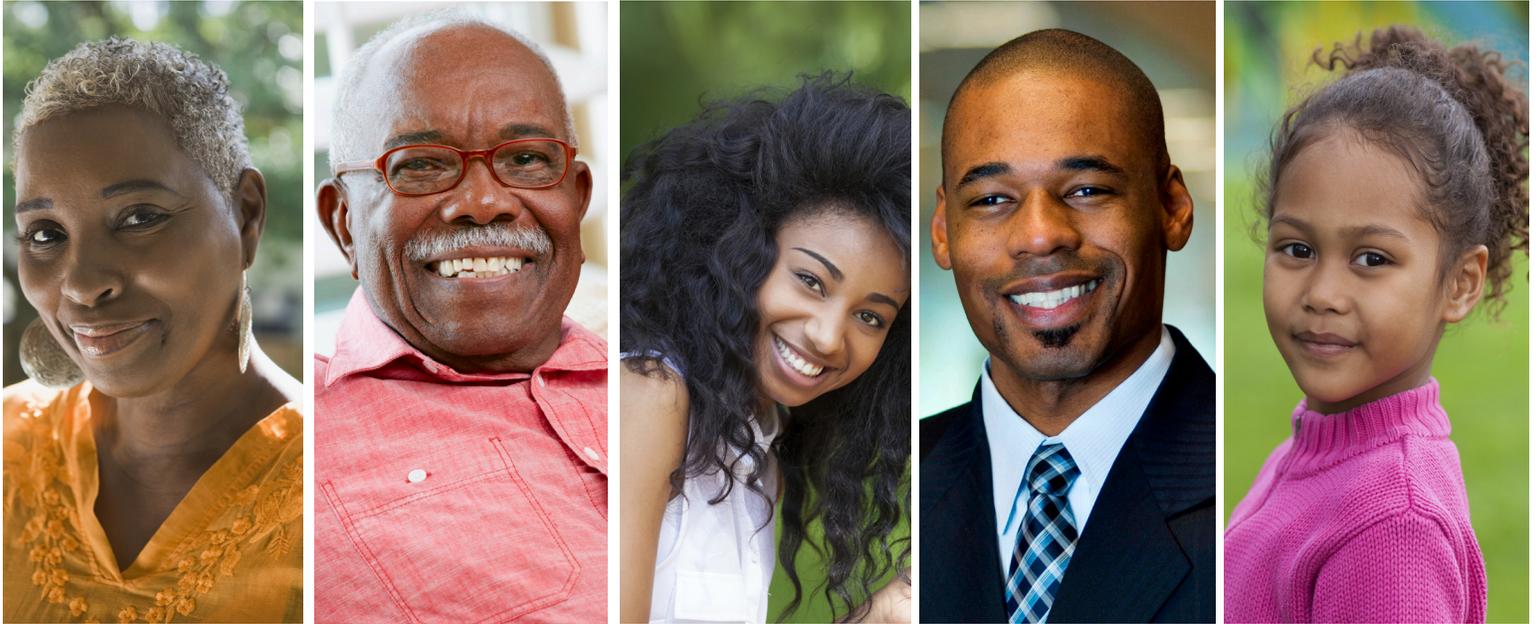


# Audience Insights

## African Americans



*CDC's Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch (SPCB) in the Office of the Associate Director for Communication (OADC), Division of Communication Services (DCS), provides CDC programs with audience-specific information such as needs, preferences, and characteristics. SPCB's audience research specialists analyze market research data on various target audiences and suggest ways to apply the findings to communication efforts. For more information, contact <mailto:SPCBHealthMktg@cdc.gov>.*

**Audience Insights are created from various sources and can provide you with meaningful information about a particular target audience. This issue describes the demographics, healthcare, media use and lifestyles of African American adults using Scarborough data collected in 2013 (Source: Scarborough USA+ 2013 Release 2, August 2012-September 2013). Scarborough is a licensed proprietary market data source provided by Nielsen, Inc., and includes a variety of information about the lifestyles, media preferences, healthcare use, and shopping patterns of U.S. adults. Market research results like these help to paint a**

