

# Sexual and Reproductive Health and Social Justice: Inequities and Leadership

2025 SOMOS Inc. Puerto Rico Conference

Panel:

*SRJ in New York State and the Caribbean: Reclaiming Health, Power, and Resilience through Research and Policy*

Diana Romero, PhD & Danielle Greene, DrPH

# Presentation Outline

- **Part 1**

- Sexual and Reproductive Justice, Health and Inequity in NY and Hispanic/Latiné Communities

- **Part 2**

- CUNY SPH and NYS Leadership in Reproductive and Social Justice: The SRJ Hub

## Part 1:

# Sexual and Reproductive Justice, Health and Inequity in NY and Hispanic/Latiné Communities



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HEALTH POLICY

# Reproductive Justice



- Reproductive Justice is the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. ([\*SisterSong\*](#))

# "Scope" of Reproductive Justice



# Social Determinants of Health: MCRSH



**47%**

Latíné households  
report **difficulty**  
**paying for**  
**housing/utilities**

(compared to 11% White)



**55.4%**

of Latíné are on  
**WIC** during  
pregnancy

(compared to 19.2% White)



**43%**

Latíné families in  
NYC face **child**  
**welfare**  
**investigations**

(compared to 19% White)



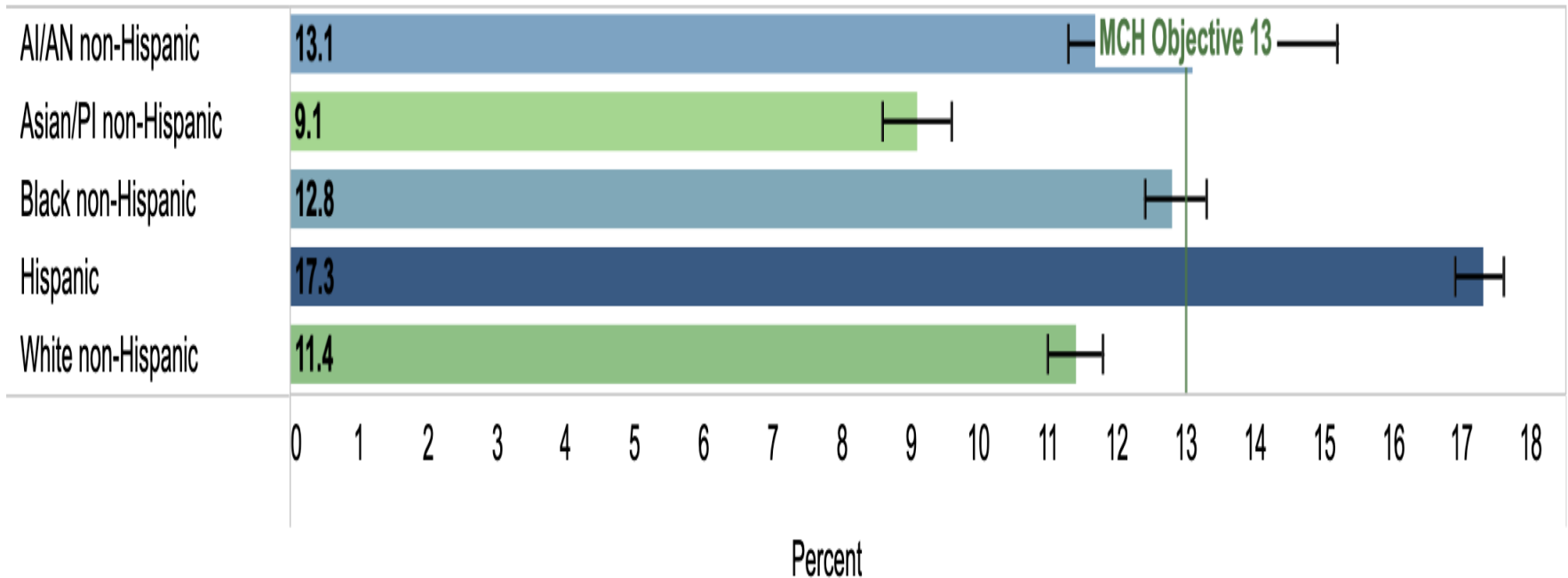
**28%**

of **incarcerated**  
women in NYS  
are Latina

(compared to 19% White)

