



Arkansas Department
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Arkansas Health Counts

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Study assesses, monitors prenatal care, risks linked to pregnancy in Arkansas

A third of Arkansas mothers don't know that folic acid can prevent certain birth defects and only 45 percent said a prenatal-care health worker discussed prevention of HIV transmission.

Those are two of the findings from the new Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) study coordinated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at Atlanta and tabulated and published by the Arkansas Center for Health Statistics.

Additionally, fewer than half of the the women who gave birth in 1997 called the birth intentional. Only about one in five mothers 19 or younger said their pregnancy was intentional.

"Arkansas is currently one of 23 states taking part in the research project, allowing us to track trends in our state from year to year, as well as compare progress in maternal/child health issues with those of other states," according to Gina Redford, project coordinator.

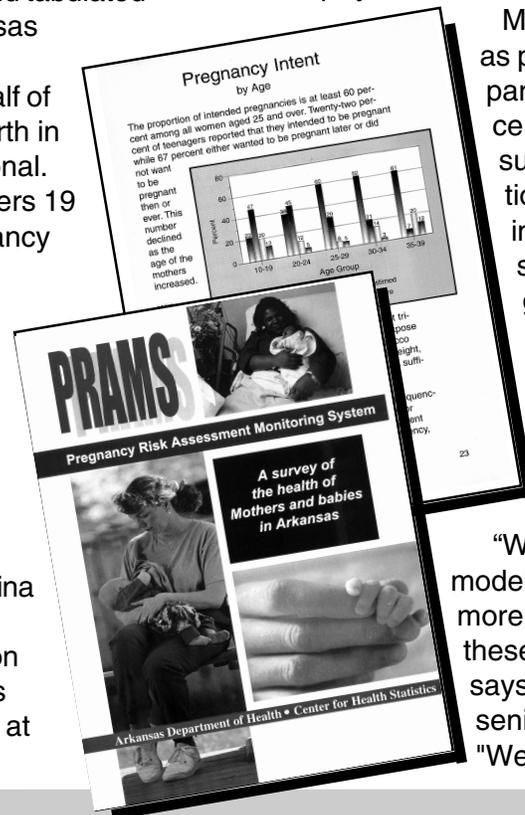
The first report is based on data collected from mothers who gave birth during 1997, at which time there were 16

PRAMS states including Arkansas.

By mail and telephone, surveyors questioned women about their experiences and behaviors before, during, and just after the birth of their last baby. Of the 33,480 mothers eligible, 2,179 were contacted, with 1,562 responding. They were asked about access to prenatal care, prenatal counseling, breastfeeding, contraception, pregnancy intent, physical violence, and well-baby care.

Mothers were identified as potential survey participants through birth certificate records. The survey excludes adoptions and multiple births involving four or more siblings. Mothers who gave birth to low birthweight and very low birthweight babies were more likely to be surveyed, as were mothers in rural areas.

"We use this sampling model so that we can get more information about these problem areas," says John Senner, PhD, senior research analyst. "We also weight the data



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to make statements about the entire state."

A telephone interviewer contacted and surveyed the mothers who didn't respond to the three mailed surveys. For completing the survey, each mother received a baby tee-shirt, or—if the child had died—an adult tee-shirt. Because the PRAMS team over sampled for low birthweight, staff members frequently had contact with mothers whose babies had died.

While many Health Department employees have close professional contact with the public, this may

