



The
Pulse of
Black
America

About the Pulse of Black America Survey:

The Pulse of Black America survey elevates the voices and aspirations of Black Americans, especially in the context of the structural barriers they face in their daily lives.

This survey provides critical insights into some of the most pressing issues that Black Americans are grappling with everyday, including voting rights, economic opportunity, and access to affordable housing, healthcare, and education.

Partnering with Benenson Strategy Group (“BSG”), the “Pulse of Black America” survey serves as a companion to the National Urban League’s annual “State of Black America Report” (“SOBA”).

“The psychological toll of always anticipating that next set back where one unexpected bill, short paycheck, or medical emergency will derail months, maybe years, of plans and priorities is exhausting. Feeling like you must do more, and expect less, creates a never-ending daily cycle of economic anxiety,” said Shannon Currie, the BSG Vice President who conceived of and led this research.

Exposing the attitudinal nuances at play when it comes to addressing persistent pain points and barriers, “The Pulse” illuminates the impact that decades of racial pressures and systemic inequalities have had on people of color.



If NUL’s Equality Index measures the share of the American economic pie Black Americans gets compared to whites, then the Pulse of Black America survey unpacks the feelings and frustrations of Black people who will never get that last slice of pie.

– Shannon-Janean Currie

SURVEY METHODOLOGY:

Benenson Strategy Group (BSG) conducted 1,674 interviews online from March 17-24, 2022 among people living in the United States ages 18 and older.

The data in this report includes:

- **Black people**
(n=779; MoE ± 3.44% at the 95% CI)
- **Other people of color**
(n=548; MoE ± 4.13% at the 95% CI)
- **White people**
(n=300; MoE ± 5.62% at the 95% CI)

BSG weighted the data to ensure accurate demographic distributions within each of the three audiences referenced above according to the U.S. Census.

TEAM CONTACT



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The Black Mindset

Rising costs and inflation are a concern for all Americans, but for Black America, the emotional wear and tear of historical inequities is a deeply personal economic pain point in their day-to-day lives. For them, getting ahead is almost impossible, and maintaining the status quo is a juggling act of high risks and low rewards. Even when following the same blueprint of academic and professional achievement outlined by White America, Black Americans feel they are still denied the keys to unlocking longer-term middle-class success.

The pandemic has only exacerbated what already felt like insurmountable barriers, leaving the Black community vulnerable and bogged down by the weight of economic despair. Despite many working throughout the pandemic as essential workers and first responders, the economic consequences of losing their jobs, homes, or health insurance are top-of-mind looming threats for many families living on the brink of poverty.

For Black America, the math doesn't add up. How can they make the same investments and sacrifices as their White counterparts and always come up short? Almost half of Black households - even amongst those with college degrees - are worried about not being able to put food on the table, having to dip into their savings to pay bills, and or having to take on debt they can't afford to pay back. How is it possible for a Black person and a White person to have the same education and occupation, and yet the Black person still ends up two steps behind? Why is the Black person in that scenario the one worried about losing their job or being passed over for a promotion they deserve?

Parents are making sacrifices and investments today, with hopes they can provide their children the opportunity to have just a little more than they did, but it seems that no amount of hard work or strategic financial planning can bring the tantalizing fruits of the American dream within reach.

In the same way that White wealth and privilege is passed down from generation to generation, Blacks inherit the struggles and strife of an entire race, carrying the pressure of achieving the dreams unfulfilled and opportunities denied the previous generation.

And yet, still optimistic. Despite centuries of oppression and combating ideas that people of color are inherently inferior, the faith and hope that one day "we shall overcome" is the ultimate expression of their belief in American freedoms and rights. Fifty years since the Civil Rights Movement and ten years since the murder of Trayvon Martin, the real promise of equity has yet to be fulfilled, and young Blacks are growing frustrated with the rate of change. Beliefs and behaviors are hard to shift, and while progress has been made, the biases of today manifest in more subtle forms of systemic suppression.

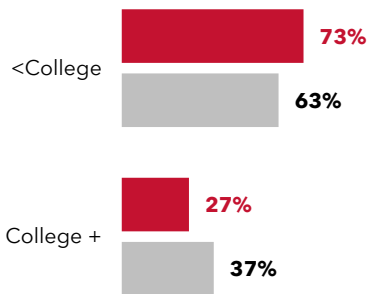
Resilient and self-reliant, Black Americans take no pride in hand outs, but do acknowledge that they need a hand-up to correct decades of systemic racism and wealth inequities. But no amount of wealth, education, or upward mobility can inoculate Black Americans from the cultural, fiscal, and psychological trauma they all must endure.

Pragmatic and hopeful, hardworking and vulnerable, the complexities of Black pain and Black pride define the Black experience.

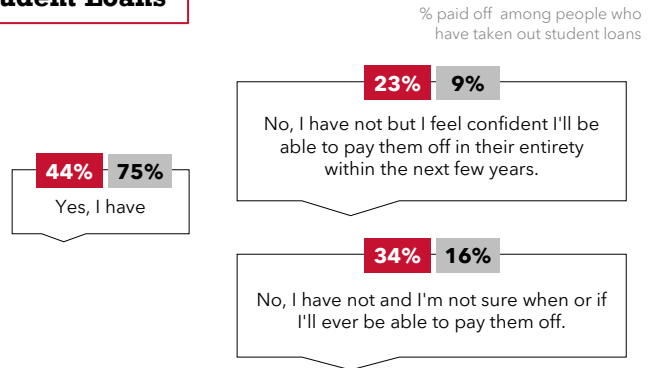
Black Americans lag White Americans across the full spectrum of economic achievement.

