

About the *Listening to Mothers in California* Survey

MAY 2017

Overview

Listening to Mothers in California is a statewide population-based survey of women who gave birth in late 2016. The survey will provide extensive, timely, previously unavailable data about women's maternity care experiences and views of their care. Survey items were selected to provide valuable information for the many initiatives in California to improve the quality, outcomes and value of maternity care and to guide policies, programs and practices. The new survey is complementary to the ongoing annual Maternal and Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) survey of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), which provides invaluable woman-reported data, especially about pregnancy and postpartum experiences, and includes important public health topics such as pregnancy intention, food insecurity, infant sleep position and intimate partner violence.

Led by Childbirth Connection Programs at the National Partnership for Women & Families, the new survey is a collaboration between the core team that has carried out a series of national *Listening to Mothers surveys* since 2002 and exceptional state partners with extensive MIHA experience at the University of California, San Francisco, Center on Social Disparities in Health and Quantum Market Research, Oakland. The California Health Care Foundation and Yellow Chair Foundation fund the project.

The *Listening to Mothers in California* survey is currently being fielded. Initial results will be reported in spring 2018, and journal articles with in-depth analysis of specific topics will follow. An extensive communications plan will help ensure that survey results reach the relevant audiences. Publicly available survey products will include:

- ▶ Topline report of all survey results
- ▶ Methodology overview
- ▶ Chartpack of figures and tables
- ▶ De-identified dataset for interested researchers
- ▶ Fact sheets
- ▶ Survey questionnaire, self- and interviewer-administered versions in English and Spanish
- ▶ One or more infographics
- ▶ Series of topical mini-documentaries

This document describes the survey background, scope and approach, and identifies key project personnel and survey Advisory Council members.

Background: National *Listening to Mothers* Surveys

Childbirth Connection's first landmark *Listening to Mothers* (LTM) survey, carried out in 2002, extensively documented women's experiences and views of childbearing for the first time at the national level. Since then, additional national LTM surveys were carried out in 2006 and 2012, and both were enriched with a follow-up survey directed to the initial participants. LTM surveys are unique, invaluable sources of information about maternity care at a time when the relevant stakeholders are grappling with how to reliably deliver high-value maternity care. Survey results are widely consulted and cited for their unprecedented insights into a broad range of topics from before pregnancy to well into the postpartum period, and shape policy, practice, education and research. Five major survey reports and dozens of journal articles and commentaries describe insights from LTM surveys (see [LTM home page](#)).

Opportunities provided by national LTM surveys include:

- ▶ Understanding many aspects of the experiences and views of childbearing women that had been previously unknown at the national level, including results of validated screening tools
- ▶ Carrying out subgroup analyses to understand variation by major demographic and other variables, including race/ethnicity groupings, source of payment and mode of birth
- ▶ Comparing survey data to systematic review results to identify overused and underused care, as in the Milbank Report *Evidence-Based Maternity Care: What It Is and What It Can Achieve*
- ▶ Capturing verbatim statements in response to open-ended questions that vividly convey survey results in women's own words, and provide rich data for in-depth qualitative analyses
- ▶ Over time, tracking experiences, attitudes, knowledge and preferences of childbearing women
- ▶ Over time, switching in new questions to learn about evolving issues in maternity and health care

Listening to Mothers in California Survey

Annually, about a half million babies – or one in eight U.S. infants – are born in California. The state is a national leader in initiatives to improve maternal and infant health and the quality, outcomes and value of maternity care. To contribute to these efforts, we have adapted the national survey methodology to opportunities and challenges at the state level and the evolving environment for survey research. Important innovations new to this LTM survey include:

- ▶ Population-based birth certificate sampling (of women who gave birth in the final months of 2016) with mail outreach to sampled women supplemented as needed with other sources of contact information
- ▶ Ability to participate on a smartphone or tablet, as well as on a computer or with an interviewer
- ▶ Ability to complete the survey in Spanish as well as in English

- ▶ Largest-yet expected number of completed surveys
- ▶ Greater depth of inquiry in several funder areas of interest: cesarean birth, midwifery care and maternal mental health
- ▶ Extensive reporting and communications plan to reach diverse stakeholders with varied interests

The survey results describe experiences and views of women 18 and over who gave birth to a single baby in a hospital in the final months of 2016, were living with the baby at the time of the survey, and could participate in English or Spanish.

The project team and Advisory Council members' in-depth knowledge of the present maternity care policy and practice environment informed the selection of questionnaire items that can contribute to current priority issues. The questionnaire was developed through an extended iterative process that involved the study team, funders, Advisory Council, and one-on-one and focus group pretesting with diverse English- and Spanish-speaking women who had recently given birth. To maximize knowledge gained, we planned for a survey averaging 30 minutes in telephone interview mode, the upper recommended limit for survey length. The questionnaire draws on the rich bank of items that have been used in the national surveys, adapts or streamlines some of those items for the state-level survey and adds new items. The most prominent theme is maternity care, including making care arrangements, care received (especially around the time of birth), care experiences and views about care. The survey also includes tools to assess prenatal and postpartum anxiety and depression and postpartum support, basic items about breastfeeding and employment, and many demographic items. A de-identified public dataset will enable interested researchers to carry out further in-depth analyses of items collected in the survey. The investigator team will have access to many items from birth certificates of sampled women to carry out analyses with the combined dataset.

Many review boards have approved the project and given our team permission for and confidential access to personal data. All team members with access to confidential data have completed the necessary trainings for handling those data, and all data are safeguarded through secure transfer mechanisms, protected storage and extensive firewalls. The institutional review board of record is the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, which approved the project last fall. The University of California, San Francisco institutional review board (Human Research Protection Program) has also approved the project. At the CDPH, the Vital Statistics Advisory Committee approved the project and the Health Information and Research Section provided birth certificate data. The California Biobank Program approved our request for data linkage, and the Genetic Disease Screening Program provided supplementary contact information from the Newborn Screening Database to help reach sampled women. At the Department of Health Care Services, the Data and Research Committee approved our request for Medi-Cal data linkage and abstraction to obtain 1) supplementary contact information to increase the likelihood of reaching Medi-Cal beneficiaries in our sample, and 2) key eligibility and participation variables that, when linked to our dataset, will complement previous research and enable a new understanding of views and experiences of the roughly half of childbearing women in California with births covered by Medi-Cal.

Please direct inquiries about the survey to Carol Sakala, csakala@nationalpartnership.org.

Listening to Mothers in California Survey Key Personnel

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The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at NationalPartnership.org.

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