



## Racial Disparities in Unplanned Pregnancies and Why Women Don't Use Birth Control: Los Angeles Mommy and Baby (LAMB) Project, 2007

Higgins C, MPH, Chao SM, PhD, MPH, Eldahaby M., BA, Liw D. MPH, Ceballos R. BA, Harding CA, MPH  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Maternal Child, and Adolescent Health Programs



## Background

- More than 150,000 babies are born in Los Angeles County each year.
- Los Angeles County is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world.
- Los Angeles Mommy and Baby (LAMB) Survey provides local data to health department and community partners to help identify at-risk groups and develop programs/policies.





## What is the problem?



- The benefits of preconception care are well established.
- A fetus is susceptible to the development of problems during the first 4-10 weeks after conception, because many women are unaware they are pregnant until after this critical period of time they are unable to reduce the risks to their baby's health. <sup>1</sup>
- In 2001, 49% of pregnancies nationwide were unplanned.<sup>2</sup>
- In Los Angeles County 53% of births in 2007 were either mistimed or unintended.<sup>3</sup>



## Study Objectives



- We aim to:
  - Investigate racial disparities between mistimed and unintended pregnancies in Los Angeles County.
  - Describe the birth control use among women with unplanned pregnancies (mistimed and unintended).
  - Describe the reasons for birth control non-use among women with unplanned pregnancies and how these reasons differ between groups.





# Methods

## SURVEY

- ❖ LAMB is a population-based survey that aims to identify factors associated with poor birth outcomes and estimate the prevalence of selected maternal experiences.
- ❖ Questions in the LAMB survey were primarily drawn and adapted from previously validated survey instruments.
- ❖ In 2007, participants received a \$20 gift certificate.

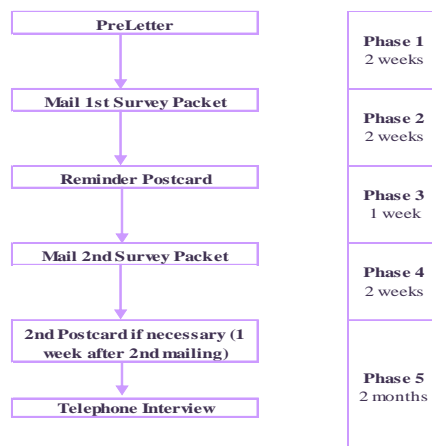
## DATA

- ❖ Population data is obtained from birth certificates.
- ❖ In 2007 LAMB used multi-level clustered sampling with an over sample of low birth weight and pre-term births.
- ❖ Eligibility:
  - Women who gave birth in 2007; most women were surveyed within 7 months of delivery
  - In the case of multiples one baby is sampled
- ❖ Raking procedures were used to properly weight the sample.



# Study Procedures

LAMB Survey Mailing Schedule



- ◆ Mixed-mode methodology for data collection similar to the CDC Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) Project





## Survey Questions



- Women were asked “Thinking back to just before you got pregnant with your new baby, how did you feel about becoming pregnant?”:
  - Those who responded they “wanted to be pregnant later” are defined as mistimed.
  - Those who responded they “didn’t want to be pregnant then or at any time in the future” were defined as unintended.
  - For purposes of this analysis unplanned is defined as unintended or mistimed.



## Survey Questions



- Women were also asked about birth control use:
  - “Before you got pregnant with your new baby, were you doing anything to keep from getting pregnant?”
    - Yes, all of the time
    - Yes, sometimes
    - No





## Survey Questions



- Finally women were asked about reasons for not using birth control:
  - “What were you or your partner’s reasons for not doing anything to keep from getting pregnant?”
    - I didn’t mind if I got pregnant
    - I wanted to have a baby/I was trying to get pregnant
    - I thought I would not get pregnant then
    - I had side effects from the birth control method I was using
    - I had problems getting birth control when I needed it
    - I thought my partner or I could not get pregnant
    - My partner did not want to use anything
    - I could not afford birth control



## Data Analysis

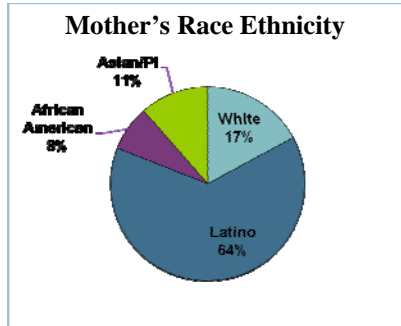


- All data analyses were conducted using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) version 9.2 survey procedures to account for the complex sampling scheme.
  - Descriptive analysis using both sampling and non-response weights were performed to estimate the population prevalence of selected factors.
  - Bi-variate analyses were performed using the Rao-Scott Chi-Square statistic to assess differences between groups.

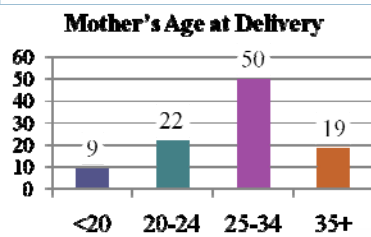




## DEMOGRAPHICS



- ◆ 6,264 women responded to the 2007 LAMB survey.
- ◆ Approximately 1/3 of the participants reported their annual income as >\$40,000 and 44% reported less than \$20,000.

