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World Family Planning 2020 Highlights

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Expanding access to contraception is an essential component of achieving universal access to reproductive health-care services, as called for in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Contraceptives enable individuals and couples to exercise their right to choose the number, spacing and timing of births, to avoid high-risk pregnancies, to reduce the chance of unintended pregnancy, and to improve the socioeconomic conditions of their families.

*The following key findings are based on the **World Family Planning 2020 Highlights**, prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).*

Ten key messages

1. Globally, many women and couples want to postpone or avoid pregnancy

In 2020, among 1.9 billion women of reproductive age (15-49 years), 1.1 billion women are considered to have a need for family planning, meaning that they desire to limit or delay childbearing. Of these women, 851 million are using a modern method of contraception and 85 million are using a traditional method. An additional 172 million women are using no method at all, despite their desire to avoid pregnancy, and thus are considered to have an unmet need for family planning.

2. More women or their partners are using contraceptive methods today than ever before

Between 2000 and 2020, the percentage of women aged 15 to 49 years who use any form of contraception increased from 47.7 to 49.0 per cent. During this period, the number of women using a modern contraceptive method increased from 663 million to 851 million. This increase was driven both by an increased prevalence in the use of modern methods (98 million women) as well as by the growing number of women of reproductive age (90 million).

3. Nearly 1 in 10 women of reproductive age have an unmet need for family planning

Today, around 9 per cent of women of reproductive age who want to avoid or postpone pregnancy are not using any form of contraception. Despite declines in the global percentage of women with unmet need for family planning, the global number of women with unmet need for family planning has increased due to the continued growth in the size of the population of women of reproductive age.

4. Use of modern contraceptive methods has increased, but progress is uneven

Globally, the proportion of women of reproductive age who have their need for family planning satisfied by use of modern methods, indicator 3.7.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has increased from 73.6 per cent in 2000 to 76.8 per cent in 2020. Relatively rapid increases in the use of modern contraceptive methods have occurred in Central and Southern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, and Western Asia and Northern Africa. Still, only about half of all women who want to avoid pregnancy are using a modern method in Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand (52.1%) and in sub-Saharan Africa (55.5%).

5. The largest increases in the use of modern contraceptive methods are expected in countries with low levels of contraceptive use today

According to projections, the largest increases in the use of modern contraceptive methods are expected in countries where the level of contraceptive use is low today. Provided that the right policies are in place and that resources are available, by 2030 around 80 per cent of women worldwide who have a need for family planning are projected to use a modern contraceptive method. An accelerated increase in countries with the largest gaps in meeting family planning needs would help to reduce global inequality in access to reproductive health-care services, including family planning.

6. In sub-Saharan Africa, future population growth will pose challenges to expanding coverage of reproductive health-care services

From 2020 to 2030, sub-Saharan Africa will see the largest increase (60 per cent) in the number of users of modern contraceptive methods, driven both by the continued increase in the absolute number of women of reproductive age as well as by the increase in contraceptive prevalence. Here, the number of women with unmet need for family planning is projected to increase by 20 per cent even though the percentage of women with unmet need for family planning is projected to decline.

7. Adolescents have a substantial unmet need for sexual and reproductive health care, especially in sub-Saharan Africa

While the absolute number of women aged 15 to 19 years with unmet need for family planning has decreased or remained constant in most regions of the world since 2000, it has increased by more than half in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2030, over 50 per cent of the world's young women with unmet need for family planning will be in sub-Saharan Africa.

8. Achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services advances progress towards achieving other SDG targets

A rise in the proportion of women of reproductive age having their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (SDG indicator 3.7.1), will facilitate the achievement of other Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, including lowering maternal mortality (indicator 3.1.1) and under-5 mortality (indicator 3.2.1). Reducing the frequency of pregnancy and childbearing at young ages will increase educational attainment (indicator 4.3.1) and contribute to reducing the percentage of women and children living in poverty (indicator 1.2.1).

9. COVID-19 has the potential to severely impact women's access to contraception

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic adds to the uncertainty of achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning. In a scenario of the decline in use of contraceptive methods due to disruptions in the access to contraception, the proportion of women of reproductive age who have their need for family planning satisfied by modern methods could decline to 74 per cent in case of disruptions lasting for half a year in 2020.

10. Accelerated action is needed to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, information and education by 2030

Global progress in achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services is contingent on progress in countries where the use of modern contraceptive methods is still low among women who want to avoid pregnancy, mostly notably in sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, and Northern Africa and Western Asia. In these regions, future growth in the number of women of reproductive age will heighten the challenge of ensuring adequate coverage of reproductive health-care services.



Prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. These key messages are based on *World Family Planning 2020 Highlights*, which examines global and regional progress in meeting the growing demand for family planning. More work of the Population Division is available at www.un.org/development/desa/pd/