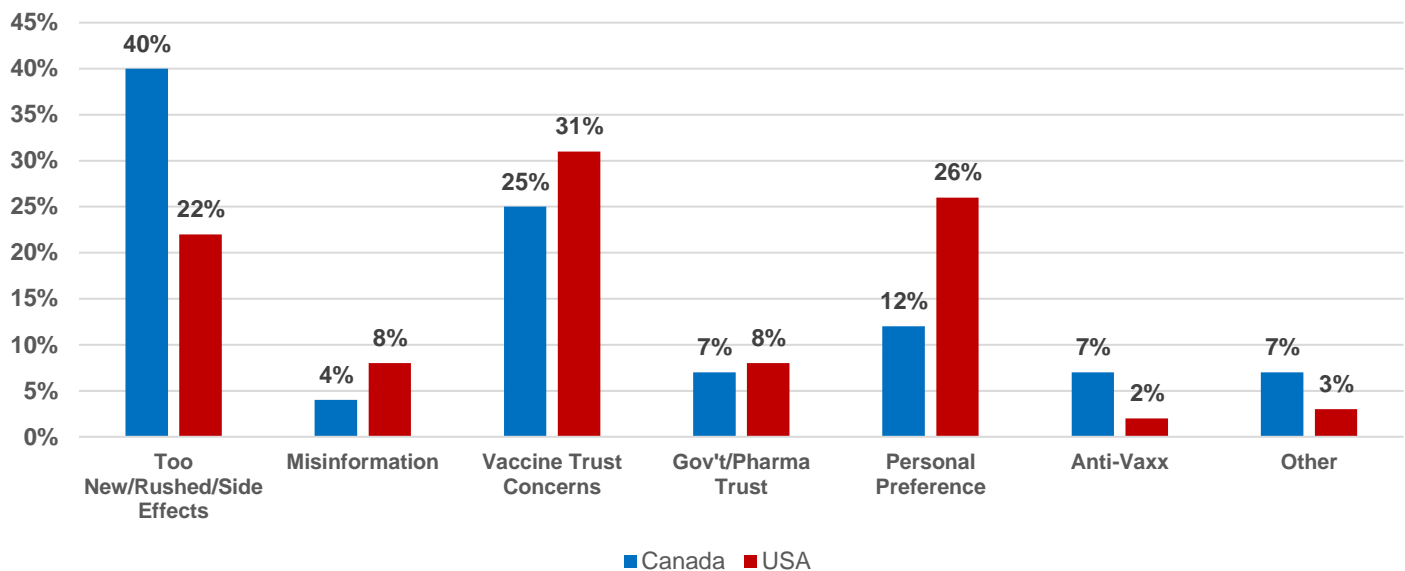


# COVID Impacts

## BLACK EXPERIENCES WITH VACCINATION IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

### Vaccine Hesitancy Among Black People



### WHAT WE KNOW

Whether individuals intend or are hesitant to vaccinate against COVID-19 has become an essential topic of discussion. We compared the perspectives of Black communities in Canada and the United States as there is significant mistrust of the vaccine (25% in Canada, 31% in the United States).

When comparing Black populations in Canada and the US, Black Canadians are nearly twice as likely to express their concerns about the vaccine's production regarding its newness, how rushed it is, and the potential side effects it may have (40% compared to 22%).

Black Americans, however, were twice as likely (8% compared to 4%) to report that they are hesitant of the vaccine due to misinformation. Relating to this is the prevalence of mistrust for political and big pharma companies.

While both communities, Black people in the US and Canada, have low reports of being Anti-Vaxx, many, especially African Americans, report personal preference as a reason for

declining the vaccine (12% in Canada, 26% in the United States).

### THE NEED FOR VACCINES

Black Canadians and Americans have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Although race-based data for every province has not yet been released in Canada, research shows that Black Canadians are most likely to contract the virus (Innovative Research Group 2020). In addition, Black Americans are contracting and dying at higher rates than other populations due to COVID-19 (Vasquez Reyes 2020).

While it is clear that federal and local governments should make black communities in both countries a priority in accessing the vaccine due to their disproportionate impacts, this is not the case. In various American states wherein, Black people have had a higher death rate, they are still less likely to have been given access to the vaccine compared to White people (Vasquez Reyes 2020). Therefore, those who need the vaccine the most are not only more likely to be hesitant of the vaccine but also most likely to not have access to it.

## LONG HISTORY OF MEDICAL MISTREATMENT

Many Black people in America experience severe mistrust of healthcare institutions and their professionals due to years of subjugation and discrimination at the hands of the health care system. Such forms of discrimination take form in lower quality assessments, medical exploitation, overmedicalization, unsatisfactory treatment by health care professionals, and racism.

Of significant importance concerning COVID-19 was the Tuskegee Syphilis Study conducted between 1932 to 1972. This study, in which African Americans unknowingly became victims of medical exploitation as they were unaware of the study's true purpose – to observe how untreated syphilis impacted Black Americans. Due to this, 400 Black American men were not given treatment, even though penicillin became available as a treatment (Reverby 2009).

Another example that demonstrates how medical institutions have abused Black Americans is shown within various medical breakthroughs such as the removal of tumors, vaginal gynecologic surgery, and the use of anesthesia as they exist today due to the unethical experimentation on Black people leading to their exploitation without their consent (Byrd and Clayton 2000).

As a result of these injustices, and other forms of medical racism, African Americans may be wary about the COVID-19 vaccination.

- community, other professionals of different races must also actively work to create this same change.
- Amplify the voices of members of the community and understand why they may be skeptical (McKenna 2020; Mastroianni 2020). This can be done by acknowledging their history and experience and being open, rather than silent and dismissive about the history of medical abuse against Black populations in North America.

