

THE STATE OF BLACK OPPOSITION AND ENGAGEMENT IN 2026

TERRANCE WOODBURY
Founding Partner

DR. DANIELLE LEMI
Research Manager

ROSHNI NEDUNGADI
Founding Partner

DR. KIM CARDENAS
Senior Analyst

©HITstrategies

**BLACK
OPPS
PROJECT**

The logo graphic consists of three concentric, semi-transparent orange circles that overlap each other, creating a sense of depth and movement. The circles are positioned to the right of the text 'BLACK OPPS PROJECT'.

PROJECT SEQUENCING AND PHASES

PHASE 1: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Can Black voters be activated to defend economic justice?

Aug 20-21, 2025

- Black registered voters of all genders under 40, Black men registered over 40, Black women registered voters across age groups
- Economic Resistance baseline/Messaging

National Focus Groups (Economy)

Oct 15-23, 2025

- N=1000 Black registered voters
- Test economic pain points, create economic justice activation index

National Survey (Economy)

Jan 30-Feb 5, 2026

- N=1813 registered voters
- Test 3 AI generated activation messages

National Content Test (Economy)

PHASE 2: DEFEND DEMOCRACY

Can Black voters be activated to defend democracy?

October 23, 2025

- Black registered voters of all genders under 40

January 29, 2026

- Black men registered voters over 40

February 26, 2026

- Black women registered voters across all ages
- Defend Democracy baseline/Messaging

National Focus Groups (Democracy)

April 2026

- N=1000 Black registered voters
- Test democracy pain points, create democracy activation index

National Survey (Democracy)

June 2026

- Test 2 AI generated activation messages

National Content Test (Democracy)

Phase 2 findings to be released in Summer of 2026.

- 1** Many Black voters feel collective economic harm of the federal government's policies, but we still must connect the dots for many.

→

 - 59% say Trump policies have hurt them personally, up from 47% in April 2025
 - 82% of the most active (Defenders) but only 41% of the least active (Spectators) perceive personal impact from Trump policies
 - This gap in personal impact recognition is a central barrier to mobilizing early resistance and later voting
- 2** Black voters are engaging in resistance activities—but unevenly, with some Black voters feeling much more urgency to fight back than others.

→

 - 30% of Black voters are Defenders—that are highly active in defending economic justice (older, educated, high earners)
 - 34% of Black voters are Activatables—that can be activated to take more resistance actions
 - 24% of Black voters are Spectators—that do not see the urgency for Black people to take action now and consequently, least likely to vote later
- 3** Barriers to resistance that prevent many from engaging in public resistance activities fall into 3 categories: fear, leadership, and efficacy.

→

 - Fear of arrest, violence or political retaliation at work
 - Leaders that are expected to resist are not, leaving many to feel abandoned
 - Efficacy concerns that resistance is futile and will not change any of their pain
- 4** Motivations to resist vary by sub-group, but must be anchored in collective power, action, and impact.

→

 - The top motivations for Black voters to resist government actions: combatting racism (47%), defending rights and family (35%), and defending American democracy (30%)
 - Leverage the perceptions of Black collective power that are greater than a single individual's power
- 5** This messaging makes Black voters +10 points more likely to boycott and +7 points more likely to protest, and increases vote likelihood among Black men by +10 and Black younger (ages 35-54) voters by +11 points.

→

 - Center real people's pain, and position them as the leader/heroes of the resistance that are calling for collective action

BARRIERS OF RESISTANCE

What prevents some Black people from resisting?

Fear of Arrest

Lack of Resistance,
Leadership, or Plan

Fear of Violence

Lack of Impact
or Change

Fear of Professional
Retaliation

Never been asked
to resist

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

What to DO to increase Black resistance?

- Paid advertising campaigns to join [not just do] collective resistance activities
 - Promote collective resistance plan with key tactics, intended outcomes, and ways to escalate peacefully
- Paid advertising campaigns promoting progress and wins from resistance activities
- Resistance Help hotline (QR Codes) for people that encounter problems from protesting
- Know your rights training to inform people of how to resist within the confines of the law
 - Encourage collective actions lead by an identified trusted leader or organization
- Offer regular updates on resistance activities and impact

MESSAGING RECOMMENDATIONS:

What to SAY to increase Black resistance?

Economic Pain Points

Name harmful government actions/policies AND how they specifically impact the Black community.



Proof of Progress from Resistance

Name examples of collective actions and how they resulted in meaningful progress.



Highlight Motivations

Describe the things that they are willing to fight for.



Inoculate the Barriers

Including risk of arrest, violence, or professional harm.



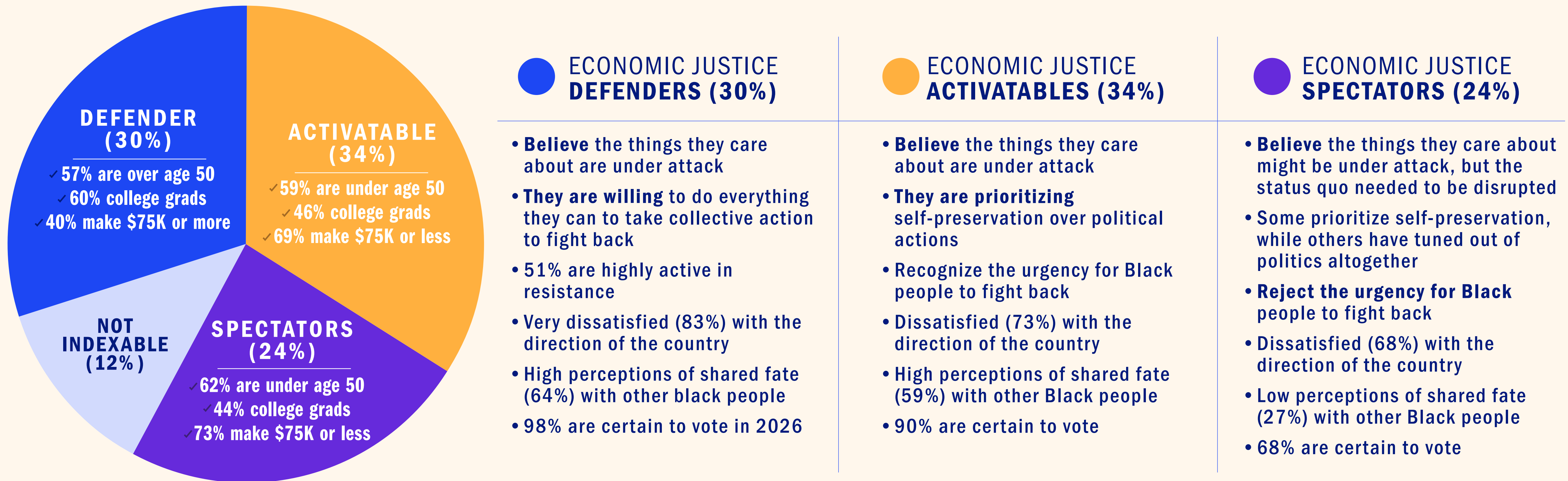
Call to Action

Reduce the risk and burden of the call to action according their level of resistance urgency.

ACTIVATION INDEX: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The HIT Activation index defines which Black voters are **Economic Justice DEFENDERS** and are actively resisting, **Economic Justice ACTIVATABLES** that could be mobilized to resist, and **Economic Justice SPECTATORS** and not willing to resist government actions.

