

Essence of Us.

A STRENGTHS BASED STUDY ON BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OMAHA



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I BE  BLACK GIRL

Essence:

/ˈesens/ noun: the intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, that determines its character.

The qualities of Black women and girls, our narratives, our stories are fluid. We are abstract multifaceted beings with depth and range. The “essence” of Black women and girls is centered in how we show up authentically by our own definitions, on our own terms.

counterparts. As a result, BWGs are inhibited by structural barriers and systemic oppression. The disparate rates at which BWGs are disciplined and criminalized in school, experience intimate partner violence and incarceration are some of the ways that illustrate the

of their seminal report *Start from the Ground Up: Increasing Support for Girls of Color*, Grantmakers for Girls of Color provided a framework to support this often overlooked demographic.¹ *I Be Black Girl* in collaboration with STEPs at the University Nebraska at Omaha is answering that call by conducting localized research that aims to:

- Define what is meant by “Black women and girls” (BWGs) and examine the tensions in those definitions.
- Explore the everyday structural barriers as described by BWGs.
- Map challenges faced by and budding opportunities for those supporting BWGs on the ground.
- Inform recommendations for service providers, funders, and policy advocates aspiring to develop increased intentional support for BWGs.

This research will inform and influence service providers, funders, and policymakers while uplifting and affirming the voices of all Black women and girls.

“When [society] acknowledges in one breath that Black women are victimized and in the same breath emphasize their strength, they imply that though Black women are oppressed they manage to circumvent the damaging impact of oppression by being strong—and that is simply not the case. Usually, when people talk about the “strength” of Black women they are referring to the way in which they perceive Black women coping with oppression.

They ignore the reality that to be strong in the face of oppression is not the same as overcoming oppression, that endurance is not to be confused with transformation.” – bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman*

Black women and girls (BWGs) are integral to the fabric of thriving vibrant communities and families, and yet we still experience acts of racism, sexism, adultification and transphobia that minimize our ability to live authentically and access our full potential.

vulnerable position in which we are left when our experiences go unrecognized. This project is a critical step towards enhancing intersectional research and promoting the inclusion of BWGs narratives in mainstream discourse.

BWGs are routinely invisible in research, advocacy, and policy. Our experiences become lost at the intersection of race and gender and are overshadowed by the experiences of our

In Spring 2019, Grantmakers for Girls of Color issued a call to action to step forward and take charge of advancing research that centers the voices and experiences of Black and Brown girls. With the release

Introduction

The research in this report seeks to use a strengths-based framework to illustrate how Black women and girls in Omaha, NE fare along common indicators of well-being (i.e., education, employment, economic stability, health) to provide insight on how advocates and stakeholders can best support efforts geared towards Black women and girls accessing their full potential. As stated by bell hooks, all defined groups, particularly those with power, influence, or control, consist of a center and a margin where those in the center possess more power, influence, or control than those at the margins.²

Unveiling pathways for action can assist those who hold positions and spaces of power to uplift and center Black women and girls who have been relegated to the margins. Previously conducted research that addressed Black women and girls’ experiences based upon their intersecting identities was used to inform topics addressed in this report.

Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood revealed the prevalence of adultification the perception of Black girls as more adult-like than White girls their

same age – and how it shapes Black girls’ experiences in public systems.³ This guided our decision to focus on age demographics.

Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected exposed the urgent need to examine the treatment of Black girls in schools and led us to address educational outcomes for Black women and girls locally.⁴

Employment and economic liberation were explored as a result of recommendations in ***The Status of Black Women in the United States***. This report encouraged further discovery into the ways we can ensure Black women gain access to upward mobility in areas like post-secondary education and employment practices.⁵

Human Rights Campaign’s 2019 Black and African American LGBT Youth Report and ***A Time To Act: Fatal Violence Against Transgender People in America*** reminded us of the importance in uplifting and centering Black transwomen and femmes’ narratives and experiences.^{6,7}

Lastly, ***Start from the Ground Up: Increasing Support for Girls of Color*** offered guidance

on how to approach our research with Black women and girls ensuring the final product was empowering, uplifting, and solutions focused.

In this report you will find background information on why we embarked on the mission to investigate the experiences of Black women and girls in Omaha, NE and the goals we intend to accomplish in doing so. We use the term “Black women and girls” to refer to those who identify as both cisgender and transgender. The term “femme” is used, out of respect, to acknowledge all feminine queer identities. A description of the research design is also provided to illustrate the strategy used to develop the research questions, for data collection, and data analysis.

Foundational data with a summary of key findings outlining how Black women and girls fare along common indicators of well-being is also present to help justify our recommendations for future action.

This project was funded through a grant from Fund for Omaha.

I Be Black Girl Leads: Sarena Dacus & Ashlei Spivey

Summary of Key Findings

There is not one common narrative to describe the experiences, vibrancy, and essence of Black women and girls. Therefore, to conduct accurate, rigorous, and comprehensive research, investigators must have a firm understanding of the community's demographic composition prior to delving into the exploration of social indicators. Key observations regarding Black women and girls within the Omaha metro in 2018 include:

The metro consists of a relatively young group of Black women and girls.

- Over half (56%) are under the age of 35.
- Out of the top 100 metros with the largest Black populations, Omaha has the 4th largest population of Black girls age 18 or younger.

Black women are not remaining in the metro through adulthood.

