

Contraceptive methods used by younger women: South Asia



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Use of modern methods of contraception among women in South Asia varies enormously, from more than 65% in Bhutan to less than 20% in Afghanistan (see Table 1). Female sterilization is the most common method of contraception in more than half of these countries, and in India, its prevalence is very high. Just under 80% of the married women in the Indian 15-49 age group who say they are using contraception cite sterilization as their method, and the use of other modern methods is correspondingly low. In none of the other countries which report sterilization as the most commonly used method,

does it dominate to quite the same extent. In Bangladesh the contraceptive pill is used by more than half of modern contraceptive users, and by more than 40% of women in Iran. Pakistan is the only country in which condoms are more commonly used than any other form of contraception, although followed closely by female sterilization.

Age-disaggregated data collected after the year 2000 are available for six countries in South Asia from Demographic and Health Surveys and Multiple Impact Cluster Surveys (see Figs. 2 and 3).

Table 1: Use of modern methods of contraception in South Asian countries
Percentage using contraception among women aged 15-49 who are married or in a union

Country	Data Source	Any modern method	Most commonly used modern method (as % of all users of contraception)	Total Fertility Rate 2005-10 (UN estimates)
Afghanistan	MICS 2010-2011	19.5	Injectable (49)	6.33
Bangladesh	DHS 2011	52.1	Pill (52)	2.40
Bhutan	MICS 2010	65.4	Injectable (44)	2.55
India	DHS 2005-06	48.5	Female sterilization (77)	2.66
Iran	National survey 2002	58.9	Pill (43)	1.89
Maldives	DHS 2009	27.0	Female sterilization (37)	2.42
Nepal	DHS 2011	43.2	Female Sterilization (35)	2.99
Pakistan	DHS 2012-13	26.1	Condom (34)/ Female sterilization (33)	3.65
Sri Lanka	DHS 2006-07	52.7	Female Sterilization (32)	2.31

Use of modern methods by young married women

The use of modern contraceptive methods is very low among married adolescent women (see Fig. 1) in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan (below 10% in all 3 countries), which is in line with what is known about desired family size in this age group in South Asia (see e.g. *Pachauri & Santhya, 2002*). Bangladesh stands out from the rest of the region with levels of use of modern methods of contraception twice as high in this age group as in any of the other countries for which there are age-disaggregated data.

The male condom is the most widely used method of contraception among married adolescents in 4 out of the 6 countries for which there are data (India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Maldives). The exceptions are Bangladesh and Afghanistan, where the pill is used by more than half all contraceptors. In Bangladesh,

however, the prevalence of pill use is ten times higher among married adolescents than it is in Afghanistan. Users of injectables constitute a significant proportion of contraceptors in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Levels of IUD use are negligible.

In the 20-24 age group, overall levels of contraceptive use increase, and other modern methods of contraception besides the condom and the pill are more widely used than they are among adolescents (see Fig. 2). It is important to note the data for India, where 13% of married women in this age group appear to have decided that they have finished childbearing by being sterilized. This accounts for more than half of all the contraceptors aged 20 to 24 years.

Injectables dominate the method mix in Afghanistan and Nepal, and are widely used also in Bangladesh. IUDs are uncommon throughout the region, and across all four demographic categories. Among old-

er married women, there are only 2 countries where the use of IUDs exceeds 1%, Nepal and India.

Fig. 1: Methods of contraception: percentage of women aged 15-19 who are currently married or

