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**Coverage**  
United Kingdom

**Theme**  
Health and Care



## Pill still the most popular form of birth control

Women prefer to use the pill ahead of other forms of contraceptive according to a new survey by the Office for National Statistics.

In 2007/08, three-quarters of women in the 16-49 age group reported using some form of contraception, with 28 per cent of women using the pill, compared with 24 per cent who relied on the male condom.

One quarter of women said they did not use any form of contraception in 2007/08, with the most common reason being that they were not in a heterosexual relationship (14 per cent). Three per cent said they were not using contraceptives because they wanted to become pregnant.

The annual survey is carried out on behalf of the NHS Information Centre for health and social care. Questions were addressed to women aged 16-49 and men aged 16-69, and most respondents used a self-completion format.

Other key findings for 2007/08 include:

### Emergency contraception

Almost all women (91 per cent) questioned in the survey had heard of hormonal emergency contraception – the ‘morning after pill’ – but fewer (37 per cent) were aware of the emergency intrauterine device.

Fewer than half of women were correctly aware that the morning after pill remains effective up to 72 hours after intercourse. Eight per cent knew correctly that the emergency IUD was effective up to five days after intercourse.

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Six per cent of women believed, incorrectly, that the morning after pill protected them against pregnancy until the next period.

### **Sexual behaviour**

Most men (92 per cent) said they only had sex with women, while 1 per cent said they only had sex with men. Just under 2 per cent said they had sex with men and women.

Within all age groups between 20 and 49 a higher percentage of men than women reported multiple sexual partners while, in most age groups, proportionately more women than men reported having had just one partner.

### **Knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases**

Around a half of men (57 per cent) and of women (50 per cent) reported making no changes to their behaviour as a result of what they had heard about HIV/AIDS and other STIs. However, 34 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women said they had increased their use of condoms.

Television programs were the most commonly mentioned source of information about STIs (31 per cent) followed by television advertisements (22 per cent) and newspapers, magazines or books (20 per cent). The internet was rarely used as a source of information about STIs, even by young people.

The percentage of people who recognised that Chlamydia is an STI has increased sharply since the question was first asked in 2000/01 – from 35 per cent to 85 per cent for men, and from 65 per cent to 93 per cent for women.

ENDS

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The full report, *Contraception and Sexual Health 2007/08* is available free on the ONS website at:  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlink=6988>
- 2.
3. The Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics for use by government departments and other public or non-profit making bodies. Interviewing is carried out every month and each month's questionnaire covers a variety of topics, reflecting different users' requirements. Interviews are conducted with approximately 1,200 adults (aged 16 or over) in private households in Great Britain each month. The Omnibus Survey uses the Postcode Address File of small users as its sampling frame; all private household addresses in Great Britain are included in this frame.
4. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards as set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from political interference. © Crown Copyright 2008.