



Unearthing Latina/o Voices on Family, Pregnancy, and Reproductive Justice

Why Latinas/os Views Matter

Latinas/os are projected to become the largest racial/ethnic group in California by 2020 and to constitute a majority by 2050. Currently, they comprise the largest group of residents under age 30.¹ Despite these significant projections, there is a lack of information concerning Latinas' attitudes and beliefs regarding reproductive and sexual health issues.

These issues which have significant policy implications are rarely raised in policy debates as important to the Latina/o community, unless they are being discussed as a “problem” among Latinas/os, as with “teen pregnancy,” or when speculating about voting decisions. Immigrant Latinas'/os' priorities have been explored even less. Immigration status is frequently discussed under various contexts, most often with negative connotations; however, its true implications are poorly understood and examined, particularly as it relates to issues of reproductive justice.

In response to this information gap, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ, www.californialatinas.org) collaborated with Lake Research Partners, to assess the opinions, attitudes and beliefs of California Latina/o adults concerning reproductive health, rights and justice issues. Through a statewide public opinion survey, we delved deeper into investigating Latinas'/os' values and what role they may play in their decision-making. The survey findings unearth Latina/o voices on these important topics, including immigrant voices that have been marginalized most, and present an opportunity to reframe the policy debate from a more accurate, community-informed and value-based point of reference. Additionally, the survey findings provide Latina/o communities with vital knowledge to inform and urge policymakers to incorporate reproductive and sexual health issues as part of their overall health policy platform and thus, better address Latinas'/os' holistic health needs.

Key Findings:

- ❖ Latino families support family communication about sexuality.
- ❖ Eight in ten strongly agreed that every woman has the right to decide for herself the number and spacing of her children.
- ❖ Lack of understanding about Latino culture is a greater barrier to accessing reproductive and sexual health services than language.
- ❖ Reproductive and sexual health services should be available to everyone in their communities.
- ❖ Women need medically accurate information about all pregnancy options, and the information should not be coercive, shaming nor should it try to change a woman's mind.
- ❖ Pregnant and parenting youth deserve and need family support and educational opportunities.

Policy Recommendations:

- ❖ Promote policies that further the monitoring and enforcement of Education Code 51930-51939, the California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Act.
- ❖ Support policies and community-based programs developed to promote voluntary family communication about sexuality.
- ❖ Promote policies and enforce existing laws that support positive health and educational outcomes for pregnant and parenting youth.
- ❖ Advance health care proposals that extend affordable coverage of and access to comprehensive health care for all Californians.
- ❖ Promote policies that provide non-coercive, factual information and counseling services that are culturally and linguistically relevant.
- ❖ Promote policies that ensure access to benefit packages within California's Health Insurance Exchange that include comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care services.
- ❖ Preserve and strengthen state programs that provide reproductive and sexual health services.
- ❖ Support policies to further the availability of *Promotora*² and community-based peer health educator models targeting youth and adults within Latina/o communities.
- ❖ Ensure community participation is included within efforts that address cultural and linguistic competency in health care delivery.

¹ Public Policy Institute of California, "Just the Facts: California's Future Population. September 2008." Found at: http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_FuturePopulationJTF.pdf

² Promotoras and Community Health Workers (CHW's) promote community-based health education and prevention, particularly in communities that have been historically underserved by the U.S. health care system. Promotoras and CHWs act as bridges between health care institutions, professional providers and community residents in need of health care services. Definition adapted from Vision y Compromiso at www.visionycompromiso.org