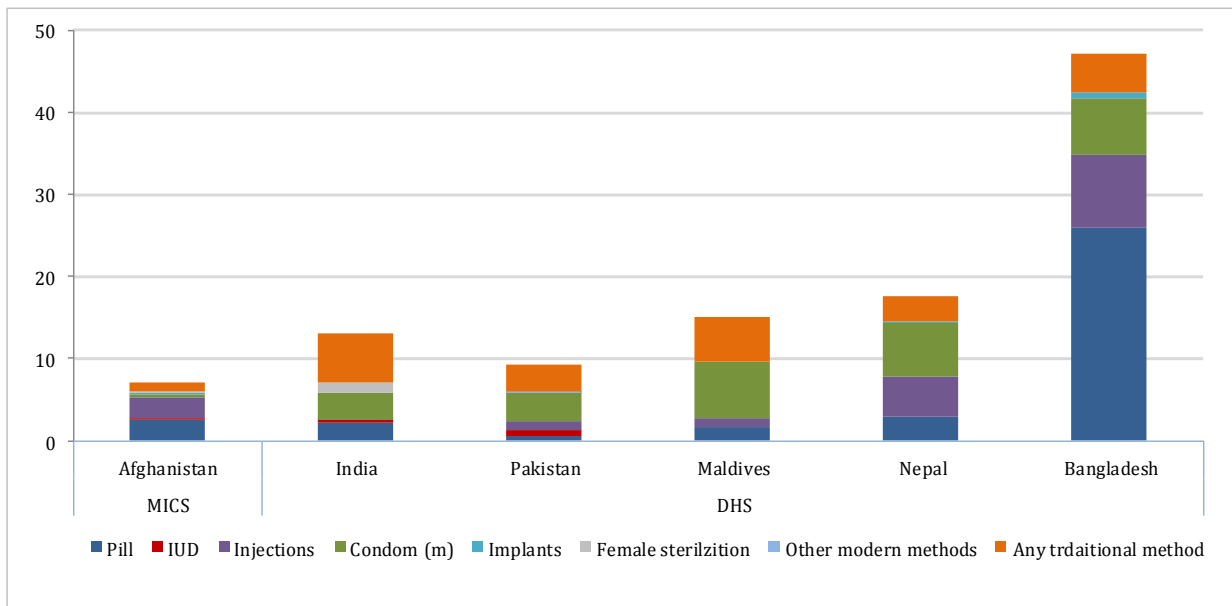
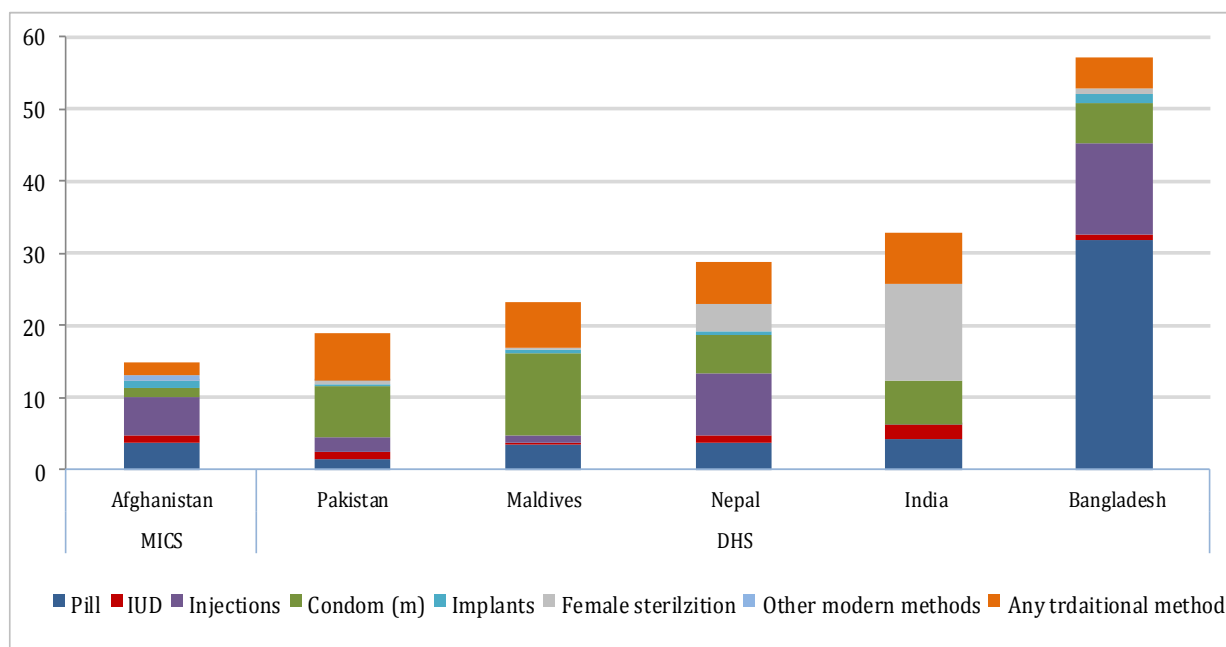


