

# Facts on Contraceptive Use in the United States

June 2010

## WHO NEEDS CONTRACEPTIVES?

- There are 62 million U.S. women in their childbearing years (15–44).[1]
- Seven in 10 women of reproductive age (43 million women) are sexually active and do not want to become pregnant, but could become pregnant if they and their partners fail to use a contraceptive method.[2]
- The typical U.S. woman wants only two children. To achieve this goal, she must use contraceptives for roughly three decades.[3]

## WHO USES CONTRACEPTIVES?

- Virtually all women (more than 99%) aged 15–44 who have ever had sexual intercourse have used at least one contraceptive method.[2]
- Overall, 62% of the 62 million women aged 15–44 are currently using a method.[2]
- Almost one-third (31%) of these 62 million women do not need a method because they are infertile; are pregnant, postpartum or trying to become pregnant; have never had intercourse; or are not sexually active.[2]
- Thus, only 7% of women aged 15–44 are at risk for unintended pregnancy but are not using contraceptives.[2]
- Among the 43 million fertile, sexually active women who do not want to become pregnant, 89% are practicing contraception.[2]

## WHICH METHODS DO WOMEN USE?

- Sixty-three percent of reproductive-age women who practice contraception use nonpermanent methods, including hormonal methods (such as the pill, patch, implant, injectable and vaginal ring), the IUD and condoms. The remaining women rely on female or male sterilization.[2]
- Contraceptive choices vary markedly with age. For women younger than 30, the pill is the leading method. Among women aged 30 and older, more rely on sterilization.[2]

### CONTRACEPTIVE METHOD CHOICE

Method use among U.S. women who practice contraception, 2006–08

Method	No. of users (in 000s)	% of users
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Pill	10,700	28.0
Tubal sterilization	10,400	27.1
Male condom	6,200	16.1
Vasectomy	3,800	9.9
IUD	2,100	5.5
Withdrawal	2,000	5.2
Three-month injectable (Depo-Provera)	1,200	3.2
Vaginal ring (NuvaRing)	900	2.4
Implant (Implanon or Norplant), one-month injectable (Lunelle) or patch (Evra)	400	1.1
Periodic abstinence (calendar)	300	0.9
Other*	200	0.4
Periodic abstinence (natural family planning)	100	0.2
Diaphragm	†	†
TOTAL	38,214	100.0

\*Includes emergency contraception, female condom or vaginal pouch, foam, cervical cap, Today sponge, suppository or insert, jelly or cream (without diaphragm) and other methods.

†Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

- The pill and female sterilization have been the two leading contraceptive methods in the United States since 1982. However, sterilization is the most common method among black and Hispanic women, while white women mostly commonly choose the pill.[\[2\]](#)
- Female sterilization is most commonly relied on by women who are aged 35 or older, women who are currently or have previously been married, women with two or more children, women below 150% of the federal poverty level and women with less than a college education.[\[2\]](#)
- Half of all women aged 40–44 who practice contraception have been sterilized, and another 20% have a partner who has had a vasectomy.[\[2\]](#)
- The pill is the method most widely used by women who are in their teens and 20s, women who are cohabiting, women with no children and women with at least a college degree.[\[2\]](#)
- Some 6.2 million women rely on the male condom.[\[4\]](#) Condom use is especially common among teens and women in their 20s, women with one or no children and women with at least a college education.[\[2\]](#)
- Dual methods (most often the condom combined with another method) are used by 13.5% of contraceptive users. The proportions using more than one method are greatest among teenagers and never-married women.[\[2\]](#)

## TEEN CONTRACEPTIVE USE

- Teenagers (aged 15–19) who do not use a contraceptive at first sex are twice as likely to become teen mothers as are teenagers who use a method.[\[2\]](#)
- Twenty-three percent of teenage women using contraceptives choose condoms as their primary method. Condom use is higher among women aged 20–24 and is lower among older and married women.[\[2\]](#)
- Of the 2.9 million teenage women who use contraceptives, 54%—more than 1.5 million women—rely on the pill.[\[2\]](#)

## TRENDS IN CONTRACEPTIVE USE

- The proportion of women aged 15–44 currently using a contraceptive method increased from 56% in 1982 to 64% in 1995, and then declined slightly to 62% in 2002 and 2006–2008.[\[2\]](#)
- Among all women, 7% were at risk of unwanted pregnancy but not using a method in 2006–2008, an increase from 5% in 1995. [\[2\]](#)
- Among just those women who are sexually active and able to become pregnant but do not want to become pregnant, 11% are not using contraceptives. That number is much higher among teens aged 15–19 (19%) and lower among older women aged 40–44 (8%).[\[2\]](#)
- The proportion of women using contraceptives who rely on condoms decreased between 1995 and 2006–2008 from 20% to 16%. However, use was still higher in 2006–2008 than it was in 1988.[\[2,4\]](#)
- Between 1995 and 2002, the share of users relying on the pill increased slightly, from 27% to 31%, but it declined slightly, to 28%, in 2006–2008.[\[2\]](#)
- In 2006–2008, 27% of contraceptive users relied on female sterilization, compared with 23% in 1982. [\[funded family planning clinic.2,4\]](#)

