

# California Health Interview Survey

Making  
California's  
Voices  
Heard on  
Health

## CHIS Making an Impact

**The California Health Interview Survey is an invaluable resource  
for building healthier communities**



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**H**ealth care reform. Health insurance coverage. Chronic diseases. Health disparities. On a broad range of important health topics, the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) data and results are invaluable tools for policymakers at the local, state and national levels. Health advocates, media, health care providers, foundations and researchers also depend on this rich source of population-based data for critical health information.

Beginning in 2001, CHIS has been conducted every two years by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research in collaboration with the California Department of Public Health, the California Department of Health Care Services and the Public Health Institute.

### Supporting New Efforts to Cover the Uninsured

California state government officials, as well as local agencies and advocacy groups, rely on CHIS data to support their efforts to expand health coverage to the uninsured – especially uninsured children.

#### California Health Care Reform

Both California Governor Schwarzenegger's office and Democratic legislators used CHIS data to develop health care reform proposals. Governor Schwarzenegger also held a press conference at UCLA in which he cited a cornerstone CHIS publication – *The State of Health Insurance in California* – as important evidence of the need for health care reform.

California State Senate Health Committee staff used CHIS data to assess coverage effects of each proposal. The Legislative Analyst Office used CHIS data to analyze the Governor's health care reform proposal for state legislators

and for the report, *The 2007-08 Budget: Perspectives and Issues*. Advocacy groups on all sides of the issue also relied on CHIS data to inform their positions and craft their arguments.

#### First 5 County Commissions

More than a dozen First 5 county commissions – created by California voters to direct tobacco tax revenues to promote early childhood development – have used CHIS data to develop new public-private expansion programs for children ineligible for private insurance, Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. In most cases, CHIS has been the only data source available. First 5 agencies from Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Joaquin, Marin, San Luis Obispo and Tulare counties have relied on CHIS data to advocate for and plan these expansion projects, as has a coalition of commissions from Sacramento, Colusa, El Dorado, Yolo and Yuba counties.

#### The United Way

The United Way and its partners have used CHIS data on a variety of omnibus reports used to influence policy throughout California. In their annual *State of the County* report on quality of life in Los Angeles, The United Way used CHIS data to describe health insurance coverage. In their *East Bay Indicators* report, CHIS data was used to describe health insurance coverage and affordability, as well as health access and utilization and chronic health conditions.

#### State and Local Health Insurance Expansion

More than two dozen counties have developed "Healthy Kids" programs – public-private partnerships to cover those not eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families. County agencies used CHIS data to estimate the number of children who would benefit from their programs and to develop their proposals, plan their programs and advocate for program funding.

## Combating Obesity, Promoting Food Security

CHIS data are used by lawmakers to support new laws and policies designed to promote healthier attitudes towards diet and nutrition.

- A recent UCLA Center for Health Policy Research policy brief on soda consumption and its link to obesity sparked widespread media coverage and prompted Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Los Angeles) to announce he would hold legislative hearings on the issue, while San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom proposed a soda tax on retailers.
- “Get Kern Moving,” a program to encourage exercise across Kern County, was created by the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program after an organizer used CHIS to understand the environmental factors contributing to obesity in local neighborhoods.
- The California Community Foundation used CHIS data to encourage heart-healthy choices on neighborhood restaurant menus.
- The Los Angeles Department of City Planning and the City Attorney used CHIS data in a UCLA Center for Health Policy Research publication, *Designed for Disease: The Link Between Local Food Environments and Obesity and Diabetes*, to help draft a City ordinance prohibiting the establishment of new fast food restaurants in South Los Angeles.
- The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) asked that their staff be trained to use CHIS data to formulate public policies focused on asthma and obesity prevention.
- A policy brief on food insecurity by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the California Food Policy Advocates prompted then-Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg to introduce AB 231 to increase participation in the federal food stamp program.

## Preventing Chronic Diseases

CHIS is widely used both to track chronic diseases, such as asthma and diabetes, and to stimulate and guide prevention action and policies.

- The California Diabetes Program (CDP) relies on CHIS data to measure county-level prevalence of diabetes and receipt of disease management services. CHIS was the only source of local health data relevant to this effort to measure risk factors and burden related to diabetes.
- Community Advocates in Solano County successfully argued against developing another truck stop along I-80 in the county based on CHIS 2001 data estimates that showed Solano County to have the state’s highest rate of asthma symptom prevalence overall and one of the highest rates for children.

