

MALE PARTNER ENGAGEMENT IN CONTRACEPTIVE CHOICE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN KENYA



KEY FINDINGS:

- Male partner engagement in contraceptive method choice is largely shaped by relationship status: by relationship status: dating/casual vs married
- For dating couples, male partners are often influencers and introducers of contraceptive methods and are also commonly responsible for providing contraception
- For married couples, male partners often engage in joint-decision making and are concerned about addressing adverse side effects experienced by their female partners

KEY ACTION ITEMS:

- Government and NGO stakeholders designing programs to reach young people should ensure that all young women and their male partners have access to quality information on the full range of contraceptive methods and their potential side effects.
- Ensure young women are able to seek contraception free from stigma by addressing policy-based barriers and training chemists and service providers
- Support the full inclusion of male engagement in community FP outreach programs

In 2018, Full Access, Full Choice convened key family planning stakeholders, from the NGO and government sectors, to identify county-specific evidence gaps in adolescent and youth family planning research. In August 2019, Full Access, Full Choice undertook qualitative in-depth interviews with 32 female youth ages 18-24 years in Mombasa, Nairobi and Migori, to better understand their contraceptive journey. Data from this study are presented below alongside quantitative data from various large-scale surveys in Kenya, including the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) (2014) and Youth Respondent-Driven Sampling Survey (YRDSS) (2019).

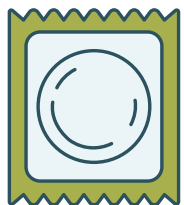
In qualitative interviews conducted by the Full Access, Full Choice project, female respondents' perceptions of male engagement were largely shaped by relationship status. Couples who were dating or in casual relationships sought primarily to prevent pregnancy and STIs, while married couples also considered birth spacing and long-term family planning goals. These differences are reflected in how male partners engaged in women's contraceptive method choice.

MALE ENGAGEMENT IN DATING & CASUAL RELATIONSHIPS

MALE PARTNERS ARE OFTEN INFLUENCERS AND INTRODUCERS OF CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

The desire to prevent pregnancy (and for some, the desire to also prevent STIs) led many women to use male condoms in casual and dating relationships. Twenty of the 23 women interviewed who reported ever using condoms first used condoms with a casual partner or boyfriend.

Many women reported that their male partners first introduced or suggested using condoms in the relationship:



Interviewer: "Why did you decide to use condoms with your first boyfriend?"
Respondent: "He's the one [who] introduced them."
Interviewer: "Okay. Tell me briefly, how did you end up using condoms? Did you discuss or how did you decide? What happened?"
Respondent: "I didn't want to have sex because I was afraid of getting pregnant. He told me we'll have to use the condom because I didn't want to get pregnant. That's how we started using."

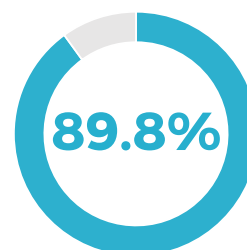
-22-year-old woman from Mombasa County without children

Many women also reported that their male partners introduced them to emergency contraception, or P2 (Postinor 2). All 15 women interviewed who had ever used emergency contraception used it while in a relationship with a casual partner or boyfriend. Women also reported that their male partners had comprehensive knowledge about the method, including when to use it, its efficacy period and where to purchase it.



Respondent: "The first time I used P2 of course it was after unprotected sex, he was the one who bought it for me. I knew P2 through him."
Interviewer: "So you talked to him or he talked to you?"
Respondent: "We talked and then he told me that he knows of pills that a girl can take if they have unprotected sex and it can prevent them from getting pregnant and it should be taken within 72 hours."

-19-year-old woman from Nairobi County without children

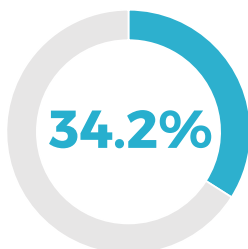


of young men in Nairobi ages 15-19 who have heard of emergency contraception, know that it is effective when taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex (YRDSS, 2019)

MALE PARTNERS ARE COMMONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING CONTRACEPTION

Purchasing or providing money for contraception was the most commonly cited form of male engagement among both dating and married couples. Of the 32 women interviewed, 20 reported having a male partner provide contraception for them at some point in their lives.

Within dating relationships, male partners commonly provided condoms and emergency contraception, two methods that are readily accessible for purchase at local chemists.



of female contraceptive users in Nairobi ages 15-19 rely on their partner to obtain their contraceptive method. **Only 4.3% of males rely on their partner** (YRDSS, 2019)



Interviewer: "And who used to get the condom?"
Respondent: "Him."
Interviewer: "So when you wanted to use male condom, which decision came first, which method to use or where to get the condom?"
Respondent: "I was not the one who was getting the condom."
Interviewer: "So it was him... every time you have used the condom it has been him?"
Respondent: "Yeah."

