

RACE, THE LITERACY GAP, AND THE PANDEMIC

Ray Block Jr.

Pennsylvania State University

Department of [Political Science](#) and Department of [African American Studies](#)

Senior Polling Analyst

[African American Research Collaborative](#) and [Latino Decisions](#)

Research Partner

Penn State [College of Medicine](#) and College of Healthcare Information Management Executives ([CHIME](#))

Email: rblock@psu.edu

Twitter: [@rayblock1](#)

October 19, 2020

HLiA-HARC Virtual Conference

Overview

2

After this session, participants will:

- ❖ Discuss racial-group differences in how the COVID-19 pandemic is experienced
- ❖ Discuss racial-group differences in how COVID-19 is understood
- ❖ Discuss racial-group differences in the intent to adhere to public health recommendations
- ❖ Describe communication strategies for overcoming racial and ethnic disparities in health communication

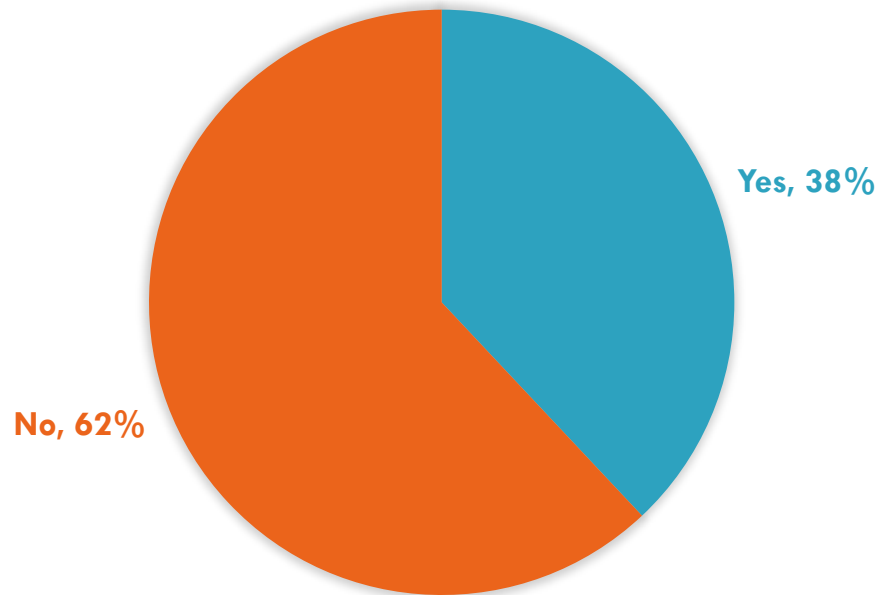
3

Racial differences in *experience* of COVID-19

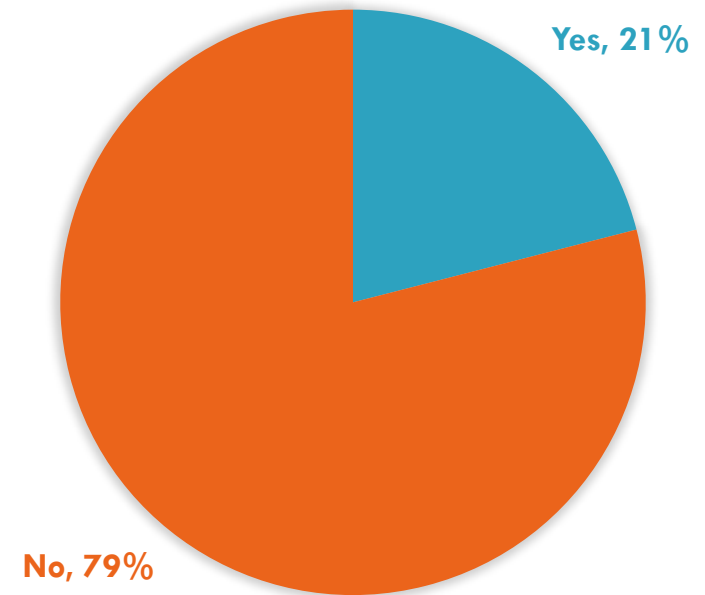
Racially-disparate *health* outcomes

4

Blacks who have friends/family who got sick or died from COVID-19



Whites who have friends/family who got sick or died from COVID-19



African American Research Collaborative

Source: AARC COVID-19 Poll (N = 604 [All African Americans]; +/- 3.9%)
Source: ABC News-Ipsos, April 1 - April 2, 2020 (N = 559; +/- 4.8%)