When it comes to education, income, occupation, housing, and debt load, Black Americans are at a disadvantage. Those systemic barriers have economic consequences. Even when following the same blueprint for success as their White counterparts, Black Americans continue to be denied the opportunity to move up the economic ladder.

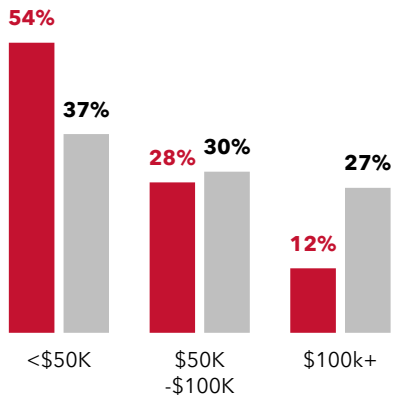
Education



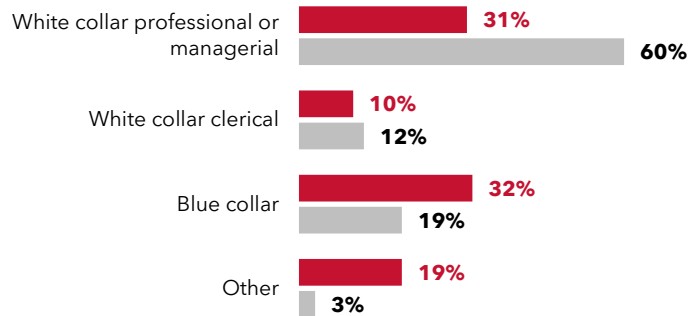
Student Loans



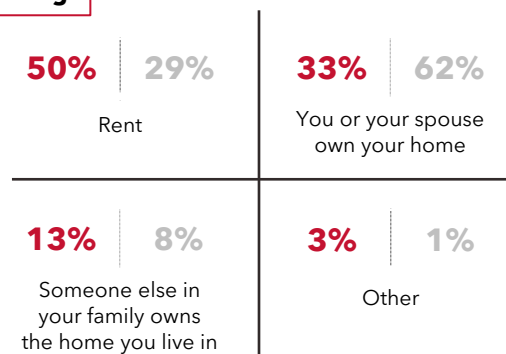
Income



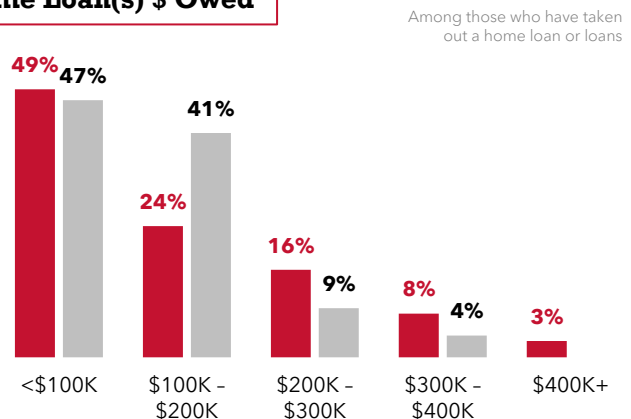
Occupation



Housing

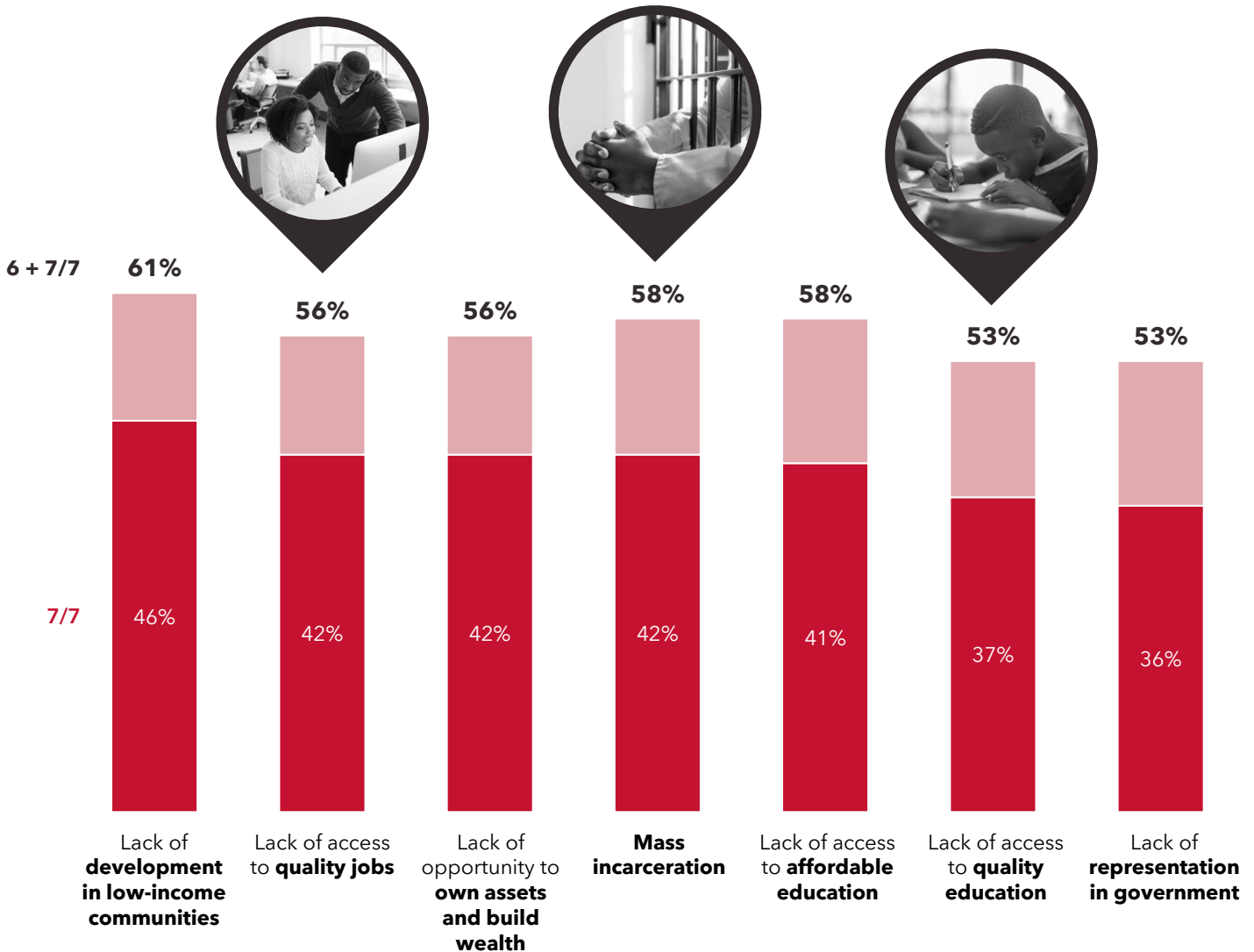


Home Loan(s) \$ Owed



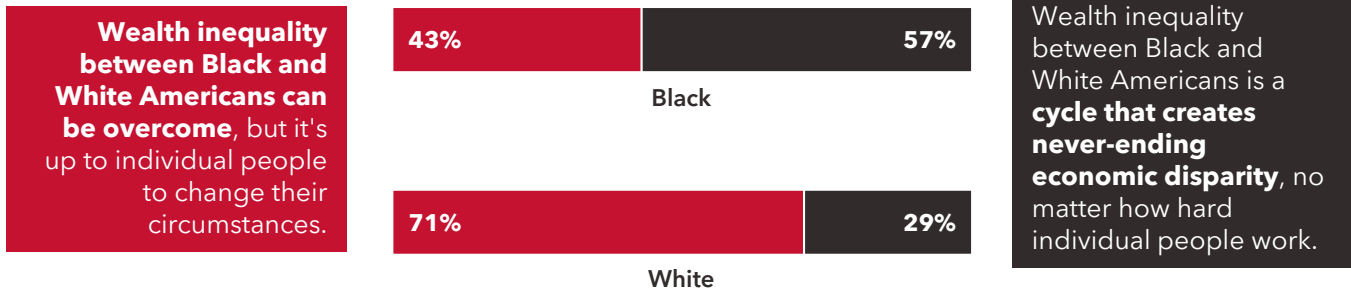
