

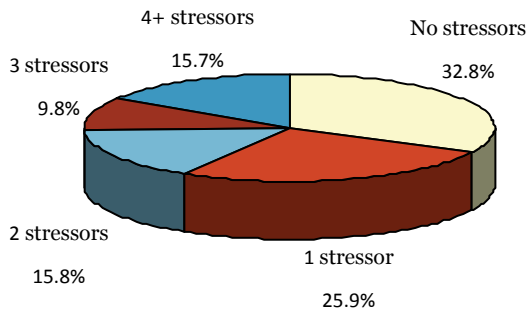
Stressful Life Events

During the 12 Months Prior to Delivery



Stress comes from a variety of sources including personal relationships, finances, work, and housing problems, and pregnancy may intensify these common stressful life events (SLE's). Some women who experience prenatal stress perceive their daily demands to be greater than their available biological, social, and psychological resources.¹ Research indicates that prenatal stress is a significant risk factor for adverse birth outcomes, such as low birth weight and prematurity.² Some women under high degrees of stress engage in risky behaviors such as alcohol and tobacco use. Research has also shown that high levels of stress for some women can be associated with unintended pregnancy and the mother's and her partner's attitudes toward the pregnancy.²

Figure 1. Percentages of Stressful Life Events, PRATS 2008

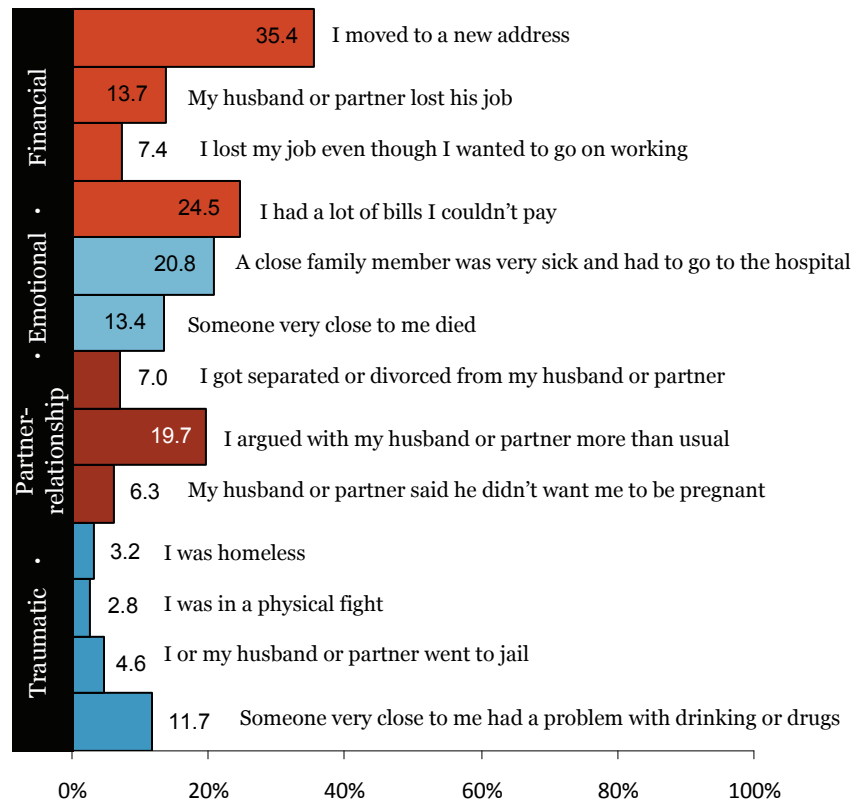


The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Tracking System (PRATS) assesses prenatal stress through a 13-item inventory of stress inducing life events. These events were categorized into four groups: financial (the mother moved to a new address, her husband or partner lost his job, the mother herself lost her job, or the mother had a lot of bills she couldn't pay); emotional (a close family member was ill and had to be hospitalized, or someone close to the mother died); partner-relationship (the mother and her husband or partner were separated or divorced, the mother experienced more arguments with her husband or partner during pregnancy than usual, or her husband or partner did not want the mother to be pregnant); and traumatic (the mother was homeless, she was involved in a physical fight, her husband or partner went to jail, or someone close to the mother had a drinking or drug problem).

Of the individual stressors, women were most likely to report having moved to a new address (35.4 percent), having a lot of bills she could not pay (24.5 percent), and having a close family member who was very sick and had to be hospitalized (20.8 percent). Women were least likely to report having been in a physical fight (2.8 percent) or having been homeless during her pregnancy (3.2 percent).

Overall, 67.2 percent of Idaho mothers reported experiencing one or more SLE's: 25.9 percent reported one, 15.8 percent reported two, 9.8 percent reported three, and 15.7 percent reported experiencing four or more stressors (see Figure 1).

Figure 2. Percentage of Stressful Life Events by Types of Stressors, PRATS 2008



What is the Idaho PRATS?

The Idaho Pregnancy Risk Assessment Tracking System (PRATS) is an annual survey of Idaho mothers that asks questions about maternal experiences and health behaviors before, during, and after pregnancy which may affect pregnancy outcomes and infant health.

The data presented in this fact sheet are representative of Idaho resident adult mothers (18 years or older) who gave birth in Idaho in 2008. Mothers of infants who were adopted or who had died at the time of the survey were excluded from analysis.