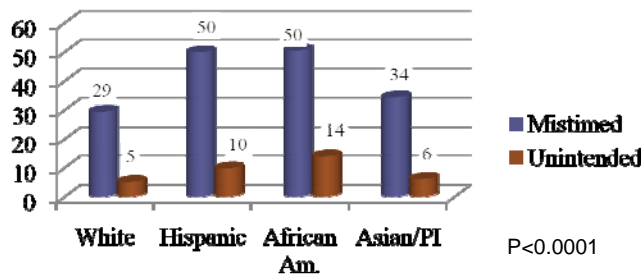


COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Public Health



## Unplanned Pregnancy

- 44% percent of women reported that their pregnancy was mistimed, another 9% reported that their pregnancy was unintended.



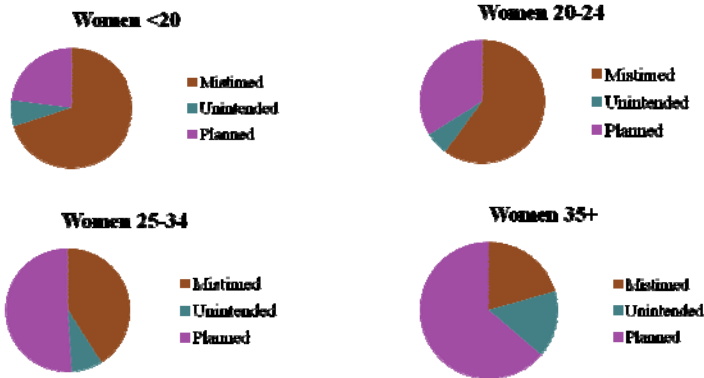
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Public Health

N=6,034 women responded to the question about pregnancy intention.



## Unplanned Pregnancy

- The prevalence of unplanned births increases as mother's age decreases, 76% of women <20 compared to 35% of women 35+ had unplanned pregnancies in 2007.



P<0.0001



## Frequency of Birth Control Use Mistimed vs. Unintended Pregnancy

- When asked about birth control use before they got pregnant, 21% of women with a mistimed pregnancy said they had been using birth control “all of the time”, 36% said “sometimes” and **43% said “no.”**
- When asked about birth control use before they got pregnant, 37% of women with an unintended pregnancy said they had been using birth control “all of the time”, 23% said “sometimes” and **40% said “no.”**

