

ISSUE BRIEF, AUGUST 2021

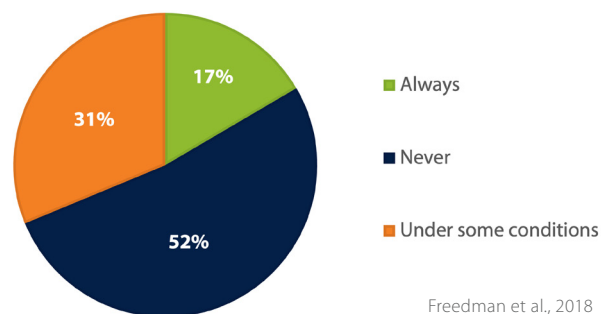
Key Points:

- Most women believe that hospitals should not be able restrict access to reproductive health care based on religion and that it is unacceptable for hospitals to restrict reproductive health care because of religion.
- Many women were not able to identify the religious affiliation of their hospital when seeking reproductive care.
- When choosing a hospital for reproductive care, some women believed the hospital's religious affiliation is important among other reasons, but less than one percent of women believed that religion is the most important consideration.
- The majority of women expect to be able to receive reproductive services regardless of the religion of the hospital.

In a national survey investigating patient awareness of the presence of Catholic hospitals and the implications on reproductive health care, **1,430 women were asked, "should hospitals be able to restrict care based on religion?" 83% said never or only under certain conditions.**

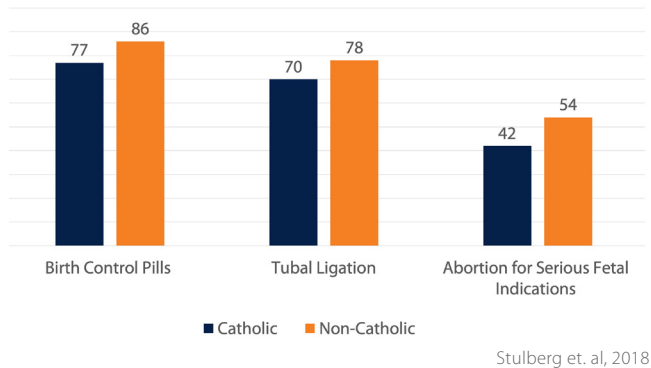
80.7% feel that knowing about a hospital's religious restrictions on care is important before deciding on where to get care.

More than two thirds of women find it unacceptable for hospitals to restrict information and treatment options for miscarriage because of religion.¹ The majority of women expect to be able to receive services regardless of which hospital they attend.

When Should Hospitals Be Able to Restrict Care Based on Religion?**Under which conditions?**

- No taxpayer funds are used to support the hospital
- Patients are informed of hospital's religious restrictions before visit
- Patients arriving by ambulance, unconscious, or in an emergency situation are offered transfer to another hospital

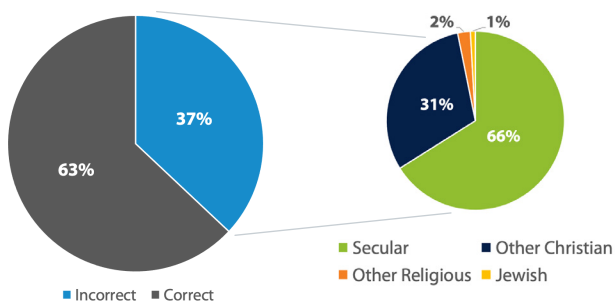
Expectations of Service Provision Based on Hospital Religion



Attending weekly religious services or being Catholic did not make women more or less likely to want information on their hospital's religion.

Women were more likely to correctly identify their hospital as Catholic when the hospital had a religious sounding name. **37% of women whose primary hospital is Catholic did not know the hospital was Catholic, and 66% who misidentified their Catholic hospital's affiliation, thought their hospital was secular.**²

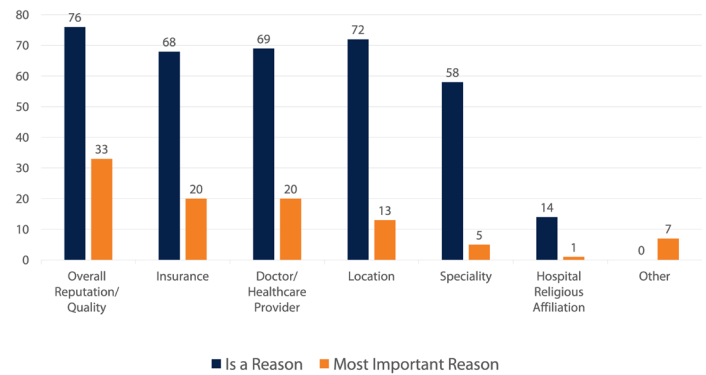
Percent of Women Who Misidentified Their Catholic Hospital and How the Hospital Was Classified



As household income increased, so did the respondents' likelihood to correctly identify a hospital as Catholic indicating **lower-income women may face more unexpected restrictions when seeking care.**³

When asked about their reasons for choosing a hospital for reproductive care, **13.6% checked the hospital's religion as one among several reasons, but 0.7% felt religion was the most important reason.**⁴

Reasons for Choosing a Hospital for Reproductive Care



References

1. Freedman LR, Hebert LE, Battistelli MF, Stulberg DB. Religious hospital policies on reproductive care: what do patients want to know? *Am J Obstet Gynecol.* 2018 Feb;218(2):251.e1-251.e9.
2. Wascher JM, Hebert LE, Freedman LR, Stulberg DB. Do women know whether their hospital is Catholic? Results from a national survey. *Contraception.* 2018 Dec;98(6):498-503.
3. Stulberg DB, Guiahi M, Hebert LE, Freedman LR. Women's Expectation of Receiving Reproductive Health Care at Catholic and Non-Catholic Hospitals. *Perspect Sex Reprod Health.* 2019 Sep;51(3):135-142.
4. Hebert LE, Freedman L, Stulberg DB. Choosing a hospital for obstetric, gynecologic, or reproductive healthcare: what matters most to patients? *Am J Obstet Gynecol MFM.* 2020 Feb;2(1):100067.