

# MBK



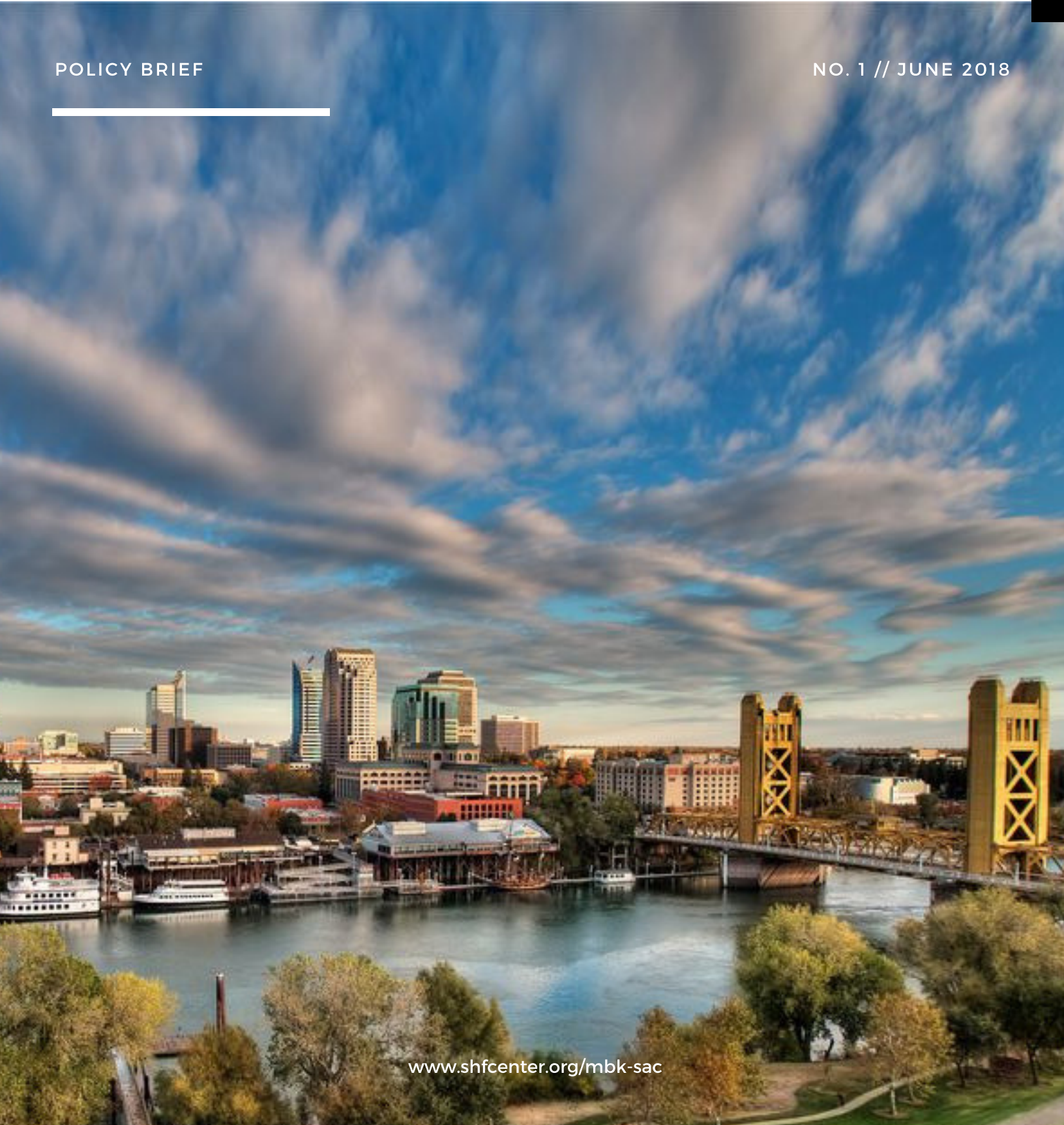
**THE CENTER**  
*at Sierra Health Foundation*

**MY BROTHER'S KEEPER - SACRAMENTO YOUTH FELLOWSHIP**

POLICY BRIEF

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NO. 1 // JUNE 2018



[www.shfcenter.org/mbk-sac](http://www.shfcenter.org/mbk-sac)

# MBK SACRAMENTO

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER



The My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Sacramento Collaborative is committed to improving outcomes for local boys and men of color.

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Building on research, partnerships and efforts already under way, the MBK Sacramento Collaborative is bringing systems leaders, community partners, youth-serving organizations and youth together to collectively address health, education, employment and justice system disparities for young men of color through policy advocacy, systems reform and support for effective programs.

The MBK initiative began in response to President Obama's signing the My Brother's Keeper Memorandum in February 2014, calling for national attention focused on "address(ing) persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color."