- Those between the ages of 35 to 54 make up only 24% and those 55 years and above account for 20% of the Black female population.
- Out of the top 100 metros with the largest Black populations, Omaha ranks 91st for the population of Black women ages 35 to 54.

Educational achievement rates, at both the high school and undergraduate levels, are on par with national averages.

- Achievement rates (88%) are second only to White women and girls (94%) when considering those who have a high school degree or higher.
- The percent who obtain a high school degree or higher is significantly less when compared to most other Black women and girls in surrounding metro areas.

Black women and girls have experienced increasing economic stability over the last several years.

- From 2016 - 2018, the percentage of Black women living in poverty has incrementally decreased (1 - 2% annually) yet they still have the highest poverty rate in Omaha, which is also above the national average.

Black women actively contribute to the labor force at a higher rate than the national average.

- The unemployment rate for women ages 16 to 64 is lower than that for Black women nationally, but relatively higher than the unemployment rate for other women locally.
- Black women age 65 and older are the most frequent participants in the labor force among women age 65 and above.

Future Recommendation

We are recommending a multifaceted approach to promote Black women and girls' optimal well-being and economic liberation. Efforts must simultaneously focus on intervening at the individual, organizational, and community levels to ensure long-term success. Specific recommendations based on pre-existing research and the current study include:

- 1. Focus outreach efforts on Black girls, femmes, and young women with programming geared towards providing emotional support, enhancing cultural pride, and leadership development.**
- 2. Place Black women and young people at the helm of policy design, advocacy, and implementation.**
- 3. Develop community-level initiatives designed to educate the broader population on the cultural gradient of Black women, girls, and femmes with the intent to reduce stigma and increase affirmation.**
- 4. Engage in ongoing research that reports disaggregated results as to make apparent the experiences of Black women, girls, and femmes.**



Research Approach & Design

Background

The experiences of Black women and girls in the U.S. routinely go unexplored, underreported, and unaddressed. Their narratives become lost at the intersection of gender and race at both the national and local levels. I Be Black Girl, in partnership with Support and Training for the Evaluation of Programs (STEPs) at **the University of Nebraska at Omaha**, sought to amplify the experiences of Black women and girls in the Omaha metropolitan area by evaluating outcomes across various areas. A primary goal was to use a strengths-based framework to identify opportunities for supporting Black women and girls in the Omaha metropolitan area, and in doing so, create continued access to greater opportunities.

Overall Research Design & Approach

Based on recommendations from *Grant Makers for Girls of Color*, a mixed method design was selected for the current study. This allowed us to explore the experiences of Black women and girls through both objective and subjective lenses. Throughout the report, the term “Black women

and girls” is used inclusively to refer to those who identify as cisgender and transgender. The term “femme” is used to represent all feminine queer identities. Due to local social distancing guidelines, phase one of the project focused on secondary data collection and analysis. Details on secondary data collection, analysis, and findings are presented in the proceeding sections. Primary data collection will be completed in phase two of the project. Focus groups will be conducted with Black women, girls, and femmes to gain insight into their subjective experiences. Individual interviews with stakeholders will also be completed to help better understand the systemic barriers Black women, girls, and femmes encounter and opportunities for reform. Data, analysis, and findings from phase two will be presented in a future report.

Identification of Indicators

STEPs conducted a brief literature review to identify key indicators commonly used when assessing the status of Black women and girls. **Education, employment, health, poverty, and political engagement** were among the top areas

consistently addressed in quality reports such as *Start from the Ground Up: Increasing Support for Girls of Color and The Status of Black Women in the United States*.¹⁵ Consistent with the desire to use a strength-based approach, poverty was reconceptualized as **economic liberation**. STEPs then proceeded to locate data sources that provided disaggregated data across each of these indicators, placing an emphasis on locating data that best captured the intersecting experience of identifying as Black and a woman or girl.

Although reliable data sources were located for each indicator, few provided data simultaneously disaggregated across race and gender. None of the explored datasets provided information regarding the key indicators for Black transgender women and femmes. Because disaggregated was unavailable, STEPs was unable to use common datasets including the *500 Cities dataset*, the *Uniform Data System (UDS) Mapper*, and the *U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Characteristics Reports* to collect data on the indices of health and political involvement for Black women and girls in the Omaha metro

area. A detailed chart of datasets that were unsuccessfully searched and a rationale for why they were inappropriate for the present report can be found in the appendices.

Analysis of Data

All data for this report was collected from the American Community Survey (ACS) through the U.S. Census. The ACS is conducted annually nationwide with a representative sample of the U.S. population. It provides information on estimated demographics and social and economic characteristics for communities across the country. Results are published in 1- and 5-year summaries. The present study shares findings based on 2018 ACS 5-year summaries because they provide the largest sample sizes and most accurate estimates. With the assistance of UNO’s Center for Public Affairs Research, STEPs compiled and analyzed the data.

STEPs then compared results for the Omaha metro area to other populations and locales in order to assist in contextualizing the findings. Rankings of the top 100 metros with the largest Black population informed the assessment of how Omaha compares to other cities with a similarly sized Black population. Omaha ranks 87th on this list with a Black population estimated to be 70,434. Some data points were compared to Tulsa, OK which ranks 82nd on the list with an estimated overall Black population of 78,792. Tulsa, OK was selected as a comparison city because of its proximity and similarity to Omaha in both total population and Black population. Additionally, STEPs utilized comparisons to women from other racial/ethnic groups to illustrate how Black women and girls fare in relation to other women in the Omaha metro area.

