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The State of Self-Care for Black Women

PREPARED BY
Zogby Analytics

PREPARED FOR
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exhale-app.com



Introduction

For Black Women, self-care is self-preservation. While the stigma around mental health has lessened in recent years, the conversation surrounding Black Women’s emotional well-being and mental health has remained dry, and resources designed with Black Women’s unique needs in mind are lacking.

The following data encompasses survey responses from 1,005 Black Women in the U.S. across diverse age groups and socioeconomic classes. The findings indicate that racial trauma, stereotypes, and discrimination are key contributors to Black Women’s stress within the workplace and their personal lives. While diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are common in institutions today, fostering safe spaces for Black Women requires making more specific resources available for them to focus on their mental health and emotional well-being. As a result, 77% of the Black Women surveyed believe there is a need for more well-being tools and resources tailored to support their specific needs.

“The State of Self-Care for Black Women” report from EXHALE aims to fill a gap in survey data pertaining to Black Women’s experience of mental, emotional, and physical health in the context of their intersectional identities.

The survey data outlines:

- The importance of prioritizing Black Women’s mental health and well-being.
- Unique stressors for Black Women, including the “strong Black Women” trope, historical trauma facing Black people, and microaggressions.
- The need for culturally appropriate resources confronting Black Women's specific pressures.
- The impact of stress on Black Women’s physical health.
- Opportunities for communities to create safe spaces for Black Women.
- Specific resources employers can implement to help Black female employees feel supported.
- And more.



Key Takeaways

Black Women prioritize mental self-care 21 percentage points more than physical self-care, highlighting an important need to reduce stress among Black Women today. ([Page 04](#))

There is a strong desire among those surveyed for the creation of more well-being tools and resources specifically tailored to Black Women's needs. ([Page 07](#))

Racism and discrimination are the top barriers Black Women must overcome to gain better access to mental health resources. ([Page 07](#))

The majority (72%) say access to resources that address the unique experiences of Black Women would make them more inclined to utilize mental health resources. ([Page 07](#))

The majority agree there is a prevalence of people who believe Black Women are stronger than most people and should be able to manage more stress than others. ([Page 09](#))

Provider bias is real and common in healthcare today. More than half of Black Women feel more comfortable with a Black doctor treating them than a white doctor due to fears of provider bias. ([Page 10](#))

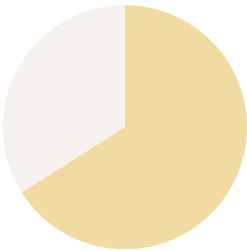
Black Women are doing too much, 66% say they overexert themselves to excel in the workplace and to take care of personal responsibilities. ([Page 11](#))

There is a need to improve workplaces, as one in two believe today's work environments do not provide safe spaces for Black Women to share their feelings and discuss their stresses. ([Page 11](#))

Self-Care Practices

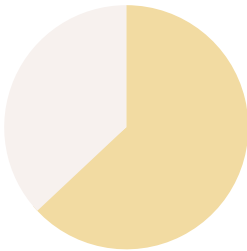
For Black Women, self-care is self-preservation

How Black Women practice self-care on a daily or weekly basis



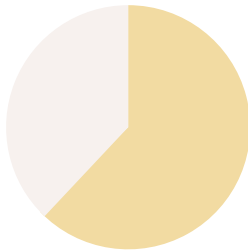
66%

Eating healthy



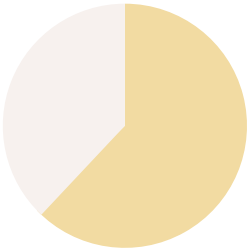
63%

Staying active/
exercising



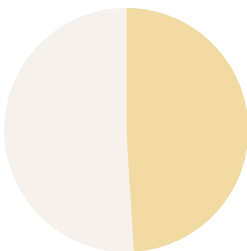
62%

Spending time with
friends/family



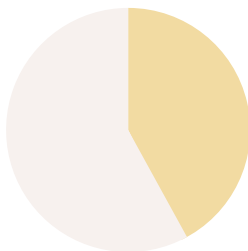
62%

Getting a good
night's sleep



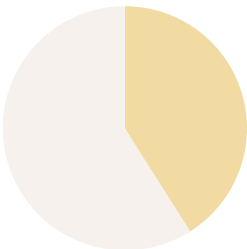
49%

Taking naps/
resting



42%

Setting
boundaries



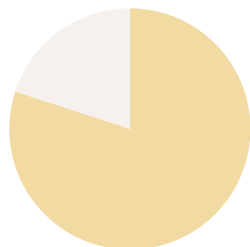
41%

Practicing spirituality
and/or religion

Self-Care Practices

For Black Women, self-care is self-preservation

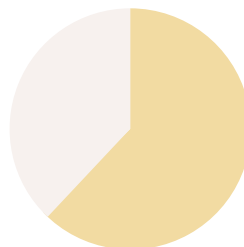
The areas of self-care most prioritized by Black Women



