

## St. Louis COVID-19 Vaccine Insights

Youth and Young Adults

July 15, 2021

**Background:** 33 African American youth and young adults attending a Dance Battle event in St. Louis City on July 13, 2021 chose and responded to one of six questions about the COVID-19 vaccination.

### Top-level findings

1. Unvaccinated respondents outnumbered vaccinated respondents 2-to-1.
2. Among those already vaccinated, protecting their family and loved ones was overwhelmingly the main motivation for getting vaccinated.
3. Five main reasons for not getting vaccinated emerged. Although some reasons were more common than others, none were mentioned by more than one quarter of attendees, but all were mentioned by multiple attendees. In descending order of frequency, they were:
  - a. *Side effects.* Most common was a general concern about unknown possible side effects. Concern about pregnancy and reproductive effects of the vaccine was mentioned by multiple women attendees. One person wondered if the vaccine could cause COVID disease.
  - b. *Lack of information.* Multiple attendees felt there was not enough information, facts or public discussion about the vaccine available to them.
  - c. *More testing and research.* These comments mostly focused on the need for more evidence about the safety of the vaccine, with several comments about the vaccine being too new.
  - d. *Mistrust.* Sources of mistrust included the way the vaccine was tested, its safety, and lack of effort to acknowledge and repair historical mistreatment of Blacks by doctors.
  - e. *Protection of God.* Two unvaccinated attendees specifically mentioned trusting God to protect them and their families from COVID-19.

### Implications for action

1. Enrich the information environment about COVID-19 vaccination for Black youth and young adults.
  - a. Actively work to increase the flow of COVID-19 vaccine information to and specifically for Black youth and young adults.
  - b. Create more opportunities for public discussion of the COVID-19 vaccine among this audience.
2. At every opportunity when communicating with Black youth and young adults about the COVID-19 vaccine, integrate information directly addressing specific barriers.
  - a. Explain how short and long-term *side effects* are tracked by vaccination surveillance systems. Describe the prevalence of COVID-19 side effects in lay terms. Explain that the surveillance system will withdraw approval if there are worrisome side effects (and that has not happened). Specifically address the *reproductive concerns* of young Black women.
  - b. Acknowledge historical *abuses* of African Americans by the medical and scientific communities. Apologize for them. Don't pretend that abuses are all in the distant past.
  - c. *Trusting God* and getting vaccinated are not incompatible. The Lord has given us a powerful tool to protect against the virus. Being vaccinated AND the power of prayer can protect our families.
3. At every opportunity, emphasize that vaccination protects your family and loved ones. In addition to saying it, explain how and why it protects them.

## How were the data collected?

### Setting and attendees

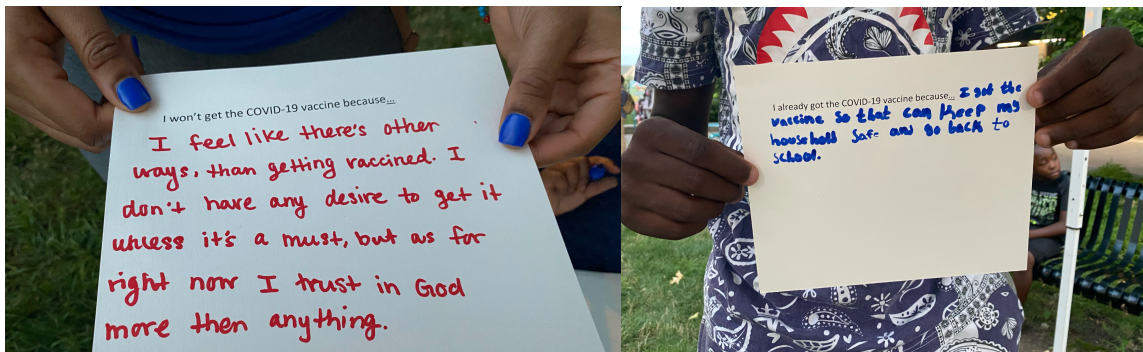
Respondents were attendees at an outdoor [Dance Battle](#) hosted by [Story Stitchers](#) at Strauss Park in the City of St. Louis. The event was held on Tuesday, June 13 from 7pm to 9pm, and attended by about 100 youth and young adults. Story Stitchers is an artist collective of minority youth and young adults, 16-24.

