions. Most say several systems in the United States need significant changes to ensure Black people are treated fairly.

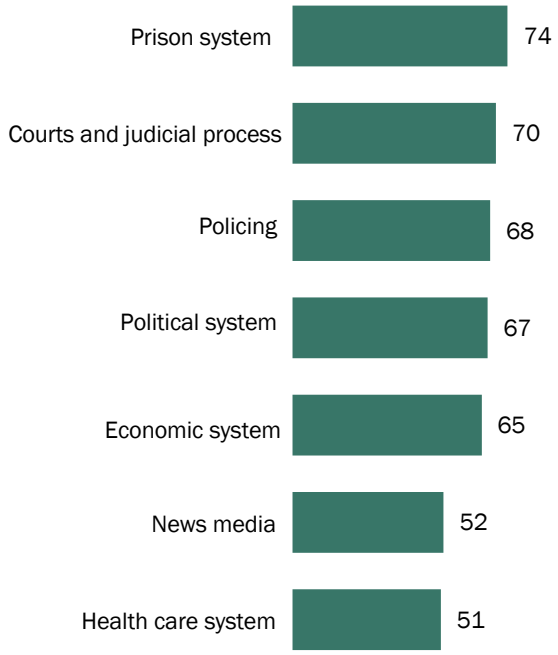
Black Americans' doubts about the fairness of institutions are accompanied by suspicion. Indeed, most Black adults say the prison (74%), political (67%) and economic (65%) systems in the U.S., among others, are designed to hold Black people back, according to a new Pew Research Center survey of Black adults conducted in September 2023.

The survey also finds that **most Black Americans are familiar with specific racial conspiracy theories about U.S. institutions and believe they are true.**

What is a 'racial conspiracy theory'?
In this report, the phrase "racial conspiracy theories" refers to the suspicions that Black adults might have about the actions of U.S. institutions based on their personal and collective historical experiences with racial discrimination.

Most Black adults say the criminal justice system was designed to hold Black people back

% of Black adults who say each of the following U.S. institutions was designed to hold Black people back a ***great deal*** *or* ***fair amount***



Note: Black adults include those who say their race is Black alone and non-Hispanic, Black and at least one other race and non-Hispanic, or Black and Hispanic.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 12-24, 2023.
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For example, 82% of Black adults say they have heard the following racial conspiracy theory about the prison system: *Black people are more likely*

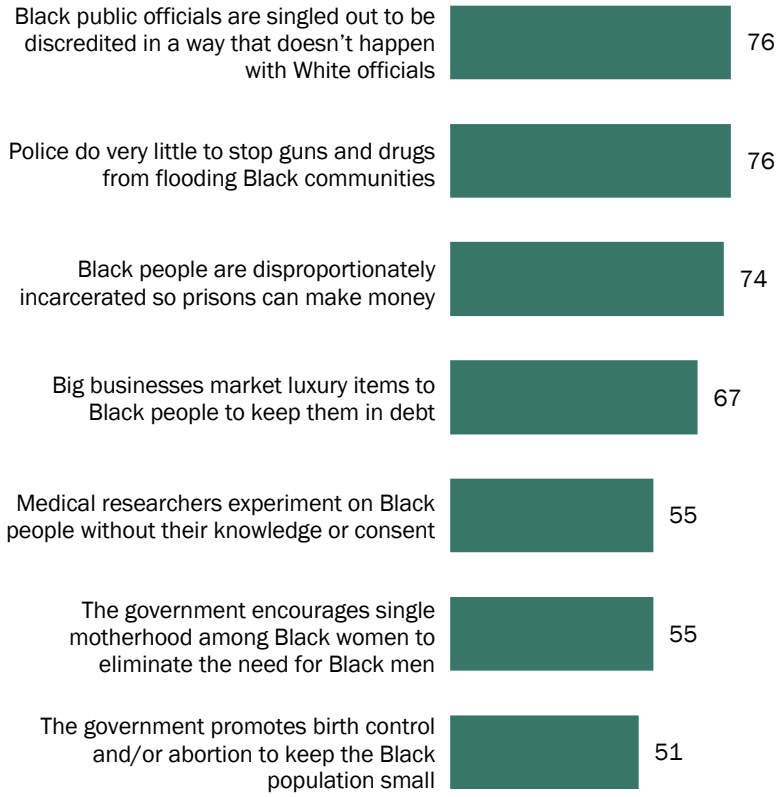
than White people to be incarcerated because prisons want to make money on the backs of Black people. Many Black adults (74%) say this racial conspiracy theory is true and happening in the U.S. today.

While psychologists say belief in conspiracy theories is often linked to paranoia or other mental health issues, the racial conspiracies that Black people believe are rooted in factual acts of intentional or negligent harm.

Well-documented examples include the surveillance of political leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., malpractice in medical research in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the massacre of Black people and destruction of their communities in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921.

Most Black adults say racial conspiracy theories are true and are happening to Black people today

% of Black adults who say each of following racial conspiracy theories is something that happens to Black people today



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These historic events (and others described in later chapters of this report) provide the context for some Black Americans' belief in racial conspiracy theories.

And to be sure, the majority of Black people are familiar with their history. Nearly 90% of Black adults consider themselves at least somewhat informed about U.S. Black history, according to a 2022 Pew Research Center survey. This includes 51% who say they are extremely or very informed.

Aside from well-known historical events, **how often Black Americans experience racial discrimination** is also a significant factor in shaping how familiar they are with racial conspiracy theories and whether they believe in them. There are also modest differences by gender, education, family income and political affiliation. Still, majorities of most Black demographic subgroups are familiar with these theories and believe in them.

For this report, we surveyed 4,736 Black adults in the U.S. from Sept. 12 to 24, 2023, in English and Spanish. Here are some other key findings about Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories.

- About seven-in-ten Black Americans say **the criminal justice system was designed to hold Black people back.**

- 76% of Black adults say the racial conspiracy theory that **Black public officials are singled out and discredited in a way that doesn't happen to White public officials** is true and happening today.

- About two-thirds (67%) of Black Americans say racial conspiracy theories in business, in the form of **targeted marketing of luxury products to Black people in order to bankrupt them,** are true and happening today.

- 55% of Black adults say racial conspiracy theories in the form of **secret and nonconsensual medical experiments** like the Tuskegee study are true and happening to Black people today.

- 55% of Black adults say the racial conspiracy theory that **the government encourages single motherhood and the elimination of Black men from Black families** is true and happening today.

- 51% of Black adults say the racial conspiracy theory that **the government promotes birth control and abortion to reduce the size of the Black population** is true and happening today.

1. Racial discrimination shapes how Black Americans view their progress and U.S. institutions

Most Black adults say they have experienced racial discrimination (75%), either regularly (13%) or from time to time (62%). They say these experiences make them feel like the system is set up for their failure. Many also say Black people must work harder than everyone else to achieve success.

Most Black adults say they experience racial discrimination

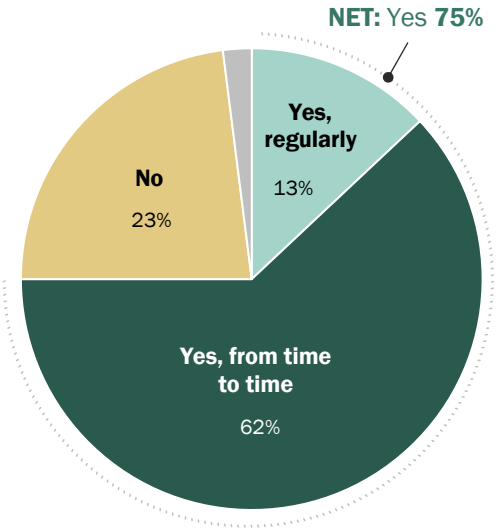
Three-quarters of Black Americans say they have experienced racial discrimination, either regularly (13%) or from time to time (62%). Fewer say they *have not* been discriminated against because of their race (23%). Black adults differ slightly on this question by age, education, family income and where they live.

By age

Eight-in-ten Black Americans ages 65 and older say they experience racial discrimination, compared with smaller shares of Black adults under 30 (71%), ages 30 to 49 (76%) and 50 to 64 (75%). Black men 50 and older (82%) were most likely to say they experience racial discrimination when compared with men under 50 (73%) and Black women of any age (75%).

The majority of Black adults say they have experienced racial discrimination

% of Black adults who say they have personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity



Note: Black adults include those who say their race is Black alone and non-Hispanic, Black and at least one other race and non-Hispanic, or Black and Hispanic. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer is shown but not labeled.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 12-24, 2023.
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By education and family income

Most Black adults with at least a bachelor's degree (82%) say they experience racial discrimination. Fewer of those with some college (77%) or a high school diploma or less education

(70%) say the same. Black adults with upper incomes (80%) are more likely than those with lower incomes (74%) to say this.[1]

By region

Black adults who live in Western states (81%) are more likely than those who live in the Northeast (72%) and the South (74%) to say they experience racial discrimination. In the Midwest, 78% of Black adults experience this.

[1] The middle-income range for the American Trends Panel is about $47,800 to $143,400 annually for an average family of three. Lower-income families have adjusted incomes less than $47,800 and upper-income families have adjusted incomes greater than $143,400. All figures are expressed in 2022 dollars. For more information, please refer to the methodology.

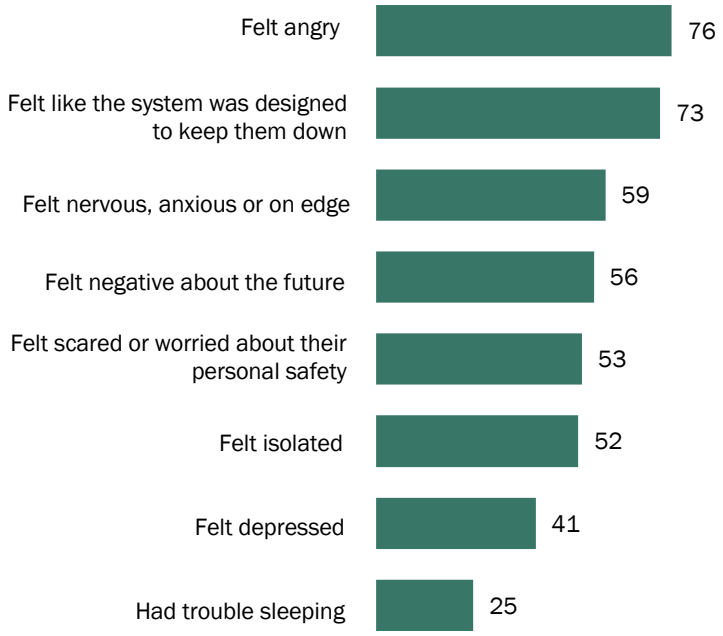
Black adults feel angry or undermined in the face of discrimination

Black Americans who experience racial discrimination have a range of reactions to this treatment. Large majorities say their experiences with racial discrimination made them feel angry (76%) and like the system was designed to keep them down (73%).