80%

Mental

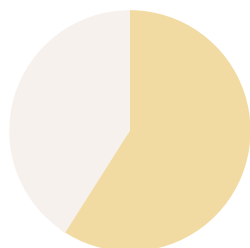
(relaxing and reducing stress)



62%

Spiritual

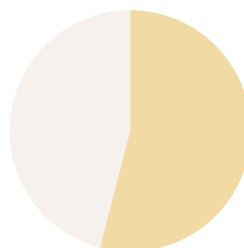
(finding meaning/
participating and
being active in a
religious community)



59%

Physical

(maintaining/improving
body health)



54%

Emotional

(processing and coping
with emotions)

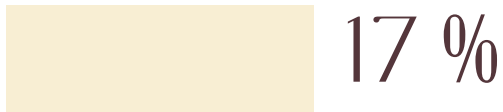
Diving Into the Data

Mental self-care is 21 percentage points higher than physical self-care, noting the importance of reducing stress for Black Women today. Emotional self-care is prioritized most highly by Black Women ages 18-49 and those who are single.

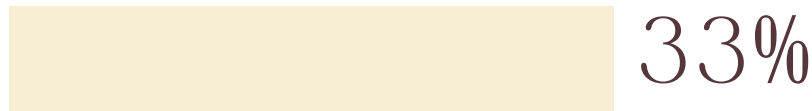
Self-Care Practices

The amount of time Black Women spend each day focusing on self-care

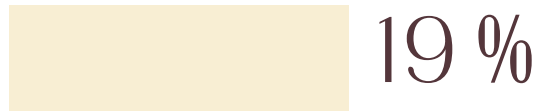
1-30 Minutes



31-60 Minutes



61-90 Minutes



Self-care and stress

36% of respondents experiencing no stress currently are engaged in 31-60 minutes of self-care daily

30% of the 251 participants hospitalized or requiring medical treatment due to stress engage in 31-60 minutes of self-care daily

40% of respondents want to spend 1-4 hours per day on self-care, illustrating Black Women's need and desire for more time for self-care

Exhale Tips

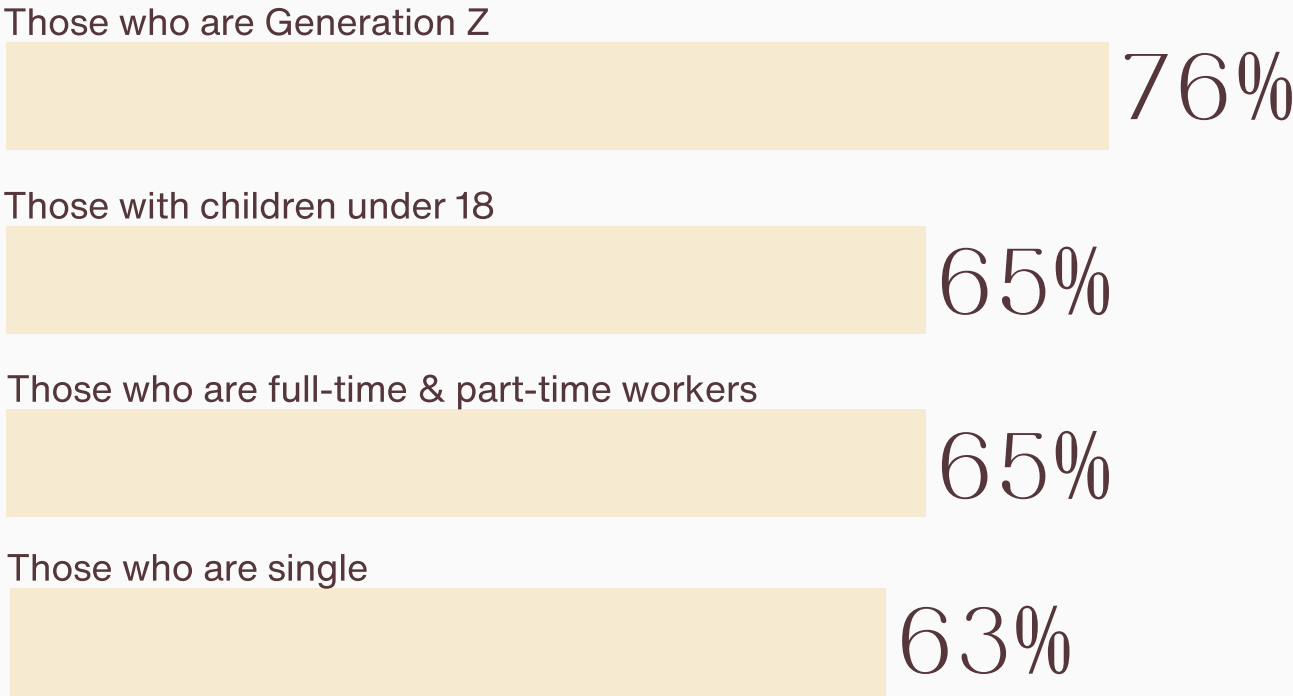
Self-love can look different for each of us but figuring out what self-love looks like for you as an individual is an essential part of your mental health journey. [Learn](#) how to practice self-care.