**detailed picture of target audiences and can guide your program in creating messages for communication campaigns that resonate with your audience. For more information on Scarborough data, please visit [www.scarborough.com](http://www.scarborough.com).**



## Demographic Insights—Who Are African Americans: By the Numbers

The accompanying table shows demographic characteristics of African American adults compared to the rest of the U.S. population (excluding African American adults). Highlights include:

- The African American population is younger than other U.S. adults. About 23% of African Americans are between the ages of 18 and 29 compared to 20% of U.S. adults overall.
- Comparable with other U.S. adults at 10%, about 13% of African Americans have less than a high school education. Ten percent of African Americans are college graduates, compared to 15% of U.S. adults. Six percent of African Americans hold an advanced degree compared to 10% of other U.S. adults.
- Some 41% of African American households earn less than \$35,000 per year, compared to 28% of other U.S. adults. About 12% of African American households earn more than \$100,000 annually, compared to 22% of other U.S. adult households.
- About 4 in 10 African Americans adults report being unemployed and 8% report they are looking for work.
- Most African American adults live in the South (56%).
- Nearly 40% of African American adults live in households of 1 or 2 people, with 1 in 5 living in single-adult households.
- More than 6 in 10 African American adults don't have children.
- About 50% of African Americans 18 years of age or older rent their residence compared to 27% of U.S. adults overall.

	African Americans	Other U.S. Adults
<b>Total Population</b>	25,704,638	237,024,889
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	44.5%	49%
Female	55.5%	51%
<b>Age</b>		
18-29	23%	20%
30-44	30%	26%
45-59	27%	27%
60 or above	21%	27%
<b>Level of education</b>		
Less than high school	13%	9%
High school	38%	33%
Some college	31%	31%
College graduate	10%	15%
Graduate degree	6%	10%
<b>Household income</b>		
< \$35,000	42%	30%
\$35,000- \$49,000	22%	20%
\$50,000- \$74,999	14%	17%
\$75,000- \$99,999	10%	14%
\$100,000+	13%	20%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	34%	56%

## Health Care Access and Use

### African Americans' Health Care Use at a Glance:

- ❖ **88% of African American adults bought a medication in the last year, compared to 91% of other U.S. adults. The most commonly purchased medications were for cold and flu, allergies, and high-blood pressure.**
- ❖ **About 3 in 4 African Americans saw a medical specialist in the year before participating in the survey compared to 80% of U.S. adults overall. Dentists, ophthalmologists, and obstetricians or gynecologists topped the list of specialists most visited by African Americans.**
- ❖ **About one-third of African Americans used a hospital emergency room for care in the past three years -- similar to the rest of the U.S. adult population.**

### African Americans' Health Insurance Coverage (pre-Affordable Care Act enrollment period):

**About 83% of African American adults are insured, compared to 89% of the general adult population. Among those African Americans with insurance, the top 5 types of health insurance reported are:**

- 1. Medicare (22.7%)**
- 2. PPO (Preferred Provider Organization) (22.3)**
- 3. Medicaid (17%)**
- 4. Other (13.8%)**
- 5. HMO (13.2%)**

**Nearly two out of every 10 African American adults are enrolled in Medicaid. Partnering with state Medicaid programs may be a good way to reach this segment with public health messages.**

## What kinds of activities do adult African Americans engage in?

- **The most common activities African Americans reported doing in the last year were lawn care (39%), gardening (32%), running (30%), swimming (24%), bicycling (23%), and bowling (21%). By comparison, other U.S. adults engaged in lawn care (51%), gardening (50%), swimming (35%), bicycling (28%), and jogging (26%).**
- **About 18% of African American adults report having a health or exercise club membership, comparable to the rest of the U.S. adult population.**



## African American Adults and Smoking Cessation

- **Only 2% of African Americans 18 and older bought medication in the past 12 months to help them quit smoking, mirroring the percentage of the general adult population that also bought smoking-cessation medications.**

## Media Habits of African American Adults—Traditional & Digital Media

The top 5 African American media markets are listed in the table below. These top markets are determined by the number and percentage of the U.S. African American population living in each city. When implementing a communication campaign targeting African Americans, these markets may be important to include in media buys and promotional activities to reach a large segment of the African American population.

