

Contraceptive Use in Vietnamese Families during the Period 2002 - 2008

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Abstract

Based on the results of Vietnam Household living standard survey from 2002 to 2008, it is to confirm that the most widely used contraceptive method in Vietnam is intra-uterine device (IUDs). Over half of married women from 15 - 49 answered that they have been using this method. The next are methods of menstrual cycle and using condoms. Other methods as male or female sterilization, withdrawal are less chosen by couples. The women's use of contraceptive methods is closely connected to some individual and public features. As the results given, couples' residence has impact on the choice of contraceptive methods. In rural area, couples choose modern contraceptive methods, specifically the method of IUDs, much more than urban households. Urban families with better life experience and awareness usually use traditional contraceptive methods as withdrawal, menstrual cycle more than households in rural area. In terms of geographic regions, the difference in the rate of using contraceptive methods has been reduced and the difference is not very clear. The age using contraceptive methods is likely to increase and women at the age of 35 - 39 reach the top rate, then this rate has the declining trend when women get much older. Education level is always considered as one of the factors affecting individuals' behavior. As can be seen from the research result, different education levels have different impacts on contraceptive methods used by women. The higher the education level, the more contraceptive methods are used. People with high education level are more and more likely to use traditional contraceptive methods. IUDs is a contraceptive method most chosen by people without education level and the rate of using this has a decreasing trend when the education level rises. Couples' current number of children affects the choice of contraceptive methods, as well. Families with 2 children use contraceptive methods most; the lowest rate belongs to households without children. The demand of giving birth and the distance of fertility have influence on the rate of using contraceptive methods. When people have demand of having children, the rate of using contraceptive methods is lowest and women who want to give birth within 2 years tend not to want to apply contraceptive methods. Women living in households with electricity and T.V accept contraceptive methods more than others. Similarly, women living in places with convenient transportation condition accept contraceptive methods more.

Index Terms—Contraceptive use, Families, Method, Vietnam

1. Introduction

The subject of contraception is an entirely new one in Vietnam at present time. Very few studies focused on this issue because it is private problem in the light of Vietnamese tradition. People are ashamed to talk about it. This paper tries to provide an overall of contraceptive using in Vietnamese families in the period 2002 - 2008. In order to achieve this task, the paper will answer the following questions: i) how many percent do Vietnamese people using contraceptive methods in families? Which method is the most popular?, ii) What are socially demographic features affecting the use of contraceptive methods?

2. Methodology

This article relies on the result of a lot of research: the statistics from the statistical agencies, especially from General Statistical Office, General Office for Population Family Planning. It provides an overview statistics about Vietnamese families. Specifically, this article bases on the result of the survey on the household living standard which has been conducted regularly by the General Statistical Office every two years from 2002 to 2008. The focus of the survey has been household size, birth rate, death rate, household income and expenditures, etc. Of course, it covers a lot of information related to contraceptive use in Vietnamese families. This article also bases on the result of the survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005. I collect, interpret and evaluate these results and used here as the main method to write this article.

3. Results

3.1. The rate of contraceptive using

Based on the result of changes in population and family planning survey in 2005 as well as the result of 2006 Household living standard survey, it can be seen that the rate of married women from 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods¹ was very high and increased each year. There were about 73.9% of married women during the age of 15 - 49 using one certain contraceptive method in 2001, in 2002 this rate increased to 76.9%. In 2003, this proportion was likely to decline a little, but reached the rise a year later. Until 2006, the rate of couples using contraceptive methods achieved the top rate at 81.7%. Thus, generally the rate of using contraceptive methods rised by 7.8% from 2001 to 2006. Corresponding to the increasing rate of using contraceptive methods, it can be seen that couples' rate of using modern contraceptive methods has the rising trend.

The proportion of married women from 15 - 49 using modern contraceptive methods was 61.1% in 2001, increasing to 64.6% in 2004, 65.8% in 2005 and 68.4% in 2006. About non - modern contraceptive methods, we can realize that the rate of using this group of methods had a declining tendency through the years in the period of 2001 - 2005 (in 2001, the rate was 12.8%, in 2002: 12.2%, in 2003: 11.8%, in 2004: 11.1 % and in 2005: 11.1% as well). The rate of using non - modern contraceptive methods slightly increased in 2006, at 13.3%. Through the above data, couples are very aware of using contraceptive methods; it is indicated in the rising trend of using contraceptive methods. The majority of couples choose the modern contraceptive methods and it has had an increasing tendency. About non - modern contraceptive methods, couples do not use a lot, and in some years it was likely to gradually decline. Perhaps the reason is that the effectiveness is not high so couples have to consider whether to use non - modern contraceptive methods as a main method or not.

