

Most Black Americans Believe U.S. Institutions Were Designed To Hold Black People Back.

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While many Black Americans view themselves as [at least somewhat successful](#) and are [optimistic about their financial future](#), previous work by Pew Research Center also finds [most believe U.S. institutions fall short](#) when it comes to treating Black people fairly.

A new analysis suggests that many Black Americans believe the racial bias in U.S. institutions is not merely a matter of passive negligence; it is the result of intentional design. Specifically, large majorities describe the prison (74%), **courts and judicial process (70%)**, political (67%) and economic (65%) systems in the U.S., among others, as having been designed to hold Black people back, either a great deal or a fair amount.

Black Americans' mistrust of U.S. institutions is informed by history, from slavery to the implementation of Jim Crow laws in the South, to the rise of mass incarceration and more.

Several studies show that racial disparities in [income](#), [wealth](#), [education](#), [imprisonment](#) and [health outcomes](#) persist to this day.

The goal of the current study is to explore how Black Americans think about U.S. institutions and the impact they have on their success.

Specifically, we examine the extent to which Black Americans believe U.S. institutions intentionally or negligently harm Black people and how personal experiences of racial discrimination factor into these beliefs.

The beliefs and narratives that Black Americans have about institutional harm have long been studied by scholars in the [health](#) and [social sciences](#) and [the humanities](#). Narratives about how institutions were designed to hold Black people back also surfaced in several of the online focus groups Pew Research Center conducted with this study last year. (Selected quotes from our focus group discussions can be found in an [accompanying text box](#).)

To measure the prevalence of these narratives of mistrust, we conducted a survey of 4,736 Black adults in the U.S. from Sept. 12 to 24, 2023.

First, respondents were asked if they had ever heard a series of statements about how U.S. institutions might intentionally or negligently harm Black people. Respondents were then asked if they thought these harms were also happening to Black people today. Here are some key findings about Black Americans' beliefs in institutional mistrust.

- 76% of Black adults say Black public officials today are [singled out to be discredited](#) in a way that doesn't happen to White public officials.
- 76% say police today [do very little to stop guns and drugs](#) from flooding Black communities.
- 74% say [Black people are more likely than White people](#) to be incarcerated because prisons want to make money on the backs of Black people today.
- 67% of Black Americans say businesses today [target marketing of luxury products to Black people](#) in order to put them into debt.
- 55% of Black adults say [secret and nonconsensual medical experiments](#) (like the Tuskegee study) are happening to Black people today.
- 55% of Black adults say the government today [encourages single motherhood](#) and the elimination of Black men from Black families.
- 51% of Black adults say the government [promotes birth control and abortion](#) to reduce the size of the Black population, and this is happening today.

The report also finds that Black Americans who have experienced racial discrimination are more likely to believe U.S. institutions intentionally or negligently harm Black people.

There are also modest differences among Black Americans by gender, education, family income and political affiliation. Still, majorities across many Black demographic subgroups are familiar with these statements about the intentions of many U.S. institutions and say these things are happening to Black people 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%).

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.

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%).

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.

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' mistrust of the criminal justice system

Views about the intentions of the U.S. 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 about the intentions of the nation's criminal justice system.

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

About three-quarters (74%) of Black adults 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%) 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.

Black adults and mistrust about policing and prisons

In addition to believing the criminal justice system was designed to hold Black people back, most Black Americans mistrust the criminal justice system.

Some 83% of Black adults say they have heard of 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.

Beliefs about policing in Black communities

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 that police are failing to prevent the flow of guns and drugs into Black communities. A larger share of Black Democrats (79%) believe this than among Black Republicans (66%), though majorities of both groups say this.

Beliefs about prisons and profits

About three-in-four Black adults (74%) say that 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%).

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' mistrust of the U.S. political system

Black Americans' suspicions about politics and the treatment of Black politicians 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 mistrust U.S. politics today.

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

Two-thirds of Black Americans (67%) say the country’s 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%).

By gender

Black women (71%) are more likely than Black men (64%) to say the U.S. 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%). Still, large majorities of Black men and women across all age groups hold this view about the U.S. political system.

By education, family income and party

Education and income also play a role in how Black Americans think about the nation’s 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.

Black Americans, Black political leaders and mistrust of the U.S. political system

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 likely 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%).

Belief that Black political leaders are singled out to be discredited

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 say Black officials are singled out more than White officials. The share is smaller 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.

4. Black Americans' mistrust of the U.S. economic system and big businesses

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 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.

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 nation's 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.

Mistrust of big businesses

Many Black Americans are familiar with narratives that suggest large corporations have unspoken motives behind their marketing practices. Indeed, 70% of Black adults have heard, either a lot or a little, 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 at all.

Whether Black Americans are familiar with this idea is associated with their age. 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. Still, 60% or more across all age groups are familiar with this idea.

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 malicious marketing targeting Black people happens today.

5. Black Americans' mistrust of the U.S. 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 about the media in the U.S.

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 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%).

About half of Black Americans believe U.S. news media was designed to hold them back

Roughly half of Black Americans (52%) say the news media in the U.S. 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 was designed to hold Black people back.

Most Black adults say they encounter inaccurate news about Black people

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, 73% 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 mistrust of the U.S. health care system 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, many [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.

Today, some [Black women](#) specifically seek out Black obstetricians to avoid racial discrimination in medical care and improve their health outcomes. This history of mistrust provides the context for Black Americans' beliefs 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 report 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 feeling like the pain they were experiencing was not taken seriously.

In the current survey, 51% of Black Americans say the U.S. 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.

Mistrust about medical research

While many Black adults say the U.S. health care system was designed to hold Black people back (51%), 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.

When it comes to medical research, 55% of Black Americans believe nonconsensual experiments are being conducted on Black people today. Fewer say this is a thing of the past (30%) or that it never happened (10%).

Like their general belief that the U.S. 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.

7. Black Americans' mistrust of U.S. government policies on family and reproductive health

Aside from their beliefs about health and medicine in general, many Black adults believe the government intervenes in their decisions about partners and family planning.

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 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](#).

Mistrust of family-related government policy

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 say they 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.

Black Republicans (72%) are the most likely to say 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 the government has encouraged single motherhood among Black mothers

While 62% of Black Americans are familiar with narratives 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

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

Black adults with the most education and highest incomes 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%).

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.

Mistrust of government reproductive health policy

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

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.

About half of Black Americans believe the government uses abortion and birth control policy today to keep the Black population small

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

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

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.

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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