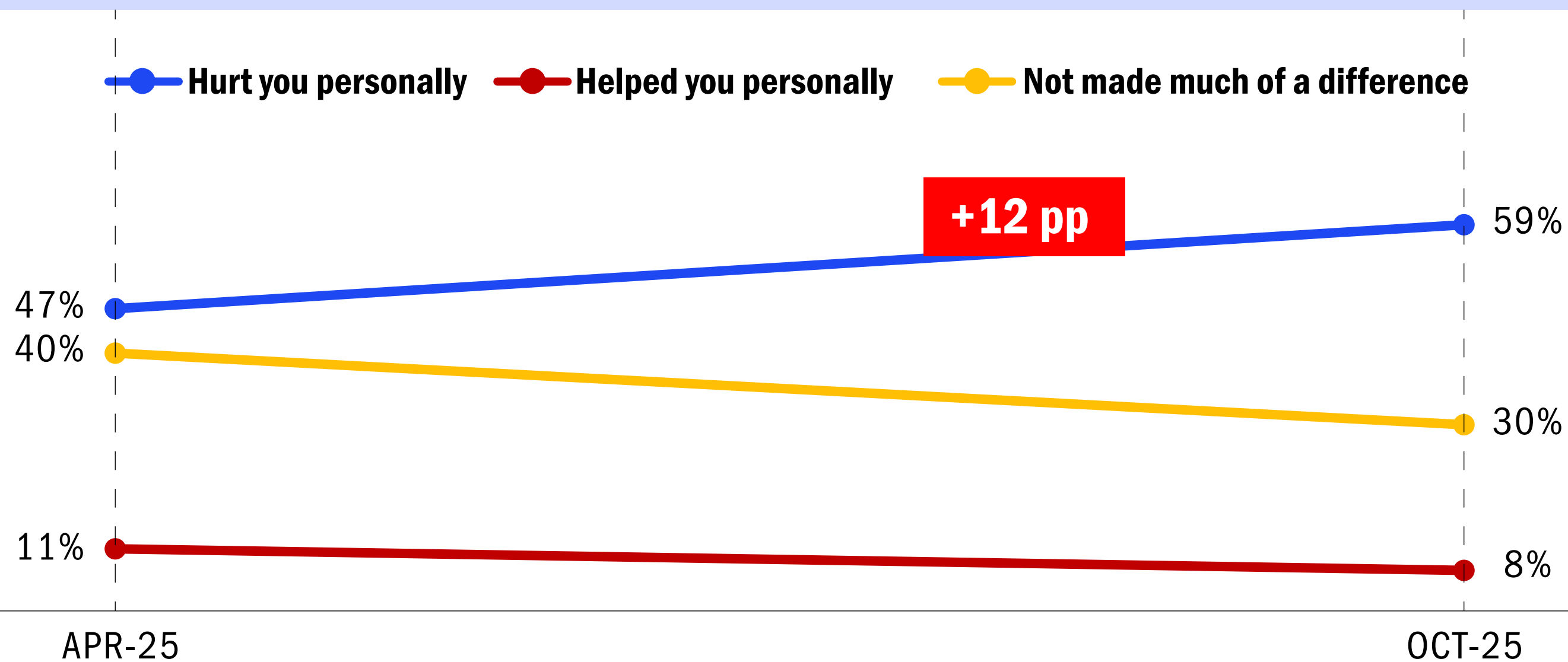
The index reveals how this has largely become a resistance of privilege with the most active **DEFENDERS** being older, more educated, and higher income than the less active **SPECTATORS**.



IMPACT OF TRUMP'S POLICIES ON BLACK VOTERS

Compared to April 2025, more Black voters think Trump's policies have hurt them, but 30% still think his policies have not made much of a difference—especially men under 50.

[APR/OCT2025] Q19 Do you think Donald Trump's policies have...?



✓ Black voters that believe Trump's policies have hurt them are more likely to take action to fight back against them.

✓ Young voters, Activatables, Spectators, and Inactive voters are also more likely to think Trump's policies have not made a difference.

	Men <50	Men 50+	Women <50	Women 50+	Defender	Activatable	Spectator	Inactive (0-2 actions)	Moderately active (3-4)	Highly active (5+)
Hurt You personally	41%	68%	56%	73%	82%	62%	41%	48%	59%	73%
Helped you personally	17%	8%	8%	1%	4%	7%	11%	7%	14%	7%
Not made much of a difference	42%	24%	30%	22%	13%	29%	47%	43%	25%	18%

* Black Opps National Resistance Survey. Fielded October 15-23, 2025. N=1000 Black registered voters nationwide.

* April 2025 Times/Siena Poll. Fielded April 21-24, 2025. N=913 registered voters.

RESISTANCE TACTICS, THE BARRIERS, AND MOTIVATIONS TO FIGHT BACK

What resistance action have Black voters taken?

What barriers prevent them from taking more actions?

What would motivate them to take more action?

WHAT DOES POLITICAL RESISTANCE LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO RAISE RESISTANCE?



“I would say get more involved locally, like the city council and things like that. Every time they have those meetings, it's not really too many people in attendance. A lot of people don't think that writing letters and that will go anywhere.”

*—Black woman, 47, OH,
(Black Women Registered Voters
Across Age Groups)*

FIGHT BACK THROUGH VOTER EDUCATION



“I think for me it's education, like voter education, helping people understand how their local politics impacts their lives and also just understanding civics.”

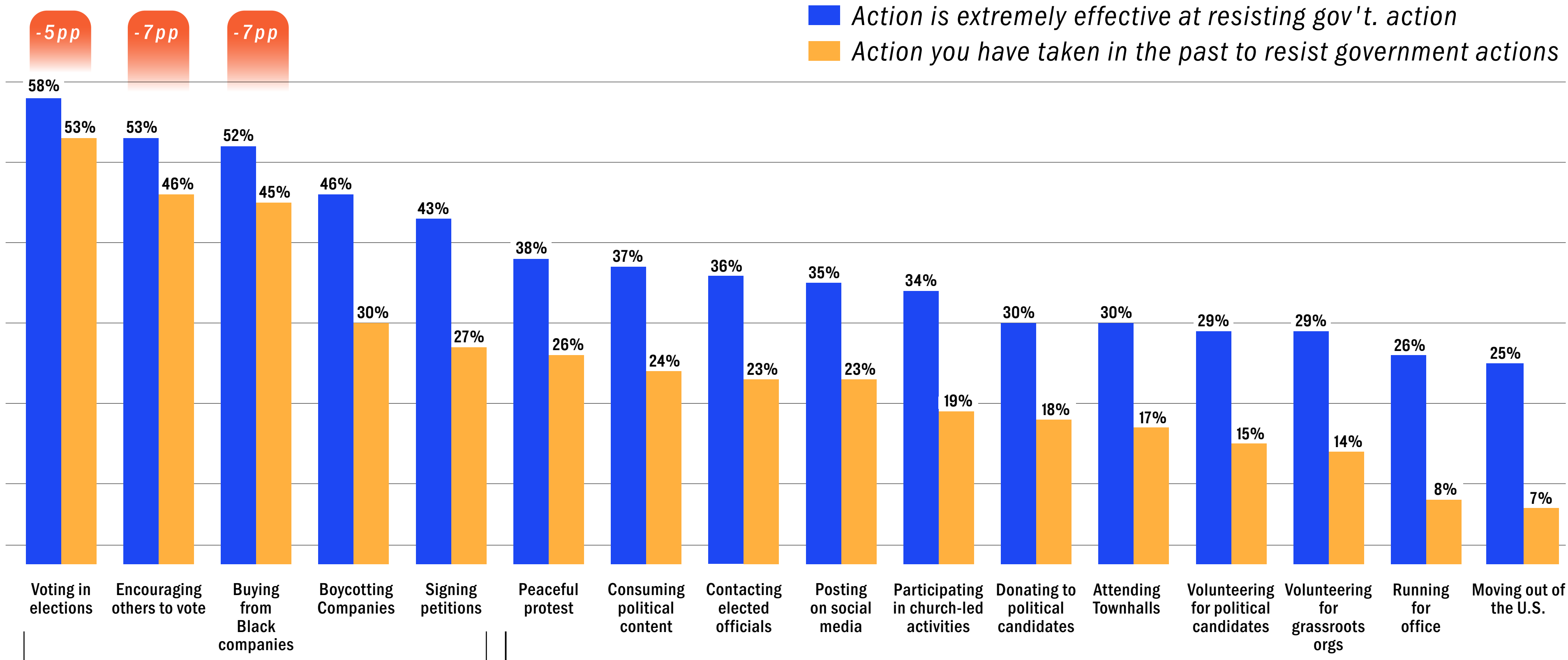
*—Black man, 30, MD,
(Black Registered Voters of
All Genders Under 40)*



BLACK OPPTS YOUTUBE PLAYLIST:
Click here for media waved Black Opps Focus Group clips that can be used in media and broadcast