We began the MBK Sacramento Youth Fellowship in 2017 for male youth of color, 16-19 years old, who reside or attend school within the City of Sacramento. Youth Fellows committed to completing the nine-month fellowship program and demonstrated interest and willingness to engage in advocacy on behalf of Sacramento young men of color.



# INTRODUCTION



The My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Initiative has been around since 2014, but this is the first year for the fellowship in Sacramento. MBK Sacramento brings young leaders together to conduct research and develop solutions for issues that prevent local young men of color from thriving and prospering in life.

We, the MBK youth fellowship, were given an opportunity to address a problem that we commonly see in our community. We were given the four topics of health, education, employment, and justice system disparities.

We spent a lot of time discussing and writing down the problems that we noticed under each topic. There were a lot of problems that we wrote down and thought were important, but we found one problem that linked everything together.

The main problem that we noticed was mental health.



I agreed on mental health, because when I was younger, I had lost my father due to kidney failure, and two years later lost my oldest brother to a car accident. At that moment, I was a part of the Pre-International Baccalaureate program and was also very involved with sports at school, so I had a lot on my hands. Losing the two most important people in my life made me mentally weak.

There have been days where I wanted to give up in everything I was doing. I started to eat less and care less in school. In other words, I became depressed. Even when I was not alone, I still felt lonely because although people showed their condolences, no one talked to me deeply about my mental state.

Some teachers knew what I was going through but didn't do anything to help make sure I was mentally stable to continue on striving in life. I thought it was important to research mental health to prevent the future generation from experiencing the lack of support.

-Christopher Her



# "This is for our brothers man...we know we all goin' through it.

- LAMARIEA



We, the MBK youth fellows, hope for this policy brief to help improve the young men of color in our community's mental health. We believe that with strong mental health, our brothers can strive for success at their full potential. We seek only progress with dismantling mental health stigmas and continuing the collective research.

As an end result, we hope to start a youth-targeted mobile platform to provide necessary mentorship and resources to aid in our brothers' success. Our priority is to help alleviate the generational mental health issues our brothers have inherited and developed from birth.



# OUR PURPOSE

As individuals, we the fellows are far from similar. We grew up under different roofs, with different families, and with different problems. All of which contributes to our own unique experiences. Within that uniqueness there is a common thread between us: our struggle and our isolation.

We went through our life with hardly any support and allowed our problems to become normalized. Not all fellows went through this, but every single fellow saw a brother go through it. As we saw it, as we all continue to see it, our brothers deal with mental health problems and oftentimes alone, with no support.



**"These things are hard to talk about, *you feel me?* We go through a lot and no one knows."**

**- -JORDAN CARR**



As we were given different categories to focus on for our policy brief, we formulated subcategories for each main category. However, we took the initiative to focus on just one overarching category and as a collective, we made the conscious decision to choose health, or more specifically, mental health.

As a collective, we the MBK Sacramento Fellows took it upon ourselves to identify and address mental health for our brothers that haven't been born, for our brothers currently going through it, and for the past us that didn't have the support but welcomed it.



We not only picked mental health because it directly impacts us individually, but because we see how it affects our community. From street violence, domestic violence, deportations, all the way to normalized shootings, our brothers experience traumatic events that if left untreated could hinder their likelihood of success, of achieving a better life.

**We aren't expecting miracles with our policy brief, but from selecting mental health we are expecting progress.**

# METHODOLOGY

We wanted to learn about how other young people of color in our community felt about their own mental health. In order to do that, we created a survey that had 20 questions. We made sure to ask questions that really focused on getting to know our communities' state of mind better.

All of our surveys were distributed on paper copies at high schools and community colleges that we attend.

At the bottom of this page, you can see the exact list of questions that we used to survey young people of color in our community.



## MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY QUESTIONS

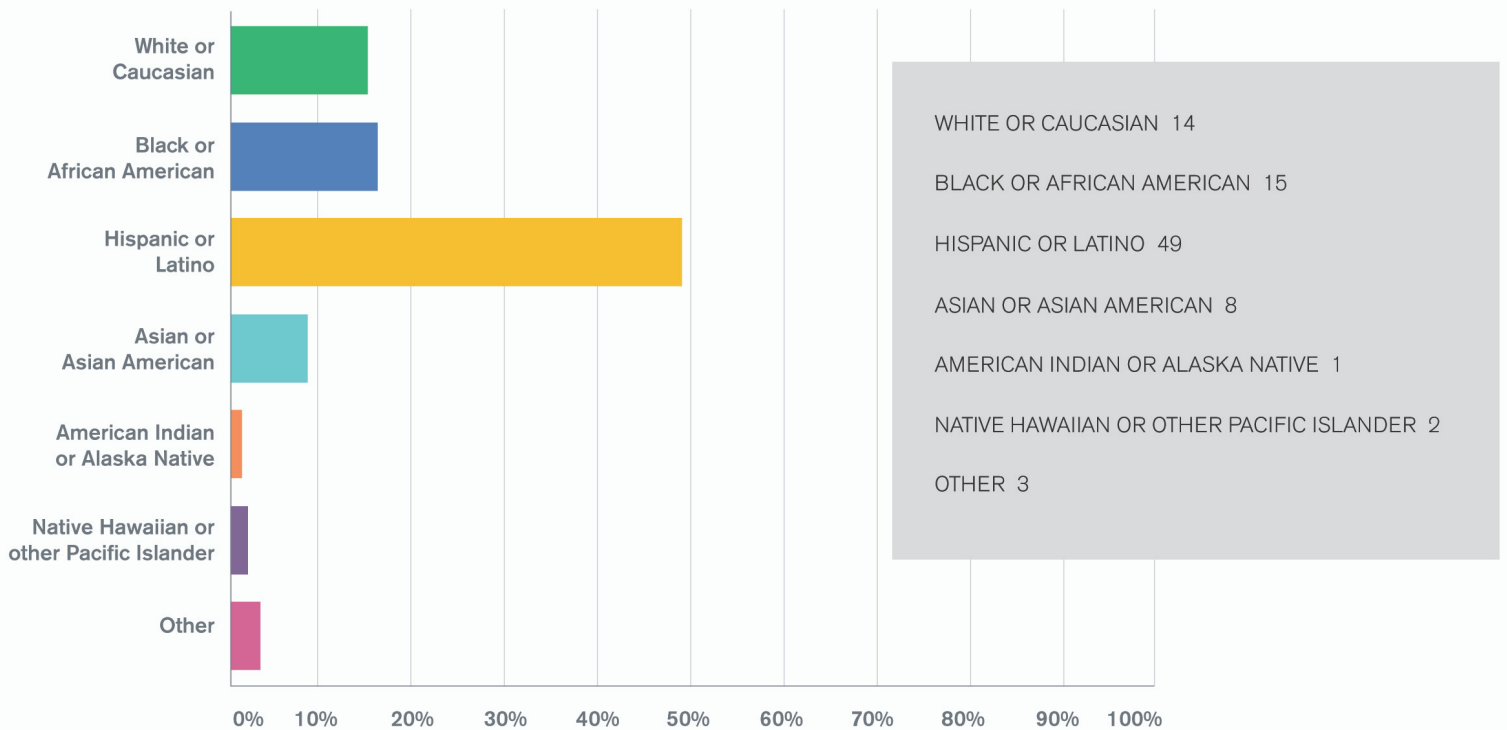
- What is your gender?
- What is your race/ethnicity?
- What is your age?
- What is your grade level?
- How strong is your support system in these areas?: home, school, mental health
- Who can you talk to for support?
- What areas/topics would you welcome more support in?
- How confident are you in yourself?
- How stressed are you?
- How comfortable are you to share your story?
- Have you experienced a traumatic event?
- How many traumatic events have you experienced?
- Do you feel like you live in a safe environment?
- How important is mental health to you?
- How often do you pretend to be happy?
- How often do you force a smile?
- Do you think your friends are dealing with problems?
- Do you think your friends have the same mindset as you?
- How would you rate this survey?
- Do you have any additional comments?



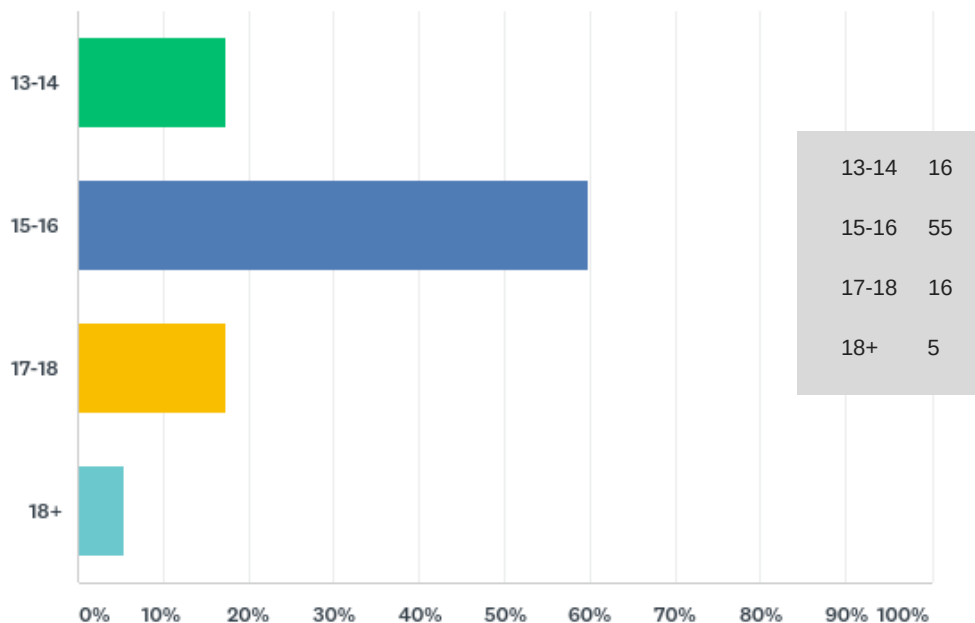
# OUR FINDINGS

On the next few pages we have provided graphs to highlight some important findings from our research.

