

Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Unintended pregnancy is associated with a host of personal, social, and health consequences for mothers, their children, and the society as a whole.¹ While current contraceptive technology provides couples considerable control over their fertility, one-half of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended.² Improved access to family planning services may prevent unplanned pregnancies by enabling women and men to choose effective methods of family planning.

The California Department of Health Services' Office of Family Planning Branch participates in the annual California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) by including questions related to sexual behavior and use of birth control methods. CWHS gathered information about family planning related visits with a healthcare provider to talk about or to receive birth control methods. Responses from the combined 2003 and 2004 CWHS were analyzed to identify women at risk of unintended pregnancy and examine their access to family planning methods. For the purposes of this analysis, women ages 18-44 "at risk of unintended pregnancy" were determined by using several survey items that identified those who were sexually active in the past 12 months and neither pregnant, sterilized, postpartum, seeking pregnancy, nor infertile. A total of 2,064 women at risk of unintended pregnancy were included in the analysis.

- Nearly one in ten women at risk of unintended pregnancy had never had a family planning related visit to talk about or to receive birth control.
- Foreign-born women were more than three times as likely as U.S.-born women (16.1 percent vs. 4.9 percent) to report that they never had a family planning related visit.
- The proportion of women who never had a family planning related visit is over twice as high for women without health insurance coverage as it is for women who reported having health insurance coverage (16.0 percent vs. 7.3 percent).
- A higher proportion (15.6 percent) of women with less than a high school education reported never having a family planning related visit compared with 4.8 percent of women with a college or post-education degree.
- More than half (55.2 percent) of younger women ages 18-24 reported a visit in the past six months; nearly 13.0 percent, however, stated they never had a family planning related visit.

It is likely for a respondent currently using a birth control method to report never having had a family planning related visit with a healthcare provider to discuss or to obtain birth control. More than half (55.0 percent) of those who reported never having a family planning related visit were condom users, suggesting that this method is obtained through over-the-counter access.

- More than nine in ten women currently using oral contraceptives, patch, or ring have had a family planning related visit in the past 12 months.
- Roughly one-quarter (24.8 percent) of those who never had a family planning related visit were both at risk of unintended pregnancy and non-users of any form of contraception.

Access to Methods of Family Planning Among California Women Ages 18-44 Who are at Risk of Unintended Pregnancy, 2003-2004

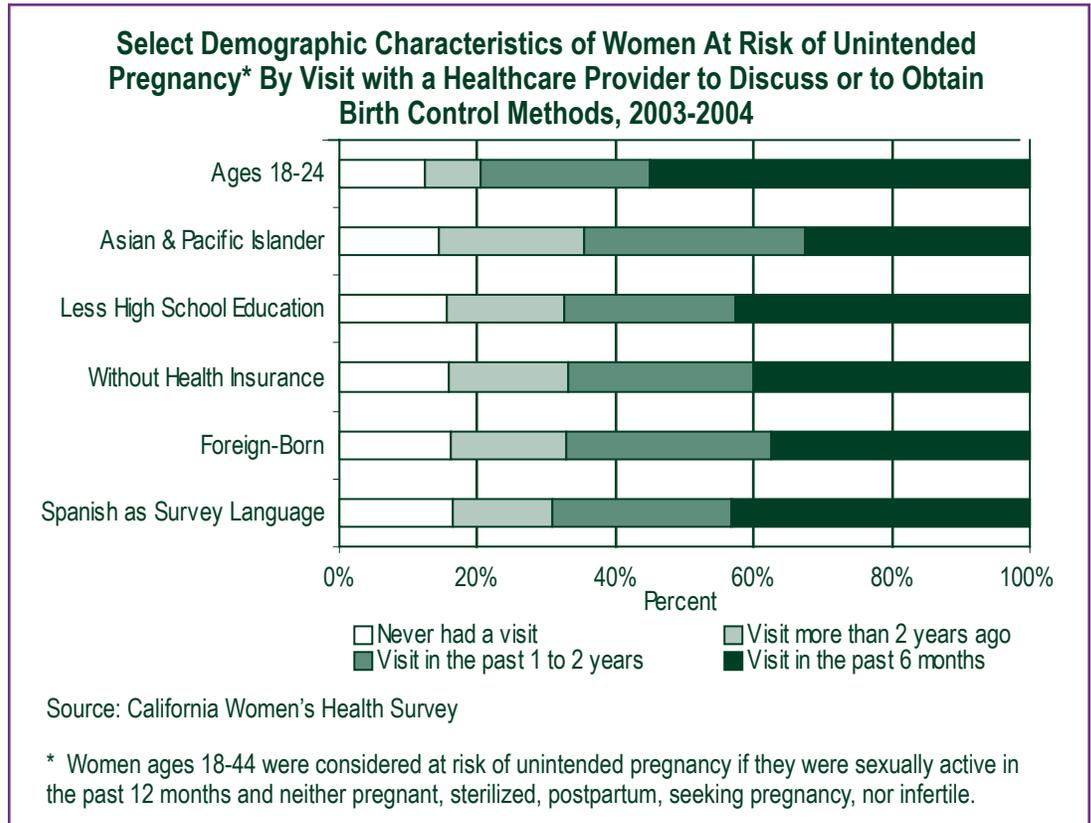
California Department of Health Services
Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health/Office of Family Planning Branch

Public Health Message:
Convenient access is one factor affecting birth control use. CWHS data show that women surveyed in Spanish, foreign-born women, and women lacking health insurance are less likely to have ever had a family planning related visit with a healthcare provider. Family planning services should target these groups.

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- 1 Lee LR, Stewart FH. 1995. Failing to prevent unintended pregnancy is costly. *American Journal of Public Health*. 85(4):479-480. Maynard RA. 1997. Having kids: The economic and social consequence of teen pregnancy. *The Cost of Adolescent Childbearing*. 10:285-323.
- 2 Office of Population Affairs and National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 1997. *Healthy People 2000 Review*. Hyattsville, Maryland: Public Health Service.

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