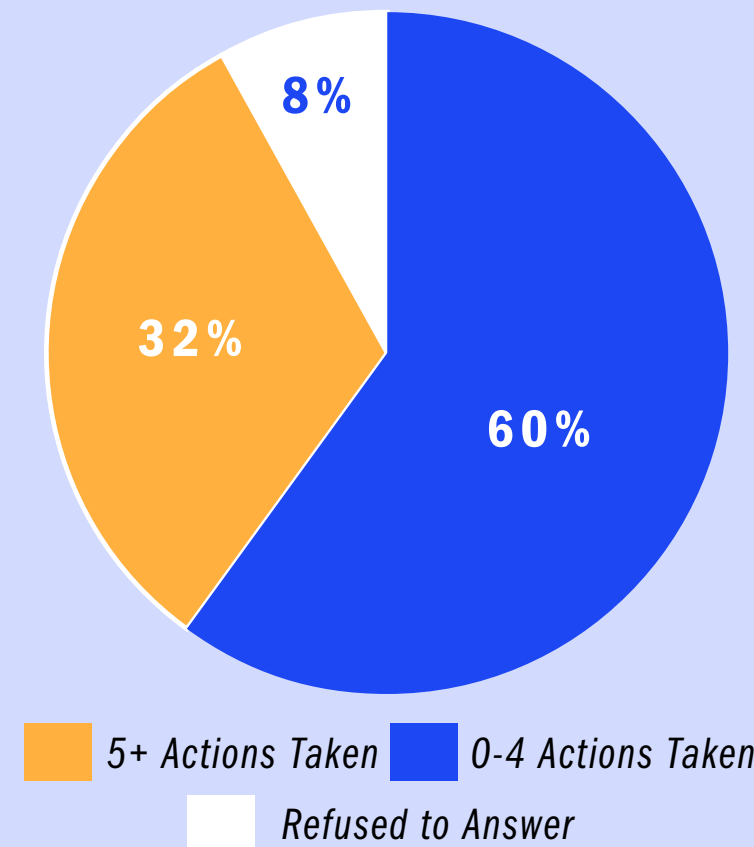
RESISTANCE ACTIONS

The gap between resistance actions that are considered extremely effective and resistance actions taken in the past year represent the mobilization opportunity. But most Black people have never been asked to resist in the past few months.*

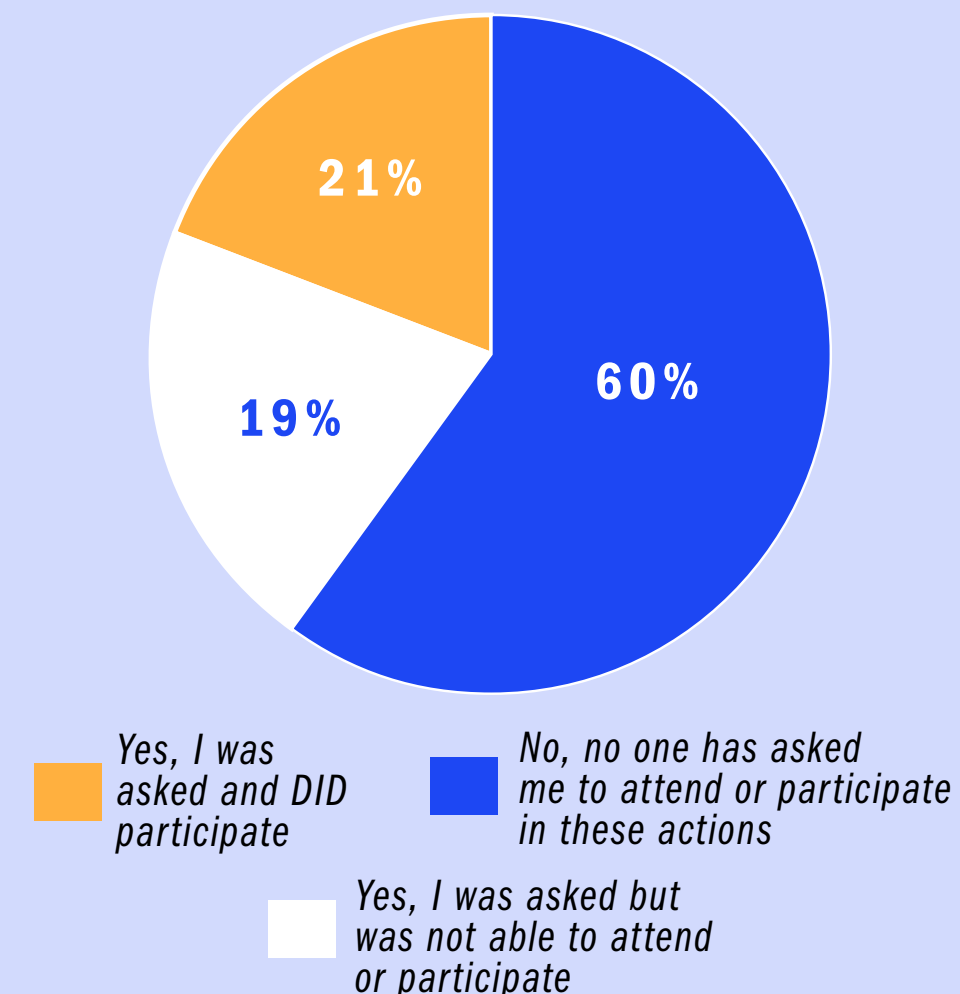


■ Action is extremely effective at resisting gov't. action
■ Action you have taken in the past to resist government actions

HOW MANY RESISTANCE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN THE PAST YEAR?



HAVE YOU BEEN ASKED TO PARTICIPATE IN RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST YEAR?



BLACK PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IN PRIVATE, LESS RISKY ACTIONS.

DESPITE MANY BLACK PEOPLE FINDING THESE ACTIONS EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE, MUCH FEWER HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THESE ACTIONS IN THE PAST YEAR

Black Opps National Rapid Message Test. Fielded January 30-February 5, 2026. N=1813 Black registered voters nationwide. Half of survey participants were asked which actions were effective and which actions they have taken.

*Black Opps National Rapid Message Test. Fielded January 30-February 5, 2026. N=1813 Black registered voters nationwide. Data is unweighted.

BARRIERS TO RESISTANCE

Inoculating the **BARRIERS TO RESISTANCE** that prevent Black people from taking action is a critical messaging element.

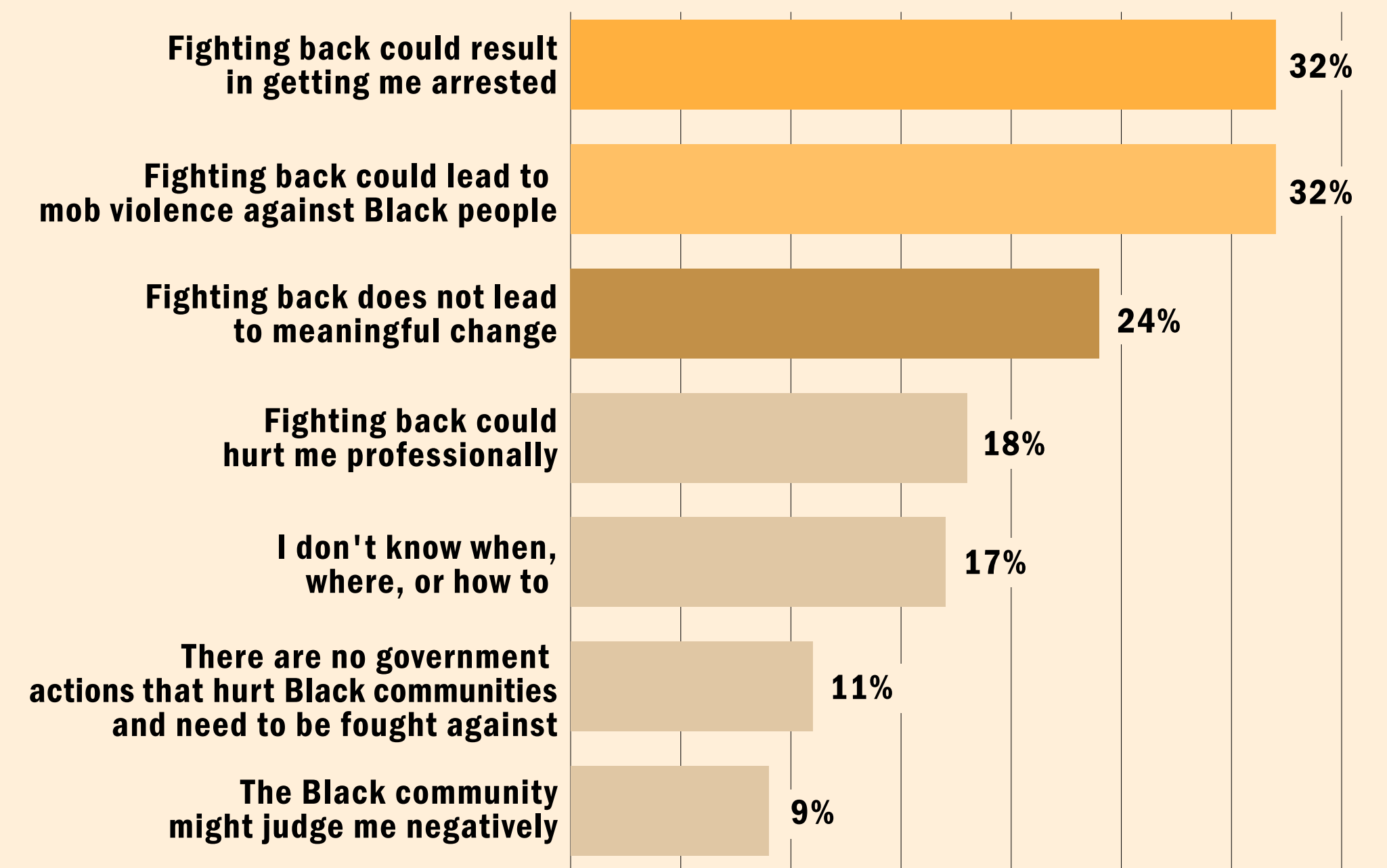


“It's scary asserting ourselves as Black folks in this resisting, because we already know about martial law. We already know that Trump gives power to the police.

