



## **HOPE AND BWOPA'S NEW POLL FINDS CALIFORNIA BLACK WOMEN AND LATINAS FACE UNIQUE BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE, CALL FOR GREATER EQUITY IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE PROVISION**

*The study sheds light on the state of Latina and Black women's mental health in California and pathways to increasing equity and representation in the field*

[\[Click Here to Access the Poll Findings\]](#)

LOS ANGELES, CA, (December 6, 2022) — Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) / TILE and Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE)<sup>®</sup> have released a historic statewide poll and report on the current state of mental health for Black and Latina women in California. The report and data uplift the challenges Black and Latina women face in accessing mental health care and their priorities for approaches to create greater equity in the provision of mental health care.

The report calls for key investments to be made by healthcare providers and universities to increase the number of women of color who enter mental health professions, for healthcare providers to lower costs, and for community groups to bridge the lack of knowledge women of color have about mental health care.

“Our research draws a direct line between the challenges in accessing mental health care for Latinas and Black women to the shortage of mental health professionals that share our backgrounds,” said Helen Torres, CEO of Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE). “The data is a call to action for healthcare providers and educational institutions to address the negative impacts of a healthcare workforce that does not represent the communities it serves. We must take steps to close the representation gap and provide better care to all.”

Latinx and Black Americans, young people, women, and those with low incomes are most at risk of mental health challenges and are the populations most burdened by the social determinants of health. The added layer of the COVID-19 pandemic heightened economic crisis and instability, more visible expressions of White supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-immigrant sentiment, and hate-crimes aimed at Black and Brown communities have increased this burden exponentially. Current health and mental health care delivery and support systems have not been designed or equipped to support the needs of Black women and Latinas. According to the Medical Board of California, only four percent (4%) of active psychiatrists practicing in California are Latino and only two percent (2%) are Black.

“We have known that racism and discrimination take a toll on the mental health of our

communities, and now we must factor in the disproportionate and lingering effects of the pandemic on communities of color,” said LaNiece Jones, Executive Director of Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA). “What matters now is that we don’t sweep these added challenges aside but treat these barriers in mental health care for what they are, a crisis in care that must be urgently addressed.”

**Key Findings from the Survey Include:**

- **Racism & Discrimination take a toll on the Mental Health of Black Women and Latinas:**
  - 77% of respondents report having experienced some form of discrimination because of their race or ethnicity, physical appearance, or other personal characteristic.
  - 69% report their experiences with racism or discrimination negatively impacted their emotional well-being or mental health.
  - Black women and lower-income women are among the most burdened by the impact of racism and discrimination on their mental health.
    - 39% of uninsured Black women, 31% of Black Gen X women (ages 42-56) and 31% of women with household incomes of \$50K or less.
- **Numerous barriers to mental health care exists for Black women and Latinas:**
  - More than 3 in 5 (62%) California Black women and Latinas report having a mental health concern for which they did not seek care from a provider.
  - 52% say it is difficult to find a counselor, therapist or mental health care provider who shares their values or comes from a similar background.
  - The monetary and opportunity costs—inability to take time off work, length of time to appointment, and transportation rank as top barriers to seeking care.
  - Risks associated with care, such as being over-prescribed medication, misdiagnosed, breaches of privacy, and treatment from providers without cultural competence, are also concerns.
  - Women without coverage for mental health services, those with a mental health condition, younger women, and those covered through Medi-Cal report the highest untreated needs:
    - 90% of women without coverage for mental health services report untreated needs.
    - 74% of those with a mental health condition report untreated needs.
    - 73% of Gen Z/Millennials (ages 18-41) report untreated needs.
    - 69% of 2nd Generation (individuals born in the U.S. with at least one parent born outside the U.S.) women report untreated needs.
    - 68% of women covered through Medi-Cal report untreated needs
- **Black Women and Latinas in California cite Finances, Safety, Health, and Housing as Top Concerns:**
  - The current social and economic climate creates a distinctive set of pressures on

Black women and Latinas.

- Just over one-third (34%) of Black women and Latinas cite finances or issues related to inadequate income as the top concern facing their household—safety, health, and housing also rank as chief concerns.
- **Black women and Latinas point to several priorities for addressing disparities in mental health care:**
  - 94% place a high priority on increasing awareness among Black and Latina women about the benefits of seeking help or support.
  - 93% place a high priority on expanding programs for Black and Latina women interested in mental health careers.
  - 92% place a high priority on expanding access to online, telephone, or virtual appointments with mental health providers trained to understand and be sensitive to the diverse communities they are serving.
  - 91% support expanding the number of Latinas and Black women who are mental health advocates, navigators, and promotoras that work through community-based organizations.

#### **Key Lessons and Recommendations:**

- **Increased Funding.** Healthcare providers and government agencies should dedicate more resources to reducing risks associated with care and addressing key barriers to care such as cost, insurance coverage, insurance acceptance, transportation to care, and time off work, among others;
- **Workforce Development.** Universities should increase the pipeline of Black women and Latinas in mental health related fields— through mentoring programs, scholarships, and financial aid;
- **Leveraging Trusted Advisors.** Philanthropic and state investments should be dedicated to expanding the number of mental health care advocates and promotoras that can work through community-based organizations to help women navigate the system and increase awareness; and
- **Expanded Awareness.** Community groups should invest in expanding awareness among Black women/Latinas about the benefits of seeking help or support when facing stress, emotional pain, distress, and mental health challenges.

The survey, conducted by EVITARUS, polled 800 California women who identify as Black, African American, and/or Hispanic/Latina. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish and fielded August 17-30, 2022. This work was made possible through a grant from Kaiser Permanente Northern California Community Benefit Programs. In addition to this study, the HOPE and BWOPA/TILE collaboration will include community listening sessions and a job fair to promote mental health careers to Black and Latina young professionals.

EMBARGOED UNTIL DECEMBER 6, 2022, 8:00 AM PT

### **About BWOPA/TILE**

Established in 1999 by Black Women Organized for Political Action's (BWOPA), the Training Institute for Leadership Enrichment's (TILE), a 501c3 non-profit organization, focus is to educate, train and engage African American women in the public policy process and provide leadership development and guidance. Since inception, TILE engages and annually trains over 1,000 Black women leaders by way of its signature leadership empowerment initiatives on health, economic security, criminal justice reform and education. TILE's work is accomplished in partnership with BWOPA's nine (9) local organizing chapters, networks, partnerships, and allies throughout California boasting over 5,000 active members. [www.bwopatileleads.org](http://www.bwopatileleads.org)

### **About HOPE®**

Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE)® is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that has empowered our communities through advocacy, Latina leadership training, and increasing knowledge on the contributions Latinas have made to advance the status of women for the past 32 years. To date, HOPE's innovative programming has served 64,000 Latinas and touched the lives of several thousand more through our advocacy. For more information on HOPE, please visit [Latinas.org](http://Latinas.org) or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

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