

WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE FAMILY PLANNING: A SURVEY OF OUR CLIENTS

October 2021

Key findings

- For young people's sexual health, what matters most is access to low cost, non-judgemental experts.
- All respondents value Family Planning because we treat them with respect and are experts in providing the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including all contraceptive options.
- Specialised sexual and reproductive health services play an important role in a client-centred health system, particularly for young people.

Introduction

Since 1936, Family Planning has been New Zealand's only national provider of sexual and reproductive health services for primary health and sexual health promotion. Through high quality service provision, training and advocacy, Family Planning has been at the forefront of ensuring New Zealanders have access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and education. From providing the full range of contraception, to working to reduce stigma, Family Planning has aimed to offer a service where people can access what they need, without judgement or shame. Throughout our history, our work has sometimes been met with resistance, as sexual and reproductive health and rights have not always been prioritised, nor embraced, by government, other health practitioners or health organisations.

Each year, Family Planning provides over 150,000 clinical consultations. The majority of our clients are women and about one-third are under age 22. We operate 29 clinics throughout Aotearoa New Zealand as well as services in schools and through community partnerships. According to the 2014/2015 New Zealand Health Survey¹ 11% of all sexually active women in New Zealand got their contraception from Family Planning. Among young women aged 16-24, 23% reported getting their contraception from Family Planning. Seventeen percent (17%) of Māori women and 14% of Pacific women reported getting their contraception from Family Planning in 2014/2015.

¹ Ministry of Health. 2019. Sexual and Reproductive Health Data Explorer 2014/15: New Zealand Health Survey [Data File]. URL: <https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/nz-health-survey-2014-15-srh-data-explorer/> (Accessed 10 September 2021).

Family Planning received government funding to provide services for the first time in 1972. This is similar to when other specialist primary care organisations overseas first received funding from government to provide sexual and reproductive health services. For example, the Title X programme in the United States was enacted in 1970. The Title X programme was the first federal funding “dedicated solely to providing individuals with comprehensive family planning and related preventive health services.”² New Zealand government funding to Family Planning supported access to contraception.

Despite nearly 50 years of funding Family Planning, there is little information about why, women in particular, choose to come to us for sexual and reproductive health services over another primary care provider. The Guttmacher Institute, a leading sexual and reproductive health research organisation, investigated the issue in 2012. Researchers published an article, *Specialized Family Planning Clinics in the United States: Why Women Choose Them and Their Role in Meeting Women’s Health Care Needs*, based on a survey of over 2,000 women receiving services at 22 family planning clinics in 13 US states.³ The research found that women choose specialised family planning providers because there are respectful staff, confidential care, free or low-cost services, and staff who are knowledgeable about women’s health. The research provided evidence of the important role specialised family planning providers play in the US health care landscape.

Family Planning decided to model a survey off the original Guttmacher research, in a New Zealand context, to gain insight into why people choose us as a provider and also why contraception is important to our clients. This information is useful as it provides information about the unique role of Family Planning in primary care at a time when New Zealand is undergoing major health system reform.

Survey results

In July 2021, Family Planning launched a survey of our clients about why they chose us as a health provider, and the importance of contraception to their lives. We distributed the survey through all of our clinics. While it was available online as well as in hard copy, nearly all surveys received were hard copy. The surveys were anonymous. We informed clients that taking the survey would not make a difference to the care they received from Family Planning. Clients had to be 16 years old to complete the survey. We received a total of 1,288 completed surveys from our clients.

As with our previous surveys, this survey was not intended to be a formal research project, but simply a tool for gathering information. Clients were not required to complete the survey and, therefore, respondents were self-selected. The survey responses may not be representative of the views of all Family Planning clients, nor all people in New Zealand. These limitations should be considered when viewing survey results. Quotes in this report may have been modified to protect privacy.

² US Health and Human Services Office of Population Affairs. Title X Program Funding History. <https://opa.hhs.gov/grant-programs/archive/title-x-program-funding-history>

³ Frost JJ, Gold RB, Bucek A. Specialized family planning clinics in the United States: why women choose them and their role in meeting women’s health care needs. *Womens Health Issues*. 2012 Nov-Dec;22(6):e519-25. doi: 10.1016/j.whi.2012.09.002. PMID: 23122212.

This report is in two parts. The first part examines the responses of young clients aged 16-19 years, and the second explores the responses of all of our clients who responded to our survey.

Part I: Young clients aged 16-19

Young people face particular barriers to accessing contraception and other sexual and reproductive health services. New Zealand research has found that barriers such as lack of health practitioner training in delivering youth friendly services^{4,5} and variability around the cost of accessing services are substantial barriers to young people, alongside the stigma and shame associated with sex and sexuality among young people. Family Planning wanted to explore responses among our young clients age 16-19 years old to learn why they choose to come to us, why contraception is important to them, and how their responses were different to responses from clients of all ages.

We present findings from this age group below. Where we compare the responses of young people to those of all respondents, we have not done statistical analysis to determine the statistical significance of these differences, therefore, these comparisons should be interpreted with caution. Responses from all clients can be found in Part II of this report.

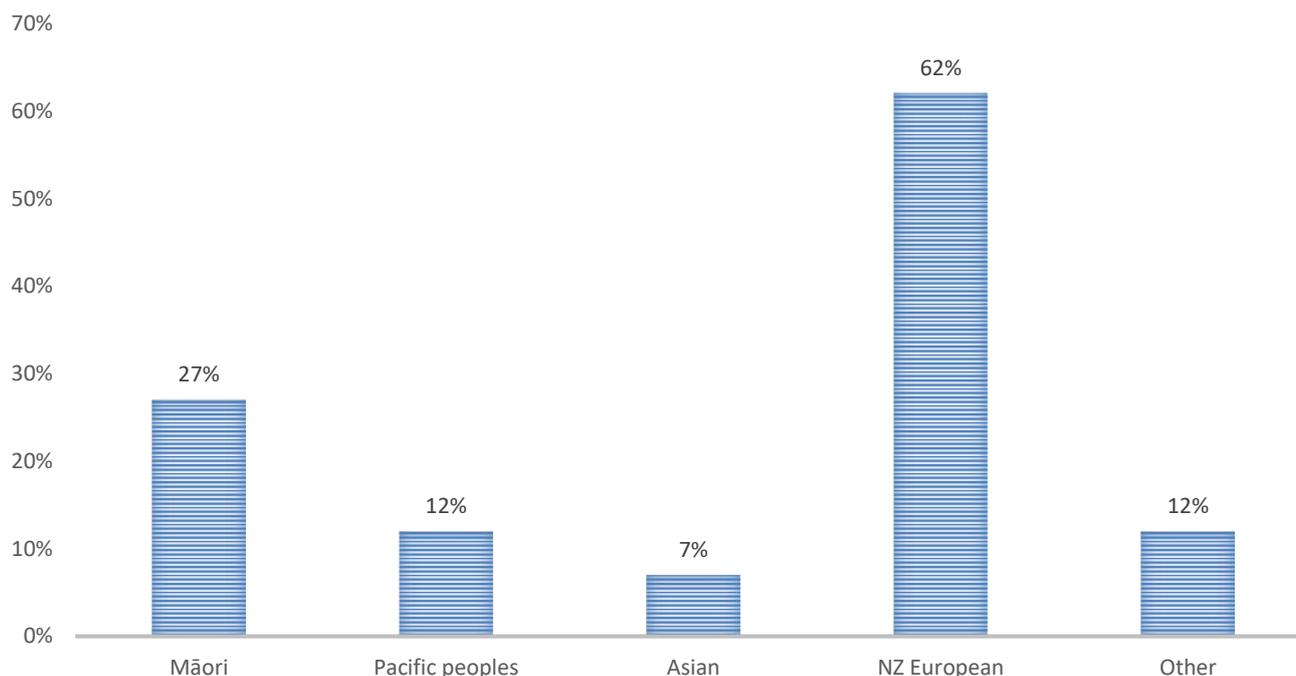
Demographics

We received surveys from 234 clients aged 16-19 years. Clients aged 16-19 years represent 18% of all survey respondents. Twenty-seven per cent (27%) of young survey respondents identified as Māori, 12% Pacific peoples, 62% NZ European, 7% Asian and another 12% other. Respondents could select all ethnicities they identify with, therefore, percentages add to more than 100%.