We already know that if we go out there with them people, something bad could pop off and then we're in trouble. So we do what we do best. We're just going to sit back and watch things get done.”

— *Black woman, 35, VA,
(Black Registered Voters of
All Genders Under 40)*

Please select the two BEST reasons why you might NOT fight back against government actions that Black communities.



*Black Opps National Resistance Survey. Fielded October 15-23, 2025.
N=1000 Black registered voters nationwide.*

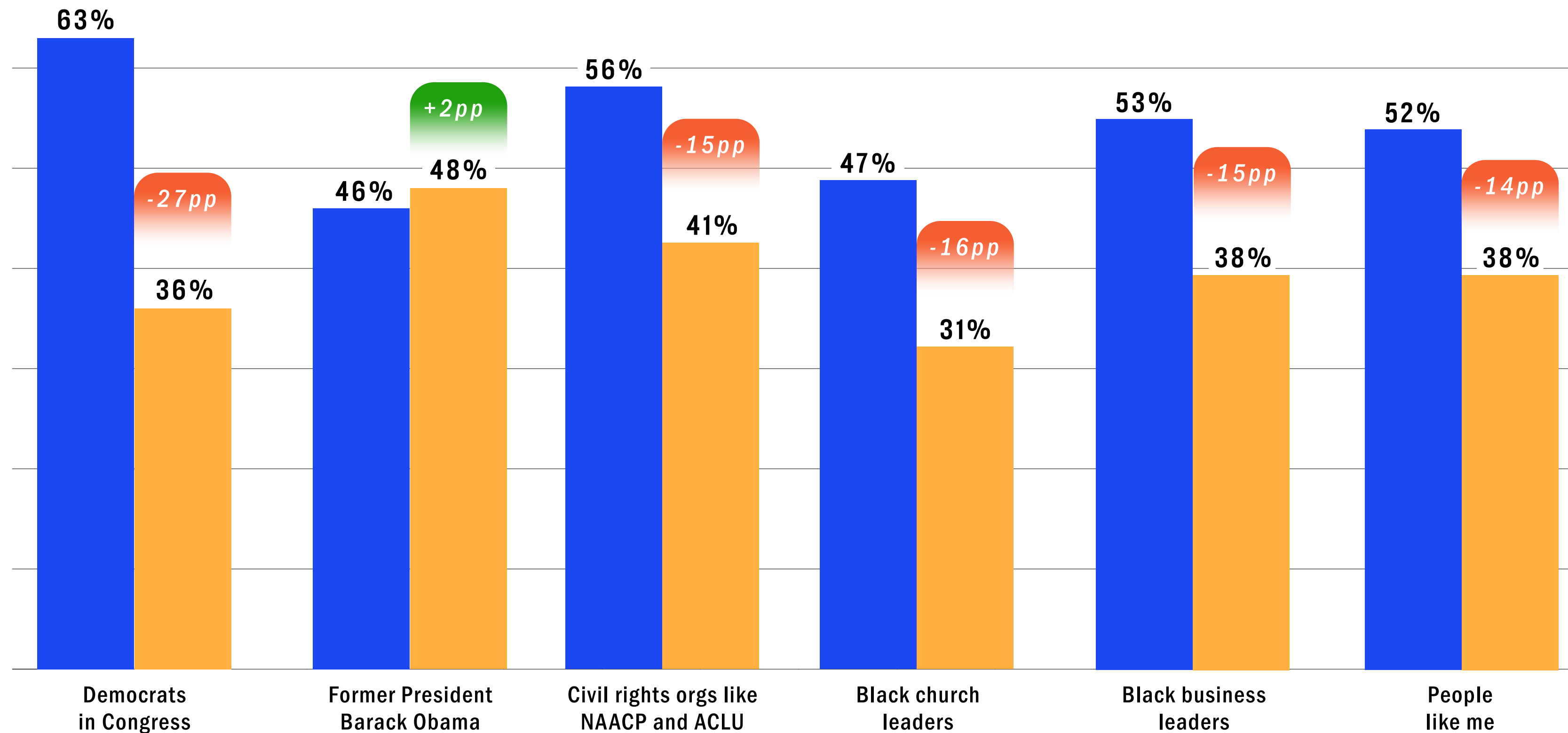
LEADERS OF THE RESISTANCE

LEADERS OF THE RESISTANCE are not seen as fighting for Black communities as much as Black voters expect them to fight.

The following political leaders are...

■ Are very responsible for fighting back against government actions that harm Black communities.

■ Are very active fighting government actions that harm Black communities



Black Opps National Resistance Survey. Fielded October 15-23, 2025. N=1000 Black registered voters nationwide.

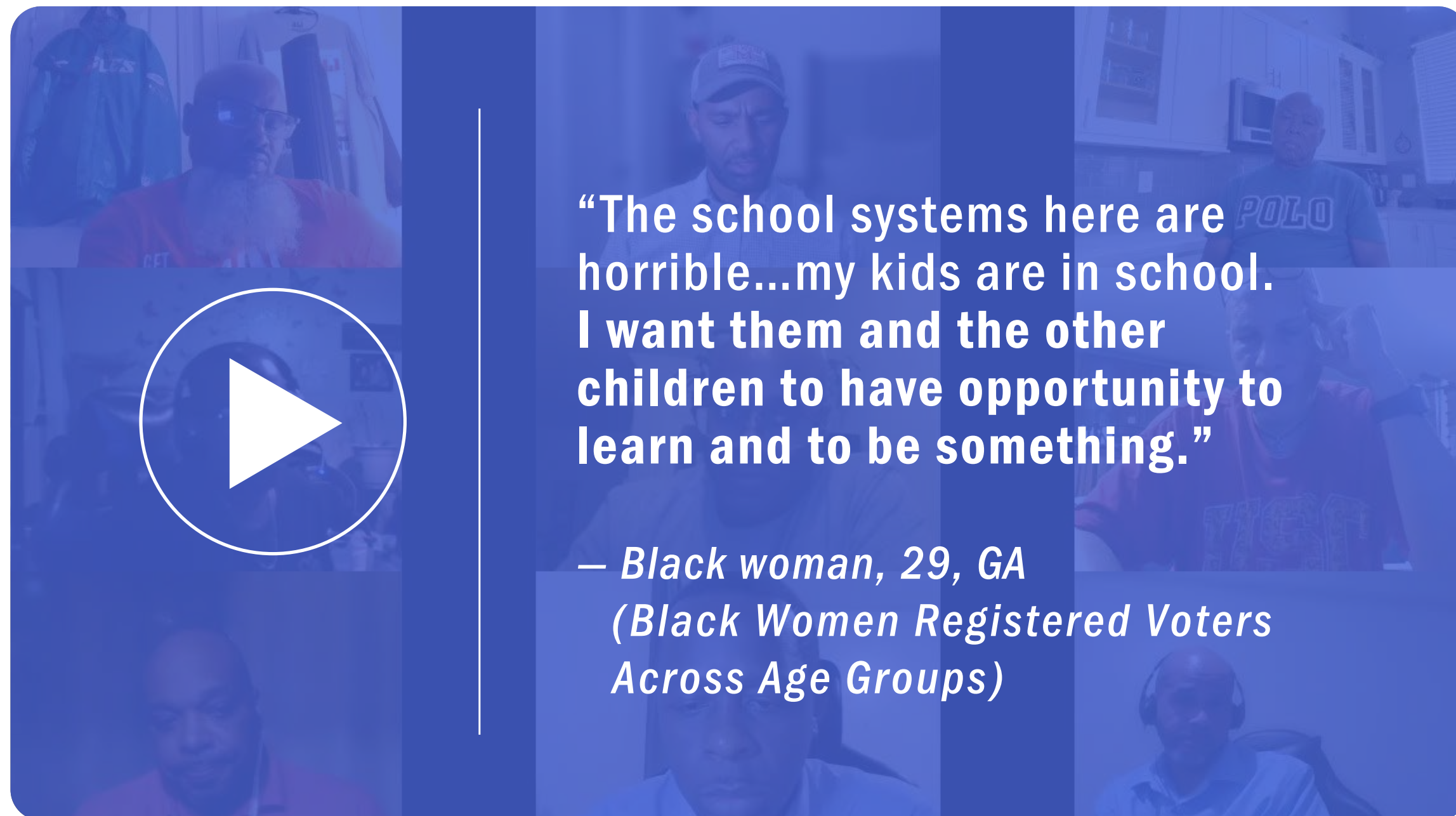
Feelings of abandonment stem from leadership not fighting as actively as expected.