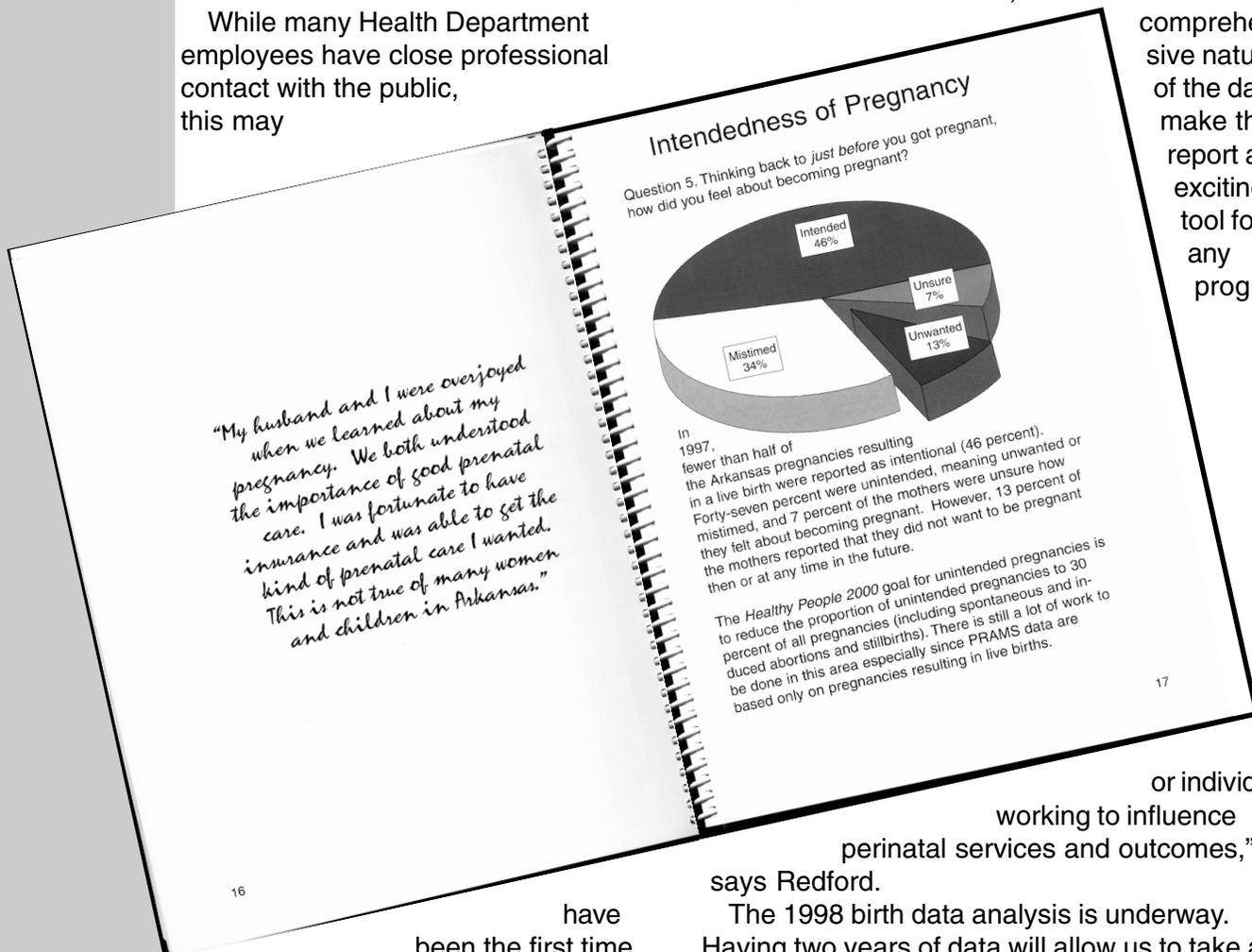
children, and their incredible experiences," Redford said. "These women have allowed us a close up view of the struggles they deal with on a daily basis."

Many of those comments are included in the PRAMS report, putting a human face on the data.

Although the quotes obviously cannot be used for quantitative analysis, they have served to bring the data to life. The marriage of the two underlines the urgency of many of the problems faced by Arkansans.

"We think those stories, combined with the

comprehensive nature of the data, make this report an exciting tool for any program



have been the first time Center for Health Statistics staff were so close to the people from whom the data flow.

The last page of the survey was set aside for comments from the mothers about "the health of mothers and babies in Arkansas."