Limitations

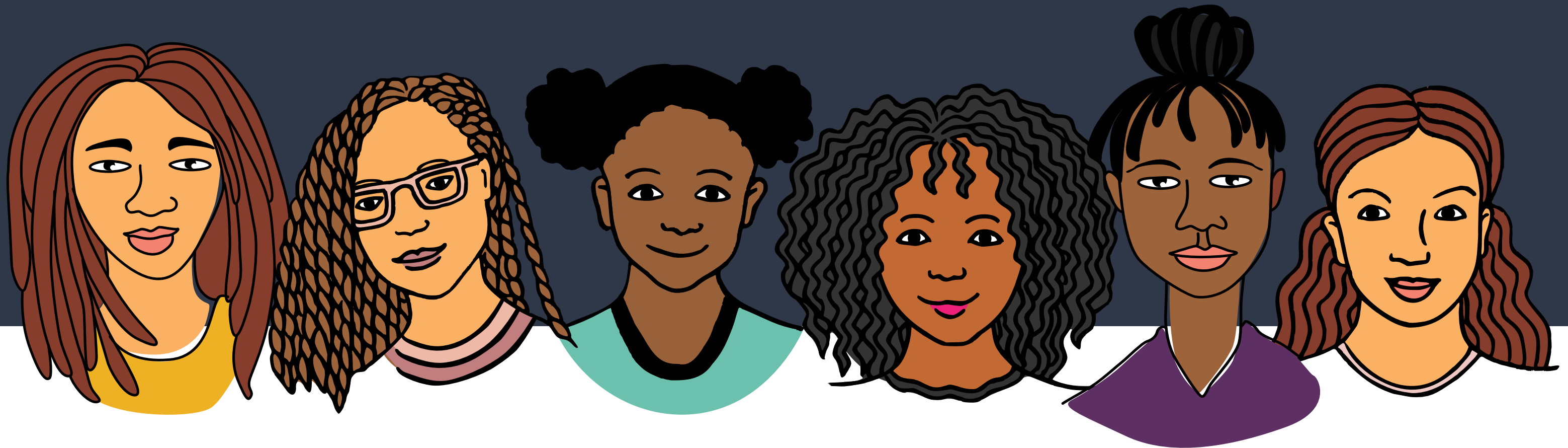
1. Limited time and financial resources prohibited an in-depth exploration of the identified key indicators.
2. Due to data and time barriers, STEPs evaluators used data from one source to compile this report. Use of multiple data sources can reduce the inherent bias that occurs when relying on one data source.
3. Current national surveys, including the American Community Survey (ACS), do not capture information on a person’s sexual identity or gender identity. As a result, though STEPs sought to honor all intersections of race and gender, demographic information and details on the experiences of Black transwomen and femmes in this report are limited.



Foundational Data

BLACK GIRLS AND
ADOLESCENTS

An estimated 35,977 Black women and girls reside in the Omaha metropolitan area. Understanding the demographic structure of the population can help provide insight into how underlying factors such as age or country of birth may influence key indicators.