### FIRST YEAR CONTRACEPTIVE FAILURE RATES

Method	Perfect use	Typical use
Pill (combined)	0.3	8.7
Tubal sterilization	0.5	0.7
Male condom	2.0	17.4
Vasectomy	0.1	0.2
Three-month injectable	0.3	6.7
Withdrawal	4.0	18.4
IUD (Copper-T)	0.6	1.0
IUD (Mirena)	0.1	0.1
Periodic abstinence	-	25.3
Calendar	9.0	-
Ovulation method	3.0	-
Symptothermal	2.0	-

Post-ovulation	1.0	-
One-month injectable	0.05	3.0
Implant	0.05	1.0
Patch	0.3	8.0
Diaphragm	6.0	16.0
Sponge		
Women who have had a child	20.0	32.0
Women who have never had a child	9.0	16.0
Cervical cap		
Women who have had a child	26.0	32.0
Women who have never had a child	9.0	16.0
Female condom	5.0	27.0
Spermicides	18.0	29.0
No method	85.0	85.0

*Note:* Data for the pill, male condom, three-month injectable, withdrawal and periodic abstinence were updated in 2007.

\*Most perfect-use rates have been clinically evaluated, but some are based on clinical expertise or “best guesses” (such as some forms of periodic abstinence, withdrawal and no method use). †Typical-use rates for the implant, the diaphragm and spermicides are based on 1991–1995 data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, as calculated by Fu et al. Rates for the three-month injectable, the pill, the male condom, periodic abstinence and withdrawal are based on data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, as calculated by Kost et al. Rates for the IUD, sterilization and the female condom are from Hatcher et al., and are adjusted by the ratio of the corrected and standardized failure rate in the first 12 months for all methods (12.9%) to the uncorrected failure rate for all methods (9.9%), as reported in Fu et al. Other typical-use rates are from Hatcher et al.

*Sources:* **Perfect use**—Hatcher RA et al., eds., *Contraceptive Technology*, 18th ed., New York: Ardent Media, 2004, Table 9-2. **Typical use**—Hatcher RA et al., eds., *Contraceptive Technology*, 18th ed., New York: Ardent Media, 2004; and Fu H et al., Contraceptive failure rates: new estimates from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, *Family Planning Perspectives*, 1999, 31(2):56–63;

and Kost K, et al., Estimates of contraceptive failure from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, *Contraception*, 2007, 77(1):10–21.

- The proportion of all users relying on the IUD has increased substantially, from less than 1% in 1995, to 2% in 2002, to 5.5% in 2006–2008. [2]

## WHO PAYS FOR CONTRACEPTION?

- One-quarter of the more than 20 million American women who obtain contraceptive services from a medical provider receive care from a publicly funded family planning clinic. [5]
- In 2008, 7.2 million women, including 1.8 million teenagers, received contraceptive services from publicly funded family planning clinics in the United States. [5]
- Federal employees are guaranteed insurance coverage for contraceptives. [6]
- Nine in 10 employer-based insurance plans cover a full range of prescription contraceptives, which is three times the proportion that did so just a decade ago. [7]
- Twenty-seven states now have laws in place requiring insurers that cover prescription drugs in general to provide coverage for the full range of contraceptive drugs and devices approved by the Food and Drug Administration. [8]

## Data Sources

The information in this fact sheet is the most current available. All of the data are from research conducted by the Guttmacher Institute and the National Center for Health Statistics or from *Contraceptive Technology*.

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Table 2: annual estimates of the resident population by sex and selected age groups for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008, no date, <<http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2008/NC-EST2008-02.xls>>, accessed May 25, 2010.

2. Mosher WD and Jones J, Use of contraception in the United States: 1982–2008, *Vital and Health Statistics*, 2010, Series 23, No. 29.

3. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), *Fulfilling the Promise: Public Policy and U.S. Family Planning Clinics*, New York: AGI, 2000.

4. Piccinino LJ and Mosher WD, Trends in contraceptive use in the United States: 1982–1995, *Family Planning Perspectives*, 1998, 30(1):4–10 & 46.

5. Frost JJ, Trends in US women’s use of sexual and reproductive health care services, 1995–2002, *American Journal of Public Health*, 2008, 98(10):1814–1817.

6. Dailard C, Contraceptive coverage: a 10-year retrospective, *Guttmacher Report on Public Policy*, 2004, 7(2):6–9.

7. Sonfield A et al., U.S. insurance coverage of contraceptives and the impact of contraceptive coverage mandates, 2002, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2004, 36(2):72–79.

8. Guttmacher Institute, Insurance coverage contraceptives, *State Policies In Brief* (as of May 2010), 2010, <[http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib\\_ICC.pdf](http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_ICC.pdf)>, accessed May 25, 2010.