Smaller shares say they felt nervous or anxious (59%), negative about the future (56%), scared for their personal safety (53%), isolated (52%) or depressed (41%), or had trouble sleeping (25%).

Most Black adults say discrimination makes them feel like the system was designed to keep them down

Among Black adults who have experienced racial discrimination, % who say they ____ as a result



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By gender and age

There are a few key differences among Black adults in their reactions to racial discrimination. Black women under 50 (80%) are more likely than Black men under 50 (73%) and women 50 and older (75%) to say racial discrimination made them feel angry.

Most Black adults also say experiencing racial discrimination made them feel like the system was designed to hold them down (73%). Black men 50 and older (75%) are more likely than Black women in this age group (69%) to say this.

By birthplace, education and party

Black adults born in the U.S. (77%) are more likely than Black immigrants (65%) to say experiencing racial discrimination made them feel angry. And Black adults who went to college

(80%), regardless of their degree level, are more likely than those with a high school diploma or less (70%) to say the same.

Black Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents (76%) are more likely than Black Republicans and Republican leaners (63%) to say their personal experiences with racial discrimination made them feel like the system was designed to hold them down. Still, majorities of both groups say racial discrimination makes them feel like the system was designed to hold them down.

Black adults say they must work more than everyone else to get ahead

Regardless of whether they feel systems are designed to hold them back, Black Americans generally view their road to success as more difficult than others'. Three-quarters of Black adults say they must work more than everyone else to achieve success. Far fewer say Black people must work the same as everyone else (19%) or less than everyone else (4%) to be successful.

By discrimination experience

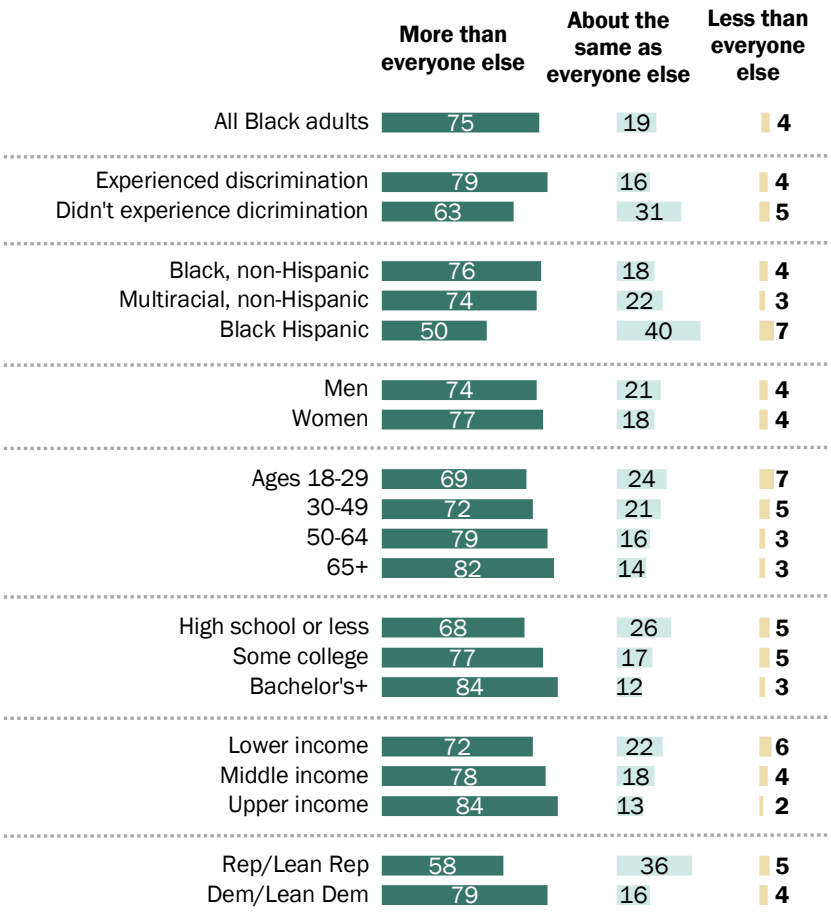
Discrimination is still a key factor in how Black Americans think about their progress. Black adults who have experienced racial discrimination (79%) are more likely than those who haven't (63%) to say Black people must work more than everyone else to be successful, though majorities of both groups share this view.

By ethnicity and age

Ethnicity and age also play a role. Non-Hispanic Black adults (76%) and multiracial Black adults (74%) are more likely than Hispanic Black adults (50%) to say Black people must work more than everyone else to achieve success. And the oldest Black adults, those ages 65 and older (82%), are more likely than those younger than 30 (69%) to say this.

Three-quarters of Black adults say they must work more than everyone else to achieve success

% of Black adults who say they have to work ____ to achieve success in the U.S.



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By education, family income and party

Over eight-in-ten Black adults with a bachelor's degree (84%) say Black people have to work more than everyone else to achieve success. Fewer of those with some college experience (77%) or a high school diploma or less education (68%) say the same. And Black adults with upper incomes (84%) are the most likely among income groups to say Black people must work harder than everyone else to be successful.

Political affiliation is also a factor in how Black Americans think about their progress. Black Democrats (79%) are more likely than Black Republicans (58%) to say Black people must work more than others to achieve success (though majorities of both groups say this).

2. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about the criminal justice system

Racial conspiracy theories about the criminal justice system have their roots in key events in the 20th century.

In the convict-leasing and chain gang systems of the early 1900s, Black men were forced to build roads, bridges and ditches as part of their incarceration. This new infrastructure improved the business prospects of rural planters throughout the South.

And in the 1990s, the CIA released a report about its role in the inner-city cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and early '90s. While the agency denied that it was directly involved, it admitted that addressing drug activity in their Central American operations was not among its priorities.

These events provide some context for Black Americans' beliefs in several racial conspiracy theories.

Black Americans believe the criminal justice system was designed to hold them back

Roughly seven-in-ten Black Americans believe in racial conspiracy theories about the criminal justice system. About three-quarters (74%) say the prison system was designed to hold Black people back a great deal or a fair amount. Similar shares say the same about the courts and judicial process (70%) and policing (68%). While many Black adults say the criminal justice system was designed to hold Black people back, there are some group differences.

By discrimination experience and ethnicity

Racial discrimination continues to be a significant factor in how Black Americans assess their progress, or lack of it. Those who have experienced racial discrimination are more likely than those who haven't to say the prison system (79% vs. 62%), judicial process (74% vs. 61%) and policing (73% vs. 55%) each was designed to hold Black people back.

When it comes to ethnicity, the majority of non-Hispanic (75%)

Black Democrats more likely than Republicans to say the criminal justice system holds Black people back

*% of Black adults who say each of the following U.S. institutions was designed to hold Black people back a **great deal** or **fair amount***

	Prison system	Courts and judicial process	Policing
All Black adults	74	70	68
Experienced discrimination	79	74	73
Didn't experience dicrimination	62	61	55
Black, non-Hispanic	75	71	69
Multiracial, non-Hispanic	72	70	67
Black Hispanic	60	57	60
Men	73	68	67
Women	76	72	70
Ages 18-29	73	68	66
30-49	73	70	69
50-64	75	71	68
65+	78	71	71
High school or less	68	65	61
Some college	78	74	73
Bachelor's+	80	73	74
Lower income	73	69	67
Middle income	75	71	70
Upper income	79	72	73
Rep/Lean Rep	59	55	54
Dem/Lean Dem	78	74	72

Note: Black adults include those who say their race is Black alone and non-Hispanic, Black and at least one other race and non-Hispanic, or Black and Hispanic. "Some college" includes Black adults who have an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Respondents who didn't answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 12-24, 2023.
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and multiracial (72%) Black adults say the prison system and the judicial process were designed to hold Black people back. Fewer Hispanic Black adults say the same (60%).

By education, family income and party

Black Americans' views also differ by education. About three-quarters or more of Black adults who have been to college, regardless of their degree status, say the prison system, the judicial process and policing were designed to hold Black people back. Those with a high school diploma or less education are less likely to agree. Likewise, Black adults with high family incomes are more likely than those with lower family incomes to say the same about prisons and policing.[2]

Political affiliation also plays a role in what Black adults believe about the criminal justice system. Black Democrats are more likely than Black Republicans, including those who lean to each party, to say the prison system (78% vs. 59%), judicial process (74% vs. 55%) and policing (72% vs. 54%) were intentionally designed to hold Black people back, though majorities of both groups say the systems were designed this way.

[2] The middle-income range for the American Trends Panel is about $47,800 to $143,400 annually for an average family of three. Lower-income families have adjusted incomes less than $47,800 and upper-income families have adjusted incomes greater than $143,400. All figures are expressed in 2022 dollars.

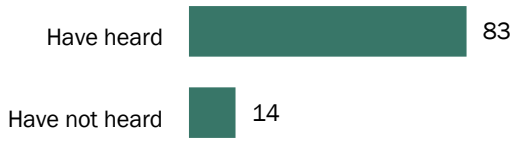
Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about policing and prisons

In addition to believing the criminal justice system was designed to hold Black people back, most Black Americans are also familiar with racial conspiracy theories about the criminal justice system.

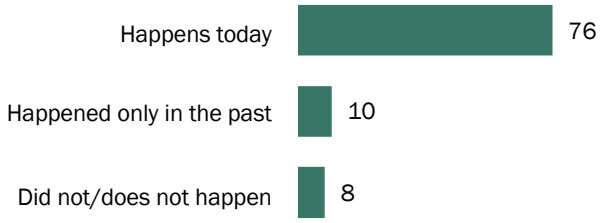
Some 83% of Black adults say they have heard about the idea that police do very little to prevent guns and drugs from flooding Black communities. And 82% have heard the idea that Black people are incarcerated more than White people to create profit for prisons. Only about 15% of Black Americans say they are unfamiliar with these narratives.

