

Systematic racism in health care boosted COVID-19 vaccine mistrust in Black communities, says study

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The University of Ottawa's Interdisciplinary Center for Black Health survey reveals the scope of coronavirus vaccine hesitancy in Black

communities in relation to health care.

The health care system must play a significant role in combating COVID-19 mistrust among Black individuals in Canada, according to a new University of Ottawa study that found distrust in the health care network was so profound that educated individuals were hesitant to receive the vaccine.

[Data](#) shows that Black communities were the least vaccinated against COVID-19, yet were the most affected by the global pandemic in terms of infection and mortality in Canada and the West. Black communities saw 2.2 times more deaths from COVID-19 despite having the same access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Key factors contributing to this mistrust included:

- Education: Surprisingly, the level of education was inconsequential in relation to COVID-19 vaccinations, since even those with professed education admitted mistrust.
- A lack of COVID-19-themed literature geared specifically to Black communities.
- Experience of racial discrimination lived inside hospitals and within the health care network.
- Age: Black individuals between 14-34 were less likely to be vaccinated.
- Income level; and
- Belief in [conspiracy theories](#).

Black individuals with a familiarity of health resources and literature (health literacy) were more likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19. But these same individuals were less trustful of COVID-19 vaccines and Canada's health resources if they had experienced systematic racism or discrimination from within the health network.

The link between systematic racism in the health care network and lagging COVID-19 trust must be addressed by:

- Addressing and finding solutions to combat systematic racism within the [health care system](#); and
- Creating credible and resourceful health care literature that will boost confidence in COVID-19 vaccines in these communities.

The work is published in the *Journal of Medical Virology*. Professor Jude Mary Cénat, Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, is the Chair of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Black Health, which leads research focused on [racial disparities](#) in health and social services and led this study.

More information: Jude Mary Cénat et al, Vaccine mistrust among Black individuals in Canada: The major role of health literacy, conspiracy theories, and racial discrimination in the healthcare system, *Journal of Medical Virology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/jmv.28738](https://doi.org/10.1002/jmv.28738)

Provided by University of Ottawa

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