

# Prioritising the Patient Voice With Hybrid Clinical Trials

**New survey findings reveal the importance of offering patients choice when it comes to improving clinical trial diversity, access, and engagement**

Aaron Fleishman at BBK Worldwide

Patients want options, or choice, when it comes to clinical trial participation. New data from a recent Study Voices survey reveal the impact choice can have on participation (1). The findings empower clinical trial sponsors to shift from traditional clinical trial models to hybrid models with confidence.

The survey reflects attitudes and perspectives of 2,078 men and women, representing a cross section of the general population – including a wide range of ages, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. It includes a percentage of individuals who have participated in a clinical trial.

Surprisingly, the findings do not show dramatic differences in attitudes and experiences based on demographic factors. Rather, they show differences based on personal preference and deliver a clear message to the industry that patients want and, in fact, need choice in their healthcare experience.

Hybrid clinical trials are a combination of remote and in-person participation. They offer sponsors an adaptive approach that can minimise barriers



to participation and help improve enrolment of underrepresented populations. They offer patients increased access, convenience, and flexibility and, most importantly, choice. By leveraging hybrid solutions – such as telehealth or medication delivery – that align with individual needs and preferences, clinical trial sponsors can reach and engage patients where they are in their daily lives.

## **Closing the Gap Between Interest and Action**

It is well recognised that there is a sizeable gap between patient interest in clinical trial participation and actual participation, influenced by factors both financial and logistical. The survey revealed that among the 74% of respondents willing to consider clinical trial participation, only 13% had actually participated.

## Willing to consider clinical trial participation: All respondents

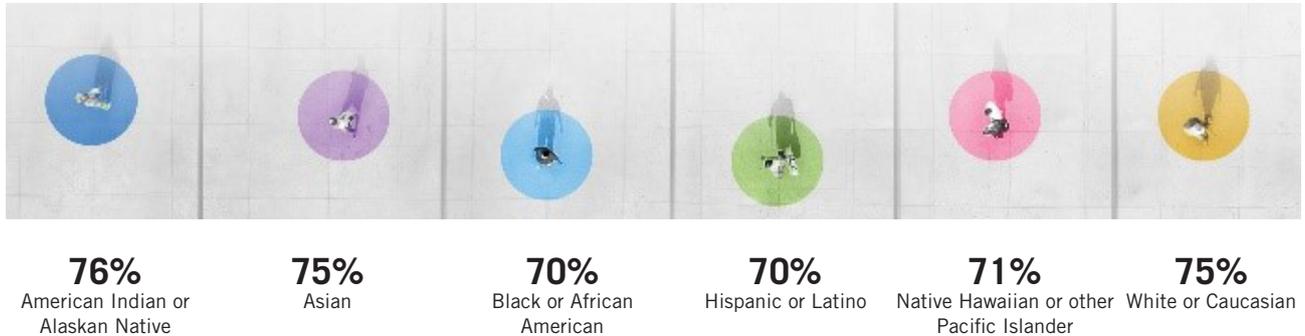


Figure 1: Respondents were asked if they would consider taking part in a clinical trial

Among the respondents willing to consider participation, 40% were ‘strongly willing’. It is clear the challenge is not about changing patient mindset. Rather, it is about identifying and removing barriers that limit clinical trial awareness and access by understanding individual needs and responding with appropriate tools and tactics.

By providing patients with choice through hybrid clinical trials that use agile and scalable enrolment and engagement solutions, study sponsors can make clinical trials more accessible and increase opportunities for participation.

### Improving Diversity and Inclusion

With a hybrid approach, solutions can be implemented based on different

or shared audience preferences and needs. Tools and tactics can be customised to specific audiences based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, income, and other demographic factors. The key is to understand the individual audiences. Learn what the patient population cares about, how they feel, and what motivates them. Discover the nuances. Leverage this knowledge to adapt solutions to engage a more diverse and inclusive audience.

The Study Voices survey results clearly showed overwhelming interest in participation among all races and ethnic groups. When asked what would help motivate participation, all respondents overwhelmingly chose reimbursement first. Hispanic or Latino respondents (39%) chose having an iPhone or tablet second,

as did Black or African American respondents (35%). White or Caucasian respondents (41%) chose equally having an iPhone or tablet and hotel accommodations second.

### Acknowledging Individual Needs and Preferences

Choosing the right tactics to inform and engage patients in clinical research is critical. Among the groups with the largest number of survey respondents who had participated in a clinical trial, the majority said they learned about the opportunity from their doctor.

