



## **“At-Risk Youth & Young Adults”**

- 18 - 34
- African-American & Hispanic
- Skew Urban
- Avg. HHI of \$35K - \$45K
- Vax Confidence: Movable Middle + Disaffected & Culturally Avoidant

### **Key Barriers to Vaccination/ Vaccine Confidence**

- Apathy /Low Perceived Threat
- Efficacy (largely due to breakthrough infections)
- Access (Convenience)
- Distrust of Institutions/Authority
- Low COVID/COVID Vax Literacy
- Mis/Disinformation from family, peers, and online
- Skeptical of Incentive Programs & “Brownwashing of COVID Messaging”<sup>1</sup>

### **#UnvaxxedNotRelaxed**

At-Risk Youth and Young Adults are the least vaccinated demographic proportionately. A browning America, recent social justice movements, and a mental health crisis have all contributed to growing distrust of the government and what some call the “Medical Industrial Complex.” This demographic’s desire for more freedom and mobility, coupled with their disillusionment with the current state of society, make them particularly vulnerable to mis/disinformation, while also being more prone to restlessness and risky behavior. Apathy is also a challenge for this group. Due to feelings of invincibility (not uncommon for their lifestage) and early reports of COVID as a virus that preys on the old and infirm, many young people still perceive COVID as low-threat; this is a severe issue in light of recent COVID variants.

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<sup>1</sup> “Brownwashing” is considered the “gratuitous” or inauthentic use of people of color in messaging, with the intention to manipulate or coerce.

### **“Politricks” As Usual: Why Bother?**

These traits are exacerbated by the fact that many lower-income youth and young adults are from challenging environments subject to social vulnerabilities such as food deserts, closer/dense living conditions, poor healthcare access, and unstable employment. These factors can lead people in this demographic to experience feelings of nihilism (hopelessness). This group often relies on others within their social sphere for guidance that will more likely than not reinforce their negative feelings about institutions and authority. This leads to a deep misunderstanding of how healthcare institutions work on both structural and safety levels. Many believe the government and health officials have ulterior motives regarding vaccination (e.g. population control, mobility tracking) and reinforce this by pointing to personal, systemic, and cultural barriers that they have faced as members of marginalized populations. Cultural groups aligned with this segment include: Nation of Islam, ADOS (American Descendants of Slavery), New Era..

### **“My Clique Bad”**

For many youth/young adults, social media is a go-to for news and their first point of contact with issues in society. They rarely venture past what they see online and typically only follow other individuals whose views, opinions, and biases align with theirs. This social media isolation is reinforced by algorithmic targeting, creating a misinformation/disinformation “filter bubble.” This online environment parallels how many interact with peers in the real world. They are more likely to partake in high-risk activities and often seek peers with similar mindsets. All of these factors lead to a dissonance about the true reality regarding COVID and how important vaccination is for their own health as well as their immediate community.

### **Priority Narratives & Barriers**

This audience has strong cultural nuances embedded in the subgroups that are drawn by ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic differences. Issues for some subgroups such as access to information, lack of formal education, or familial expectations may be very prevalent regarding attitudes about the vaccine in one subgroup and completely absent in others.

The narratives have been prioritized in a broad sense for the major issues that result in vax hesitancy for youth and young adults. The broad groupings address major themes of this audience and the narratives further explain their likely reasoning for perpetuating those themes.

### **Apathy/Underestimation of the Effects of the Virus**

#### **1. "COVID Vaccines Are Unnecessary" (Perceived Low Threat)**

- a. Youth and young adults feel that, because they are young and healthy, they are not at risk for severe illness or death from COVID-19

### **Distrust of Institutions & Authority**

#### **2. "COVID Vaccines Don't Work"**

- a. Lack of understanding of the vaccination process and breakthrough cases

#### **3. "The Big Push"**

- a. The adavance of the government to get people, especially BIPOC, vaccinated is perceived as an active part of a conspiracy theory

#### **4. "It's About Freedom" (Government Control)**

- a. There is a sense of rebellion and distrust of the government's actual ability to make viable decisions for BIPOC

#### **5. "I Just Don't Know" (Overwhelm/Lack Clarity)**

- a. This stems from distrust of institutions and leads this segment to think of the abuses and mistreatment suffered in the past

#### **6. "Covid Vaccines Are Unnecessary" - Rejection of Science**

- a. A deeper level of conspiracy theory and mistrust of institutions but also encompassing research and medical institutions

#### **7. People Should Do their Own Research**

#### **8. "It's about Freedom" (Medical)**

#### **9. "It's Not Worth The Risk" / "COVID Vaccines Aren't Safe"**

- a. Messaging from influencers, peers, and bad actors in social media exaggerates the side-effects of the vaccine

### **Engagement Strategy Insights**

While a large percentage of vax-hesitant *At-Risk Youth & Young-Adult* share a relatively low perceived risk of COVID-19, they also have diverse sub-cultural drivers, resulting in attitudinal subsets.