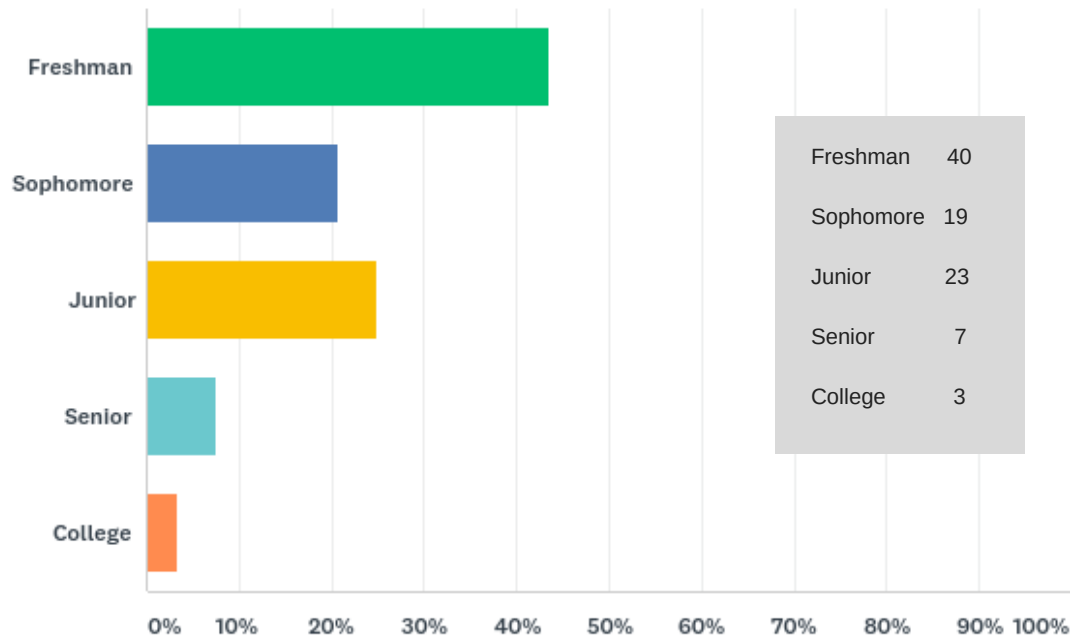
## Q2 What is your race/ethnicity?



## Q3 What is your age?



## Q4 What is your grade level?

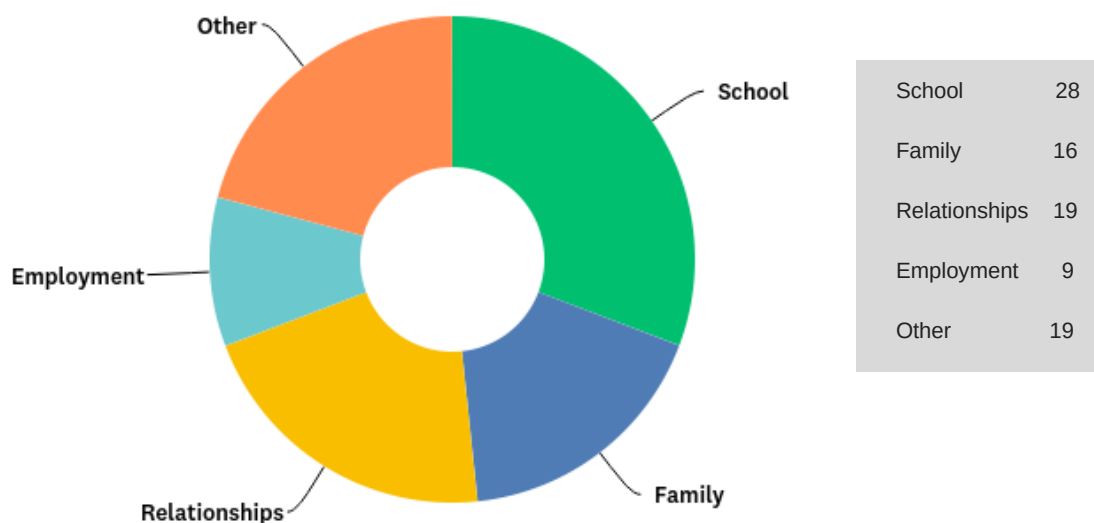


## Q6 Who can you talk to for support?

The larger fonts shown for question 6 indicate a higher response rate for the word.

