

# Unmet need for postpartum family planning among Filipino women

## A Comparison of the 2013 and 2017 National Demographic and Health Surveys



Photo: USAID/ReachHealth

### What is postpartum family planning?

Postpartum family planning (FP) is a major pathway to achieve the Philippine Government's goals to address unmet need for FP, increase the uptake of modern FP methods, and improve maternal and newborn health. It is supported by the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law of 2012, which guarantees access to comprehensive reproductive health care services. Postpartum FP plays a critical role in improving health outcomes for both mothers and children by managing birth spacing and limiting family size. With most deliveries now occurring in a health facility (78 percent),<sup>1</sup> the postpartum period is a timely opportunity to inform mothers of their FP options, the importance of adequate spacing for their next pregnancy, and to provide FP services.

Based on the latest 2017 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), unmet need for FP methods among married and in-union<sup>2</sup> women is 17 percent. Among postpartum women, however, prospective unmet need for FP<sup>3</sup> is even higher, at approximately 51 percent.<sup>4</sup> However, this estimate on postpartum women is derived from an NDHS report from 2008 and should be updated.

### Why is this important?

An up-to-date, accurate estimate of unmet need for FP among postpartum women provides evidence to support interventions targeting postpartum women (such as the Department of Health and USAID "FP in Hospitals" intervention) and allows us to estimate their potential impact. To build this evidence base, USAID conducted a secondary data analysis of the 2013 and 2017 NDHS to obtain a more updated estimate of unmet need for FP among postpartum women.

<sup>1</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority and ICF. Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey 2017. Quezon City, Philippines and Rockville, Maryland, USA: PSA and ICF; 2018. Available from: [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/PHILIPPINE%20NATIONAL%20DEMOGRAPHIC%20AND%20HEALTH%20SURVEY%202017\\_new.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/PHILIPPINE%20NATIONAL%20DEMOGRAPHIC%20AND%20HEALTH%20SURVEY%202017_new.pdf)

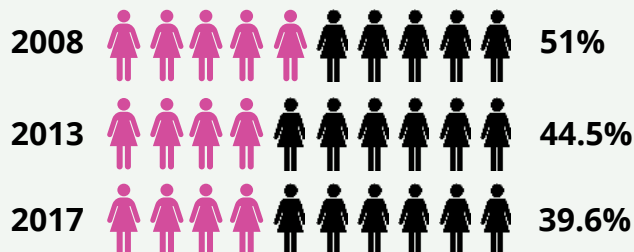
<sup>2</sup> In-union refers to persons who are not formally married but are living together with a partner.

<sup>3</sup> Prospective unmet need for postpartum FP is the percentage of postpartum women who want to stop or delay childbearing within the next two years but are not using a method of contraception. For the rest of this brief, the term "unmet need" will be used.

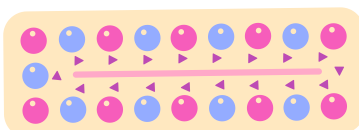
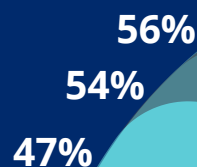
<sup>4</sup> Moore Z, Pfitzer A, Gubin R, Charurat E, Elliot L, Croft T. Missed opportunities for family planning: An analysis of pregnancy risk and contraceptive method use among postpartum women in 21 low- and middle-income countries. *Contraception*. 2015; 92(1): 31-39. Available from: DOI:10.1016/j.contraception.2015.03.007

## NDHS 2013, 2017 Findings:<sup>5</sup>

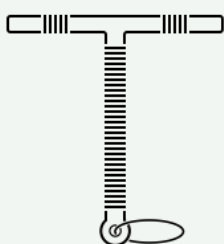
Unmet need for FP among postpartum women significantly decreased from 2008 to 2017, from 51 percent in 2008 to 44.5 percent in 2013, and dropped further to 39.6 percent in 2017.



The percent of women using FP methods during the postpartum period significantly increased over the same time, from 47 percent using any FP method in 2008, to 54 percent in 2013, to 56.2 percent in 2017—an increase of almost 10 percentage points in nine years.



The majority of women use short-acting methods, specifically the pill. Usage of the pill was at 36.2 percent in 2013 and 38.5 percent in 2017.



Intrauterine device (IUD) use increased from 3.6 percent in 2013 to 7.4 percent in 2017.

Women using long-acting and permanent methods<sup>6</sup> significantly increased from 21.5 percent in 2013 to 30.9 percent in 2017.