About three-quarters of Black adults believe racial conspiracy theories about policing

*% of Black adults who say they ____ the idea that **police do very little to stop guns and drugs from flooding Black communities***



*About the idea that **police do very little to stop guns and drugs from flooding Black communities**, % of Black adults who say this ...*



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Belief in racial conspiracy theories about policing in Black communities

Aside from being familiar with these ideas, most Black Americans say racial conspiracy theories about policing are *true and happening today*. About three-quarters of Black adults say the police's failure to prevent the flow of guns and drugs in Black communities is something that happens today (76%). By comparison, 10% say this happened in the past but no longer happens today, and 8% say this has never happened.

By discrimination experience and community type

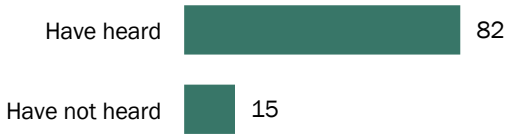
Black adults who have experienced racial discrimination (80%) are more likely than those who haven't (68%) to say the failure of police to prevent the flow of guns and drugs is something that happens today. And Black adults who live in urban areas (80%) are slightly more likely than those in suburbs (76%) or rural areas (72%) to say this.

By education and party

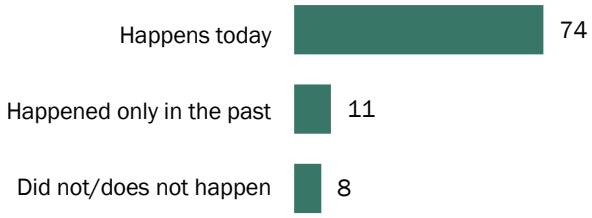
Black adults also differ on this question by education and political party. Those with a bachelor's degree (78%) are more likely than those with a high school diploma or less (72%) to say police are failing to prevent the flow of guns and drugs into Black communities. The share of Black Democrats (79%) who believe this is higher than the share of Black Republicans (66%).

About 8 in 10 Black adults are familiar with racial conspiracy theories about the prison system

*% of Black adults who say they ___ the idea that **Black people are disproportionately jailed to make money for prisons***



*About the idea that **Black people are disproportionately jailed to make money for prisons**, % of Black adults who say this ...*



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Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 12-24, 2023.
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Belief in racial conspiracy theories about prisons and profits

Black Americans also say racial conspiracy theories about the prison industry are true and happening today. About three-in-four Black adults (74%) say Black people are being incarcerated more than White people so that prisons can make profits off them. Smaller shares say this happened in the past but no longer happens today (11%) or say this has never happened (8%).

Much like their beliefs about police neglect in Black communities, Black adults who have experienced discrimination and those who are Democrats are more likely than their counterparts to say Black people are used for profit in the prison industry today.

3. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about politics

Racial conspiracy theories about politics have their roots in well-known events involving Black political leaders. Declassified memos show how Martin Luther King Jr. was viewed by the FBI as an "effective" and "dangerous" leader who should be "neutralized." And a letter attributed to a former New York City police officer suggests there were federal and local conspiracies to discredit Malcolm X and his organization.

This history of surveillance of Black leaders provides context for how Black Americans view racial conspiracy theories about politics.

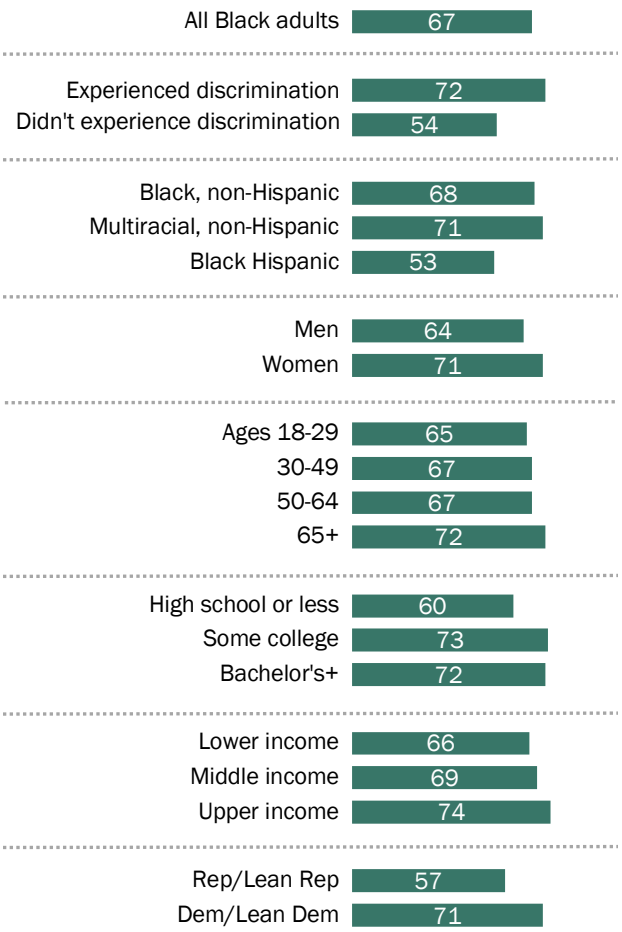
Many Black Americans believe the political system was designed to hold them back

Two-thirds of Black Americans (67%) say the political system was designed to hold Black people back a great deal or fair amount. Smaller shares say it only holds Black people back somewhat (20%) or does not hold them back much, if at all (11%).

Black adults who have experienced racial discrimination (72%) are more likely than those who haven't (54%) to say the political system was designed to significantly hold Black people back. And while about seven-in-ten Black adults who are non-Hispanic or multiracial say the same, fewer Hispanic Black adults agree (53%).

Black women are more likely than Black men to say the political system holds Black people back

*% of Black adults who say the political system was designed to hold Black people back a **great deal** or **fair amount***



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Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Sept. 12-24, 2023. "Most Black Americans Believe Racial Conspiracy Theories About U.S. Institutions"

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By gender

Black women (71%) are more likely than Black men (64%) to say the political system was designed to significantly hold Black people back. However, age also factors into this. Black women under 50 (73%) are more likely than Black men of the same age group (60%) to say this. They are also slightly more likely than Black women 50 and older to agree (68%).

By education, family income and party

Education and income also play a role in how Black Americans think about the political system. About seven-in-ten Black adults with a bachelor's degree (72%) say the political system was designed to hold Black people back a great deal or fair amount. Black adults with a high school diploma or less education (60%) are less likely to say the same. And Black adults with upper incomes (74%) are the most likely among the income groups to say the political system intentionally holds Black people back.

Black Democrats (71%) and Republicans (57%) also differ significantly on this question.

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about political leaders

Aside from believing the political system was set up for their failure, many Black Americans are also familiar with racial conspiracy theories about political leaders.

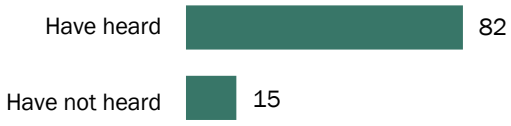
About eight-in-ten Black adults (82%) say they have heard the idea that Black public officials are singled out and discredited in a way that doesn't happen with White public officials. Only 15% of Black Americans say they have not heard of this idea at all.

By age and ethnicity

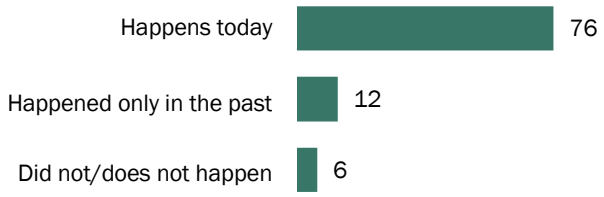
Some groups of Black Americans are more familiar with these ideas than others. Black adults ages 65 and older (85%) are slightly more like than those 50 to 64 (81%) to have heard that Black officials are singled out more than White officials. And the share of non-Hispanic Black adults (84%) who have heard of this idea outpaces that of both multiracial (75%) and Hispanic Black adults (71%).

About 8 in 10 Black adults are familiar with racial conspiracy theories about political leaders

*% of Black adults who say they ____ the idea that **Black public officials are singled out to be discredited in a way that doesn't happen with White officials***



*About the idea that **Black public officials are singled out to be discredited in a way that doesn't happen with White officials**, % of Black adults who say this ...*



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Belief in racial conspiracy theories about political leaders

About three-quarters of Black Americans (76%) believe that Black officials are singled out and discredited more than White officials and that this is happening today. Much smaller shares say this is something that happened in the past but doesn't happen today (12%) or that it has never happened (6%).

By discrimination experience and ethnicity

Eight-in-ten Black adults who have experienced racial discrimination believe the racial conspiracy theory that Black officials are singled out more than White officials. The share is smaller is among those who haven't experienced discrimination (67%). And about 75% of non-Hispanic and multiracial Black adults also believe this racial disparity in how leaders are treated is happening today. Fewer Hispanic Black adults say the same (62%).

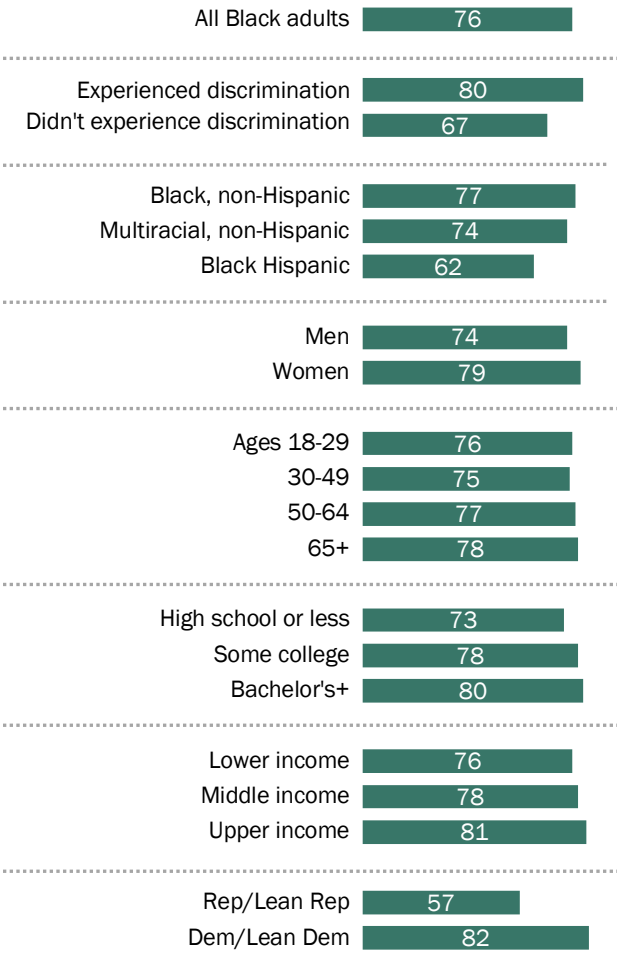
By gender, party and education

Overall, Black women (79%) are slightly more likely than Black men (74%) to say Black leaders are singled out unfairly today. More specifically, Black men under 50 (72%) are less likely than women of any age to say this.