African American Population	% of the Us African American Population
1. New York: 2,706,753	9.3%
2. Atlanta: 1,412,987	4.8%
3. Chicago: 1,210,272	4.2%
4. Washington, D.C.: 1,174,925	4.0%
5. Philadelphia: 1,106,084	3.8%
<b>Total: 7,611,021</b>	<b>29.9%</b>

### TV, radio and the local newspaper are good mediums to reach African Americans:

- African American adults watch more television than other U.S. adults -- they reported watching an average of 34 hours of TV in the week before participating in the survey, compared to 27 hours per week among U.S. adults overall.
- ABC, CBS, NBC, and BET are the most-watched TV networks by African American adults. When it comes to watching news, slightly more than half (54%) watch the evening broadcast with almost 51% watching the morning show. About one-third (35%) watch late news.
- About 61% of African American adults subscribe to cable television, and 71% own a high-definition TV. Movies, comedies, and news shows are popular among this audience.
- Adult African Americans tend to be light newspaper readers with a little more than 50% not reading newspapers, and 22% reporting that they read one newspaper the week before participating in the survey. For those who read the newspaper, more than half read the main news (or front page) and local news section.
- African Americans reported listening to the radio a little more than 10 hours in the week before participating in the survey, mirroring radio-listening habits for other U.S. adults.
- Urban adult contemporary and Urban contemporary are the radio station formats African American adults listen to most often.



## Going Online

- Most African American households own a computer (84%).
- Although Internet access among African American adults is widespread (78%), this target audience tends to spend slightly less time online than the general population. For example, about 30% of African Americans report spending no time online in an average week compared to 21% of other U.S. adults.
- Most adult African Americans use social media (46%). However, about 25% of those who use social media spend less than 1 hour per day on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., compared to about 33% of other U.S. adults. The most common social media activities for African Americans included visiting a friend's page, commenting on a friend's post, sending a message, and updating their status.

**Many African Americans use the Internet for practical, everyday tasks. The top five ways this audience reported using the Internet are listed in the following table.**

Top 5 Ways African American Adults Use the Internet and Apps in the Last 30 Days	%
Social networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	47.8%
Maps/GPS	37.7%
Instant Message	35.7%
Search (Google, Yahoo!, etc.)	34.3%
Games	30.6%

## Going Mobile

- About 93% of African American adults own a cell phone; of that, 52% own a smartphone. African Americans are also more likely than other U.S. adults to own an Android than an IOS (Mac-based platform).
- About 71% of African American adults send text messages on their cell phone.
- African American adults use their cell phones for music (52%), social media (28%), games (17%), and other functions. Since African American adults rely on their cell phone for multiple purposes, mobile devices may be an effective way to reach them.
- About 33% of adult African Americans own a handheld-digital tablet, such as an iPad or Samsung Galaxy.



## Lifestyle

**Concerned for the greater good: A strong inclination to help others can be recognized and incorporated into communication efforts:**

- ❖ About 25% of African American adults report volunteering in the past year, compared to 28% of U.S. adults overall.
- ❖ Two-thirds of African American adults contributed money to organizations in the past year with 37% contributing to religious groups. About 67% of U.S. adults other than African Americans contributed money to organizations in the last year with 37% contributing to a religious organization.
- ❖ 92% of African American adults engage in eco-friendly activities on a regular basis, including recycling, buying locally grown or organic food, and using energy-efficient household items. About 96% of U.S. adults engage in these eco-friendly activities.

### Quenching their thirst:

- About 6 in 10 African Americans reported drinking regular soft drinks in the week before taking the survey, and 3 in 10 reported drinking diet soft drinks in the same timeframe.
- A greater percentage of African American adults drink bottled water and juice products when compared to other U.S. adults. In the week before participating in the survey, almost half (47% ) of African American adults reported drinking bottled water while 27% reported drinking fruit juice/juice drinks.
- About 36% of African American adults report drinking beer in the last month compared to 43% of other U.S. adults. Some 7% of African Americans drink wine once a month, mirroring the percentage for U.S. adults overall.