A lack of development in low-income communities, access to good jobs, a quality education, and government representation, as well as mass incarceration, are the biggest barriers to equality.

How much do you think each the following holds people of color back from achieving true equality in America?
 Please use a scale from 1-7 with 1 meaning it "does not hold people of color back at all" and 7 meaning it "is a major factor holding people of color back". (Among Black Americans)



Most Black Americans feel that no matter how hard they work, they will struggle to overcome wealth inequality...

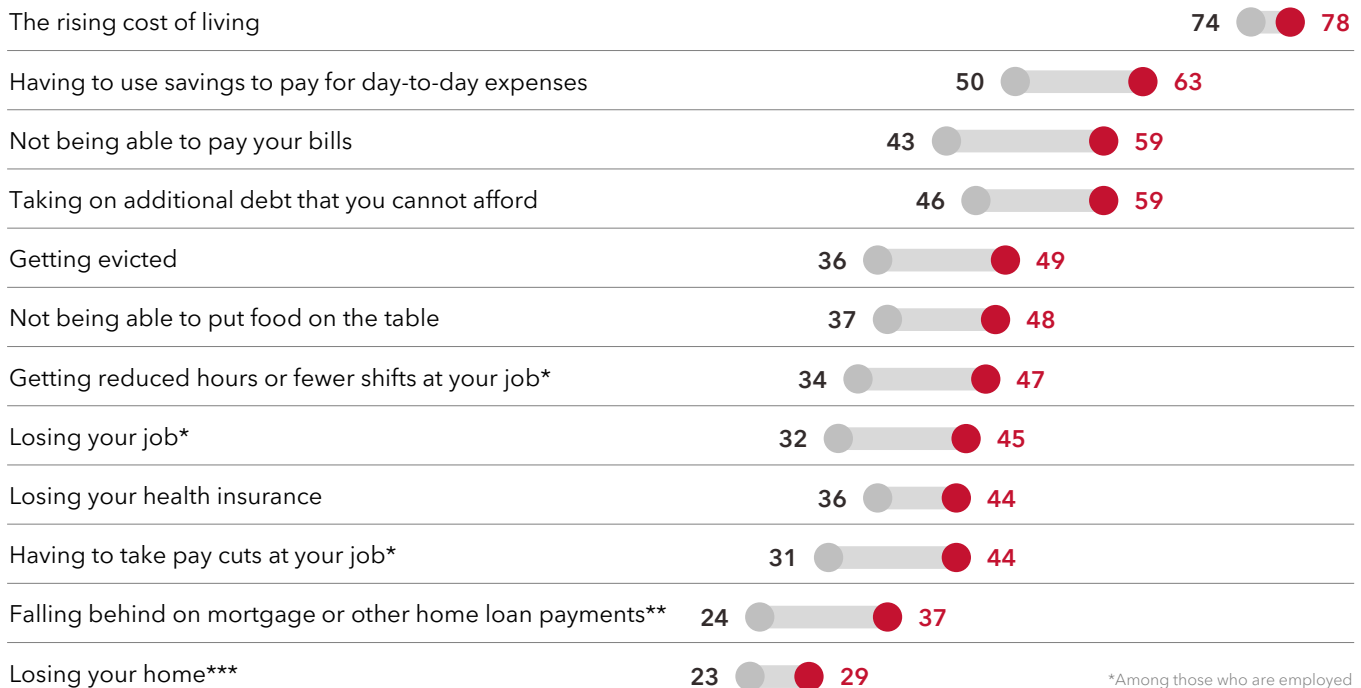
Which of the following comes closer to your view?



