

France makes birth control free for women up to 25

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The French government said on Thursday it would make birth control free for all women under 25, expanding a scheme currently targeting under-18s to ensure young women don't stop taking contraception

because they cannot afford it.

Health Minister Olivier Veran said surveys had shown a decline in the use of contraception among "a certain number of young women".

"Their main reason for going without (birth control) is financial," he said.

The scheme covers the pill, IUDs, contraceptive patches and other methods composed of steroid hormones.

Visits to the doctor for contraception will also be free, Veran said.

The move is part of a series of measures taken by President Emmanuel Macron's government to boost women's rights and alleviate youth poverty.

Last year, the government made free contraception available to girls under 15 for the first time—previously it was only available to girls aged between 15 and 18—as part of a bid to end underage abortions.

Several European countries, including Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway, make contraception free for teens.

Britain makes several forms of contraception free to all.

In France, the number of abortions among 15-18 year-olds fell from 9.5 per 1,000 girls between 2012 and 2018 to 6 per 1,000.

But in some developed countries, the free contraception won by women after decades of campaigning is coming under attack again from the religious right.

In the US, former president Barack Obama's signature health reform, known as Obamacare, gave most people with health insurance free access to birth control.

But his successor Donald Trump scrapped the measure, allowing employers to opt out of providing contraception coverage on religious grounds—a decision upheld by the Supreme Court in 2020.

Poland's conservative government has also heavily restricted access to emergency contraception as part of its war on birth control.

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