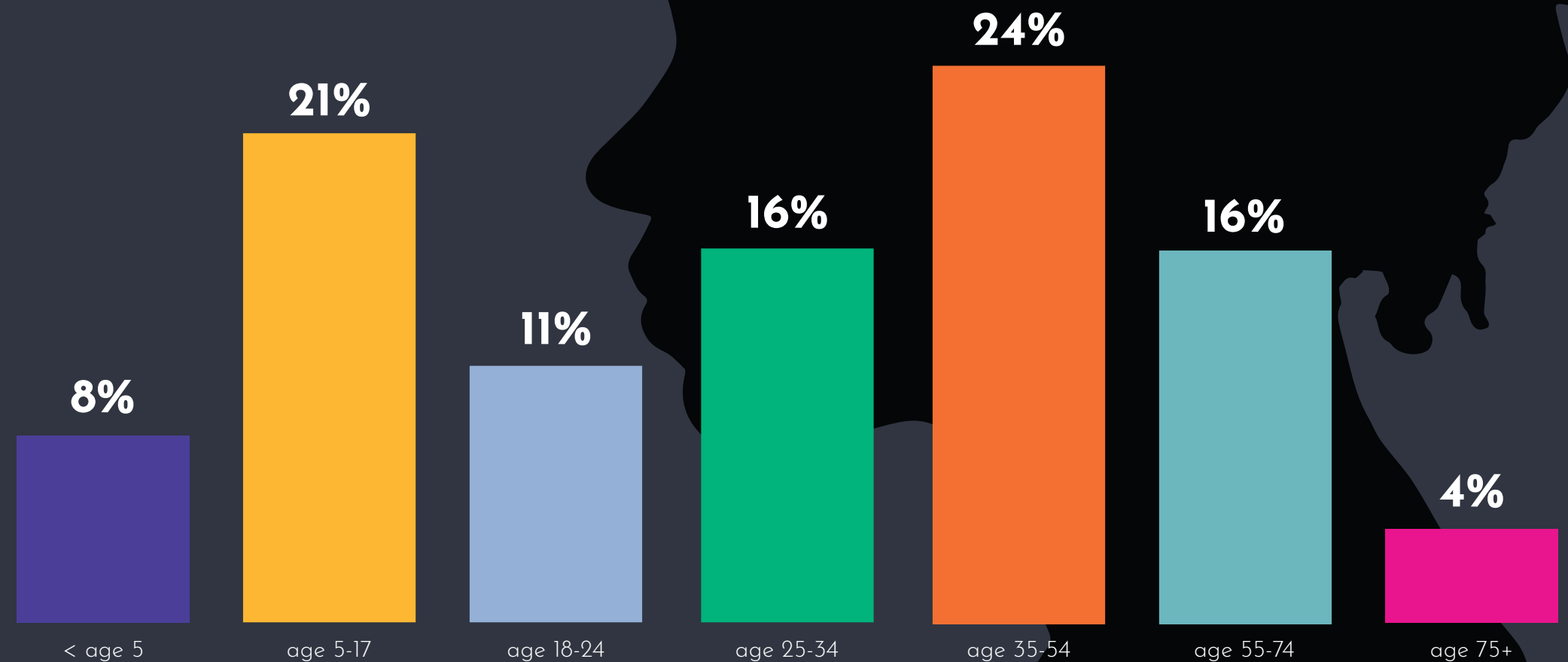
Age

Approximately 56% of Black women and girls in the Omaha metro are 35 years old or younger. This includes 29% of girls who are under the age of 18 with a small percentage (4%) being born outside of the United States.

Key Finding:

The metro consists of a relatively young group of Black women and girls.

Age Breakdown of Black Females in Omaha Metro



Giving Context to the Numbers

Within the top 100 metros in Black population, Omaha ranks as having the:

- 4th highest population of Black female children under age 5.
- 5th highest for Black female school-aged children between ages 5 and 17.
- 4th highest for Black female children under age 18.

The Story Behind the Numbers

Researchers have found at an early age Black girls are exposed to unique experiences attributed to their gender and race. As young as age 5, Black girls are viewed by adults as needing less nurturing and protection. Black girls are also perceived as more independent and knowing more about adult topics. As a result, young Black girls are more likely to be adultified or believed to be less innocent and more adult-like than their white counterparts.³ These misconceptions may result in Black girls receiving less emotional support, harsher discipline for developmentally appropriate behaviors, and underlie Black girls' inequitable treatment in public systems.

Educational Attainment

Education can provide multiple pathways to success through increased wages, employment, and a sense of agency in one's life. However, structural barriers such as disparate discipline practices and under-resourced schools can preclude Black women and girls from achieving their full potential.⁴ Nationally and locally, Black girls encounter elevated levels of punitive discipline practices, which may negatively impact educational attainment while increasing their risk of involvement with the criminal justice system.^{4,8,9}

In the Omaha metro, about 88% of Black women age 25 and above have obtained a high school degree or higher. This achievement is second only to White women (94%) and slightly above Native American women (87%).

At age 25 and above, 23% of Black women hold a bachelor's degree or higher. This is 10 percentage points higher than Native American women and 7 percentage points above Hispanic women while being 15 percentage points and 21 percentage points below White and Asian women, respectively.

Educational Attainment at Age 25 and Above

Key Finding:

Educational achievement rates, at both the high school and undergraduate levels, are on par with national averages.

	Black Women (n=21,644)	White Women (n=269,251)	Asian Women (n=8,384)	Native American Women (n=1,041)	Hispanic Women (n=21,626)
Women with HS+	18,978 88%	252,106 94%	6,060 72%	1,214 87%	13,519 63%
Women with BS+	5,082 23%	102,838 38%	3,713 44%	186 13%	3,425 16%

