

EVERYONE LOVES BIRTH CONTROL

POWER TO DECIDE, THE CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT UNPLANNED PREGNANCY

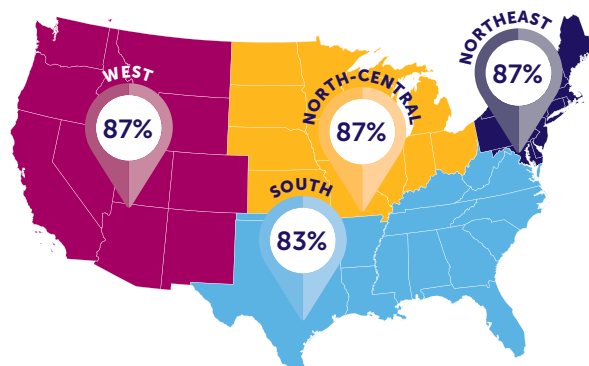
Support for birth control is broad and deep, and almost everyone uses it. Birth control is linked to a wide array of benefits for women, men, children, and society, including fewer unplanned pregnancies.¹ It is also true that nearly half (45%) of all pregnancies in the U.S. are reported by women themselves as unplanned.² The good news is that unplanned pregnancy is declining for the first time in decades—the latest data show an 18% decline from 2008 to 2011. However, progress isn't victory and great disparities remain—women of color, low-income women, and women living in poverty all have higher rates of unplanned pregnancy.³ Unplanned pregnancy is preventable, and there is wide support for the full range of available contraceptive methods.

Birth Control is Popular

Researchers attribute the 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 equitable 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:

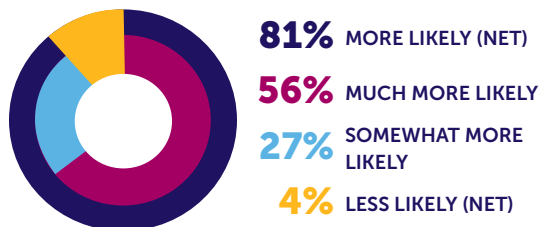
- 99% of American women who have ever had sex have used contraception at some point in their lives,⁵ as have 98% of Catholic women.⁶
- Birth control enjoys broad public support. A large majority of all adults (86%)—regardless of race/ethnicity, region, and political affiliation—support access to all methods of contraception.⁷ This includes 83% of adults in the South, and 87% in the Northeast, North Central region, and West. It also includes 86% of White adults, 94% of Black adults and 88% of Latino adults, as well as 93% of Democrats, 75% of Republicans, and 87% of Independents.
- 91% of Democrats and 66% of Republicans all agree that birth control should be a basic part of women's health care.⁸
- Nearly 9 in 10 adults (87%) agree that everyone deserves access to the full range of birth control methods, no matter who they are, where they live, and what their economic status is.⁹
- More than 9 out of 10 Americans (92%) find birth control morally acceptable, according to a recent Gallup poll. Indeed, birth control consistently tops the list of all issues Gallup tests for moral acceptability.¹⁰

The majority of adults support
access to all methods of contraception



So Why Does Everyone Love Birth Control?

- **It improves maternal and infant health.** More than 8 in 10 Americans understand that when teens and women have the power to decide if and when to get pregnant, they are likely to have healthier babies and more stable families.¹¹



Helping people and couples space out their 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. Babies who are born early or too small also have a greater chance of dying in their first year of life and suffering short- or long-term health consequences.¹²

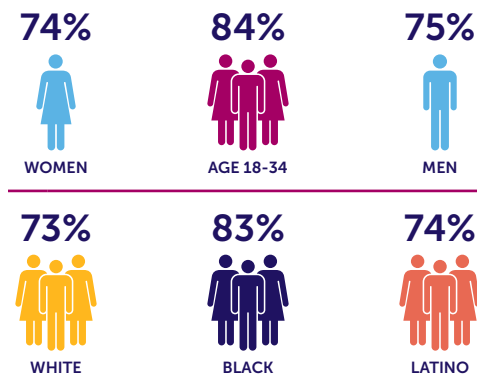


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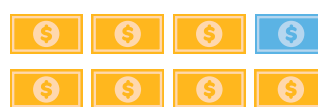
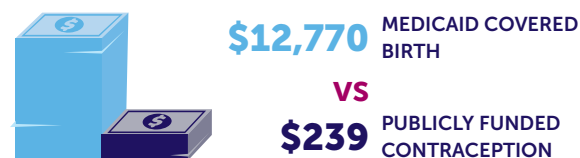
Women who have unplanned pregnancy are **twice as likely to lack prenatal care** as those with a planned pregnancy.