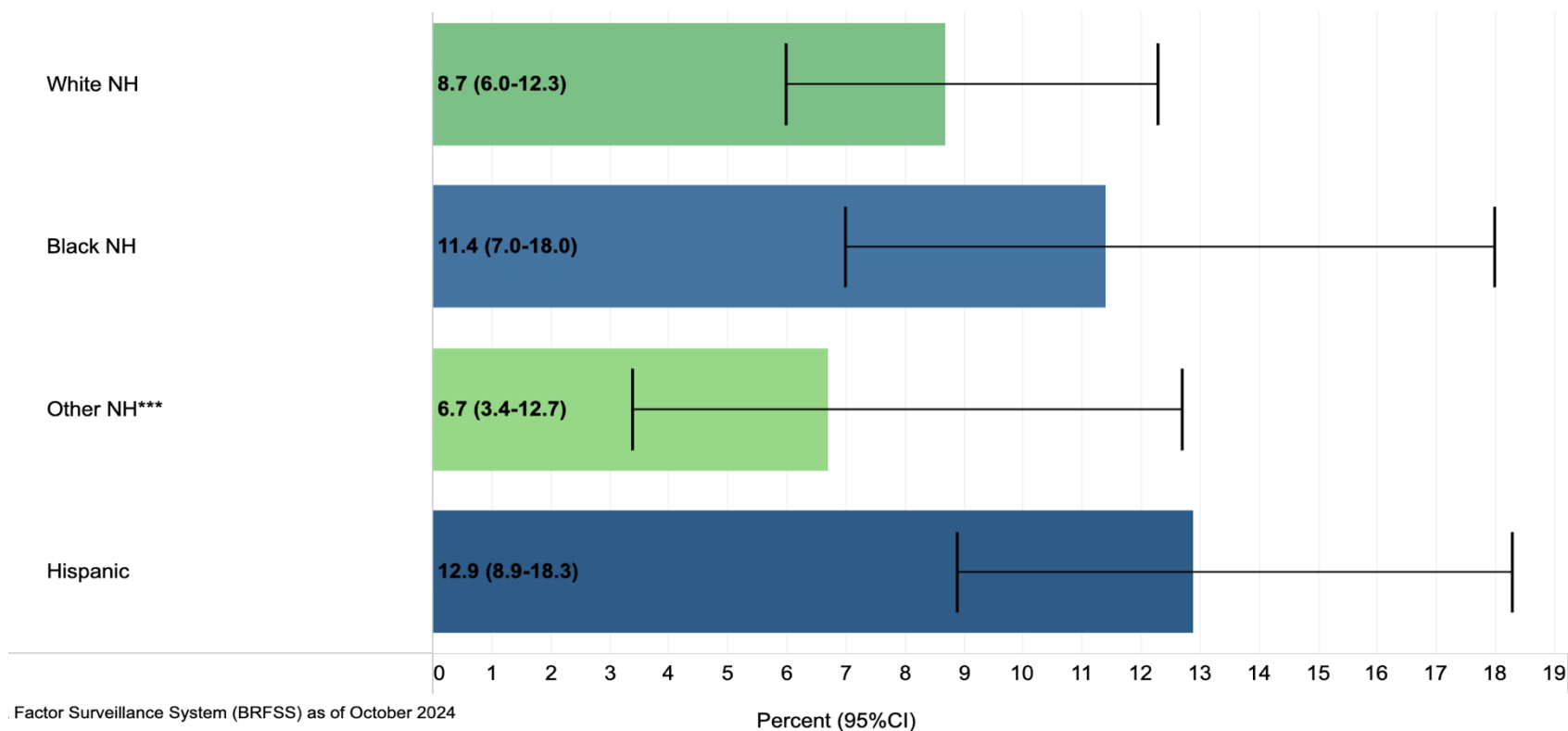
# Child Health I: Obesity

- **17.3% of Hispanic children (2-4 yrs) in WIC obese (2020, NYS)**



# Child Health 2: Asthma

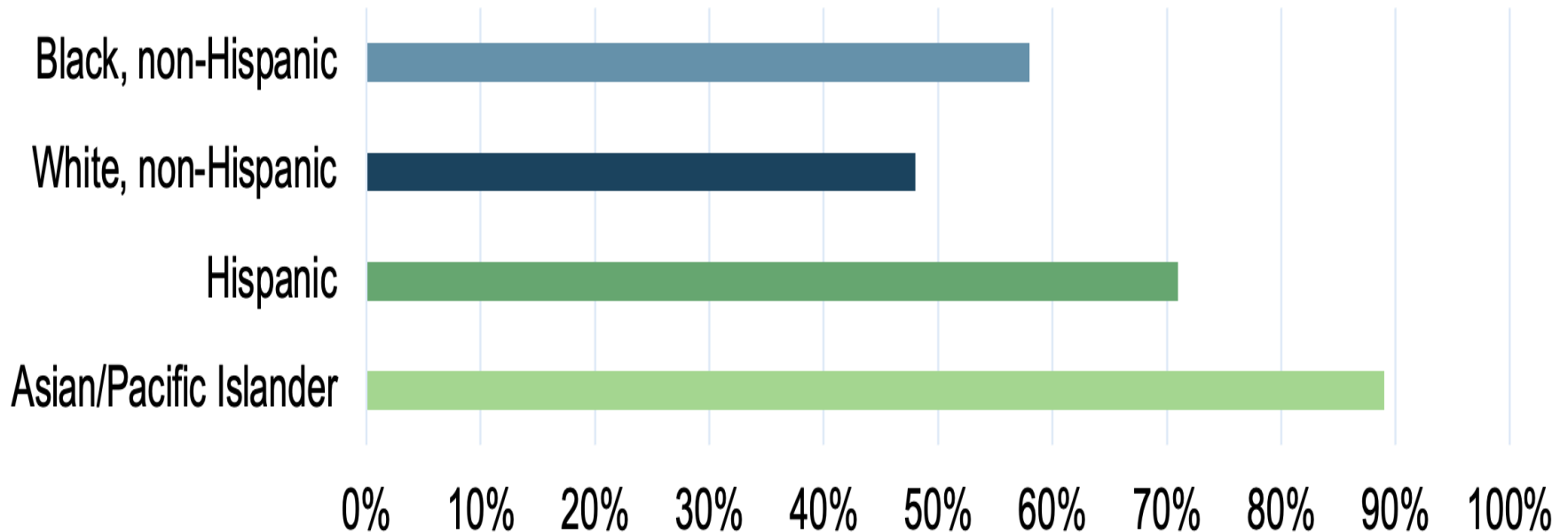
- Hispanic children 0-17 yrs had *highest* reported rates of lifetime asthma prevalence at 12.9% (2021)