Black Democrats (82%) are significantly more likely than Black Republicans (57%) to say Black leaders are treated unfairly today. And Black adults with a bachelor's degree (80%) outpace those with a high school diploma (73%) on this question.

Most Black adults believe racial conspiracy theories about politics are true and happening today

*% of Black adults who say that **Black public officials being singled out to be discredited more than White officials** is something that happens today*



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4. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about economics and business

Social scientists have long debated the causes of economic inequality among Black Americans. The conversation among Black people reached a notable inflection point in 2004, when comedian Bill Cosby linked persistent poverty in some Black families with the purchase of luxury items.

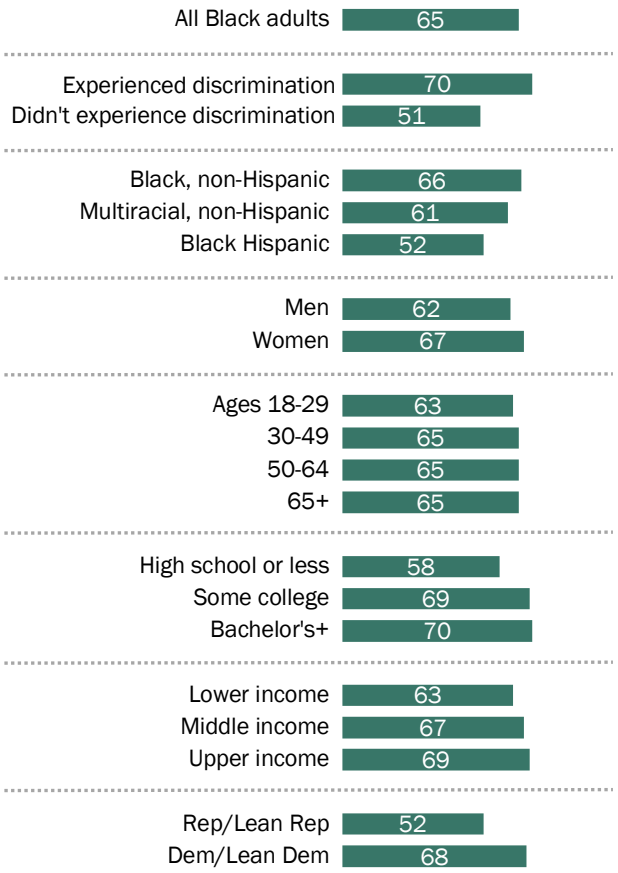
There is some evidence that poverty and expensive purchases are related in complex ways for Black people – namely, that race and residential segregation impact how people signal wealth. However, this broad conversation about the causes of persistent economic inequality provides some context for Black adults' beliefs in racial conspiracy theories about the economic system.

Black Americans believe the economic system was designed to hold them back

About two-thirds of Black Americans (65%) say the U.S. economic system was designed to hold Black people back, either a great deal (39%) or fair amount (26%). Roughly a quarter (23%) say it was designed to hold Black people back somewhat, and 11% say it was not designed to hold Black people back much or at all.

Black college graduates are most likely to say the economic system holds Black people back

*% of Black adults who say the economic system was designed to hold Black people back a **great deal** or **fair amount***



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By education and family income

Roughly 70% of Black adults who have been to college say the economic system was designed to hold Black people back. Fewer Black adults with a high school diploma or less education say the same (58%). And about two-thirds of Black adults at each income level say the economic system intentionally holds Black people back.

By gender and community type

Black adults also differ by gender on this question. Black women (67%) are slightly more likely than Black men (62%) to say the economic system was designed to hold Black people back. Black women under 50 (69%) are particularly more likely than Black men (61%) of their same age group to say this.

Black adults who live in urban areas (67%) are slightly more likely than those in rural areas (61%) to say the economic system significantly holds Black people back. Two-thirds (66%) of those in suburbs agree.

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about big businesses

Many Black Americans are familiar with racial conspiracy theories about the marketing practices of large corporations. Indeed, 70% of Black adults have heard the idea that big businesses market luxury items to Black people to keep them in debt. About a quarter of Black adults (27%) have not heard this idea.

Age is the only demographic difference among Black adults in their familiarity with this idea. Black adults ages 30 to 49 (72%) are slightly more likely than those 50 to 64 and 65 and older (67% each) to say they have heard that big businesses market luxury items to Black people to keep them in debt.

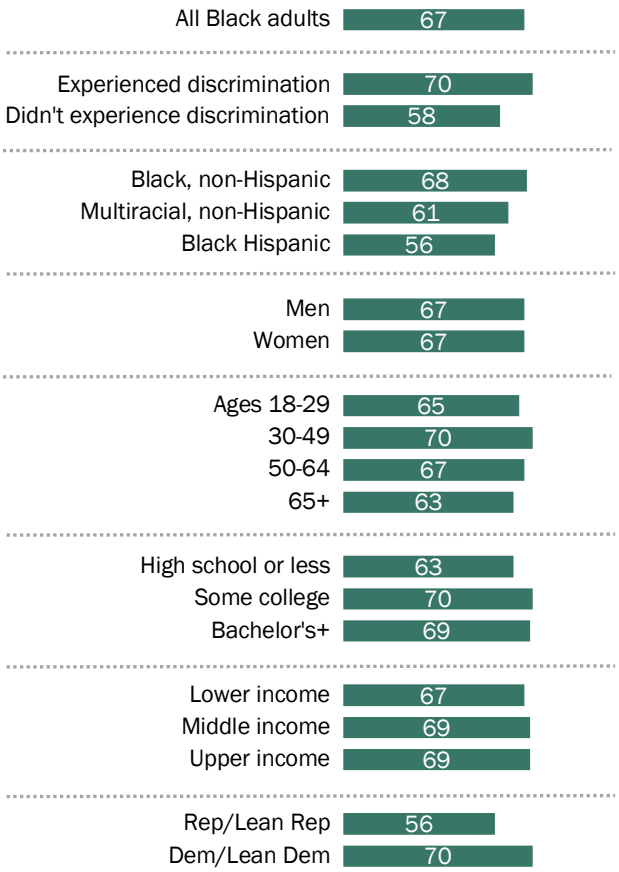
Many Black adults have not only heard of this idea, they also think malicious marketing of luxury items to Black people is something that happens today (67%). Only 10% say this happened in the past but does not happen today, and 17% say this has never happened.

Once again, age makes a difference. Black adults ages 30 to 49 (70%) are more likely than those 65 and older (63%) to believe targeted marketing of luxury items to Black people happens today.

Black adults who live in urban areas (71%) are slightly more likely than those in the suburbs (65%) to say they believe in this racial conspiracy theory about marketing.

Two-thirds of Black adults believe racial conspiracy theories about big businesses' marketing practices

*% of Black adults who say that **big businesses marketing luxury items to Black people to keep them in debt** is something that happens today*



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5. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about the news media

Some of the most enduring stereotypes about Black people have their roots in images created during and immediately after slavery. From the docile Mammy and Uncle Tom characters that appeared in newspaper ads and on food containers to the threatening Mandingo in the film "Birth of a Nation" and the more recent controversy about whether television character Olivia Pope was a modern-day Jezebel, Black Americans' relationship with media has been contentious at best.

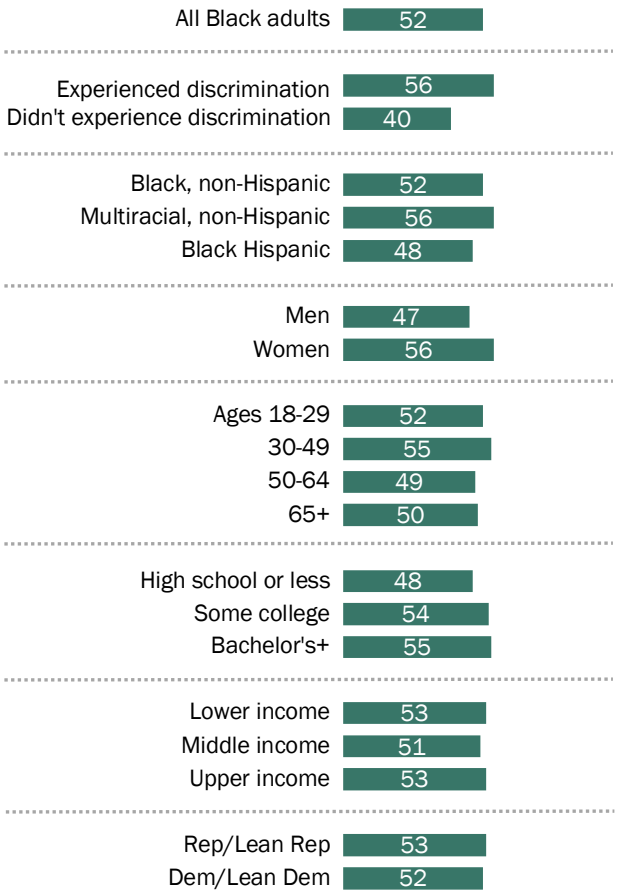
Black Americans have also said the news media specifically characterizes them as disproportionately poor, welfare-dependent and criminal. This history of stereotypical imagery provides some context for Black Americans' beliefs in racial conspiracy theories about the media.

A Pew Research Center survey from early 2023 shows that 63% of Black Americans say the news about Black people is often more negative than news about other racial and ethnic groups. Over half (57%) say the news only covers certain segments of Black communities, and 43% say the coverage significantly stereotypes Black people.

In the current survey, nearly nine-in-ten Black Americans (88%) say they at least sometimes come across news and information about Black

Black women are more likely than Black men to say the news media was designed to hold Black people back

*% of Black adults who say the news media was designed to hold Black people back a **great deal** or **fair amount***



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people they think is inaccurate. This includes 42% who say they come across this often or extremely often and 46% who say they see these inaccuracies sometimes.

