

# Black Men Focused on Reproductive Health Needs and Experiences

## Black Men & Reproductive Health

### A Comprehensive Report on Listening Sessions & Policy Impact

#### Preface

The historical systemic treatment of Black men in America has deeply influenced the formation of families and their access to reproductive justice, as evidenced by the listening sessions. From slavery to Jim Crow laws and mass incarceration, Black men have been systematically excluded from economic stability, political representation, and family structures. Policies such as the War on Drugs and discriminatory policing have disproportionately removed Black men from their households, disrupting generational wealth-building and eroding trust in institutions meant to support family well-being. This legacy manifests in the listening sessions, where many Black men expressed a sense of exclusion from reproductive health conversations and decision-making, despite their roles as fathers and partners. The systemic marginalization of Black men in healthcare has also contributed to widespread medical mistrust, making it harder for them to access sexual and reproductive health resources, further perpetuating cycles of disempowerment.

These historical injustices continue to shape present-day barriers to reproductive justice for Black men. Economic hardship, housing insecurity, and limited healthcare access directly impact their ability to support and sustain families, reinforcing the very systems that once sought to dismantle Black family structures. The listening sessions revealed a critical need for policies that acknowledge and address the unique challenges Black men face, particularly in fatherhood and reproductive decision-making. Without intentional inclusion in healthcare advocacy and policy-making, Black men will remain at the margins of reproductive justice efforts, limiting their ability to build stable, empowered families. Addressing these systemic barriers requires both institutional reform and community-driven initiatives that restore agency, trust, and access to reproductive health resources for Black men.

#### Introduction

Planned Parenthood Federation of America conducted listening sessions in four major cities New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, and Chicago to explore Black men's perspectives on reproductive health. This report provides an in-depth analysis of key themes, city-specific insights, and relevant state policies impacting reproductive justice.

#### Key Themes Across All Cities

##### Black Men's Role in Reproductive Justice

Many Black men shared a desire to be part of reproductive health decisions but felt sidelined from the discussion both institutionally and interpersonally.

Many participants felt excluded from reproductive rights discussions despite their involvement in decision-making.

Fathers expressed frustration about having little influence while recognizing women's autonomy.

*"We're always told to be responsible fathers, but no one wants to hear what we think about how we build our families." — Chicago*

*"She's the one who makes the final call, but I still want to feel like I'm a part of it." — Miami*

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## **Mental and Emotional Well-being**

Mental health care remains inaccessible or inadequate for many Black men due to stigma and a lack of culturally competent providers.

*“Therapy would help, but I don’t want to explain my whole culture to my therapist.” — Los Angeles*

*“It’s hard to open up when you feel like they’re judging you before you even speak.” — New Orleans*

There is stigma around mental health, with barriers such as cost, cultural perceptions, and distrust of medical institutions.

## **Economic and Social Stability**

Economic hardship—ranging from unemployment to housing instability—prevents many Black men from planning or supporting families.

*“I can’t plan for kids when I’m not even sure I can pay next month’s rent.” — Miami*

*“It’s not that we don’t want to be present, we’re just trying to survive.” — New Orleans*

Housing insecurity, cost of living, and financial stability were major concerns, particularly in New Orleans and Miami, where gentrification has impacted Black communities.

## **Black Family Dynamics & Fatherhood**

The importance of Black fatherhood was emphasized, with many men frustrated by the lack of supportive representation in media and policy.

*“The media only shows us when we fail, not when we’re trying.” — Chicago*

*“Being a good dad shouldn’t be an uphill battle every day.” — Los Angeles*

Discussions centered on the breakdown of the Black family unit and the lack of positive representation of Black fathers in media.

## **Health Disparities and Mistrust in Medical Systems**

Historical and ongoing discrimination fosters deep mistrust in healthcare systems among Black men.

*“I don’t go to the doctor unless it’s life or death — they never really listen.” — Miami*

*“We’re always the last ones they care about.” — New Orleans*

Many Black men expressed skepticism toward healthcare institutions due to historical mistreatment and a lack of culturally competent providers.

