




PREGNANCY EXPERIENCES

OF
AFRICAN
AMERICAN/ BLACK
WOMEN

IN
COLORADO

SURVEY RESULTS



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Sponsored by CDC PRAMS CA#U50/CCU813490-08



In 2002 and 2003, 823 women in Colorado participated in a special survey of African American/Black women who had recently given birth. The survey, called the *Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System* (PRAMS), is part of an ongoing study conducted by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All African American/Black women who gave birth between July and December of 2002 were sent the survey. This report shows the results of this study. No individual women are identified.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment thanks the women—who completed this survey—for their help! The results of this study will be used to plan programs to improve the health and well-being of pregnant women in Colorado.

Share a copy of this report with your friends and family members who are pregnant, or planning to become pregnant, to help support them in having a healthy baby.

For more information, please call (303) 692-2160 or e-mail health.statistics@state.co.us.

WHO ANSWERED THE SURVEY?



he survey was sent to 1,321 women. Of these, 823 completed the survey and sent it back, or completed it over the telephone.

This table describes the women who answered the survey.

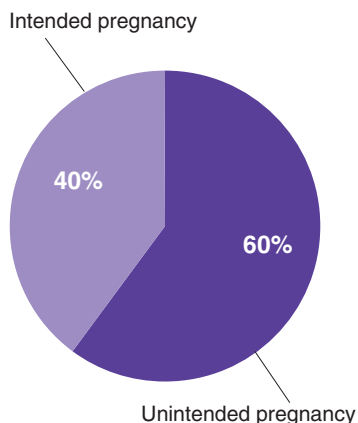
	Number	Percent
Marital Status		
Married	377	45.8
Other	466	54.2
Education		
<12 years	140	17.1
12 years	342	42.4
>12 years	336	40.5
Age		
15-19 years	143	17.0
20-24 years	279	33.8
25-34 years	332	40.5
35+ years	69	8.6
Poverty Level		
>185% FPL*	244	28.6
<=185% FPL*	502	62.1
Unknown	77	9.3
Income		
0-15,999	352	43.6
16,000-24,999	130	15.4
25,000-39,999	114	13.8
40,000+	165	19.6
Unknown	62	7.6

*Federal Poverty Level. In 2003, the FPL was \$18,400 for a family of four.

PREGNANCY INTENTION



Unintended pregnancies are defined as those that are unwanted (pregnancy not wanted at any time) or mistimed (pregnancy not wanted until some time in the future) at the time of conception. Many women with unintended pregnancies receive late or inadequate prenatal care, suffer from poor nutrition, and often use harmful substances like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Their infants are at higher risk for low birth weight, dying in the first year of life, and being abused or neglected.



Sixty percent of the births to women in this study were the result of an unintended pregnancy. Planning pregnancy can help to ensure that the woman will take better care of herself during pregnancy.

Nearly 85 percent of the women in this study reported they were using birth control at the time they answered the survey (2-8 months after the baby was born), which increases the likelihood that a future pregnancy would be planned.

"I think that a lot of time and money need to be spent on self-esteem of women that get pregnant or repeatedly get pregnant when that is not really what they wanted. I don't think it's that they don't know about birth control but maybe that they are not able to obtain it."

-survey respondent

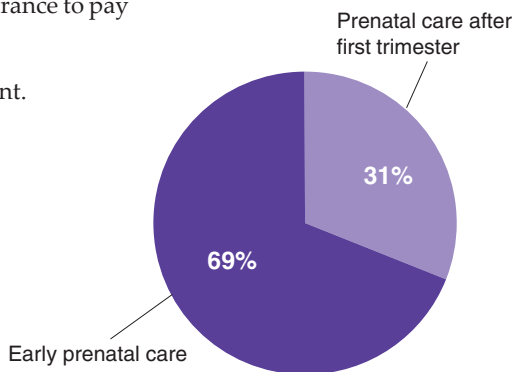
PRENATAL CARE



Early and consistent prenatal care allows for the diagnosis and management of medical conditions that may affect the health of the mother and infant.

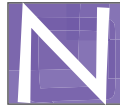
Most women in this study entered prenatal care in their first trimester, which is recommended. For those women who didn't enter care in the first trimester, the reasons most often cited were they:

- didn't know they were pregnant;
- didn't have enough money or insurance to pay for the visits; and
- couldn't get an earlier appointment.

