

FACT SHEET:

Family Planning – An Overview

Family planning (FP) has been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a voluntary and informed decision by an individual or couple on the number of children to have and when to have them. (WHO. Family planning/contraception methods. 2020. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception>. Accessed 3 Mar 2021.). Family planning allows people to attain their desired number of children and determine the spacing of pregnancies.



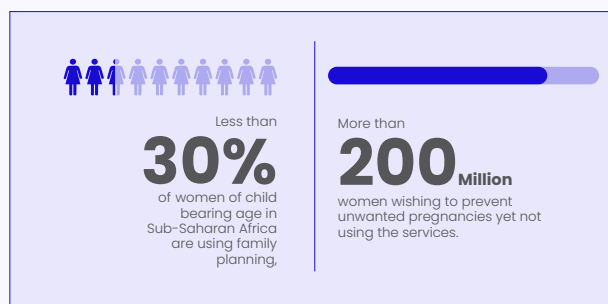
Among the targets (3.7) in goal 3 of the United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) is to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programs.

(United Nations Sustainable development goals. Goals 3; Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; Targets and Indicators. 2019. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>. Accessed 20 May 2021.)

Almost 60% of women of child bearing age use family planning globally, with evidence showing a global increase in the use of family planning especially in Asia with 62% and Latin America with 67%. Globally, 966 million women of reproductive age are using some method of contraception. Among 1.9 billion women of reproductive age (15–49 years), an estimated 874 million women use a modern contraceptive method and 92 million, a traditional contraceptive method. (World Family Planning 2022–UN DESA Publications)

The use of Modern Contraceptives (MC) in most African Countries has been low despite the high fertility rate and unmet need for family planning. The use of Modern Contraceptives (MC) to protect against sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and mortality as a result of unsafe abortion is low in many African countries.

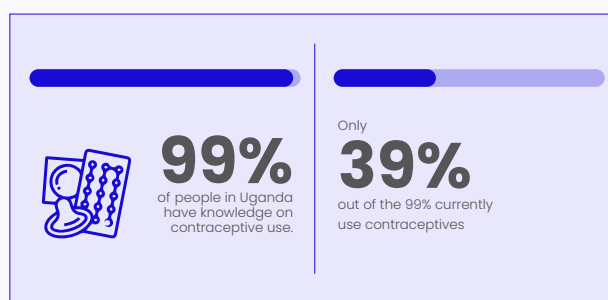
However, less than 30% of women of child bearing age in Sub-Saharan Africa are using family planning, with more than 200 million women wishing to prevent unwanted pregnancies yet not using the services.



(WHO, factsheet (2020))

Contraceptive non-use among women of reproductive age in sub-Saharan Africa accounts for nearly 14 million unplanned pregnancies annually and majority of maternal deaths (66%). (Bongaarts J. WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and United Nations population division trends in maternal mortality: 1990 to 2015 Geneva: World Health Organization, 2015. Popul Dev Rev. 2016;42:726)

Uganda continues to present undesirable fertility rates (5.4 births per woman) and maternal mortality ratios (336 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), that are associated with contraceptive non-use. In Uganda, almost everybody (99%) has knowledge on contraceptive use. However, the knowledge is not equitable to current contraceptive uptake (39%), attributed to indistinct factors, particularly across regions of the country.



Despite the government efforts to reduce the high fertility levels and increase uptake of family planning services in Uganda, family planning use is still low at 30% which is the lowest in the East African region. (UDH 2016)

Methods of Family Planning and their Associated Impacts

It is characterized by the use of contraceptives, either modern or traditional methods.

In addition to socio-cultural factors that can inhibit contraception accessibility, there are also numerous misconceptions about modern methods of birth control, and some women choose to use traditional practices as methods of contraception such as herbs [14].

Women of low socio-economic standing, particularly in rural areas, are less likely to use modern contraception, and have about twice as many children than wealthier families in urban areas

African Perceptions Towards Family Planning

The perceptions towards family planning in Africa are complex and diverse, influenced by cultural, religious, and socio-economic factors.

- In some cultures, having many children is seen as a sign of fertility and prosperity, and having a small family may be viewed as a failure to fulfill one's duty as a parent or spouse.
- Some African societies hold traditional beliefs about fertility and childbirth, and some religious groups may view contraception or other forms of family planning as sinful.
- In rural Africa, prestige is attached to having very many children in an African home which kills the sense of family planning.
- In Africa, it is highly desirable for men to have a fertile wife and bearing children is a sign of respect and submission towards the husband.

Modern contraceptive methods include male and female sterilization, male and female condoms, depot implants, pills, Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM), Intra-Uterine Devices (IUD), and emergency contraception.

On the other hand, traditional methods comprise the withdrawal and rhyme method (periodic abstinence). Of these two methods, modern contraceptive (contraceptive) has been recognized as an effective method for fertility reduction, and are being widely promoted to slow rapid population growth, particularly in developing countries.

Understanding perceived access barriers to contraception through an African feminist lens: a qualitative study in Uganda

There are many barriers that impact a woman's access to contraception in rural sub-Saharan Africa, such as financial constraints, supply shortages, stigma, and misconceptions.

Myths, Misconceptions Still Discourage the Use of Family Planning

Many modern contraceptives contain hormones that can cause certain side effects in some women. Depending on the method being used, these may include breast tenderness, headaches, weight gain, lack of regular menstrual bleeding, nausea, and/or loss of bone density with continued use over many years.

These potential side effects often form the basis for a wide range of misconceptions. For example, where women's ability to bear children is key to their socio-economic status, they frequently fear that the temporary prevention of pregnancy with contraception can lead to permanent infertility with sustained use.

They may believe that lack of a monthly period signals a dangerous buildup of blood inside their bodies.

Some believe that nausea that can be caused by an oral contraceptive may be a sign that acid in the pill is burning their stomach or ovaries.

Fear of side effects, both real and imagined, is a major reason why women discontinue using contraception, which can result in unintended pregnancies.⁶ A study in 36 countries found that discontinued use resulted in more than one third of unintended pregnancies.⁷ However, many health surveys do not distinguish between mis-perceptions and actual side effects when asking women why they stop, making it difficult to know the exact impact of each.⁸