...which is reflected in their economic concerns. The emotional wear and tear of historical inequities is a deeply personal economic pain point in their daily lives.

How worried are you currently about each of the following?
Showing total worried

White Black



*Among those who are employed
**Among those who own their homes
*** Among those who rent their homes

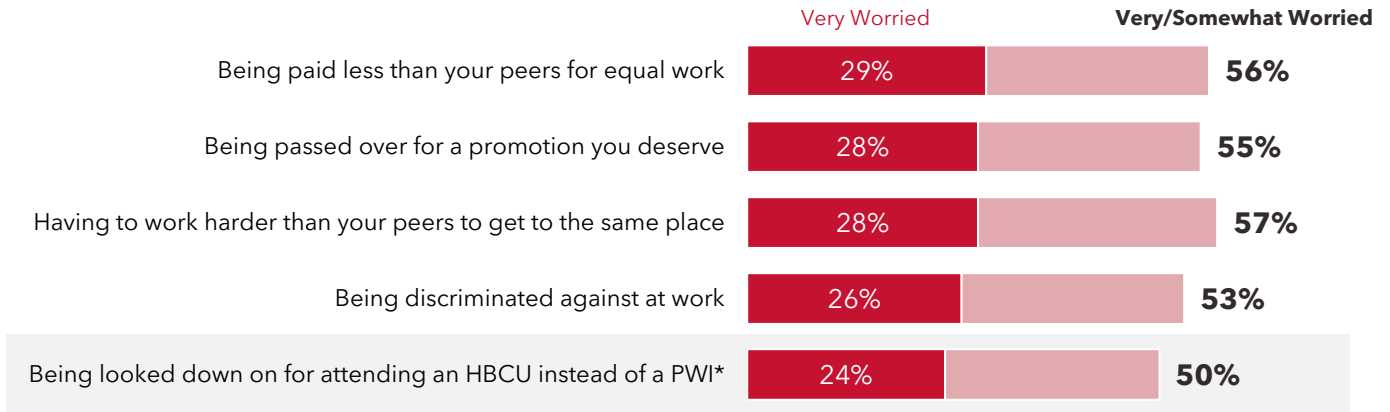
As Black Americans are twice as likely to have part-time jobs as Whites, the **economic consequences of losing their jobs, homes, or health insurance** is a looming threat for many vulnerable families living on the cusp of poverty.

Black people face obstacles to their professional success at every turn.

Worries about being paid less, passed over, having to work harder for the same amount, and even being discriminated against are all common.

How worried are you currently about each of the following?

Among Employed Black Americans



*Among those who graduated from an HBCU

Which of the following comes closer to your view?

Among Employed Black Americans

41%
I receive **fewer professional opportunities** than others because of my race or ethnicity.

12%
I receive **more professional opportunities** than others because of my race or ethnicity.



47%
The professional opportunities that I receive have **nothing to do** with my race or ethnicity.

Homeownership, a key to building intergenerational wealth, is often inaccessible.

A steppingstone into the middle class, Black people are more likely to value the importance of homeownership than White people are, but fewer than half of Black people are homeowners – and those that do own their home are 30% more likely than White homeowners to have home loans.

% “Strongly agree” with each statement

White Black

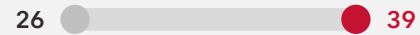
Homeownership is important because it builds wealth that will last multiple generations.



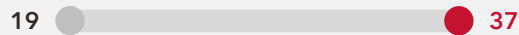
Homeownership is important because it leads to financial stability.



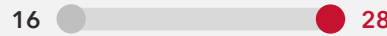
Owning a house is an important measure of my own success.



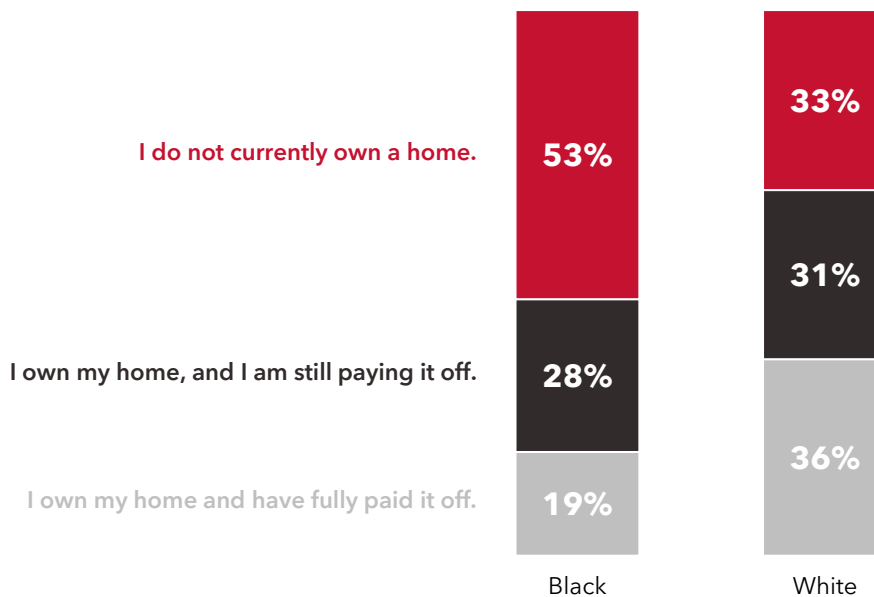
The most valuable thing parents can do for their kids is leave them wealth, like savings, investments, and other assets.



