

Key Health Disparities for African American Women in LA County

Many factors contribute to health disparities including poverty, gender, race/ethnicity, lack of health insurance, access to care, environmental and lifestyle factors. The complex interplay of these factors is illustrated in the dramatic disparities revealed for African American women.

- **Social & Physical Environment:**
 - 56% of African American women are living in poverty (less than 200% FPL).
 - Only 74% of African American women believe their neighborhoods are safe compared to 80% of women overall in LA County.
- **Health Status:**
 - African American women report the highest number of unhealthy days (9.4 days in the past month) and days of activity limitation (3.6 days in the past month) due to poor mental or physical health, compared to other ethnic groups.
 - Disability rates are highest among African American women at 31% compared to 19% overall among women in Los Angeles County.
- **Health Risks/Behaviors:**
 - Cigarette smoking is increasing among African American women, up from 20% in 1997 to 23% in 2005.
 - Overweight and obesity are serious health risks for two in three African American women; 35% overweight and 33% are obese.
 - Only 14% of African American women consume 5 servings or more of fruits and vegetables daily.
 - 14% of African American women reported household food insecurity with hunger, up from 11% in 2002.
- **Health Care Access:**
 - Less than 12% of African American women are uninsured compared to almost 22% of women countywide.
- **Health Care Access (continued):**
 - African American women have the highest screening rates for hypertension, high cholesterol, and colorectal cancer.
 - The lowest influenza vaccination rates were among African American women with and without chronic diseases.
 - Rates of breastfeeding initiation and continuation for at least 6 months have improved from 1999 to 2005 but remains low among African American women.
- **Health Outcomes**
 - 52% of African American women were found to be at risk for heart disease.
 - African American women have the highest rates of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, asthma and arthritis.
 - Percentage of low birthweight live births among African American women (13%) is almost twice the percentage for all ethnic groups.
 - Rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and AIDS were several times higher among African American women compared to other ethnic groups.
 - African American women experience the highest death rate from all causes, and specifically from heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer.
 - Maternal and infant mortality rates are 2-3 times higher in African American women than women countywide.
 - Homicide rates are 3 times higher in African American women compared to rates among women overall.