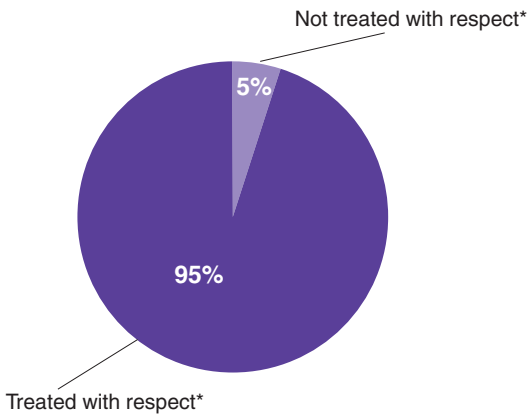


"I think that women of any age or race should get early prenatal care. In the end I found that when I got prenatal care early in my second pregnancy the more relaxed I was. I was also not as nervous. I knew what to expect."

SATISFACTION WITH CARE



early all women (95%) in this study reported that they were satisfied with the understanding and respect shown by the staff during their prenatal care visits. Around 12 percent of women reported that they were not satisfied with the amount of time their health care provider spent with them during visits.



*perception of patient

"My health care was perfect and I am very thankful for Medicaid and the help that they have provided for me and my kids for free. The healthcare could get no better."

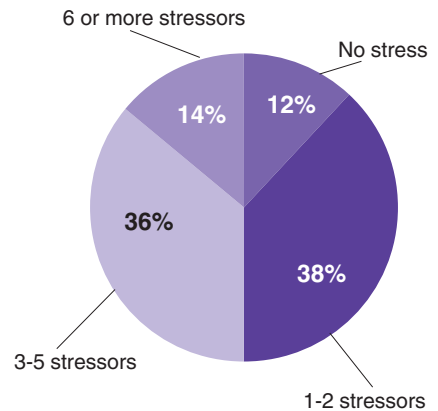
STRESS



Stressful life events have been shown to have a negative impact on health and pregnancy.

Among the women who participated in this study, only 12 percent reported no stressful life events during the year before becoming pregnant. Most women had between 1 and 5 stressful events. The most common stressful events were:

- moving to a new address;
- arguing more often with husband or partner; and
- having bills you couldn't pay.



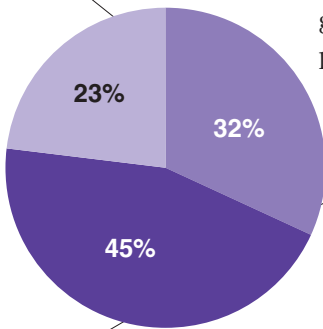
“Sometimes when your pregnant and there’s so much going on it stresses you out.”

WEIGHT GAIN



How much weight a woman gains during pregnancy is an important factor in how well her baby grows prenatally. Not gaining enough weight during pregnancy is a risk factor for intrauterine growth retardation and low birth weight in infants. Gaining too much weight during pregnancy is of concern because it can lead to obesity, which is linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

Too little weight gain



About one-third of women in this study gained the right amount of weight during pregnancy, 45 percent gained too much weight, and 23 percent gained too little.

Adequate weight gain

Too much weight gain

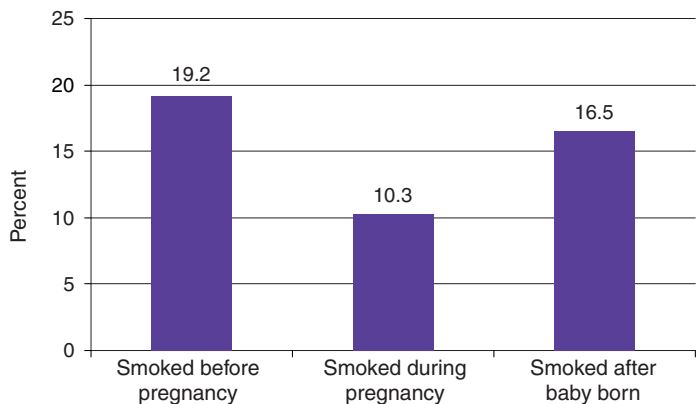
"I truly believe that exercise and a healthy eating lifestyle added to my successful pregnancy and delivery."

SMOKING



Smoking during pregnancy has been shown to contribute to low birth weight infants.

Most women in this study did not smoke before, during, or after pregnancy. Many smokers quit smoking during their pregnancy, but more than half of all smokers continued to smoke throughout their pregnancy. Although many women quit smoking while pregnant, some started up again after their babies were born, oftentimes exposing them to secondhand smoke.

