

RESEARCH BRIEF

Increasing role of abstinence and infecundity in non-use of contraceptive methods in India

Globally, infrequent sex, fear of side effects, and low perceived risk of pregnancy are common reasons women report for non-use of FP. However, women may underestimate the true risk of unintended pregnancy. This paper aimed to understand patterns of non-use and the discrepancies between reasons for non-use and risk of pregnancy.



Photo Credit: Population Council

RECOMMENDATIONS



Increasing the range of contraceptive methods available to couples can enable them to choose methods based on their contraceptive needs, preferences, and desire to prevent pregnancy.



Improving outreach and counseling to women reporting infrequent sex, infecundity or post-partum amenorrhea can help ascertain risk of pregnancy and ensure access to voluntary FP among those who do not perceive any need but want to prevent pregnancy.



Ensuring access to a range of FP methods for couples where husbands migrate can help prevent unintended pregnancy.



Future research may further examine reasons for non-use of contraception and inconsistencies in responses to supplement National Family Health Surveys.



Photo Credit: Population Council

There are several common reasons that women cite for non-use of contraception despite wanting to space or limit births. These reasons may not coincide with their behaviors, and while couples may have a low perceived risk of pregnancy due to these reasons, they risk an unintended pregnancy.

FINDINGS

- Wanting a child within two years was the most common reason for non-use of contraception. Infecundity and abstinence were common reasons for non-use, followed by opposition to use, all of which increased in prevalence between the two surveys.
- Between 2005-2015, there was a decline in postpartum amenorrhea, infrequent sex, and method-related reasons for non-use. This indicated improvements in postpartum contraceptive use and reductions in method related barriers.
- Discrepancies were noted between women's reported reasons for non-use and sexual behavior. Over half of women who cited infrequent sex as a reason also reported sexual activity in the 4 weeks preceding the survey.
- Husband's migration was the most prominent factor associated with reporting abstinence as a reason for non-use.

METHOD

Using data on married women aged 15-49 years from the NFHS-3 (2005-2006) and 4 (2015-2016), levels of non-use of contraceptives were assessed, classified into fertility-related and other reasons. Multivariate logistic regressions were conducted to examine associations between respondent characteristics and non-use.

RASTA

RASTA (Research and Analyses for Scientific Transformation and Advancement) is a multi-institutional research utilization initiative led by Population Council.

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EVIDENCE

The Evidence Project uses implementation science—the strategic generation, translation, and use of evidence—to strengthen and scale up family planning and reproductive health programs to reduce unintended pregnancies worldwide. The Evidence Project is led by the Population Council.

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