Stressful Life Events by Maternal Characteristics

Overview of High Levels and Types of SLE's

In 2008, over one quarter (25.5 percent) of mothers experienced high levels of stress (3 or more SLE's during the 12 months prior to delivery), (see Figure 3). High levels of stress were most prevalent among:

- Mothers who were aged 18-19, were not married, completed less than a high school education, and whose income was less than \$15,000 in the year prior to delivery.

Over half of all Idaho mothers (51.4 percent) experienced financial stress during their pregnancy. Emotional stress (26.6 percent) was the next highest type of stressor, followed closely by partner relationship stress (25.2 percent), and then traumatic stress (15.6 percent). Below are the maternal characteristics which had the highest level of each type of stress:

- Financial: mothers aged 18-19, not married, had a high school education or less, and an income of less than \$15,000.
- Emotional: mothers aged 25-29, not married, had some college education, and had an income of \$15,000-\$24,999.
- Partner-relationship: mothers aged 18-19, not married, had a high school education or GED, and an income of less than \$15,000.
- Traumatic: mothers aged 18-19, not married, had less than a high school education, and an income of less than \$15,000.

Figure 3. Percentage of Stress Levels and Types of Stressors to Idaho Adult Mothers by Maternal Characteristics, PRATS 2008

| | Levels of Stress* | | | Types of Stressors | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|
| | No Stress | Low Stress | High Stress | Financial | Emotional | Partner-Relationship | Traumatic |
| TOTAL | 32.8 | 41.7 | 25.5 | 51.4 | 26.6 | 25.2 | 15.6 |
| AGE | | | | | | | |
| 18-19 | 14.4 | 30.8 | 54.8 | 70.8 | 29.5 | 48.3 | 34.3 |
| 20-24 | 19.5 | 43.7 | 36.8 | 69.0 | 28.1 | 35.0 | 23.7 |
| 25-29 | 34.6 | 43.9 | 21.4 | 47.8 | 30.0 | 20.3 | 12.1 |
| 30-34 | 45.9 | 39.6 | 14.6 | 38.2 | 20.9 | 18.6 | 9.2 |
| 35+ | 42.2 | 39.6 | 18.2 | 37.2 | 22.4 | 18.9 | 11.0 |
| MARITAL STATUS | | | | | | | |
| Not Married | 16.5 | 31.9 | 51.6 | 70.6 | 30.1 | 45.9 | 34.9 |
| Married | 37.8 | 44.7 | 17.6 | 45.6 | 25.6 | 18.9 | 9.8 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | |
| K-11th Grade | 22.3 | 39.5 | 38.2 | 61.4 | 29.2 | 32.7 | 33.7 |
| High School or GED | 24.8 | 38.0 | 37.1 | 60.2 | 28.3 | 33.5 | 21.5 |
| Some College | 30.1 | 43.5 | 26.5 | 55.9 | 29.5 | 24.8 | 14.9 |
| College Graduate + | 46.6 | 43.2 | 10.2 | 35.1 | 20.7 | 16.1 | 5.4 |
| INCOME | | | | | | | |
| Less than \$15,000 | 16.2 | 31.6 | 52.2 | 73.5 | 29.1 | 44.3 | 36.3 |
| \$15,000 - \$24,999 | 19.8 | 44.1 | 36.1 | 68.3 | 31.3 | 28.0 | 16.8 |
| \$25,000 - \$34,999 | 30.3 | 42.8 | 26.9 | 53.6 | 26.6 | 28.3 | 15.1 |
| \$35,000 - \$49,999 | 33.3 | 50.0 | 16.8 | 49.2 | 28.6 | 22.5 | 7.8 |
| \$50,000 + | 51.5 | 41.3 | 7.3 | 28.6 | 21.6 | 12.0 | 5.4 |

*Levels of Stress: no stress (0 SLE's), low stress (1-2 SLE's), and high stress (3+ SLE's).

Select Maternal Risk Factors by High Levels of Stress

The prevalence of the following maternal risk factors was significantly related to the level of reported SLE's; as prenatal stress increased so did the prevalence of the risk factors. When compared with mothers who had low or no stress, mothers with high stress were significantly more likely to:

- Not have insurance for her prenatal care (64.7 percent) or delivery (67.5 percent).
- Have Medicaid, which paid for delivery (65.2 percent).
- Have an unintended pregnancy (55.0 percent).
- Smoke during pregnancy (19.9 percent).
- Not receive prenatal care in the first trimester (19.0 percent).
- Not receive adequate social support during pregnancy (14.2 percent).
- Be physically abused during pregnancy (11.2 percent).

Other maternal risk factors were analyzed but did not show any significant differences. These risk factors included mothers who: breastfed their baby, had self-reported post partum depression, exercised during pregnancy, had a low birth weight baby, or had a premature baby.

References

1. Sable MR, Wilkinson DS. Impact on Perceived Stress, Major Life Events and Pregnancy Attitudes on Low Birth Weight. Family Planning Perspectives 2000, 32 (6): 288-294.
2. March of Dimes, Stress and Prematurity: Quick References and Fact Sheets, <http://www.marchofdimes.com>, accessed May 2010.

Source: 2008 Pregnancy Risk Assessment Tracking System (PRATS), Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics, July 2010.

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For more details on the PRATS project or any of the survey results, contact the PRATS director at (208) 332-7366.

This and other health statistics publications can be found online at www.healthstatistics.dhw.idaho.gov.