



CWHS

# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 2009 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Denial of reproductive healthcare because of a provider's religious beliefs has led to debate about the role of conscientious objection in health care.<sup>1-7</sup> Research examining the beliefs of both health care professionals and women found that there should be a balance between religious liberty and access to reproductive health care.<sup>1,8</sup> Another aspect of women's reproductive health care involves investigating the reasons that led them to choose sterilization as their contraception method.

Female sterilization is the second leading method of contraception in the United States,<sup>9-11</sup> and tubal ligation has been reported as the third most popular method of contraception by California women.<sup>12</sup> Research shows that rates of female sterilization vary by race/ethnicity, age, education level, marital status, income, health insurance, and number of children.<sup>9-10,12-15</sup> Other research noted that women reported that their doctor was either not involved in their decision to be sterilized or tried to dissuade them.<sup>16</sup> However, no research was found that discussed whether doctors had recommended female sterilization to women.

In 2009, the California Women's Health Survey (CWHS) respondents were asked: (1) *Has your health care professional ever denied you access to reproductive care because of his or her religious beliefs?*; (2) *Have you ever been denied access to reproductive care from a hospital due to their religious beliefs?*; and (3) *Has your doctor ever recommended that you should have a tubal ligation or be sterilized rather than use other birth control methods?* In addition, women reported their age, race/ethnicity,

whether they had a tubal ligation, income level, health insurance status, marital status, education, number of children, and whether they had experienced discrimination because of their race/ethnicity. The purpose of these analyses was to examine the denial of reproductive health care because of providers' religious beliefs and to assess doctor-recommended female sterilization among different subgroups of California women. Responses were weighted in these analyses by age and race/ethnicity to reflect the 2000 California adult female population. Differences between groups were evaluated using Chi square statistics and *P* Values are reported for significant results.

## Denial of reproductive healthcare due to providers' religious beliefs

- Of the respondents ages 18 and older, 1.3 percent reported having ever been denied reproductive health care because of the providers' religious beliefs, and 0.9 percent indicated being denied reproductive health care from a hospital due to their religious beliefs. Because of the small number of women who responded yes to being denied reproductive health care because of religion, no further analyses were conducted to examine these variables.

## Doctor recommended female sterilization

- When asked about doctors' recommending sterilization, 7.7 percent of the respondents ages 18 to 49 and 7.1 percent of respondents ages 50 and older reported having sterilization recommended by their doctor.

## Doctor Recommended and Use of Sterilization as a Birth Control Method Among California Women, 2009

Department of Health Care Services  
California Department of Public Health  
Office of Women's Health

### Public Health Message:

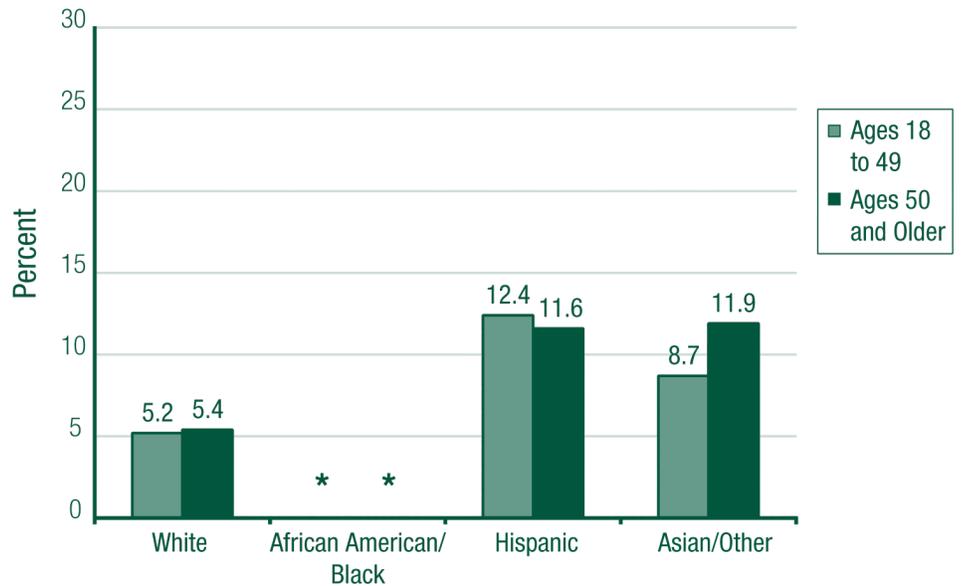
*The results indicate a trend towards sterilization for low income and less educated women and among women of color for a small number of women. It is important to monitor whether women are getting the appropriate health education information they need to make informed decisions about their choice of contraceptive method.*