The most valuable thing parents can do for their kids is leave them a home.



Which of the following, if any, describes your current living situation?



Black America is still skeptical of the healthcare industry.

Access to high-quality and affordable healthcare saves lives and creates economically stable and thriving communities, but for Black Americans healthcare industry represents yet another barrier to parity. 8 in 10 Black Americans feel that race influences the quality of care a person receives, and 2 in 5 feel the healthcare system discriminates against them personally.

% "Strongly" or "Somewhat agree" with each Statement



The health care system profits off me without really helping me.

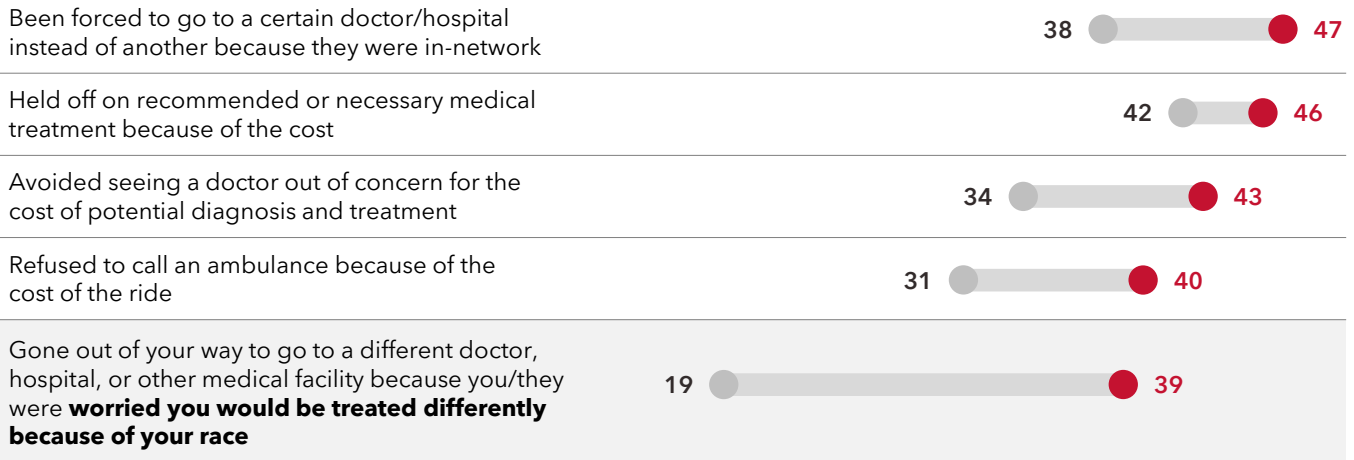


Women in my community receive inadequate maternity care.

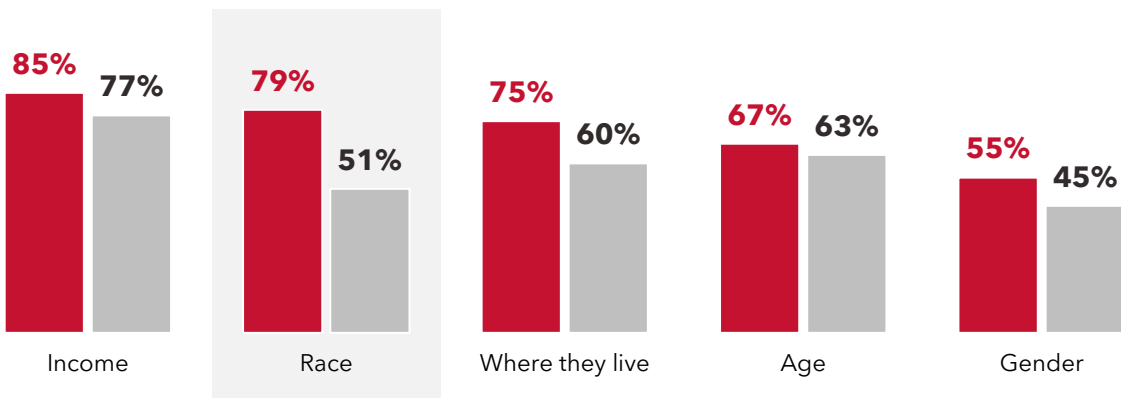


The health care system discriminates against me.