Popularity of other sources, such as online ads, social media, and TV/radio, was relatively consistent among the three groups. A slightly higher percentage of Hispanic or Latino respondents were receptive to ads or content on social media. And TV/radio or advocacy group ranked slightly higher for Black or African Americans. Outdoor billboard or transit was a bit higher among the Hispanic or Latino respondents.

Although the gaps between the groups were not dramatic, the fact that each group identified multiple sources suggests the need for



*Although the gaps between the groups were not dramatic, the fact that each group identified multiple sources suggests the need for multichannel outreach to connect with all audiences*



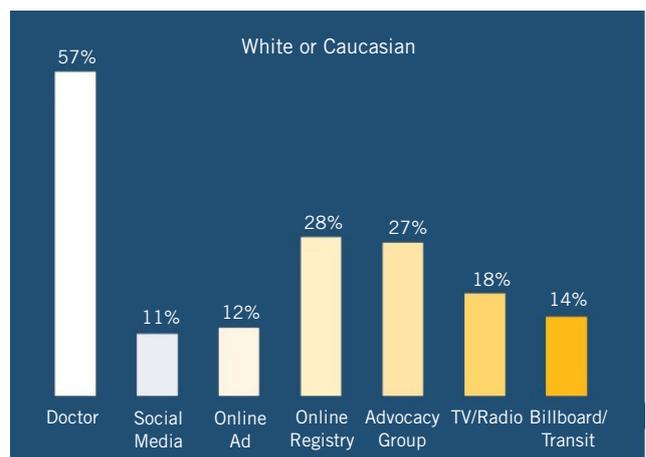
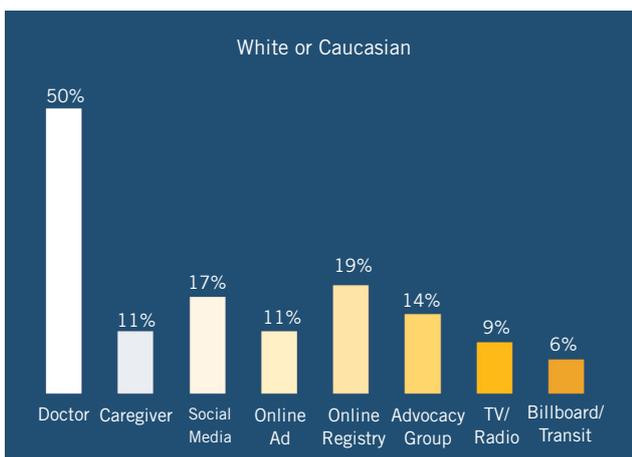
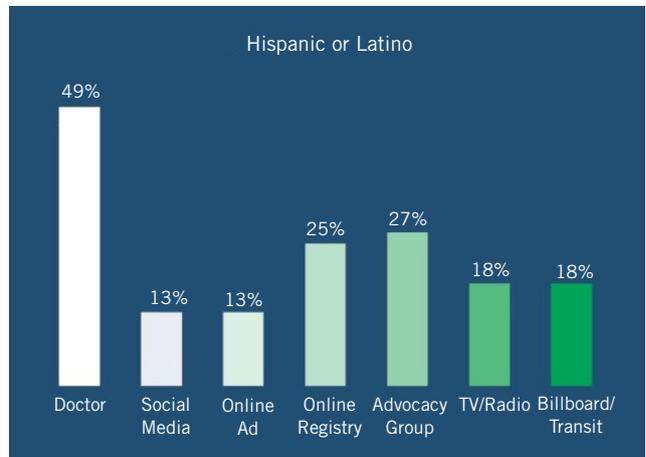
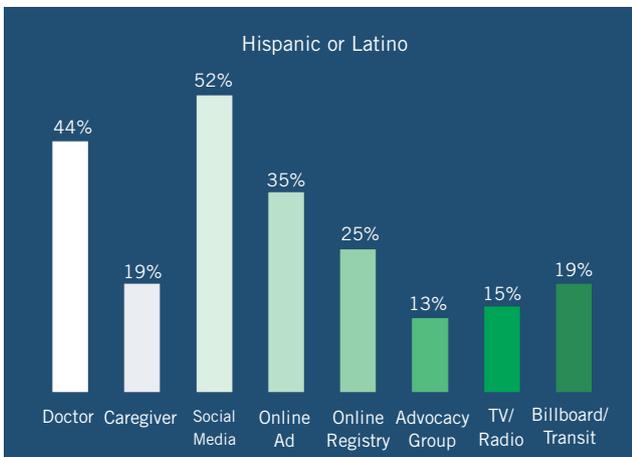
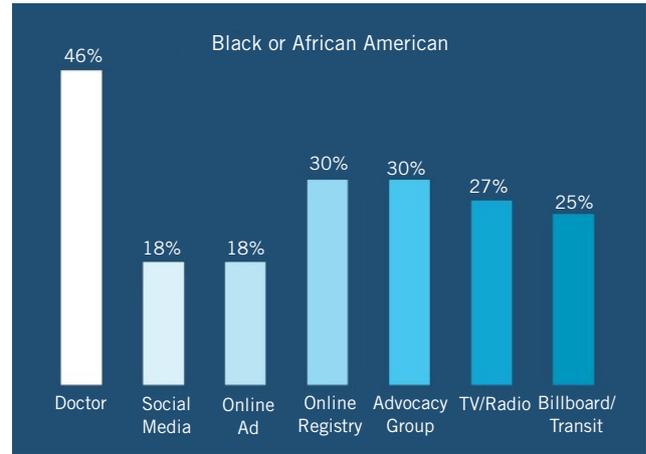
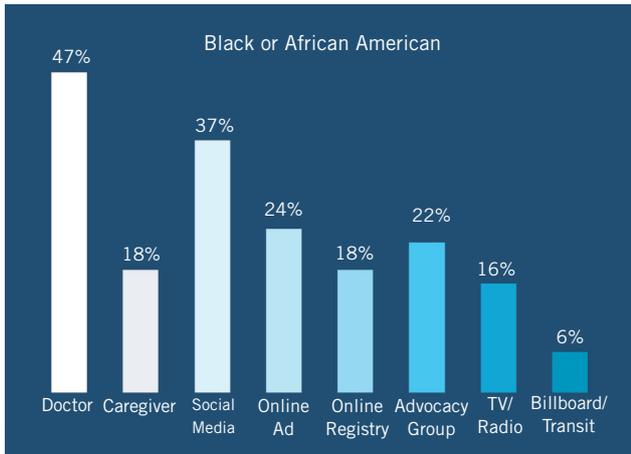