### Methods

Two members of the St. Louis CEAL team were on site to listen to attendees' feelings and beliefs about the COVID-19 vaccine. Attendees could share these by responding in writing to simple prompts printed on card stock. There were six prompts, which read:

- *I won't get the COVID vaccine because...*
- *I might get the COVID vaccine if...*
- *I already got the COVID vaccine because...*
- *People who get the COVID vaccine are...*
- *One question I have about the COVID vaccine is...*
- *I wish the COVID vaccine was...*

Attendees selected a prompt that applied to them and wrote their response on the card. With the attendee's permission, members of the St. Louis CEAL team would photograph their hands holding the response card they completed. Respondents received a \$5 gift card. They could choose between gift cards for Mission Taco, Starbucks, or Target.



### Responses

A total of 32 attendees provided a response. All responses are shown below, organized by prompt.

### Analysis

Authors of this report reviewed all attendee responses independently and identified recurring themes. Through discussion and consensus, the prior findings were agreed upon.

## How did attendees respond to each prompt?

Prompt 1: I won't get the COVID vaccine because... (selected by 9 attendees)

- I believe I'm protected and covered by Jesus. I also believe my family is protected as well. No one in my house has been sick so...ya know.
- I am afraid of needles and it hasn't been around for long. I will get it eventually because of travel.
- I don't think it was tested the right way. It may affect people more.
- I know it won't help me I'll be sick and I see all after affects no thank you.
- I just don't trust the vaccine.
- I feel like there's other ways, than getting vaccinated. I don't have any desire to get it unless it's a must, but as for right now I trust in God more than anything.
- It's not enough information about it.
- A lot MORE RESEARCH.
- I didn't get paid to get it. :)

Prompt 2: I might get the COVID vaccine if... (selected by 5 attendees)

- It's proven to not be harmful or have some long-term health consequences.
- Once they establish more confidence in the actual chemical make-up with less side effect.
- If I can fully get over the mistrust w/ doctors and Black people. There doesn't seem to be much effort to repair what is a historically broken relationship. That said, I am still willing to consider.
- More info about it was talked about publicly.
- There was more tests and less risk.

Prompt 3: I already got the COVID vaccine because... (selected by 8 attendees)

- I want to keep everybody safe and healthy.
- I wanted to keep my family and friends safe. For me, it was worth the risk because of the amount of at-risk people who are in my life.
- I want the chance to be present for my family & enjoy life longer.
- I wanted more protection against the virus. I want to protect my family, didn't want to put anyone at risk.
- I try to do my part to ensure the safety of not only my loved ones, but everyone. Why wouldn't I care about my fellow man's safety?
- I got the vaccine so that can keep my household safe and go back to school.
- BECAUSE, I WANT TO GET BACK OUSSIDE #PRAY4ME/US
- of my age (parent/older respondent)

Prompt 4: People who get the COVID vaccine are... (selected by 1 attendee)

- Saving lives.

Prompt 5: One question I have about the COVID vaccine is... (selected by 5 attendees)

- Will the vaccine change for the better in the future and will it help more people?
- Is it FDA approved?
- Will it give me covid after? Will it give me bad/adverse side effects when I decide to get pregnant?

- My mom is concerned about what it might do to my reproductive system, so what might it do to me?
- Will it last long and do we need to take another? (parent/older respondent)

Prompt 6: I wish the COVID vaccine was... (*selected by 5 attendees*)

- More understood and more people gave facts about it.
- A guarantee for a safe world, like before!
- More tested to that people had more information about what is going in their body.
- Available for children with special needs, they are more affected because they don't know what's going on.
- Never here!!!

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**Questions?** Please contact Taylor Butler: [butler.t@wustl.edu](mailto:butler.t@wustl.edu)

*Special thanks to Story Stitchers for including the St. Louis CEAL team in their Dance Battle event.*