And when they come across these errors, Black Americans are more likely to fact-check stories for themselves (85%) than they are to reduce the amount of news they take in overall (52%), from social media (66%), or from friends and family (44%).

Black Americans believe the news media was designed to hold them back

About half of Black Americans (52%) say the news media was designed to hold Black people back a great deal or a fair amount. Fewer say the media was designed to hold Black people back somewhat (30%) or not much, if at all (16%).

Black adults differ significantly on this question by gender. Black women (56%) are more likely than Black men (47%) to say the news media was designed to hold Black people back. Younger Black women are especially likely to agree. Six-in-ten Black women under 50 say this (61%), compared with smaller shares of Black men under 50 (47%) and Black women and men 50 and older (51% and 47%, respectively).

Roughly 55% of Black adults who have been to college say the news media was designed to hold Black people back. This is larger than the share of Black adults with a high school diploma or less education who say the same (48%).

And Black adults who have experienced racial discrimination (56%) are more likely than those who haven't (40%) to say the news media is designed to hold Black people back.

Most Black adults believe racial conspiracy theories about the media

About nine-in-ten Black Americans (88%) say they come across inaccurate news and information about Black people at least sometimes. And among those who do, 72% say those inaccuracies were created on purpose. Substantially fewer say they are the result of normal human error (24%).

Black adults who have been discriminated against (74%) are more likely than those who haven't (68%) to say media inaccuracies about Black people are created on purpose.

Black adults with a bachelor's degree (81%) are more likely than those with some college (74%) or a high school diploma or less education (66%) to say media inaccuracies about Black people are created on purpose. And the share of Black adults with high (80%) and middle (77%) family incomes outpace the share of Black adults with lower incomes (68%) who agree.

6. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about health care and medical research

Although the Tuskegee Syphilis Study is one of the best-known examples of race-based medical malpractice, there are others.

Throughout the 20th century, Black women were subject to eugenics laws that forcibly sterilized them. In 1951, Henrietta Lacks' cervical cells were harvested and studied without her knowledge or consent – a legal case that was settled in 2023.

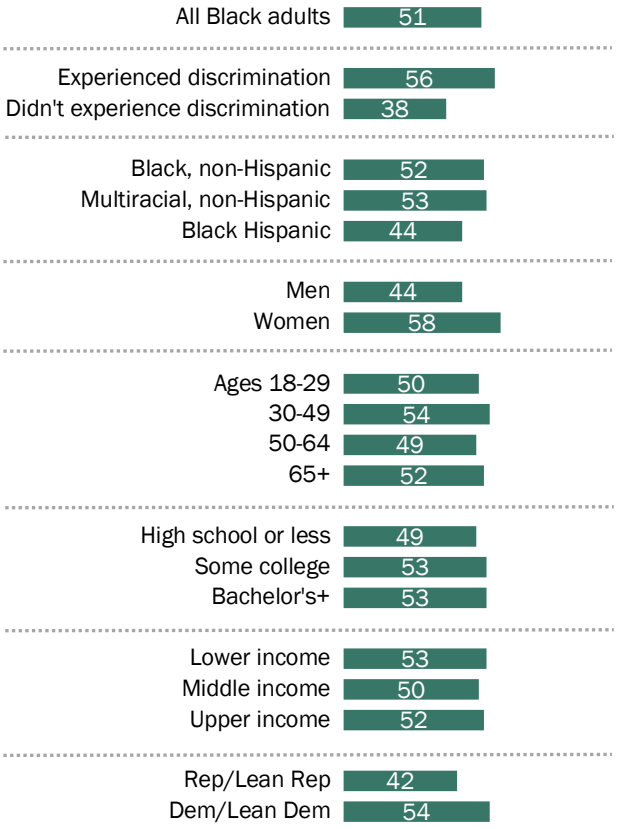
Today, both Black men and Black women specifically seek out Black doctors to avoid racial discrimination in medical care and improve their health outcomes. This history of mistrust provides the context for Black Americans' beliefs in racial conspiracy theories about the health care system and medical research.

Some Black Americans believe the health care system was designed to hold them back

A 2022 Pew Research Center survey found mixed results in how Black adults assessed their experiences with health care. While nearly half (47%) said health outcomes for Black people have improved over the last 20 years, sizable minorities said they have stayed the same (31%) or gotten worse (20%). And the majority of Black Americans (55%) said they have had negative experiences with doctors, including having to speak up to get proper care and

Black women are more likely than Black men to say the health care system holds Black people back

*% of Black adults who say the health care system was designed to hold Black people back a **great deal** or **fair amount***



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feeling like the pain they were experiencing was not taken seriously.

In the current survey, 51% of Black Americans say the health care system was designed to hold Black people back a great deal or fair amount. Another 28% say it was designed to hold Black people back some, and 19% say not too much or not at all.

Black adults differ significantly on this question by gender. Indeed, Black women (58%) are more likely than Black men (44%) to say the health care system was designed to hold Black people back. But Black women under 50 (61%) are much more likely to say this than older Black women (54%) and all men regardless of age (44%).

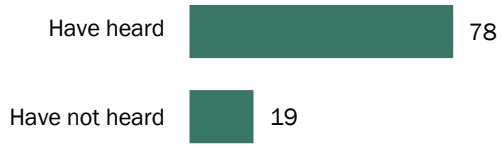
These patterns are like those in the 2022 study, which found that Black women (particularly those under 50) were significantly more likely than Black men to report negative experiences in health care. This includes not having their women's health concerns taken seriously.

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about medical research

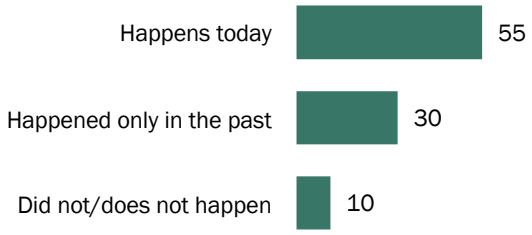
While many Black adults say the health care system was designed to hold Black people back (51%), more have heard about racial conspiracy theories about medical research. About eight-in-ten (78%) say they have heard the idea that medical researchers experiment on Black people without their knowledge or consent. Only 19% say they have not heard about this at all.

About 8 in 10 Black adults are familiar with racial conspiracy theories about medical research

*% of Black adults who say they ____ the idea that **medical researchers experiment on Black people without their knowledge or consent***



*About the idea that **medical researchers experiment on Black people without their knowledge or consent**, % of Black adults who say this ...*



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When it comes to belief in racial conspiracy theories about medical research, 55% of Black Americans believe experiments on Black people without their knowledge or consent happen today. Fewer say this happened in the past but does not happen today (30%) or that it never happened (10%).

Like their general belief that the health care system was designed to hold Black people back, Black women (57%) are slightly more likely than Black men (52%) to believe medical experimentation on Black people without their knowledge or consent is something that is happening today.

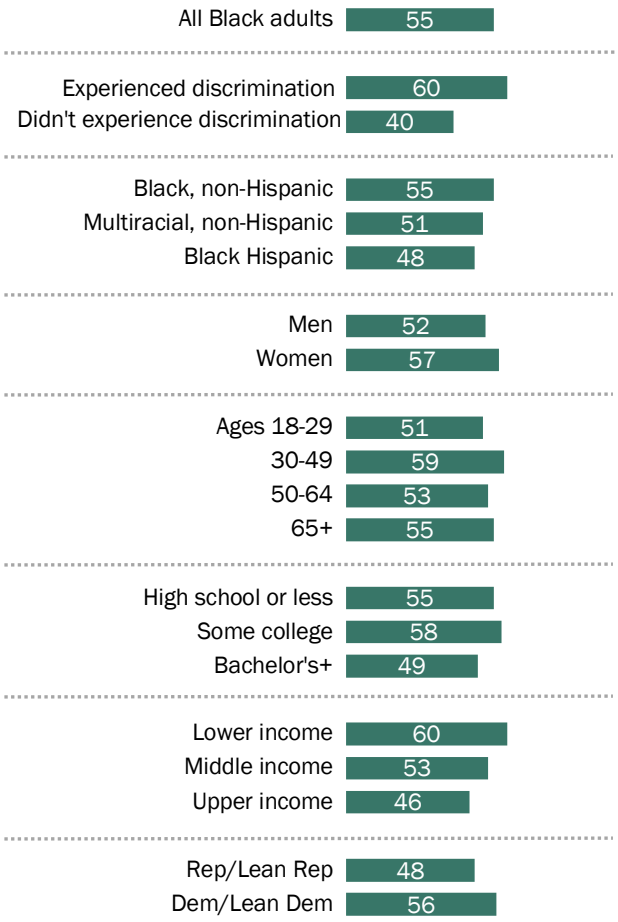
Black adults with some college (58%) or a high school diploma (55%) are more likely than those with a bachelor's degree or higher (49%) to say medical experimentation on Black people without their knowledge or consent happens today.

Likewise, Black adults with lower incomes (60%) are the most likely among the income groups to agree.

Black adults who live in the Midwest (60%) are more likely than those in the Northeast (52%) to say medical experimentation against Black people happens today. About half of Black adults in the South (54%) and the West (53%) say the same. Black adults in urban areas (59%) are more likely than those in the suburbs (51%) to say these types of experiments happen today, while 57% of those in rural areas agree.

More than half of Black adults say racial conspiracy theories about medical research are true

*% of Black adults who say that **medical researchers experimenting on Black people without their knowledge or consent** is something that happens today*



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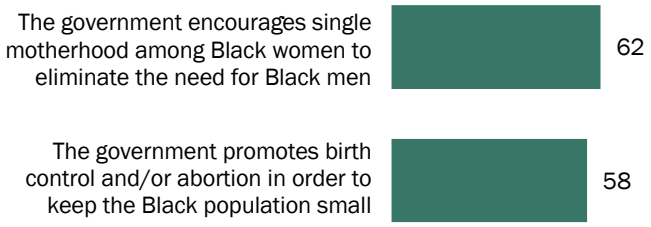
7. Black Americans and racial conspiracy theories about Black families and reproductive health

Aside from their beliefs about health and medicine in general, Black adults believe in racial conspiracy theories about government interventions into their families and family planning.

