

# Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Contraceptive use is essential among sexually active women of reproductive age who wish to limit the number of children they have. Contraception is important for those who plan to space their births at healthy intervals or postpone childbearing. Family planning is included as one of the 28 focus areas of Healthy People 2010, a nationwide comprehensive health promotion and disease prevention agenda launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.<sup>1</sup>

The California Department of Health Services' Office of Family Planning Branch included two contraceptive utilization questions asked of non-pregnant, fertile respondents (i.e. those who reported they haven't had a hysterectomy) in the annual California Women's Health Survey (CWHS): first, "Are you or your male sex partners currently using a birth control method to prevent pregnancy?" and second, "Which birth control method or methods are you using?" Respondents or their partners who were currently using a contraceptive method were classified by what method they were using; those using multiple methods were classified by the most effective method they were using. A total of 2,595 respondents were current users of contraception in the combined 2003-2004 CWHS.

Nearly half, 48.9 percent of women ages 18-44 were at risk of unintended pregnancy. Of those at risk of unintended pregnancy (sexually active in the past 12 months and neither pregnant, sterilized, postpartum, seeking pregnancy, nor infertile), 13.6 percent were not currently using any contraceptive method and 86.4 percent were currently using some form of birth control. Women who reported sterilization (either male or female) were excluded from this estimate because they are not considered to be at risk of unintended pregnancy.

Below are the highlights describing current contraceptive users and their methods of choice:

- The contraceptive pill was the most popular method with 27.9 percent of contraceptive users; 40.5 percent of women ages 25-29, 39.7 percent of women ages 18-24, 39.1 percent of those who were never married/unmarried couple, and 31.5 percent of White women were oral contraceptives users.
- Approximately one-quarter of women reported using condoms, the second most frequently cited method of contraception; 36.4 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander and 35.6 percent of African American women reported condoms as their primary method.
- Female sterilization was the third leading method with 16.6 percent of users of contraception; 31.8 percent of women who were divorced, widowed, and separated, 31.4 percent of older women ages 40-44, and 26.2 percent of women ages 35-39 reported this method as their leading method of contraception.
- Twelve percent of women currently using contraception relied on male sterilization as their contraceptive method.
- Eleven percent of women reported using long-acting methods such as Depo-Provera®, contraceptive implant, and intrauterine contraception.
- About 5.0 percent of women and their partners were current users of other methods such as diaphragm, cervical cap, natural family planning, and withdrawal.

## Contraceptive Use Among California Women Ages 18-44, 2003-2004

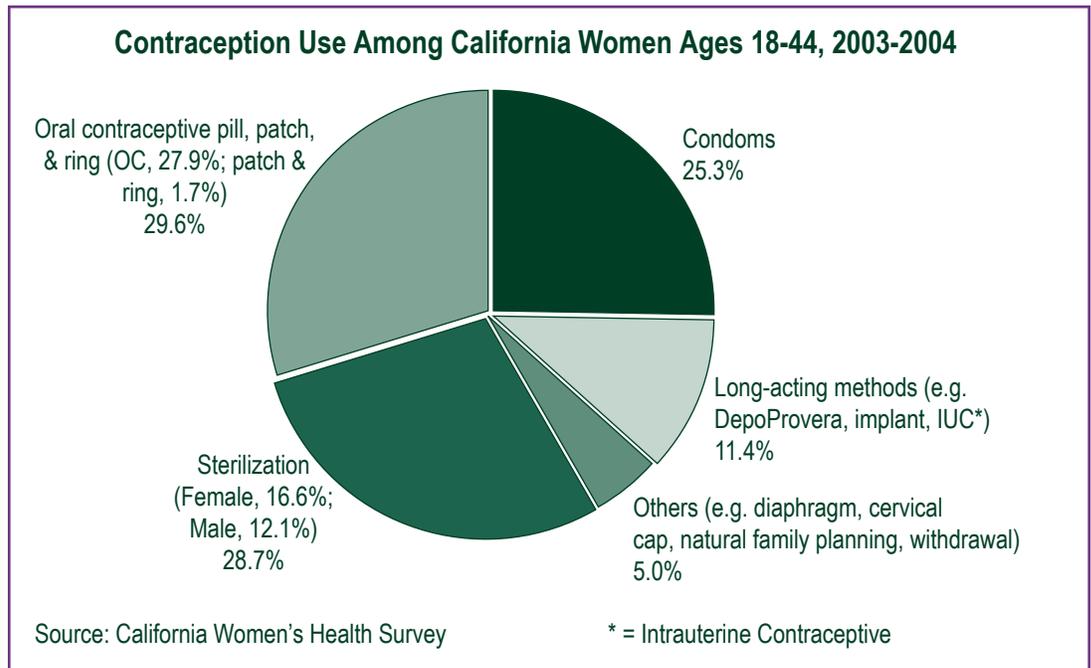
California Department of Health Services  
Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health/Office of Family Planning Branch

**Public Health Message:** *Prevention of mistimed and unplanned pregnancies is possible through consistent use of effective contraception. Although nearly nine in ten women ages 18-44 reported current use of contraceptives, more than one in ten who were at risk of unintended pregnancy were not using any form of contraception.*

Issue 4, Summer 2006, Num. 17

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cent Health/Office of Family  
Planning Branch



- 1 United States Department of Health and Human Services. 2000. Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: U.S. government Printing Office.

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