About the structure of using contraceptive in Vietnam, it is shown that due to the promotion of the practice of population communications, education to change behavior along with services of reproductive health care - family planning, especially the program of bringing services of family planning and reproductive health care to poor, difficult and remote areas; the use of contraceptive methods have been diversified in stead of monotonous program of family planning by using IUDs 3 decades ago (Van, 2004). Nowadays, people can use a variety of contraceptive methods, including modern contraceptive methods: IUDs, birth control pills, injectable contraceptives, vaginal methods (effervescent tablets), condoms, male or female sterilization and other traditional methods as menstrual cycle, withdrawal, etc.

Among the above-mentioned methods of contraception, IUDs was dominant (accounting for 55.2%). This is the most common contraceptive method because when using this method, women only come to a hospital or medical clinic and doctors will put a contraceptive instrument into their neck of the uterus. If the IUDs are accurately placed and its quality are good, this method has the most effective ability of contraception (up to 100%) and the period of time using this method is from 3 - 5 years. IUDs have an advantage that do not reduce the pleasure in couples' having sex and do not cause pregnancy. When couples want to have children again, they only need to remove the IUDs. Thus, there is a trend that many couples choose IUDs as the main contraceptive method.

Fig. 1. The rate of married women from 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods, 2006 (%)

The second method that many couples choose is the method of menstrual cycle, accounting for 11.2 % of people asked. This is a traditional contraceptive method because it is based on daily life experience of people, especially of women. The advantages of this method are that couples do not need to prepare any contraceptive devices or put any device into their body like the method of IUDs so it is very comfortable for both husband and wife. However, this method is totally dependent on experience so it can cause pregnancy when the counting² is not accurate. Thus, although this method ranked secondly among all the contraceptive methods, it can be recognized that the rate of using this method was much lower than the method of using IUDs (11.2% to 55.2%). Using condoms is the third choice of couples in contraception, accounting for 11% of people asked. Condom is a contraceptive method used rather popularly now because of its convenience. Condoms can be used at any time when users want and it is easy to carry them along. Condoms are only used for male and its effectiveness of contraception is very high.

¹ There are no surveys allowed to collect the rate of couples using two contraceptives and more. Consequently, in the results there are no data about combination of contraceptive methods.

² Menstrual periods usually occur every 28 days but commonly vary from 21 days to 35 days and last from 4 days to 7 days.

Not only effective in contraception, condoms can help preventing HIV and some sexually infectious diseases. If these advantages do not play any special roles in husband and wife's relation, they are really important for sexual relation outside family. Because nowadays, it is quite common for people to have sex outside their marriage, so condoms have their own advantages and they are also able to prevent AIDS - a century's disease. Nevertheless, using condoms is faced with certain limitations which make couples have to consider using them, that is using condoms can reduce the pleasure in having sex for both so many men do not like wearing condoms. It is the reason why only a certain rate of couples chooses condoms as a main contraceptive method.

Another modern contraceptive method used by 10.6% of couples in 2006 was taking birth control pills. The side effect of birth control pills may be one of reasons that makes many women afraid of when carry on using. In a recent research carried out by Vietnamese women's organization, the world organization of population and development with the cooperation of the international research central of women about the choice of contraceptive methods, there have been very obvious ideas about the side effect of birth control pills. Most people are afraid because taking these pills is very hot, complicated to use and causes putting on weight, nausea, headache, stress, etc. (The Committee of population and family planning, 2000). In some cases, birth control pills can reduce women's pleasure in having sex. This explains why not many couples use birth control pills for contraception. However, this method is more chosen by couples than other contraceptive methods as withdrawal or male, female sterilization. Only 4.9% of couples used the method of withdrawal. With this method, penis will be drawn out of vagina before ejaculating.