"To our great surprise and delight, many moms have used this space to tell us stories about themselves, their

or individual working to influence perinatal services and outcomes," says Redford.

The 1998 birth data analysis is underway. Having two years of data will allow us to take an even closer look at the issues identified by data from the previous year.

Redford says she expects PRAMS to continue through its existing five-year grant and get re-funded in 2001. With the quality of the information and the high response rates, expects to continue the relationship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which funds the study, and to providing Arkansas with an invaluable look into the lives of its mothers and babies.



Nearly 1/3 of Hispanics uninsured

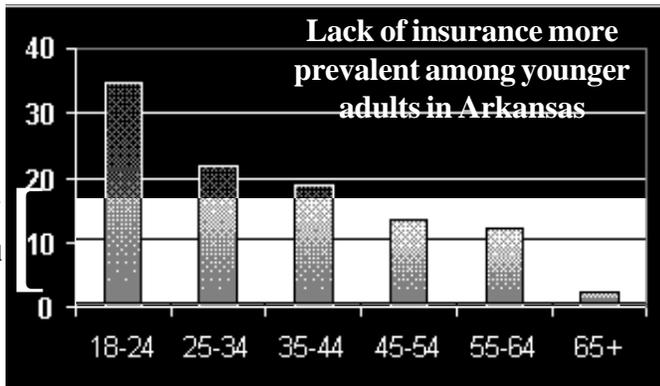
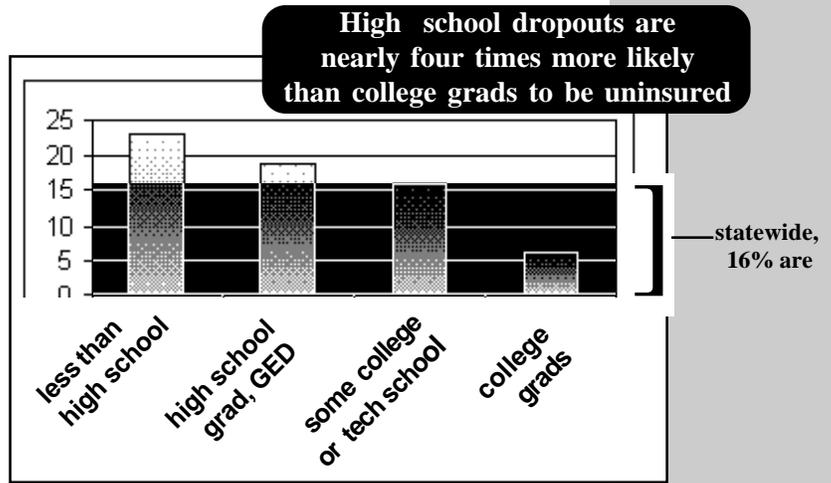
by John Hofheimer
Health Statistics staff writer

Nearly one in three Hispanic adults in Arkansas doesn't have health insurance, according to the 1999 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey.

By contrast to the 31 percent of Hispanics who are uninsured, 26 percent of blacks and 14 percent of whites lacked health insurance. Overall, 16 percent of Arkansas adults lacked insurance.

Nonwhite women were uninsured at a rate of 26 percent, which means they are nearly twice as likely as white women (15 percent) to be without insurance.

Elsewhere, there weren't may surprises. Employment continues as an accurate predictor of insurance. In 1999 in this state, the jobless were nearly three times as likely to lack insurance as those with jobs. Almost half of the unemployed are uninsured.



Unmarried persons are about twice as likely to lack insurance as those who are married. And 26 percent of blacks don't have insurance, 14 percent of whites don't.