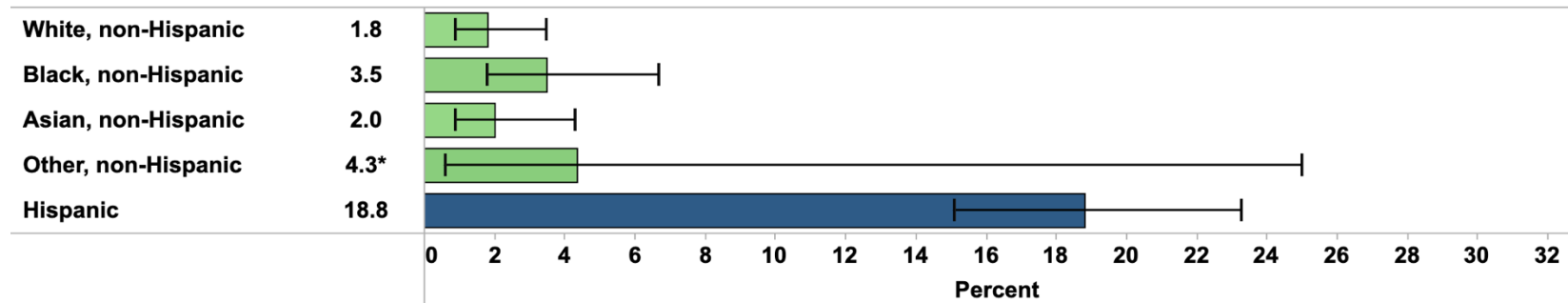
# Child Health 3: Vaccinations

- **71% of Hispanic children (24-35 mos) received all doses of the combined 7-vaccine series (NYC, 2025)**

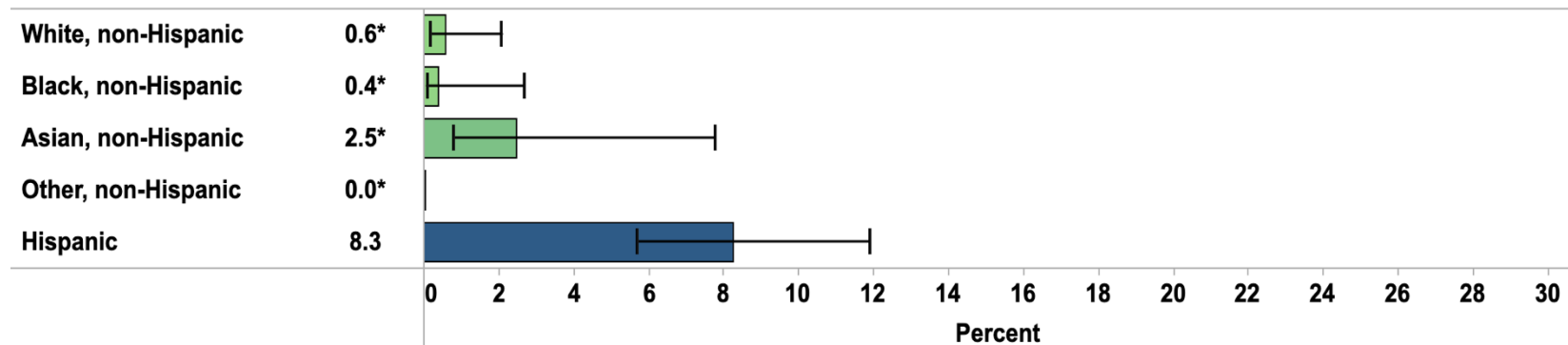


# Pregnancy-related Health Inequities: *Healthcare Access*

- Hispanic women were most likely to report uninsurance (18.8%) in the month *prior* to getting pregnant (NYS, 2022)