Black voters want leaders to:

- "Fight fire with fire"
- "Stop playing by old rules"
- "Disrupt government functions"
- "Have a plan for resistance and communicate it clearly"

MOTIVATIONS TO RESIST

Highlighting **MOTIVATIONS TO RESIST** is a critical message element that centers what Black voters are willing to fight for.

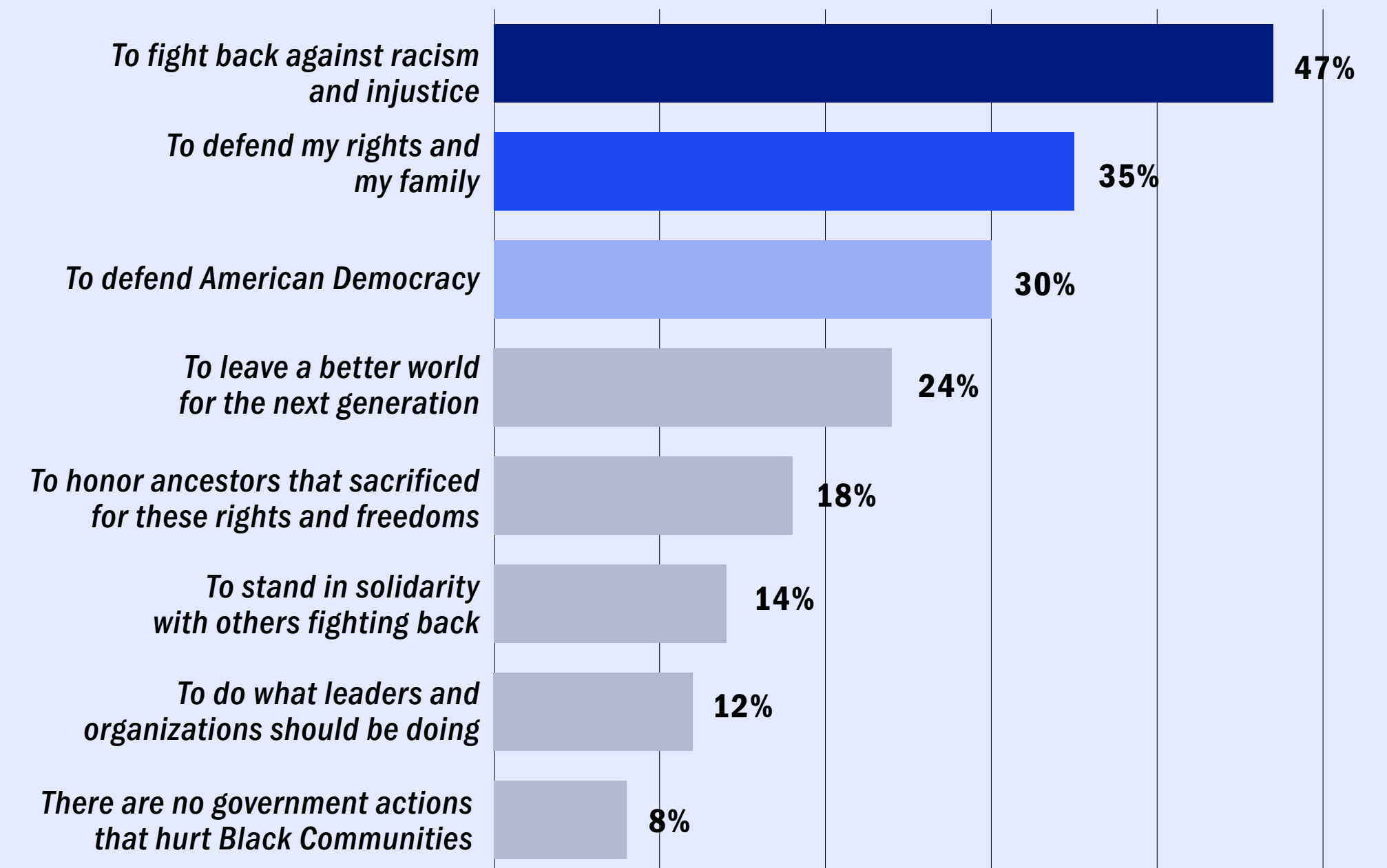


“The school systems here are horrible...my kids are in school. I want them and the other children to have opportunity to learn and to be something.”

— Black woman, 29, GA
(Black Women Registered Voters Across Age Groups)

Only 40% (-7pp compared to average) of young (under age 50) Black voters rank fighting back against racism/injustice in their top two reasons, while only 22% (-8pp compared to average) said defending American democracy.

Please select the two BEST reasons why YOU might fight back against government actions that hurt Black communities.



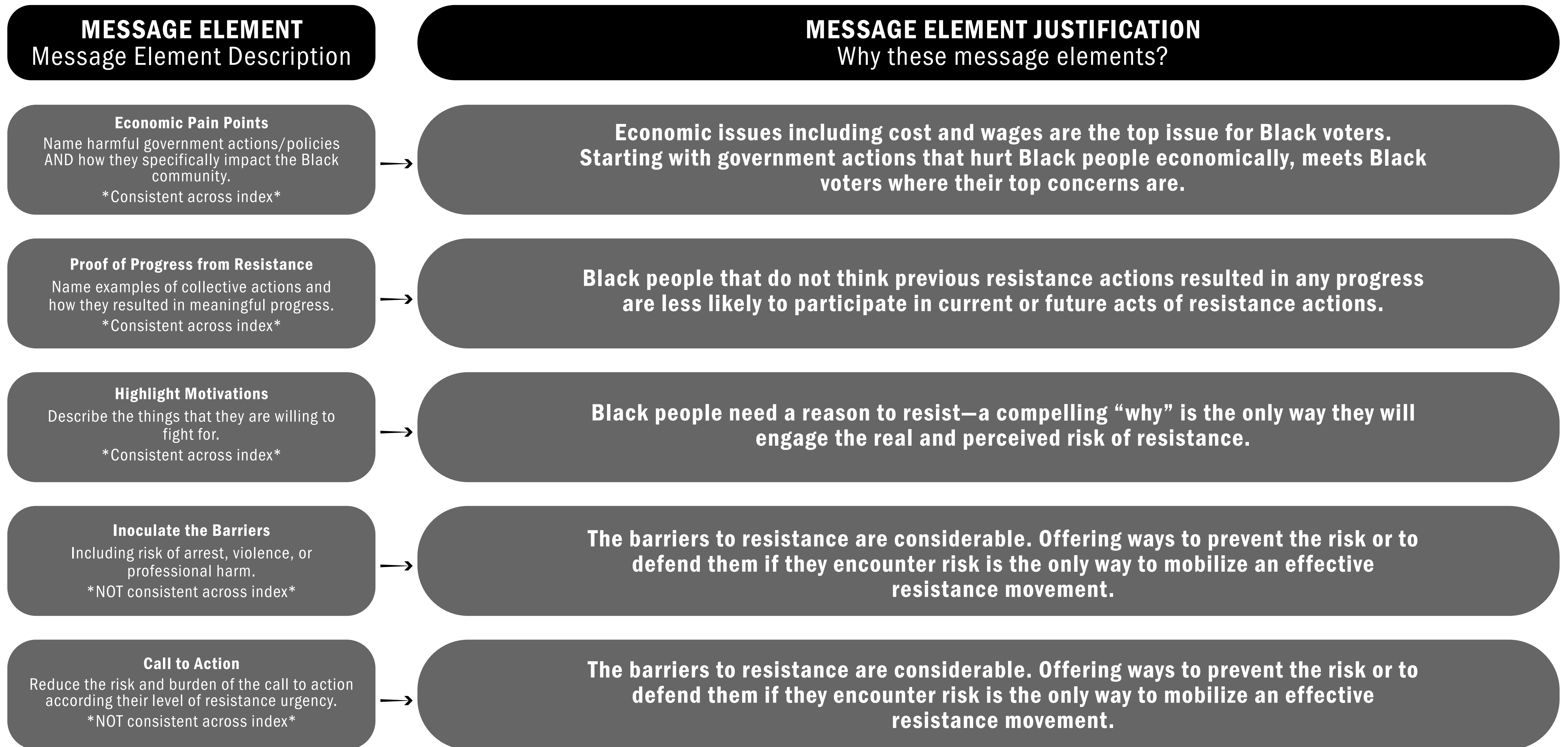
Black Opps National Resistance Survey. Fielded October 15-23, 2025. N=1000 Black registered voters nationwide.