- ***Life's A B\_\_\_ & Then You Die (Disillusioned & Depressed)*** – For *At-Risk Youth & Young-Adults* in urban areas, there are sentiments of apathy regarding their health that stem from the hardships of living in neighborhoods and communities that have faced outsized disruption. Many of these young people have deprioritized vaccination due to more pressing concerns such as joblessness, housing insecurity, and mental/behavioral health challenges. Communicating that the virus is just as much of a threat as other aspects of their lives will be extremely difficult but can be rooted in taking back one's power through informed decision-making and assuring they are connected to social services that can address their other needs.
- ***Politricks As Usual (Disaffected & Distrustful)*** – There is a subset of *At-Risk Youth & Young-Adults* that have a strong distrust for the government. This distrust manifests in a variety of ways, including belief in conspiracy theories and the rejection of science. These sentiments typically lead to a *wait-and-see* attitude or a strong dependence on homemade/natural remedies. To engage with these beliefs, one must acknowledge their doubts as reasonable, provide assurances through education around safeguards, and clearly lay out the facts regarding the production of the vaccine and exactly how it works scientifically.
- ***#BLKFuturesMatter, So Decolonize Your Life (Determined Social Activists)*** – Yet another subset of *At-Risk Youth & Young-Adults* is very focused on intersectionality, community empowerment and social justice. This group is active in social causes, civic engagement, and healthier living. The Hispanic young people in this group may also be active in the indigenous people's lead movement around "Decolonization." A hallmark of the "Decolonize" movement is the return to indigenous ways of living, such as natural foods and holistic wellness and remedies in place of traditional medicine.

**Key Messages: Positioning & Topics**

- **A Calculated Risk** – Communicate the proven ways that the virus is affecting the body vs. the lack of evidence around the vaccine driving these same symptoms. Combining this strategy with the danger presented to their community by the unvaxxed will address some cultural nuances and their perception of being able to withstand catching COVID because of their youth.

Topics include:

- Long Covid – Expressing the long-term, often ignored, effects of having caught the virus
  - Risk of infertility/erectile dysfunction (Vax vs. COVID)
  - Risk to pregnant mothers (Vax vs. COVID)
  - Breakthrough infections & severe illness/death (Vaxxed vs. Unvaxxed)
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- **The Path to “Better BLKFutures”/Economic Advancement** – AA & HA communities have faced outsized economic disruption due to COVID. Roughly 50% of Black-Owned Small Businesses have shuttered their doors, with no expectations of returning. Many *At-Risk Youth & Young-Adults* are ambitious, aspiring business owners and also have a strong desire to support Black Businesses; “Boss” was a common descriptor in social media profiles and respondents in focus groups spoke to dreams of moguldom. Positioning vaccination as a path to recovery, and assurances against further economic disruption would appeal to these young “future moguls”.

Topics include:

- The Cost of COVID – In human lives, economic disruption, loss of black businesses
- Vaccine Equity – Explain “The Big Push” in black & brown communities
- Tie in employment and job training assistance along with healthcare informational sessions



- **Practice Radical Self-Care** – Tapping into cultural cues from the *Non-Binary*, *Decolonize*, and *Black Lives Matter* movements, positioning vaccination as a form of freedom and radical self-care appeals to the rebellious spirit of the *Determined Social Activist* subset, and their desire for freedom, autonomy, and validation.

Topics include:

- Vaccine Equity – Explain “The Big Push” in black & brown communities
- Mis/disinformation, bad actors, & The Infodemic
- Break free From the filter bubble
- Black Vax History – Onesimus, Dr. James Hildreth, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett

### **Priority Engagement Channels**

- **Mobile** – *At-Risk, Youth & Young Adults* are highly mobile, always on the go, and mobile-first when it comes to media engagement. Any digital platforms, sites, or content should be optimized for mobile. Mobile targeting and Text banking should also be considered strategies for engaging this group.
- **Social Media** – *At-Risk, Youth & Young Adults* are social media mavens who seek different types of experiences from each of their primary platforms:
  - **TikTok** – Discovery, joy, levity
  - **Twitter** – News, Culture, “Shade”/“The Tea”
  - **Instagram** – Exploration of personal lifestyle interests; staying connected to the worlds of their peers and influencers
- **WOM – Family/Trusted Messengers/Peer Ambassadors** – Influenced by the opinions of family as well as local mentors/influencers/celebrities who represent aspirational qualities – financial security, respect, freedom, authenticity. *AYYA*’s are also heavily influenced by their peers when engaged respectfully and with curiosity in culturally relevant settings.
- **Cultural Spaces** – Spaces such as outdoor concerts/festivals and community gatherings can serve as important venues for conversations and effective messaging.

