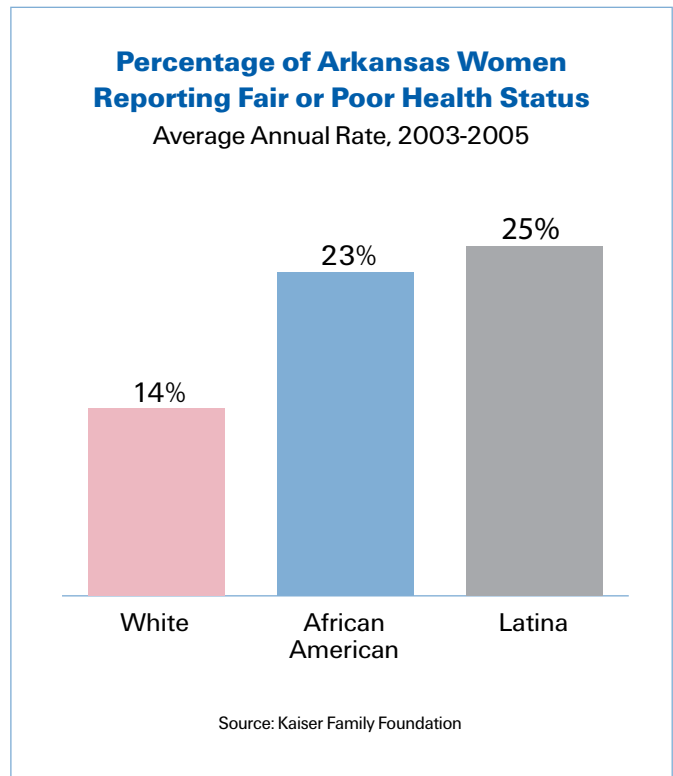
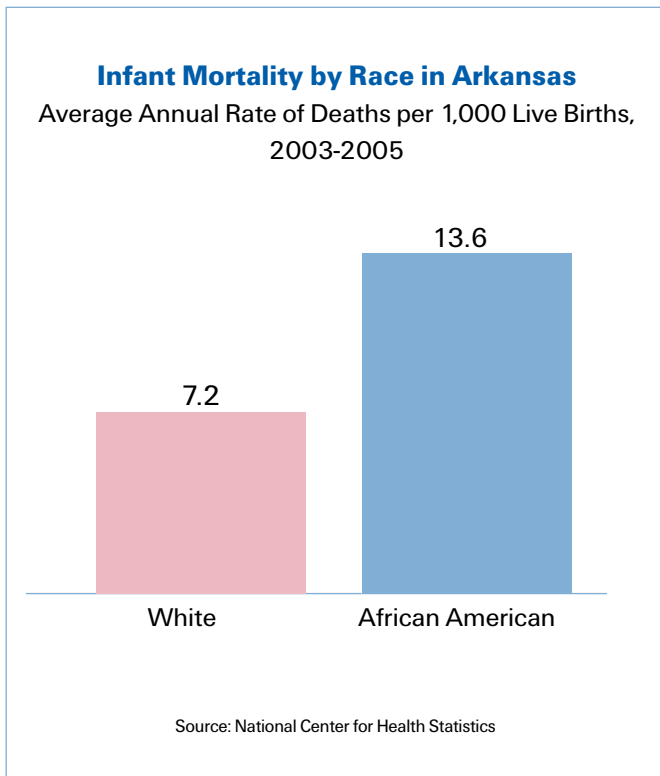


# Health Care Discrimination Harms Communities of Color in Arkansas

Rapidly escalating medical costs and insurance premiums, rising numbers of people without coverage, and rip-offs by monopolistic private insurers have dominated the Arkansas political dialogue surrounding President Barack Obama's plans for comprehensive health reform. On Capitol Hill, the American public is witnessing an historic clash of Washington special interest groups fighting to protect their revenue streams. Yet no one has more at stake than the 103 million people of color in the U.S.,<sup>1</sup> including the 233,000 in Arkansas.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the nation's history, communities of color have been forced to accept health care that bears little resemblance to what is experienced by members of more advantaged groups. For people of color in Arkansas and nationwide, life is shorter, chronic illness more prevalent and

disability more common. These are predictable side-effects of a health care system that provides these communities in Arkansas with narrower opportunities for regular health services, fewer treatment options and lower-quality care.