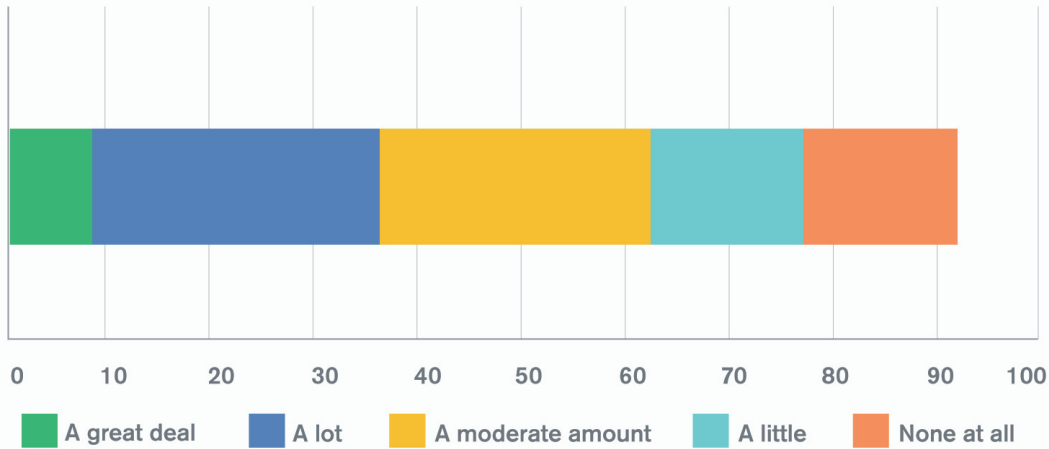
teachers girlfriend **parents** mom **friends** people  
family

## Q7 What areas/topics would welcome more support in?



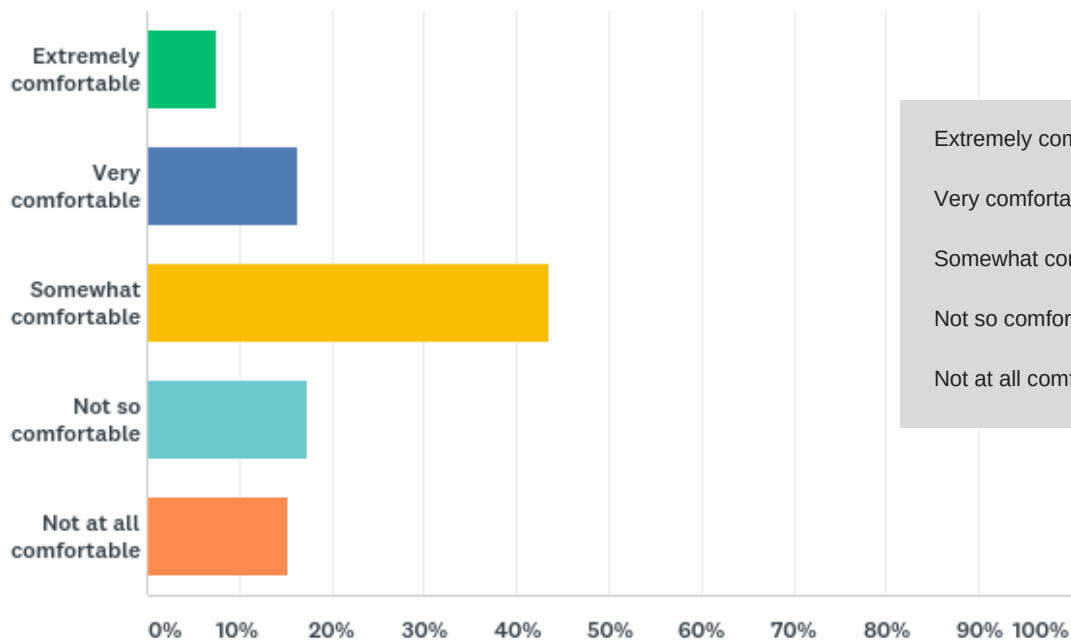


## Q9 How stressed are you?



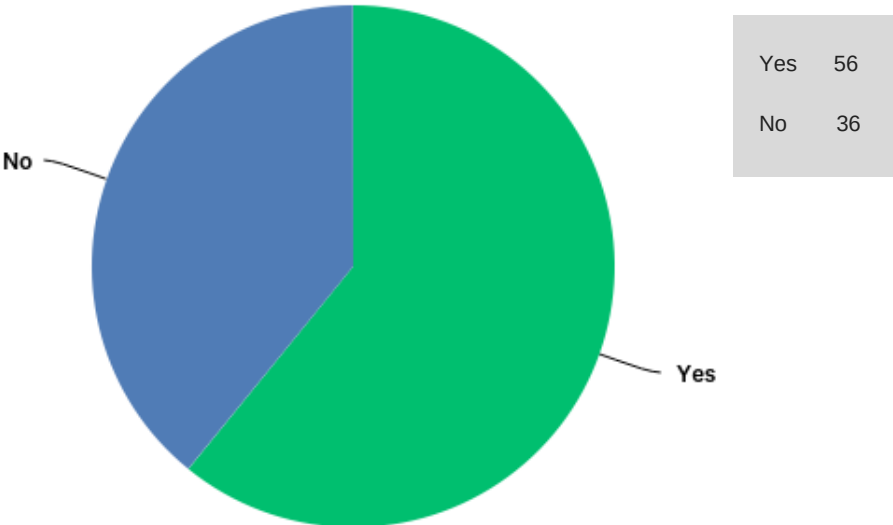
A great deal 8  
A lot 28  
A moderate amount 26  
A little 15  
None at all 15