- **It improves educational and workforce attainment.** Birth control helps people decide if, when, and under what circumstances to become pregnant, complete their education, and improve financial and employment prospects for themselves and their families.¹⁴ 86% of college-educated women in the workforce say that being able to control if and/or when to become a parent has been important to their career path.¹⁵ Indeed, 74% of adults appreciate birth control for the ability to work toward educational or professional goals.¹⁶

74% of Adults Appreciate Birth Control for the Ability to Work Toward Educational or Professional Goals.



- **It saves tax dollars.** Nearly half of all births in the United States are paid for by Medicaid.¹⁷ There is overwhelming evidence that providing publicly funded contraceptive services for low-income women directly reduces Medicaid costs.¹⁸



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For every \$1 invested in contraception, the nation saves approximately \$7 in taxpayer dollars.

Moreover, contraception is cited as a key factor in recent declines in teen pregnancy, and recent analysis finds that the 64% decline in the teen birth rate between 1991 and 2015 has resulted in \$4.4 billion in public savings each year.²⁰

- **It also saves private dollars.** 65% of black female and 64% of Latina small business owners say access to birth control, and the freedom to decide if and when to have children, has impacted their bottom lines as business owners.²¹ 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

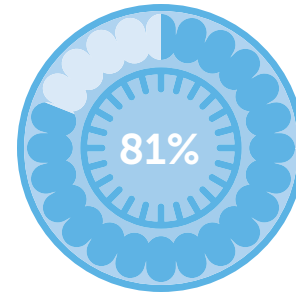
- **It reduces abortion.** Greater access to and use of effective birth control by those not seeking to get pregnant is critical to preventing unplanned pregnancy that is at the root of almost all abortions. 42% of the 2.8 million unplanned pregnancies in the U.S. end in abortion.²⁴ Even among the 40% of Americans that believe abortion should be illegal in most (25%) or all (15%) cases, 66% think government health insurance programs for low-income women, like Medicaid, should cover the cost of birth control.²⁵

There is Broad Support for Addressing Gaps in Information and Access

- Despite broad popularity and use of birth control, not everyone has access to complete information about all their birth control options. For example, only 31% of women of reproductive age have heard about the most effective methods such as intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants. There are substantial disparities in knowledge about these methods, with large knowledge gaps among non-white, non-Hispanic, low income, and single women.²⁶ What's more, while telehealth can help overcome some barriers to accessing contraception, significant knowledge and access gaps exist for lower income women.²⁷
- Moreover, many people do not have access to contraception, and access to the most effective methods of contraception is even more limited. More than 19 million women in need of publicly funded contraception live in contraceptive deserts, counties in which there is not reasonable access to a public clinic that offers the full range of contraceptive methods.²⁸ In addition, research conducted among female community college students (primarily lower income women of color) in Texas found that 69% of students

reported they wanted to use a more effective method and would use it if they could afford it or had access to insurance that covered it, but only 30% were actually using one. In addition to cost barriers, women who preferred a more effective birth control method but weren't using one reported not knowing where to get it.²⁹

- A large majority (81%) of Americans support policies that make it easier for people 18 years and older to get the full range of birth control methods.³⁰



OF ALL ADULTS

- More than 8 in 10 (83%) of adults would support efforts or advocate for full access if they knew that not everyone in the U.S. had access to the full range of birth control methods.³¹ 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.³²
- 7 in 10 female small business owners are supportive of policies that ensure and expand access to birth control.³³
- The vast majority of the public (77% overall, including 89% of Democrats, 78% of independents, and 64% of Republicans) support government health insurance programs for low-income women, like Medicaid, covering the costs of birth control. This includes support from 84% of women and 71% of men, and in all states (ranging from 66% in Wyoming to 88% in Rhode Island).³⁴

So, What's Next?

We know that there is broad support for contraception. We also know that not all people have information about and access to the full range of contraceptive methods. A large majority (84%) of adults are thankful that birth control allows them to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant and have a child.³⁵

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, decision makers, and young women themselves. There's more work to do to ensure that everyone—no matter who they are, where they live, or what their economic status is—has the power to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant and have a child.

Endnotes

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