Giving Context to the Numbers

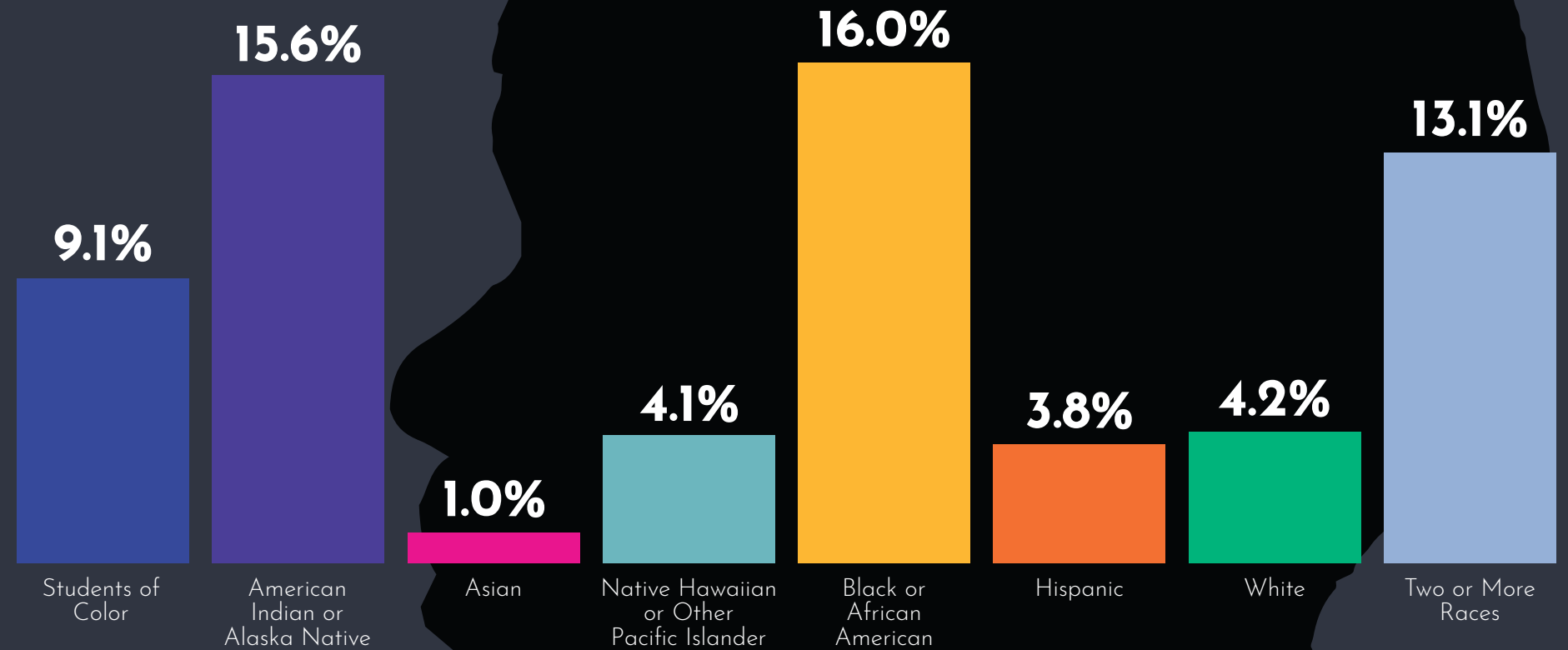
The Omaha metro (38th) ranks below Tulsa, OK (15th) when comparing the percentage of Black women with a high school degree or higher at age 25. However, the Omaha metro (36th) ranks above the Tulsa, OK metro (64th) when considering the percentage of Black women with a bachelor's degree or higher. Black women's educational attainment in the Omaha area is similar to the national averages.

The Story Behind the Numbers

Black girls contend with the consequences of implicit bias, often based on negative stereotypes, in their daily lives. Profound examples are demonstrated in their experiences within educational environments. Black girls are suspended more frequently than their racial counterparts and punitively disciplined for behaviors that may be more effectively addressed through counseling or mediation. Black girls also report elevated exposure to harassment and perceiving teachers to be less invested in their academic success.⁴ Black transgender and gender-expansive youth (male and female) describe similar experiences of feeling unsafe and unsupported at school and at times within the community. Previously, they have reported experiences of intentional and unintentional discrimination such as being misgendered by school officials, exposure to verbal and physical harassment, and subjection to restrictive gender binary policies that prohibit them from living authentically.⁶

Omaha Public Schools At Least One Out-of-School Suspension

(one and multiple suspensions combined)



Each of these experiences can contribute to Black girls prematurely disengaging from educational settings. Teachers' and administrators' misconceptions and implicit biases may result in lower academic expectations for students who possess these identities, further increasing their likelihood of academic disengagement with detrimental consequences. Multiple studies have demonstrated youth who are not attached to an educational setting are at increased risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system.^{3,4} Both limited educational attainment and involvement with the criminal justice system reduce employment opportunities and decrease economic prosperity in adulthood.

Persistent exposure to misconceptions and negative stereotypes inside the educational environment and outside have a detrimental impact on the psychological well-being of Black girls. For example, Black transgender and gender expansive youth (male and female) have identified a lack of support from their family, schools, and community as a barrier to optimal self-esteem. In one survey, 67% of Black transgender and gender expansive youth reported being made to feel bad about their gender identity by family members.⁶ Additionally, an expansive body of literature documents the correlation between exposure to stereotypes and lower self-esteem for Black girls.

However, the negative impact of these experiences can be reduced when Black women, girls, and femmes are supported in embracing their identities. Providing opportunities to enhance cultural knowledge and increase cultural pride can help insulate Black girls from discrimination and improve academic outcomes.¹⁰

Highlighting the narratives of Black transgender women and femmes can facilitate access to relatable role models while combating overall stigma.¹¹ In addition, Black girls report leadership aspirations more than any other group of girls.¹² Capitalizing on these aspirations can help increase confidence and overall self-esteem for Black girls and femmes. Conducting focus groups with Black women, girls, and femmes in the Omaha metro will help confirm if their experiences reflect those reported at the national level and assist in determining specific gaps in services that can be addressed.

Recommendation

Focus outreach efforts on Black girls, femmes, and young women with programming geared towards providing emotional support, enhancing cultural pride, and leadership development. Providing intentional support can increase their connectedness to the Omaha community, improve matriculation rates, and lead to greater retention in the metro through their prime working years (ages 35 to 54). Development in this arena can benefit young Black women, girls, and femmes by increasing their overall quality of life and benefit the Omaha metro via young professionals' contributions to urban prosperity.

Foundational Data

BLACK WOMEN
INTO ADULTHOOD

An estimated 35,977 Black women and girls reside in the Omaha metropolitan area. Understanding the demographic structure of the population can help provide insight into how underlying factors such as age or country of birth may influence key indicators.