MESSAGING

What is the messaging framework and themes that motivate Black voters to mobilize?

How do we reach the different segments of Black voters—the Defenders, Activatables, and the Spectators?

5 ELEMENTS OF MOBILIZATION MESSAGE



MESSAGE ELEMENT Message Element Description

Economic Pain Points
Name harmful government actions/policies AND how they specifically impact the Black community.
Consistent across index

Proof of Progress from Resistance
Name examples of collective actions and how they resulted in meaningful progress.
Consistent across index

Highlight Motivations
Describe the things that they are willing to fight for.
Consistent across index

Inoculate the Barriers
Including risk of arrest, violence, or professional harm.
NOT consistent across index

Call to Action
Reduce the risk and burden of the call to action according their level of resistance urgency.
NOT consistent across index

MESSAGE ELEMENT Message Element Description

PERSONA: BLACK MILLENNIAL FATHER
CALL TO ACTION: NATIONAL PROTEST



	OVERALL
VOTE LIKELIHOOD	+3
BOYCOTT	+10
PROTEST LIKELIHOOD	+7
POST INFO	+6
TAKE 2+ ACTIONS	+4
TRUMP POLICIES HURT	+8

Black Oppts National Rapid Message Test. Fielded January 30-February 5, 2026. N=1813 (weighted) but for this specific video it is N=460 (unweighted) Black registered voters nationwide. Green=statistically significant compared to placebo at 90% confidence level.

MESSAGE ELEMENT Represented in AI Content Script

Economic Pain Points
“My son relies on Medicaid. So when costs go up, my paycheck is done. And now Trump and these tariffs means I’m paying more for everything”

Proof of Progress from Resistance
“In 2020 George Floyd protests got things done—police departments banned chokeholds, no-knock warrants, that stops cops from barging into someone's home.”

Highlight Motivations
Describe the things that they are willing to fight for.

Inoculate the Barriers
“We gotta fight racism even if the government isn’t.”

Call to Action
Because we gotta have each other’s backs. Will you be Boots on the Ground at an upcoming protest in your city?

MESSAGE ELEMENT Message Element Description

Economic Pain Points
Name harmful government actions/policies AND how they specifically impact the Black community.
Consistent across index

Proof of Progress from Resistance
Name examples of collective actions and how they resulted in meaningful progress.
Consistent across index

Highlight Motivations
Describe the things that they are willing to fight for.
Consistent across index

Inoculate the Barriers
Including risk of arrest, violence, or professional harm.
NOT consistent across index

Call to Action
Reduce the risk and burden of the call to action according their level of resistance urgency.
NOT consistent across index

MESSAGE ELEMENT Message Element Description

PERSONA: BLACK MILLENNIAL POLITICIAN
CALL TO ACTION: JOIN AND SHARE BLACK FACTS (POLITICAL CONTENT)



	OVERALL
VOTE LIKELIHOOD	+3
BOYCOTT	+8
PROTEST LIKELIHOOD	+1
POST INFO	+3
TAKE 2+ ACTIONS	+5
TRUMP POLICIES HURT	+9

*Black Opps National Rapid Message Test. Fielded January 30-February 5, 2026.
N=1813 (weighted) but for this specific video it is N=440 (unweighted)
Black registered voters nationwide.
Green=statistically significant compared to placebo at 90% confidence level.*

MESSAGE ELEMENT Represented in AI Content Script

Economic Pain Points
“Many families rely on Medicaid, Because of Trump’s tariffs, prices are sky high. On top of that, many lost their jobs as federal workers.”

Proof of Progress from Resistance
“When we stopped spending our Black dollars at Target after they decided to cut their DEI programs, we made them lose \$12B in revenue and even forced the CEO to resign.”

Highlight Motivations
“We must fight racism even if the government stops fighting racism. We must defend our rights and our families.”

Inoculate the Barriers
“I am working with civil rights groups to launch a massive information campaign called Black Facts to keep our community informed.”

Call to Action
Will you join the Black Facts email list and post information that will link your community to the knowledge they need to help each other?

MESSAGE ELEMENT Message Element Description

Economic Pain Points
Name harmful government actions/policies AND how they specifically impact the Black community.
Consistent across index

Proof of Progress from Resistance
Name examples of collective actions and how they resulted in meaningful progress.
Consistent across index

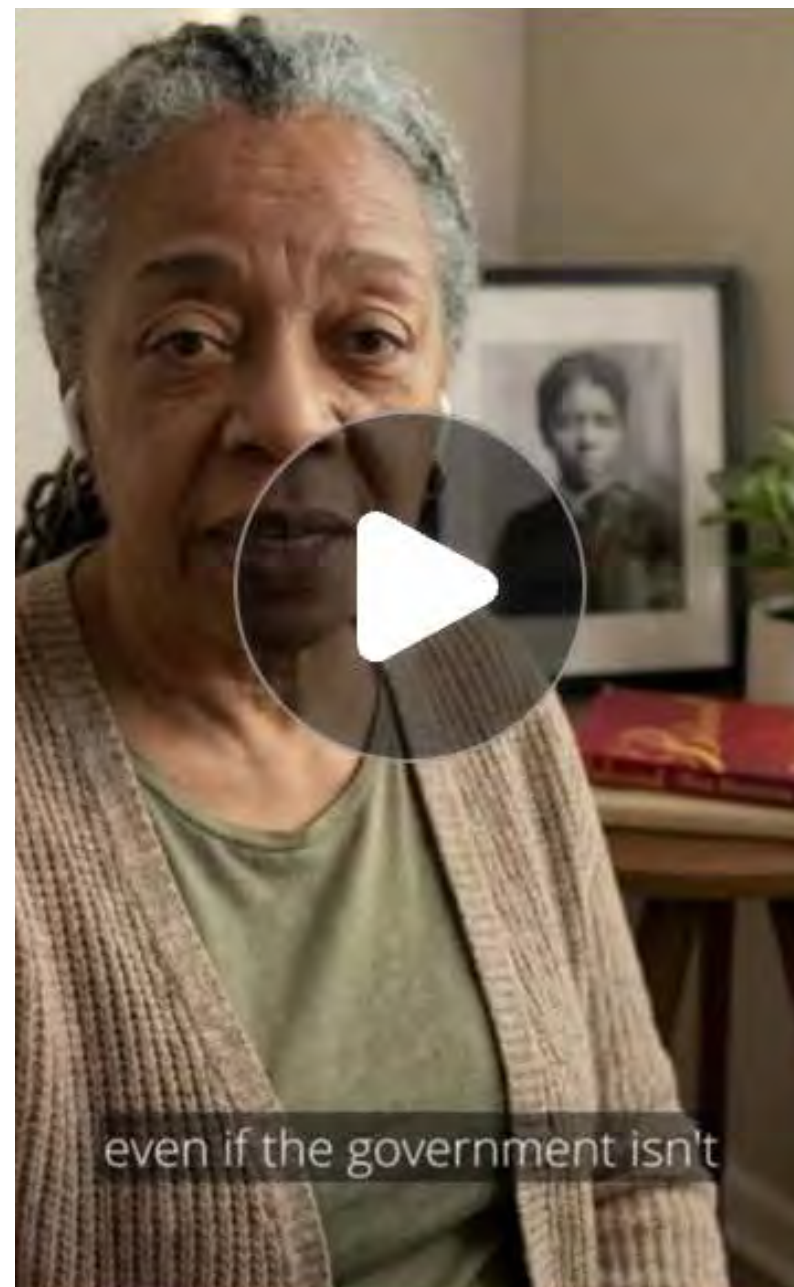
Highlight Motivations
Describe the things that they are willing to fight for.
Consistent across index

Inoculate the Barriers
Including risk of arrest, violence, or professional harm.
NOT consistent across index

Call to Action
Reduce the risk and burden of the call to action according their level of resistance urgency.
NOT consistent across index

MESSAGE ELEMENT Message Element Description

PERSONA: BLACK ELDER
CALL TO ACTION: BLACK OUT BOYCOTT



	OVERALL
VOTE LIKELIHOOD	+1pp
BOYCOTT	+9pp
PROTEST LIKELIHOOD	+2pp
POST INFO	+4pp
TAKE 2+ ACTIONS	-2pp
TRUMP POLICIES HURT	+5pp

*Black Opps National Rapid Message Test. Fielded January 30-February 5, 2026.
N=1813 (weighted) but for this specific video it is N=459 (unweighted)
Black registered voters nationwide.
Green=statistically significant compared to placebo at 90% confidence level.*

MESSAGE ELEMENT Represented in AI Content Script

Economic Pain Points
“When those programs were cut by DOGE, I lost my job. I’m also worried about what cuts to Medicaid.”