At the same time, men have to notice so that sperm does not run into vagina. With this method, both husband and wife do not need to use any contraceptive devices or supplementary methods, but the biggest disadvantage is causing stress in men and women's nerve system. Men cannot comfortably follow his pleasure, because he has to pay attention to the end of intercourse. Women are even more uncomfortable because in almost all cases, they are taken away their intercourse completion ability. The curve, which indicates their orgasm, is increasing higher and higher suddenly ends. Sexual organs are full of blood, but because the intercourse is incomplete and it has not come to the relief period so blood is stuck and can not escape. Women cannot go to sleep; they feel unpleasant and only come back to normal state after a certain period of time. Thus, interrupted intercourse cannot take place regularly with the purpose of contraception. Furthermore, this contraceptive method does not have high effectiveness, because if the husband does not draw his penis out before ejaculating, it will lead to the woman's pregnancy. All the above-analyzed things help to realize the reason why only 4.9% of people asked use the method of withdrawal as a main contraceptive method.

There is one more contraceptive that couples can use, it is male and female sterilization. For this method, it is impossible for them to have children again, so not many couples use it. Especially men do not want to use this method because they think they will lose their manliness, and their male physical features will be reduced. It is the main reason causing only 0.3% of couples in Vietnam use male sterilization. In conclusion, the most widely used contraceptive method in Vietnam is IUDs. Over half of married women from 15 - 49 answered that they have been using this method. The next are methods of menstrual cycle and using condoms. Other methods as male or female sterilization, withdrawal are less chosen by couples.

3.2. Some socially demographic features affecting the use of contraceptive methods by married women from 15 - 49.

Firstly, couples' residence

As shown in the survey result, the rate of rural couples using contraceptive methods was a bit higher than that of urban couples (82.1% to 80.6%). However, the difference between rural and urban area is mainly because in rural area, the use of IUDs is much higher than in urban area. 59.4% of rural women used the method of IUDs while this rate in urban area was only 42.9%. This difference is attributed to a main reason that urban women have many choices of contraceptive methods due to more developed conditions in urban area. Moreover, urban couples' awareness of contraceptive methods is better than rural ones' so they can safely use other methods besides using IUDs. This obviously leads to the lower rate of urban women using IUDs than that of rural ones. The rate of urban men using condoms was higher than that of rural ones (18.1% to 8.6%). This can be explained with the reason that in urban area, it is easier and more convenient to get access to population-family planning services than in rural area. The method of menstrual cycle used by urban couples was also higher than by rural couples. Obviously, the higher understanding and awareness of urban people have resulted in the difference in the choice of this contraceptive method compared with rural people.

Apart from the above differences in using contraceptive methods, we can recognize that there exists almost no remarkable difference between rural and urban areas. It can be concluded that the most obvious difference between rural and urban area in using contraceptive methods is that, in rural area the proportion of couples using modern methods, specifically IUDs is excessively higher than that of urban ones. Urban households with experience and better awareness often choose traditional methods like withdrawal, menstrual cycle more than do rural households.

The difference in the rate of using contraceptive methods categorized into geographic regions has been reduced and this difference is not very clear. The region having the highest rate of using contraceptive methods was the South Central Coast with 87.7% and the lowest rate belonged to the Southeast with 77.8% (the difference was 9.9%). Other regions had the approximate equal rates and at around 80%. Using IUDs is the most common method in geographic regions. The region using this method the most was the North Central with 2/3 of couples (69.5%). This means that in 3 couples using contraceptive methods; there are 2 using IUDs. This is a relatively high proportion. Central Highlands was the region using IUDs least, with 40.9%, meaning 28.6% lower than the region with the highest rate - North Central. Central Highlands was also the only region with no male sterilization case. With traditional contraceptive methods, the difference between the Northwest, North Central - the regions having the lowest rate (both at the rate of 9.2%) and the Central Highlands - the region with the highest rate (23.2%) can be clearly shown. These are relatively poor, slowly developed economic regions of the country but there exists a very clear difference in using traditional contraceptive methods. Does the factor of tradition and customs of each region affect this?

Secondly, women's age

Table 3 presents the current rate of using each contraceptive method categorized into different age. Nevertheless, we can combine the above ages into 3 main age groups: 15 - 24, 25 - 39, 40 - 49. These groups of age are considered to cover the main periods in the process of getting married. The youngest group is in the period of building family, the mid-group is practicing fertility and the oldest group has finished their target of childbirth. Hence, we can clearly see that the use of contraceptive methods is lowest for the first group of age, then it rises to the top for the second age group and it is likely to decline for the third group.

