

EVERYONE LOVES BIRTH CONTROL

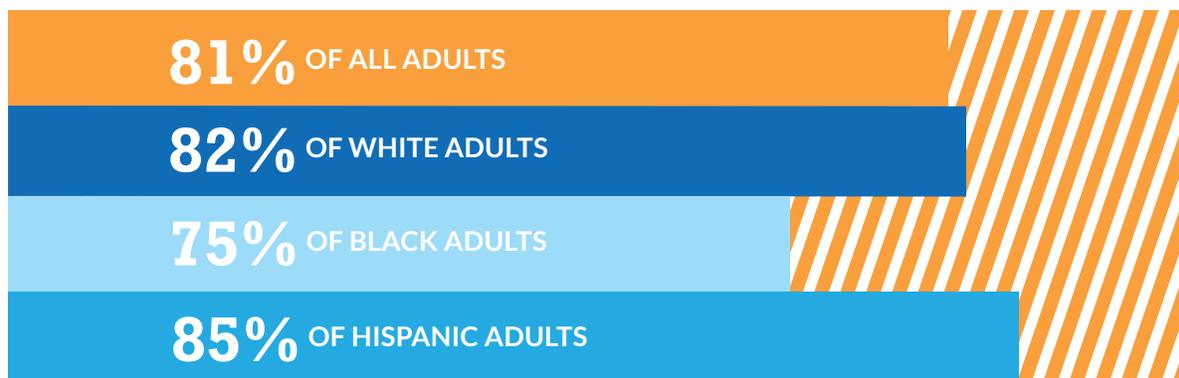
THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN AND UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

Support for birth control is broad and deep and almost everyone uses it. Birth control is directly linked to a wide array of benefits to women, men, children, and society, including fewer unplanned pregnancies.¹ It is also the case that nearly half (45%) of all pregnancies in the U.S. are reported *by women themselves* as unplanned.² The good news is unplanned pregnancy is declining for the first time in decades—the latest data show an 18% decline from 2008 to 2011. However, great disparities remain—women of color, low income women, and women with less education all have higher rates of unplanned pregnancy.³ Unplanned pregnancy is highly preventable and the broad array of contraceptive methods available are widely supported.

Birth Control is Popular

Researchers attribute the recent decline in rates of unplanned pregnancy in large part to increased use of contraception and the availability of more effective methods of contraception, such as IUDs and the implant.⁴ However, not everyone has information about and access to the full range of methods and there is a misperception about the acceptability of contraception. The reality is that birth control is popular. Support for and use of contraception in the United States is very broad-based and longstanding:

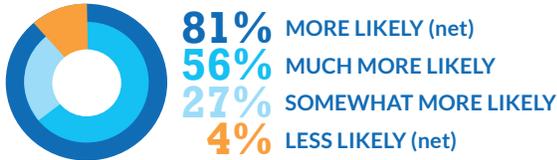
- Ninety-nine percent of American women who have ever had sex have used contraception at some point in their lives,⁵ as have 98% of Catholic women.⁶
- Birth control enjoys broad public support. A majority of adults agree that birth control is a basic part of women's health care:⁷



- Ninety percent of Democrats and 70% of Republicans agree that birth control is a basic part of women's health care.⁸
- More than 90% of all Americans (across political parties, race, and ethnicity) agree that for those trying not to get pregnant, using birth control is taking personal responsibility.⁹
- Nearly nine out of 10 Americans (89%) find birth control morally acceptable, according to a recent Gallup poll. Indeed, Gallup noted that of all the issues they tested for moral acceptability in that poll, "birth control is the issue that the largest percentage of Americans approve of."¹⁰

So Why Does Everyone Love Birth Control?