## Q10 How comfortable are you to share your story?

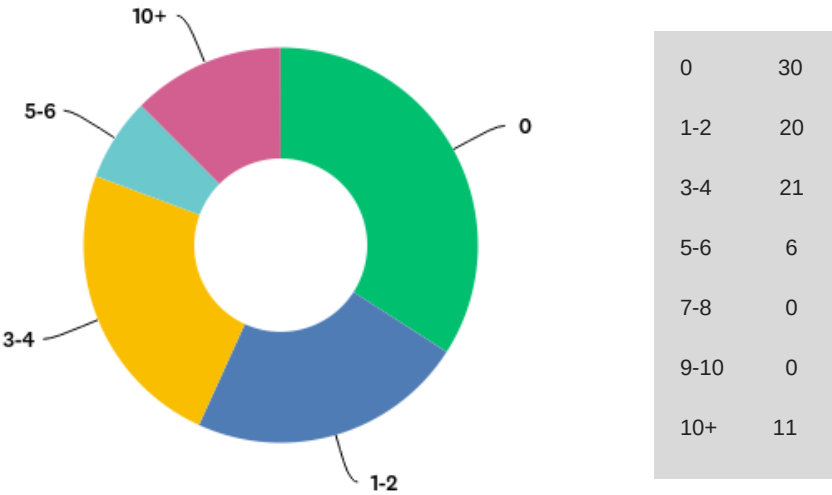


Extremely comfortable 7  
Very comfortable 15  
Somewhat comfortable 40  
Not so comfortable 16  
Not at all comfortable 14

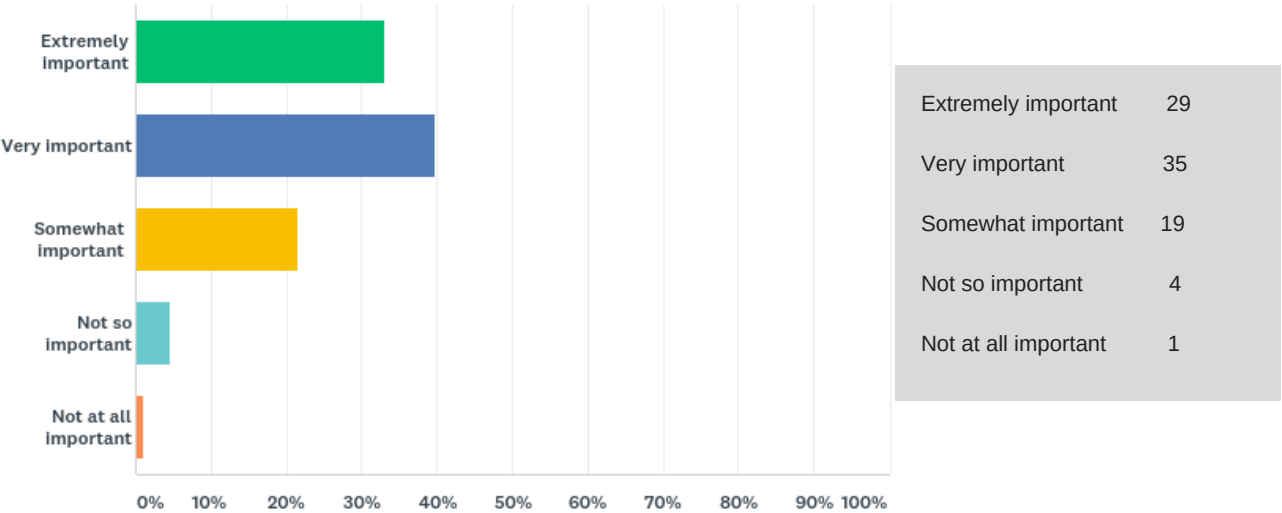
Q11 Have you ever experienced a traumatic event?



