

California Health Interview Survey

CHIS Making an Impact—2011

Making
California's
Voices
Heard on
Health



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The California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) is the nation's largest state health survey and one of the largest health surveys in the United States. Conducted by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, CHIS regularly surveys up to 50,000 or more adults, teenagers and children, providing a detailed picture of the health and health care needs of California's diverse population.

Highlights of CHIS in 2011 include:

CHIS as a national data collection model

As health care reform implementation planning began in 2011, CHIS was cited repeatedly as potential model for national data collection, particularly in regards to minority groups underrepresented in most health surveys:

- In an April memorandum, The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) along with more than 200 other civil rights and consumer groups, recommended that CHIS be used as a model for federal health care reform-related data collection on immigrants. The memo, submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services, recommended standards for the collection of immigrant and mixed-status family data in research and surveys designed to measure these communities' health care access and quality and specifically cites CHIS as the recommended model for immigrant data.
- A June report from the National Academy of Sciences discussed CHIS as a national model for data collection on the health of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) population. The report, "The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People: Building a Foundation for Better Understanding," described CHIS and provides a reference to the sexual orientation questions included in past and present CHIS surveys.
- CHIS staff were invited to participate in a

September 7 meeting on health care reform and data collection in transgender communities at the U.S. Health and Human Services Agency in Washington, DC. The meeting is a result of the Agency's recent decision to begin national data collection on sexual minorities.

- In July, in recognition of the contributions CHIS and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research have made to state and local data collection, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded a grant to establish a new network of state and local health surveys to promote coordination to collect state and local data that is comparable across states and local areas and with national surveys. Such data is hoped to be an essential tool in the implementation and monitoring of health care reform nationally.

Giving voice to vulnerable groups

CHIS data were featured in a number of groundbreaking studies and reports on the health of minority groups, including:

- A widely-cited study ("Cancer survivorship and sexual orientation") in the journal *Cancer* used data from several cycles of the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) to find that gay men were nearly twice as likely to report a diagnosis of cancer as straight men.
- A November report authored by the LGBT Movement Advancement Project, Family Equality Council, and the Center for American Progress used CHIS data to offer one of the most comprehensive portraits to date of the wide range of obstacles facing lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families. The report, "All Children Matter: How Legal and Social Inequalities Hurt LGBT Families," found that less than one quarter of U.S. households are now raised by married heterosexuals and roughly two million children are being raised by LGBT parents. Yet LGBT families continue to face significant legal and social obstacles, including stigma and

lack of official recognition for their family unit, higher tax burdens, unequal access to health coverage and care, as well as economic pressures.

- “Why Place & Race Matter,” a report published by PolicyLink and The California Endowment, used CHIS data to illustrate the growing divide between those born into neighborhoods with safe parks, clean air, access to nutritious foods, and good neighbors -- and those without these essential building blocks of a healthy environment.
- The Los Angeles City Council cited a recent CHIS publication on informal caregivers in a resolution designating the month of November as “Family Caregiver Month.”

Improving the health of women and children

- CHIS is one of 75 surveillance systems featured on a new National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research Catalogue of Surveillance Systems.
- CHIS data were used by The Community Foundation of Monterey County in report that illustrated the challenges women and girls face in accessing education, overcoming disparities and living in safe neighborhoods. The report, “The Lives of Women & Girls in Monterey County,” found that nearly two-thirds of local women were clinically overweight or obese and that the high cost of health insurance, lack of eligibility for public programs, inadequate health education and lack of access to safe parks and other recreation activities impede women's efforts to stay healthy and fit.
- Children Now's “California Report Card 2011” used CHIS data to determine a “C-” grade to California for its overall efforts to protect and enhance the well-being of its children.
- In 2011, even more CHIS data was added to kids-data.org, an online repository of data on children.

Fighting pollution and climate change

- The Los Angeles basin has some of the worst air quality in the nation. In April, the Center received funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to launch a unique program that uses CHIS data to help local communities advocate and take action against the dangerous emissions generated by ship, train and truck traffic. The “Turning Data into Action (TDA): Fighting Air Pollution in Two Immigrant Communities” Program provides data training, access to experts, and skills-building classes to groups organized through the Children's Clinic in Long Beach and the East LA Community Corporation in Boyle Heights. The goal: To develop action plans aimed at changing policies and practices to reduce pollution generated in these predominantly Latino communities as goods move from the twin ports to warehouses and rail yards.

- CHIS data was included in a January report from California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment on climate change and environmental justice. The report, “Indicators of Climate Change in California: Environmental Justice Impacts,” found that California's socially and economically disadvantaged residents, including the urban poor, the elderly and children, traditional societies, agricultural workers and rural populations, are already experiencing disproportionately greater impacts on their health and well-being than others as a result of climate change.

Supporting new policy approaches

- In a December report to the California Strategic Growth Council, the Health in All Policies Task Force used CHIS data to argue that health is a critical component of economic, environmental and other policies.
- Based in part on her numerous studies on obesity that use CHIS data, Center Senior Research Scientist Susan Babey was invited to participate in the California Obesity Prevention Evaluation Task Force. The Task Force will evaluate the impact of the state's obesity prevention plan, *California Obesity Prevention Plan: A Vision for Tomorrow, Strategic Actions for Today*.

Enhancing research

- CHIS data powered the research of the winner of the 2011 Preventing Chronic Disease Student Research Contest, Camillia Lui. The Center graduate student researcher used CHIS and OSHPD data to examine the prevalence, hospitalization rates, and geographic variability of hypertension and congestive heart failure (CHF) patients to determine whether CHF patients are being hospitalized “too much.”
- The Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM) included CHIS as one of its “Featured Datasets” for health services research.

CHIS by the Numbers:

12-month Web traffic*: 360,242 visitors

12-month AskCHIS queries: 118,943

Average daily page views: 8,000

Articles & reports: CHIS data have been used in hundreds of peer-reviewed journal articles, organizational reports, fact sheets and issue briefs each year.

Media coverage: CHIS data, reports and experts are quoted in hundreds of local, regional and national media—television, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, blogs and websites—reports each year.

Learn more: www.chis.ucla.edu

* For the 12-month period ended December 1, 2011.