Racially-disparate economic outcomes

5

African Americans bear the brunt of Covid-19's economic impact

Pandemic spotlights racial disparities, with black workers expected to feature disproportionately in the 26m recent unemployment claims



▲ Grocery Store 54, an employee at a laundromat poses for a picture in Miami on 17 April 2020. Workers of color

African American Research Collaborative



theGrio



Lifestyle Finance Health

Black people are in no rush to re-open economy despite financial hits

A recent study conducted by the African American Research Collaborative concludes that Black Americans prioritize their health over their wallets.

By **Brooke Abrams and Ray Block Jr.** - June 11, 2020



COVID-19 is a devastating disease for Pennsylvanians

6

- ❖ 146,281 cases and 8,004 deaths as of September 21, 2020
- ❖ Until there is a vaccine or cure, personal protective behaviors are required to minimize the spread
- ❖ Once a vaccine and/or cure becomes available, for them to be effective the public must have knowledge of them, access to them, and confidence to take them
- ❖ Effective messaging is critical to ensuring self-protective behaviors and confidence in vaccines and treatments

COVID-19 is a devastating disease for Pennsylvanians

7

Our data from central PA shows group gaps in knowledge levels, which may help explain why (compared to Whites) COVID-19 infections are...

- ❖ 1.1x higher among Asians,
- ❖ 2.5x higher among Black/African Americans, and
- ❖ 2.8x higher among Latino/a/X and native populations

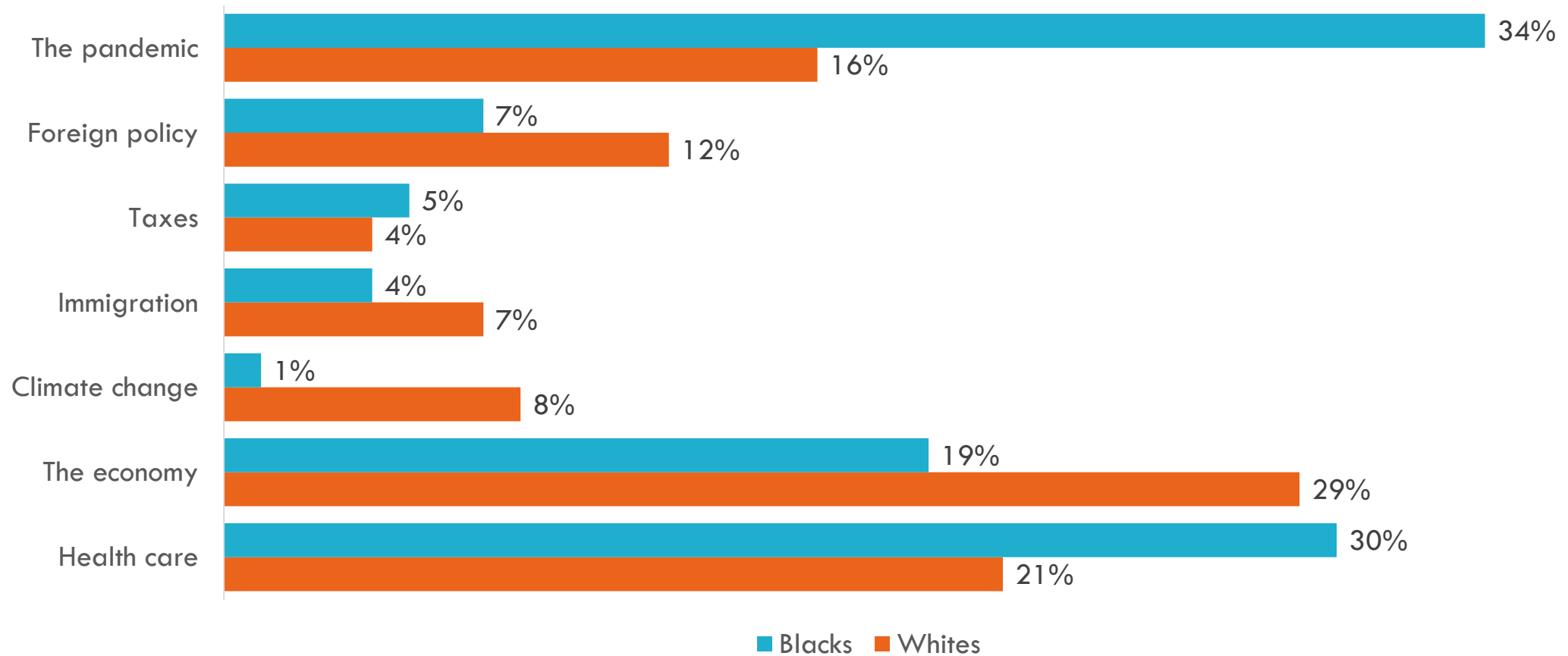
We also found that preferred information sources and trust correlated with knowledge and behavior nationally.