⁴ Duncan R, Paterson H, Anderson L, Pickering N (2019) We're kidding ourselves if we say that contraception is accessible: a qualitative study of general practitioners' attitudes toward adolescents' use of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) *Journal of Primary Health Care*. 11(2):138–145. Accessed: <https://www.publish.csiro.au/hc/pdf/HC18105>

⁵ Tipene J and Green A (2017) He Pūkenga Kōrero: Rangatahi and sexually transmitted infections in the Waikato. Accessed <http://tewhariki.org.nz/assets/He-Pukenga-Korero-Final-Report-31-Aug-2017.pdf>

ethnicity of respondents age 16-19



Young respondents were from most regions of New Zealand. The northern regions were over-represented among respondents with 66% of young respondents from Northland (10%), Auckland (42%) and Waikato (14%). There were other areas of the country that were under-represented as compared to Census 2018 data: respondents from Bay of Plenty, Manawatū-Whanganui, Nelson Tasman and Canterbury were under-represented; and there were no respondents in this age group from the Hawkes Bay or West Coast regions. Family Planning does not have clinics in Hawkes Bay, Nelson Tasman or the West Coast.

Almost all of the young survey respondents identified as female (98%). One per cent (1%) of respondents identified as male and 1% as another gender.

Visits to Family Planning and other health providers

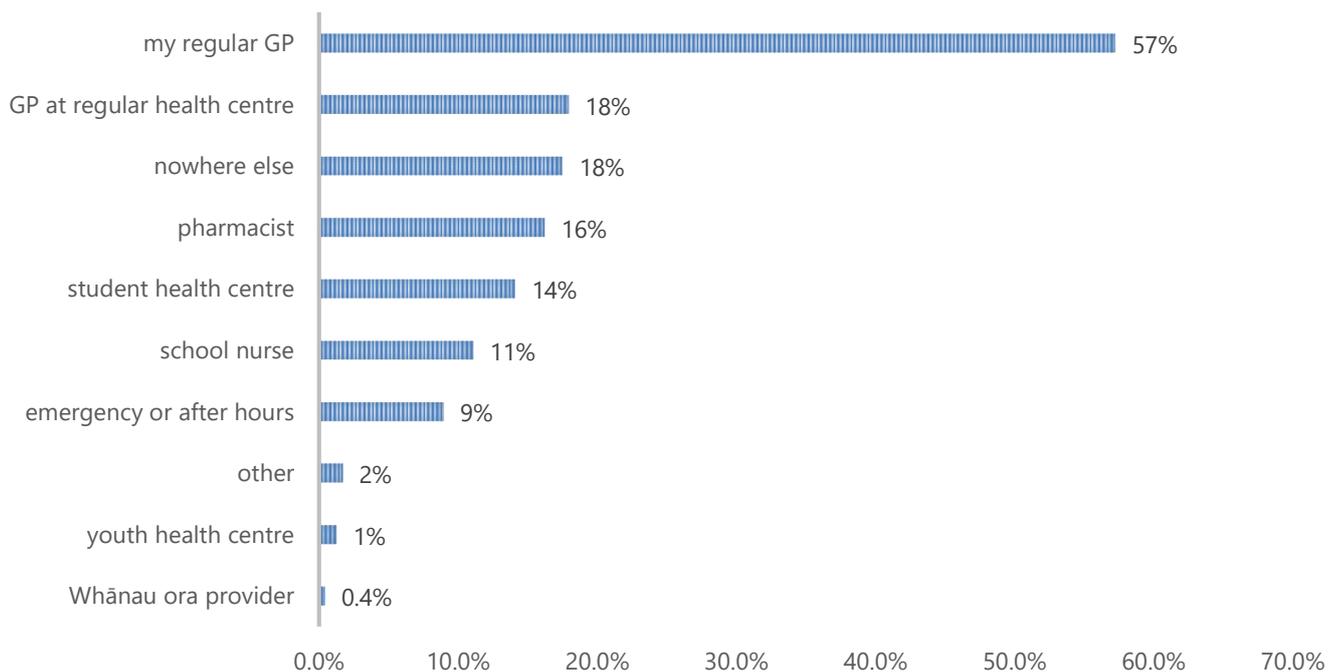
For 28% of young people completing the survey, it was their first visit to Family Planning, while 72% were returning clients. There was a higher proportion of first visitors among young people completing the survey as compared to all survey respondents (15%), which is not surprising given that many people visit Family Planning repeatedly throughout their lives once they become sexually active.

Most young clients reported that in addition to Family Planning, they visited other health providers in the past year. Clients could tick as many options as applied. Fewer young people reported visiting their regular GP (57%) than among all survey respondents (71%). Slightly more young people reported visiting a GP at their regular health centre (18%) than among all respondents (15%). Fourteen percent (14%) of young people reported visiting a student health centre and 11% a school

nurse, which is, unsurprisingly, a much higher percentage than among all respondents (7% and 2% respectively).

Eighteen percent (18%) of young respondents reported that other than Family Planning, they did not go anywhere else for health care in the past year. In other words, for more than one in six of our young clients, Family Planning was their only source of health care over a twelve-month period. These results provide strong evidence that Family Planning is an important point of contact with the health system for many of our young clients.

other providers young clients visited in last 12-months



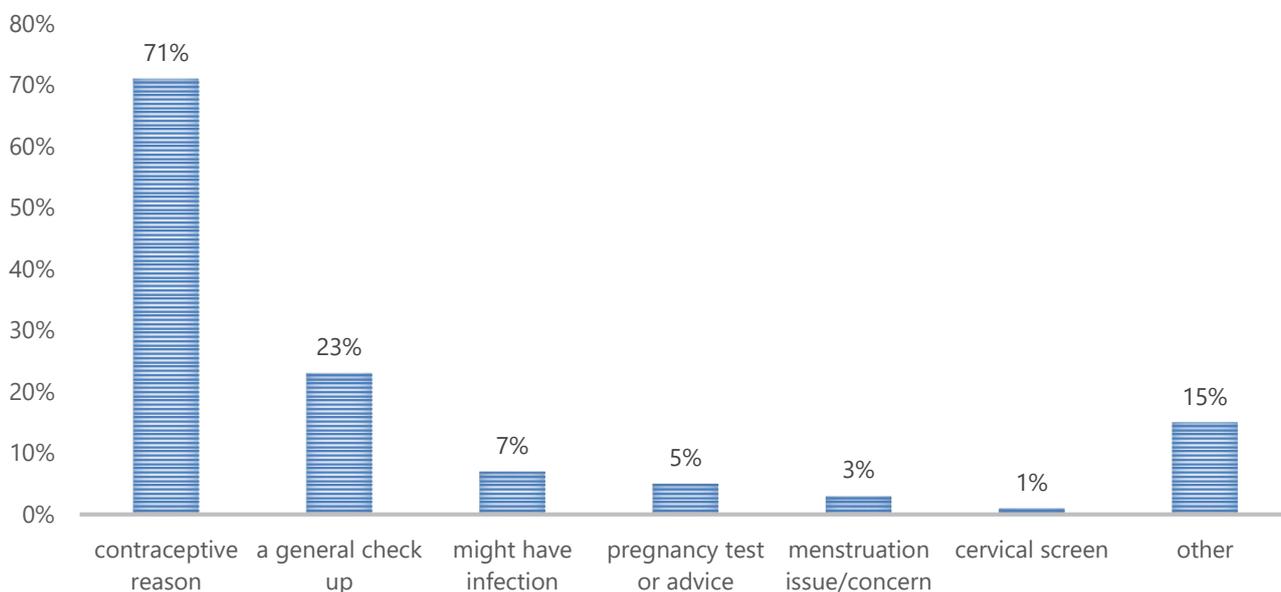
Reasons why young clients visited Family Planning

Most young survey respondents reported visiting Family Planning for contraceptive reasons (71%). These contraceptive visits included: repeat contraception (29%), such as a repeat prescription for an oral contraceptive or a Depo Provera injection; visits to get contraception for the first time (21%); a visit to change contraception (16%); and 5% were visiting due to a problem with their contraception. More young clients were visiting Family Planning to get contraception for the first time (21%) as compared to all survey respondents (9%).