The infant mortality rate, a leading indicator of community health and well-being, illustrates the huge health disparities between whites and other racial and ethnic groups in Arkansas. The infant death rate for whites is 7.2 per 1,000 live births, compared with 13.6 for African Americans.<sup>3</sup> Life expectancy for African Americans in Arkansas is 6 to 10 years shorter than that of whites.<sup>4</sup> About 34 percent of Latinos and 29 percent of African Americans in Arkansas are uninsured, compared with 17 percent of whites.<sup>5</sup>



## Arkansas Disparities

- In Arkansas, about 14 percent of African-American adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, almost 40 percent greater than the rate for whites.<sup>6</sup>
- In Arkansas, 30 percent of Latina women received no early prenatal care, compared with 27 percent for African Americans and 17 percent for whites.<sup>7</sup>
- The infant mortality rate for African Americans in Arkansas is almost twice that of whites.<sup>8</sup>
- The mortality rate for African Americans in Arkansas is 25 percent higher than for whites.<sup>9</sup>
- Despite growing evidence of racial disparities in health status and medical services, no system exists in Arkansas for collecting comprehensive state and local data on disparities. As a result, many questions about the health of people of color in Arkansas remain unanswered. For example, it is not known how many African Americans or Latinos (compared to whites) have forgone care because they can't afford it.
- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 7 percent of the Arkansas labor force is unemployed.<sup>10</sup>
- In Arkansas, 485,849 people were uninsured in 2007.<sup>11</sup>
- About 29 percent of African Americans in Arkansas are uninsured, meaning that African Americans are 70 percent more likely to be uninsured than white people are.<sup>12</sup>
- Health insurance premiums for Arkansas working families have skyrocketed, increasing 66 percent from 2000 to 2007.<sup>13</sup>
- The full cost of employer-sponsored health insurance in Arkansas is projected to grow at an annual rate of 8.1 percent, compared to a 1.4 percent increase in income.<sup>14</sup>
- About 260,000 working non-elderly adults in Arkansas lack health insurance. That comprises 64 percent of the total non-elderly uninsured population.<sup>15</sup>

**Arkansas Racial and Ethnic Disparities by Health Indicator**

Health Indicator	White	African American	Latino
Infant Mortality Rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	7.2	13.6	6
Diabetes Mortality Rate (deaths per 100,000 population)	23.6	52.9	-
Annual AIDS Case Rate (per 100,000 population)	4	31.3	14.5
Living in Poverty	15%	41%	29%
Enrolled in Medicaid	14%	30%	24%
Uninsured	17%	29%	34%

Note: - denotes insufficient data in state.

Source: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. "Key Health Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and State," 2009 update.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, "USA QuickFacts," 2008. Accessed at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, "Health, United States, 2008 With Chartbook" Hyattsville, MD: 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "Key Health Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and State," 2009 update.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Public Health and Science, Office of Women's Health. Quick Health Data Online, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Cara James, et al., "Putting Women's Health Care Disparities on the Map: Examining Racial and Ethnic Disparities at the State Level," Kaiser Family Foundation, June 2009. Accessed at <http://www.kff.org/minorityhealth/upload/7886.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, "Health, United States, 2008 With Chartbook" Hyattsville, MD: 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics." Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/web/lauhsthl.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "Health Insurance Coverage of the Total Population, states (2006-2007), U.S. (2007)." Accessed at <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparebar.jsp?ind=125&cat=3>.

<sup>12</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "Key Health Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and State," 2009 update.

<sup>13</sup> Families USA, "Premiums versus Paychecks," September 2008. Accessed at <http://www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/reports/premiums-vs-paychecks-2008.html>.

<sup>14</sup> New America Foundation, "The State of State Health: The Cost of Failure (2007)" Accessed at <http://statehealth.newamerica.net/>.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Harbage, Ben Furnas, "Health Care in Crisis," Center for American Progress, May 4, 2009. Accessed at [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/05/working\\_uninsured\\_map.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/05/working_uninsured_map.html).