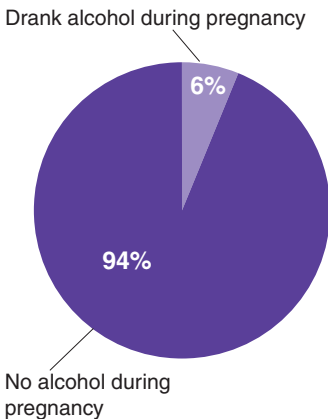


"I think smoking cigarettes can do a lot of harm to babies. I have seen many pregnant women smoking."

ALCOHOL

Drinking early in pregnancy increases the risk for bad outcomes, including spontaneous abortion, poor growth, and neurological problems. Many of these problems develop between 3 and 8 weeks of gestation, often before women know they are pregnant.

Very few women in this study drank alcohol during their pregnancies; however, 6 percent did report drinking. Among those who did drink, the vast majority (96%) drank three or fewer drinks per week.



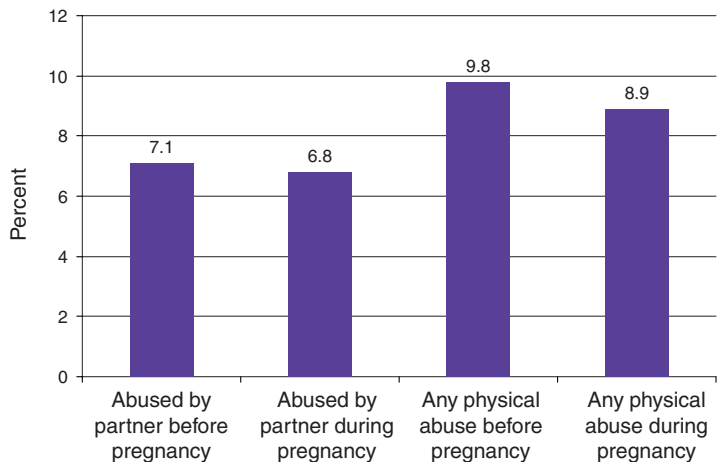
"I wish women would take more time to realize that they are having a baby and take better care of themselves. There are too many women drinking and taking drugs."

ABUSE

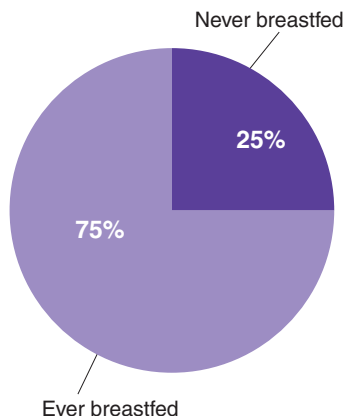


hysical abuse during pregnancy can result in fetal loss, early onset of labor, and delivery of a preterm, low birth weight infant. Experiencing physical abuse can be very damaging to women, physically and psychologically.

During the year **before** pregnancy, 7.1 percent of women in this study were abused by their husband or partner, and almost 10 percent reported abuse by their husband/partner or someone else. Nearly 9 percent of women reported abuse **during** pregnancy.

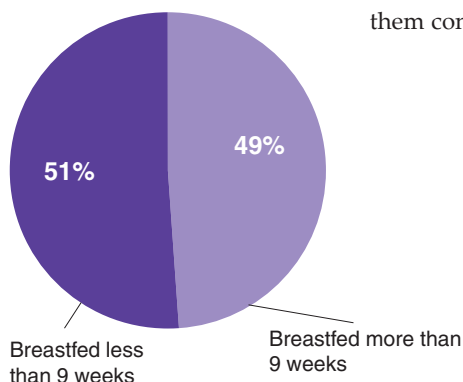


BREASTFEEDING



Breastfeeding is known to be beneficial to both infants and mothers. Benefits for babies include fewer middle-ear infections, fewer chronic illnesses such as diabetes, fewer allergies, and less obesity. School-aged children who were breastfed as babies have been found to have IQs about eight points higher than those who were not. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for one year.

Three out of four moms (75%) in this study began breastfeeding their babies. However, less than half of them continued beyond 9 weeks.