About 6 in 10 Black adults are familiar with racial conspiracy theories about Black families and reproductive health

% of Black adults who say they have heard of each of the following ideas



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Since the introduction of social welfare programs in the mid-20th century, ideas about "man in the house" rules have circulated among the public. That is, various states required that women who received welfare payments must not live or have sexual relationships with able-bodied men, which dissuaded women from having or pursuing relationships with men while receiving benefits. If men were found in the home during a welfare home visit, the women would be accused of welfare fraud and their payments would end.

These rules were struck down by the Supreme Court in 1968, but the association between poverty, welfare and government incentives for absent Black fathers remained.

At the same time, the idea that birth control and abortion are genocidal efforts aimed at Black families and communities has a long history. Some Black political figures like Herman Cain and Ben Carson have controversially connected Planned Parenthood and its founder, Margaret Sanger, with efforts to eliminate the Black population through birth control and abortion. And some contemporary Black anti-abortion activists make similar claims.

This history sets the stage for the emergence of conspiracy theories about the elimination of Black men and suppression of Black population growth.

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about Black families

About six-in-ten Black Americans (62%) have heard the idea that the government encourages single motherhood among Black women to eliminate the need for Black men in Black families, while 35% have not heard this idea at all.

By gender

Black men (65%) are more likely than Black women (59%) to have heard the idea that the government encourages Black women to be single mothers to eliminate the need for Black men.

Younger Black men are particularly more likely to have heard this. Seven-in-ten Black men under 50 are familiar with this idea, compared with smaller shares of both Black men and Black women 50 and older (58% and 50%, respectively).

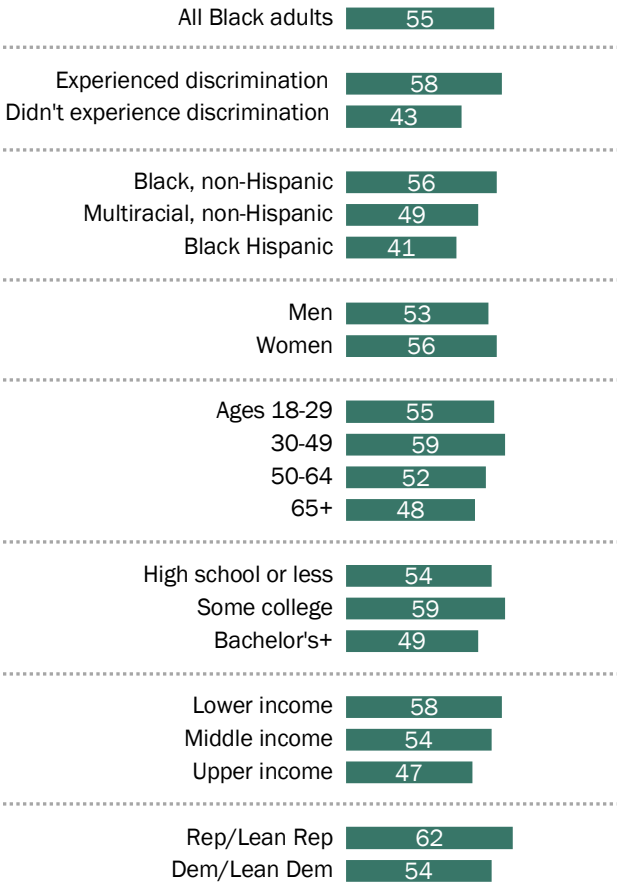
By age and party

In general, younger Black adults are more familiar than older adults with the idea that the government encourages single motherhood. Those ages 18 to 29 (66%) and 30 to 49 (69%) are more likely than those 50 to 64 (56%) and 65 and older (50%) to have heard this.

And in a reversal from the general pattern of Democrats being more likely to hear about and believe in racial conspiracy theories, Black Republicans (72%) are the most likely to say

Black Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe racial conspiracy theories about absent Black fathers

*% of Black adults who say that **the government encouraging Black single motherhood to eliminate the need for Black men** is something that happens today*



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they have heard that the government encourages single motherhood among Black women to eliminate the need for Black men. While still a majority, Black Democrats (60%) are less likely to say they have heard this.

Many Black Americans believe racial conspiracy theories about government elimination of Black men from their families

While 62% of Black Americans are familiar with conspiracy theories about single motherhood and Black men, fewer say the government-supported elimination of Black men from Black families is happening today. Still, more than half (55%) of Black adults say the government encouraging single motherhood among Black women to eliminate the need for Black men is something that is happening today. Smaller shares say this happened in the past but does not happen today (15%) or say this has never happened (23%).

By age and gender

Age and gender play an important role. Black adults ages 30 to 49 (59%) are more likely than those 50 to 64 (52%) and 65 and older (48%) to say the idea of the government encouraging single motherhood to eliminate the need for Black men is happening today. Black women under 50 (62%) are significantly more likely than Black women 50 and older (50%) and all Black men to say this.

By education, family income and party

In a reversal from other patterns in racial conspiracy theory beliefs, it is the Black adults with the most education and highest incomes who are among the least likely to believe government encouragement of single motherhood happens today. About half (49%) of Black adults with a bachelor's degree say this, compared with 56% of those with less formal education. And 47% of Black adults with higher incomes say this, compared with larger shares of those with middle (54%) and lower family incomes (58%).

In another reversal, Black Republicans (62%) are more likely than Black Democrats (54%) to say that the government encouraging single motherhood among Black women is something that happens today.

Familiarity with and belief in racial conspiracy theories about reproductive health

About six-in-ten Black Americans (58%) have heard the idea that the government promotes birth control and abortion to keep the Black population small, while 39% have not heard this idea at all.

By gender

Although Black men (60%) and women (57%) don't differ on this question in the broad view, younger Black men stand out. Specifically, Black men under 50 (63%) are more likely than both Black men (55%) and Black women (53%) 50 and older to say they have heard the idea that the government promotes birth control and abortion to manage the size of the Black population.

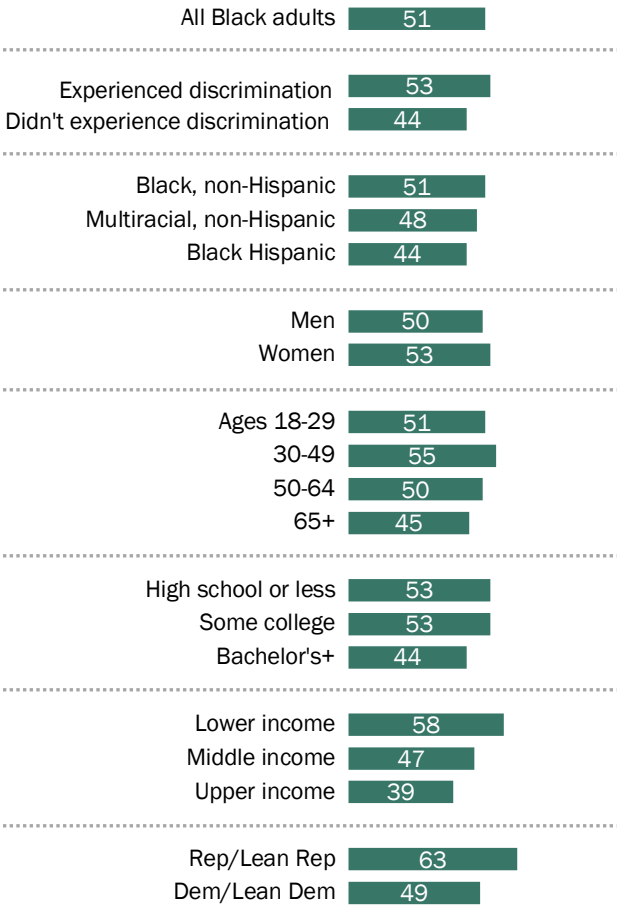
By family income and party

While Black adults do not differ on this question by education, family income makes a difference. About six-in-ten Black adults with lower incomes (61%) say they have heard the idea that the government promotes birth control and abortion to keep the Black population small. This is larger than the share of Black adults with high incomes (52%) who say the same.

And like their familiarity with ideas about single Black mothers, Black Republicans (71%) are more likely than Black Democrats (56%) to have heard ideas about reproductive techniques being used to keep the Black population small.

Lower-income Black adults are most likely to believe racial conspiracy theories about reproductive health care

*% of Black adults who say that **the government promoting birth control and/or abortion to keep the Black population small** is something that happens today*



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Some Black Americans believe racial conspiracy theories about abortion and birth control

About half of Black Americans (51%) say the government promoting birth control and abortion to keep the Black population small is something that happens today. Smaller shares say this happened in the past but no longer happens today, or that it never happened at all (21% each).

By gender

Although younger Black men were more likely than older Black men and woman to have heard this conspiracy theory about reproductive health, younger Black women stand out in their belief that this happens today. Some 57% of Black women under 50 say government promotion of birth control and abortion to manage the size of the Black population is happening today. This is more than the share of Black men and women 50 and older (48% each) who say the same. Half of Black men under 50 say this happens today.

By education and family income

Once again, Black adults with the most education and highest incomes are least likely to believe racial conspiracy theories about reproductive health. Only 44% of Black adults with a bachelor's degree or higher say the government today is promoting birth control and abortion to manage the size of the Black population. Larger shares of Black adults with some college or a high school diploma or less education say the same (53% each). And Black adults with lower incomes (58%) are most likely among income groups to say that the government promotes reproductive health techniques to control the Black population today.

By region, community type and party

Black Americans living in the Midwest (57%) are more likely than those in every other region of the U.S. to say that the government is now promoting birth control and abortion to manage the size of the Black population. Black adults who live in rural (56%) and urban (54%) areas are more likely than those in the suburbs (46%) to say the same.

And like their belief in racial conspiracy theories about parenthood, Black Republicans (63%) are more likely than Black Democrats (49%) to say that government promotion of birth control and abortion to manage the Black population is something that happens today.

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Find related reports online at our topic page on Black Americans.

Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from ATP Wave 134, conducted from Sept. 12 to Sept. 24, 2023. A total of 7,470 panelists responded out of 10,219 who were sampled, for a response rate of 74% (AAPOR RR3). This includes 4,489 respondents from the ATP and an oversample of 2,981 Black Americans from Ipsos' KnowledgePanel. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 2%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 3%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 7,470 respondents is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points.