Figure 2: How did you learn about the clinical trial you participated in? (Multiple responses allowed). Sources for learning about clinical trials by race/ethnicity

Figure 3: In your opinion, how credible are the following as sources of information for a clinical trial? (Multiple responses allowed) Credibility of clinical trial sources by race/ethnicity

multichannel outreach to connect with all audiences, using the ones they are familiar with and trust.

For the 87% of respondents who had not participated in a clinical trial, the

doctor was also viewed as the most credible source. Attitudes towards the other sources were consistent among the three groups as well, with online registry and advocacy group ranking in the top three for all. The very fact

that multiple sources were viewed as credible speaks to the importance of engaging audiences based on their habits and preferences, reinforcing the value of a hybrid approach that stresses flexibility and adaptability.

## How important is it to you to be able to have telehealth visits with your doctor?



Figure 4: Attitudes toward telehealth by community type and age

### Maximising Engagement

The survey revealed a similar pattern in terms of attitudes towards common engagement solutions such as telehealth, travel, reimbursement, and digital tools. For instance, it didn't matter where respondents lived – rural, suburban, or urban. Some preferred telehealth to in-person visits while others preferred the reverse. Some felt they were tech-savvy and preferred to engage with an iPhone or tablet, whereas others had limited access to technology but, again, no distinct gaps based on such factors as race/ethnicity, age, or location.

This pattern is reflected in attitudes towards telehealth. When asked about the importance of having a telehealth visit with their doctor, respondents' answers were consistent regardless of their geographic location or their age.

When asked to rank their preference for a routine medical appointment with their doctor, 68% of all respondents ranked an in-person visit with their doctor first. However, there was only a slight difference separating a telehealth visit and a home visit by a nurse for second place. Although there may not be visible differences between demographic groups, it is clear that there are individual preferences that cannot be ignored.

Respondents showed strong enthusiasm for patient support services such as medication delivery. The gap between helpful and not helpful is consistent regardless of whether respondents lived in a rural, suburban, or urban setting.

- 75% in rural communities said helpful
- 75% in suburban communities said helpful
- 79% in urban communities said helpful

Older respondents were slightly more willing to travel a longer distance to their doctor's office. But, again, the pattern was mostly consistent among age groups. In this situation, sponsors might want to consider patient travel programmes to reduce travel as a barrier to those unwilling to travel more than 20 miles.