Other reasons young clients reported visiting Family Planning included getting a general check-up (23%), might have an infection (7%), pregnancy test or advice (5%), menstruation issue such as heavy bleeding (3%), a cervical screen (1%), other reasons (15%). A large percentage of reasons reported in the "other" option still related to contraception, including implant or IUD removals. The reasons why young people visit Family Planning were similar reasons to those reported by all respondents with the exception of cervical screening. There were only a few young clients reporting cervical screening as a

reason for visiting, which makes sense given cervical screening is recommended for women aged over 25 who have been sexually active.

reason for young clients visit to Family Planning

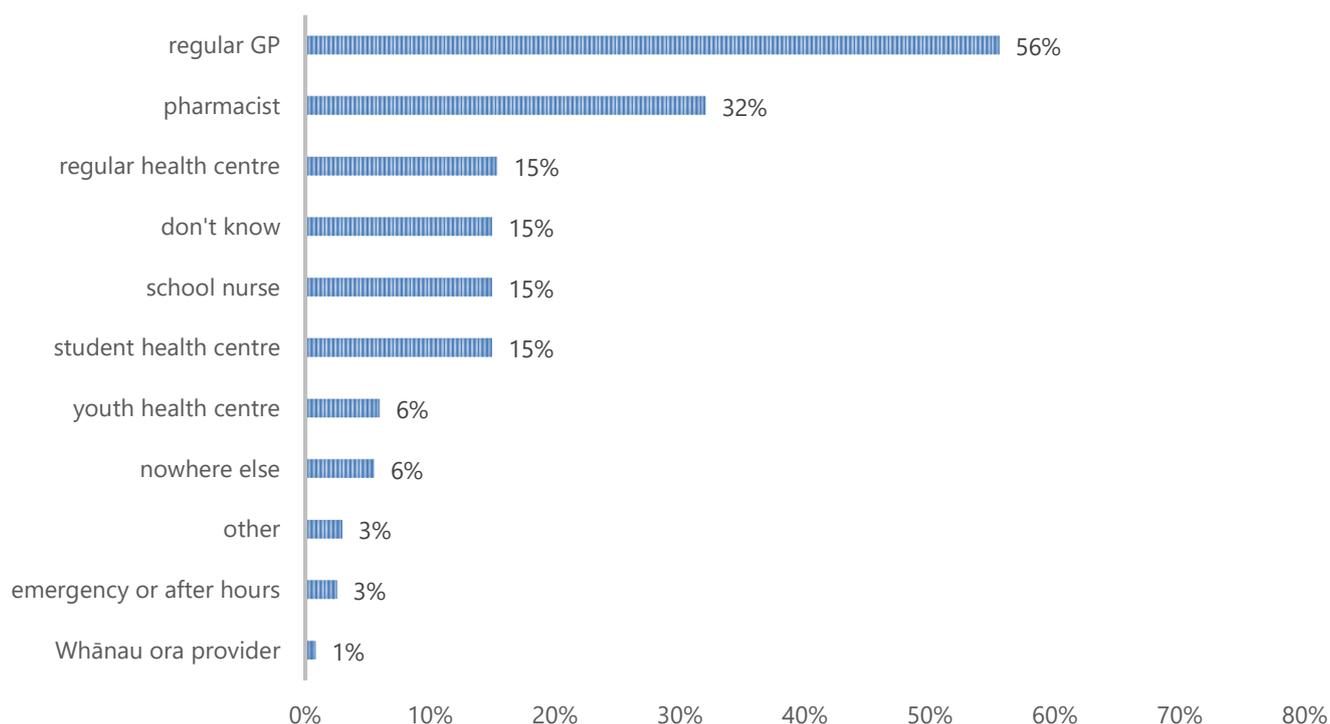


Young clients visiting Family Planning for contraception were interested in a range of types: the oral contraceptive pill (28%); Depo Provera (24%); condoms (24%); the implant (14%); IUS (14%); IUD (14%); emergency contraception (7%); not sure (3%). Young people did not report any interest in natural family planning. The types of contraceptives young people were interested in are similar to those reported by all survey respondents, but some types had differences between the groups of more than 5%. Six percent (6%) more young people expressed interest in the oral contraceptive pill and condoms as compared to all respondents, 5% fewer expressed interest in IUD, and 7% less in IUS. This may be indicative of a lack of knowledge about IUD and IUS or fears about insertion of this device.

When asked where else they could go for contraception, only 56% of young clients said they could get contraception from their regular GP. This is a smaller proportion as compared to all respondents. Thirty-two percent (32%) of young clients reported that they could get contraception from a pharmacist. We did not investigate what this means – whether young people were filling a prescription, getting condoms, ECP or the oral contraceptive pill from pharmacists. Among young clients, fifteen percent (15%) reported they could get contraception from their regular health centre, from a student health centre (15%) or from a school nurse (15%). Unsurprisingly, greater percentages of young clients reported being able to access contraception from a student health centre or school nurse than among all respondents.

Among young people, 21% said they didn't know where, or there was nowhere else, for them to get contraception, which is a higher proportion than among all respondents (14%).

where else young clients report they could get contraception

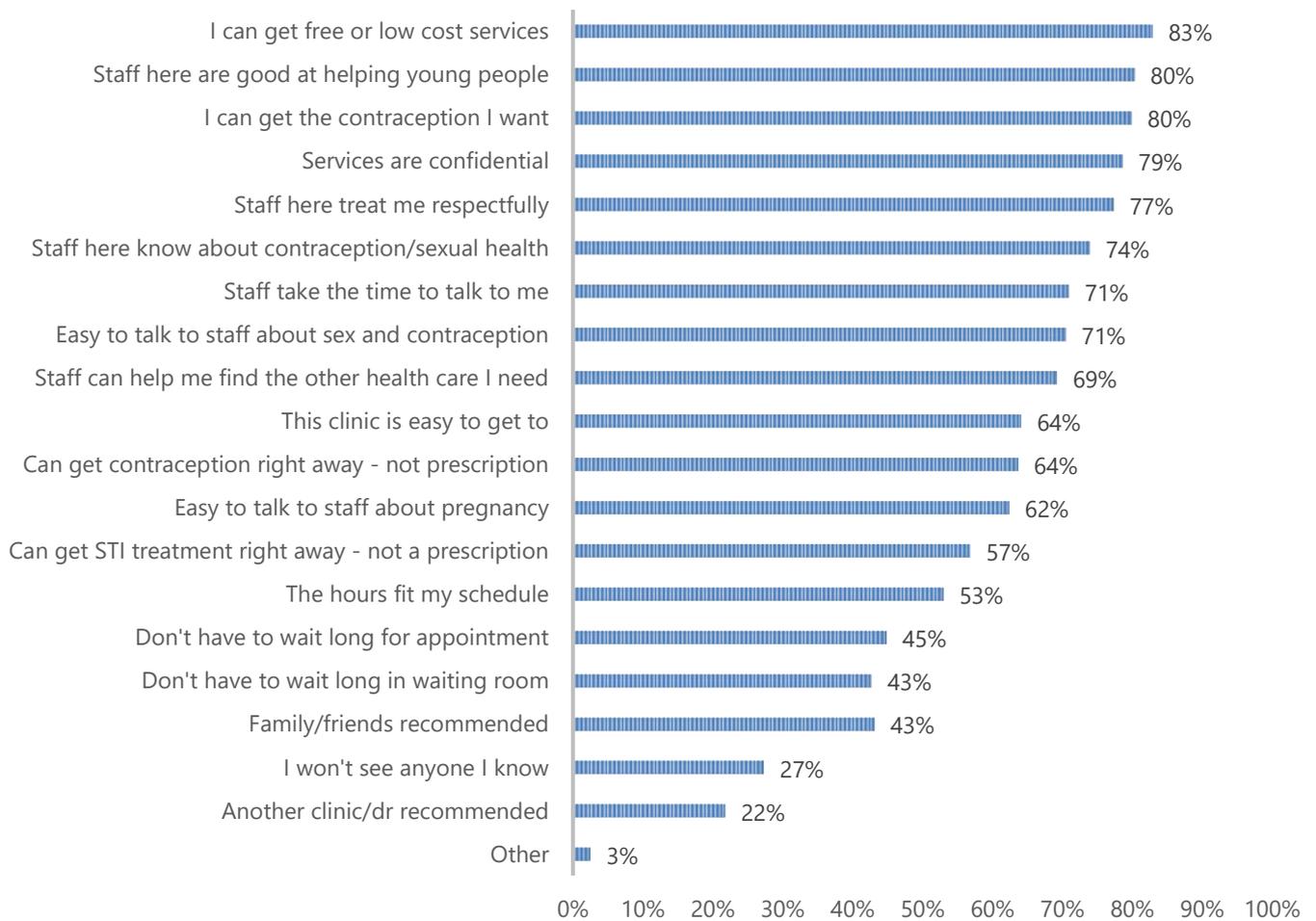


The reasons why young clients chose Family Planning

Family Planning asked survey respondents to rate a list of 20 reasons why they chose to visit Family Planning. They could tick as few or as many as applied and there was a category – other - where they could provide their own reason. The 20 reasons were either identical or similar to the reasons provided in the original research on which this survey was based.