Based on the above table, we can realize that the rate of women from 15 - 19 using contraceptive methods was lowest (57.1%), the next was the age group of 45 - 49 with 65.1%. These are obviously the most typical age during the fertility period of women. If the age group from 15 - 19 is the first stage of the fertility period, surely these women cannot complete their childbirth function so the rate of using contraceptive is not very much. If they use contraceptive methods, it is only for canceling the birth of the first child. At the age of 45 - 49, they are at the final stage of fertility so their pregnant ability is not high so it is not necessary for them to use contraceptive methods. Moreover, during this period the sex demand is not high and this influences their low demand of using contraceptive methods. The number of people applying contraceptive methods reached the top rate at the age group of 35 - 39 with 91%, the next was the group of 30 - 34 with 88.7%. This is the most vigorous period of couples in intercourse. During this period, normally they have enough number of children according to their demand and the social regulation, so the demand of using contraceptive methods is naturally very high. Furthermore, in this period they can apply contraceptive methods to enlarge the distance between the different times of childbirth.

Using birth control pills most belonged to the group from 15 - 19 (26.7%) and group from 20 - 24 (20.6%), the lowest rate was of the group from 45 - 49 (3.8%). This is absolutely reasonable because young people are inexperienced in having sex, so they do not know how to have safe contraception and it leads to the worry about pregnancy. And the method they choose to solve the problem is taking emergency birth control pills. Despite knowing that taking birth control pills can leave side effects and harm their health, they do not have any other choice. For women from 45 - 49, they have passed through a quite long sexual life, so their experience in contraception is a lot and they do not use birth control pills much, except in emergency. The age group of 15 - 19 using condoms had the highest rate among age groups (26.7%), and this rate drastically dropped with the next age groups. The general trend is that the younger the group age is, the more they use condoms, apart from the group of 25 - 29 having a bit higher rate than the group of 20 - 24. This difference can be explained with the reason that young people do not have enough experience in contraceptive methods, especially traditional methods so they have to use condoms because as analyzed above, this is an easy-to-use and highly effective in contraception method.

Consequently, young people often choose this method. For the older group, they have more experience in contraception so they have many other contraceptive methods to choose. They can choose modern or non-modern methods better than young people. Moreover, the young age group's frequency of having sex is quite a lot, whereas the older age group's is not much, this obviously affects the young age group's higher demand of using condoms than the older age group's. The younger the age group is, the less they accept female sterilization method. If there was 0.8% of the group from 15 - 19 using this method, the age of 45 - 49 had the rate of 10% using this method. Clearly, young people do not want to be sterilized because their sexual life still lasts long so they can use and choose other contraceptive methods to have more effectiveness. In addition, if their children have accidents or die, they will have to give birth to have other children. But with sterilization, they cannot have children anymore so people at young age do not accept female sterilization. Separately with male sterilization, almost no age groups choose this method. The difference among age groups hardly exists because the rate of using male sterilization was too low for all the age groups (from 0% to 0.7%).

Almost all the age groups apply traditional contraceptive methods at a certain degree. People at older age with their own experience often use traditional methods more than do younger people (see table 3).

Thirdly, education level Women's education level has impact on their contraception behaviors. Really, people with low education levels accept family planning methods less than people with high education levels. Only 78.7% of women who have not finished the 1st grade or have never been to school accepted family planning methods, whereas 83.7% of women with high school graduation accepted this. With the method of using IUDs, the lower the education level is, the more this method is used (apart from people graduating from secondary school who had the higher rate of using IUDs than people graduating elementary school). The rates of people who have not finished the first grade or have never been to school and who have graduated from elementary school, secondary school, high school, college and university using IUDs were respectively 59.3%, 53.1%, 62.1%, 52.8%, 43.7%. In contrast, with the method of using condoms, the lower the education level is, the less couples use it. The rate of using condoms gradually increases by women's education levels. Specifically, the rate of people who have not finished the 1st grade or never been to school using condoms was 4.1%, elementary school graduation 11.1%, secondary school graduation 10.1%, high school graduation 12.6% and college, university graduation 21.1%. This may be because people with high education level accept the use of condoms more easily than people with low education level. They have more knowledge and realize advantages of this method better so their rate of using condoms is higher.

The rate of using the method of menstrual cycle by women with high education level was much higher than women with lower education level (13.4% of people graduating from college, university used this while only 6.0% people who have not finished the 1st grade or never been to school used this). This is based on the principle that the use of traditional methods only takes effect when its mechanism is thoroughly understood and only people with high education level can understand about this more clearly.

