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"Health, U.S." Describes Health Status Disparities among Minorities

"Health, United States, 1990," the latest annual report on the nation's health, emphasizes striking disparities in the health status of the nation's racial and ethnic minorities.

The report documents generally lower levels of health and health care among black, American Indian, and Puerto Rican groups. More favorable health status and better access to health care were seen more frequently among white, Cuban, and Asian populations. The health picture for Mexican Americans varied across different health indicators.

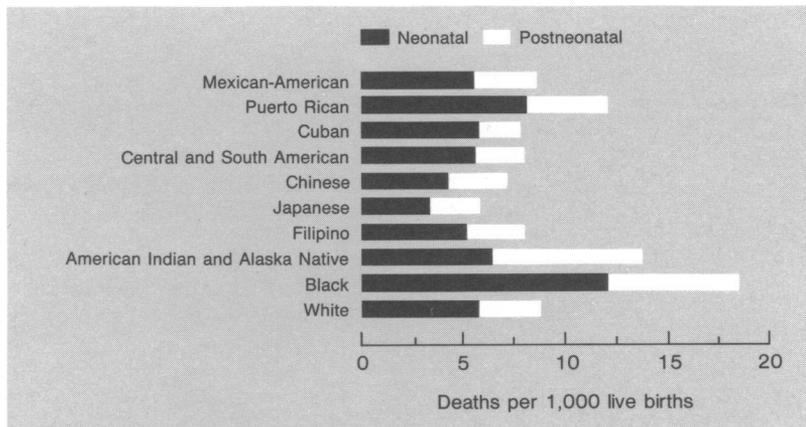
"Health, United States, 1990," the 15th edition in the series reviewing the health and health care of the nation, is prepared by the Centers for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Public Health Service. The data were derived from tracking a wide range of health measures.

This edition includes a chartbook on minority health, with detailed racial and ethnic data on major health indicators, information not previously available. For the first time, tables from the report are available on diskette in spread-sheet format to facilitate public use of the data. Highlights of the report follow.

Minority Health

- In 1988, only about 60 percent of American Indian, Mexican American, black, and Puerto Rican mothers received prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy. In contrast, about 80 percent or more of white, Cuban, and Asian mothers used early prenatal care.
- The overall U.S. infant mortality rate was 10.0 per 1,000 live births in 1988, down 1.0 percent from the previous year and continuing the slow decline during the past decade. The United States ranked 24th among industrial countries on infant mortality, with a rate twice that of Japan. Throughout the 1980s, infant mortality has remained twice as high among black as white infants.
- A new research file linking records of births and infant deaths expands the analysis of infant mortality to other minorities. The file shows an infant mortality rate 50 percent higher for American Indians and 40 percent higher for Puerto Ricans than for

Infant mortality rates, by race and ethnicity of the mother, United States, 1983-85 birth cohorts



NOTE: Data on Hispanic origin of mother are from 23 States and the District of Columbia.
SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System.

whites. The rate for Japanese births was about 33 percent lower than among whites (see chart).

- In the general population, Asians in the United States had the lowest death rates in 1988. Among those younger than 45 years, black persons and American Indians had the highest death rates. These differences narrowed with increasing age. For persons 65 years and older, black-white differences were minimal, and death rates among whites exceeded those for American Indians.
- In 1988, death rates at ages 15-44 years for the Hispanic population exceeded those for white persons by about 20 percent. Among children and those 45 years and older, death rates for Hispanic persons were similar to or lower than those for white persons in 1988.
- In 1988, unintentional injuries were the leading cause of death for all Americans ages 15-24 years, except for black persons for whom homicide was the leading cause of death.

Health Status and Determinants

- Life expectancy at birth dropped slightly from 75.0 in 1987 to 74.9 in 1988. Provisional data show life expectancy back up to a record high of 75.2 years in 1989.
- Heart disease and stroke mortality continued a long downward trend, although the decline in death rates from stroke slowed in recent years.
- Between 1987 and 1988, the age-

adjusted death rate for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection increased by 20 percent. HIV infection now ranks as the 15th leading cause of death.

Health Expenditures

- Between 1980 and 1989, the age-adjusted percentage of persons younger than 65 years with no health care coverage increased from 13 to 16 percent. In 1989 the percentage with no health care coverage increased steadily with decreasing income. Residents of the South and West were nearly twice as likely as those in the Northeast and Midwest to have no coverage. More than a third of Mexican Americans and more than a fifth of Puerto Ricans, blacks, and Cubans younger than 65 years had no health insurance, compared to 12 to 16 percent among whites and Asians.
- In 1988, national health expenditures totalled \$540 billion, with hospital care accounting for 39 percent of national health expenditures.

Copies of "Health, United States, 1990," can be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 20402. The stock number is 017-022-01129-8. The price is \$18 for the printed copy. For price and ordering information for a copy on diskette, call the GPO Electronic Media Order Desk, (202) 275-0186.

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