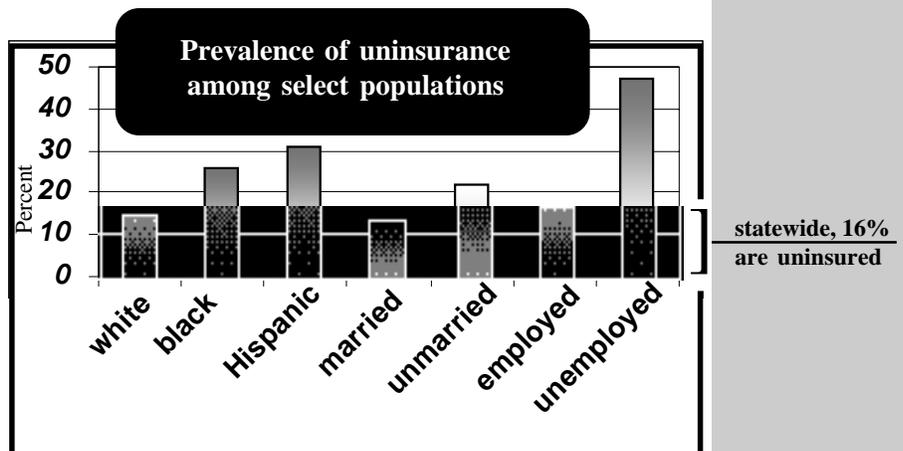
Among all Arkansans in the 18-24 age group, 35 percent have no insurance. At the opposite extreme, only 2 percent of Arkansans 65 or older lack insurance.

The more money you make, the more likely you are to have health insurance. Same with education.

Only 6 percent of college graduates lack health insurance, while 23 percent of those with less than a high school diploma aren't insured.

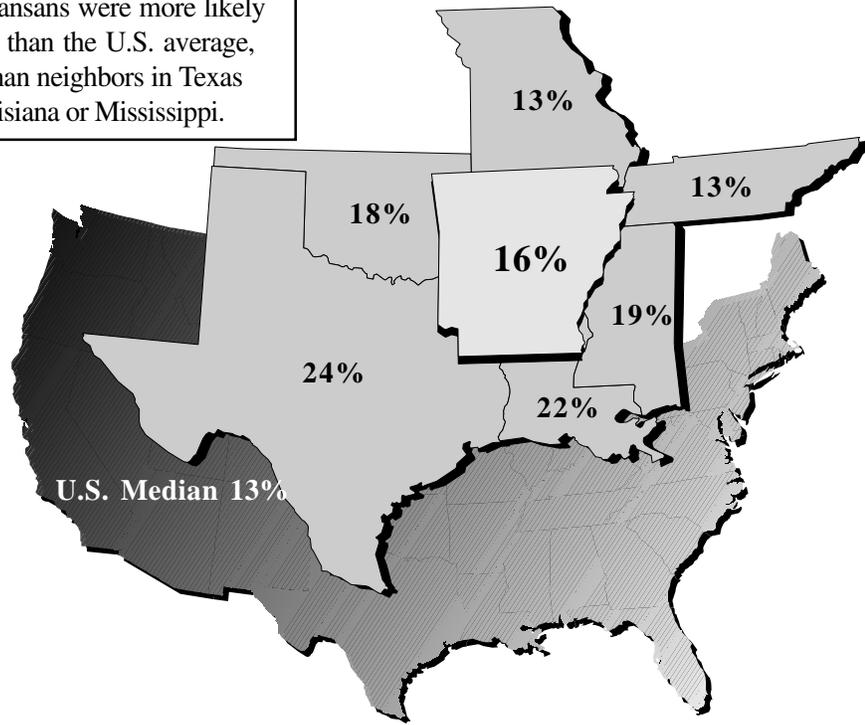
Similarly, those earning \$50,000 a year or more are at least four times less likely to be uninsured than those earning less than \$25,000.

Nationwide, 13 percent of adults are without insurance. While 14 states had higher rates of uninurance than Arkansas, among it's neighbors, only Missouri and Tennessee residents are more likely to have insurance.



Arkansas at a Glance

In 1998, Arkansans were more likely to be uninsured than the U.S. average, but less likely than neighbors in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana or Mississippi.



Percent uninsured by state.

1998 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey



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