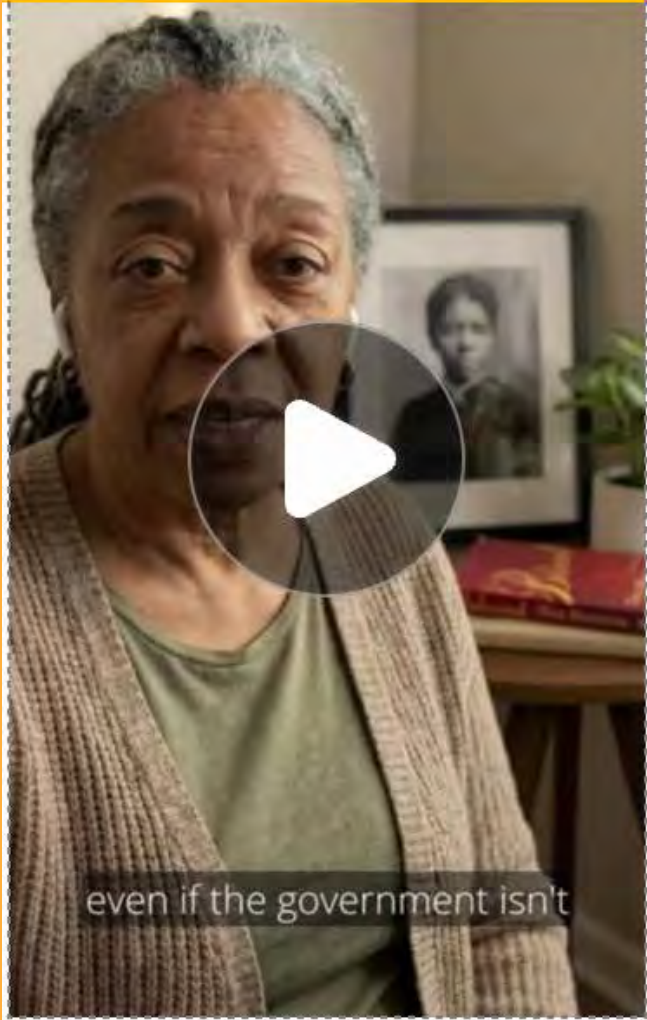

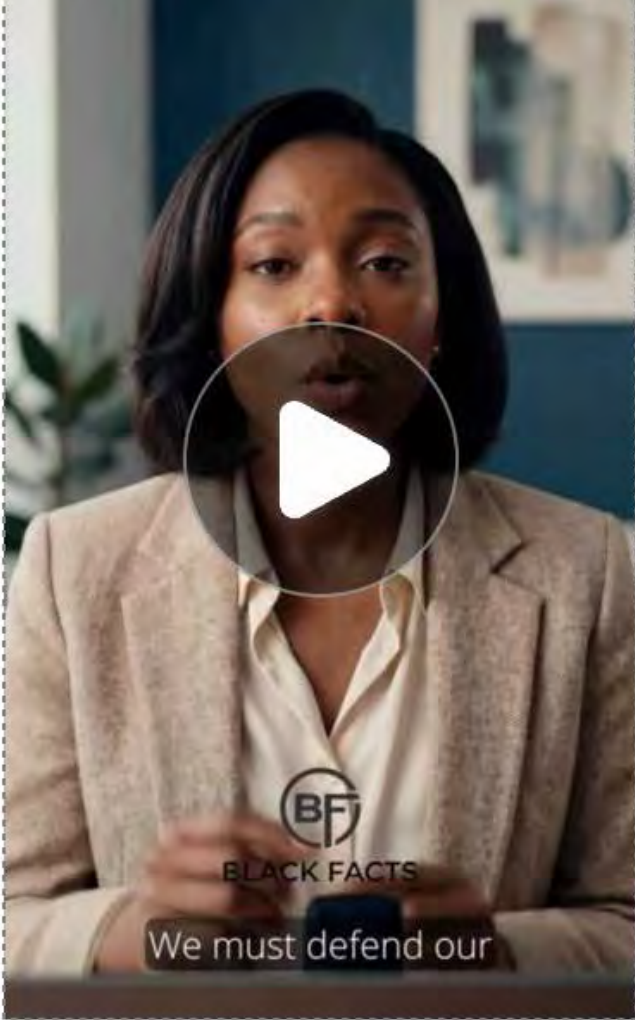
Proof of Progress from Resistance
“When advocacy groups sued the government over the January 6 storming of the US Capitol in Washington DC in 2021, we got closer to justice.”

Highlight Motivations
“We must fight racism even if the government stops fighting racism. We must defend our rights and our families.”

Inoculate the Barriers
“The Black Out boycott lists demands like raising wages, hiring Black executives, and restoring policies that create opportunity in Black communities.”

Call to Action
America will not be able to ignore when we stop spending our Black dollars during the Black Out. Are you with us? Will you join the Black Out?

AI messaging content that included all 5 messaging elements effectively increased likelihood of participating in resistance actions. Asking Black voters to take any action increases likelihood of other actions.

 <p>PERSONA: BLACK ELDER</p> <p>CALL TO ACTION: BLACK OUT BOYCOTT</p> <p>even if the government isn't</p>		 <p>PERSONA: BLACK MILLENNIAL FATHER</p> <p>CALL TO ACTION: NATIONAL PROTEST</p> <p>to families like ours.</p>		 <p>PERSONA: BLACK POLITICIAN</p> <p>CALL TO ACTION: POSTING INFORMATION</p> <p>We must defend our</p>	
	OVERALL		OVERALL		OVERALL
VOTE LIKELIHOOD	+1	VOTE LIKELIHOOD	+3	VOTE LIKELIHOOD	+3
BOYCOTT	+9	BOYCOTT	+10	BOYCOTT	+8
PROTEST LIKELIHOOD	+2	PROTEST LIKELIHOOD	+7	PROTEST LIKELIHOOD	+1
POST INFO	+4	POST INFO	+6	POST INFO	+3
TAKE 2+ ACTIONS	-2	TAKE 2+ ACTIONS	+4	TAKE 2+ ACTIONS	+5
TRUMP POLICIES HURT	+5	TRUMP POLICIES HURT	+8	TRUMP POLICIES HURT	+9

ECONOMIC PAIN POINT MESSAGES

ECONOMIC PAIN POINT MESSAGES that explicitly name harmful federal actions/policies AND how they specifically impact the Black community all raise high concerns, with Medicaid cuts testing slightly higher overall.

