

Use of Contraception and Use of Family Planning Services  
in the United States: 1982-2002  
A Fact Sheet for Advance Data No. 350

**Objective of the report**—To describe trends and group differences in contraceptive use and use of family planning services in the US from 1982 to 2002.

**Source of data**---The 1982, 1995, & 2002 National Surveys of Family Growth (NSFG).

**Methods**---In-person interviews with 12,571 men and women 15-44 in 2002. This report is based on the sample of 7,643 women.

**Response rate** for women in the 2002 NSFG was 80 percent.

**Strengths (Advantages) of these data:** See page 3, middle column, of the report.

**Short summary of the findings:**

- Contraceptive use is virtually universal in the U.S.
- 98 percent of women of reproductive age have used one or more methods, and large majorities have used the pill and the (male) condom.
- The condom is the leading method at first intercourse, and use at first intercourse has been rising steadily in the last 20 years.
- The pill is the leading method among young women, and female sterilization is the leading method among women over 35.
- There are big differences in contraceptive use by age, education, race, marital status and other characteristics.

**RESULTS: Use of contraception in the month of interview (tables 4-10)**

The leading method is the oral contraceptive pill, used by 11.6 million women; second leading method is female sterilization, used by 10.3 million women. 3<sup>rd</sup>-leading method is the male condom: 5.4 million were using the condom alone, while another 3.6 million used the condom with other methods.

4<sup>th</sup>-leading method is Male sterilization

5<sup>th</sup>-leading method is the 3-month injectable called Depo-Provera™

**Together, these 5 methods account for about 90 percent of contraceptive users.**

**Results: Ever-Use (tables 1 and 2 and Figures 1 and 2):**

- More than 98 percent of women 15-44 years of who have ever had sexual intercourse have used at least one contraceptive method.
- About 44.5 million women (82 percent) had used the Oral contraceptive pill at some time in their lives. 90 percent had had a partner who used the condom.

### **Results: Use at first sex (Table 3 and figure 3):**

- Use at the first premarital intercourse: before 1980, only 43 percent used a method of contraception at first intercourse. In 1999-2002, 79 percent. Most of this increase was due to an increase in use of the male condom at first intercourse, from 22 percent in the 1970's to 67 percent in 1999-2002. (table 3 and Figure 3)

### **Current Use: Other results**

- Women 15-44 who were sexually active and not using contraception: increased from 5.4 percent in 1995 to 7.4 percent in 2002. This is an estimated increase of 1.43 million women between 1995 and 2002, and could raise the rate of unintended pregnancy. The increase did not occur among teens; only among women 20 and older. (Table 6)
- 38 million women 15-44 were using contraception in 2002. They are referred to as “contraceptors” in the report. Female sterilization is the leading method choice among those 35-44 (Table 10 & Figure 6). In contrast, the Pill is the leading method among those under age 30. (Table 10 & Figure 7)
- Female sterilization accounts for 55 percent of users without a high school degree in 2002, compared with just 13 percent of contraceptors with a 4-year college degree. (Table 10 and Figure 8)
- 11 percent of contraceptors without a high school degree used the pill in 2002, vs. 42 percent of contraceptors with a 4-year college degree. (Table 10 & Figure 9)
- About 10 percent of never married women had a partner who was using male condoms. But another 7 percent were using condoms along with a more effective method---such as the pill---so a total of 17 percent were using the condom. Among married couples, however, this kind of combination use was not common. (Tables 8 and 13 and Figure 10)
- Very few women rely on their partners to use withdrawal as their most effective method of contraception (only 2.5 percent). But withdrawal is used as an occasional back-up method by some married and cohabiting couples, and by the partners of some never married women. (Tables 8 and 13 and Figure 11)

