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Contraceptive preferences among Polish youth

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ABSTRACT

Contraception is a pillar of reducing the rate of pregnancies among young people. Knowledge about the possibilities and characteristics of available methods of contraception is one of the key elements of sex education. It allows planned reproduction and can prevent sexually transmitted infections. In order to assess the knowledge about contraception among Polish youth, we analyzed 2205 collected responses.

Keywords: contraception, birth control, intrauterine device, contraceptive implant, oral contraceptive pills, condom

1. INTRODUCTION

Contraception is a pillar of reducing the rate of pregnancies among young people. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians develop practical knowledge about contraception to help adolescents reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and the negative health consequences of sexually transmitted diseases. Over the past decade, young people have been given many new contraceptive methods and newer guidelines for existing contraceptive methods have been issued [1].

The male condom is the most common contraceptive method used by adolescents, with up to 75% of male and 52% of female adolescents reporting condom use at last time [2]. Latex condoms also reduce STI transmission – trichomoniasis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis B,

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), HSV (herpes simplex virus), HPV (human papillomavirus) and syphilis transmission [3-13].

Approximately 750,000 adolescents become pregnant each year, and over 80% of these pregnancies are not planned, indicating an unmet need for effective contraception in this population [14, 15]. The effectiveness of contraceptive methods is presented in Table 1 [1].

Table 1. Contraceptive Method Efficacy [1]; DMPA – depot medroxyprogesterone acetate
IUD – intrauterine device

	% of Women Experiencing an Unintended Pregnancy in the First Year of Use		% of Women Continuing Use at 1 Year
	Typical Use	Perfect Use	
No method	85	85	-
Spermicides	28	18	42
Fertility awareness – based methods	24	-	47
Withdrawal	22	4	46
Female condom	21	5	41
Male condom	18	2	43
Diaphragm	12	6	57
Combined pill and progestin-only pill	9	0,3	67
Contraceptive patch	9	0,3	67
Contraceptive ring	9	0,3	67
DMPA contraceptive injection	6	0,2	56
IUD (levonorgestrel)	0,2	0,2	78
Single-rod contraceptive implant	0,05	0,05	84
Female sterilization	0,5	0,5	100
Male sterilization	0,15	0,1	100

2. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to assess knowledge in the field of contraception in Poland, as well as to find out what methods of contraception are most often used by Polish youth. They

were divided into three groups: heterosexuals excluding medical students, non-heterosexuals excluding medical students and medical students.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A Poland-wide on-line survey was conducted between January and March 2019. 2205 anonymous answers were analysed. The research included 1356 (61.5%) women, 681 (31%) men, 46 (2%) trans men, 12 (0.5%) trans women and 110 (5%) non-binary people. 95.4% were aged 16-29. In order to interpret the results, we divided the study group into people who defined themselves as heterosexual persons (heterosexuals) and people who defined themselves in any other way (non-heterosexuals) constituting the LGBT+ community. 1122 (51%) of the respondents described themselves as non-heterosexuals and 1083 (49%) – as heterosexuals. Almost half of the answers (n=1080; 49%) came from students, of which 40% were medical students (n=435). Among medical students most responses came from students of the fourth year (n=95; 4.3%). Nearly half of the respondents (n=1077; 49%) lived in cities with a population of over 250,000. To compare the knowledge of heterosexual and non-heterosexual persons, medical students were excluded from both groups. Finally, three studied populations were identified: heterosexuals excluding medical students [HS] (n=735), non-heterosexuals excluding medical students [non-HS] (n=1035) and medical students [MS] (n=435). The detailed characteristics of the study group is presented in Table 2.

We asked interviewers to answer the following issues: “If you (or your partner) currently use any methods of contraception, please select them from the following...”, “Two medicaments are available in Poland as emergency contraception. One of them (the one that has a longer duration of action) can be taken no later than...”, “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the highest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...” and “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the lowest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”.

Table 2. Demographic data and characteristics of the study group (n=2205)

Parameter		Value (n)	Value (%)
Age	16–19	820	37,2
	20–29	1283	58,2
	30–39	79	3,6
	40–49	13	0,6
	50–59	7	0,3
	60–69	3	0,1
Sex	Women	1356	61,5
	Men	681	31

	Trans men	46	2
	Trans women	12	0,5
	Non-binary	110	5
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	1083	49
	Non-heterosexual	1122	51
Place of residence	Village	331	15
	City with up to 50,000 inhabitants	301	13,5
	City of 50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants	263	12
	City of 150,000 to 250,000 inhabitants	233	10,5
	City of over 250,000 inhabitants	1077	49
Education	Not studying	353	16
	Disciples	772	35
	Medical students	435	20
	• 1 st year	71	3,3
	• 2 nd year	85	3,9
	• 3 rd year	85	3,9
	• 4 th year	95	4,3
	• 5 th year	86	3,9
• 6 th year	13	0,7	
Non-medical students	645	29	
Membership in the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA-Poland)	Yes	60	2,7
	No	2145	97,3

4. RESULTS

4. 1. "If you (or your partner) currently use any methods of contraception, please select them from the following..."