Fourthly, couples' current number of children

Couples' current number of children is also a factor affecting a lot the use of contraceptive methods. The result of sociological study in 2006 showed that families with 2 children used contraceptive methods most (85.5%), the next were families with 3 children and more (79.3%), families with one child had a rate of 63.4%, and families without children accounted for 11.4%. This is easy to explain because families with 2 children are families having enough number of children as the law, so they need to use contraceptive methods to prevent the ability of having the third child. For families with one child, they have to give birth to one more child if they have demands so their use of contraceptive methods is lower than families with 2 or 3 children. As for families without any children, the use of contraceptive methods is reasonably lowest because they still have the responsibility to give birth.

Fifthly, the fertility rate and the expected distance of fertility

Normally, when a woman wants to have children, they will not want to use any contraceptive methods. The research data shows that women's rate of using contraceptive methods is due to different fertility rates expected. The model shown in table 4 is quite tightened (for both any contraceptive method and modern contraceptive methods). Women who do not want to have more children had the highest rate of using contraceptive methods (81.1%). The next were women who cannot decide their fertility behaviors (75.3%), the lowest rate belonged to women who want to have more children (55.4%).

The differences based on the distance of fertility expected is also confirmed, women who want to give birth within 2 years are likely not to use contraceptive methods, whereas 2/3 of women who desire to have children after 2 years want to apply contraceptive methods. Women who want to have more children but do not confirm about when to have children often use contraceptive more.

Sixthly, other features

The acceptance of contraceptive methods due to some features of women from 15 - 49 is presented in table 5. Obviously, the use of contraceptive methods has a connection with having or without electricity and having or without television. Women living in households with electricity or T.V accept contraceptive methods more than others. This proves that the factors of development and communication programs have great influence on the behavior of family planning.

The data in table 5 reports that the transportation conditions also affect women's behavior of contraception. Women living in the places with convenient transportation accept contraceptive methods more.

4. Conclusion

The above analysis shows that the most widely used contraceptive method in Vietnam is IUDs. Over half of married women from 15 - 49 answered that they have been using this method. The next are methods of menstrual cycle and using condoms. Other methods as male or female sterilization, withdrawal are less chosen by couples. The women's use of contraceptive methods is closely connected to some individual and public features: couples' residence, the age of women, education level, couples' current number of children, facilities are furnished in families, such as: electricity, T.V, etc.

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List of Table and Figure

Table 1: The rate of using contraceptive methods in Vietnam in the period of 2001 - 2006 (Unit: %)

Year	The rate of using contraceptive methods	Categories	
		Modern	Non- modern
2001	73.9	61.1	12.8
2002	76.9	64.7	12.2
2003	75.3	63.5	11.8
2004	75.7	64.6	11.1
2005	76.9	65.8	11.1
2006	81.7	68.4	13.3

Source: - Survey about changes in population and family planning in 2005:
Main results

- Self - calculation based on results of 2006 Household Living Standard Survey

Table 2: The proportion of married women from 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods by rural, urban area and geographic regions in 2006 (unit: %)

	Rate of using	Birth control pills	IUDs	Condoms	Female sterilization	Male sterilization	Other modern methods	Menstrual cycle	Withdrawal	Other methods
Areas										
Urban	80.6	10.8	42.9	18.1	5.1	0.2	0.5	15.1	6.7	0.6
Rural	82.1	10.5	59.4	8.6	5.7	0.3	1.3	9.9	4.2	0.3
Geographic regions										
Red River Delta	80.8	7.6	65.7	10.2	3.1	0.1	0.2	7.3	5.6	0.2
Northeast	82.0	9.0	58.0	10.6	4.8	0.1	1.7	10.2	5.4	0.1
Northwest	84.0	11.3	65.8	3.7	8.6	0.2	1.1	4.6	4.8	--
North Central	80.7	4.5	69.5	10.5	5.4	0.2	0.7	5.7	3.5	--
South Central Coast	87.7	7.3	42.0	21.5	7.5	1.0	2.6	9.5	8.4	0.2
Central Highlands	80.0	12.6	40.9	10.2	9.3	--	3.5	19.0	4.2	0.3
Southeast	77.8	13.7	42.2	14.0	8.5	0.3	0.3	15.8	4.6	0.6
Mekong River Delta	83.8	17.0	49.4	7.6	4.4	0.3	1.0	16.0	3.5	0.8

Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

Table 3: The rate of married women from 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods by age in 2006 (Unit: %)