The top two individual reasons why young clients chose Family Planning were: I can get free or low cost services (83%); staff here are good at helping young people (80%). These reasons are different to the top two reasons reported by all clients. The next two reasons reported by young clients were also among the top four reasons all respondents reported choosing Family Planning: I can get the contraception I want (80%); and services are confidential; no one needs to know (79%). Cost is clearly a significant issue for young people, as is staff competency in providing services to young people.

percentage of young clients rating reason as very important



Substantially related responses were grouped into summary categories, based on categories used in the original research from which this survey was adapted. For each category, percentages of respondents who reported that any of the reasons in that group was very important to their choice were reported.

When responses were grouped into summary groups, five of the categories were reported as very important by over 80% of young respondents (refer to table below):

- method/service availability (87%)
- other category (included staff are good at helping young people) (85%)
- interaction with staff (85%)
- women's health focus (84%)
- affordability (83%)

The other and affordability categories did not feature as top categories among all respondents, but the other three were the same as young clients. It is noteworthy that young respondents were most likely to rate the method/service availability category as very important. This category includes the following reasons: I can get the contraception I want; I can get my contraception right away, not just

a prescription; I can get my STI treatment right away, not just a prescription. This illustrates the value young people place on being able to get what they need right away in one place. Similar to the individual responses, the referrals category was least likely to be reported as a very important reason for choosing Family Planning, which may indicate that clients base their decision to visit Family Planning on their own expectations or experiences with staff and the service, more than a referral or recommendation.

Reasons young people choose to visit Family Planning – reasons by summary group	Proportion of clients ranking any reasons as very important
Method/service availability <i>I can get the contraception I want</i> <i>I can get my contraception right away, not just a prescription</i> <i>I can get my STI treatment right away, not just a prescription</i>	87%
Other <i>Staff are good at helping young people</i> <i>Staff can help me find other health care I need</i>	85%
Interaction with staff <i>Staff treat me respectfully</i> <i>Staff take the time to talk to me</i>	85%
Women's health focus <i>Staff know about contraception and sexual health</i> <i>It is easy to talk to staff about sex, contraception</i> <i>It is easy to talk to staff about pregnancy</i>	84%
Affordability <i>I can get free/low-cost services</i>	83%
Confidentiality <i>Services are confidential; no one needs to know</i> <i>I won't see people that I know</i>	79%
Accessibility <i>This clinic is easy to get to</i> <i>The hours fit my schedule</i> <i>I don't have to wait long for an appointment</i> <i>I don't have to wait long in the waiting room</i>	78%
Referrals <i>My friends/family recommended I come</i> <i>Another clinic/doctor recommended I come</i>	50%

There were fewer written comments from young people as compared to all clients, and the comments were more succinct. However, there were many positive comments from young clients about Family Planning.

It has a safe environment!

Needing Mirena so need doctor who is experienced to place correctly

Referred by local GP

Safe, easy environment

Go there, it's free (mostly), easy and not judgmental.

Friendly service, helps finding the right contraception you need

A girls' best friend

A caring place that can get contraception and other help about sex or pregnancy

Easy, cheap, convenient

Quick, useful

Easy and cheap for under 21 years and experienced / knowledgeable

Easy to go to, knowledgeable

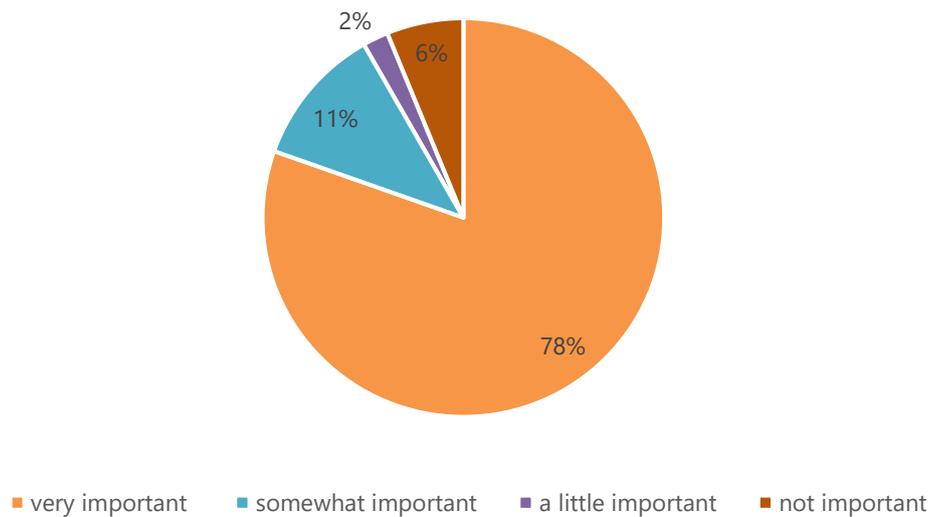
Very comfortable environment

Thoughts about pregnancy

We asked our clients why contraception is important to them, and how they felt about pregnancy at this time in their lives.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of young clients reported that it was very important to prevent a pregnancy right now, a higher percentage than among all respondents (66%).

how important is it for young clients to prevent pregnancy



We asked young clients why they use contraception. The reasons most commonly reported as very important among young clients were that they want to have a good job before having a baby (76%), want to wait until they are ready to have a baby (75%), want until they are older to have a baby (73%), and want to wait until they can afford to have a baby (70%). While these reasons were similar to those reported by all respondents, waiting until I am older did not feature among all respondents. Far fewer young people reported that contraception gives them control over their lives (58%), as compared to all respondents (72%), perhaps reflecting that young people may generally feel that they have less control over their lives as compared to adults.

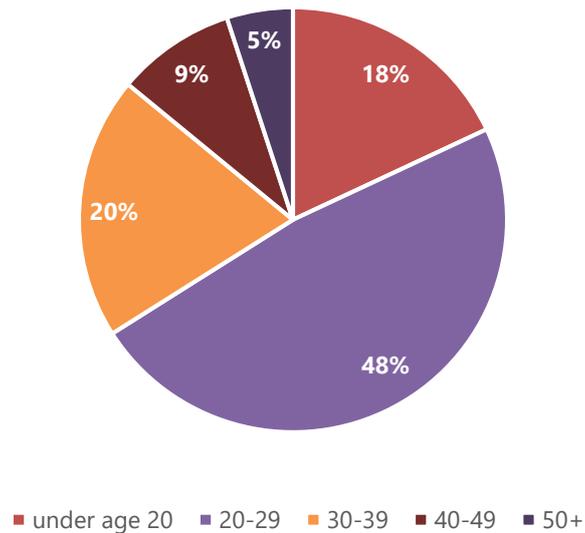
Twenty-seven percent (27%) of young clients reported that a very important reason why they were using contraception is that their partner wants them to use contraception. This is an interesting finding and one that raises questions about the ways that partners may be involved with or influence contraceptive decision making, and if reproductive coercion was a factor in some of these responses.

