# YOUNG WOMEN OF COLOR AND MENTAL HEALTH
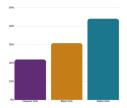
**Structural barriers** are **systemic challenges** embedded in our culture, economy, and institutions that **cause inequality**. Produced by systems of power, they require **large-scale investment** and **policy solutions** to achieve meaningful change. CLASP conducted focus groups* with young women of color to learn what structural barriers they encounter in daily life. This fact sheet includes insights from **African-American**, **Latina**, and **Native** young women about their experiences with mental health. Uprooting mental health challenges and other structural barriers demands **turning over the ground** to reveal these root causes, **partnering with young women of color** to identify solutions, and **seeding change** in equitable ground.
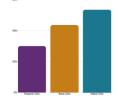
## TRAUMA

*"They always think that in order to have PTSD you have to go through war. You have to go through …. You have to be a veteran. It's like I'm obviously not a veteran. I had something bad happen to me but I'm not a veteran. They don't see it as you know oh, you're not a veteran you can't have one."*

*- Denver*

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** are a set of stressful life experiences that have been linked to long term health and mental health outcomes.[1]
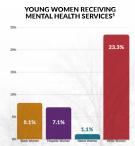


Across all income levels, **21.8%** of Hispanic girls, **30.7%** of Black girls, **43.9%** of Native girls have experienced two or more ACEs.[2]



When factoring in poverty, these percentages increase to **30%** of Hispanic girls, **43.6%** of Black girls, and more than half of Native girls (**53.4%**).[3]

## LACK OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Although nearly a quarter of white young women living in poverty reported receiving any mental health services in the last year (**23.3%**), young women of color received mental health services in the last year at less than one third of that rate.[4]

**YOUNG WOMEN RECEIVING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES[5]**



Black Women 8.1%  Hispanic Women 7.1%  Native Women 1.1%  White Women 23.3%

*"Even though we're in a program, we still deal with our personal problems and things on our own. Nobody really helps. Nobody really can help; it's something that we got to figure out on our own."*

*- Birmingham*

**our ground our voices**
SYSTEMS OF POWER AND YOUNG WOMEN OF COLOR

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## STIGMA

*"I know growing up like that this is not discussed if someone is like depressed or if they're experiencing anxiety. Like no one knows what that is or how to like really address it or realize like this isn't going to be like ongoing process and a lot of times if like someone's depressed they're like oh like you'll get over it. It's fine. Like why are you acting like that? It's also kind of like a taboo topic like you know you're supposed to just keep going, keep working and or like try some other sort of remedies that aren't really going to get to like the root problems."*

*- Central Valley*

**19.1%** of Black young women and **16.1%** of Hispanic young women report that they did not seek mental health treatment because of confidentiality concerns.

Hispanic young women also reported that they avoided mental health treatment because they "did not want others to find out" (**14.5%**) or because they "feared negative impact on their job" (**17.8%**) at high rates.[6]

## HIDDEN DISABILITY

# 10%

Invisible or hidden disabilities are defined as disabilities that are not readily apparent. This umbrella term applies to an estimated 10% of Americans, including those with mental health diagnoses.[7]

*"I know somebody like me because I do have a bit of mental challenge, mental illness going on. You know it's kind of a struggle to um, to uh, get in the work thing because I don't deal well with people, when I'm with too much people. I get really bad anxiety and of course you know, she knows, like so it's kind of hard so like that's why I went to graveyards, but then I started to deal with people in the morning and a lot of bad experiences happened with people with me as well but, you know just being like it's hard to try because they don't understand. Nobody, nobody gets it. Like so they just think oh you're making it up or it's not real you know."*

*- Denver*

**17.3%** of Black young women, **10.6%** of Native young women, and **21.8%** of Hispanic young women living in poverty experienced any mental illness in the last year.[8]

*"I can't see it so it's not there. It's sort of like I know it's real to me. It's not real for you but I know it's for me. It's like so it's hard, because they don't understand. They're not there they're not in my head first, so it's always hard."*

*- Denver*

[1] SAMHSA, Adverse Childhood Experiences, 2018.
https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/practicing-effective-prevention/prevention-behavioral-health/adverse-childhood-experiences
[2] CLASP analysis of Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI), Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health. (2016). 2016 NSCH Child and Family Health Measures and Subgroups, SPSS Codebook, Retrieved 07/09/18 from www.childhealthdata.org.
[3] Ibid.
[4] CLASP Analysis of Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health Public Use File, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016. http://datafiles.samhsa.gov/study-dataset/national-survey-drug-use-and-health-2015-nsduh-2015-ds0001-nid16894
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Disabled World, Invisible Disabilities: List and General Information, 2018. https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/types/invisible/
[8] CLASP Analysis of Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health Public Use File, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2016. http://datafiles.samhsa.gov/study-dataset/national-survey-drug-use-and-health-2015-nsduh-2015-ds0001-nid16894

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