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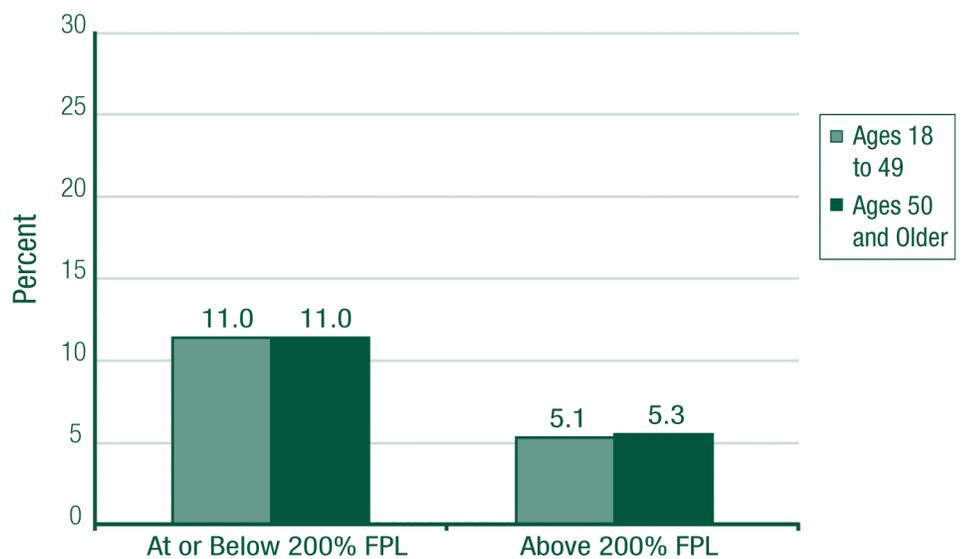
**Figure 1**  
**Rates of Doctor Ever Recommending Sterilization for Women Ages 18 to 49  
and Ages 50 and Older by Race/Ethnicity, 2009**



\* - Too few for data to be reliable

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

**Figure 2**  
**Rates of Doctor Ever Recommending Sterilization for Women  
Ages 18 to 49 and Ages 50 and Older by  
Federal Poverty Level (FPL), 2009**

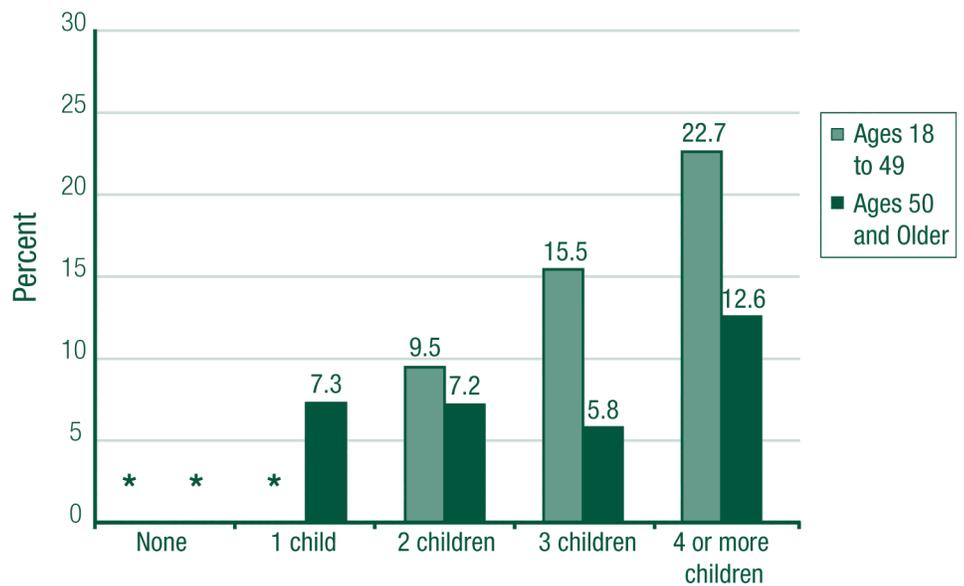


Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

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Figure 3  
**Rates of Doctor Ever Recommending Sterilization for Women Ages 18 to 49 and Ages 50 and Older by Number of Children, 2009**



\* - Too few for data to be reliable

Source: California Women's Health Survey, 2009

- **For women ages 18 to 49:**
  - White women reported the lowest rate of doctor recommended sterilization (5.2 percent), while Hispanic women and Asian/Other women reported the highest (12.4 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively). However, data was unreliable due to the small sample size for African American/Black women (Figure 1).
  - Women who reported tubal ligation as their contraceptive method reported higher rates of doctor recommended sterilization (15.8 percent) than women who did not report tubal ligation (7.9 percent;  $P < .01$ ).
  - Women with household incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) reported higher rates of doctor recommended sterilization (11.0 percent) than did women above that level (5.1 percent;  $P < .0001$ ) (Figure 2).
  - Women who were separated/divorced/widowed reported higher rates of doctor recommended sterilization (13.5 percent) than married women (9.1 percent), women who were part of an unmarried couple (8.9 percent), and women who had never married (1.8 percent;  $P < .0001$ ).
  - Women with less than a high school education reported higher rates of doctor recommended sterilization (17.5 percent) than women with more education.
  - Women reported higher rates of doctor recommended female sterilization as their number of children increased (Figure 3). However, data was unreliable due to the small sample size for the women who reported having one or no children.

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- o No significant difference was found in health insurance status or having ever experienced discrimination between women who reported that their doctor recommended sterilization vs. those who did not report doctor recommended sterilization.
- o Women who were separated/divorced/widowed reported higher rates of doctor recommended sterilization (10.0 percent) than other women; however, data was unreliable due to the small sample sizes for the never married and unmarried couple groups.
- o Women reported higher rates of doctor recommended female sterilization as their number of children increased (Figure 3). However, data was unreliable due to the small sample size for the women who reported having one or no children.
- o No significant difference was found in health insurance status, education level, or having ever experienced discrimination between women who reported their doctor recommend sterilization vs. women who did not report doctor recommended sterilization.
- **For women ages 50 or older:**
  - o White women reported the lowest rate of doctor recommended sterilization (5.4 percent), while Hispanic women and Asian/Other women reported the highest (11.6 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively). However, data was unreliable due to the small sample size for African American/Black women (Figure 1).
  - o Women with household incomes at or below 200 percent of the FPL reported higher rates of doctor recommended sterilization (11.0 percent) than women above that level (5.3 percent;  $P < .0001$ ) (Figure 2).

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