Q12 How many traumatic events have you experienced

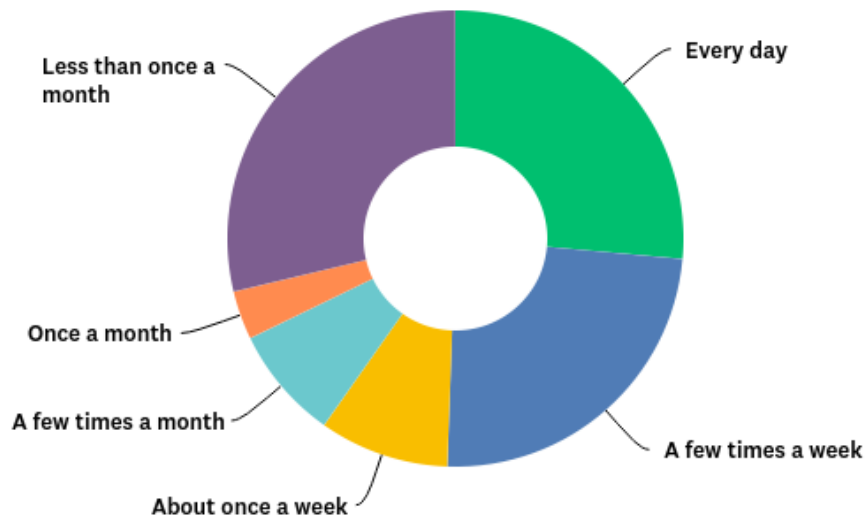


Q14 How important is mental health to you?



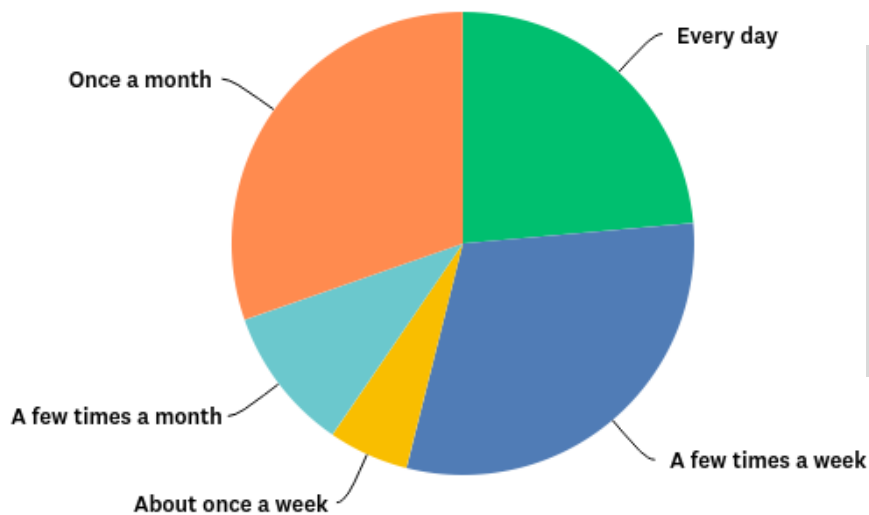


## Q15 How often do you pretend to be happy?



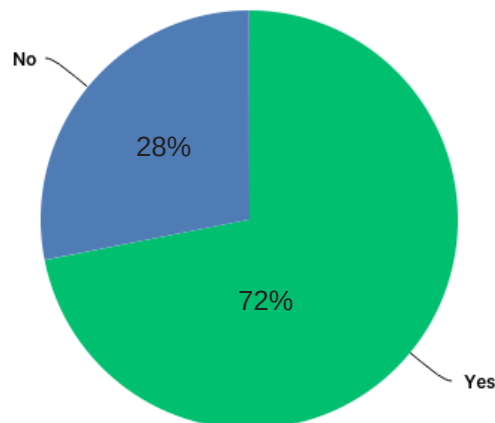
Every day	23
A few times a week	21
About once a week	8
A few times a month	7
Once a month	3
Less than once a month	25

## Q16 How often do you force a smile?



Every day	21
A few times a week	27
About once a week	5
A few times a month	9
Once a month	27

## Q17 Do you think your friends are dealing with problems?



Yes	72
No	28

# DATA ANALYSIS

In total, we had about 200 respondents, the majority of those respondents being males of color. We focused our findings on the 92 brothers we had and our findings were very revealing.

Surprisingly, the majority of our brothers were of Latino or Hispanic heritage.

Therefore, our findings are centered more around these individuals. Of the 49 Latino/Hispanic brothers, about 63% of them ranged between the ages of 15 and 16 and were either freshman or sophomores in high school. This confirmed the fact that we had gotten responses from our target age group.



**"We have to pay attention to what our brothers are telling us...they're screaming out for help and we never listen."**

**- XAVIER**

Within the questions asking about their external support system, the majority of the Latino brothers believe that their friends are their biggest support system. This is worth mentioning because in a later question, it was revealed that more than half of these same brothers (56.25%) believed that they didn't share the same values as their friends. We also saw a similar pattern as it pertains to our Asian and African-American brothers. This data began to have us question whether it was beneficial for young people to seek support from individuals that wouldn't truly understand their mindset and values. Furthermore, 52% of the Latino/Hispanic brothers have experienced one or more traumatic event, even though a great majority of these individuals (93.33%) believe that they live in a safe environment. If these results are true, this means that something outside of their normal environment is causing these traumatic events to occur and it needs to be our job to find out what that may be.