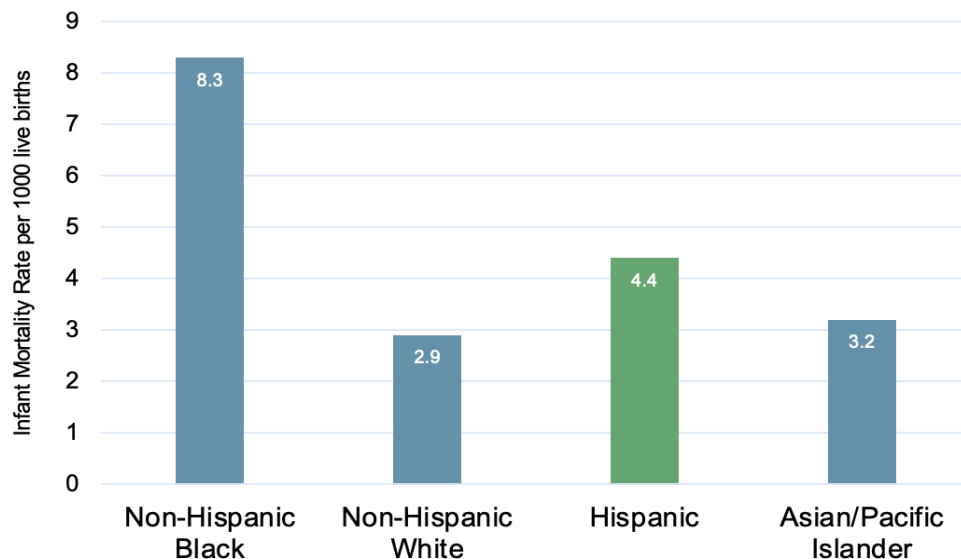


- Hispanic women also most likely to report uninsurance (8.3%) in the month *after* delivery (NYS, 2022)



# Pregnancy-related Health Inequities: *Clinical Outcomes*

- Hispanic infants had the second highest infant mortality rate (4.4/1,000)



Infant Mortality Rate (New York State, 2023)



During 2020-2022 in New York, **preterm birth rates** were second highest for Hispanic infants (**10.4%**)

# Pregnancy-related Health Inequities: *Latina Healthcare Experiences*



**16%**

reported **mistreatment**  
by care providers in  
childbirth

(vs. 18% White patients)



**31%**

reported  
**medical mistrust**

(vs. 17% White  
patients)



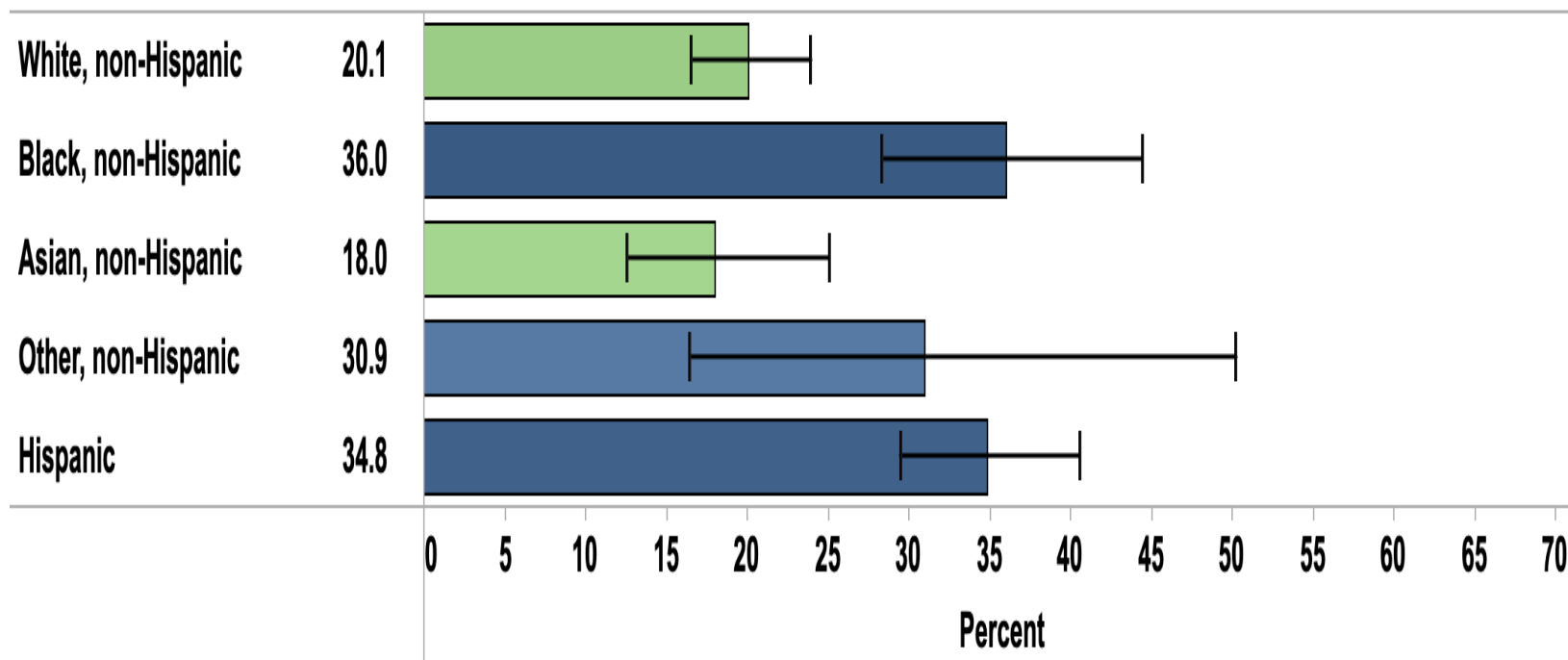
**56.2%**

given a **breast  
pump** by the  
hospital

(vs. 38.5% White patients)