Part II: All survey respondents

Demographics

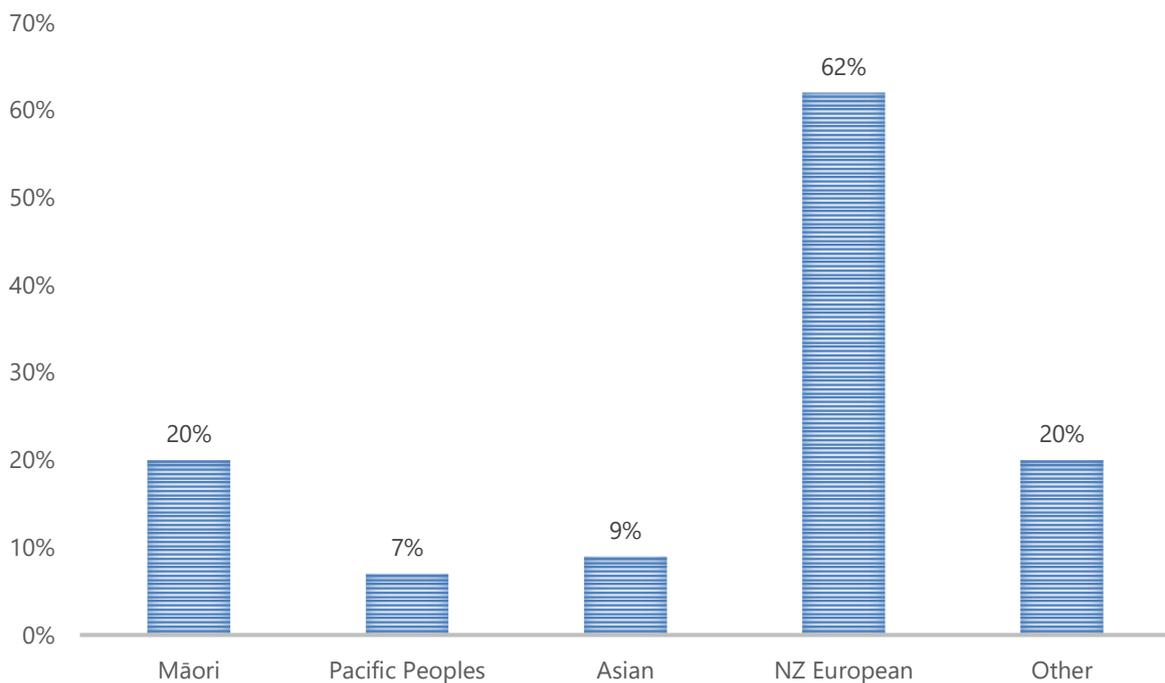
The majority (48%) of survey respondents were 20 to 29 years of age, 20% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years, and 18% were aged 16-19 years old.

age of survey respondents



Twenty per cent (20%) of all survey respondents identified as Māori, 7% Pacific peoples, 62% NZ European, 9% Asian and another 20% other. Respondents could select all ethnicities they identify with therefore percentages add to more than 100%.

ethnicity of respondents



Respondents were from most regions of New Zealand. However, Auckland was considerably over-represented with 50% of respondents from the Auckland region. The percentage of respondents from other regions aligned well with population distributions based on Census 2018 data, with the following exceptions: respondents from Bay of Plenty and Canterbury were under-represented; and there were no respondents from the Hawkes Bay, Nelson Tasman and West Coast regions. Family Planning does not have clinics in Hawkes Bay, Nelson Tasman or the West Coast.

Almost all of the survey respondents identified as female (97%), which is not surprising given that most Family Planning clients identify as women. Two per cent (2%) of respondents identified as male and 1% as another gender.

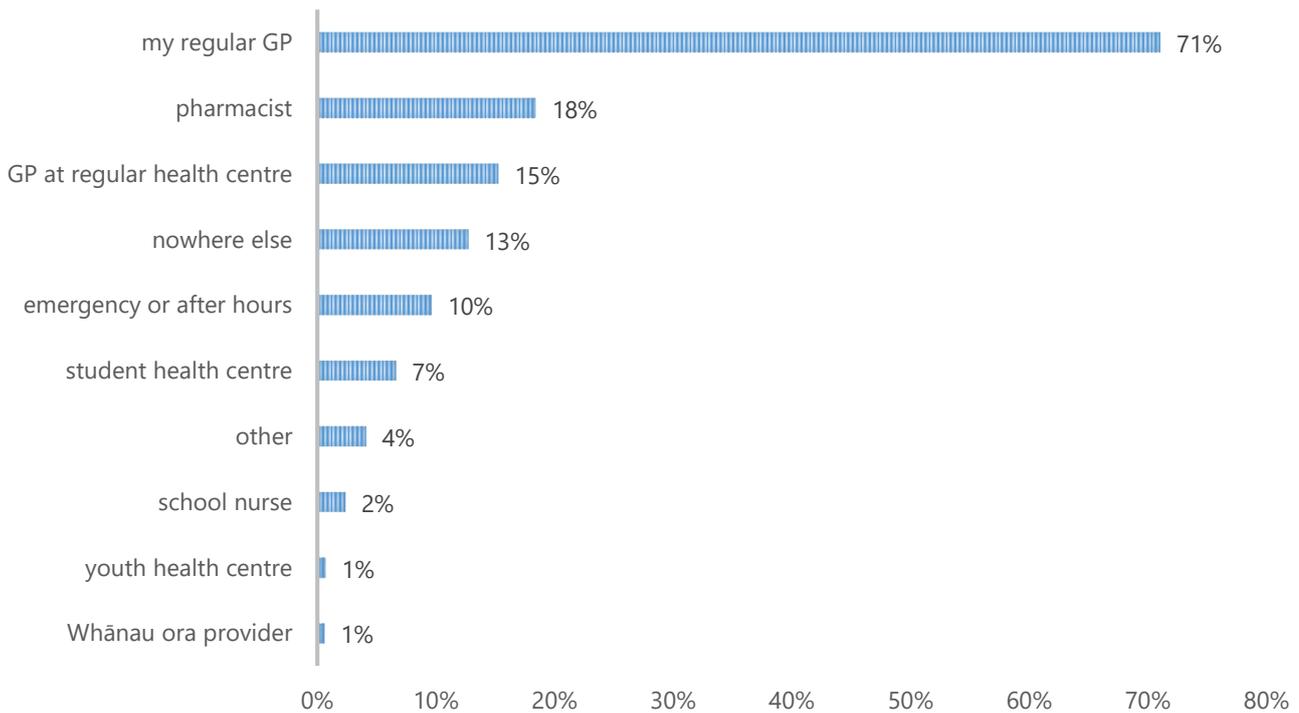
Visits to Family Planning and other health providers

For 15% of survey respondents, the visit at which they completed the survey was their first visit to Family Planning, while 85% of survey respondents were returning clients. Many clients reported that they visit Family Planning often. Among returning clients, one-third (32%) visit several times a year, 39% said they visit sometimes or once a year, and one-quarter (25%) said they rarely visit.

Most clients reported that in addition to Family Planning, they visited other health providers in the past year. Clients could tick as many options as applied. Most clients had visited their regular GP (71%) and/or a GP at their regular health centre (15%), a pharmacist (18%), emergency department or after-hours (10%), a student health centre (7%), school nurse (2%), youth health centre/one-stop shop (1%) and/or a Whānau Ora provider (1%).