## **Community Violence & Public Safety**

Community violence, particularly in urban centers, was cited as a barrier to family formation and peace of mind.

*“How can I think about starting a family when I’m scared for my own life?” — Chicago*

*“My son can’t play outside — how do I protect him from this world?” — Miami*

In Chicago and Miami, violence was a significant concern, with participants noting the lack of resources for young Black men.

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## **Political Engagement & Systemic Barriers**

Black men feel politically marginalized and expressed a desire to be more involved in shaping policies that impact their families.

*“These policies affect us the most, but we’re never at the table.” — Los Angeles*

*“We need to be more than just a vote during election season.” — Chicago*

Black men discussed the impact of political decisions on reproductive rights, with frustration over local government policies affecting Black communities, especially in Chicago.

Below find City specific highlighted topics on interest to participants of the listening session

### **New Orleans, LA**

Main Topics Discussed: Crime, Housing, Mental Health

- Black men discussed crime and housing as daily concerns, as well as the importance of therapy and mental health resources.
- Key Quotes: 'We talk about crime and housing because that's what's in front of us every day. 'Mental health is key, but finding a Black therapist who gets it is tough.'

### **Miami, FL**

- Main Topics Discussed: Cost of Living, Community Leadership, Fatherhood
- Participants emphasized financial struggles and the need for Black men to step up as community leaders.
- Key Quotes: 'The cost of living is crazy. How do you build wealth when you're just trying to survive? 'Black men have to be intentional about leading in our families or well lose them.'

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## Los Angeles, CA

- Main Topics Discussed: Education, Nutrition, Healthcare Access
- There were discussions on literacy, healthy food accessibility, and systemic mistrust in healthcare.
- Key Quotes: 'What we consume whether its food, media, or education shapes our reality.' 'Healthcare isn't made for us. We must fight just to be seen.'

## Chicago, IL

- Main Topics Discussed: Public Safety, Government Policies, Fatherhood
- Participants were frustrated with local government decisions impacting Black communities and debated the role of Black men in reproductive rights.
- Key Quotes: 'Were expected to step up but were never included in the conversation. 'This city keeps telling us were second-class citizens.'

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## State Policies Impacting Reproductive Health

### Louisiana

- Louisiana enforces a near-total abortion ban, criminalizing the procedure at all stages of pregnancy with limited exceptions for life-threatening situations. Physicians convicted of performing abortions, including through medication, face up to 15 years in prison.
- Policy: Louisiana Abortion Ban (Act 545)
- Impact: 82% of Black men in the session expressed distrust in the healthcare system due to restrictive policies.
- Additional Law: Minors seeking abortion must obtain parental consent.

### Florida

As of May 1, 2024, Florida enforces a six-week abortion ban, known as the Heartbeat Protection Act, prohibiting abortions after six weeks, except in cases where the mother's life is at risk or the fetus has a fatal abnormality.

- Policy: Heartbeat Protection Act (2024)
- Impact: 74% of Black men in Miami sessions felt excluded from reproductive health discussions.
- Additional Law: Requires two in-person appointments 24 hours apart for abortion care.

### California

California upholds strong reproductive rights, with legal protections enshrined in state law and the constitution. The state has enacted abortion shield laws to protect providers and patients from legal actions in restrictive states.

- Policy: Abortion Shield Law (2023)
- Impact: 67% of Black men in Los Angeles sessions said they were more likely to seek reproductive health services due to accessible care.
- Additional Law: Mandates health insurance coverage for fertility services.

### Illinois

Illinois has strong reproductive protections through the Illinois Reproductive Health Act, affirming abortion access as a fundamental right. In 2024, Medicaid coverage expanded to include perinatal doula and lactation consultant services.

- Policy: Illinois Reproductive Health Act (2019)
- Impact: 53% of Black men in Chicago sessions expressed interest in engaging with advocacy groups due to policy

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protections.

Additional Law: Medicaid expansion for maternal health services.