Access to technology affects not only opportunities to learn about a clinical study, but also the ability to participate. Although the percentages are relatively low for the respondents who do not have access to high-speed internet, sponsors should consider providing hotspots or even iPhones to ensure equitable participation among all audiences.

### Engaging the Patient Voice

The best way to learn about the clinical trial audience is to listen to the patient

### Medication Delivery

How helpful would it be to have medication delivered directly to your home?

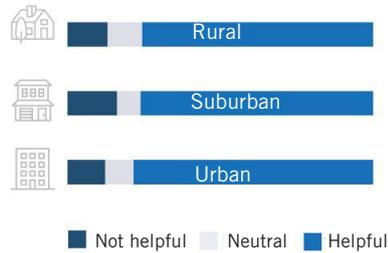


Figure 5: Attitudes toward medication delivery by community type

### Transportation

How far would you be willing to travel to a doctor's office for more than a routine checkup?

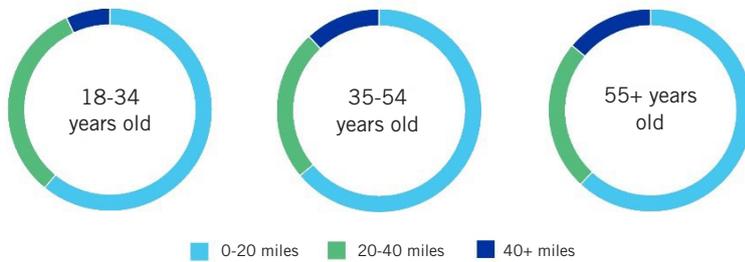


Figure 6: Willingness to travel to doctor's office by age

### High-Speed Internet

Do you have access to high-speed internet?

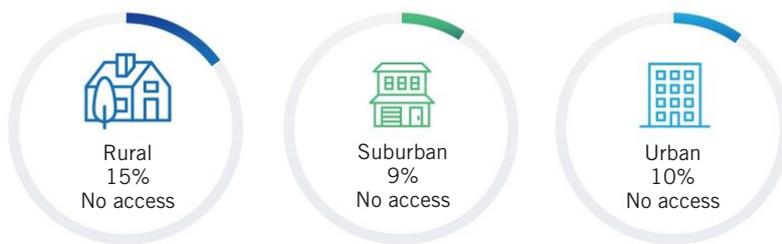


Figure 7: High-speed internet access by community

voice. Ask questions. Learn what matters to patients. Know their attitudes. Understand their needs. For instance, do they have access to high-speed internet? Do they have their own tech device, or do they need an iPhone or iPad to participate in a clinical trial? How tech-savvy are they? Do they have a car, or do they rely on public transportation? Are up-front, out-of-pocket expenses an issue?

Fill in the gaps as needed. For instance, for patients who indicate

they are not tech-savvy, consider more channels for education and support; it doesn't mean they have to be excluded from participation. A hybrid approach provides the flexibility that maximises enrolment and engagement opportunities, providing access for all.

#### Making the Investment

Although the Study Voices survey findings dispel some common assumptions and confirm others, they empower clinical

trial sponsors to embrace solutions that remove barriers to participation and meet patients where they are in their daily lives. Study sponsors can leverage the findings and insights to better plan and prepare for clinical trial enrolment and engagement. Recognising the uniqueness of each audience can go a long way towards putting the proper foundation in place with effective tools and tactics.

Really connecting with an inclusive audience requires an investment. It is a strategic investment in terms of learning about and utilising the right tools and tactics. It is also a philosophical investment, embracing the commitment to invest energy and effort in engaging a truly diverse and inclusive audience. Last, it is also a financial investment, recognising that budget parameters may need to expand to accommodate flexible and adaptive solutions. Sponsors who make the investment will not only improve their opportunities for enrolment and engagement success but will help advance the industry-wide effort to create more inclusive clinical trials.

#### Reference

1. Study Voices 2021 Survey, BBK Worldwide, August 2021



**Aaron Fleishman** has more than ten years of experience in the patient recruitment industry. A member of **BBK Worldwide's** market development team, he is an innovative leader who transforms out-of-the-box ideas into reality. His passion for clinical research and development (R&D) has led to several industrywide initiatives, including Study Voices market research surveys and the Pharma15 Live! webcast series, which explores topics that have an impact on the clinical trial experience.

[afleishman@bbkworldwide.com](mailto:afleishman@bbkworldwide.com)