However, 13% of respondents reported that they did not go anywhere else for health care. In other words, for one in eight of our clients, Family Planning is their only source of health care over a twelve-month period. These results provide strong evidence that Family Planning is an important point of contact with the health system for many of our clients.

other health providers seen in last 12 months

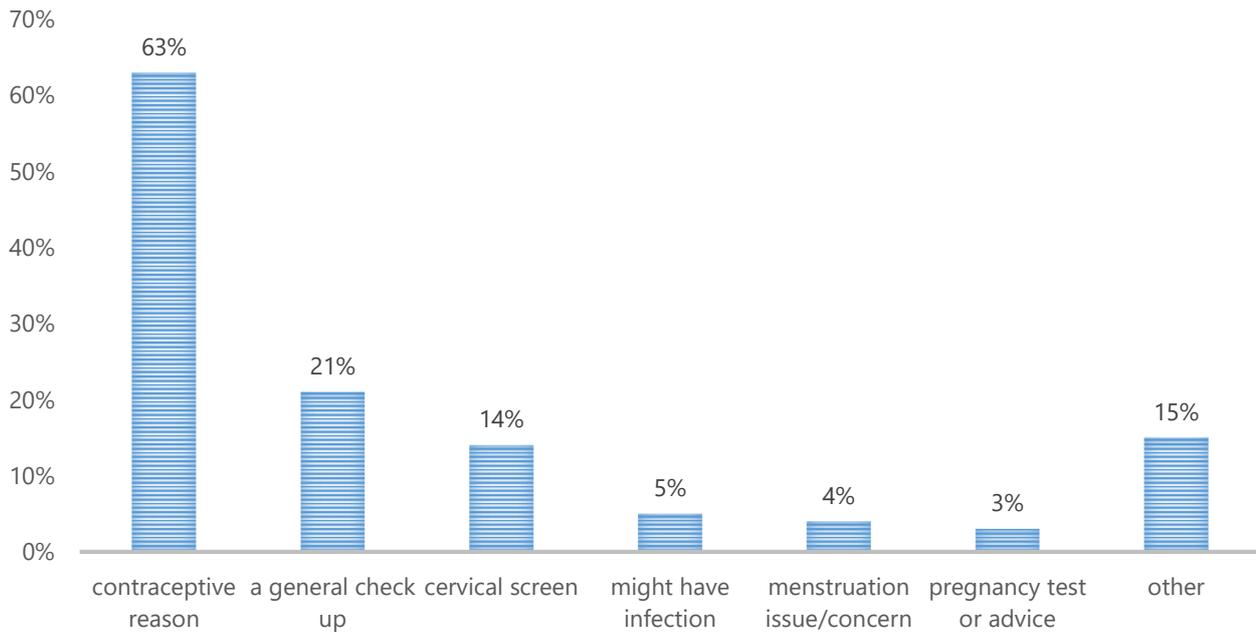


Reasons why clients visited Family Planning

Most survey respondents reported visiting Family Planning for contraceptive reasons (63%). These contraceptive visits included: visits to get repeat contraception (28%), such as a repeat prescription for an oral contraceptive or a Depo Provera injection; a visit to change their contraception (20%); a visit to get contraception for the first time (9%); and 6% were visiting due to a problem with their contraception.

Other reasons for visiting Family Planning included getting a general check-up (21%), a cervical screen (14%), might have an infection (5%), menstruation issue such as heavy bleeding (4%), pregnancy test or advice (3%), other reasons (15%). A large percentage of reasons reported in the "other" option still related to contraception, including implant or IUD removals. Clients who reported they visited for a general check-up may have been seeking routine sexually transmissible infection (STI) testing.

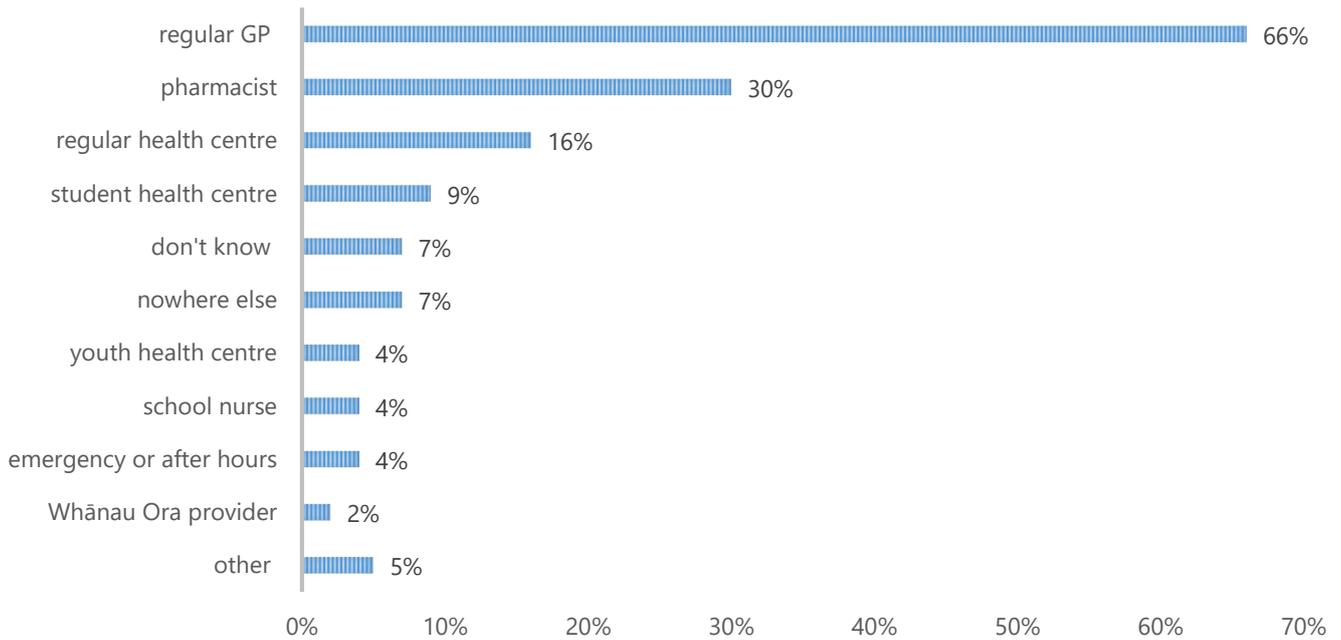
reasons for visiting Family Planning



Among all survey respondents visiting Family Planning for contraception, clients were interested in a range of types: Depo Provera (22%); oral contraceptive pill (22%); IUS (21%); IUD (19%); condoms (18%); implant (11%); emergency contraception (3%); not sure (1%); and natural family planning (1%).

When asked where else they could go for contraception, a large proportion of respondents said their regular GP (66%) or their regular health centre (16%), or a pharmacist (30%). These were the most common answers. A much smaller proportion of respondents reported they could get contraception from a student health centre (9%), school nurse (4%), after-hours or emergency department (4%) youth health centre (4%) or a Whānau Ora provider (2%). Seven per cent (7%) of respondents reported that there is nowhere else where they could go to get their contraception. Five per cent (5%) of respondents ticked the "other" as a response to this question. The most popular answer that people reported in the other category was that they could get contraception at a supermarket (condoms).