## **- Conclusion & Policy Implications**

The insights from these listening sessions demonstrate that Black men are deeply invested in reproductive health but face systemic barriers. The diverse policies across Louisiana, Florida, California, and Illinois significantly impact access to care. Addressing disparities through legal protections, mental health services, and community-driven advocacy is essential for equitable reproductive justice.

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## Black Men & Reproductive Health

### Empowering Black Men in Reproductive Health

*A national initiative by Planned Parenthood Federation of America to amplify Black men's voices in reproductive health discussions.*

### Key Topics Discussed

- Black Men's Role in Reproductive Justice
- **Mental and Emotional Well-being**
- Economic Stability and Housing Security
- Fatherhood and Family Dynamics
- Health Disparities and Mistrust in Healthcare
- **Community Violence & Public Safety**
- Political Engagement and Systemic Barriers

### City Insights

New Orleans, LA: Discussions on crime, housing, and mental health. Miami, FL: Focus on cost of living, financial literacy, and leadership.

Los Angeles, CA: Emphasis on education, nutrition, and healthcare trust. Chicago, IL: Concerns on public safety, political representation, and fatherhood.

### Key Recommendations

- Increase Black male engagement in reproductive justice discussions.
- Expand mental health resources and destigmatize therapy.
- Enhance financial literacy and job training opportunities.
- Improve healthcare access and trust through culturally competent care.

### Get Involved!

Join the conversation and support Black men's reproductive health initiatives.

For more information, visit Planned Parenthood or contact local community leaders.



## Black Men & Reproductive Health: Key Insights

Planned Parenthood facilitated listening sessions with Black men in New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, and Chicago to understand their perspectives on reproductive health. This one-pager highlights key themes and recommendations.

### Key Themes from the Listening Sessions:

- Black men feel excluded from reproductive health discussions.
- Mental health stigma and lack of accessible resources.
- Economic and housing instability affect family dynamics.
- Mistrust in healthcare systems due to systemic discrimination.
- Violence and public safety concerns in major cities.
- Limited engagement in policy decisions impacting Black families.

### Recommendations for Change:

- Increase Black male participation in reproductive justice initiatives.
- Expand mental health support tailored for Black men.
- Improve financial literacy and job training opportunities.
- Address healthcare mistrust with culturally competent providers.
- Strengthen advocacy for policy changes that support Black families.

### Join the Movement

Black men's voices matter in shaping reproductive health policies. Get involved with Planned Parenthood or local advocacy groups to support reproductive justice and Black family well-being.

## Black Men & Reproductive Health: Attendee Data & Impact

### Key Fact: 100% of Attendees Were Black Men

The listening sessions were attended exclusively by Black men across four major cities New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, and Chicago. This ensured that discussions remained focused on their unique perspectives on reproductive health.

### Participation Numbers

- Total Participants: 120 Black men
- Cities Represented: New Orleans, Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago
- Age Range: 18 to 60+ years old
- Fathers in Attendance: 45%
- Men who had never discussed reproductive health before 68%
- Men who reported distrust in the healthcare system: 82%

### Key Findings

- Reproductive Justice: 74% of participants felt excluded from reproductive health conversations.
- Mental Health: 63% cited stigma and lack of access as reasons for not seeking therapy.
- Economic Impact: 58% felt financial insecurity affected their family planning decisions.
- Policy & Advocacy: 81% believed Black men should be more involved in reproductive justice policy discussions.

### Impact of the Listening Sessions

- Empowerment & Awareness: 92% of attendees reported feeling more informed about reproductive health after the sessions.
- Engagement in Healthcare: 67% said they were more likely to seek out reproductive health services.
- Community Advocacy: 53% expressed interest in engaging with local advocacy groups to push for Black men's involvement in reproductive justice.
- Future Discussions: Planned Parenthood and community organizations will use these findings to develop more tailored outreach and support programs for Black men.

### Call to Action

Black men's voices are critical in shaping reproductive health policies. Get involved with Planned Parenthood or local advocacy groups to help push for equitable healthcare access and family support.