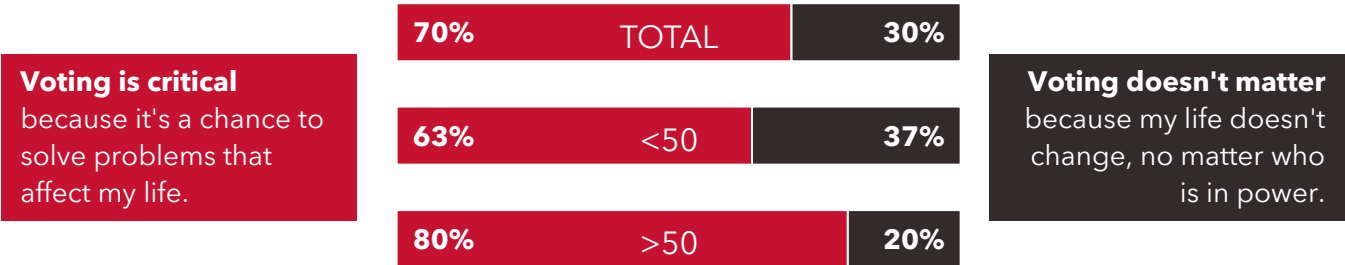
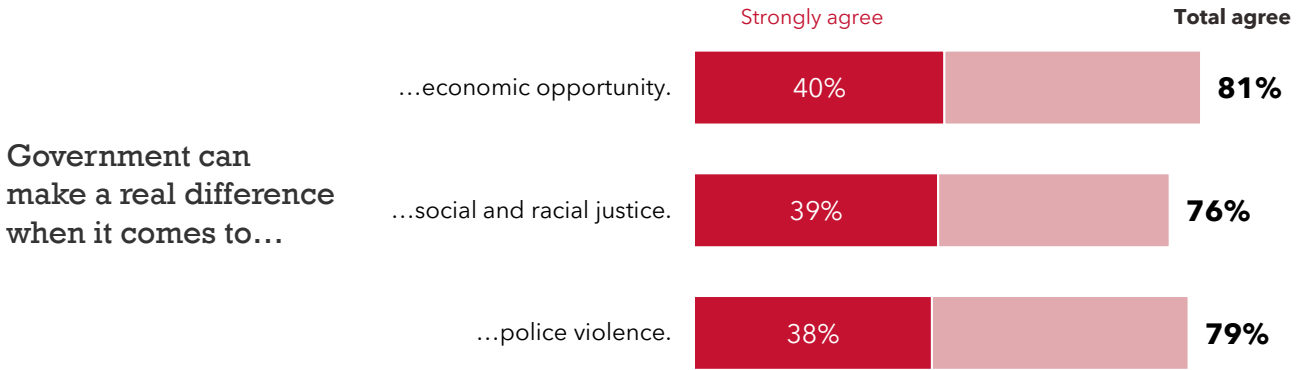
Which of the following actions have you or someone in your family taken because of the specifics of your current health coverage?



How much do you believe each of the following influences the quality of healthcare a person receives?

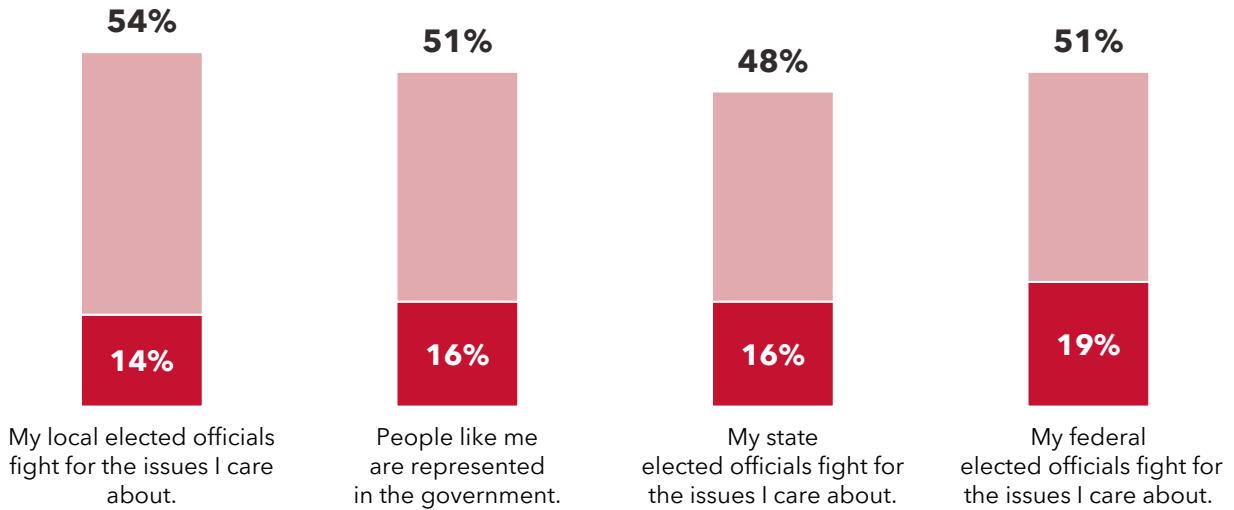


Black Americans believe strongly in the power of their vote and in the potential for civic engagement to improve their circumstances (although younger Black people are less likely to feel that voting matters)...



...but they don't think politicians are doing a good job representing them...

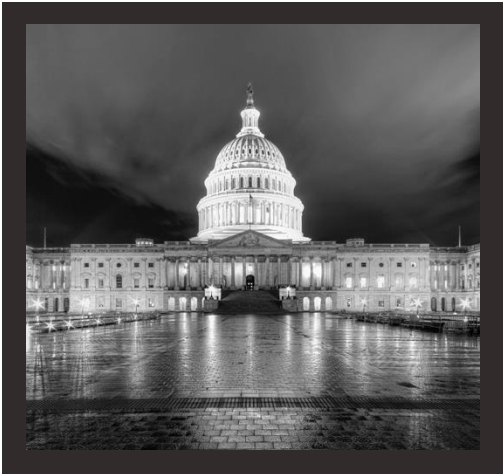
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.



