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Subject: Media Coverage and Use of NSFG Data by the Media
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For over four decades, the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) has consistently been 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.

NSFG began operating in the field on a continuous basis in 2006, with new results becoming publicly available in 2009 and 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 recent 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, and in direct distribution to users, media coverage helps to inform new groups and users of the available information.

NSFG findings in the news:

Interpregnancy Intervals and Childbearing – The well-documented (by NSFG) dramatic shifts in childbearing over the past several decades have been of great interest to researchers and news reporters alike, and in 2016 NSFG released a National Health Statistics Report on trends in attitudes about childbearing as well as a National Vital Statistics Report on interpregnancy intervals that revealed more U.S. women plan on having children than in the previous decade. This resulted in media coverage from PBS News Hour, Time, the Philadelphia Inquirer and other outlets.

Contraception and Long-Acting Reversible Contraception – NSFG released five new reports on contraceptive use in 2015 and 2017. The first publication documented overall trends in long-acting reversible contraception (LARC), which was the first-ever trend analysis on this topic. Two other reports were issued on contraceptive use in 2015 – one focusing on teens and the other on all women of childbearing age (ages 15-44). These three 2015 reports received a great amount of press attention from outlets that include: USA Today, CBS, CNN, Time, NBC, and the New York Times, as well as a substantial number of smaller news outlets across the U.S. In 2017, the NSFG published another report on contraceptive use among teens which generated news coverage from these same major outlets as well as other outlets such as U.S. News and World Report. The NSFG also published a report on contraceptive use by a less understood demographic: unmarried men. This publication resulted in news articles in outlets including the Philadelphia Inquirer and Huffington Post among others.

Trends in Attitudes About Marriage and Childbearing – There is a significant lack of national data available on trends in marriage in the U.S., though it has historically been 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 2016 on this topic which resulted in news coverage from NBC and a number of other print and broadcast media outlets across the country.

Sexual Behavior and Sexual Orientation – Analysis on sexual behavior has always been of great interest to the press. In 2015, NSFG released a new report focusing on sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing among teens using the latest NSFG data, resulting in news stories from CBS, CNN, and Time and other media outlets. Also, the issue of sexual orientation has increasingly been a topic of media interest in recent years. In 2016, NSFG published a National Health Statistics Report on sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation among all adults ages 18-44, which covered a range of topics and also shed light on the percentage of adults who have same-sex relationships. This publication generated several news articles, including by CBS, CNN and other news media.