Panel recruitment

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	1,395
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	833
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	405
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	3,853
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	1,388
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	1,441
May 29 to July 7, 2021; Sept. 16 to Nov. 1, 2021	ABS	1,329	1,162	732
May 24 to Sept. 29, 2022	ABS	3,354	2,869	1,462
April 17 to May 30, 2023	ABS	686	576	435
	Total	**43,580**	**30,859**	**11,944**

Note: RDD is random-digit dial; ABS is address-based sampling. Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based sampling (ABS) recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.[3] Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is asked to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.[4]

We have recruited a national sample of U.S. adults to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional effort (known as an "oversample") to boost sample size with underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Across the six address-based recruitments, a total of 23,862 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 20,917 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 30,859 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 11,944 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. It featured a stratified random sample from the ATP in which Black adults were selected with certainty. The remaining panelists were sampled at rates designed to ensure that the share of respondents in each stratum is proportional to its share of the U.S. adult population to the greatest extent possible. Respondent weights are adjusted to account for differential probabilities of selection as described in the Weighting section below.

The ATP was supplemented with an oversample from the KnowledgePanel in which all panelists who had previously identified as Black or African American (including those who identify as Hispanic or Black in combination with another race) were selected with certainty.

[3] AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."
[4] Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from $5 to $20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Sept. 12 to Sept. 24, 2023. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on Sept. 11.

Invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Eighty ATP panelists and 484 KnowledgePanel panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Sept. 12, 2023. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Sept. 13.

Invitation and reminder dates, ATP Wave 134

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	September 12, 2023	September 13, 2023
First reminder	September 15, 2023	September 15, 2023
Second reminder	September 18, 2023	September 18, 2023
Third reminder	September 21, 2023	September 21, 2023
Final reminder	September 23, 2023	September 23, 2023

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All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to four email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to four SMS reminders.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center's researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, six ATP and 11 KnowledgePanel respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The data is weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey. That weight is then adjusted to account for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and panel attrition. Next, respondents are divided into three groups, which are ATP Black respondents, ATP non-Black respondents, and KnowledgePanel Black respondents. The base weights for each group are separately scaled to be proportional to their effective sample size before being recombined and calibrated so that the proportion of Black (alone or in combination) respondents matches the American Community Survey benchmark.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed) Age x Gender Education x Gender Education x Age Race/Ethnicity x Education Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans Years lived in the U.S.	2021 American Community Survey (ACS)
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	2021 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2021 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation Frequency of internet use Religious affiliation	2022 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Additional weighting dimensions applied within Black adults	
Age Gender Education Hispanic ethnicity	2021 American Community Survey (ACS)
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation Religious affiliation	2022 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total U.S. adult population.

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This weight is further calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles separately for Black and non-

Black respondents to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 134

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	7,470	1.9 percentage points
Black adults	4,736	2.2 percentage points

Note: This survey includes an oversample of Black respondents. Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 134

	AAPOR code	ATP	KP	Total
Completed interview	1.1	4,489	2,981	7,470
Logged on to survey; broke off	2.12	34	167	201
Logged on to survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	23	91	114
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	197	2,087	2,284
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0	0	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.3	6	11	17
Screened out	4.7	0	133	133
Total panelists sampled for the survey		**4,749**	**5,470**	**10,219**
Completed interviews	I	4,489	2,981	7,470
Partial interviews	P	0	0	0
Refusals	R	254	167	421
Non-contact	NC	0	0	0
Other	O	6	11	17
Unknown household	UH	0	0	0
Unknown other	UO	0	2,178	2,178
Not eligible	NE	0	0	0
Screen out	SO	0	133	133
Total		**4,749**	**5,470**	**10,219**
AAPOR RR1 = I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		95%	56%	74%
AAPOR RR3 = I / (I+R+[e*UO])		95%	57%	74%

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Cumulative response rate as of ATP Wave 134

	ATP	KP	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	11%	10%	10%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	71%	61%	65%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 134	46%	33%	39%
Response rate to Wave 134 survey	95%	57%	74%
Cumulative response rate	**3%**	**1%**	**2%**

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How family income tiers are calculated

Family income data reported in this study is adjusted for household size and cost-of-living differences by geography. Panelists then are assigned to income tiers that are based on the median adjusted family income of all American Trends Panel members. The process uses the following steps:

1. First, panelists are assigned to the midpoint of the income range they selected in a family income question that was measured on either the most recent annual profile survey or, for newly recruited panelists, their recruitment survey. This provides an approximate income value that can be used in calculations for the adjustment.

2. Next, these income values are adjusted for the cost of living in the geographic area where the panelist lives. This is calculated using price indexes published by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. These indexes, known as Regional Price Parities (RPP), compare the prices of goods and services across all U.S. metropolitan statistical areas as well as non-metro areas with the national average prices for the same goods and services. The most recent available data at the time of the annual profile survey is from 2021. Those who fall outside of metropolitan statistical areas are assigned the overall RPP for their state's non-metropolitan area.

3. Family incomes are further adjusted for the number of people in a household using the methodology from Pew Research Center's previous work on the American middle class. This is done because a four-person household with an income of say, $50,000, faces a tighter budget constraint than a two-person household with the same income.

4. Panelists are then assigned an income tier. "Middle-income" adults are in families with adjusted family incomes that are between two-thirds and double the median adjusted family income for the full ATP at the time of the most recent annual profile survey. The median adjusted family income for the panel is roughly $71,700. Using this median income, the middle-income range is about $47,800 to $143,400. Lower-income families have adjusted incomes less than $47,800 and upper-income families have adjusted incomes greater than $143,400 (all figures expressed in 2022 dollars and scaled to a household size of three). If a panelist did not provide their income and/or their household size, they are assigned "no answer" in the income tier variable.

Two examples of how a given area's cost-of-living adjustment was calculated are as follows: The Anniston-Oxford metropolitan area in Alabama is a relatively inexpensive area, with a price level that is 16.2% less than the national average. The San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley metropolitan

area in California is one of the most expensive areas, with a price level that is 19.8% higher than the national average. Income in the sample is adjusted to make up for this difference. As a result, a family with an income of $41,900 in the Anniston-Oxford area is as well off financially as a family of the same size with an income of $59,900 in San Francisco.

The respondents from the KnowledgePanel oversample answered the same family income and household size questions, and their incomes were adjusted using the procedures detailed above. They were then assigned an income tier based on the median adjusted family income for the full ATP at the time of the most recent annual profile survey.

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Topline Questionnaire

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2023 NATIONAL SURVEY OF BLACK AMERICANS
September 12-24, 2023
BLACK AMERICANS TOTAL N=4,736
GENERAL PUBLIC TOTAL N=7,470

NOTE: "BLACK AMERICANS" REFERS TO U.S. ADULTS WHO ARE BLACK ALONE AND NON-HISPANIC, BLACK IN COMBINATION WITH OTHER RACES AND NON-HISPANIC, AND BLACK AND HISPANIC. ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES. THE PERCENTAGES GREATER THAN ZERO BUT LESS THAN 0.5 ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (*). COLUMNS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. THIS TOPLINE SHOWS AGGREGATED DATA FOR RESPONDENTS FROM DIFFERENT SAMPLES. RESPONSES TO SOME QUESTIONS WERE COLLECTED IN PREVIOUS SURVEYS. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE DIFFERENT SAMPLES, REFER TO THE METHODOLOGY. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON EXACT QUESTION WORDING, ORDER, AND FILTERING, REFER TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

	Sample size	Margin of error at 95% confidence level
Black adults	4,736	+/- 2.2 % points

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

IDIMPORTMOD **[IF XATPBLACK=1:** In a recent survey**, IF XPANEL=1:** Previously,**]** you said you consider yourself Black or African American. How important is being Black to how you think about yourself? **[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-5 OR 5-1 IN SAME ORDER AS PER_SUC1]**

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
69	**NET Extremely/Very important**
47	Extremely important
22	Very important
16	**Somewhat important**
14	**NET A little/Not at all important**
5	A little important
8	Not at all important
1	**No answer**

IDIMPORTMOD TREND FOR COMPARISON:

	Feb. 22-March 5, 2023	Oct. 4-17, 2021
NET Extremely/Very important	**67**	**76**
Extremely important	43	54
Very important	24	22
Somewhat important	**18**	**14**
NET A little/Not at all important	**13**	**9**
A little important	8	3

Not at all important	6	5
No answer	**2**	**2**

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

BLK_TAX Compared with other groups, how much do you think Black people have to work to achieve success in the U.S.? **[RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-3 OR 3-1]**

Black Americans Sept. 12–24, 2023	
75	More than everyone else
19	About the same as everyone else
4	Less than everyone else
1	No answer

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

RACESURV20 Thinking about your own experience, have you ever personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?

Black Americans Sept. 12–24, 2023	
75	**NET Yes**
13	Yes, regularly
62	Yes, from time to time
23	**No**
2	**No answer**

RACESURV20 TREND FOR COMPARISON[5]:

	Oct. 4-17, 2021	June 4-10, 2020	Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2019
NET Yes	**79**	**83**	**76**
Yes, regularly	15	17	13
Yes, from time to time	64	66	63
No	**19**	**15**	**23**
No answer	**2**	**2**	**1**

ASK IF BLACK AND EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION ((XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1) AND RACESURV20=1,2):

RAC_FEEL As a result of racial discrimination, have you ever… **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS]**

a. Felt nervous, anxious, or on edge

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
59	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
40	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

[5] Oct. 4-17, 2021, results are for all U.S. Black adults. Earlier results are for U.S. non-Hispanic Black adults only.