### **Results: Use of Family Planning and other medical services**

- About 42 percent of women 15-44 years of age received one or more family planning services in the 12 months before the 2002 survey. Use of these services by age parallels use of oral contraceptives by age: 63 percent of women 20-24

years of age, and 20 percent of women 40-44 used such services in the year before the survey. (Table 15 and Figure 12)

- The percentage of women 15-44 who used family planning services in the last 12 months increased from 33 percent in 1995 to 42 percent in 2002. About 29 percent of females 15-19 received some family planning services in 1995, compared with 40 percent in 2002. Increases also occurred in other age groups. (text, page 12-13 and table 15).
- About 73 percent of women 15-44 years of age in 2002 (44.8 million) had visited a doctor or clinic for family planning services or related medical care in the last year. (table 17)
- About 42 percent (25.7 million) received family planning services such as birth control methods (34%), or birth control check-ups or tests(24%). (Table 15)
- 69 percent (42.5 million) received other medical services, such as Pap smears (64%), Pelvic exams (60%), or pregnancy tests (20%). (Table 16)
- More than 34 million of the 61.6 million women 15-44 years of age (56 percent) visited private doctors for family planning or related medical services in 2002. About 13.5 million (22 percent) used publicly-funded clinics. (Table 17)
- The DHHS Title X family planning program served an estimated 4.2 million women in the 12 months before the 1995 survey, and an estimated 5.4 million in the 12 months before the 2002 survey. The clients of this program are disproportionately low-income women. (Table 18)

### The effectiveness of contraceptive use:

**There is little evidence in the report that adults as a whole are using more effective methods in 2002 than they were in 1995.**

**But Teen** contraceptive use has become more effective since 1995:

- teens are more likely to use contraception (usually condoms) at first intercourse, and a growing percentage use the pill and the condom at first intercourse;
- more teens use condoms and fewer use no method at all, at their most recent intercourse;
- more teens use the new injectable methods, which are very effective.

### Uses of the data

The data are widely used for scientific research (on population change, family change, marriage and divorce, and teenage sex and pregnancy). The NSFG web page lists over

360 published government reports and articles in scientific journals that have used NSFG data: [www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg.htm)

A group of agencies and programs in DHHS paid for the survey because it gives them information they need to run their programs—including

- Providing health education and information;
- providing medical services to low-income people;
- scientific research on families and health;
- preventing teen pregnancy; and
- monitoring population change, including birth and pregnancy rates.

Federal, state, and local governments, and groups interested in preventing teen pregnancy, improving family planning services, and providing health care for low-income people will use the data to see how their experience compares with the nation as a whole, and to see if they should be changing the direction or emphasis of their programs.

### Some other surprising or interesting findings:

1. Some methods that are used by less than 3 percent of women—table 11:
  - Implant, 1-month shot, patch, IUD,
  - diaphragm, calendar rhythm, temperature rhythm,
  - Today Sponge, Cervical cap, female condom.
2. Very few women use the diaphragm.  
(table 4: 4.5% in 1982; 1.2% in 1995; 0.2% in 2002) (120,000)  
(table 11: accounting for multiple use, 0.4% of all women, or 246,000)
3. Pill use is strongly associated with education:  
Figure 9 and table 10: varies from 11% to 42%  
In 1995 (Series 23, No. 19, table 44): 14% vs 32%, so these differences have widened since 1995.
4. Condom use is associated with the woman's education:  
Table 10: 13% vs 21% by education.
5. The number of women who were at risk of pregnancy but not using a method appears to have increased. (page 7 of report): **5.4% in 1995, 7.4% in 2002. 3.13 million in 1995, and 4.56 million in 2002.** If the change is real, it could result in more unintended pregnancies; some of these women may believe they are infertile, or they may be ambivalent about getting pregnant. This should be studied further.
6. Ever-use data: 98% have used a method. (tables 1 and 2)
  - 90% have used condom. (14.7% currently using it, table 11.)
  - 56% have used withdrawal vs. 41% in 1995 (table 1);  
(5% currently using it, table 11)