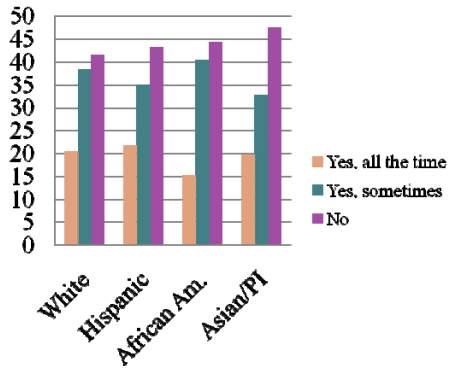


P<0.0001

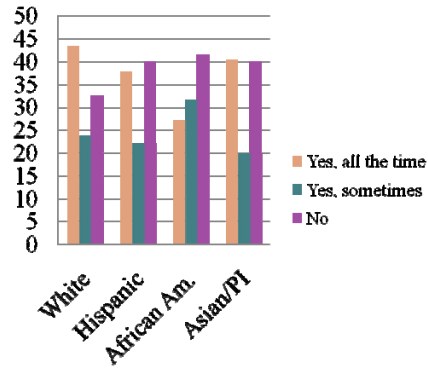


## Frequency of Birth Control Use

**Birth Control use Among Women with Mistimed Births**



**Birth Control use Among Women with Unintended Births**



P<0.0001

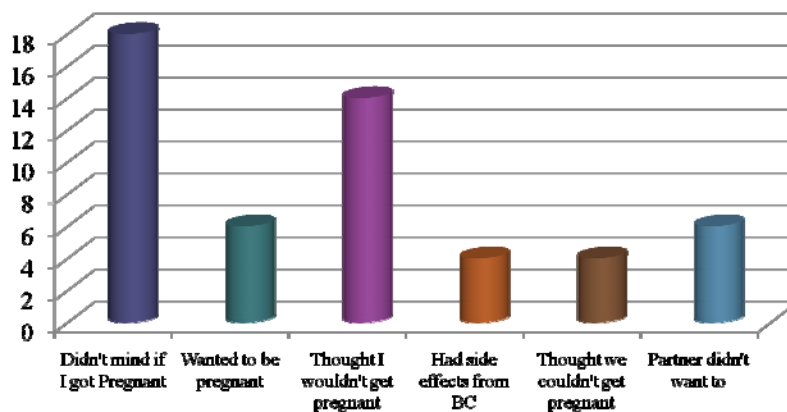


COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Public Health



## Reasons for Not Using Birth Control

**Reasons for BC Non Use Among Mistimed Pregnancies**

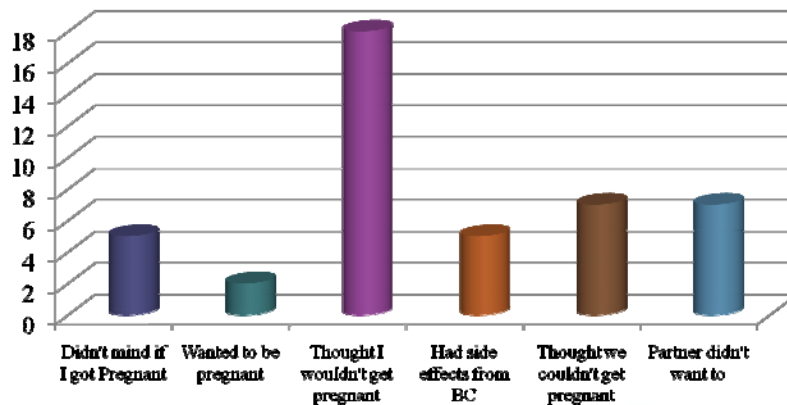


COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
Public Health



## Reasons for Not Using Birth Control

Reasons for BC Non Use Among Unintended Pregnancies



## Reasons for Not Using Birth Control

- Among women with mistimed births, the main reasons for not using birth control were “I didn’t mind if I got pregnant” and “I thought I wouldn’t get pregnant” regardless of race.
- Only 4% of white women reported that “their partners didn’t want to use anything” compared to 8% of African Am. and 7% of Asian/PI women.
- 3% of white women reported they “could not afford their BC” compared to 1% each for Hispanic, African Am. and Asian/PI women.





## Reasons for Not Using Birth Control

- Among women with unintended births, the main reasons for not using birth control were “I thought I wouldn’t get pregnant” and “I thought I couldn’t get pregnant,” regardless of race.
- 7% of White, 5% of Hispanic, and 3% of African Am. Women reported “having side effects from their BC”, while none of the Asian/PI women reported this as a barrier to BC use.
- While none of the White women and only 4% of Hispanic women reported that “their partners didn’t want to use anything,” 11% of African Am. and 12% of Asian/PI women sited this as a reason for non use.



## Study Limitations

- It is important to remember that these participants are women who had a live birth
  - This analysis on pregnancy intention and birth control usage therefore excludes women who had abortions, miscarriages or fetal losses.
- All information is based on self report and asked 3-7 months after the delivery. While recall bias is a potential issue we wouldn’t expect it to differ significantly between groups.
- Women reporting that their most recent birth was mistimed are grouped together for the purposes of this analysis. Some of these women hoped to be pregnant 6 months later whereas some hoped to be pregnant 5 years later.





## Conclusions



- Overall, 53% of births in 2007 were unplanned, with 44% being mistimed and another 9% being unintended.
- Racial disparities in the number of unplanned pregnancies exist.
- African American and Latino women were more likely to report their birth as unplanned.
- More than 1/3 of women who wished to either be pregnant later or not at all were not taking steps to prevent pregnancy.
- The reasons women didn't use birth control vary by pregnancy intention and race/ethnicity.



## Implications

- To improve the health of women and babies in Los Angeles County, we need to decrease the number of unplanned births.
- In addition to educating women on the importance of preconception health during their reproductive years, we should encourage women to discuss their risk of becoming pregnant with their provider.





## Data to Action



- LAMB surveillance data continues to serve as a resource to local government, community based and private entities.
- In an effort to address unplanned pregnancy and preconception health in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Preconception Health Collaborative was formed.
- Recent work of the collaborative includes:
  - WIC WOW (WIC Offers Wellness): case management for women with LBW/PT births. Increase birth spacing and promotes interconception care.
  - Integrate preconception health into Title X family planning clinics.
  - Data development to define preconception health indicators, engage the community, and evaluate efforts to improve women's health.



## Funding and Collaboration

- This project was made possible by the Health Resources and Services Administrative (HRSA) # R40MC06635, Productivity and Investment fund, and MCAH General grants and was completed in collaboration with Michael C. Lu, MD, MPH, 2007 LAMB Principal Investigator.
- The 2010 cycle of LAMB is currently underway and is funded by First Five Los Angeles. Data from the 2010 LAMB survey will be available December 2011.





## Contact

- For additional LAMB information please visit [www.LALamb.org](http://www.LALamb.org)
- Or contact Dr. Shin Margaret Chao at [schao@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:schao@ph.lacounty.gov), 213-639-6470
- Presenter Contact Information
  - Chandra Higgins
  - [chiggins@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:chiggins@ph.lacounty.gov)
  - 213-639-6455



## References & Data Sources

1. CDC. Preconception Health  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/preconception/whypreconception.htm>
2. Finer and Henshaw (2006). Disparities in Rates of Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, 1994 and 2001, Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 38(2):90-96.
3. Data Source: Los Angeles Mommy and Baby (LAMB) Survey 2007.

