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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women ages 18 to 49</th>
<th>Born, or mother was born, in a country where FGM/C is common</th>
<th>Spoke one of the study languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

1,132 WOMEN

**AGE GROUP**

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

**LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

- Less than high school/GED\(^a\) diploma: 15%
- High school/GED diploma: 22%
- Some college/Associate’s degree: 33%
- Bachelor's degree or higher: 30%

**IMMIGRATION GENERATION**

- 1.0 Generation: 87%
- 1.5 Generation: 10%
- 2.0 Generation: 3%

\(^a\) General Education Development

**MARITAL STATUS**

- Married/Living with partner: 61%
- Previously married: 14%
- Never married/Lived with partner: 25%
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR ALL WOMEN IN THE STUDY

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY

1,132 WOMEN

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Insurance</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicaid</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

b Woman’s birth country or mother’s birth country if woman was not born in eligible country.

West Africa includes Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Sierra Leone.

* Country of Origin Map Powered by Bing © GeoNames, Microsoft, OpenStreetMap, TomTom
**REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

77% of all women surveyed reported **having 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 all women surveyed reported **ever used birth control**. Among women who had ever used a contraceptive, 29% used one in the last 30 days.

31% of women who had a child reported **delivering 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 in the study 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%

\( ^d \) West African countries include Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, and Sierra Leone.

BY AGE

**Women With FGM/C, By Age Group**

- **1 in 4 (25%)** women ages 18-24 have experienced FGM/C.
- **Nearly 3 in 4 (69%)** women ages 40-49 have experienced FGM/C.

**Age at FGM/C Among Women With FGM/C**

- **Too young to remember**: 12%
- **<5 years old**: 21%
- **5–9 years old**: 44%
- **10–14 years old**: 16%
- **>15 years old**: 4%
- **Don't know**: 3%

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.