### Grocery shopping habits:

- The use of coupons among African Americans 18 years and older is similar to that of other U.S. adults with about 25% using coupons two to three times each month.
- African American and other U.S. adult households (19% each) cite Walmart Supercenter as the grocery store where they buy the most groceries.
- The top 5 used foods in the household in the last seven days for African American households- 75% fresh meat, 64% packaged meat, 58% ice cream products, 55% cereal, and 55% chips. Similarly, the top 5 used foods in the household in the last seven days for US adults- 77% fresh meat; 66% coffee, 63% packaged meat, 62% cereal, and 59% chips.
- Nearly 6 in 10 African American households reported shopping at a convenience store the week before participating in the survey, comparable to other U.S. adult households.

## Additional Health Communication Resources

The following summaries draw from various market research reports to provide additional insight into this target audience.

- ❖ African American radio has loyal listeners and followers. Public health practitioners should consider using a wider range of media and approaches to influence behavior and further explore how African American radio -- a potentially cost-effective communication channel along with its online networks and supportive community partnerships -- can be used and evaluated as a method of communicating to African American audiences.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Adult African American smokers are less likely than the general population to seek advice about quitting from their doctors, or to use tobacco cessation aids such as patches, gums, lozenges, and prescription medications. But, they are responsive to tobacco media campaigns with “positive encouragement and have lower quit rates compared with smokers from other racial or ethnic populations.”<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ African American churches may serve as a good medium to spread health messages to African Americans. According to a survey of African American church members, churches have a responsibility to promote healthy living within the communities they serve.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ African American households are more likely to include a single parent -- most often a woman. Almost half of African American grandparents who live in the same household with their grandchildren serve as primary caregivers.<sup>4</sup> Consider aligning communication campaigns with mothers and grandparents when targeting the African American community.
- ❖ A 2012 poll conducted by The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation found that although African American women are heavier than their white counterparts, they report substantially higher levels of self-esteem.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ African Americans value family time and entertaining.<sup>4</sup> Consider building your communication messages around family and social themes to appeal to this tradition. When asked which term African Americans preferred to be called, 44% preferred “black,” 43% preferred “African American,” and 11% did not care.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ African Americans are more likely to live in the downtowns of major cities and surrounding high-density neighborhoods, which usually include the central business district and earliest suburban areas. About 30% of African American households are located in these urban areas, compared with 17% of all households.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ More than 80% of African Americans believe that African American media, and the products advertised in black media, are more relevant to them.<sup>4</sup> Consider using African American media outlets as mediums to reach African American consumers in trusted environments where they see themselves most reflected.



## References\*

1. Preventing Chronic Disease. The potential of African American radio to spread health messages and reduce disparities. 2010. Available at: [http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2010/jul/09\\_0194.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2010/jul/09_0194.htm)
2. American Journal of Health Promotion. A national mass media smoking cessation campaign: Effects by race, ethnicity, and educational attainment. 2011. Available at: <http://www.ajhpcontents.com/doi/full/10.4278/ajhp.100617-QUAN-201?prevSearch=Vallone&searchHistoryKey=>
3. Health Promotion Practice. Examining characteristics of congregation members willing to attend health promotion events in African American churches. 2013. Available at: <http://hpp.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/03/14/1524839913480799.full>
4. Nielsen. African-American consumers: Still vital, still growing 2012 report. 2012. Available at: <http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/microsites/publicaffairs/StateOfTheAfricanAmericanConsumer2012.pdf>
5. The Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation. Black women in America. 2012. Available at: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8271.cfm>

**For more information,**

About Audience Insights: African Americans, contact the Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch at [SPCBHealthMktg@cdc.gov](mailto:SPCBHealthMktg@cdc.gov).

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthCommunication/>

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
Office of the Associate Director for Communication  
Division of Communication Services  
Strategic and Proactive Communication Branch