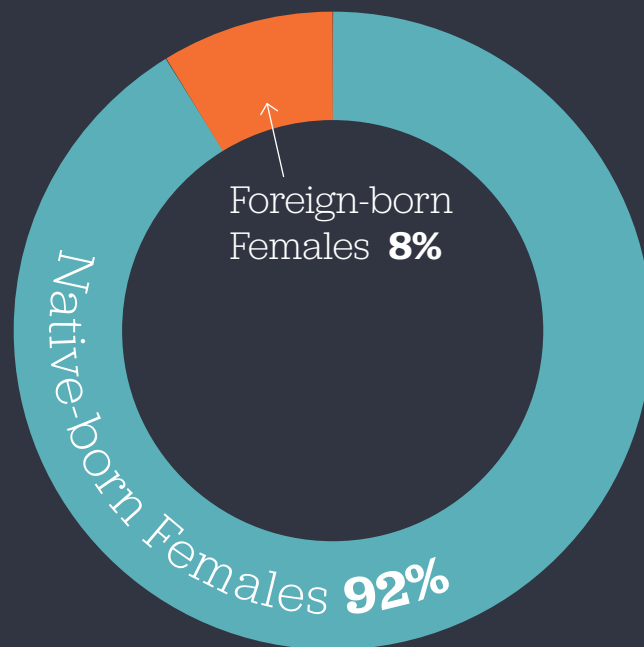
Nativity and Age

Being born outside of the United States adds another dimension to the essence of being a Black woman, girl, or femme.

Overall, 8% of Black women and girls in Omaha are foreign-born. Of Black girls under age 18, 4% are foreign-born. Of Black girls age 18 and older, 10% are foreign-born.

Women between the ages of 35 to 54 make up 24% of the Omaha metro Black female population while those 55 years and above account for roughly 20%.

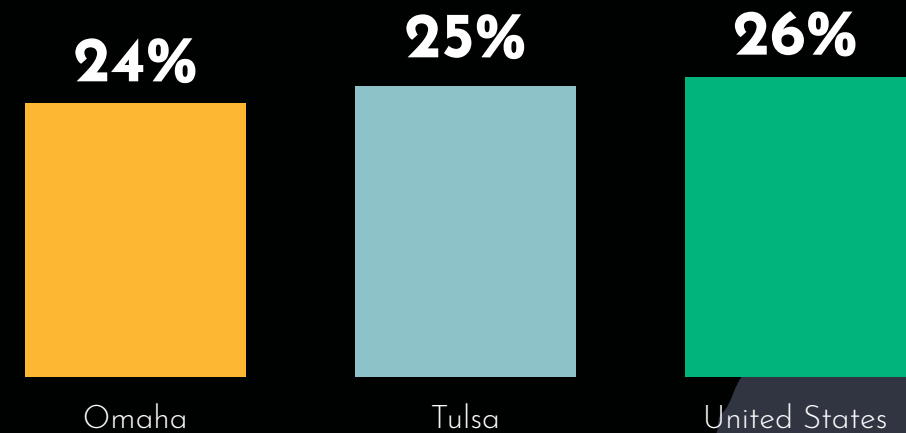
Nativity of Black women and girls in Omaha



Key Finding:

Black women are not remaining in the metro through adulthood.

Percentage of Black Women Age 35 to 54



The story behind the numbers

The percentage of Black women in Omaha between the ages of 35 to 54 pales in comparison to other cities within the top 100 metros with the largest Black populations. Women in this age demographic represent those in their prime working years who typically have increased expertise and earnings they can contribute to society. However, they may move out of state to seek more prosperous environments when faced with limited opportunities for career advancement and establishing meaningful social relationships.

Being foreign born adds another layer of complexity to being a Black woman or femme. Frequently, individuals must balance navigating peculiar oppressive systems while fighting to remain authentic to their cultural heritage. They may also encounter discordance in relationships with native born women and a disconnect between themselves and their U.S.-born children if they start a family.

Recommendations

Develop community-level initiatives designed to educate the broader population on the cultural variability of Black women, girls, and femmes with the intent to reduce stigma and increase affirmation. Creating educational platforms that teach all people about the diversity and rich cultural heritage of Omaha's Black women, girls, and femmes as well as their accomplishments can promote interdependence, increase confidence, and assist in invalidating commonly held stereotypes. Black women, girls, and femmes can empower one another to navigate obstacles and embrace self-acceptance. Whereas, the community can uplift them through increased knowledge and acceptance by celebrating their vibrancy and creating affirming spaces.

Giving Context to the Numbers

Within the top 100 metros in Black population, Omaha ranks 91st for the percentage of Black women between the ages of 35 to 54. When looking at the percentage of overall Black women and girls who are foreign-born, the Omaha metro (29th) ranks above Tulsa, OK metro (56th). However, with 8.0% of the population of Black females being foreign-born, Omaha is slightly below the national average of 9.7%.

Employment Status

Into adulthood, Black women and femmes continue to have experiences, shaped by their racial and gender identities, that impact their economic prosperity. Black women are considered some of the most active participants in the labor force, but still experience higher rates of unemployment. When employed, Black women report being undervalued and underpaid. These beliefs are validated by ample data that suggests Black women earn a lower median wage than most other women and men.^{5,13} Researchers have also found Black LGBTQ+ people, including transgender women and femmes, face increased discrimination throughout the employment process. They report being subjected to biased hiring practices, unnecessary background checks, and earning lower wages.¹⁴ Other national reports indicate generally for transgender people the unemployment rate is double that of the national average.⁷

Gainful employment ensures self-sufficiency and allows individuals to contribute to the country's economic success.

