African American Young Women, Mothers, Children & Youth

This report highlights surveillance data that identifies health disparities affecting African American mothers, children, and adolescents in San Francisco. By comparing African Americans to overall San Francisco rates and/or to the ethnicity with the most favorable health outcome, this analysis describes the existence of health disparities, but not the reasons for the differences. The results indicate existing social inequities (e.g., housing, education, jobs, income, and neighborhood conditions), preventable health disparities, and the potential for improving health outcomes throughout the life course.

Young Women and Mothers

- **Pre-Pregnancy Weight.** 58% of African American women are overweight (25%) or obese (34%) before pregnancy, more than double the rates of Whites (26%) and Asians (21%), and the highest obesity rate of any major ethnic group. Before pregnancy with their first child (pre-motherhood), more than half (54%) of African American women are overweight (23%) or obese (31%); the highest rate of any major ethnicity group in SF, substantially higher than the rate of Asians (18%) and Whites (26%).

- **STDs.** African American women have the highest rates of chlamydia (19 cases/1,000 persons per year) and gonorrhea; both more than ten times the rate of SF females with the lowest rates. Chlamydia rates are highest in 15-19 year-olds, where the African American female rate of 118 cases/1,000 women per year.

- **Domestic Violence.** African Americans comprise 6% of the population, but 27% of domestic violence Victim Services clients served by the District Attorney’s office.

- **Health Insurance.** Three-fifths of African American mothers (60%) have Medi-Cal coverage for delivery, which suggests they had a high rate of being uninsured before pregnancy. African-Americans are eight times more likely to utilize Medi-Cal for delivery than are Whites.

- **First-trimester Prenatal Care.** Only two-thirds of African-American mothers (65%) start prenatal care during the first trimester, as recommended (compared to overall rate for SF of 88%). That is the lowest of any major ethnicity. African-American mothers are five times as likely as Whites to have started prenatal care late.

Infants

- **Prematurity.** African-American infants have the highest rate (14.5%) of preterm birth (births before 37 weeks gestational age), more than twice the rate of the lowest group (Whites, 6.2%).

- **Low Birth Weight.** African American infants have the highest rate (17.3%) of low birth weight (LBW, <2,500 g.), and very low birth weight (VLBW, <1,500 g., 1.4%). These rates are more than twice the rates of the ethnic groups with the lowest rates, Whites (LBW among 6.0%) and Asians (VLBW among 0.7%).

- **Infant Mortality.** African-American babies have the highest rate of infant death (14.4 per 1,000 births), which is more than three times higher than the three other main ethnicity groups (Latino, Asian, and Whites), and five times higher than Whites (2.6/1,000).

- **Breastfeeding.** African-Americans have the lowest rates of “any” breastfeeding (86%), significantly lower than for Latinas (98%) and Whites (98%); and the second lowest rates (63%) of “exclusive” breastfeeding (not using any infant formula), much lower than Latinas (85%) in the delivery hospital. Among new mothers on WIC, African Americans have the lowest exclusive breastfeeding rate in hospital (56%), which then drops to only 14% at two-months and to 8% at four-months.

Children

- **Poverty.** 41% of African American children (ages 0-19) live below federal poverty level (FPL), which is three times the overall SF children’s rate of 14%. 72% live below 200% of FPL, which is twice the 36% rate for all SF children and almost 6 times the 14% rate for White children. The San Francisco family economic self-sufficiency standard is well above 200% of FPL.

- **Child Welfare.** The African American foster care first entry rate has decreased 40% over the past decade, but the rate remains in 2011 at over twelve times that of White children. Similar disparities persist for
maltreatment reporting and substantiation. Among poor children, blacks are somewhat less likely to be reported or substantiated for maltreatment and there is no disparity in foster care entry compared to whites.

**Oral Health.** Nearly half (47%) of African-American kindergartners have had dental caries, twice the rate of Whites (23%). 31% have untreated caries, the highest rate of any ethnicity and more than twice the 13% rate among Whites.

**Dental Access.** Among African American children eligible for Denti-Cal (dental benefits through Medi-Cal), services were used by only 45% of 4-5 year-olds, 45% of 6-8 year-olds, and 39% of 9-11 year-olds. These rates are 61%, 59%, and 57% in the highest-user ethnicity, Chinese, for these respective age groups.

