Women’s Health Needs Study (WHNS)

The WHNS was a one-time survey that collected information on women’s health care experiences and needs, as well as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

The study took place from November 2020 to June 2021 in four metropolitan areas in the United States (Atlanta, Minneapolis, New York, and Washington, DC).

### ELIGIBILITY

- Women ages 18 to 49
- Born, or mother was born, in a country where FGM/C is common
- Spoke one of the study languages

### WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

**1,132 WOMEN**

#### AGE GROUP

- 31% 18-29 years old
- 38% 30-39 years old
- 31% 40-49 years old

#### LEVEL OF EDUCATION

- 15% Less than high school/GED<sup>a</sup> diploma
- 22% High school/GED diploma
- 33% Some college/Associate’s degree
- 30% Bachelor's degree or higher

#### IMMIGRATION GENERATION

- 87% 1.0 Generation Immigrated to the U.S. at age 13 or older
- 10% 1.5 Generation Immigrated to the U.S. before age 13
- 3% 2.0 Generation Born in the U.S.

#### MARITAL STATUS

- 61% Married/Living with partner
- 14% Previously married
- 25% Never married/Lived with partner

<sup>a</sup> General Education Development
WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

1,132 WOMEN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

West Africa 39%

Egypt 11%

Sudan 3%

Eritrea 3%

Ethiopia 31%

Somalia 13%

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR ALL WOMEN IN THE STUDY

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Over half (52%) had Medicaid.

No Insurance 17%

Private 31%

Medicaid 52%

INTERPRETER

27% prefer an interpreter when visiting their health care provider.

Among women who prefer an interpreter, 2 in 3 (66%) were offered one during their last visit.
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

77% of women reported having had a pelvic exam or Pap smear within the last 3 years; 17% never had an exam; 6% had one 4 or more years ago.

51% of women reported having ever used birth control. 29% of women used birth control in the last 30 days.

45% of women who had a child reported ever having a C-section. 31% of births were delivered by C-section.

18% of women who reported ever having sexual intercourse were under 18 at age of first sexual intercourse; 59% were 18 to 24; and 23% were 25 or older.

FGM/C EXPERIENCE

The World Health Organization defines female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) as all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural, religious, or other non-therapeutic reasons.1

Over half of women reported experiencing FGM/C.

55% experienced FGM/C.

45% did not experience FGM/C.

EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN WITH FGM/C

BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The percentage of women from each country of origin who reported experiencing FGM/C:

- **Somalia**: 74%
- **West African countries**: 59%
- **Eritrea**: 55%
- **Sudan**: 51%
- **Ethiopia**: 45%
- **Egypt**: 34%

*West African countries include Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Sierra Leone.*

BY AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at FGM/C Among Women With FGM/C</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too young to remember</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 years old</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9 years old</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–14 years old</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥15 years old</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Women With FGM/C Within Age Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 in 4 (25%) women ages 18–24 have experienced FGM/C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nearly 3 in 4 (69%) women ages 40–49 have experienced FGM/C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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BY TYPE OF FGM/C

- **29%** said their genital area was sewn closed.
- **57%** said flesh was removed from their genital area.
- **2%** said their genital area was cut, no flesh removed.
- **12%** did not know the type of FGM/C they experienced.
HEALTH CONCERNS OF WOMEN WITH FGM/C

67% reported a problem with childbirth compared to 49% of women without FGM/C. This includes postpartum bleeding, extensive vaginal tears from childbirth, or emergency C-sections.

47% reported a reproductive health problem compared to 23% of women without FGM/C. This includes difficulty passing period blood, difficulty passing urine, pain with urination, or many urinary tract infections.

44% reported a sexual health problem compared to 17% of women without FGM/C. This includes pain or bleeding during sex.

35% reported feeling sad for many weeks at a time compared to 24% of women without FGM/C.

COMFORT OF WOMEN WITH FGM/C IN TALKING TO PROVIDER

58% would feel comfortable discussing their FGM/C with a health care provider.

31% have discussed their FGM/C with a health care provider.

FGM/C ATTITUDES OF ALL WOMEN SURVEYED

91% believe FGM/C should be stopped.

87% believe FGM/C can cause health problems later in life.

82% do not believe FGM/C is required by religion.

Funding of WHNS was provided by the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women’s Health, and the Department of Justice, National Institute for Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. For more information, see https://www.norc.org/research/projects/a-study-of-womens-health-needs-in-the-us.html.