

In Spain, 70 percent of women use contraceptives during their first sexual encounter

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Contraceptive use in Spain during the first sexual encounter is similar to other European countries. However, there are some geographical differences between Spanish regions: women in Murcia use contraceptives less (55.8 percent) whereas women in the Basque Country use them more (76.7 percent). Credit: SINC

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Spanish researchers have analysed the prevalence of contraceptive use during the first sexual encounter over the last month in 5,141 sexually active women between the ages of 15 and 49 years through Spain's 17 autonomous communities.

"Bearing in mind the individual factors amongst women that determine contraceptive use, living in one autonomous community or another also has an influence," as explained to SINC by Dolores Ruiz Muñoz, researcher at the Public Health Agency of Barcelona and lead author of the study.

Published in the *Health & Place* journal, the results reveal that the prevalence of contraceptive use during the first sexual encounter is 70.4%. It varies in the different regions from 55.8% in Murcia to 76.7% in the [Basque Country](#).

In this case, contraceptive use shows positive correlation in women with a university education and negative correlation amongst women from poor backgrounds.

Ruiz Muñoz points out that "contraceptive use during the first sexual encounter was more common amongst non-religious women in developed countries who had high educational attainment and their first sexual experience was between the ages of 18 and 19 years."

Furthermore, the prevalence of contraceptive use during the four weeks prior to the interview stood at 77.2%. Percentages varied from 70.9% in Navarra to 86.7% in Asturias, which suggested less difference between the different regions than in the case of the first sexual encounter.

The use of contraceptives during sexual relations in the month before the study was more common amongst younger women, those who live alone, those with higher educational attainment, those with children and those that had used contraceptives during their first [sexual encounter](#).

"There are many factors that influence the correlation between the region and women at an intermediate level" continues the researcher. "These factors which influence the context must be taken into account to ensure all women throughout [Spain](#) have equal access to contraceptives regardless of their socio-economic level or the area where they live."

There are still inequalities

According to experts, contraceptives are the most effective way of preventing unplanned pregnancy and their use is widespread in Spain. Nonetheless, there are still some inequalities in their use.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of considering the social, economic and political characteristics of regions when designing administrative measures and promotion methods for contraceptive use.

"This is important in light of the new 2010 law in Spain on Sexual and Reproductive Health, which aims to ensure equal access to [contraceptive](#) methods for all [women](#)", concludes Ruiz Muñoz.

More information: Dolores Ruiz-Muñoz, Gloria Pérez, Mercè Gotsens, Maica Rodríguez-Sanz. "Regional inequalities in the use of contraception in Spain: A multilevel approach". *Health & Place* 18 (2012) 408.

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