# Pregnancy: *Intendedness*

- **34.8% of Hispanic mothers had live births from unintended pregnancies (comparable to NH-Black mothers; NYS, 2022)**



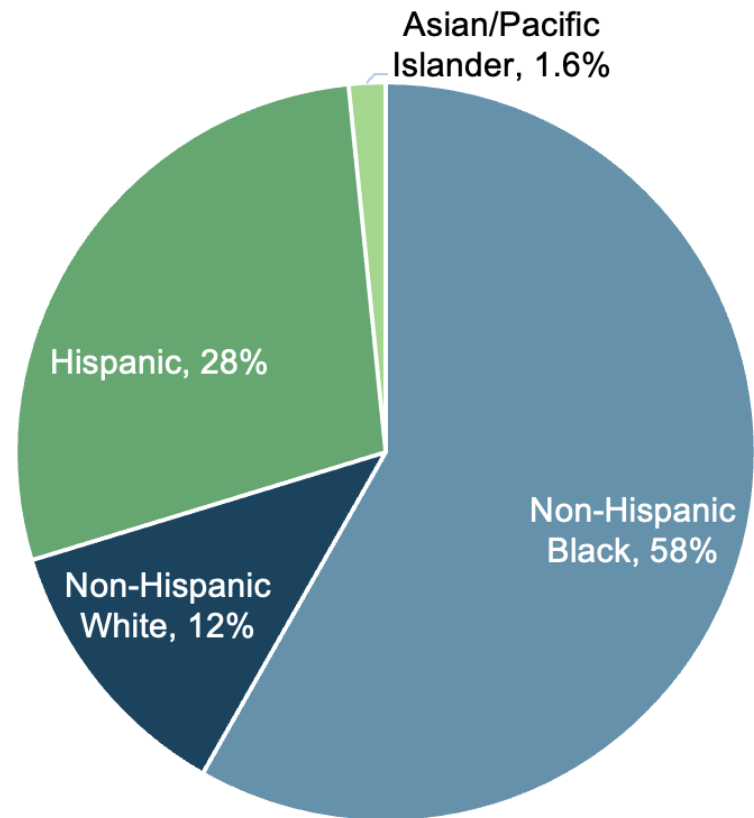
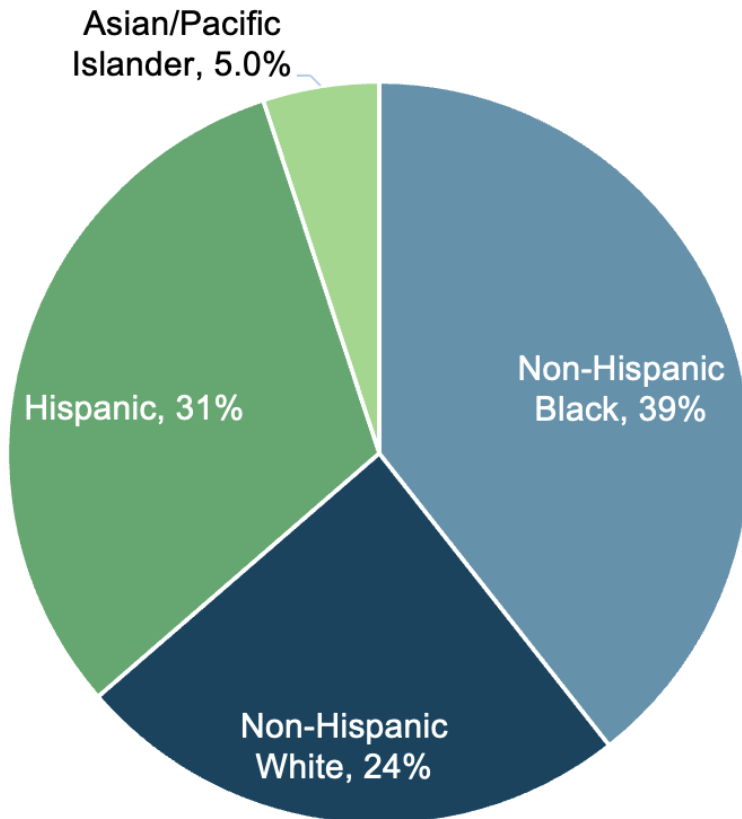
# STIs: Chlamydia & HIV by Race/Ethnicity (NYS, 2023)

- Chlamydia

Hispanic individuals account for 31% of cases

- HIV

28% of HIV cases among the Hispanic population



## Part 2:

# CUNY SPH and NYS Leadership in Reproductive and Social Justice: The SRJ Hub

# Sexual and Reproductive Justice Hub

**CUNY SPH** is New York's hub for sexual and reproductive justice scholarship and advocacy — preparing the next generation of public health leaders to stand up for and advance the human right to health.



## Multidisciplinary approach

Producing training and research to bridge disciplinary divides and engage communities.



## Skill-building in the next generation

Equipping students with critical thinking and solutions-oriented skills for sustainable research and data-informed advocacy.