where else clients say they could get contraception

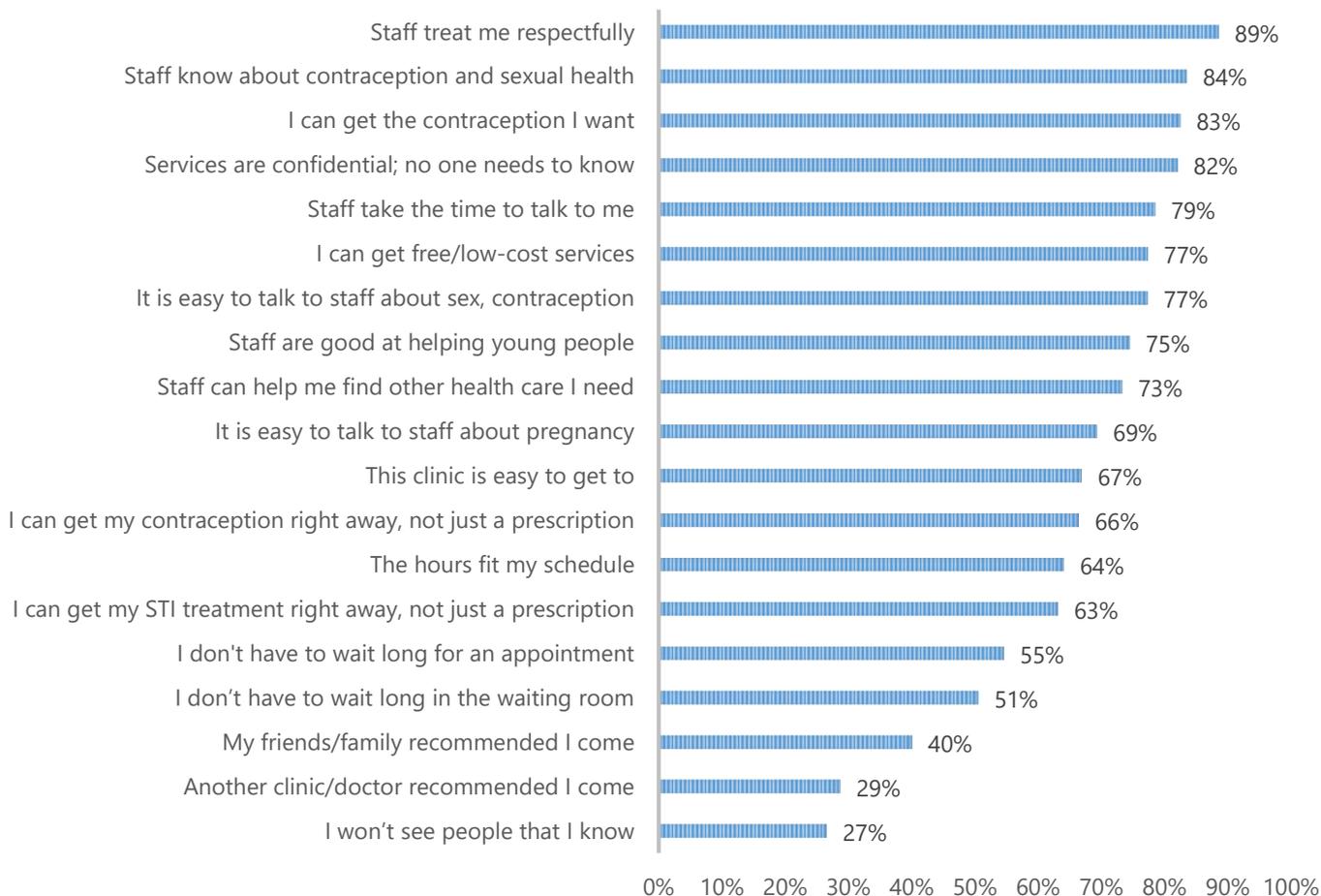


The reasons why clients chose Family Planning

As explained in Part I (page 7), Family Planning asked survey respondents to rate a list of 20 reasons why they chose to visit Family Planning. They could tick as few or as many as applied and there was a category – other - where they could provide their own reasons.

The top four individual reasons that survey respondents reported as very important to why they chose Family Planning were: staff treat me respectfully (89%); staff know about contraception and sexual health (84%); I can get the contraception I want (83%); and services are confidential; no one needs to know (82%). It is interesting to note that recommendations from family, friends and doctors were not reported frequently as a very important reason for visiting Family Planning, which may indicate that clients base their decision to visit Family Planning on their own expectations or experiences with staff and the service, more than a referral or recommendation.

percentage of clients rating reason as very important



As described previously (pg 8), substantially related responses were grouped into summary categories, based on categories used in the original research from which this survey was adapted. For each category, percentages of respondents who reported that any of the reasons in that group was very important to their choice were reported. Three of the categories were reported as very important by over 80% of all survey respondents:

- interaction with staff (87%)
- women's health focus (83%)
- method/service availability (81%)

Similar to the individual responses, the referrals category was least likely to be reported as a very important reason for choosing Family Planning (refer to table below).

Clients completing our survey appear to value Family Planning's highly trained staff. Survey respondents visit us because we are specialist providers in women's health. Our staff are highly trained in discussing and managing sexual and reproductive health issues and can provide a full range of services, respectfully.

Reasons for deciding to visit Family Planning – reasons by summary group	Proportion of clients ranking any reasons as very important
Interaction with staff <i>Staff treat me respectfully</i> <i>Staff take the time to talk to me</i>	87%
Women's health focus <i>Staff know about contraception and sexual health</i> <i>It is easy to talk to staff about sex, contraception</i> <i>It is easy to talk to staff about pregnancy</i>	83%
Method/service availability <i>I can get the contraception I want</i> <i>I can get my contraception right away, not just a prescription</i> <i>I can get my STI treatment right away, not just a prescription</i>	81%
Accessibility <i>This clinic is easy to get to</i> <i>The hours fit my schedule</i> <i>I don't have to wait long for an appointment</i> <i>I don't have to wait long in the waiting room</i>	79%
Confidentiality <i>Services are confidential; no one needs to know</i> <i>I won't see people that I know</i>	72%
Other <i>Staff are good at helping young people</i> <i>Staff can help me find other health care I need</i>	71%
Affordability <i>I can get free/low-cost services</i>	71%
Referrals <i>My friends/family recommended I come</i> <i>Another clinic/doctor recommended I come</i>	40%

The survey elicited many quotes from our clients, most of which were positive. Here is a sample below:

"I feel safe - confidentially & staff are very skilled and kind"

"A non-judgmental space to talk all things sexual health and not be ashamed"

"experts in their field, specialist"

"I had an IUD fitted at [another provider] that didn't go well so when I wanted to try again it made sense to come see the people who are doing it all the time."

"Feel very comfortable coming to clinic who specialises in sexual health. Very experienced & everything is very norm for them. The staff are very conscientious & gentle & respectful! Always come here for my smears too"

"The main reason I come back to Family Planning is because the staff always have strong empathy, there is no sense of judgement or uncertainty that you sometimes get at [another provider]. That goes a long way and it is so appreciated. [The] RN was an excellent example of that today."

"...because it is a focus on female reproductive health, I feel like my issues won't be dismissed"

"Just good to see people who are dealing with what I want to know about all the time."

"A place I trust to be professional and give me best advice."

"Best place for wāhine"

"A place all things sexual health, where everyone makes you feel comfortable, nurses are really easy to talk to which makes you feel like you can open up. Receptionists are also so friendly and make you feel welcome."

"wanted to go to a gynaecologist / specialist rather than [another provider]. It's affordable for me"

"very knowledgeable in female health which some [other providers] don't have to the same degree"

"Very comfortable and professional culturally safe, have helped me in the past."

"trauma-informed practitioners - more so than [other providers]"

"The staff at the front desk are amazing and very friendly, the nurses are extremely helpful and professional, I have felt so comfortable and confident going there. Thank you."

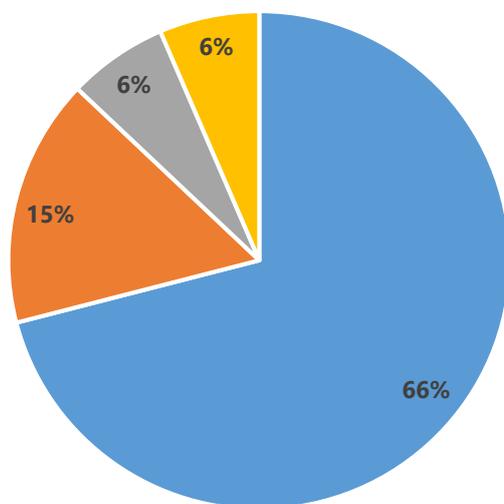
"An easy way to ensure your sexual health is safe and a place where you're not going to be judged."

Thoughts about pregnancy

We asked our clients why contraception is important to them, and how they felt about pregnancy at this time in their lives.

Sixty-six percent (66%) of survey respondents reported that it was very important to prevent a pregnancy, 15% said it was somewhat important, 6% a little important and 6% not important. While some clients were ambivalent, two-thirds were clear about not wanting to become pregnant at this time in their lives.