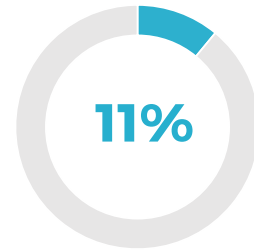
-23-year-old woman from Nairobi County without children

This kind of male engagement appears to be partly rooted in social norms that disapprove of unmarried women who are sexually active. Some women spoke of the stigma and negative reactions they would face if they were to purchase contraception at a local chemist or store:



Interviewer: "Is he the one who went for it [condom], why not you?"
Respondent: "I was afraid, I had no courage to go to the chemist."
Interviewer: "Why did you not have the courage?"
Respondent: "I feared people will judge you. People have this perspective that if a girl goes to buy a condom it does not make sense. They will look at you and say this girl is spoilt."

-21-year-old woman from Migori County without children



of female contraceptive users in Nairobi ages 15-19 **rely on their partners to procure male condoms due to fear of being shamed by the provider.**
(YRDSS, 2019)

MALE ENGAGEMENT IN MARRIAGE

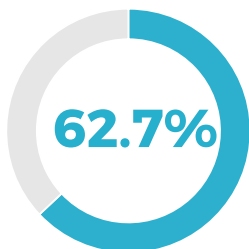
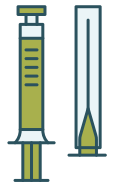
MARRIED WOMEN FREQUENTLY REPORTED JOINT CONTRACEPTIVE DECISION MAKING WITH THEIR PARTNERS

Male engagement among couples who were in union or formally married, involved more instances of joint decision making, particularly as it related to birth spacing. Among couples in union who jointly decided on a method, implants and injectables were often chosen.



Interviewer: "Why did you decide to use the injection... or what made you use this method?"
Respondent: "So that I would not get pregnant before my child has not completed breastfeeding."
Interviewer: "Did you talk to anyone when you were deciding to use this method."
Respondent: "Yes."
Interviewer: "Who did you talk to?"
Respondent: "My husband."
Interviewer: "What did you talk about."
Respondent: "About which method we can use to plan our family and that is when we decided to use the 3 month injection."

-23-year-old woman from Mombasa County with two children



of young women in union ages 15-24 reported joint decision making for using FP with their partner
(DHS, 2014)



Interviewer: "And who did you talk to when you were making that decision [to use the implant]?"
Respondent: "We made the decision the two of us. Me and my man."
Interviewer: "You and who?"
Respondent: "Me and my husband."
Interviewer: "Can you expound?"
Respondent: "We sat down as a family and we decided I do that one so that we have something to control myself with."

-19-year-old woman from Mombasa County without children

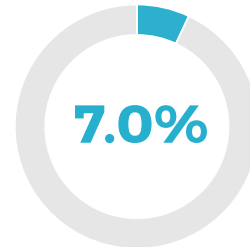
DISCORDANT VIEWS ON CONTRACEPTION LED SOME WOMEN TO USE CONTRACEPTION DISCREETLY

Some women reported not being able to make a joint decision with their partners. A few women reported using a method discreetly when there was disagreement with their partner about contraceptive use. Of the 4 young women who did so, 3 were married. These women opted for methods they could use discreetly such as injectables or implants.



Interviewer: "How did your partner view the injection?"
Respondent: "He didn't know. An injection is something you get and no one knows... My husband doesn't like those things so if I go to a doctor and say I want an injection secretly, it will be so."

-24-year-old woman from Migori County with one child



of married female users aged 20-24, report that their husbands/partners do not know about their FP use (DHS, 2014)

MARRIED MEN WERE CONCERNED ABOUT ADDRESSING ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS EXPERIENCED BY THEIR PARTNERS

Many women reported conversations with their husbands regarding the influence of side effects on contraceptive decisions. Women reported their husbands held various perceptions and misperceptions about adverse contraceptive side effects such as dizziness and weight loss.

These perceived or actual side effects prompted their husbands to discourage them from using a specific method. Some men were supportive agents and suggested trying other methods, while others were not supportive of any contraceptive use.



Respondent: "When I got the first child and used the injection and it gave me side effects, so when I got my second child my husband told me that we should change and use the implant."

Interviewer: "So that is when is when you decided to use the implant?"

Respondent: "Yes, and we're familiar to it [implant] because when we used to go for the antenatal clinic they used to tell us about it."

-23-year-old woman from Mombasa County with two children



What is Full Access, Full Choice?

Full Access, Full Choice is four-year, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) supported project implemented by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Carolina Population Center and the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP). The project will generate and synthesize evidence to inform programs and policies to expand contraceptive method choice for youth aged 15-24 at the global and country levels.

For more information, please contact the FAFC team at fullaccessfullchoice@unc.edu or Bernard Onyango with the AFIDEP team at bernard.onyango@afidep.org.