...and more than a third of Black and Americans say that neither party cares about their respective communities

_____ really care about issues in my community and are trying to address them.

	Black	<50	50+
Only Democrats	33%	28%	40%
Only Republicans	7%	9%	3%
Both Democrats and Republicans	24%	23%	25%
Neither Democrats nor Republicans	36%	40%	32%

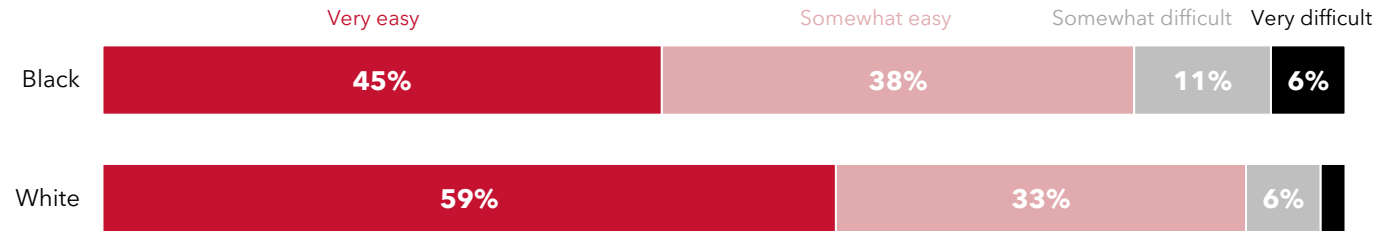


Many Black Americans feel that Black and brown communities across the country are often denied the right to vote—and they believe the government can and should take action to fix that.

Fewer than half of Black Americans say voting is very easy – 25% lower than the share of White Americans who say the same thing. And 71% of Black people agree that Black and brown communities specifically are often denied the right to vote.

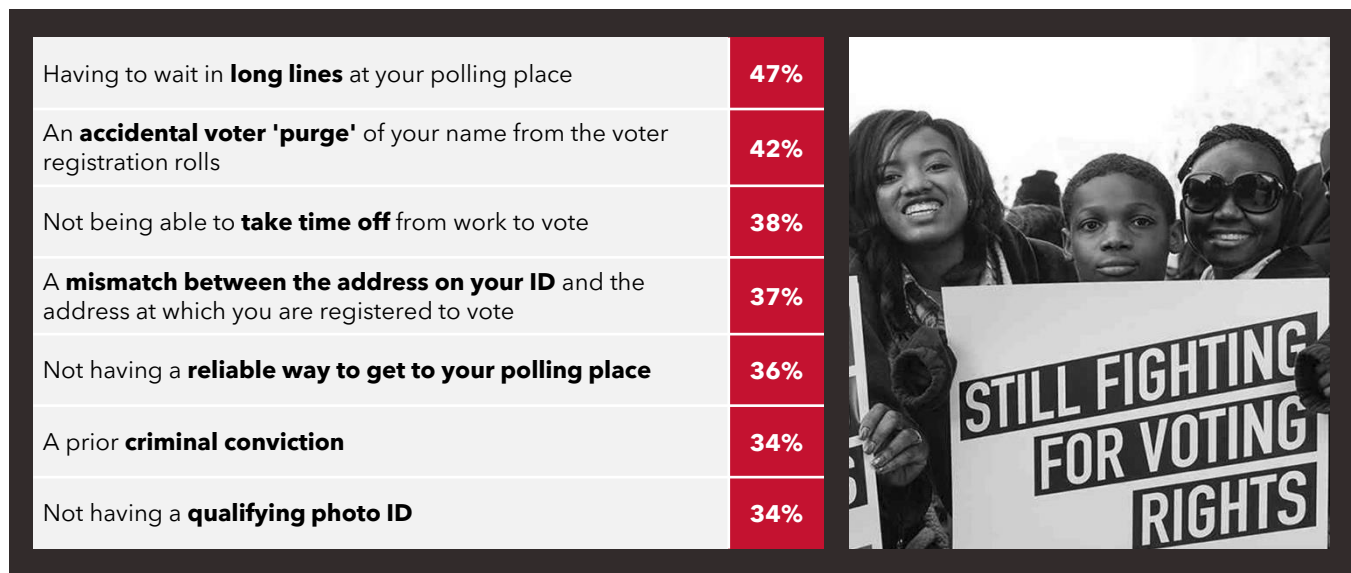
A smaller share of Black vs. White Americans say voting is easy

Overall, how easy or difficult would you say voting is in your community? Is it...?



The methods may change, but the purpose is always the same – Blacks anticipate forms of suppression in every election

How concerned are you about each of the following making it difficult or impossible for you to vote in the future?
Showing total concerned



Black Americans believe that government can and should take steps to address these challenges.

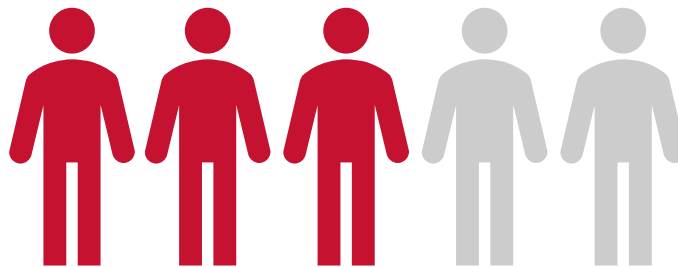
They overwhelmingly support policies that expand voting access and enhance minimum standards for polling places.

Their top priorities:

- ✓ Restoring Voting Rights Act protections
- ✓ Expanding early voting
- ✓ Enforcing minimum standards at polling places to avoid long lines
- ✓ Enhancing the protection of ballots and voting records.

The high bipartisan support across all racial groups for these reforms demonstrates that there is opportunity to build consensus around common sense reforms that make voting easy, accessible, and secure for all Americans.