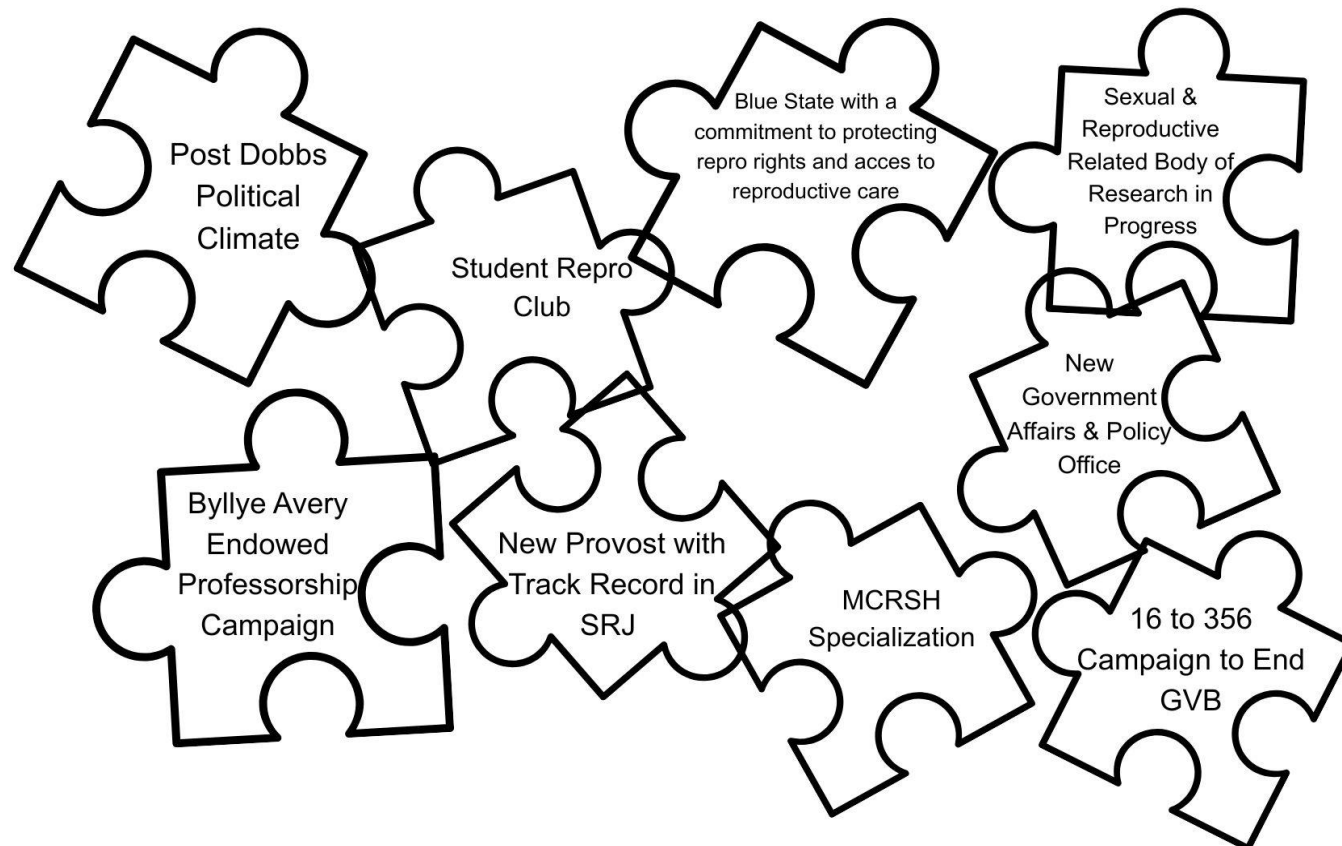


## Interrogate and address upstream inequities impacting outcomes

The combination of our approach and skill building strategies allows us to address root inequities impacting health outcomes.



# Components of a Strong SRJ Program



# Preparing to Advocate

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND JUSTICE

## SRJ Expertise

CUNY SPH holds considerable expertise in SRJ among its faculty and leadership. The development of the SRJ Hub is co-lead by Terry McGovern, Senior Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, and Dr. Lynn Roberts, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Alumni Relations and Assistant Professor of Community Health and Social Sciences, along with Dr. Diana Romero, Professor of Community Health and Social Sciences, who leads the MCRSH specialization.

## Terry McGovern

Senior Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs

Prior to joining CUNY SPH in 2023, Terry McGovern was the Harriet and Robert H. Heilbrunn Professor and chair of the Heilbrunn Department of Population and Family Health at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. At Columbia, McGovern led domestic and global research related to sexual and reproductive justice and human rights. Prior to joining Columbia in 2002, McGovern served as senior program officer in the Gender, Rights, and Equality Unit of the Ford Foundation, where she oversaw global and domestic programming relating to HIV, gender, LGBT, and human rights.