- **It improves maternal and infant health.** More than eight in 10 Americans understand that when teens and women have the power to decide if and when to get pregnant they are more likely to have healthier babies and more stable families.¹¹



Helping women and couples time and space pregnancies through the effective use of contraception improves maternal and child health. A child born as the result of an unintended pregnancy is at greater risk of premature birth and low birthweight and babies who are born early or too small have a greater chance of dying in their first year of life and suffering short- or long-term health consequences.¹²



Low birthweight is **2/3** more likely following an unwanted pregnancy.¹³



Women who have unplanned pregnancy are **twice as likely to lack prenatal care** as those with a planned pregnancy.¹⁴

- **It reduces abortion.** Greater access to and use of effective birth control by those not seeking to get pregnant is critical to preventing unplanned pregnancy which is at the root of almost all abortions. Forty-two percent of the 2.8 million unplanned pregnancies in the U.S. end in abortion.¹⁵ The public understands the common sense idea that birth control reduces abortion. Most Americans agree that those who oppose abortion should strongly support birth control.¹⁶



- **It improves educational attainment and family wellbeing.** Birth control helps women decide if, when, and under what circumstances they become pregnant, complete their education, and improve the financial and employment prospects for themselves and their families.¹⁷ Indeed, 84% of adults agree that having the power to decide if and when to get pregnant contributes to educational and economic opportunities for teens and women.¹⁸

For educational and economic opportunities for teens and women:



For the ability of teens and women to finish school:



- **It saves tax dollars.** Nearly half of all births in the United States are paid for by Medicaid.¹⁹ There is overwhelming evidence that providing publicly-funded contraceptive services for low-income women directly reduces Medicaid costs. In 2010, the average cost for one Medicaid-covered birth was \$12,770. In comparison, the annual per-client cost for contraceptive care was \$239.²⁰



- **It also saves private dollars.** The National Business Group on Health recommends that employers offer services that help prevent unintended pregnancy including coverage of all FDA-approved methods of contraception at no cost to employees. This recommendation is based on evidence that contraception provides considerable cost savings to companies.²² Furthermore, the cost to employers of covering contraception for employees is minimal, accounting for less than 1% of total employee health insurance coverage costs.²³

There is Broad Support for Addressing Gaps in Information and Access

- Despite broad popularity and use of birth control, not everyone has full information about all their birth control options. For example, 38% of adults say they know little or nothing about birth control pills, which are the most common type of birth control. This lack of information is much higher for the most effective methods—68% for IUDs and 77% for implants.²⁴ What’s more, nearly one-quarter of men claim to know something about the “contraceptive cone”—a method that doesn’t even exist.²⁵
- Moreover, not everyone has access to the methods they want. For example, research conducted among female community college students (primarily lower income women of color) in four sites in Texas found that current contraceptive use among these women does not accurately reflect the methods that they would like to be using or would consider using. That is, considerable unmet demand exists for the most effective methods of contraception, such as IUDs, implants, and hormonal methods.²⁶
- A large majority of Americans agree that more people would use birth control if they:²⁷

KNEW ABOUT THE MANY BIRTH CONTROL OPTIONS AVAILABLE.

74%
AGREE

KNEW ABOUT ITS MANY BENEFITS.

78%
AGREE

WERE MORE COMFORTABLE TALKING OPENLY ABOUT IT.

74%
AGREE

HAD EASIER ACCESS TO BIRTH CONTROL.

77%
AGREE

In fact, 65% of young Republicans (age 18 – 34) agree it is important to educate people about and cover the full range of birth control methods so everyone is free to choose the method that is right for them.²⁸

- Eight in 10 (81%) millennials favor increasing access to contraception for women who cannot afford to pay for it, with support cutting across all racial, ethnic, religious, and political groups.²⁹

So What’s Next?

We know that there is broad support for contraception and we also know that not all women have information about and access to the full range of contraceptive methods. We also know that the American public understands that when all women have the power to decide if and when to get pregnant, they are more likely to have healthier babies, more stable families, and greater educational and economic opportunities.³⁰ Given its myriad benefits, we must ask ourselves what more can we do to ensure access to all contraceptive methods for all women? We should remember that birth control is not controversial, and we all benefit from its use. We all have a role to play—institutions, individuals, decisionmakers, young women themselves. There’s more work to do.

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