RAC_FEEL CONTINUED

b. Felt depressed

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
41	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
58	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

c. Felt isolated

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
52	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
46	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

d. Felt negative about the future

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
56	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
42	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

e. Had trouble sleeping

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
25	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
74	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

f. Felt angry

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
76	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
22	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

g. Felt like the system was designed to keep you down

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
73	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
25	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
2	No answer
N=3,748	

RAC_FEEL CONTINUED

h. Felt scared or worried about your personal safety

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
53	Yes, I have felt this way because of racial discrimination
46	No, I have not felt this way because of racial discrimination
1	No answer
N=3,748	

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

SYS_BACK How much do you think each of the following U.S. institutions was designed to hold Black people back? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS; RANDOMIZE ORDER OF RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-5 or 5-1 IN SAME ORDER AS CONTROL1]**

a. The economic system

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
65	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
39	A great deal
26	A fair amount
23	**Some**
11	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
6	Not too much
4	Not at all
2	**No answer**

b. The health care system

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
51	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
27	A great deal
25	A fair amount
28	**Some**
19	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
11	Not too much
7	Not at all
2	**No answer**

c. The political system

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
67	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
43	A great deal
25	A fair amount
20	**Some**
11	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
6	Not too much
5	Not at all
2	**No answer**

SYS_BACK CONTINUED

d. Policing

Black Americans
Sept. 12-24, 2023

68	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
48	A great deal
20	A fair amount
19	**Some**
11	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
6	Not too much
6	Not at all
2	**No answer**

e. The courts and judicial process

Black Americans
Sept. 12-24, 2023

70	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
48	A great deal
22	A fair amount
18	**Some**
10	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
6	Not too much
4	Not at all
2	**No answer**

f. The prison system

Black Americans
Sept. 12-24, 2023

74	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
59	A great deal
15	A fair amount
13	**Some**
10	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
5	Not too much
5	Not at all
2	**No answer**

g. The education system

Black Americans
Sept. 12-24, 2023

59	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
32	A great deal
27	A fair amount
24	**Some**
15	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
9	Not too much
6	Not at all
2	**No answer**

SYS_BACK CONTINUED

h. The news media

Black Americans
Sept. 12-24, 2023

52	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
28	A great deal
24	A fair amount
30	**Some**
16	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
10	Not too much
7	Not at all
2	**No answer**

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

SOURCETRUACC[6] How much do you trust the accuracy of the news and information that comes from… **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS; RANDOMIZE ORDER OF RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-5 or 5-1 IN SAME ORDER AS CONTROL1]**

a. National news outlets

Black Americans
Feb. 27-March 5, 2023

44	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
11	A great deal
33	A fair amount
35	**Some**
20	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
14	Not too much
6	Not at all
1	**No answer**

b. Local news outlets

Black Americans
Feb. 27-March 5, 2023

48	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
12	A great deal
37	A fair amount
35	**Some**
16	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
11	Not too much
5	Not at all
1	**No answer**

[6] Items a-f were fielded Feb. 27-March 5, 2023, in a prior survey of U.S. Black adults. Items g and h were fielded Sept. 12-24, 2023.

SOURCETRUACC CONTINUED

c. Political leaders and public officials

Black Americans
Feb. 27-March 5, 2023

20	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
3	A great deal
16	A fair amount
36	**Some**
44	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
30	Not too much
14	Not at all
1	**No answer**

d. Friends, family and acquaintances

Black Americans
Feb. 27-March 5, 2023

35	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
10	A great deal
26	A fair amount
45	**Some**
19	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
15	Not too much
4	Not at all
1	**No answer**

e. Social media sites (such as on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube)

Black Americans
Feb. 27-March 5, 2023

18	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
4	A great deal
14	A fair amount
34	**Some**
47	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
30	Not too much
17	Not at all
1	**No answer**

f. Religious leaders

Black Americans
Feb. 27-March 5, 2023

27	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
6	A great deal
20	A fair amount
34	**Some**
38	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
21	Not too much
17	Not at all
1	**No answer**

SOURCETRUACC CONTINUED

ASK IF INTERNET USER (XTABLET=2):
g. Podcasts

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
15	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
4	A great deal
10	A fair amount
37	**Some**
46	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
29	Not too much
18	Not at all
2	**No answer**
N=4,400	

ASK IF INTERNET USER (XTABLET=2):
h. Online videos

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
14	**NET A great deal/A fair amount**
5	A great deal
9	A fair amount
39	**Some**
44	**NET Not too much/Not at all**
31	Not too much
14	Not at all
2	**No answer**
N=4,400	

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):
BLK_MADEUP1 How often do you come across news and information about Black people that you think is inaccurate? **[RANDOMIZE ORDER OF RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-5 or 5-1]**

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
42	**NET Extremely often/Often**
15	Extremely often
27	Often
46	**Sometimes**
9	**NET Rarely/Never**
7	Rarely
2	Never
3	**No answer**

ASK IF BLACK AND AT LEAST SOMETIMES COME ACROSS NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE THEY THINK IS INACCURATE ((XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1) AND BLK_MADEUP1=1-3):

BLK_MADEUP2 When you have come across inaccurate news and information about Black people, have you ever… **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

a. Reduced the amount of news and information you get overall

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
52	Yes, I have
46	No, I have not
2	No answer
N=4,265	

b. Reduced the amount of news and information you get from social media

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
66	Yes, I have
32	No, I have not
2	No answer
N=4,265	

c. Reduced the amount of news and information you get from friends or family

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
44	Yes, I have
54	No, I have not
2	No answer
N=4,265	

d. Checked the facts for yourself before believing a story

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
85	Yes, I have
14	No, I have not
1	No answer
N=4,265	

ASK IF BLACK AND AT LEAST SOMETIMES COME ACROSS NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE THEY THINK IS INACCURATE ((XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1) AND BLK_MADEUP1=1-3):

BLK_INFOWHY Which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
73	Inaccurate news and information about Black people is usually created on purpose
24	Inaccurate news and information about Black people is usually the result of normal human error
3	No answer
N=4,265	

SHOW IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):
Next we're going to ask about several ideas that some people believe may or may not be true.

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

BLK_SUSP How much if anything, have you ever heard about each of the following, regardless of whether you think it is true or not… **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS]**

a. Big businesses market luxury items to Black people to keep them in debt

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
30	A lot
39	A little
27	Nothing at all
3	No answer

b. Police do very little to stop guns and drugs from flooding Black communities

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
47	A lot
36	A little
14	Nothing at all
3	No answer

c. Black people are more likely to be put in jail than White people because prisons want to make money on the backs of Black people

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
53	A lot
29	A little
15	Nothing at all
3	No answer

BLK_SUSP CONTINUED

d. Black officials are singled out to be discredited in a way that doesn't happen with White officials

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
45	A lot
38	A little
15	Nothing at all
3	No answer

e. The large number of single Black mothers is encouraged by the government to eliminate the need for Black men

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
31	A lot
30	A little
35	Nothing at all
3	No answer

f. Medical researchers experiment on Black people without their knowledge or consent

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
38	A lot
40	A little
19	Nothing at all
3	No answer

g. The government promotes birth control and/or abortion in order to keep the Black population small

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
25	A lot
34	A little
39	Nothing at all
3	No answer

ASK IF BLACK (XATPBLACK=1 OR XPANEL=1):

BLK_SUSPTRUE When it comes to each of the following, do you think that… **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS ACROSS TWO SCREENS, USING SAME ORDER AS BLK_SUSP; RANDOMIZE ORDER OF RESPONSE OPTIONS 1-4 OR 4-1]**

a. Big businesses market luxury items to Black people to keep them in debt

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
55	Happened in the past and still happens today
10	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
12	Did not happen in the past but happens today
17	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
6	No answer

BLK_SUSPTRUE CONTINUED

b. Police do very little to stop guns and drugs from flooding Black communities

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
69	Happened in the past and still happens today
10	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
7	Did not happen in the past but happens today
8	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
5	No answer

c. Black people are more likely to be put in jail than White people because prisons want to make money on the backs of Black people

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
69	Happened in the past and still happens today
11	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
5	Did not happen in the past but happens today
8	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
6	No answer

d. Black officials are singled out to be discredited in a way that doesn't happen with White officials

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
69	Happened in the past and still happens today
12	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
7	Did not happen in the past but happens today
6	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
6	No answer

e. The large number of single Black mothers is encouraged by the government to eliminate the need for Black men

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
46	Happened in the past and still happens today
15	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
9	Did not happen in the past but happens today
23	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
7	No answer

f. Medical researchers experiment on Black people without their knowledge or consent

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
50	Happened in the past and still happens today
30	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
5	Did not happen in the past but happens today
10	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
6	No answer

BLK_SUSPTRUE CONTINUED

g. The government promotes birth control and abortion in order to keep the Black population small

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
43	Happened in the past and still happens today
21	Happened in the past but no longer happens today
8	Did not happen in the past but happens today
21	Did not happen in the past and does not happen today
7	No answer

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES[7]

ASK ALL:
F_HISP Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
5	Yes
95	No
*	No answer

ASK ALL:
F_EDUCCAT What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
25	College graduate +
34	Some college
40	HS graduate or less
*	No answer

ASK ALL:
F_USR_SELFID How would you describe the community where you currently live? **[RANDOMLY DISPLAY ITEMS 1-3 OR 3-1]**

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
37	Urban
42	Suburban
19	Rural
2	No answer

[7] The following questions were asked of all respondents. The American Trends Panel Black American sample was asked Aug. 7-27, 2023, and the KnowledgePanel Black American sample was asked Sept. 12-24, 2023.

ASK ALL:
F_OWNRENTMOD Which of the following describes the house, apartment, or mobile home where you live?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
31	Owned by you or someone in your household with a mortgage or loan (include home equity loans)
16	Owned by you or someone in your household free and clear (without a mortgage or loan)
47	Rented
4	Occupied without payment of rent
2	No answer

ASK ALL:
F_BIRTHPLACE Where were you born?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
87	U.S. - 50 states, District of Columbia
1	U.S. - Puerto Rico
3	U.S. - other territory
8	Another country
2	No answer

ASK IF CITIZEN (CITIZEN = 1):
F_REG Which of these statements best describes you?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
72	You are ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN that you are registered to vote at your current address
10	You are PROBABLY registered, but there is a chance your registration has lapsed
18	You are NOT registered to vote at your current address
1	No answer
N=4,647	

ASK ALL:
F_PARTY In politics today, do you consider yourself a…

ASK IF INDEP/SOMETHING ELSE OR REFUSED (PARTY=3,4,99):
F_PARTYSUM As of today do you lean more to…

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
14	Republican/lean Republican
77	Democrat/lean Democrat
8	Independent/other/no answer

ASK ALL:

F_INC_SDT1 Last year, that is in 2022, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
35	Less than $30,000
13	$30,000 to less than $40,000
8	$40,000 to less than $50,000
8	$50,000 to less than $60,000
7	$60,000 to less than $70,000
5	$70,000 to less than $80,000
4	$80,000 to less than $90,000
4	$90,000 to less than $100,000
11	$100,000 or more
6	No answer

ASK ALL:

F_GENDER Do you describe yourself as a man, a woman, or in some other way?

Black Americans Sept. 12-24, 2023	
43	A man
55	A woman
1	In some other way
1	No answer