In the Omaha metro, 75% of Black women between the ages of 16 to 64 participate in the labor force. In addition, 20% of Black women age 65 and above also participate.

Black women in the Omaha metro ages 16 to 64 experience the second highest unemployment percentage rate (8%) compared to other women in the area. At 7%, Black women age 65 and older experience similar levels of unemployment and the highest unemployment rate for women age 65 and above.

Key Finding:

Black women are not remaining in the mero through adulthood.

Giving Context to the Numbers

Black women and girls in Omaha between the ages of 16 to 64 experience a lower rate of unemployment (8%) compared to their counterparts residing in Tulsa, OK (10%). Omaha Black women and girls' unemployment rate is also slightly lower than the national percentage (9.9%) for Black women.

Employment Status of Women Ages 16 to 64

	Black Women (n=23,304)	White Women (n=249,501)	Asian Women (n=9,231)	Native American Women (n=1,664)	Hispanic Women (n=26,830)
Women in labor force	17,517 75%	195,239 78%	5,589 61%	986 59%	18,206 68%
Women unemployed	1,382 8%	6,069 3%	318 6%	124 13%	1,132 6%

The story behind the numbers

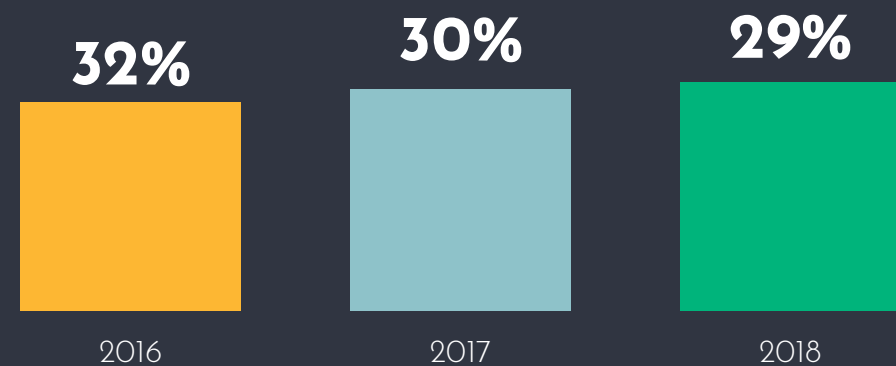
Stereotypes and bias negatively impact economic prosperity for Black women and femmes by limiting their opportunity for advancement in the workplace. Black women are more likely to work in the service industry and hold lower ranking positions.⁵ The trend of being relegated to lower positions persists outside of the service industry such as in the nonprofit sector where Black women are frequently assigned to administrative roles and excluded from managerial positions. When seeking to advance their careers, they face inaccurate assumptions about their qualifications and report being passed over or overlooked for promotions. When Black women do successfully enter management, they are routinely still being assigned tasks below their rank rather than leadership and strategic development opportunities.¹³

Black women and femmes also describe a lack of senior staff encouragement or mentorship for growth into higher positions. Some indicate they must seek out professional mentors, usually outside of the workplace, to receive assistance developing their talents.¹³ Connecting with a professional mentor who has a shared identity is rare. Black women and femmes would benefit from mentorship from others with similar lived experiences that can provide guidance on how to navigate the contours of race and gender in the workplace. By lifting Black women and femmes into leadership positions, businesses would be rewarded with new perspectives and fresh insight informed by the groups' unique experiences.¹¹ Black women and femmes who are denied the opportunity for leadership and career advancement may seek to relocate to more supportive and inclusive areas of the country. The loss of Black women and femmes of prime working age can impact economic prosperity for Black women overall and deprive Omaha businesses of their skills and innovation.

Economic Liberation

Economic liberation is influenced by both educational attainment and employment. Restricted economic liberation can have an adverse impact on Black women, girls, and femmes' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Percentage of Black Women Below Poverty Line (ACS 5-Year Estimates)



Key Finding:

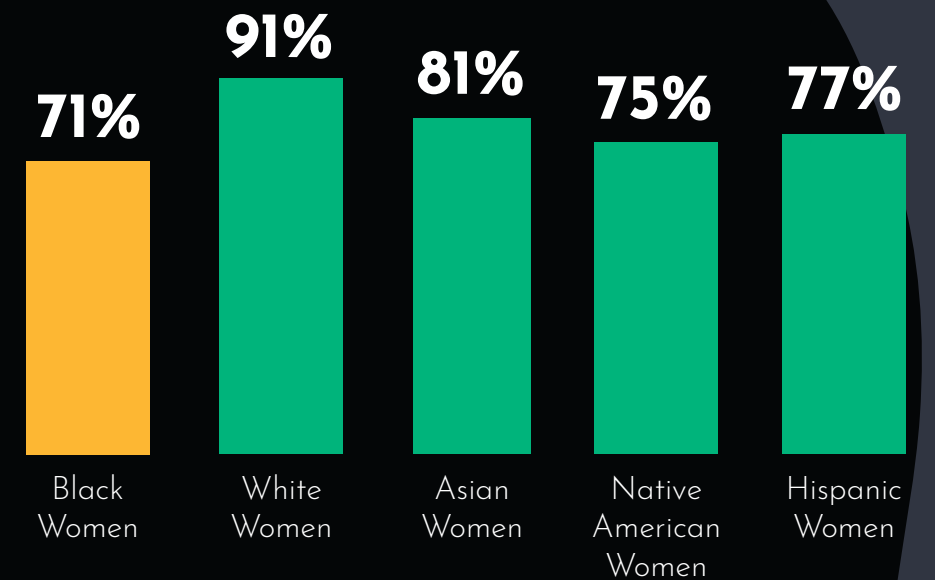
Black women and girls have experienced increasing economic stability over the last several years.

