

Original research article

# Contraceptive sterilization use among married men in the United States: results from the male sample of the National Survey of Family Growth

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## Abstract

**Background:** Surgical sterilization has many advantages. Previous information on prevalence and correlates was based on surveys of women.

**Study Design:** We estimated the prevalence of vasectomy and tubal ligation of partners for male participants in the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, a nationally representative survey of US residents aged 15–44 years. We identified factors associated with sterilizations using bivariate and multivariate techniques.

**Results:** The findings revealed that 13.3% of married men reported having had a vasectomy and 13.8% reported tubal sterilization in their partners. Vasectomy increased with older age and greater number of biological children, non-Hispanic white ethnicity, having ever gone to a family planning clinic. Tubal sterilization use was more likely among men who had not attended college, those of older age and those with live births.

**Discussion:** One in eight married men reported having vasectomies. Men who rely on vasectomies have a somewhat different profile than those whose partners have had tubal sterilizations.

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**Keywords:** Vasectomy; Tubal sterilization; Tubal ligation; Surgical sterilization

## 1. Introduction

Surgical sterilization, which includes tubal ligation and vasectomy, is prevalent among married couples. In the United States, it is the contraceptive of choice for one in three married couples [1]. Advantages of contraceptive sterilization include effectiveness, safety, convenience and avoidance of the high rates of discontinuation of temporary methods [2]. In addition, vasectomy has proven to be among the most highly cost-effective methods of contraception [3].

National estimates of the frequency and type of contraceptive methods, including surgical sterilization methods, generally have relied on data reported by women on reproductive health surveys [1]. Our data come from a national sample of men aged 15–44 years who participated

in the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). Our objectives were to describe the frequency of the use of vasectomy and tubal sterilization as contraceptive methods as reported by a nationally representative sample of men and to describe factors associated with the use of each method among married men.

We compared factors predictive of use of vasectomy with factors predictive of partner's use of tubal sterilization to examine any differences in married couples who selected male sterilization compared with those relying on female sterilization for contraception.

## 2. Materials and methods

We analyzed data from participants in the male sample of Cycle 6 of the NSFG. In-person interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of 7643 women and an independent nationally representative sample of 4928

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Table 1

Percent with vasectomy and partners' tubal sterilization, married males (2002 NSFG male survey)

	Vasectomy				Partners' tubal sterilization		
	<i>n</i>	%	95%	CI	%	95%	CI
Total sample	1234	13.3	10.5	16.8	13.8	11.3	16.7
Age group							
15–24	101	0.8*	0.1	5.0	1.2*	0.3	4.6
25–29	218	2.5	0.9	6.7	5.5	2.9	10.2
30–34	307	8.0	5.1	12.3	11.3	7.8	16.0
35–39	319	12.7	8.7	18.2	17.0	12.5	22.7
40–44	287	28.0	20.7	36.5	20.8	14.3	29.2
Race/ethnicity							
Non-Hispanic white	627	16.5*	12.7	21.2	11.9	9.2	15.3
Non-Hispanic black	179	5.0	2.4	10.1	17.5	12.8	23.4
Hispanic	363	4.4	2.3	8.3	13.2	8.7	19.6
Other	65	13.4	4.8	32.0	32.7	17.0	53.6
Education							
College graduate or higher	307	10.6	7.5	14.9	7.1*	4.0	12.3
Some college	305	18.3	11.4	27.8	11.8	8.1	16.8
High school graduate/GED	398	12.7	7.9	19.6	19.0	14.0	25.4
Less than high school graduate	224	11.3	5.0	23.6	19.0	12.2	28.4
Family income relative to poverty level							
Less than 150% of poverty	277	8.4	4.2	16.2	22.2*	14.9	31.7
150–299%	361	13.0	8.3	19.9	16.0	12.1	20.9
300%+	596	15.3	10.9	21.0	9.4	6.6	13.3
Number of sex partners in past year							
None	62	4.5*	0.9	19.7	19.1	5.8	47.3
1 partner	1076	14.2	11.1	17.9	13.8	11.3	16.7
2 partners	39	0.0	.	.	11.6	4.5	26.7
3 or more partners	49	6.6	1.8	21.0	8.1	3.1	19.7
Number of biological children							
None	287	3.2*	1.3	7.6	5.3*	2.4	11.3
1 child	309	8.5	4.5	15.3	8.2	5.1	13.0
2 or more children	638	19.5	15.1	24.8	19.8	15.6	24.7
Health insurance coverage							
Not covered	232	8.9	4.1	18.3	19.1	11.6	29.8
Private insurance	896	14.1	10.7	18.4	12.5	9.9	15.6
Medicaid	35	15.6	3.9	45.9	23.8	8.5	51.1
Government/military coverage	71	12.6	6.2	23.8	14.5	6.2	30.0
Past year any time without insurance							
Some time in past year	330	8.8	5.2	14.6	17.6	12.2	24.7
Others	902	14.7	11.2	19.1	12.6	10.0	15.8
Had physical exam in past year							
Yes, had exam	582	15.7	11.2	21.5	13.6	9.9	18.5
Others	651	11.2	8.1	15.2	14.0	10.4	18.5
Ever gone to family planning clinic							
Yes, have gone	223	20.9	12.8	32.3	8.8	5.1	14.7
Others	1008	11.8	8.9	15.6	14.9	11.9	18.4
Usual place of health care							
No usual place	319	11.3	7.3	16.9	15.6	10.5	22.4
Private doctor/HMO	679	15.4	11.2	20.7	12.8	9.7	16.8
Public clinic	93	10.6	3.4	28.1	9.2	4.6	17.4
Employer/school clinic	29	4.3	0.5	31.1	14.2	2.7	49.8
Hospital including emergency room	68	10.6	3.0	31.8	29.6	15.1	49.9
Urgent care facility/other	46	6.5	2.2	17.5	7.1	2.2	20.9
Self-reported health status							
Excellent/very good	900	14.6	11.2	18.8	11.4*	8.5	15.2
Good	262	8.0	5.0	12.4	19.5	14.3	26.1
Fair/poor	65	15.7	4.9	40.0	27.0	14.0	45.8
Current religion							
Catholic	415	8.6	4.7	15.1	11.1	6.8	17.7
Protestant	568	16.1	11.6	21.8	15.9	11.7	21.2
Other/non-Christian	84	9.0	3.9	19.5	10.6	3.4	28.7
None/don't know/refused	167	15.0	8.1	25.9	13.3	8.4	20.3

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