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U.S. Birth-Control Use Stable, Except For Increase In Use Of IUDs: Study

American women of child-bearing age continue to use birth control at high rates, with the pill, condoms and sterilization remaining the most common methods of avoiding pregnancy. However, use of the intrauterine device (IUD) has steadily grown, the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) said Tuesday.

The new report was based on the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) 2011-2013, which estimated that out of 61 million U.S. women ages 15-44, nearly 62 percent were using some form of birth control.

This is essentially unchanged from what the NSFG found in its 2002 and 2006-2010 surveys.

The birth-control pill was the most common type of contraceptive, used by nearly 26 percent of the women who were currently using a birth control method, the NCHS report said.

Female sterilization was the second most common type of birth control, with 25 percent of women relying on that procedure; another 8.2 percent of women relied on their male partners' sterilization.

Use of male condoms was the third most common method, with 15 percent of women using such products to avoid pregnancy.

The most significant change was the increase in long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC), which the agency noted has been given "increased attention" in recent years, due to their effectiveness and ease of use: "LARC methods require little or no user action once inserted," said the report by NCHS researcher Kimberly Daniels and colleagues.

In 2011-2013, nearly 12 percent of women were using a LARC — with more than 10 percent using an IUD, rather than an implant.

In comparison, in 2002, only 2.4 percent of "current contraceptors" were using a LARC.

The NCHS said that 99 percent of U.S. women who have ever had sexual intercourse have used a birth control method, with most women saying they have used about three different methods during their lifetime.

A new survey of 1,000 adults released Monday found "overwhelming support" for birth control among Americans, as well as strong support for making it easier for people to get "the full range of birth control methods," said the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.