**Asthma.** African-American young children (0-5 years) had the highest rate of asthma hospitalizations (44 per 10,000), which is twice the rate of the lowest SF group.

**Anemia.** 19% of low-income African-American children ages 3-4 years old have anemia, the highest rate for any ethnicity and more than twice the rate of Whites.

**Physical Fitness.** Only 37% of fifth-grade African Americans in San Francisco are physically fit (meeting at least 5 of 6 Fitnessgram standards), much less than Whites (56%) and Asians (57%). Of note, fifth-grade African Americans are less likely to be physically fit than counterparts in adjacent counties-- Marin (49%), Alameda (44%), and San Mateo (45%).

**Overweight and obesity.** One-third (33%) of low-income African American children 2-4 years old are overweight (18%) or obese (15%), compared to 22% of Asians. (14% and 8%, respectively).

**Adolescents**

- **Mortality.** African Americans have the highest death rate (174.9 per 100,000) among 15-19 year-olds in San Francisco, primarily due to violence.
- **Nutrition.** More than half (52%) of African American public high school youth hadn’t eaten a green salad in the week prior to the survey, much higher than White (29%) and overall SF public high school rates. 19% didn’t eat fruit, and 30% drank a can or more of soda a day; which are twice the overall SF rates.
- **Sedentary Behavior.** 44% of African American high schoolers watch TV more than 3 hours daily, 50% higher than the SF rate (29%) and nearly triple the White rate (16%). But only 14% used computers that much for non-school activities, compared to 48% among Asians.
- **Physical Fitness.** Only 37% of ninth-grade African Americans in San Francisco are physically fit (attaining at least 5 of 6 Fitnessgram standards), much less than Whites (53%) and Asians (71%). Of special note, fifth-grade African Americans are less physically fit than counterparts in adjacent counties-- Marin (52%), Alameda (41%), and San Mateo (52%).
- **Overweight and Obesity.** 40% of African American high-school youth are obese (19%) or overweight (20%). These are double the overall SF rates (8%, 13%) and triple the Asian rates (5%, 8%).
- **Violence and safety.** The homicide rate for African-American 15-24 year olds was 488 per 100,000. This rate is the highest of any ethnicity, five times the White rate and sixteen times the Asian rate. African American HS youth have the highest rates for: having been in a physical fight in past year (45%), having been in a physical fight at school (24%), having carried a weapon at least once (20%), and having carried a weapon to school in past month (10%).
- **Dental Access.** Among African American adolescents eligible for Denti-Cal, services were used by only 40% of 12-14 year-olds, 32% of 15-18 year-olds, and 26% of 19-20 year-olds. These rates are 58%, 53%, and 54% in the highest-user ethnicity, Chinese, for these respective age groups.
- **Mental health.** One fourth of all SF high school youth (24%), and of African American youth (26%), had felt sad or hopeless for a 2-week period over the previous year. This is about one quarter higher than Asian youth (19%).
- **Asthma.** 42% of African-American high schoolers have ever been told they have asthma, and 16% that they still do. Both rates are the highest among ethnicities, almost twice the SF overall rate in 2009.
- **Anemia.** 40% of low-income African-American youth ages 5-20 have the anemia, the highest rate of any major ethnicity and nearly triple the 14% rate of Latinos.
• **STDs.** African-American 14-20 year-olds have the highest incidence of chlamydia, 78 cases per 1,000 persons per year, which is twelve and twenty times higher than the White and Asian rates, respectively.  

The San Francisco Department of Public Health regularly monitors health-related data to assess the health of women, infants, children and families to help guide program planning and policy development. Using data that are regularly available and represent entire populations allows the measurement of changes associated with program and policy interventions.

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Sources
Numbers in endnotes refer to original endnote with citation source information

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16 Personal communication from California Dept. of Health Care Services, January 11, 2013.
17 SFDPH MCAH epidemiology, calculated from 2005-2007 data from FHOP Title V SF county workbook.
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21 CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). SF 2009 high school data downloaded November 2012 from: http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/. 2009 data were used because on the 2011 survey on most questions the number of African American respondents fell just below the CDC reporting threshold of 100 (Except where otherwise noted).
22 SFDPH analysis of SF mortality, 2005-2008..