Mental Health and Culturally Appropriate Resources

Access to mental health resources should not be this hard

60% say it's difficult for Black Women to find and access formal mental health resources.

This is highest among

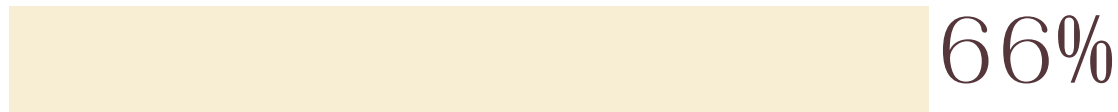


Mental Health and Culturally Appropriate Resources

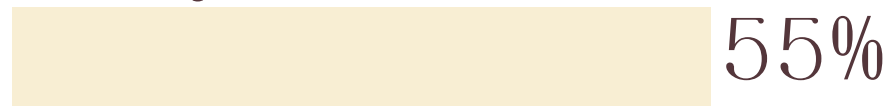
Access to mental health resources should not be this hard

Black Women have to overcome many barriers to gain better access to mental health resources

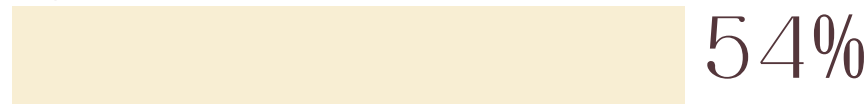
Racism and Discrimination



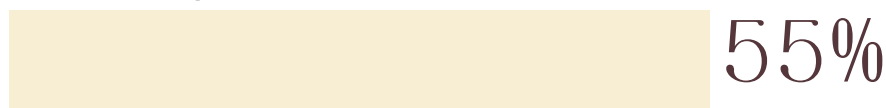
Cultural Stigmas



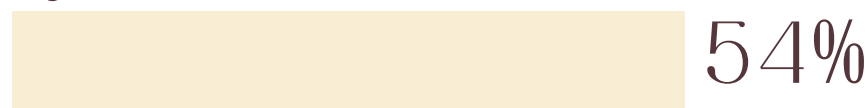
High Costs



Cultural Stigmas



High Costs



What would make Black Women more inclined to utilize mental health resources?

72% say access to resources that address the unique experiences of Black Women

64% say that time to spend on self-care

64% say lower cost

Exhale Tips

Do you feel stressed or anxious? [Here are three ways](#) to ground yourself. These grounding techniques can help you self-regulate in moments of stress and anxiety.

Emotional Well-Being

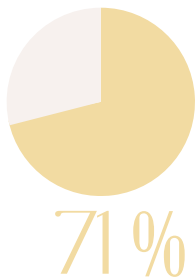
Attending to emotional needs does not make you weak

Black Women face limited access to the right tools to help them process emotions and manage stressors

38%

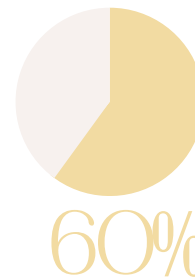
say they do not have access to culturally appropriate emotional well-being resources (or are unsure if they have access to them)

More than half of respondents rate emotional well-being as a prioritized form of self-care. Of those...