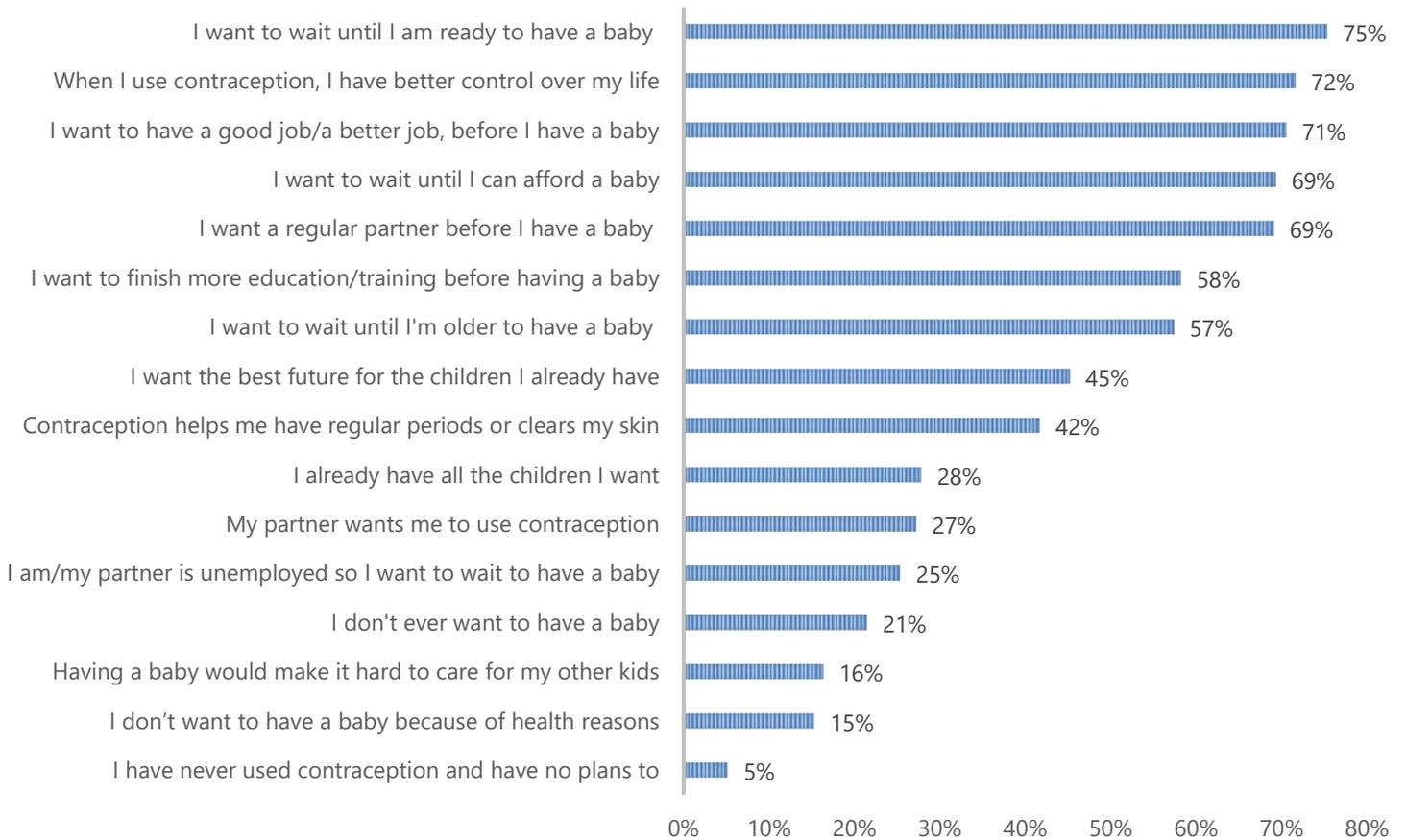
how important is it for clients to prevent pregnancy?



■ Very important ■ Somewhat important ■ A little important ■ Not important

When asked why they use contraception, respondents reported wanting to wait until they were ready to have a baby (75%), when they use contraception they have better control over their life (72%), and they want to wait until they have a good job (71%). Sixty-nine percent reported wanting more money before having a baby (69%) and a regular partner (69%). Fewer clients reported wanting to finish more education/training before having a baby (58%) or waiting until I am older to have a baby (57%) as very important reasons. The same percentage of all respondents (27%) as young people reported that a very important reason why they were using contraception is that their partner wants them to use contraception. As stated previously, this raises questions about how partners are involved in contraceptive decision making. While there may be positive conversations between partners about contraceptive use, it is also possible that some clients experience reproductive coercion. Over one in five clients reported that they never want to have a baby.

why clients use contraception?



Some clients commented on this issue.

I already have children but would like to wait until I'm financially stable for more

Me and my kids would be homeless if I kept another baby – my lease would not be renewed

I want a gap between babies

Not interested in having children ever

Already have a baby, waiting 3 years until next one.

I want to roll into menopause without conceiving

The time will come and it'll be great. I'll cherish it forever!

I have had all my babies and am very happy and too old for more

It's hard enough looking after myself let alone a kid

Conclusion

This survey shows the important role that Family Planning plays in the New Zealand health system. Many of our clients choose to come to Family Planning, despite having other options for seeking sexual and reproductive health services. For example, seven in 10 (71%) of our clients reported visiting a GP during the past 12-months, but chose to come to Family Planning for sexual and reproductive health care.

Among our young clients aged 16-19, the top reasons they visited Family Planning were because our services were free and because our staff are good at helping young people. This finding is consistent with what we already know young people want – low cost, youth friendly services. Young people value Family Planning because they can get the contraception they want from us, right away. Other than Family Planning, more than one in six of our clients age 16-19 reported that they didn't visit any other health providers during the past 12 months, illustrating the important role we play providing health care to young people in particular.

Both young people and all survey respondents chose Family Planning because they can get the contraception they want, they were treated respectfully by staff and services are confidential. Clients reported that it was very important to them that Family Planning staff are knowledgeable about contraception and sexual health.

While confidentiality did not feature as the top reason for choosing Family Planning, it was still high on the list of reasons among all clients and young clients. For many people, getting sexual and reproductive health care from a service they know is confidential is extremely important. While all health providers have an obligation to protect client confidentiality, sometimes seeking this care from other regular health providers in a person's community may feel too close to home. Sadly, sex and sexuality are still stigmatised, particularly for groups experiencing discrimination based on things like age, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.

The reasons our clients reported choosing Family Planning were strongly aligned with the top reasons women in the United States gave for visiting specialised family planning clinics.⁶ In the original US research, "the four most common reasons for choosing a specialised family planning clinic, reported by at least 80% of respondents, were respectful staff, confidential care, free or low-cost services, and staff who are knowledgeable about women's health." Our clients also reported respectful staff, confidential services, and knowledge of contraception and sexual health issues among their top four reasons for choosing Family Planning. It appears that despite vastly different health systems and population groups, women universally value a health provider with specialist knowledge and skill in providing sexual and reproductive health care, and staff who treat them with respect. Therefore, the findings of our survey are not unique, but mirror what has been found in other countries through robust research. This is likely why funding for specialised sexual and reproductive services has been a

⁶ Frost JJ, Gold RB, Bucek A. Specialized family planning clinics in the United States: why women choose them and their role in meeting women's health care needs. *Womens Health Issues*. 2012 Nov-Dec;22(6):e519-25. doi: 10.1016/j.whi.2012.09.002. PMID: 23122212.

staple of so many health systems across the world for decades, although these services are almost universally underfunded.

Our clients reported that contraception is very important to them and helps them have a baby when they are ready. Seventy-two percent (72%) of clients report that contraception gives them more control over their lives. Contraception is basic health care. Deciding if and when to have a child is a human right. If health care reform is going to be client centred, access to contraception and other sexual and reproductive health services in primary care must be a priority.

When we asked clients what we could do better, there were common themes that were not a surprise to us. Most relate to our capacity to meet demand for our services. Clients want shorter waiting times for appointments, more clinics, more staff and expanded hours. We understand our clients' frustration over long wait times. Family Planning has been underfunded for over a decade and our limited resources makes it difficult to scale up services. Clients asked for some changes to how we operate that also relate to our capacity and limited resources, such as developing an online booking system. We value this information from our clients and endeavour to respond to their needs and suggestions.

Family Planning acknowledges this survey is not the same as research. However, given the alignment with robust research from the United States, we believe it provides valuable information at a critical time in the development of a new health system for New Zealand. Overall, the results of this survey show that young people choose to come to Family Planning because we offer free, youth-friendly services. Some of our young clients don't go anywhere else for their health care. The survey findings indicate that clients value how our staff treat them, our expertise in women's health and our ability to provide the contraception they want right away. Confidentiality of services was also important to our clients. As the Government considers how to restructure the New Zealand health system to meet the needs of all clients, address inequity and prioritise prevention, it is clear that specialised sexual and reproductive health providers like Family Planning play an important role. Specialised sexual and reproductive health services should be easily accessible and must be adequately resourced to meet demand. Meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of New Zealanders will help people stay healthy and well and will give people better control over their lives.

Key findings

- For young people's sexual health, what matters most is access to low cost, non-judgemental experts.
- All respondents value Family Planning because we treat them with respect and are experts in providing the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including all contraceptive options.
- Specialised sexual and reproductive health services play an important role in a client-centred health system, particularly for young people.