



The National Survey Of Family Growth (NSFG)

The NSFG is a study of women of reproductive age based on lengthy personal interviews with a national sample of women aged 15-44 in the United States. Conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the 1995 NSFG surveyed 10,847 women across the country, representing the 60.2 million U.S. women of childbearing age. Major funding for the 1995 NSFG was provided by NCHS, the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the Office of Population Affairs (OPA), with additional support from the Administration for Children and Families -- all of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The NSFG collects data on factors affecting pregnancy and women's health and is the most comprehensive source of this information in this country. It serves to augment data on births, marriage and divorce, fetal death and infant mortality collected by the National Vital Statistics System. The NSFG is also an important part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) public health surveillance for women, infants, and children, and sheds light on several important public policy issues, including maternal and child health, adoption, teen pregnancy, use of family planning services, STD/HIV prevention, infertility and unintended pregnancy and childbearing. Other topics addressed in the NSFG include:

- sexual intercourse
- contraceptive use
- wanted and unwanted births
- sterilization
- health insurance coverage
- HIV testing
- pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- sex education.

The first national fertility survey, the Growth of American Families Study, took place in 1955, followed by surveys in 1960, 1965 and 1970 conducted by private researchers. To make sure that these surveys would be continued, the NCHS began conducting fertility surveys under the name of the National Survey of Family Growth. Cycle 1 of the NSFG took place in 1973, followed by Cycle 2 in 1976, involved only ever-married women. Cycle 3 took place in 1982, including unmarried women for the first time, and Cycle 4 in 1988. Women interviewed in person in 1988 were re-interviewed by phone in 1990. The 1995 survey (Cycle 5) yields much more detailed data than ever before on the social, economic and family background of the woman and her husband or partner. The average sample of the NSFG has been around 8,000 women; the interviews averaged about one hour and were conducted in person at home.

Trends and differences in sexual and reproductive behaviors have profound effects on many aspects of American life, including population growth, housing, education, employment and public education. Having accurate, current data on these behaviors is imperative for sound, well-informed public health and public policy decision-making.

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