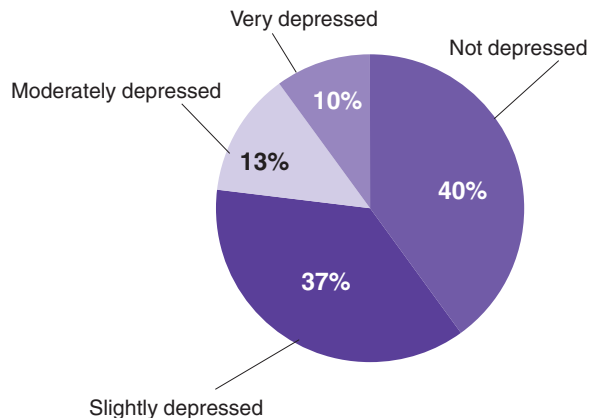


“Breastfeeding is better because of fewer stomachaches, and it’s cheaper. There are no earaches with breastfeeding.”

DEPRESSION

Depression after pregnancy (also called *postpartum depression*) can decrease a new mother's enjoyment of her baby, as well as other aspects of her life, and can even lead to harm.

Sixty percent of women in this study reported some degree of depression, and 10 percent reported they were very depressed. Over half of the women who reported depression said they talked to someone about it. Most women talked with their husband or partner, their mother, or a friend.



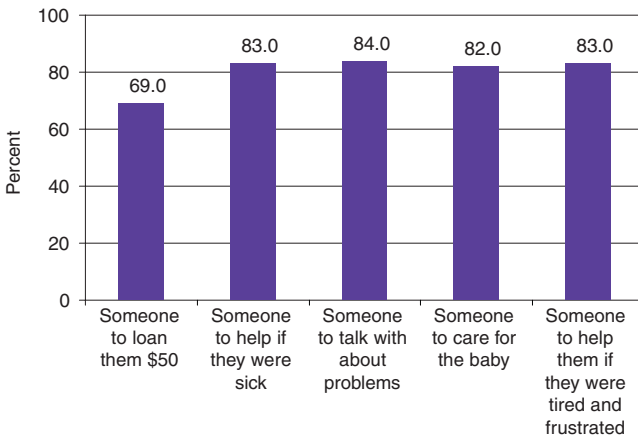
"After delivery I think it would help to have a home visit for a few days to help educate mothers to maybe help reduce depression."

SOCIAL SUPPORT



Women who have adequate support before, during, and after pregnancy may experience less stress and be able to take better care of their babies.

Most of the women in this study have strong social support networks. Nearly 70 percent said they had someone who could loan them \$50 if they needed it. Over 80 percent said they had someone who could help them if they were sick, with whom they could talk about their problems, who could care for the baby, and who could help them if they were tired and frustrated with the baby.



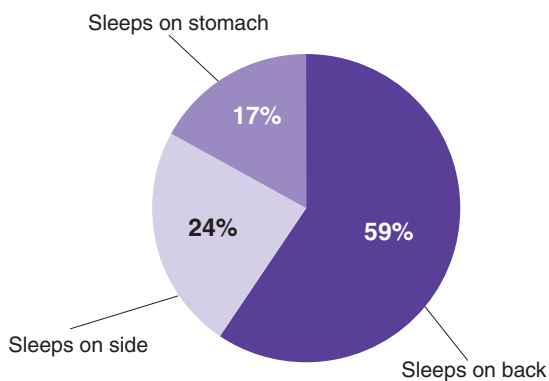
"I had a good pregnancy and I believe that you will have a good pregnancy if you have moral support."

INFANT SLEEP POSITION



Infants who sleep on their stomachs are estimated to be up to 9.3 times more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) than infants who sleep on their backs.

Nearly 60 percent of women in this study reported they put their babies to sleep on their backs, and another 24 percent put babies to sleep on their sides.




SAFETY



he women in this study reported the following measures of baby safety:

- ✦ 99 percent brought the baby home from the hospital in a car seat;
- ✦ 99 percent reported their new baby always or almost always rides in a car seat;
- ✦ 94 percent reported that their home has a working smoke alarm; and
- ✦ 97 percent reported that their home does not have loaded guns inside.

“Make your kids your number one priority.”



African American/Black women in Colorado are doing many things to take care of themselves during pregnancy to make sure they have healthy babies. More can be done to help women get better care during pregnancy.

Many of the women who completed this survey shared stories of their lives, and we appreciate the time and care they took in completing this survey. The information gathered in this survey will be used to help ensure that future mothers have healthy pregnancies and babies.



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