Fig. 2: Methods of contraception: percentage of women aged 20-24 who are currently married or in a union.



Use of modern methods by unmarried sexually active women

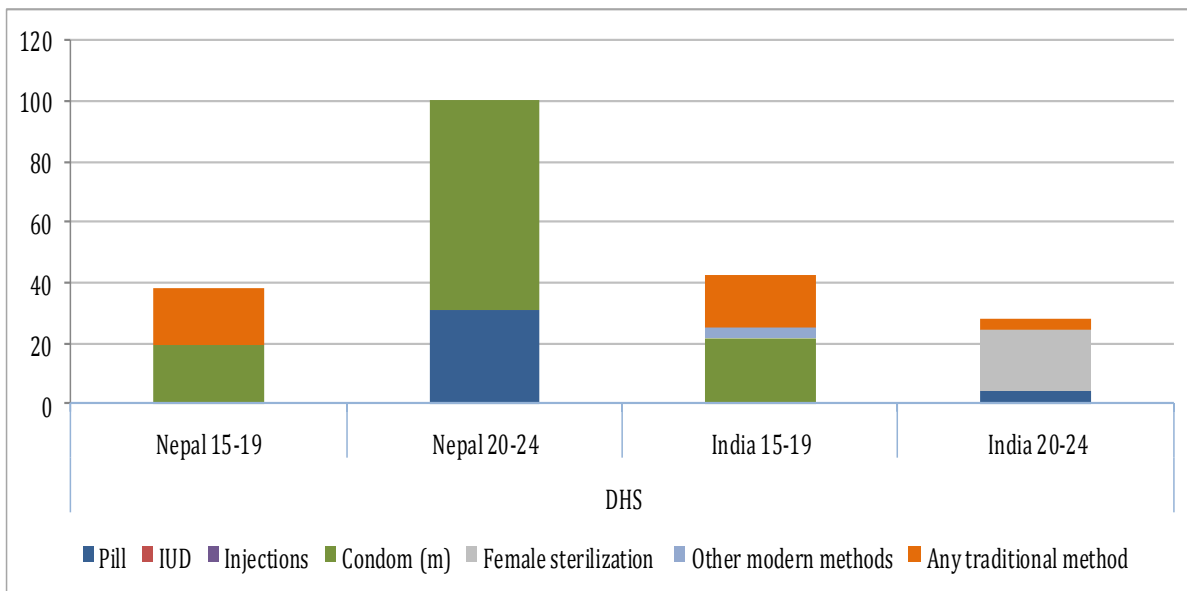
The only countries for which there are data on sexually active unmarried women are India and Nepal (see Fig. 3). The male condom is the dominant method of contraception for unmarried teenagers in both India and Nepal, and is in fact the only modern method use by Nepalese adolescents. It also accounts for about 70 per cent of contraceptors in the older age group in Nepal.

In India one in four sexually active unmarried young women use some form of contraception. What is re-

markable is the extent to which female sterilization dominates the method mix even in this category. Fewer than one in six contraceptors use the pill.

Adolescents used traditional methods more frequently than older age groups in both countries, and in Nepal levels of use match those of (any) modern methods.

Fig. 3: Methods of contraception: percentage using contraception among sexually active unmarried women aged 15-19 and 20-24.



References

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