NEW AMERICA

BETTER LIFE LAB

A Portrait of Caring Black Men

This report provides a portrait of Black men as active contributors to the care economy—discussing what they do, how they experience care work, the barriers that make it difficult to provide care, and recommendations for supportive policies. This report also assesses the similarities and differences between Black and white men who are **High-Intensity Caregivers and/or Parents (HICP)** — and between Black and white **fathers**. Based on the findings of a nationally representative survey, this study finds that few differences exist between Black and white men as it pertains to how they value and fulfill their care responsibilities.

In the context of parenting, our findings add to the growing body of research and evidence that is helping to dispel the harmful myth of the "absent Black father," an idea perpetuated by structural racism and white supremacy. Such stereotypes have historically been used to wrongly attribute socioeconomic inequities to the perceived shortcomings of Black men, rather than to systemically racist policies that undermine Black men's ability to raise their children and take care of loved ones.

In section one, this report provides a broad overview of caregiving Black men — who they are and whom they care for. The second section of this report focuses on Black male HICPs, and the third section of this report concentrates on Black men who are fathers. This third section on parenting examines all Black men in our sample who said they were parents, including those who have cared for a child with special needs and those who have not, and regardless of whether they ever cared for an adult.

Key Findings

- Eighty-six percent of Black men who are High-Intensity Caregivers and/or Parents (HICP) have helped adults with hands-off tasks (instrumental activities of daily living), and almost two-thirds (65 percent) have provided hands-on care (basic/physical activities of daily). More Black male HICPs than white male HICPs performed hands-on medical or nursing tasks.

- Black male HICPs are more likely to say work demands—not family responsibilities—make it difficult for them to balance the demands of work and family responsibilities. More than half of all Black male HICPs think that an inability to afford leave from work is a major reason why men don't take time off to give care.

- Black male HICPs are extremely similar to their white counterparts as it pertains to how they value care, how they fulfill their roles, and how they perceive access to leave and work as barriers to caregiving. Only about half of HICP men in both racial groups have access to paid leave.

- When it comes to how they value and provide care, few differences exist between Black and white fathers. Still, our survey found that more Black fathers than white fathers think that it's very important that they feed, dress, and provide childcare to younger children.

- Both Black and white fathers in our survey face barriers to caregiving. While a similar percentage of Black and white fathers used savings to cover the costs associated with their recent leaves—paid or unpaid—twice as many of Black fathers (30 percent) than white fathers (15 percent) used savings they had specifically set aside for health needs to fund their time off from work.

Black men provide crucial care to the people in their lives and play an integral role in promoting the wellbeing of Black families. However, without adequate access to workplace accommodations and paid leave, Black men face barriers to fulfilling the role of caregiver or father. Especially in 2020, the need for family-supportive policies that meet the needs of Black men with caregiving and childcare needs proves urgent.