MEDICAID CUTS	The Trump administration will cut nearly \$1 trillion from Medicaid over 10 years, which will disproportionately affect Black youth, 60% of whom rely on Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).	<p>Total 73%</p> <p>Defender 89%</p> <p>Activatable 88%</p> <p>Spectator 73%</p>
DEI ATTACKS	The Trump administration issued an executive order to end diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs across the federal government. This resulted in approximately over 4,000 Black federal workers losing their jobs.	<p>Total 71%</p> <p>Defender 90%</p> <p>Activatable 83%</p> <p>Spectator 73%</p>
DPT of EDU	The Trump administration laid off nearly half of the staff at the Department of Education, which protects students' civil rights nationwide, and administers billions in funding to support students with disabilities. With reduced protections, approximately 9.2 million Black students now face greater risks of being denied opportunities in education.	<p>Total 70%</p> <p>Defender 85%</p> <p>Activatable 76%</p> <p>Spectator 52%</p>
TARIFFS	The Trump administration's tariffs are projected to cost middle-income households \$22,000 over a lifetime - all while the richest 1% receive tax cuts from Trump's budget bill. Black households are especially vulnerable to the impacts of these tariffs, as 91% of Black people are either lower or middle income.	<p>Total 69%</p> <p>Defender 85%</p> <p>Activatable 77%</p> <p>Spectator 53%</p>
HOUSING CUTS	The Trump Administration cut 70% of staff from the Office of Fair Housing at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, weakening its enforcement of anti-discrimination protections for homebuyers and renters. Black families now face greater challenges to fair renting and homeownership.	<p>Total 69%</p> <p>Defender 85%</p> <p>Activatable 75%</p> <p>Spectator 52%</p>
INFLATION	The Trump Administration claims that there is no inflation, but the available data shows the cost of living has gone up by 2.9% in 2025. Black people, who are more likely to be lower or middle income, face greater financial strain from rising costs on essentials.	<p>Total 69%</p> <p>Defender 86%</p> <p>Activatable 80%</p> <p>Spectator 57%</p>

Defenders responded best to the **DEI Attacks** | **Activatables** responded best to the **Medicaid cuts** | **Spectators** responded best to **Medicaid cuts** and **DEI Attacks**

**Each participant saw half of these messages.*

Black Opps National Resistance Survey. Fielded October 15-23, 2025. N=1000 Black registered voters nationwide.

Bars show percent "very concerned."

PROOF OF PROGRESS FROM RESISTANCE

RESISTANCE PROGRESS MESSAGING that shows how fighting back resulted in meaningful progress makes majorities of Black voters “much more likely to fight back.”

TARGET BOYCOTTS	<p>In January and February of 2025, Black shoppers boycotted Target in response to the corporation cutting its DEI programs. Since then, Target has lost \$12 billion in value and the CEO was forced to resign.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Total</td><td>66%</td></tr> <tr><td>Defender</td><td>66%</td></tr> <tr><td>Activatable</td><td>62%</td></tr> <tr><td>Spectator</td><td>38%</td></tr> </table>	Total	66%	Defender	66%	Activatable	62%	Spectator	38%
Total	66%									
Defender	66%									
Activatable	62%									
Spectator	38%									
GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS	<p>In 2020, about 15 million to 26 million people participated in demonstrations over the death of George Floyd, leading to police reform changes at the city and state levels, including bans on chokeholds, no knock warrants, and mandatory body cameras.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Total</td><td>56%</td></tr> <tr><td>Defender</td><td>59%</td></tr> <tr><td>Activatable</td><td>67%</td></tr> <tr><td>Spectator</td><td>40%</td></tr> </table>	Total	56%	Defender	59%	Activatable	67%	Spectator	40%
Total	56%									
Defender	59%									
Activatable	67%									
Spectator	40%									
FIRST BLACK GA SENATOR	<p>In 2022, 86% of Black voters in Georgia voted for U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock in a runoff election, leading to the re-election of the first Black U.S. Senator from Georgia.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Total</td><td>54%</td></tr> <tr><td>Defender</td><td>68%</td></tr> <tr><td>Activatable</td><td>60%</td></tr> <tr><td>Spectator</td><td>35%</td></tr> </table>	Total	54%	Defender	68%	Activatable	60%	Spectator	35%
Total	54%									
Defender	68%									
Activatable	60%									
Spectator	35%									
JAN. 6TH LAWSUIT	<p>In 2021, the NAACP represented the plaintiff in a lawsuit against Donald Trump regarding the January 6th insurrection, resulting in a 2023 ruling that Trump was not immune from prosecution for actions taken leading up to the insurrection.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Total</td><td>52%</td></tr> <tr><td>Defender</td><td>71%</td></tr> <tr><td>Activatable</td><td>54%</td></tr> <tr><td>Spectator</td><td>37%</td></tr> </table>	Total	52%	Defender	71%	Activatable	54%	Spectator	37%
Total	52%									
Defender	71%									
Activatable	54%									
Spectator	37%									

Jan 6. lawsuit performed best for Defenders, 59%-71% responded more likely to fight back.

George Floyd performed best for Activatables, 54%-67% responded.

No messages moved majorities of Spectators, they only moved between 35-40%.

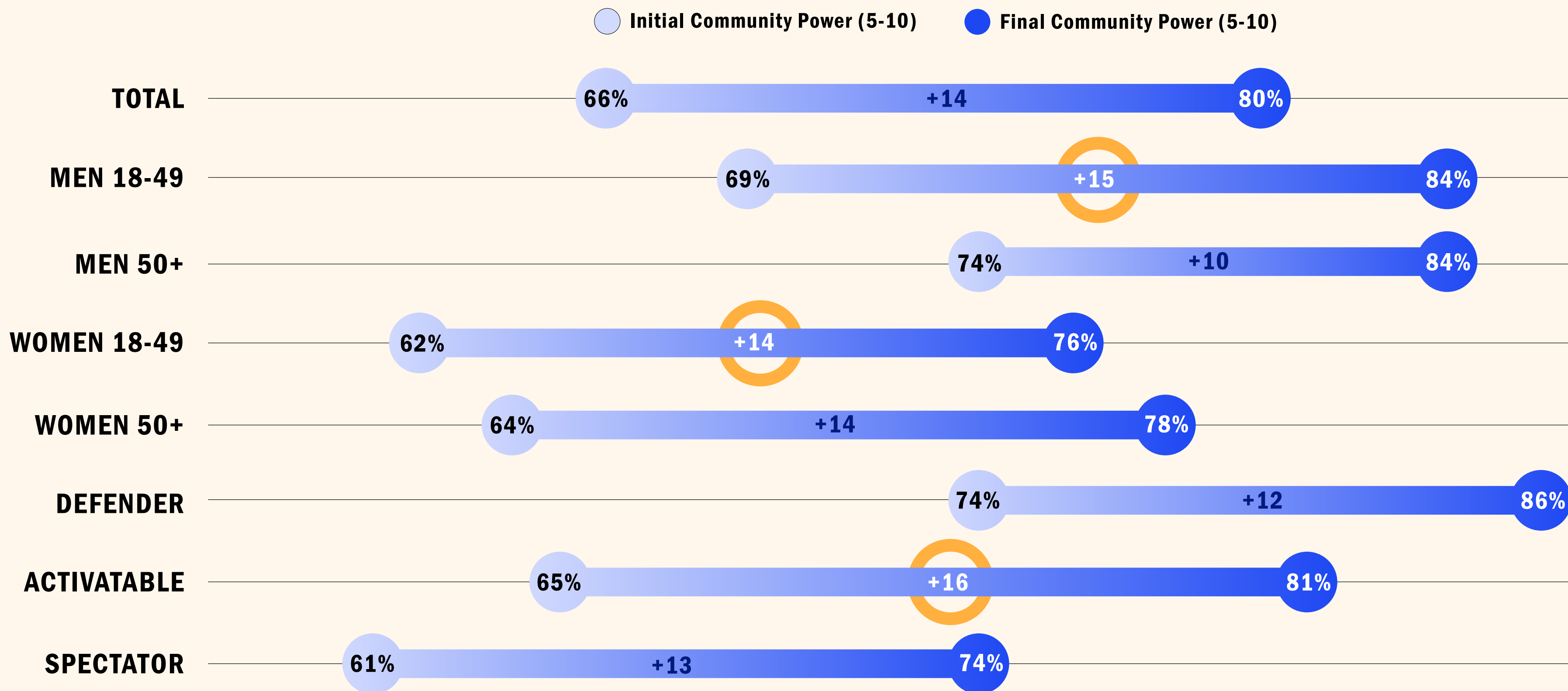
*Each participant saw half of these messages.

Black Opps National Resistance Survey. Fielded October 15-23, 2025. N=1000 Black registered voters nationwide.

Bars show percent “much more likely.”

INCREASING BLACK POWER TO INCREASE BLACK RESISTANCE

Once again, no matter how frequently you vote in elections, how much power do you feel that the Black community has to make change on issues that matter most to their community?



Increasing Black people's perceptions of their own political power is a required prerequisite to increasing Black resistance.

To increase resistance actions Black people must know that their actions have the power to improve their lives or their community.

Black Opps Messaging significantly increase perceptions of power across all groups of Black voters.



THANK YOU

For more info about about Black Opps Project click [here.](#)

To access media waved focus group footage that can be used in media and broadcast click [here.](#)

To support Black Opps Project or book public briefings click [here.](#)