This number was actually more around 50% for both our Asian and African-American brothers.

Also, we found that most of the brothers in general force a smile at least once a month.

This can be a very challenging thing for young people's mental state when they keep their stress and unhappiness on the inside.

This is also very interesting considering the fact that around 65% of the brothers as a whole believe that mental health is important to them.

Our young brothers may be misled into believing that "mental health" is directly equal to "mental illness," meaning that they will disassociate themselves with any direct talk about their mental health.

They may believe that people will think they are crazy because someone wants to talk to them about their mental state.

**"As a man, you don't wanna seem weak and ask for help...so a lot of us just end up hiding it and we be strugglin'."**

**- -LAMARIEA**

When looking at the responses of the questions dealing with a more internal state of mind, we found that around 40% of the Latino/Hispanic brothers feel a moderate to extreme amount of stress.

This is why we, as a collective group of people dedicated to serving our young people, must create new, modern ways to reach our brothers without potentially pushing them away. Therefore, we created a list of recommendations that we feel will support our young brothers in the best way.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

Through our research findings and our analysis, we have developed a comprehensive list of recommendations that we hope one day will be implemented throughout our Sacramento community.

**First**, we the fellows find it would be beneficial to have more resources that support improving education and mental health resources at school. We need more emphasis on mental health in our health classes, where health classes are available. Unfortunately, not all of us have access to a health class in high school and when we do

have access, they don't talk about important topics like mental health. For those of us in college, mental health courses are not a requirement, so you do not have access to mental health education unless you take it as an elective.

Additionally, from personal experience, there aren't enough campus resources that primarily help or support mental health or well-being. As students, we attend classes regularly, but go through traumatic events outside of school regularly. This is why we need mandatory check-ins with counselors.







Not just academic counselors for college, but mental health professional counselors. Specifically, we need counselors that look like us. We need more counselors of color that really care about us. They need to know what it's like to grow up here and what happens in our neighborhoods.

**Second**, we the fellows find it would be beneficial for young men of color to have easier access to mentors, credible messengers, and many more community leaders that are actively involved or associated with the work of mentoring boys of color and have been already vetted and are trusted by the community. Sometimes young men of color don't feel like they can trust people who work in schools

because teachers and staff don't treat them right. So we have to be able to rely on community members outside of schools. We believe this will provide opportunities for young men to open up about what they are going through and weaken the resistance that we find holds individuals back from speaking up and speaking out.

We think that there needs to be an emphasis on creating more community events where young men can meet mentors. These positive events should be held in the communities that we live in and be staffed and run by people who live in the area. At these same events, there could be healing circles and community talks where young folks can speak to positive men in our

communities. Specifically, we think that there should be an emphasis in finding "Mid G's" (people that are a little older than us but aren't too old). These events could link us together with more community-based "Mid-G's" that can relate to us and bond more with the youth. This would also help in providing jobs for mentorship to these Mid G's in our communities and could create long-lasting positive relationships for young men who need positive male role models. We believe that having a mentor who you can trust is essential for having good mental health.

**Lastly**, we the fellows want to develop an app that uses technology to help our youth with their mental health.

As young men, we know that the majority of our peers are always on their phones. We should use social media as a way to help young men with their mental health. The app we want to create will make this possible.

Our idea involves creating an online database of mentors who are associated and vetted by local community organizations. These mentors will have completed a screening process with their organizations and be cleared to work with young people. The app will give young men of color the opportunity to search for and find mentors based on their location, need, and current problem.

## Find Someone by GPS Advice





For example, if a young man was having a mental breakdown (like many of us do) and just needed someone to talk to, they could pull up this app, search for someone on the database, scrolling through pictures, ratings, and comments, and make a phone call based on their own selection. After they make the connection, the app would help them set a meeting time at a local community organization to meet and talk.

The app would also direct people to crisis intervention workers. If the person was planning on harming themselves, there would be a suicide hotline button or an emergency button.

In the future, the app would feature other resources like links for community meeting spaces for healing, self-care strategies, and calming breathing techniques.

We think that if we use social media and technology for something positive, we could create real change.

We think that this app, in combination with all of our recommendations, could truly impact the mental health of Sacramento boys and men of color in a major way.







# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### Special Thanks

This policy brief is a reflection of the contributions of many, including, but not limited to: our families, Sierra Health Foundation, and the My Brother's Keeper Collaborative.

### Supporting this Work

Creating impactful systems change for Sacramento BMOC requires the commitment of an entire community. For more information on how you can be involved in supporting the efforts of the MBK Sacramento Collaborative, or for upcoming meeting dates and progress updates, please visit [www.shfcenter.org/mbk-sac](http://www.shfcenter.org/mbk-sac).