Giving Context to the Numbers

Black women in the Omaha metro are experiencing increased economic liberation as evidenced by the decreasing poverty trend over the last several years. In 2018, 71% of Black women lived above the poverty line while 29% lived at or below the poverty line.

While Black women continue to experience increasing income levels, a gap still exists between women from other racial categories in the Omaha metro. The percentage of women living above the poverty line is higher for White women (91%), Asian women (81%), Hispanic women of any race (77%), and Native American women (75%). In addition, the Omaha metro's rate of Black female poverty is higher than the national average of 24%.

Percent of Women Above Poverty Level Within Race



The story behind the numbers

Systemic oppression grounded in racism, sexism, and transphobia hampers Black women and femmes' economic liberation. Diminished prosperity can be attributed to unjust experiences when interacting with public systems, low wage earnings, and attenuated work-family supports. Occupational segregation, or the tendency for women to be overrepresented in certain occupations, also inhibits Black women and femmes' prosperity.⁵ Past and present research suggests that policy reform enacted to dismantle current unjust practices is a critical component of advancing economic liberation. To obtain substantial benefits, reform must be evidence-informed and reflect the voices of Black women, girls, and femmes.

Recommendations

Place Black women and young people at the helm of policy design, advocacy, and implementation. Identifying, addressing, and eliminating systemic injustice can facilitate the creation of environments that cultivate the talents of Black women, girls, and femmes. Organizational change efforts must be focused on moving beyond inclusion towards valuing and capitalizing on the benefits of a multicultural student body or workforce. Creating spaces within leadership will provide access to innovative ideas and overall, enhance organizations.

Engage in ongoing research that reports disaggregated results as to make apparent the experiences of Black women, girls, and femmes. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative modes of exploration can aid in achieving both generalizable and nuanced understandings of Black women, girl and femmes' lived experiences. Ideally, they would be active participants throughout the research process regardless of the methodological approach.

Conclusion

Black women and girls have the right to experience life without racism, sexism, transphobia, and all other forms of oppression. Misguided attempts to celebrate our achievements and present our story as a monolith, rob us of the opportunity to fully excel and demonstrate our vibrancy. Transforming social systems by removing barriers will allow for Black women and girls to exist authentically and enable us to access our full potential.

Intentional and ongoing interventions are required to ensure Black women and girls are repositioned to the center of community, so our narratives remain uplifted in mainstream dialogue. Action must be reenvisioned and executed by Black women and young people.

The next step for this project is to engage in data collection through focus groups to hear directly from Black women and girls about their experiences, ideas, and solutions. Individual interviews with advocates will be conducted to complement the knowledge gained from focus groups. This qualitative data will be tied to the quantitative data review that is presented here, to give a comprehensive view of Black women and girls' experiences in Omaha, NE.

It is the shared responsibility of funders, service providers, allies, and partners to commit to expelling injustice, celebrating and valuing our presence, and advocating for our advancement until we are able to exist and access our full potential without harm and institutional barriers.

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Appendix A

Dataset Source

500 Cities Project

United States Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project

Food Access Research Atlas

NCES Common Core of Data

Home Mortgage Disclosure Act

Douglas County Community Health Assessment (2018)

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Nebraska Vital Statistics

Nebraska Department of Education

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Justification for Exclusion

Data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data reported at the state level.

Data reported at the county level.

Data reported at the district level; data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Data reported at the state level; data not disaggregated across race and gender.

Appendix B

Health and Political Engagement

Health

Health refers to a state of physical and mental well-being and not merely the absence of disease.¹⁵ Poor health can result in adverse consequences that permeate most other social indicators. Most health indicator data is collected at the county and state levels and is aggregated across racial or gender lines.

In Douglas County, aside from Hispanic mothers (60%), Black mothers report receiving the least amount of prenatal care (62%) during their first trimester as compared to mothers from all other racial categories (e.g., White, 81%). Black infants also experience the highest levels of infant mortality (13%) than any other group.¹⁶

Focusing on Omaha, Black women and girls between the ages of 15 and 50 have the second highest fertility rate among the top 100 metros with the largest Black populations. This rate is 81 births per 1,000 women (2nd) compared to a rate of 57.6 births per 1,000 in Tulsa, OK (49th) and the national average of 54 births per 1,000.

Access to early prenatal care, infant mortality, and fertility often displays a relationship with poverty, whereas those with attenuated economic resources experience delayed prenatal healthcare and increased infant mortality. Nationally, approximately a quarter of births occurs to mothers experiencing poverty.

STEPs was unable to locate additional health data aligned with the current report's focus on specifically exploring the experiences of Black women and girls in the Omaha metro.

Political Engagement

Political engagement allows individuals active participation in the governance of their country. It gives people a voice and influence over policies that guide all aspects of life.

Nationally, Black women had a higher voting rate than all other women and men during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. Still, they continue to be underrepresented at every level of political office.¹⁷

STEPs was unable to locate disaggregated data for Black women's political participation in the Omaha metro area.



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