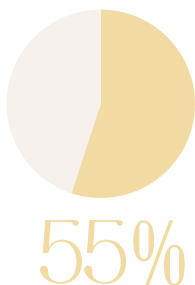
make less than \$50,000/year in personal income

71%



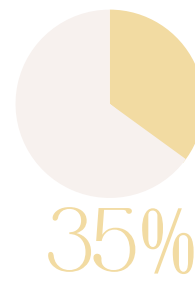
are single

60%



have no dependents in the household under the age of 18

55%



work full-time

35%

Exhale Tips

It's time to safeguard your emotional health. [Click here](#) to learn more about practices for better managing your well-being.

Diving Into the Data

Of those who prioritized emotional well-being, 46% report feeling somewhat stressed at the time of the survey.

Physical Health

Today's healthcare system does not meet the needs of Black Women

Rising stress levels are impacting Black Women's physical health

61% said they felt stress at the time of the survey

25% said they have been hospitalized or needed medical care due to stress

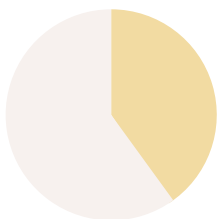
60% said their stress level has increased over the past year

Black Women are constantly expected to be strong

76% agree there is a prevalence of people who believe they are stronger than most people and should be able to manage more stress than others

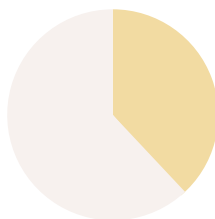
49% indicate that stress is impacting their daily lives

The major causes of stress



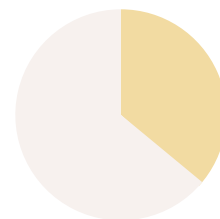
40%

Historical trauma facing Black people



38%

Racial discrimination



36%

Daily microaggressions

“Women should be reminded that attending to their own needs, whether physical or emotional, doesn’t make you weak. It makes you better able to care for your loved ones in the long run.” - Erica Martin Richards, M.D., Ph.D.

Excerpts from “Mental Health Among African American Women”

Physical Health

Access to culturally appropriate care alone may be insufficient

57% who don't trust today's healthcare system report having access to culturally appropriate physical health resources

Provider bias is real and common in today's healthcare system

52% feel more comfortable with a Black doctor treating them than a White doctor due to fears of provider bias

39% feel they have access to Black healthcare providers

38% report needing to self-advocate to receive adequate care

37% report experiencing provider bias in a healthcare setting

Diving Into the Data

The majority of Black Women prefer to be treated by a Black doctor. However, only 6% of physicians in the United States identify as Black or African American, despite 12% of the U.S. population identifying as Black or African American.

Exhale Tips

We deeply believe in the power of meditation & breath work in aiding with stress management. Check out more amazing tips on managing stress as a Black Woman [here](#).

Issues in the Workplace

36% of Black Women have left a job due to feeling unsafe

Black Women are doing too much

66% say they overexert themselves to excel in the workplace and to take care of personal responsibilities

Black Women don't feel supported in the workplace

53% don't believe their current work environment provides supportive resources for Black Women

50% indicate there is no company culture of inclusivity for Black Women in the workplace

47% feel pressure to change negative stereotypical views of Black Women in the workplace

50% say today's work environments do not provide safe spaces for Black Women to share their feelings and discuss their stresses

Resources provided to Black Women in the workplace

27% Open communication about workplace stress for Black Women

25% Creating more management and/or leadership positions for Black Women

24% Training on how to decrease workplace stress

20% Greater access to well-being tools and resources specific to the needs of Black Women

