

California Equity in Maternal Health Report

Improving Outcomes for Black Women and Latinas



Policy Fact Sheet

The California Maternal Health Report is a collaboration between HOPE and Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA-TILE) that sheds light on the ongoing challenges many women face in accessing safe, respectful, and high-quality maternal health care. Drawing on insights and experiences from more than 800 Black and Latina women across the state, the report offers data-driven findings and actionable recommendations for policymakers, health systems, and communities to strengthen maternal health outcomes and ensure quality care for all families.

Social Determinants of Maternal Health

- Three-quarters (74%) or more of Black women and Latinas report that economic insecurity and the impact of childbearing on their health factor into their decision about whether to have a child.
- A majority of Black women and Latinas report experiencing depression (55%) and/or anxiety (43%) during pregnancy or postpartum. Separately, many (46%) did not receive or do not recall receiving mental health screening as a part of prenatal or postpartum care.



Low Access to Care and Trust in California's Birthing System

- One in four Black women and Latinas (26%) find it difficult to access obstetric and gynecological care. Notably, an even higher percentage, nearly one-third (32%), find it difficult to access a health provider for routine health care.
- More than half of Black women and Latinas (57%) report some level of unfair or adverse treatment during a pregnancy or birthing experience. While California hospitals are required to provide written instructions on how to file a complaint for patients who experience discrimination or unfair treatment, a striking majority (59%) of Black women and Latinas say they do not know how to file a complaint if needed.
- 79% of Black women and a majority of Latinas (55%) believe it is "extremely important" to increase the number of Black + Latina women in maternal care.
- 36% of respondents reported difficulty accessing doula or midwife services, while 39% stated they did not know where to find them. 68% of respondents reported not receiving any information about doula or midwife services from their health care provider.

Key Recommendations

Based on the experiences of Black women and Latinas, several priorities have emerged for strengthening maternal health policy and care across communities, including:

- Centering the experiences of women and birthing people in the maternal health care system.
- Increasing the number of Black women and Latinas who are OB-GYNs/doctors, obstetrics nurses and birthing care providers.
- Increasing the number of doctors, nurses, and other professionals who are trained to understand, and be sensitive to, the diverse communities they are serving.
- Expanding access to paid family leave and time off work for maternal care.
- Investing in priority support services such as mental health, lactation counseling, information about diet and nutrition, and childcare.

The findings underscore opportunities for California to strengthen systems of care for women, with the goal of ensuring consistent access to high-quality, safe maternal health services across the state.



Access the full report and learn more at latinas.org/maternalhealth