## Dr. Lynn Roberts

Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Alumni Relations,  
Assistant Professor of Community Health and Social Sciences

Dr. Lynn Roberts, a national leader in the reproductive justice movement for over 20 years, is an emeritus board member of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. She is co-editor and contributing author of *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundations, Theory, Practice Critique* (Feminist Press, 2017). Dr. Roberts' current activism and scholarship examine the intersections of race, class and gender in adolescent dating relationships, juvenile justice, and reproductive health policies, as well as the impact of models of collaborative inquiry and teaching on civic and political engagement. For decades Dr. Roberts has taught the *Community Organizing to Advance Health and Social Justice* course in our MPH program, with the highest student evaluation accolades.

## Dr. Diana Romero

Professor of Community Health and Social Sciences

Dr. Diana Romero has over 20 years of experience in research and evidence-based advocacy related to reproductive, maternal and child health experiences affected by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, and related structural factors such as factors affecting contraceptive decision-making and the differential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pregnant persons in NYS. Dr. Romero serves on the NYC DOHMH Advisory Board for the CDC Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey.

CUNYSPH

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND JUSTICE

## The Sexual and Reproductive Justice Hub at CUNY SPH

Since the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, we are seeing the erosion of reproductive autonomy and the rise of reproductive health injustices disproportionately burdening people of color and marginalized populations. While safeguarding reproductive freedom is critical, the goals of reproductive justice extend far beyond the right to choose, encompassing an intersectional array of rights that collectively influence health outcomes. The core mission of the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH)—to advocate for sound policy and practice to advance social justice and improve health outcomes for all—uniquely positions the school to become New York's first hub for sexual and reproductive justice training, scholarship and advocacy.

### What is Sexual and Reproductive Justice?

Sexual and Reproductive Justice (SRJ) is a framework that embodies a holistic view of health and strives for the "complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, social, and economic well-being of women and girls" through advocating for and upholding the human rights of all, especially marginalized women and people who can become pregnant.<sup>1</sup> Empowering people to maintain autonomy over their sexual and reproductive lives leads to better overall health outcomes for all.

The SRJ framework recognizes that reproductive autonomy is inextricably linked to a wide range of factors that affect health and equity, including access to quality healthcare, adequate housing, educational opportunities, clean and safe environments,

nourishing food, affordable childcare, employment and livable wages. Without equitable access to these resources, there cannot be reproductive autonomy. Repeated disinvestment creates a ripple effect of negative health outcomes that are particularly bleak for Black women and people of color, reinforces structural racism, and prevents the achievement of health justice.

### Why create an SRJ Hub at CUNY SPH?

We are witnessing a steady decimation of the right to bodily autonomy across the U.S. The disintegration of these rights is manifesting in censorship of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, limitations on gender-affirming care, removal of medical autonomy for women, and exacerbating the maternal morbidity and mortality crisis.

There are currently no coordinated efforts in New York State, and few around the country, to advance SRJ through a centralized academic unit that emphasizes not only scholarship, but also advocacy. The CUNY SPH Sexual and Reproductive Justice Hub (SRJ Hub) strives to change this paradigm through *scholarship-oriented scholarship, training, and advocacy* that centers the lived experiences of women of color and elevates and funds their and other marginalized people's work.

### What will the SRJ Hub do?

#### By/lie Avery SRJ Professorship

CUNY SPH has launched the *By/lie Avery Sexual and Reproductive Justice Professorship*, the nation's first and only endowed professorship addressing this area of public health. Named for the esteemed By/lie Avery, a pioneer in women's health, forerunner of the reproductive justice movement, and founder of the Black

LEAD OFFICER	Dean's Office, Maternal, Child, Reproductive, and Sexual Health Specialization
FUNDING	New request
BUDGET ASK	\$500,000

Women's Health Imperative, this professorship will centralize SRJ programming, research, and scholarship at the school and will expand experiential learning opportunities for students. The associated research portfolio for this professorship will be unique, focusing on solutions to longstanding disparities and building strategic leadership with an emphasis on impacting policy.

#### Leadership Training

The SRJ Hub will develop the next generation of SRJ leaders who will actively work to challenge the barriers to reproductive justice, develop community-led solutions, and engage with elected officials, policy makers, and state and local agencies to educate and impact legislative changes to make reproductive justice possible. The SRJ Hub will be a central source that can provide the evidence to state and national agencies and not-for-profit organizations that can be used to inform policy change and program modification.

#### UNFPA Partnership: 16 Days Campaign

CUNY SPH has partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the Global 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, an initiative to bring global awareness to the widespread issue of gender-based violence, a pervasive public health threat. For over thirty years this civil society-led campaign has brought together local and global feminist activists and movements to raise awareness of the many forms of gender-based violence, its root causes and impact, and pathways to prevention and accountability. This campaign, which originally kicked off each year on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and ran for 16 days through December 10, Human Rights Day, will be transformed under CUNY SPH's guidance into a year-round initiative.

CUNYSPH

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND JUSTICE

## SRJ Curriculum

CUNY SPH offers the *Maternal, Child, Reproductive, and Sexual Health: MCRSH Specialization*, which provides graduate students with an understanding of the socio-historical and political contexts that have and continue to shape related health outcomes, as well as a foundation for research and programmatic activities in maternal, child, reproductive, and sexual health. The curriculum embraces a holistic approach to sexual and reproductive health within an SRJ framework that recognizes the diversity of human sexual expression, relationships, and family structures; promotes informed, healthy, respectful, and responsible choices, free from coercion, and supports increased access to effective preventive, screening, treatment, and support services.