## VACCINE INTENTIONS

Accompanied with the data demonstrating the existing vaccine hesitancy amongst the Black community in Canada and the United States, intent to receive the vaccination is also present. In Canada, 35.4% of respondents stated that they intended to get vaccinated. However, 27.1% of respondents have no intent in receiving the vaccine, and 37.5% are undecided. In the United States, 36.8% of Black American respondents plan to get vaccinated, 31.9% will not get the coronavirus vaccine, and 31.3% do not intend on getting the vaccine.

Thus, in both groups, more respondents are undecided or will not receive the vaccine, reflected in many of their open-ended responses. For example, 18 Canadian respondents stated their mistrust for the vaccine and 17 respondents noted that the vaccine was too new and were wary about its potential side effects. Similarly, 13 Canadian respondents indicated that the vaccine's manufacturing seemed too rushed. In the United States, 39 respondents also shared their mistrust for the vaccine, and 34 were hesitant of the vaccine, which is rooted in their personal preference. 23 Black American respondents are also concerned about the vaccine is too new and rushed.

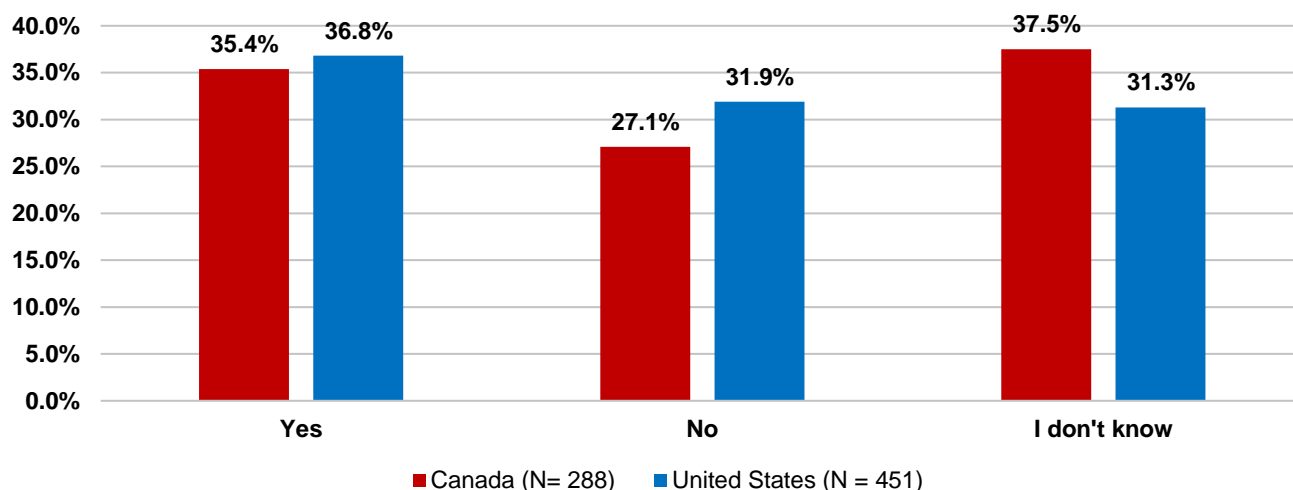


## PROMOTION OF VACCINES IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

To receive vaccine acceptance among groups that are rightfully skeptical, changes must include:

- Focusing on messages of vaccine safety and acknowledging the harms minority communities have experienced.
  - While this first point focuses on education, one of the most essential tools to help educate those that are skeptical of the vaccine and its many myths, the latter focuses on being open about the harmful and exploitative history, and experience Black populations in Canada and the United States have and are currently facing.
- Identify media outlets that may share misinformation and assign trusted individuals (such as local community members) who can deliver credible information.
  - It is important to note that while Black community members and professionals may help create change within their

## Do you intend to get vaccinated against COVID-19?



### FINAL POINTS

These findings demonstrate that while COVID-19 has impacted various people of different races in Canada and the United States, Black Canadians and Americans are facing another distinctive battle: being significantly over-represented in the rates of deaths caused by COVID-19 but still feeling that ongoing distrust of the medical system that has disrupted any trust. Historically, we are aware that examples of medical abuses against Black persons have and are occurring in the United States. This may explain why more Black Americans in our survey are hesitant of the vaccine due to how much they trust the vaccine and its ingredients, lack of trust for governmental officials and big pharma, and are more than twice as likely to have stated that they are hesitant due to personal preference, resulting in more Black Americans stating that they will not seek a vaccine compared to Black Canadians.

As a significant barrier against the vaccine is medical mistrust, we must focus on acknowledging the history and current doings and implementing educational campaigns to help build trust. Lastly, officials should ensure that they prioritize equitable access to vaccine administrations, so it is possible to obtain when Black Canadians and Americans take the next step.

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### ABOUT THE PROJECT

The researchers: A cross-national team of over 30 researchers led by Dr. Lori Wilkinson, Dr. Kiera Ladner and Dr. Jack Jedwab, received funding from CIHR for this study *COVID-19's differential impact on the mental and emotional health of Indigenous Peoples and*

*Newcomers: A socioeconomic analysis of Canada, US and Mexico.*

The study: The team has been collecting data in Canada since March 9 and the United States since March 27, 2020. Ongoing survey waves now include Mexico. Our goal is to measure and follow the changes in attitudes, behaviours, health and socioeconomic outcomes among persons living in all three countries using a mixed methodology of surveys and unstructured interviews.

**This fact sheet was prepared by Valérie Georges (University of Manitoba).**

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