8

Racial-group differences in how COVID-19 is *understood*

Most important factor in voting

9

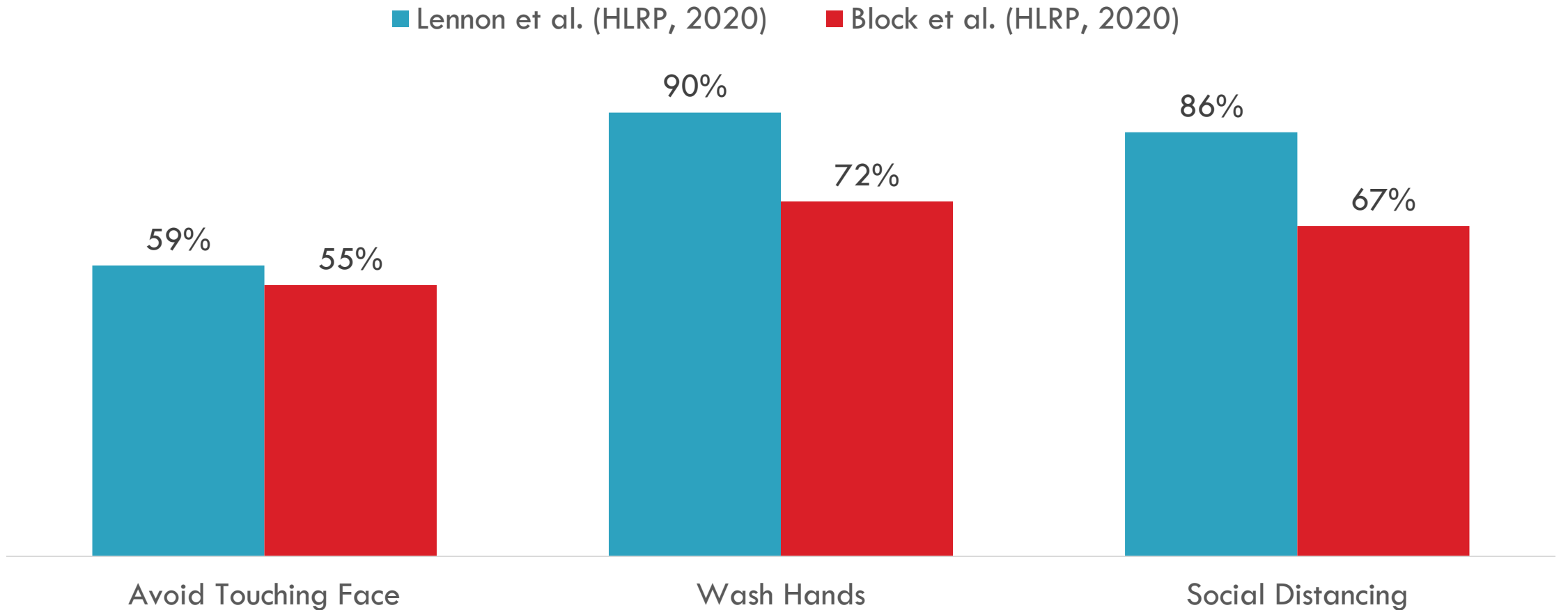


10

Racial differences in the *intent to adhere* to public health recommendations

Racial differences in *self-protective* actions

11