Among those who declare the use of contraception, the most frequently chosen options were condoms: 51% HS, 41% non-HS and 57% MS (Figures 1-3). 17% of HS declared that they use contraceptive pills, and 13% – calendar method. Medical students most often chose condoms and contraceptive pills (57% and 24% respectively).

4. 2. “Two medicaments are available in Poland as emergency contraception. One of them (the one that has a longer duration of action) can be taken no later than...”

The correct answer (“72 h after sexual intercourse”) was marked by 32% HS, 32% non-HS and 45% MS (Figures 4-6). In HS and non-HS groups, the most frequently indicated response was "48 h after sexual intercourse" (42% and 45% respectively).

4. 3. “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the highest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

14% HS, 17% non-HS and 9% MS believe that condoms are the most effective form of contraception (Figures 7-9). “Contraceptive implant” was chosen by 12% HS, 14% non-HS and 15% MS.

4. 4. “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the lowest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

Each group considered the calendar method to be the least effective method of contraception (63% HS, 58% non-HS and 74% MS respectively). 6% HS and 6% non-HS believe that the condom is the least effective method of contraception (Figure 10-12).

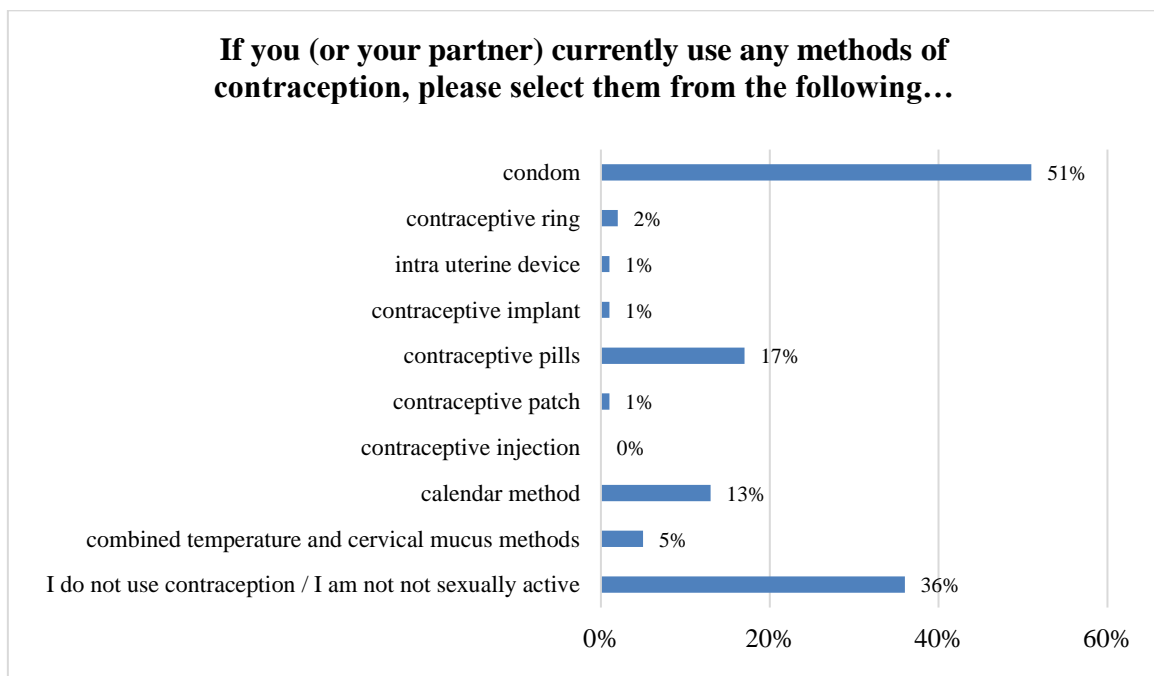


Figure 1. HS group answers to the question: “If you (or your partner) currently use any methods of contraception, please select them from the following...” (multiple choice question)