19% Building policies into the agency's structure that address workplace stress

16% Workgroups for Black Women

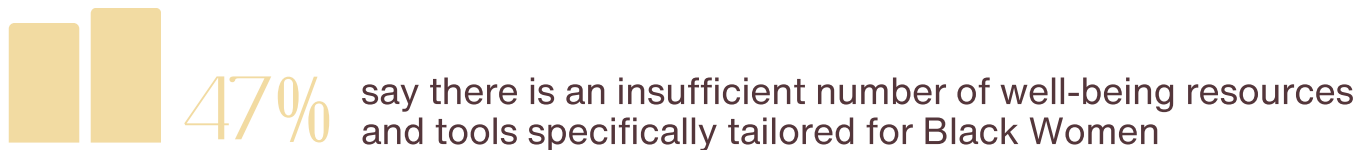
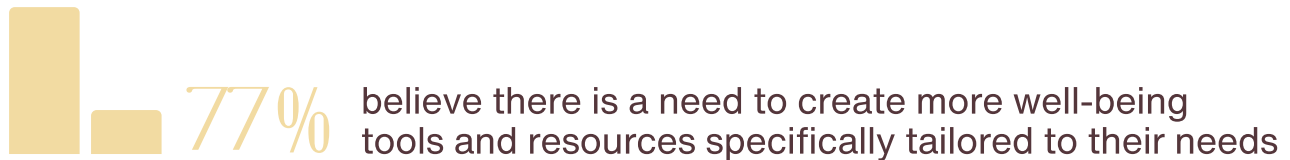
Diving Into the Data

When asked what resources are provided to Black Women in the workplace, nearly half (46%) selected 'none of the above'.

Supporting Black Women's Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

Black Women are searching for tools and resources built for their unique needs

Resources for Black Women are lacking



Black Women are willing to invest to address their needs

67% are willing to spend more than \$5 per month on emotional well-being apps or tools created by Black Women, for Black Women

54% are willing to spend more than \$10 per month on these tools

Supporting Black Women's Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

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Preferred methods of accessing tools and resources

55% prefer to access well-being tools and resources through a combination of in-person and virtually

54% are willing to spend more than \$10 per month on these tools

Black Women do not know where to find tools and resources made for them

 **29%** are unaware of any well-being tools and resources created by Black Women, for Black Women

 **39%** are aware of one to five of these tools and resources

Exhale Tips

Race and gender identities work together to shape Black Women's unique mental health needs. Facing stereotypes and systemic racism can lead to a continuously heightened state of stress, which is why Black Women need culturally appropriate resources that acknowledge the impacts of racial trauma on emotional well-being.



About Exhale

Exhale (@[exhaleapp](#)) is the first emotional well-being app designed specifically for Black Women to inspire self-care, relaxation, stress reduction, and inner peace.

Exhale was developed by Katara McCarty, coach, author, and podcast host, and is available to download via the [iTunes App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). In just three years since launching, Exhale has reached over 17,000 downloads with users in 55 countries.

About The Study

Exhale commissioned Zogby Analytics to conduct an online survey of 1,005 Black Women in the US.

Using internal and trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were randomly invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation is password coded and secure so that one respondent can only access the survey once.

Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books and exit polls, we use complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion.

Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 1,005 is +/- 3.1 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, the identical survey repeated will have results within the margin of error 95 times out of 100.

Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. As a rule, we do not rely on the validity of very small subsets of the data, especially sets smaller than 50-75 respondents. At that subset, we can make estimations based on the data, but in these cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative.

Additional factors can create error, such as question-wording and question order.

Founder of Exhale



Katara McCarty, LSCC, is a sought-after coach, author, speaker and podcast host, as well as the Founder and CEO of Katecha Corp, a technology startup dedicated to expanding access to health and well-being for Black Women.

She is also the founder of Katecha Cares Foundation, a non-profit committed to systemic change that prioritizes and ensures culturally responsive care for Black Women's mental and emotional health is the norm. Katara is committed to amplifying the richness of Black Women and their stories while advocating for and providing well-being resources through her app EXHALE.



Industry Contributor



Dr. Stella Safo, MD, MPH Founder of Just Equity for Health is a Harvard-trained, board-certified HIV primary care physician, an innovator in designing healthcare delivery models, and an advocate committed to gender and racial equity and civic engagement in healthcare.

She is a founding member of Equity Now at Mount Sinai, VoteHealth 2020 and the Coalition to Advance Antiracism in Medicine. In 2020, Dr. Safo was named one of Modern Healthcare's top minority clinicians to watch.



Exhale is pleased to share the results of the first "State of Self-Care for Black Women" report and thank the industry leaders who helped contribute to the great questions that are driving insights pertaining to Black Women's experience of mental, emotional, and physical health.