## CHIS and California Health Care Reform Efforts

At a UCLA press conference, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger used a cornerstone CHIS publication – *The State of Health Insurance in California* – to draw attention to his health care reform efforts. Holding the report, the Governor said it illustrated “that we must fix this system, and we must fix it now.” Both the Governor and Democratic legislators have subsequently drawn upon CHIS data to formulate their evolving plans for comprehensive health care reform. The SHIC report alone was downloaded nearly 28,000 times during the high point of reform efforts. CHIS staff assisted legislators from both political parties with customized data and supplemented those requests with CHIS-based policy briefs and facts sheets, offered free of charge. Throughout the process, CHIS was used as a credible, relevant and universally accepted data source by legislators and advocacy groups working on all sides of the issue. No other single health survey played such a central role in powering the debate on the critical issue of health care reform.

- The Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP) Initiative, funded by The California Endowment, relies on CHIS data and analyses to support the work of nearly a dozen regional programs.
- The California Health Benefits Review Program uses CHIS data in its mandated analyses of legislative bills that propose new benefits to be required in all health insurance plans, including bills that would mandate childhood asthma management programs, mental health services, cancer screening and control services and others.
- The Central California Children’s Institute used CHIS data to develop reports and indicators on childhood asthma, child health insurance and other topics.
- The Central Valley Health Policy Institute at California State University, Fresno has used CHIS data in many studies that examine key health issues and shape policy in the San Joaquin Valley.
- Monterey, Fresno, Santa Barbara, Kern and other counties use CHIS data to develop reports and support programs on issues ranging from the prevalence of childhood asthma to ‘scorecards’ on obesity and overweight.

## Obtaining Funding to Improve Access to Care

CHIS data are used by local agencies and community clinics to support their efforts to obtain funding to serve low-income families and individuals.

- The Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County uses CHIS data in its advocacy and planning

activities, and in its proposals to government agencies and foundations in support of its 41 member community clinics and health centers.

- The San Francisco Community Clinic Consortium and San Francisco Department of Public Health used CHIS Service data to develop their federally funded Community Access Program, a project to improve access to care for San Francisco's indigent and uninsured.
- CHIS data helped the Fresno Metro Ministry secure funding from the USDA for its Food Security Project.

## Building Healthier Communities

Local governments and organizations continue to discover new ways to integrate CHIS data into their individual health-related projects in their communities.

- First 5 San Diego used CHIS data in its planning to allocate \$6 million for efforts to enroll uninsured eligible children in existing programs.
- Health policy researchers at the University of California, Berkeley used CHIS data in the first study to compare measures of mental health and general well-being among California's county populations.
- The Great Valley Center in California's Central Valley region used CHIS data to assess more than two dozen regional health care indicators in *The State of the Great Central Valley: Public Health and Access to Care*.

## Using Data to Better Serve Ethnic Communities

Because of its size, sample design, and ability to reach households in several languages, CHIS is of great value to those seeking to identify the health needs of ethnic communities in California and beyond.

- The Indian Health Service used CHIS data to testify before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs about suicide rates among American Indians.
- University of California, Irvine researchers used CHIS data to determine expanded need for mental health services for older Vietnamese. The results are published in *Older Vietnamese More At-Risk for Poor Mental Health*.
- The National Cancer Institute (NCI) uses CHIS data to better understand how cancer impacts Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese and other Asian ethnic populations, as well as American Indian-Alaskan Natives.
- The Asian Pacific American Legal Center used CHIS to produce demographic profiles of the Asian and Pacific Islander populations.
- United American Indian Involvement used CHIS data in a successful competitive grant application to the Indian Health for a Diabetes Primary Prevention Demonstration project in Los Angeles County.

- The Office of Multicultural Health at the California Department of Public Health used CHIS data for legislative analyses of Assembly Bill 1963 (to encourage the use of *promotores de salud* and community health workers to assist rural and underserved communities) and Assembly Bill 9 (to address disparities in the delivery of health services to multicultural populations in specific areas of Los Angeles County), among other legislation.
- Stanford University's Center for Biomedical Ethics used CHIS data to measure racial and ethnic disparities in cancer screening for an article that appeared in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

## Supporting Vital Research on Health Policies and Health Disparities

Researchers in the California Department of Public Health, other State agencies, the National Cancer Institute, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), universities and other research organizations have been using CHIS data for studies on many important health issues.

- The National Cancer Institute used CHIS data in the creation of its HD\*Calc, statistical software used to evaluate and monitor health disparities.
- More than 100 studies using CHIS data have been published in peer-reviewed journals and demonstrate the survey's wide applicability.