However, they believe that government today is part of the problem.



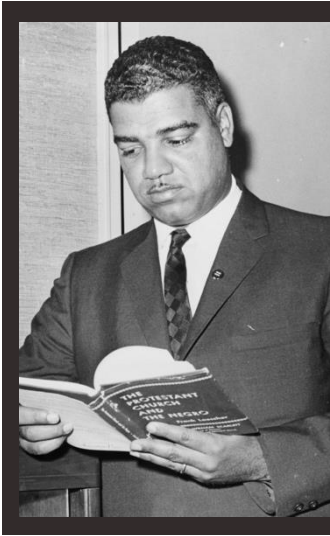
3 in 5

Say the **government is doing more to limit voting rights** than it is to protect them.

THE MAINSTREET MARSHALL PLAN

Whitney M. Young, who served as NUL’s executive director from 1961 to 1971, first proposed a domestic Main Street Marshall Plan in 1964. Young’s blueprint for a bold and comprehensive plan to uplift urban communities out of poverty and stimulate their economic growth is reiterated in the current framework of the Biden administration’s Build Back Better Agenda and serves as an outline for policy priorities of the movement writ large.

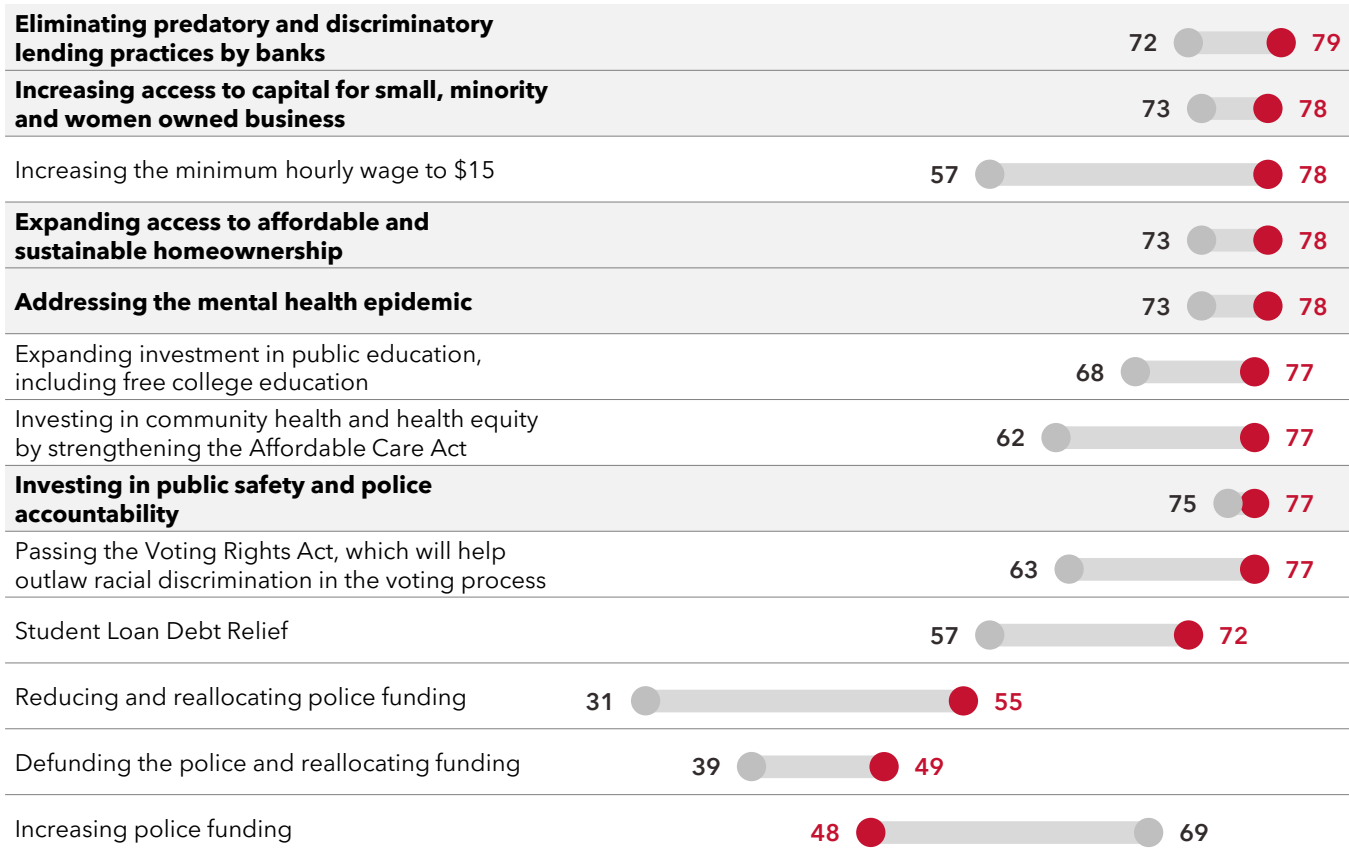
For decades, Black families have struggled to achieve the American dream of economic prosperity, homeownership, and financial freedom because of a lack of government-driven investments in their communities. The **National Urban League’s Main Street Marshall Plan** outlines an investment in a social safety net that is critical in the fight to combat poverty, promote equality and eliminate systemic disparities. Americans are aligned in their belief that the best way to promote economic equality between White people and people of color is rooted in correcting the financial exploitation and discrimination that Black and Brown communities have endured for a century.



How much, if at all, do you think that each of the following (Mainstreet Marshall plan strategies) would help promote economic equality between White people and people of color?

NET A great deal / Somewhat

White Black





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National
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