



Contraceptive Use In the United States

The need for contraceptives

- There are 61 million U.S. women of reproductive age (15–44). About 43 million of them (70%) are at risk of unintended pregnancy—that is, they 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 correctly and consistently.
- Couples who do not use any method of contraception have approximately an 85% chance of experiencing a pregnancy over the course of a year.
- In the United States, the average desired family size is two children. To achieve this family size, a woman must use contraceptives for roughly three decades.

Who uses contraceptives

- More than 99% of women aged 15–44 who have ever had sexual intercourse have used at least one contraceptive method.
- Some 60% of all women of reproductive age are currently using a contraceptive method.
- Ten percent of women at risk of unintended pregnancy are not currently using any contraceptive method.
- The proportion of women at risk of unintended pregnancy who are not using a method is highest among those aged 15–19 (18%) and lowest among those aged 40–44 (9%).
- Eighty-three percent of black women at risk of unintended pregnancy are currently using a contraceptive method,

compared with 91% of their Hispanic and white peers, and 90% of their Asian peers.

- Among women at risk of unintended pregnancy, 92% of those with an income of at least 300% of the federal poverty level and 89% of those living at 0–149% of poverty are currently using a contraceptive method.

- A much higher proportion of married women than of never-married women use a contraceptive method (77% vs. 42%), largely because married women are more likely to be sexually active. But even among those at risk of unintended pregnancy, contraceptive use is higher among currently married women than among never-married women (93% vs. 83%).

CONTRACEPTIVE METHOD CHOICE

Most effective method used in the past month by U.S. women, 2014

METHOD	No. of women	% of women aged 15–44	% of women at risk of unintended pregnancy	% of contraceptive users
Pill	9,572,477	15.6	22.7	25.3
Tubal (female) sterilization	8,225,149	13.4	19.5	21.8
Male condom	5,496,905	8.9	13.0	14.6
IUD	4,452,344	7.2	10.6	11.8
Vasectomy (male sterilization)	2,441,043	4.0	5.8	6.5
Withdrawal	3,042,724	5.0	7.2	8.1
Injectable	1,481,902	2.4	3.5	3.9
Vaginal ring	905,896	1.5	2.1	2.4
Fertility awareness–based methods	832,216	1.3	2.0	2.2
Implant	965,539	1.6	2.3	2.6
Patch	69,106	0.1	0.2	0.2
Emergency contraception	69,967	0.1	0.2	0.2
Other methods*	234,959	0.4	0.6	0.6
No method, at risk of unintended pregnancy	4,408,474	7.2	10.5	na
No method, not at risk	19,302,067	31.4	na	na
Total	61,491,766	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Includes diaphragm, female condom, foam, cervical cap, sponge, suppository, jelly/cream and other methods. NOTE: "At risk" refers to women who are sexually active; not pregnant, seeking to become pregnant or postpartum; and not noncontraceptively sterile. na=not applicable.

- Unmarried women who are cohabiting fall between married women and unmarried women who are not cohabiting: Ninety percent of at-risk women living with a partner use a method.
- Contraceptive use is common among women of all religious denominations. For example, 89% of at-risk Catholics and 90% of at-risk Protestants currently use a method. Among sexually experienced religious women, 99% of Catholics and Protestants have ever used some form of contraception.

Methods used

- Seventy-two percent of women who practice contraception currently use nonpermanent methods—primarily hormonal methods (i.e., the pill, patch, implant, injectable and vaginal ring), IUDs and condoms. The rest rely on female (22%) or male (7%) sterilization.
- The pill and female sterilization have been the two most commonly used methods since 1982.
- Four out of five sexually experienced women have used the pill.
- The pill is the method most widely used by white women, women in their teens and 20s, never-married and cohabiting women, childless women and college graduates.
- The use of hormonal methods other than the pill has increased with the advent of new options. The proportion of women who have ever used the injectable increased from 5% in 1995 to 23% in 2006–2010. Ever-use of the contraceptive patch increased from less than 1% in 2002 to 10% in 2006–2010. Six percent of women had used the contraceptive ring in 2006–2010, the first time this method was included in surveys.
- Reliance on female sterilization varies among subgroups of women. It is most common among blacks and Hispanics, women aged 35 or older, ever-married women, women with two or more children, women living below 150% of the federal poverty level, women with less than a college education, women living outside of a metropolitan area, and those with public or no health insurance.
- Some 68% of Catholics, 73% of Mainline Protestants and 74% of Evangelicals who are at risk of unintended pregnancy use a highly effective method (i.e., sterilization, the pill or another hormonal method, or the IUD).
- Only 2% of at-risk Catholic women rely on natural family planning; the proportion is the same even among those who attend church at least once a month.
- In 2014, about 14% of women using a contraceptive relied on a long-acting reversible contraceptive method, or LARC (12% used the IUD and 3% used the implant). This follows a trend in increasing proportions of women using LARCs, from 2% in 2002 to 6% in 2007 and 9% in 2009.
- Among contraceptive users, the groups of women who most commonly use an IUD or implant are 25–34-year-olds, those born outside of the United States, those living in a Western state, those who report their religious affiliation as “other” and those who have ever stopped using a non-LARC hormonal method. At least 16% of women in these groups use a LARC method.
- Among female contraceptive users in the United States, those most likely to use a LARC method are women who have had a child and those who have ever stopped using a non-LARC hormonal method.
- Some 5.5 million women rely on the male condom. Condom use is most common (i.e., at least 25% greater than the national average of 15%) among 15–19-year-olds, those who report their religious affiliation as “other,” those born outside of the United States, college graduates, those who are uninsured, and those who are nulliparous or are expecting at least one (more) child.
- Ever-use of the male condom increased from 52% in 1982 to 93% in 2006–2010.
- Dual method use offers protection against both pregnancy and STIs. Some 8% of women of reproductive age simultaneously use multiple contraceptive methods (most often the condom combined with another method).

- The proportion of all sexually experienced women who have ever used withdrawal increased from 25% in 1982 to 60% in 2006–2010.
- Seven percent of men aged 15–44 have had a vasectomy; this proportion increases with age, reaching 16% among men aged 36–45.

SOURCES

References are available in the HTML version: <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/contraceptive-use-united-states>



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