	Rate of using	Birth control pills	IUDs	Condoms	Female sterilization	Male sterilization	Other modern methods	Menstrual cycle	Withdrawal	Other methods
15-19	57.1	26.7	37.8	21.1	0.8	--	--	10.8	2.8	--
20-24	75.3	20.6	53.5	11.8	--	--	0.8	7.0	5.0	1.3
25-29	84.9	14.8	56.4	13.1	1.0	--	1.6	9.2	3.6	0.3
30-34	88.7	12.2	57.0	11.2	2.5	0.2	1.2	10.2	5.5	--
35-39	91.0	11.4	55.5	10.4	6.3	--	1.3	10.8	4.2	0.1
40-44	84.8	7.7	53.8	10.1	8.2	0.7	1.0	13.3	4.5	0.6
45-49	65.1	3.8	54.9	10.5	10.0	0.5	0.4	13.2	6.5	0.3

Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

Table 4: The rate of using contraceptive methods by expected fertility rates

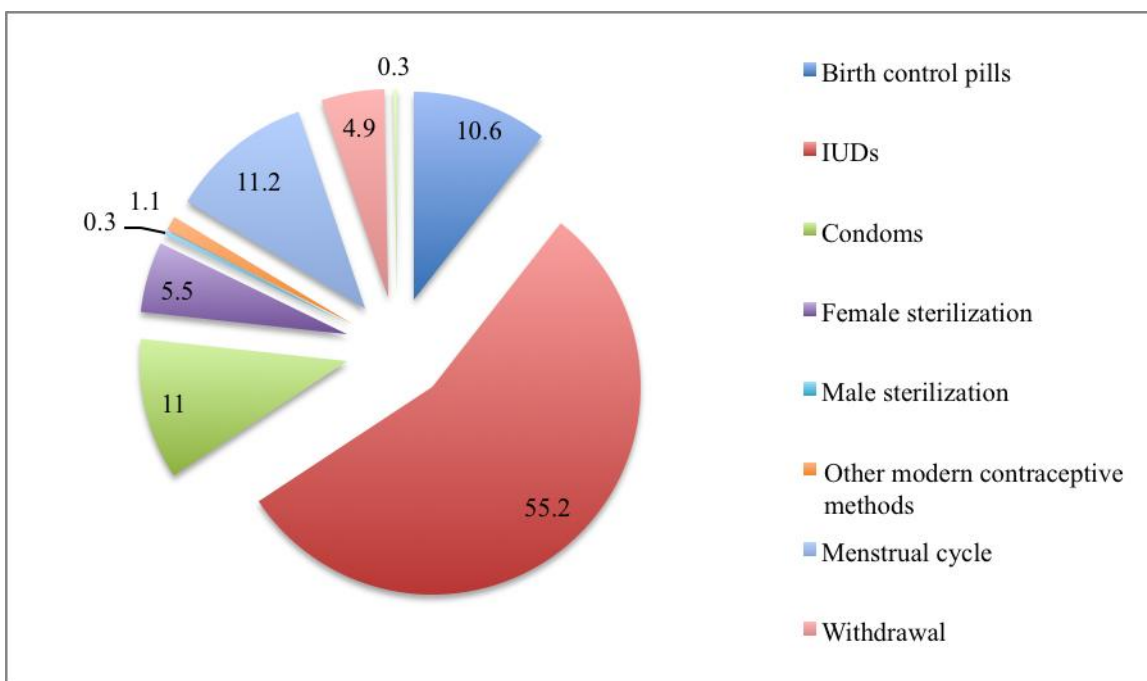
	Using contraceptive methods (%)	Using modern contraceptive methods (%)
Desire to have children		
Having more children	55.4	40.2
Having not decided	75.3	54.9
No desire to have more children	81.1	57.7
Distance of fertility expected		
Within 2 years	22.2	12.1
After 2 years	64.8	48.4
No specific period of time	64.4	43.6

Source: The Committee of population - family planning, 2000

Table 5: The rate of using contraceptive methods due to some factors

	Using contraceptive methods (%)	Modern contraceptive methods (%)
Electricity		
No	66.4	46.6
Yes	77.8	58.4
TV		
No	71.1	55.1
Yes	79.1	56.4
Transportation		
Roads available in 4 seasons	77.6	59.5
Roads seasonally available	63.2	49.3
Others (waterway/ railway)	70.3	41.2
Pathway	67.1	47.2

Source: The Committee of population - family planning, 2000



Source: 2006 Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey

Fig. 1. The rate of married women from 15 - 49 using contraceptive methods, 2006 (%)