Family planning

Knowledge and current use of family planning

Knowledge of contraceptive methods is almost universal among women and men aged 15–49 in Solomon Islands, with 94% of women and 98% of men knowing at least one modern contraceptive method, while 82% of women and 81% of men know at least one traditional method. The most commonly known modern contraceptive method is the male condom, with 90% of women and 97% of men reporting that they knew about this method.

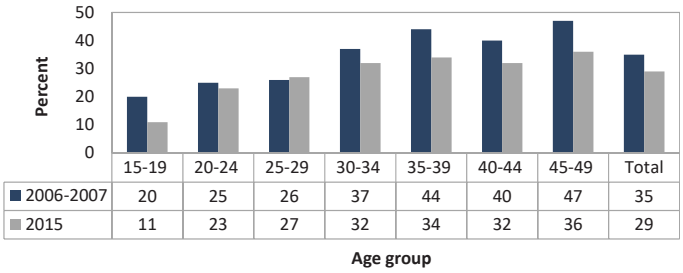
While contraceptive knowledge is widespread, contraceptive use is low, with approximately one in five (21%) women using some form of contraception, as reported at the time of the 2015 Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey (SIDHS). Another 29% of all currently married women state that they use some sort of method while very few sexually active, unmarried women (10%) currently use some form of contraception. Adolescent women aged 15–19 and young adult women aged 20–24 have a low uptake of contraceptive methods despite high levels of awareness: only 4% for adolescent women and 16% for young adult women.

Use of modern contraceptives by women aged 15–49

The use of modern contraception among all women aged 15–49 is low in Solomon Islands, and large families are the norm. Among all currently married women, 24% use any modern method as compared with 8% of sexually active unmarried women. The two most common methods used by currently married women are female sterilisation and injectable contraceptives. The use of modern contraception among currently married women is low among married women with no education. There is no variation in the use of contraception by women's residence (urban vs rural) or by women's living status. The results of the 2015 SIDHS indicate that the contraceptive prevalence rate is 24%, which is lower than what was reported in the 2006–2007 SIDHS (27%).

Further comparison of the use of contraceptive methods among currently married women by age groups between the two surveys indicates low usage of contraceptive methods across all age groups in the 2015 SIDHS, with the exception of women in the 25–29 age group. The lowest usage of contraceptive methods, as reported in the 2015 SIDHS, is among young women aged 15–19 and women aged 20– 24.

Table 1: Use of contraceptive methods among currently married women by age groups, 2006–2007 SIDHS and 2015 SIDHS



	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Total
2006-2007	20	25	26	37	44	40	47	35
2015	11	23	27	32	34	32	36	29

Contraception discontinuation rate

One in five women aged 15–49 years (20%) who started an episode of contraceptive use, discontinued that use within 12 months; 5% discontinued because of side effects or health concerns, and 5% discontinued for other reasons. Wanting to become pregnant or wanting a more effective method of contraception were the next most common reasons for discontinuation, both comprising about 3% of women aged 15–49. Nearly 2% of women stopped because the method failed and another 5% switched to another method.

Injectable contraceptives were associated with a higher rate of discontinuation, with more than one in four women (26%) discontinuing this method within 12 months of use.

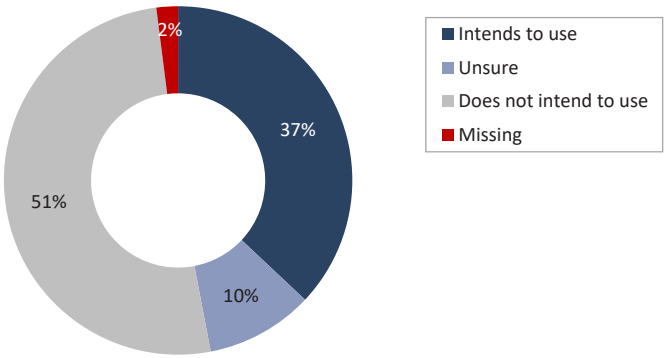
Unmet need for family planning

The 2015 SIDHS also highlights the fact that not all family planning needs are being met. Overall, over one in three (35%) married women aged 15–49 have an unmet family planning need. This is highest among adolescent women aged 15–19 and among young adult mothers aged 20–24, with 44% and 48% having an unmet need for family planning, respectively. There is little difference in the percentage of unmet family planning needs for women in urban areas (36%) and rural areas (35%).

Intended future use of contraception

Of the currently married women in Solomon Islands who are not using contraception, 51% report that they do not intend to use any contraception in the future, 37% intend to use some form of contraception, and 10% say they are unsure of their future intention to use any method.

Fig. 1: Intended future use of contraception among currently married women aged 15–49, 2015 SIDHS



Exposure to family planning messages

The media is currently being used to disseminate family planning information in Solomon Islands, and 28% of women and 36% of men report that they have heard family planning messages on the radio. This is in comparison with the 2006–2007 SIDHS, where 60% of women and 78% of men heard family planning messages on the radio. The results show a significant shift in the use of radio as the main media among women and men.

Throughout the world, health workers in the field have proven to be an effective means of providing family planning information. However, only 14% of women were visited by a field health worker and discussed family planning issues. The majority of these women (75%) did not discuss family planning with a field health worker at home or at a health facility.

Informed choice about contraception

Family planning users should be well informed about the possible side effects of the contraceptive method they choose and what to do if they experience side effects, and should be told about other available methods. Among women who last started an episode of modern contraception, 70% were informed about the side effects of the method but not all of these women were told what to do if they experienced the side effects (66%); 71% of current users were told about other methods that could be used.

Policy note

Approximately one in five (21%) women report that they used some form of contraception at the time of the 2015 SIDHS. Between the 2006–2007 SIDHS and 2015 SIDHS, the contraceptive prevalence rate declined from 27% to 24% (among currently women aged 15–49 using modern contraception). The low percentage of women currently using contraception could be one of the factors in the high and slow declining TFR of 4.4 as recorded in 2015 SIDHS.

The results also recorded a contraception discontinuation rate of about 20%. Almost half of all women aged 15–49 currently do not use any kind of contraceptive method and do not intend to use contraception in the future. This highlights the need to review Solomon Islands' reproductive health policy and family planning services and programmes, particularly those that focus on reproductive and sexual health education.

According to the results of the 2015 SIDHS, the most commonly used contraceptive method is female sterilisation. Other methods are used by very few women for whatever reasons, indicating a need to ensure consistent availability of other types of methods for users, and to ensure easy access of these methods. There is also a need to provide educational support in the use of these other methods, with emphasis placed on young people in order to educate them on how they can protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. These services and programmes would also be able to assist and help women and contraception users to continue using the methods, as the results indicate a discontinuation rate of about 20%.

The use of media in disseminating and promoting family planning messages is vital in order for the correct message to reach everyone (men, women, young adults) wherever they live in Solomon Islands. The results of the 2015 SIDHS suggest that media sources other than radio, tv and newspapers are likely to be more effective in disseminating family planning messages. There is a need to review the use of media and its effectiveness in reaching men, women and young adults, and look at other ways of communicating such as using mobile phones, drama and other sources.

**For more detailed information on family planning, see chapter 7 in the 2015 SIDHS report.*