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Subject: Media Coverage and Use of NSFG Data by the Media

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The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) continues to be one of the data sets from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) that is most frequently used by the media. Media coverage/use comes in two major forms: (1) as breaking news when new results from the survey are released in NCHS publications, in articles authored by NCHS staff, and when analyzed and presented by a wide range of other government, research, academic and policy organizations and (2) to provide a knowledge and factual base for the presentation of information from other sources on the many aspects of reproductive health and family formation addressed in the NSFG. The NSFG surveys have produced such a rich data base in terms of scope, depth and trend analysis that the survey is the natural baseline and comparison for the many smaller or local surveys and studies on the health and demographic topics covered in the NSFG.

In 2006, the NSFG began operating in the field on a continuous basis, with new results becoming publicly available in 2009 and potentially every two or three years from that point, instead of every seven years which used to be the case. This has resulted in a significant increase in media coverage of NSFG in the coming years.

Media use of NSFG findings include coverage as breaking news, op ed pieces, editorials, and commentaries. NSFG data are used in discussion of topics directly covered by the survey, but also on a broad range of topics of policy and programmatic interest including health and social services, welfare reform and family support, and others. The NSFG data as covered by the media raise public awareness, improve knowledge, and set the stage for public policy and public action. While NCHS reports are promoted extensively on the web, through targeted mailings, and in direct distribution to users, media coverage helps to inform new groups and users of the available information.

NSFG findings in the news:

First Marriages in the U.S. – There is a significant lack of national data available on the subject of marriage and divorce in the U.S., and it is a subject of great interest to the news media as the NCHS press office frequently receives inquiries on this topic. In response to the strong demand for this information, NSFG released a National Health Statistics Report in 2012 on this topic which resulted in news coverage from NBC, USA Today, US News & World Report, and a number of other print and broadcast media outlets across the country.

Intended and Unintended Births in the U.S. – Dramatic shifts in childbearing over the past several decades have been of great interest to researchers, and in 2012 NSFG released a National Health Statistics Report on this topic which resulted in news stories in USA Today as well as the Huffington Post and Reuters, which in turn led to coverage among dozens of smaller news outlets across the country.

Fertility– The NSFG released several reports on fertility since 2012, including on fertility trends and the use of infertility services in the U.S. Several major media outlets ran stories based on the data from these reports, including the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, USA Today, NBC and other major news networks.

Contraception – In 2013, the NSFG released two reports on contraception: one documenting overall trends over several decades and the other on trends in emergency contraception use, as a means to better understand patterns in family planning and unintended vs. intended pregnancy. These reports received a great amount of press attention from outlets that include: USA Today, Bloomberg, NPR, US News & World Report, and the Associated Press, which in turn was picked up by dozens of smaller news outlets across the U.S.

Sexual behavior and related health measures – New data, released in 2012, was compiled from the 2007-2010 NSFG. The findings address sexual behaviors not only related to issues of pregnancy, childbearing, and fertility but also relevant for disease prevention. The survey produced new information on prevalence and timing of oral sex among opposite sex partners ages 15-24, information that is critical for planning strategies for preventing HIV and other STD's among teens and young adults.

The findings from this new report was covered by the Associated Press, USA Today, NPR, the New York Daily News, and several radio and TV affiliates nationwide.

Father Involvement in Raising Children – A new NSFG report released in 2013 looked at the amount of involvement fathers have in the lives of their children, both those who lived with their children and those who did not. This report presents a key and overlooked part of society and children health, and received media coverage from Bloomberg News, the Arizona Daily Star, the Baltimore Times, and other outlets.