

## Contraceptive Use in Benin

- Benin's government promotes family planning as part of its national health plan. The country is working toward a goal of increasing the use of modern contraceptives among women aged 15–49 from 9% in 2013 to 20% by 2018. As of 2012, fewer than one in 10 married women of reproductive age use a modern contraceptive method, despite the fact that nearly half do not want to have a child soon.

- Women in Benin have an average of 4.9 children, about one child more than they say they desire.

- Helping women avoid unintended pregnancies would lead to lower rates of maternal and child mortality, improve family welfare, and accelerate economic and social development.

### USE OF MODERN CONTRACEPTIVES IS LOW

- Only 14% of women aged 15–49 use a traditional or modern contraceptive method. Nine percent use a modern method, a level of use only two percentage points higher than in 2006.

- Among married women, 13% use a method, and 7% use a modern contraceptive method. Of the modern method users, the majority use injectables (27%), male condoms (25%) or the pill (18%).

- Contraceptive use is much higher among unmarried sexually active women: Thirty-two percent use any contraceptive method, and 23% use a modern method. Of the modern method users, a large majority use male condoms (64%).

- In Benin, all public health facilities are required to provide family planning services as part of their minimum package of services. Unfortunately, these services are not always available, particularly in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Where they are available, problems related to stockouts of supplies and shortages of trained personnel are common and limit the range of methods from which women can choose.

### UNMET NEED FOR CONTRACEPTION IS HIGH

- More than 47% of married women report that they do not want to become pregnant in the next two years or at all.

- Among all married women, 33% do not want to become pregnant but are not using a contraceptive method. These women are described as having an unmet need for contraception.

- Unmet need among sexually active unmarried women is even higher: Half of those wanting to avoid a pregnancy are not using a contraceptive method.

- As a result of such high unmet need for contraception, unplanned childbearing is fairly common: Between 2007 and 2012, 19% of births were unplanned.

### WOMEN'S REASONS FOR NOT USING A METHOD

- Among married women who want to avoid a pregnancy, the most commonly cited reasons for not using contraceptives are fear of side effects/health concerns (22%) and opposition from their partners or from the women themselves (22%).

- Among married women citing opposition as a reason, a higher proportion reported opposition from their husband than personal opposition.

- Sixteen percent of married women with unmet need say they are not using a method because they do not have sex frequently or at all, and 17% cite postpartum amenorrhea or breast-feeding. Some of the women citing these reasons may underestimate their risk of becoming pregnant.

- Ten percent of married women with unmet need mentioned cost, and only 7% cited access, as reasons for non-use. Nonetheless, Benin has one of the highest proportions globally of married women who cite cost and access as reasons for not practicing contraception.

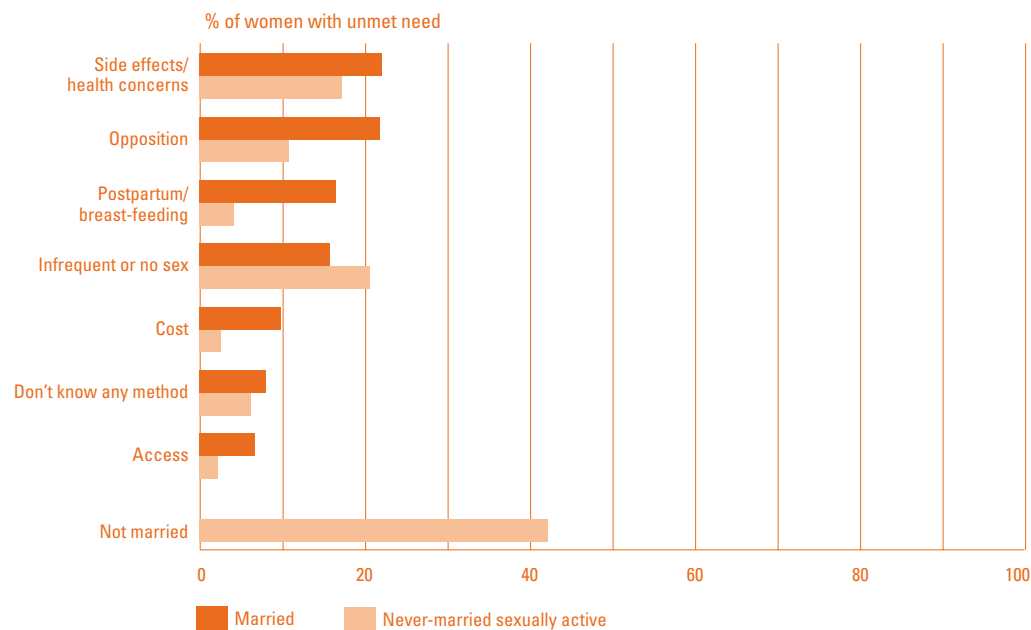
- Among never-married women with unmet need, 42% cite not being married as their reason for nonuse; these women are likely affected by social stigma toward unmarried women who have sex or practice contraception. Other reasons for nonuse among these women include infrequent sex (21%), fear of side effects/health concerns (17%) and opposition (11%). A total of 5% report lack of access or cost as reasons for nonuse.

### FAMILY PLANNING IS RARELY DISCUSSED

Although the majority of women report having heard family planning messages from the media or other information channels, only 14% report having discussed family planning with someone in

## Reasons for Not Using Contraceptives

Among Beninese women with unmet need, reasons for nonuse differ by marital status.



Notes: Percentages do not add to 100 because the survey allowed multiple responses. Source: Special tabulations of data from the 2011–2012 Benin Demographic and Health Survey.

the months before the survey, a decline from 18% in 2006.

- Of those women who report having discussed family planning with someone, fewer than one-quarter did so with a spouse or partner, a substantial decline from nearly half in 2006.
- This lack of discussions suggests that talking about family planning may not be socially acceptable.

### WOMEN NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CONTRACEPTION

- Access to a range of contraceptive methods and to contraceptive counseling would enable women to make fully informed decisions about the best methods for their circumstances and needs.
- During contraceptive counseling, providers should inform women about the advantages and disadvantages of different

methods, as well as potential side effects and what to do about them. Women should also have the opportunity to switch methods when they choose.

- Women who have just given birth or who have sex infrequently need better information about their risk of becoming pregnant and methods that could be suitable for them.

### REMOVING OTHER BARRIERS TO CONTRACEPTIVE USE

- Despite national efforts to promote family planning, there is still a need to increase awareness of family planning methods and where to obtain them.
- Mass media can be effective in reaching a large proportion of the population, but reaching people in remote and poor areas will require expanding successful education campaigns. Mobile clinics and community health worker programs are promising community-based approaches.

- Given the importance of men's approval of contraceptive use, greater efforts should be made to reach men and encourage discussion of family planning among couples.

- Given that religion is an important part of life in Benin, informing religious leaders about the advantages of family planning and soliciting their support is an important strategy for reducing the social and cultural barriers to contraception.

## CREDITS

Data in this fact sheet come from Chae S, Woog V, Zinsou C and Wilson M, Barriers to women's contraceptive use in Benin, *In Brief*, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2015, and from Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Économique (INSAE) et ICF International, *Enquête Démographique et de Santé du Bénin 2011-12*, Cotonou, Benin: INSAE; and Calverton, MD, USA: ICF International, 2013.

This publication was supported by a subgrant from Population Services International under the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Choices and Opportunities Fund.



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