# ALIVE & IN COLOR

- **OOH/ Transit Media (Urban Areas)** – As this is a highly mobile group, but often without personal transportation, transit media and out-of-home are great venues for marketing.
- **Radio** – Music is central to the lives of these young people of color so radio (terrestrial, satellite, and streaming) is an important mode of engagement. They often tune into shows like *The Breakfast Club* (nationally syndicated), *The Kenny Burns Show*, or *The Big Tigger Morning Show* on a daily basis. Subsequently, emcees/hosts of these shows develop a rapport with their young listeners, and can be highly effective in bringing them into conversation with local community leaders and subject matter experts. Leverage the social media platforms of these hosts for Social Media LIVE conversations to expand the reach of your message.

## At-Risk Youth & Young Adults

| Demographics  | Identity, Attitudes, Values   | Cultural Engagement   | Key Cultural Spaces   | Health/ Healthcare   | COVID-19 Risk Factors   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Age</b><br/>18-24 (Core)<br/>13-34 (All)</p> <p><b>Gender</b><br/>Male skew</p> | <p><b>Self-Concept</b><br/>Driven<br/>-----<br/>Outspoken<br/>-----<br/>Passionate<br/>-----<br/>Unapologetically/<br/>authentically black (AA)<br/>-----<br/><b>BUT ALSO</b><br/><br/>Feelings of being<br/>misunderstood and<br/>misrepresented</p> | <p><b>Cultural Openness</b><br/>Range of social<br/>isolation by race and<br/>ethnicity<br/>-----<br/>Experiencing a period<br/>of disillusionment<br/>around race in<br/>America;<br/>Distrust, racial pride,<br/>and empowerment<br/>influence perspective.<br/>(Black Lives Matter, The<br/>Crown Act, etc.)</p> | <p><b>Offline Spaces</b><br/>Outdoor events -<br/>concerts, festivals,<br/>sporting events<br/>-----<br/>Bars/lounges/<br/>parties/eateries<br/>-----<br/>HS/college campus<br/>-----<br/>Barber shops/salons<br/>-----<br/>Neighborhood parks/<br/>basketball courts/ rec<br/>centers/pools<br/>-----<br/>Malls/shopping<br/>centers</p> | <p><b>Relative Trust In<br/>Healthcare</b><br/>High degree of distrust in<br/>healthcare system and<br/>Big Pharma due to<br/>persistent systemic<br/>racism and bias<br/>-----<br/>High vulnerability to<br/>mis/disinformation; 26%<br/>believe in conspiracy<br/>theories</p> | <p><b>Risk Factors</b><br/>Perceived invincibility; apathy -<br/>More likely to underestimate<br/>their personal risk for COVID due<br/>to their age and less likely to<br/>practice risk mitigation<br/>behaviors (3Ws - Wear a mask,<br/>Wash your hands; Watch your<br/>distance (6-feet))<br/>-----<br/>Heavy use of mass transit<br/>-----<br/>High Incidence of undiagnosed<br/>and/or untreated<br/>mental/behavioral health issues<br/>-----<br/>Food insecurity/poor nutrition/<br/>job insecurity/housing insecurity<br/>-----<br/>Substance abuse, obesity, and<br/>risky behaviors (drinking<br/>smoking/ vaping)</p> |

