



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2005 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Consistent and accurate use of effective contraception is important for preventing unintended pregnancy. Birth control use facilitates the spacing of pregnancies, which contributes to better health outcomes for mothers and children. In the United States (U.S.), the average age that a woman first has sexual intercourse is 17; for women who want only two children- the number most women report as desiring- more than two decades may be spent being sexually active while trying to avoid unintended pregnancy.¹

In 2004 and 2005, The California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) asked women aged 18 and above: "How many children have you ever given birth to, counting only live births?"

Of the more than 4,000 respondents aged 18 to 44 from the combined 2004-2005 survey, 22.1 percent reported having delivered three or more live births. Highlights of this subgroup are as follows:

- The proportion of women who reported delivering three or more live births increases linearly with age. The largest increase was between women in the 18-24 age group (3.3 percent) and women aged 25 to 29 (14.5 percent). One-quarter of women aged 30 to 34, and more than a third of older women aged 35 to 44 reported having three or more live births.
- Hispanics were more likely (33.3 percent) than Black/African Americans (26.0 percent), Whites (15.9 percent), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (9.7 percent) to report having three or more live births.²

- Women who did not complete high school were nearly 4.5 times more likely to report having delivered three or more live births (50.1 percent) than women with college or postgraduate degrees (11.5 percent).³
- A higher proportion of foreign-born women than U.S.-born women reported having three or more live births (30.2 percent vs. 17.7 percent).⁴

Women who were not pregnant or seeking pregnancy were asked: "Are you or your male sex partner currently using a birth control method to prevent pregnancy?"

In the combined 2004-2005 survey, 2,900 women answered this question. The highlights are as follows:

- Eight in 10 respondents (80.0 percent) reported that they or their partners are currently using a birth control method to prevent pregnancy.
- Birth control usage did not vary much according to the number of live births a woman had. Women with three or more live births had the lowest birth control use (76.4 percent); 81.0 percent of women who had not delivered a live birth used birth control, a proportion similar among women who delivered up to two live births.

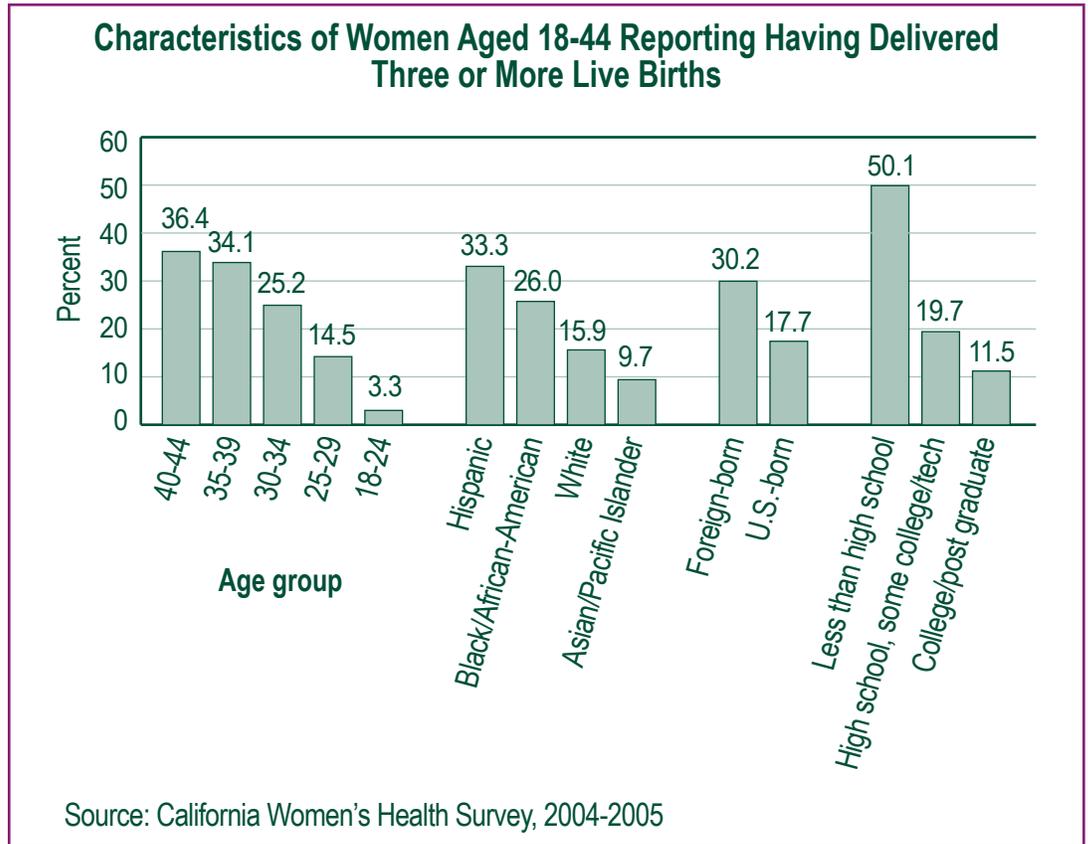
Parity and Birth Control Use Among California Women Ages 18-44 California Women's Health Survey (CWHS), 2004-2005

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

Public Health Message:
Most California women and their partners use birth control to prevent pregnancy. Women with many children and little spacing between pregnancies may be at greater risk of poor health in later life. Further efforts are needed to inform women about the benefits of consistent and accurate use of contraception.

Parity and Birth Control Use Among California Women Ages 18-44
California Women's Health Survey (CWHS), 2004-2005

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- 1 Sonfield, A. *Preventing Unintended Pregnancy: The Need and the Means*. The Guttmacher Report: vol 6(5), December 2003.
- 2 $P < 0.0001$, chi-square test
- 3 $P < 0.0001$, chi-square test
- 4 $P < 0.0001$, chi-square test

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