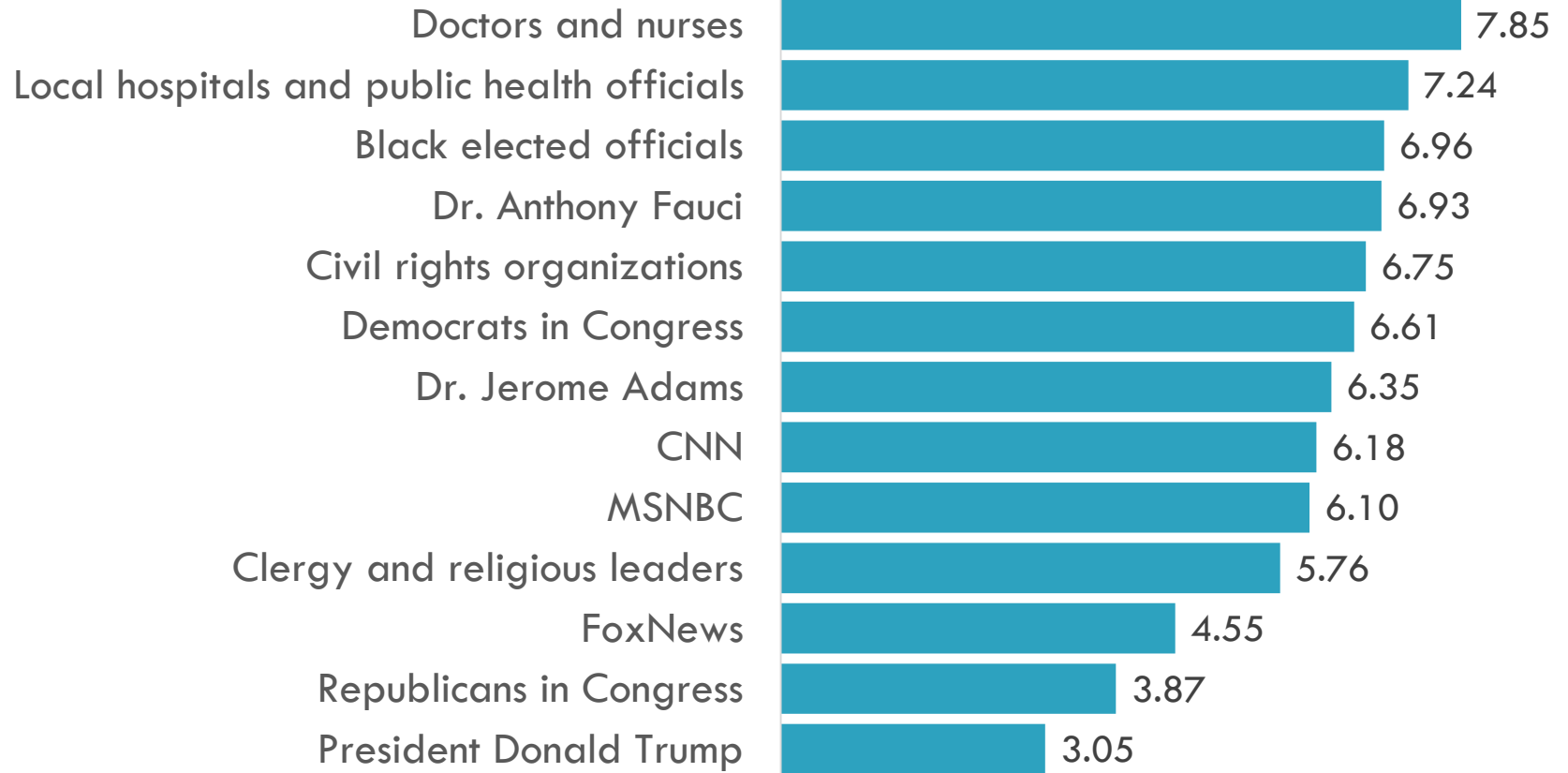
12

Strategies for overcoming racial disparities

Trusted Messengers

[On a 10-point scale], how much do you trust different spokes-people and groups to provide honest and factual information about the COVID-19 pandemic to the African American community?

