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## **Poverty and Ethnicity Play Strong Roles in Health Inequities Among Women in LA County**

New report on women's health highlights health care needs and challenges

LOS ANGELES – Low-income women living below the federal poverty level (FPL) were four times more likely to report a fair or poor health status compared to women with incomes over 300 percent of the FPL according to a new report released by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. The report, *Health Indicators for Women in Los Angeles County: Highlighting Disparities by Ethnicity and Poverty Level*, highlights the latest data on access to health care, health behavior, health status, and incidence and mortality rates. Also included in the report is a new Determinants of Health section with socioeconomic indicators such as employment status, housing, and social support.

“Many women have important health care needs reflective of their challenging socioeconomic status,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “The data presented in this report is intended to provide information on women’s health-related conditions to help guide priorities and drive policies, programs and initiatives in addressing the most pressing needs.”

Public Health in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Commission for Women will be hosting a community dialogue, themed “Using Data to Make a Difference in Women’s Health” on July 9, 2013 at The California Endowment. The community dialogue will provide participants with an overview of the new report findings and strategies to combat health disparities and strive for equity among women. Among the strategies is a Data Dissemination Project funded by The California Wellness Foundation with a goal of translating the data into meaningful action and programs on the community and grassroots level.

“Women experience unique social and economic circumstances such as expanded caregiving roles, lower income compared to men, and barriers to health care access,” said Dr. Rita Singhal, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Office of Women’s Health. “By utilizing the data presented in this report, strategies can be devised to address the inequities and ultimately make a difference in the health of all women.”

The *Health Indicators for Women in Los Angeles County: Highlighting Disparities by Ethnicity and Poverty Level* report illustrates the multitude of social, physical, and economic factors that work together to shape the health of women in Los Angeles County. Included are new indicators on mental health, musculoskeletal health (arthritis, osteoporosis), and life expectancy; trends of key women’s health outcomes over the last decade; and a focus on how women at different life stages fare on important indicators. Indicators in the report are described for women and men combined, and for women alone.



## Key findings from the report include:

- Latinas report the highest rate of poverty (45%) and lowest level of education (48.7%).
- Black women have the lowest life expectancy (79.1 years) and highest mortality rates from many chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke.
- Despite having the longest life expectancy at birth, Asian/Pacific Islander women have seen large increases in obesity (4.1% to 8.2%) and diabetes (4.2% to 10%) from 1997 to 2011.
- Approximately 75% of uninsured women report difficulty accessing medical care compared with 36% of women on Medi-Cal and 13% of women with private insurance.
- Mortality rates for breast cancer have decreased for all racial/ethnic groups except for Latinas whose rates increased 16%.
- About four times as many black women (17%) and Latinas (13%) are single with children, than white (3%) and Asian/Pacific Islander women (3%).
- Population projections show that the proportion of women 65 years and older will double in the next 50 years.

For a full copy of the report, *Health Indicators for Women in Los Angeles County: Highlighting Disparities by Ethnicity and Poverty Level* visit: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/owh/index.htm>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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