**Unmarried women are 19 times more likely to have unmet need for FP.**

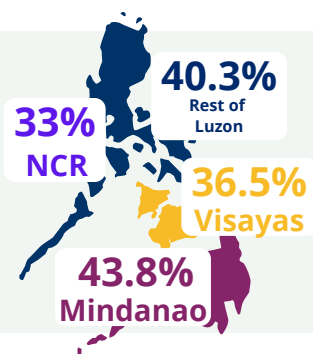
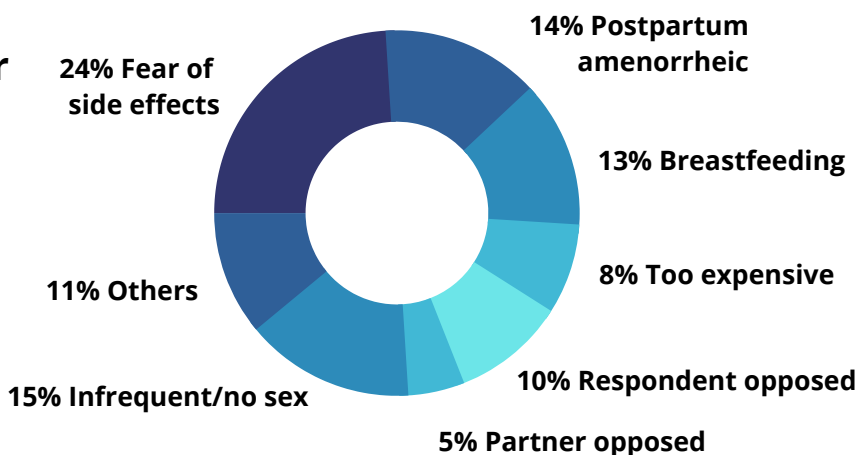
Women who give birth in a **non-health facility** are **1.57 times more likely** to have unmet need for FP compared to women who delivered in a public hospital.



<sup>5</sup> USAID Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting for Improved Health Activity. Final Report: Unmet need for postpartum family planning among Filipino women: Comparison of the 2013 and 2017 National Demographic and Health Surveys. Feb. 26, 2021, prepared with expert technical assistance from short-term consultants Dr. Elma P. Laguna and Prof. Maria Paz N. Marquez of the University of the Philippines Population Institute.

<sup>6</sup> Long-acting and permanent FP methods include IUD, sterilization, injectables, and implants.

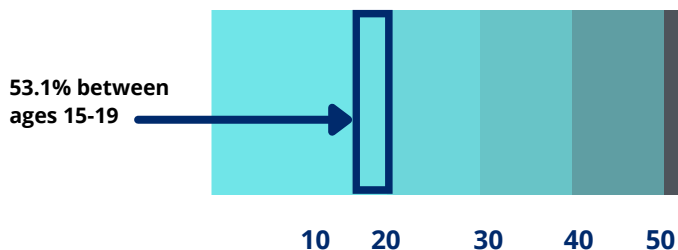
## Top reasons for non-use of FP methods, 2017



Women from the rest of Luzon and Mindanao were significantly more likely to have unmet need for FP during their postpartum period than women from NCR.

In 2017, women residing in Mindanao have the highest percent unmet need at 43.8 percent, followed by Luzon at 40.3%

In 2017, more adolescents and women in the youngest cohort were found to have the highest unmet need for FP.



## Recommendations for health providers

- 1 FP counseling should emphasize both the benefits and side effects of FP to allay fears of postpartum women.** This may require additional health education training of health workers, including training on counseling that is more objective and culturally sensitive.
- 2 FP services should be more inclusive to all potential types of relationships, including women with and without partners or husbands.** This includes women who are not married who have higher unmet need for FP. Service providers may need reminding that women who are not married also need FP services.
- 3 Every client encounter should be taken as a chance to provide FP information and counseling to reduce missed opportunities.**

## Recommendations for program managers

- 1** **FP interventions should consider the differences between younger and older women's preferences in terms of spacing and limiting their births.** Information, education, and communication campaigns targeted towards young women can promote the value of delaying family formation, smaller family size, and adequately spaced pregnancies. On the other hand, the long-term significance of FP can be emphasized among older women.
- 2** **Interventions should aim to draw women to deliver in health facilities to address the higher unmet need for FP for non-health facility deliveries.** These interventions should focus on regions where non-health facility births are highest such as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, other regions in Mindanao, and MIMAROPA.
- 3** **Investigate what more can be done within the expanded postpartum period to reach the target of zero unmet need for modern FP by 2030.** Consider public-private partnerships, since more women are preferring to avail of services from private facilities, and increasing awareness of FP benefits for postpartum FP in facilities.
- 4** **Unmet need for postpartum FP should be included as one of the FP indicators to help assess FP program impact.** Furthermore, future NDHS rounds should include questions related to postpartum FP such as a) exclusive breastfeeding and lactational amenorrhea; b) the timing of IUD insertion to determine interval IUD from postpartum IUD; c) FP supplies and services received during the first postnatal check-up; d) use of withdrawal methods; and e) FP use, duration of use, and switching behavior.

**Contact us for a copy of the full study paper and to learn more about addressing unmet need for FP among postpartum women:**



Department of Health:  
Dr. Jan Aura Laurelle Llevado  
[jvllevado@doh.gov.ph](mailto:jvllevado@doh.gov.ph)



Commission on Population and Development:  
Mr. Lolito R. Tacardon  
[lolito.tacardon@popcom.gov.ph](mailto:lolito.tacardon@popcom.gov.ph)  
(02) 85315122



USAID:  
Dr. Yolanda Oliveros  
[yoliveros@usaid.gov](mailto:yoliveros@usaid.gov)