[Bars = average trust ratings]



Perceived Health/Medical Disparities

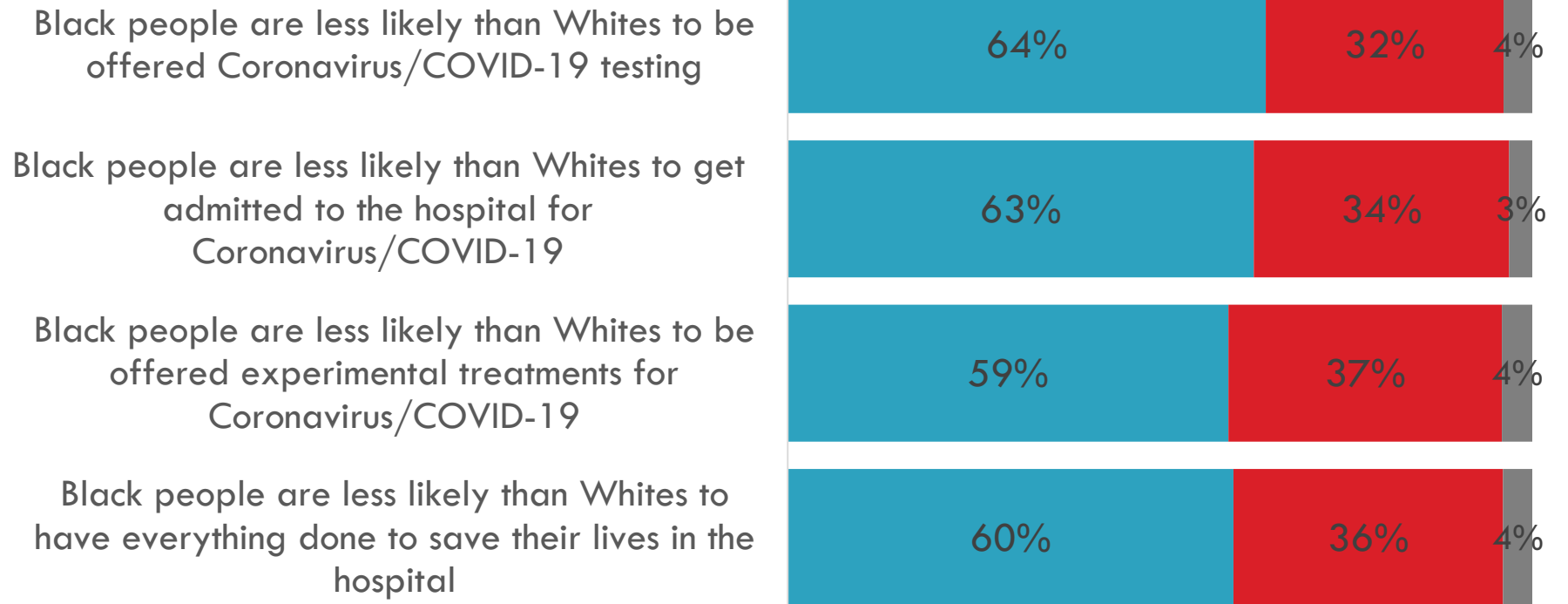
14

For each of the following statements, indicate whether you [agree]...

[Total agree = somewhat + strongly agree]

[Total disagree = somewhat + strongly disagree]

■ Total Agree ■ Total Disagree ■ Undecided



The “Trust/Mistrust” Puzzle

15

- ❖ On the one hand, the Black people in our survey put a fair amount of trust in medical professionals and health care providers when it come to COVID.
- ❖ On the other hand, there is a clear disconnect between who Black people believe the *trusted messengers* are and whether they believe the system will *treat them fairly*.
- ❖ Disparate experiences/understandings of COVID-19 must be addressed within an explicit framework of how race structures myriad arenas of American public life.

Current efforts in Pennsylvania

16

- ❖ Determine residents' knowledge, perceptions, behaviors, misunderstandings, vaccine confidence and treatment confidence
- ❖ Develop model strategies for overcoming misunderstandings and hesitance regarding COVID-19 self-protective behavior, treatments, and vaccines, tailored to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and preferred information source

Q & A

17

For more information, go to: www.AfricanAmericanResearch.us