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| <b>Demographics</b>   | <b>Identity, Attitudes, Values</b>   | <b>Cultural Engagement</b>   | <b>Key Cultural Spaces</b>   | <b>Health/ Healthcare</b>  | <b>COVID-19 Vax Confidence</b>   |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b><u>Race/ Ethnicity</u></b><br/>                     African-American<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Bicultural Hispanic-American/ LatinX<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Afro-Latino</p> | <p><b><u>Attitudes/ Values</u></b><br/>                     Fear of failure/feelings of inadequacy and nihilism<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Range of cultural/social isolation<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Diverse viewpoints and social norms - ranging from heavy materialism to cooperative economics and social equity<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Trading "The Hustle" for self-actualization &amp; "radical self-care"<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Spiritual vs. religious</p> | <p><b><u>Subculture Participation</u></b><br/>                     Subcultures heavily based around the culture of their community and socio-economic level<br/>                     -----<br/>                     AA/HA Sports, Culture, &amp; Entertainment<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Geography<br/>                     -----<br/>                     More likely to Use natural/home remedies<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Food/cooking<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Racial justice /immigrant rights<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Faith-based<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Black farmers &amp; liberation farming (Rural)</p> | <p><b><u>Online Spaces</u></b><br/>                     Instagram<br/>                     Twitter<br/>                     TikTok<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Mitu/PeroLike (HA)<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Twitch<br/>                     (Gaming/Streaming)</p> | <p><b><u>Health Behaviors</u></b><br/>                     Less likely to have visited a doctor within the last year - in Fulton County, Georgia, only 45% had a primary care provider in 2020<br/>                     -----<br/>                     May have difficulty staying on medicaid due to administrative burden<br/>                     -----<br/>                     May avoid seeking healthcare in general due to fear of mistreatment/ bias<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Stigmas around seeking mental/behavioral healthcare<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Time-conscious &amp; driven by convenience</p> | <p><b><u>Relative Confidence</u></b><br/>                     Segment with <b>least confidence</b> in COVID vaccine<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Cultural isolation + low vax literacy<br/>                     -----<br/>                     High vulnerability to mis/disinformation<br/>                     -----<br/> <b>Key Areas of Doubt</b><br/>                     Strong distrust of government institutions<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Short-term side-effects that impair ability to work<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Long-term side-effects<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Time/cost constraints<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Underlying conditions<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Pregnancy/fertility<br/>                     -----<br/>                     Speed of development process</p> |

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|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Geography</b><br/>Skews urban<br/>73 % between 19-24 live in rented space</p> <p><b>Education</b><br/>Some HS<br/>HS<br/>GED<br/>Some college<br/>College<br/>Post-grad</p> <p><b>Income</b><br/>\$20,000-<br/>\$40,000</p> | <p><b>Racial/ Ethnic Self-ID</b><br/>Black/ African-American<br/>-----<br/>Country of origin<br/>-----<br/>Afro-Latino<br/>-----<br/>Hispanic/LatinX</p> <p><b>Subcultures</b><br/>Urban, Southern<br/>-----<br/>Rap/hip-hop/urban music/drill (HA /AA)<br/>-----<br/>Football/basketball (AA)<br/>Soccer (HA)<br/>-----<br/>Nation of Islam (Skews Chicago/<br/>Mid-Atlantic/NE)<br/>-----<br/>Decolonize living + Chingona Como Mi Mama (HA Skew)</p> | <p><b>Cultural Markers</b><br/>Urban sports/<br/>Entertainment<br/>ATVs/4 -wheelers<br/>Marvel Entertainment</p> <p><b>Key Lifestyle Influencers</b><br/>Social justice groups (e.g. Liberation Farmers, New Era Detroit)<br/>-----<br/>Sports entertainment Icons<br/>-----<br/>Migos/Cardi B./Charlamagne Tha God/Lizzo/Doja Cat/Da Baby/Issa<br/>Rae/Snoop/Jemele Hill/Colin Kaepernick<br/>-----<br/>Local Black/Hispanic media/radio personalities</p> | <p><b>Key Traditional Channels</b><br/>WOM<br/>-----<br/>Radio<br/>-----<br/>Transit media/OOH</p> <p><b>Online Channels/ Streaming Video</b><br/>The Shade Room<br/>-----<br/>Social Media<br/>Black Twitter<br/>WhatsApp (HA skew)<br/>-----<br/>Worldstar Hip-Hop<br/>-----<br/>TMZ<br/>-----<br/>Bleacher Report<br/>-----<br/>Amazon Prime Video<br/>Netflix<br/>Hulu</p> | <p><b>Level Insured</b><br/>Level insured varies greatly within this group and is dependent largely upon socio-economic status<br/>-----<br/>Medicaid<br/>-----<br/>HMO/PPO<br/>-----<br/>University Health System</p> | <p><b>Trusted Messengers</b><br/>Peers/friends/family<br/>-----<br/>Primary care providers<br/>-----<br/>Culturally congruent subject matter experts<br/>-----<br/>Community advocates/organizers<br/>-----<br/>Social justice advocates<br/>-----<br/>Community health workers<br/>-----<br/>Youth advocates/counselors/teachers/professors<br/>-----<br/>Faith leaders/spiritual advisors</p> |