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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:

Reasons for Not Testing for HIV Among Women – With an estimated 13% of the people infected with HIV unaware that they are infected, public health officials have emphasized the need for testing. NSFG analysis in a 2018 National Health Statistics Report looked at the main reasons why adults 15-44 have never been tested for HIV, and found that there was a decline among adults getting tested, primarily because they perceive themselves to be at low risk for contracting the disease. The findings from this report were covered by CNN, the Daily Mail, and several radio affiliates.

Current Contraception Status Among Women Aged 15-49 – NSFG released two new reports on contraceptive status in 2018 and 2020, covering the data cycles 2015-2017 and 2017-2019. These reports received significant press attention from outlets including: HealthDay, CNN, U.S. News and World Report, and Time, despite the fact that the second report was released in the second half of 2020, when the majority of media outlets were focused on the pandemic.

Urban-Rural Variations in Fertility-Related Behavior Among Women – With an estimated one-fifth of the U.S. population living in rural areas and other NCHS data pointing to higher teen birth and infant mortality rates in rural counties compared with urban counties, the NSFG set out to learn about urban and rural variation in fertility-related behavior, such as sexual activity and contraceptive use. The resulting report described urban-rural differences in first sexual intercourse, marital and cohabitation status, number of births, and contraceptive use based on residence at the time of interview. The report, released in 2018, resulted in significant media coverage, including from the Detroit News, the Washington Post, NPR, and other outlets.

Demographic, Health Care, and Fertility Characteristics of Adults Who Were in Foster Care – This 2020 report from NSFG compares adults who have ever been in foster care with those who have not, highlighting differences by several key demographic characteristics including age at interview, Hispanic origin and race, marital or cohabiting status, educational attainment, receipt of public assistance in the past 12 months, and labor force status for women and men. The report also presents differences by history in foster care for outcomes related to health service access and use, as well as the timing of key fertility-related milestones. This report includes analyses of outcomes examined in other studies previously mentioned, building on those concepts with detail on other related measures that are uniquely contributed by NSFG. The report generated high profile media interest from the Associated Press, the New York Times, and other outlets.