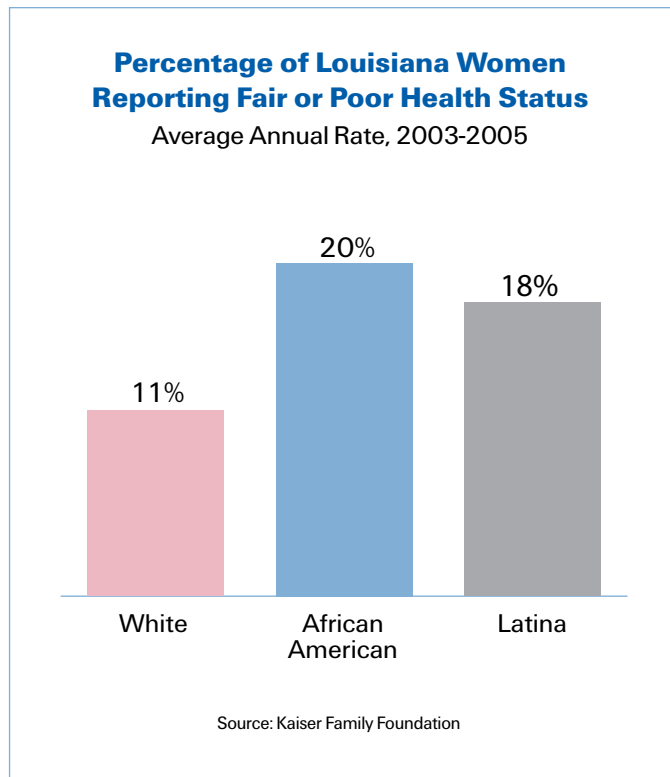
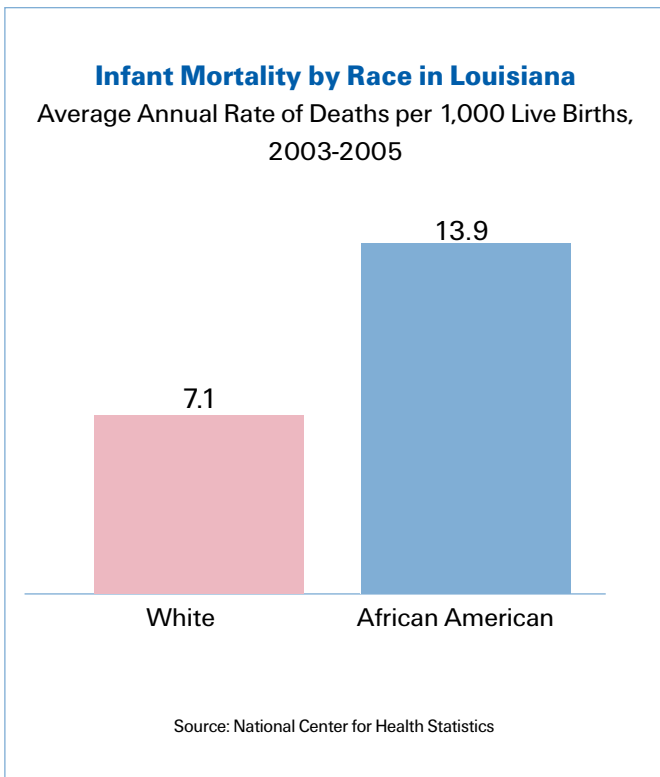


Health Care Discrimination Harms Communities of Color in Louisiana

Rapidly escalating medical costs and insurance premiums, rising numbers of people without coverage, and rip-offs by monopolistic private insurers have dominated the Louisiana 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.,¹ including the 1,663,000 in Louisiana.² 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 Louisiana 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 Louisiana 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 Louisiana. The infant death rate for whites is 7.1 per 1,000 live births, compared with 13.9 for African Americans.³ Life expectancy for African Americans in Louisiana is 6 to 10 years shorter than that of whites.⁴ About 57 percent of Latinos and 30 percent of African Americans in Louisiana are uninsured, compared with 18 percent of whites.⁵



Louisiana Disparities

- In Louisiana, about 14 percent of African-American adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, a rate almost 50 percent greater than for whites.⁶
- Among adult African Americans in Louisiana, 8.3 percent have asthma, compared to 5.2 percent of whites and 12.3 percent of Latinos.⁷
- Among Latina and African-American women, 20 percent received no early prenatal care, compared with 8 percent for whites.⁸
- The infant mortality rate for African Americans in Louisiana is almost two and a half times greater than that of whites.⁹
- The mortality rate for African Americans in Louisiana is 25 percent higher than for whites and more than two and a half times higher than for Latinos.¹⁰
- Despite growing evidence of racial disparities in health status and medical services, no system exists in Louisiana for collecting comprehensive state and local data on disparities. As a result, many questions about the health of people of color in Louisiana 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 6.6 percent of Louisiana's labor force is unemployed.¹¹
- In Louisiana, 848,463 people were uninsured in 2007.¹²
- About 57 percent of Latinos in Louisiana are uninsured, a rate more than three times greater than for whites.¹³
- Health insurance premiums for Louisiana working families have skyrocketed, increasing 75 percent from 2000 to 2007.¹⁴
- The full cost of employer-sponsored health insurance in Louisiana is projected to grow at an annual rate of 7.9 percent, compared to a 0.2 percent decrease in income.¹⁵
- About 390,000 working non-elderly adults in Louisiana do not have health insurance. That comprises 61 percent of the total non-elderly uninsured population.¹⁶

Louisiana Racial and Ethnic Disparities by Health Indicator

Health Indicator	White	African American	Latino
Infant Mortality Rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	7.1	13.9	5.6
Diabetes Mortality Rate (deaths per 100,000 population)	29.7	65.4	-
Annual AIDS Case Rate (per 100,000 population)	8.4	60.5	33.4
Living in Poverty	13%	42%	-
Enrolled in Medicaid	11%	29%	-
Uninsured	18%	30%	57%

Note: - denotes insufficient data in state.

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

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

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

⁴ Ibid.

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

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

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 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>.

⁹ National Center for Health Statistics, "Health, United States, 2008 With Chartbook" Hyattsville, MD: 2009.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics." Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/web/lauhsthl.htm>.

¹² 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>.

¹³ Kaiser Family Foundation, "Key Health Indicators by Race/Ethnicity and State," 2009 update.

¹⁴ Families USA, "Premiums versus Paychecks," September 2008. Accessed at <http://www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/reports/premiums-vs-paychecks-2008.html>.

¹⁵ New America Foundation, "The State of State Health: The Cost of Failure (2007)" Accessed at <http://statehealth.newamerica.net/>.

¹⁶ 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.