Health care providers: Key trusted messengers about vaccines for older African American/Black adults

2020 AARP Vaccine Survey of Adults
Ages 50 and Older

Though most older African American/Black adults believe vaccines are generally safe, they don't have enough information or a trusted messenger to deliver it.

More than eight in 10 (85%) of these adults ages 50-plus say vaccines in general are safe, but only one-third (33%) say they get all the vaccines their doctor or health care provider recommends. Furthermore, half (50%) say they don't search for information on vaccines on their own, and six in 10 (61%) say they don't know whom to trust to provide accurate information on vaccines. Women and those with household incomes less than \$30,000 are more likely to say they are unsure whom to trust on this topic.

Agreement with the following statements

■ Strongly disagree ■ Somewhat disagree
■ Somewhat agree ■ Strongly agree

A recent survey shows that for **older African American/Black adults ages 50-plus**, a **trusted messenger** regarding vaccinations is vital. This understanding may **provide insight on possible strategies** to help the these older adults make **informed decisions regarding vaccine acceptance**.

When prompted, most older African American/Black Americans adults say they trust their doctor or health care provider for information on vaccinations.

When prompted with a list, the majority (73%) of older African American/Black adults say their doctor or health care provider is their most trusted source for information about adult immunizations. Only one in ten (11%) say the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is their most trusted source, a notable distant second. While very few (4%) say websites are their trusted source for information, African American/Black adults ages 50–64 are significantly more likely than those ages 65-plus to say they turn to websites for information on vaccinations.

Most African American/Black adults ages 50-plus say they don't know whom to trust to provide accurate information on vaccines.

Most trusted source for vaccine information

For honest and factual information about the COVID-19 vaccine, personal health care providers also top the list of highly trusted sources, followed by Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Nearly seven in 10 (68%) older African American/Black adults highly trust their personal health care provider to give them honest and factual information about the COVID-19 vaccine (8, 9, or 10 out of 10 on a trust scale where 10 = complete trust). Similarly, six in 10 (61%) say they highly trust Dr. Fauci, and half say they highly trust local hospitals (51%) and the CDC (50%).

Percent who highly trust for COVID-19 vaccine info 8, 9 or 10 (1 = no trust at all, 10 = complete trust)

A personal doctor or health care provider's recommendation will be important for some older African American/Black adults as they consider whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

When considering the COVID-19 vaccine, older African American/Black adults rate a personal doctor or health care provider's recommendation among the top three criteria for making their decision, underscoring the importance of the personal health care provider as a trusted messenger. More than eight in 10 (85%) say a doctor or health care provider's recommendation will be either *very important* or *somewhat important* when deciding whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The doctor or health care provider's recommendation is only surpassed by vaccine safety (90%) and effectiveness (87%). Interestingly, men are more likely than women to say the doctor or health care provider's recommendation will be very important in their deliberations.

Personal health care providers rise to the top as most trusted messenger regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

Importance in deciding to get the COVID-19 vaccine *Top three factors*

Those who say they are unlikely to get a COVID-19 vaccine cite distrust in the government as the top reason.

Trust is also a pivotal issue for older African American/Black adults considering whether to get the COVID-19 vaccine. At the time of the survey (September/October 2020), two-thirds (67%) of these older adults who said they are unlikely to get a COVID-19 vaccine cited a lack of trust in the government as a reason for vaccine hesitancy. Six in 10 (63%) also cited a concern about possible side effects from the vaccine.

Lack of trust in the government is the top reason cited for COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy.

Reasons for being unlikely to get the COVID-19 vaccine

Top three reasons

Some older African American/Black adults say they highly trust community leaders and family/friends to provide accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Nearly three in 10 (28%) older African American/Black adults say they highly trust their community leaders to provide honest and factual information about the COVID-19 vaccine (8, 9, or 10 on a 10-point trust scale where 10 = complete trust), and a quarter (26%) rate family or friends highly. One in five (22%) rate their clergy/faith leaders 8, 9, or 10 out of 10 on a trust scale to provide accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Trust for info on the COVID-19 vaccine

(1 = no trust at all, 10 = complete trust)

Implications

Though most older African American/Black adults have positive attitudes toward vaccinations, many do not get the recommended vaccines and are unsure whom to trust to provide accurate and honest information about adult immunizations. Notably, a majority of those who say they are unlikely to get a COVID-19 vaccine say they are unlikely because they don't trust in the government.

Many older African American/Black adults say their personal doctor or health care provider is their most trusted source for information about vaccines in general, and the majority say they trust their doctor or health care provider to provide honest and factual information about the COVID-19 vaccine specifically. Additionally, many African American/Black adults 50-plus say whether their doctor or health care provider recommends the COVID-19 vaccine will be important in deciding whether to get the vaccine.

To ensure older African American/Black adults make informed decisions regarding vaccines, public health officials should capitalize on this trusted source — personal health care providers — to develop strategies to ensure that they receive the information they need to decide whether to take a vaccine.

Methodology

This AARP vaccine survey was conducted online from September 28 to October 12, 2020 with a total sample of 1,722 adults ages 50-plus. The total sample included an oversample of 491 African American/Black (non-Hispanic) respondents. This national survey was conducted using NORC at the University of Chicago's AmeriSpeak probability-based sample. AmeriSpeak is designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. All data are weighted by age, gender, and race according to the most recent Census population statistics. The margin of error for the Black/African American (non-Hispanic) sample is ± 5.51 percent.

For more information, contact Cheryl Lampkin, CLampkin@aarp.org.
For media inquiries, contact media@aarp.org.