The MCRSH specialization currently offers two core courses – MCRSH: A Life Course Perspective and MCRSH in Context. Electives in the program include:

- Social Inequality and Reproductive and Sexual Health, Policy, and Rights
- The Health of Young People
- Sexual Health Promotion
- Special Victims Unit: Child Maltreatment and Its Effects on Child and Family Mental Health
- Adolescent Health
- Advancing an Equity MCRSH Agenda in Health Departments

New course topics under consideration include:

- The nexus of environmental justice and reproductive justice
- Changing abortion policy across the U.S.
- Policy, legislation, and government programs related to MCRSH and SRJ
- Financing and insurance in MCRSH
- The history of bodily autonomy and race

SPH

CUNYSPH

The SRJ Hub will build on current scholarship and research by CUNY SPH faculty and graduate students, including:

- Audit of existing federal funding (NIH, EPA) available to study the role of environmental exposures in Black maternal and infant mortality to establish the need for additional targeted funding
- Support research that identifies the contribution of environmental pollution to neuro-developmental and other health outcomes in children
- Large-scale mixed-methods evaluation of a physician training program for advocacy around abortion and other reproductive health issues
- Analysis of maternal meconium samples to establish the role of metal mixtures associated with adverse child outcomes to inform prevention strategies
- Study of the intersectionality of racial and gender discrimination among teens exposed to dating violence
- Study of the role of COVID-19, race and social factors in pregnancy experiences, delays to contraception, abortion, and miscarriage care during the pandemic
- Investigation of the impact of the Dobbs decision on medical integrity
- Evaluation of a multi-center NYC-based Doula program
- Comprehensive review exposing migrants' lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Randomized controlled trial to identify the efficacy of a model socialization and sexuality education approach for adolescents and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Assessment of safety-net health care utilization among uninsured immigrants in New York City
- Studies exploring needed supports from family, administration, and staff for pregnant and parenting students at CUNY
- Qualitative study of East Harlem adolescents and their life goals in the context of personal relationships, risk of pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- State and national analyses of welfare family-cap policies and violation of reproductive and human rights principles

sph.cuny.edu

SPH

sph.cuny.edu

# Advocating for the SRJ Hub



# Celebrating Success



✓ Combatting maternal & infant mortality

New York will be the first state in the nation to offer paid pre-natal leave & is taking action to expand access to care





# SRJ Hub: The First Year



## Opinion: New York's maternal health crisis continues to disproportionately harm Black mothers

The state must expand culturally competent health services for Black mothers who face much higher pregnancy-related mortality rates.

*By Lea Webb, [Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn](#) and [Lynn Roberts](#)*

April 15, 2025

# Advocating Again

**2024  
SOMOS PR  
WORKSHOP**

**Intersections for Sex  
Positivity and  
Reproductive Justice:  
NY and PR Experiences**

**Legislative Sponsors**

**Senator**  
Kristen Gonzalez  
District 99

**Assemblywoman**  
Amy Paulin  
District 88  
Chair, Health Committee

**Moderator**

Anthony Feliciano  
Vice President  
Advocacy  
Housing Works

**PANELIST**

Rafael Torruella, PhD  
Executive Director  
Intercomida Puerto Rico

Diana Ramero, PhD, MA  
CUNY Graduate School of Public  
Health and Health Policy

Jessie Leach, MPH  
CUNY Graduate School of Public  
Health and Health Policy

Romy Pato, MPA  
Director of Health Policy  
Latino Commission on ASHC

Charles King, JD, MPH  
Founder & CEO  
Housing Works

**Key Discussions & Insights**

Understanding Intersectionality

Stumbling Blocks, Struggles & Solutions

Social & Political Determinants of Health & Hope

Taking Action to Change Systems & Narratives

**Thursday, November 7th 2024  
10:30 am to 11:45 am  
GUAYACAN @ Caribe Hilton Hotel  
(Conference Host Hotel)**

**For more information**  
Anthony Feliciano  
VP Advocacy @ Housing Works  
646-325-5317  
a.feliciano@housingworks.org





MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH in

# Sexual and Reproductive Justice & Health

CUNY  
SPH

CUNYSPH SRJ HUB

SRJ VOICES

## Upholding Rights, Ensuring Justice

A conversation with Dean Terry McGovern and  
Assemblymember Jessica González Rojas

September 17, 2025 | 5pm - 6:30pm | Virtual




**Terry McGovern**  
Senior Associate Dean  
CUNY SPH

**Jessica González-Rojas**  
Assemblymember  
New York State Legislature

[cuny.sph.mic/voices\\_sep12025](https://cuny.sph.mic/voices_sep12025)



# Byllye Avery Endowed Professorship





# Thank you!

Danielle Greene, DrPH  
[danielle.greene@sph.cuny.edu](mailto:danielle.greene@sph.cuny.edu)

Diana Romero, PhD  
[diana.romero@sph.cuny.edu](mailto:diana.romero@sph.cuny.edu)