To learn more about studies using CHIS data, visit the CHIS Research Clearinghouse at [www.chis.ucla.edu/rc](http://www.chis.ucla.edu/rc).

## Reaching the Community

CHIS data, offered free of charge, continues to prove its value as a public service tool for researchers, health experts, policymakers and the media.

- In the 12 months ending September 2009, the CHIS Web site (and the Web site of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, where many CHIS publications are posted) had approximately 630,279 total visits.
- CHIS experts and/or CHIS data are quoted in hundreds of

### CHIS and AHRQ

CHIS was selected by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) as the only subnational population survey to be included in its *National Healthcare Disparities Report*.

AHRQ selected CHIS because it provides robust samples of Asian and Latino ethnic groups that are unavailable in national surveys, and it provides cutting-edge measures related to ethnicity, immigration and culture.

media outlets each year, ranging from NBC, CBS and Fox News, to The New York Times and Los Angeles Times, to regional media such as KPCC, KPBS, La Opinion and The Sacramento Bee.

- More than 2,000 representatives from over 800 organizations in California have been trained to use CHIS statistics by the Center's Health DATA program.

## Recognizing Excellence

CHIS's contributions to public service, as well as its groundbreaking and rigorous survey methods, are recognized nationally.

- CHIS won the 2006 American Association for Public Opinion Research Award for Policy Impact, which recognizes "outstanding research that has had a clear impact on improving policy decisions, practice, and discourse, either in the public or private sectors."
- CHIS, as part of a group, won the 2008 National Institutes of Health Merit Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to multicultural survey methods.
- The UCLA Center for Health Policy Research's data training team was awarded the American Cancer Society's "Special Recognition Award" for its support of an initiative to increase awareness and policy around cancer. The team drew on CHIS data for the initiative.

## Unparalleled Access

Results and data files from CHIS are available in a variety of ways to anyone with an interest in public health issues:

- Reports, policy briefs and fact sheets in print and online free at [www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu](http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu).
- AskCHIS, an easy-to-use free online data query system available at [www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu).
- Public-use data files and accompanying documentation can be downloaded free from [www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu) and are also available on CD-ROM.
- Technical assistance through regional workshops and consultation is available to organizations and researchers using CHIS data.

## Getting Out the Data

- **6,614:** People who have obtained CHIS data through AskCHIS in 12-month period ending September 2009
- **410,188:** Number of data queries made on AskCHIS since 2002
- **9,960:** Downloads of CHIS Public Use Files since 2002
- **204:** Number of CHIS research projects being tracked by the Research Clearinghouse ([www.chis.ucla.edu/rc](http://www.chis.ucla.edu/rc)).

## CHIS Is a Key Resource for Data About Ethnic and Other Subgroups

Because CHIS offers large samples of ethnic and other subgroups, researchers rely on CHIS data to study disparities in health and health behaviors. For example, a recent article in the journal *Academic Pediatrics* used CHIS data to examine parental concerns about development, learning and behavior for young children of Mexican origin and identified whether concerns differ by families' citizenship/documentation status. Another study, published in *BMC Psychiatry*, used CHIS data to examine whether gender and sexual orientation affected the use of services to treat psychiatric problems such as mental health and alcohol and drug disorders.

- UCLA Center for Health Policy Research's Data Access Center (DAC) enables researchers to work with confidential files in a secure environment. The DAC also offers programming and statistical consulting services.

## Scope and Relevance

The sheer size of CHIS makes it relevant to researchers and organizations interested in a wide range of health topics. CHIS data has appeared in hundreds of journal articles, reports, issue briefs and other publications including:

- **Healthy People 2010: A 2007 Profile of Health Status in the San Joaquin Valley** (Central Valley Health Policy Institute)
- **California Scorecard 2008** (Children NOW)
- **Fact Sheet: California's Uninsured Children** (100% Campaign)
- **California Children's Health Coverage** (100% Campaign)
- **America's Uninsured Crisis: Consequences for Health and Health Care** (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies)
- **Construction: Working Without a Healthcare Net** (Center for Policy Initiatives)
- **Aging in the San Joaquin Valley: Present Realities and Future Prospects** (Central California Institute for Healthy Aging)

## Learn More

For information about the California Health Interview Survey, please visit [www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu).

Specific questions can be emailed to [chis@ucla.edu](mailto:chis@ucla.edu).

To use AskCHIS, go to [www.askchis.com](http://www.askchis.com).