

BLACK CALIFORNIANS' ASSETS & ASPIRATIONS

Black Californians create community assets & carry ambitious aspirations

Black Californians provide significant opportunities for their children and contribute a rich array of assets to their communities despite unfair and often openly hostile conditions created by the state's education, health care, and criminal justice systems. An accurate accounting of these assets is critical to combating warped and untrue stereotypes perpetuated about Black families.

Adapted from the 2013 report *Being Black Is Not a Risk Factor* by the National Black Child Development Institute and from the 2021 *Black Child National Agenda*, the following are a handful of examples of the social, cultural, and intellectual wealth Black Californians generate and contribute to their families, communities, and state.

1 **The vast majority of the more than 20,000 Black babies born in California every year are welcomed by stable families with diverse structures and extensive networks of loved ones.** In 2023, an estimated 86% of Black Californians maintained stable housing over the prior year. Black families report high rates of social ties among relatives, friends, and faith-based communities. These reciprocal relationships are especially important considering recent evidence that strong social connections help buffer against the negative impacts of racism for parents of young children.

2 **Nationally, 80% of Black households have at least one family member who is employed.** This is 1 percentage point higher than the share of white families with at least one family member employed (79%). However, because of enduring wage gaps, this high rate of employment for Black parents does not always translate to higher, or even comparable, earnings between these groups.

3 **Nine in 10 Black Californians believe attending preschool is important to students' future academic success, the highest of any racial or ethnic group.** According to a survey conducted in March 2024 by the Public Policy Institute of California, 87% of Black Californians thought attending preschool was important to a student's long-term educational success compared with 80% of Asian and Latinx families and 71% of white families.

4 **Black parents overwhelmingly aspire for their children to attain a postsecondary degree.** In a national study of low- to moderate-income Black Americans, 84% of Black parents agreed that it was extremely or quite important that their children attend college.



5

Nearly 9 in 10 Black students agree that it is important to earn a postsecondary degree.

Students also view academic success as important, with 89% of Black youth from low-income households agreeing that it is important to obtain a postsecondary education.

6

Black parents are highly engaged and invested in their children's educations, particularly in the early years.

Nationally, 98% of Black families with preschoolers (ages 3-5) spend time at home actively fostering literacy by teaching their young children letters, words, and numbers — the highest of any racial group. This high level of support continues as children get older: One 2022 study showed that 92% of Black parents of children in kindergarten through 12th grade found more time to talk to their children about everyday assignments during the past school year.

7

Even with currently high levels of engagement, Black families desire more opportunities to be involved in their children's education and want more input into education laws.

Nearly 90% of Black parents participating in a national study said it would be helpful to have resources to assist in their efforts to advocate for high-quality education in their communities, and 93% said they wanted more opportunities for involvement in their child's education and to have input into education laws.

8

Young Black Californians are optimistic about their futures and actively engage in civic life at higher rates than any other group.

In 2023, Power California and Latino Decisions surveyed 1,557 young Californians ages 18 to 30. They found that despite facing economic insecurity at higher rates than other groups, 88% of Black respondents are optimistic about their futures, and 93% believe they can achieve their dreams.

9

Black college graduates in California have high rates of workforce participation (90%), comparable to other groups.

This high level of participation underscores the fact that Black college graduates (ages 25 to 54) successfully leverage their educational attainment, actively pursuing and securing job opportunities at rates comparable to their peers. This is true despite lower rates of employment among younger Black Californians who hold a college degree (21 to 24 years old) compared to their peers.

10

Black Californians contribute significantly to the state's economy, including as majority owners of 15,000 businesses and a relatively large share (8%) of the state's arts, entertainment, and recreation firms.

Black-owned small businesses (20 employees or fewer) are powerful economic drivers, with 175,000 Black-owned nonemployer or sole-proprietor small businesses in 2019 and 10,000 additional small businesses employing 22,000 workers.

This list merely scratches the surface of the assets, aspirations, and cultural and intellectual wealth that Black students and families hold and contribute to California's communities. Yet, far too often, policies that shape opportunity within our education systems fail to create the conditions to fully realize these strengths.

Despite these assets, racist policies and practices suppress the economic well-being of Black students and their families

The education debts owed by the state to Black families centered in this report do not exist in isolation — they are compounded by injustices across other key dimensions of well-being. Decades of discriminatory banking practices and predatory lending, a long history of exclusionary housing markets and redlining that denied Black families the chance to purchase houses in certain neighborhoods, and inequities in hiring and compensation have entrenched racial wealth gaps so effectively that in 2019, the median white household had nine times the amount of financial assets held by the median Black household.

Black children in California experience poverty at disproportionately high rates because of the same structural racism that severely limits Black Californians' economic prospects, earnings, and wealth-building. The California Department of Education uses a robust measure of socioeconomic disadvantage that considers factors like whether a child's parents have a high school diploma and whether they are homeless or in foster care, in addition to income-based eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. This data reveals that 3 in 4 Black TK-12 students are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Figure 2). That is 13 percentage points higher than the statewide average and more than double the share of white students in the state who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.



3 out of 4 (76%) Black TK-12 students in California are socioeconomically disadvantaged

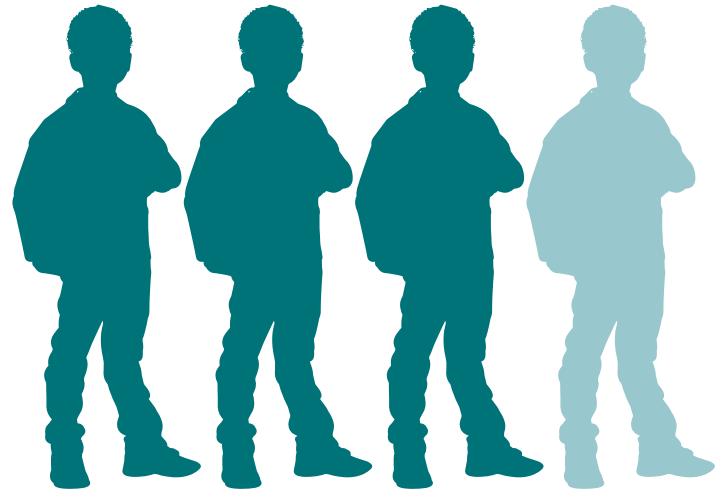


FIGURE 2. SHARE OF BLACK TK-12 STUDENTS WHO ARE SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED (2023-24)

Source: California Department of Education, [Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade](#)



To read the full Black Minds Matter 2025 report, access data sources, and for more advocacy resources to support Black students in California, scan the QR code.