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STRATEGY NETWORK

Reduced Health Insurance Payments for Hospital Births Had a Bigger Impact on Sterilization Rates Than Correcting an Injustice

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For decades, **female sterilization** has been one of the **most common forms of birth control in the U.S.**: 11.5% of U.S. women, ages 15-49, use female sterilization as their primary contraceptive method – nearly identical to the pill.

But **the history of sterilization** is also deeply entangled with coercion in the form of **racial targeting, invalid consent** and **state control**.

As a **health economist** and a **political scientist**, we wanted to better understand what factors influence women's choices around contraception and sterilization. Our recent study found that a policy change in the 1990s which reduced the length of hospital stays for women giving birth appears to have inadvertently **had a more meaningful effect** on female sterilization rates in the U.S. than a landmark civil rights intervention in the 1970s.