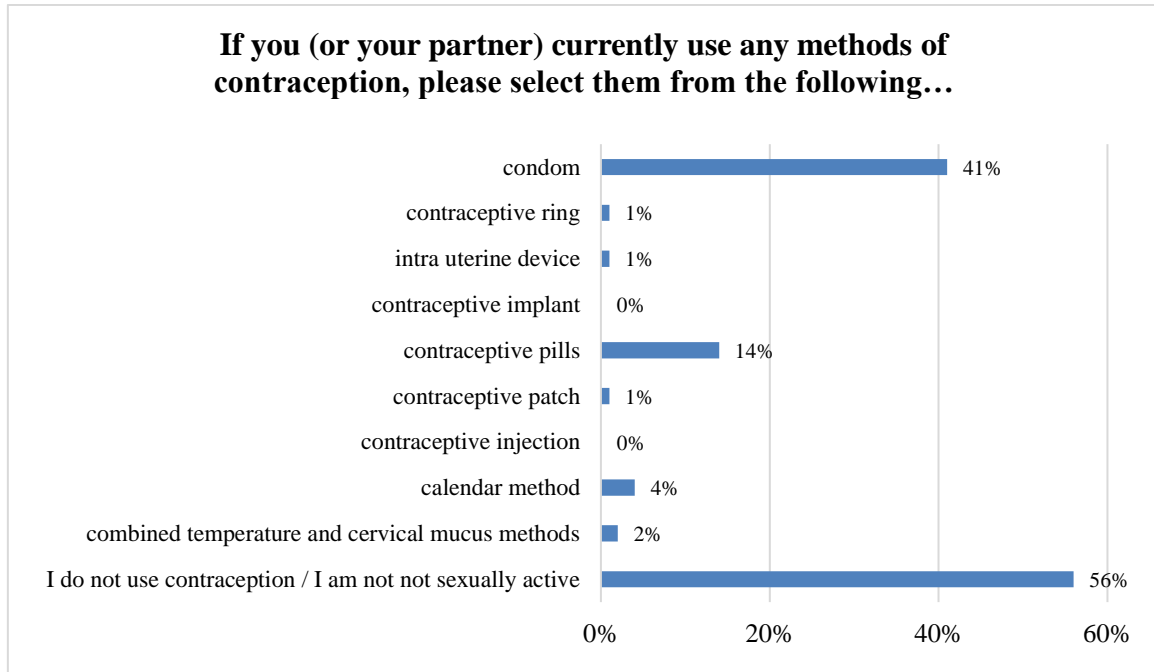


Figure 2. Non-HS group answers to the question: “If you (or your partner) currently use any methods of contraception, please select them from the following...” (multiple choice question)

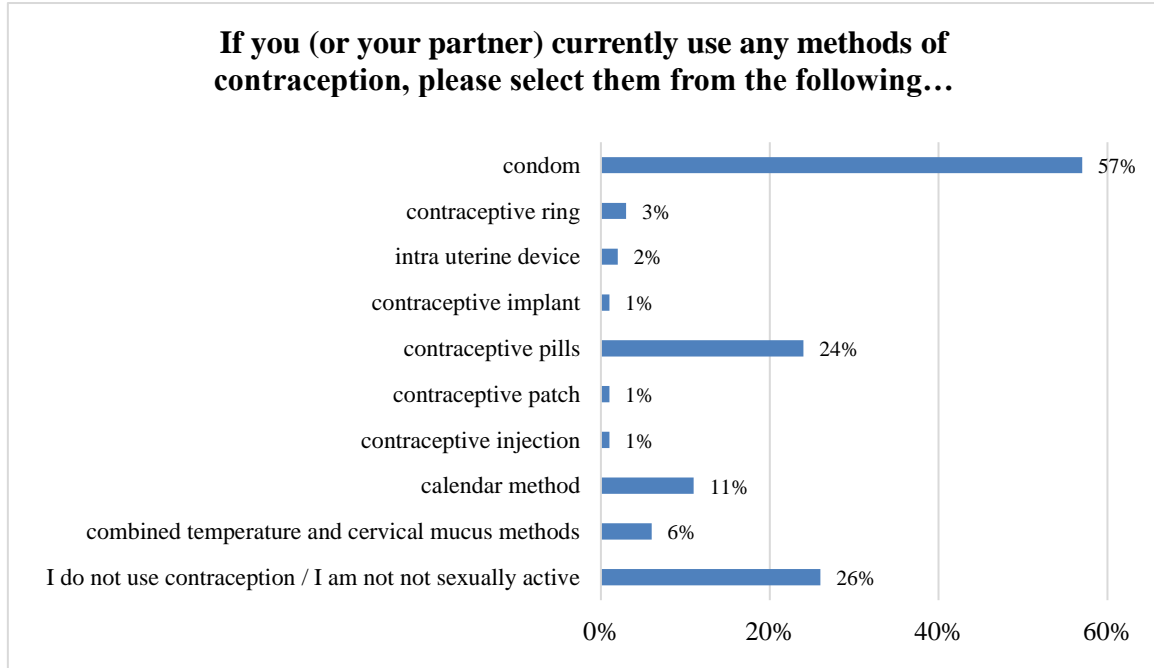


Figure 3. MS group answers to the question: “If you (or your partner) currently use any methods of contraception, please select them from the following...” (multiple choice question)

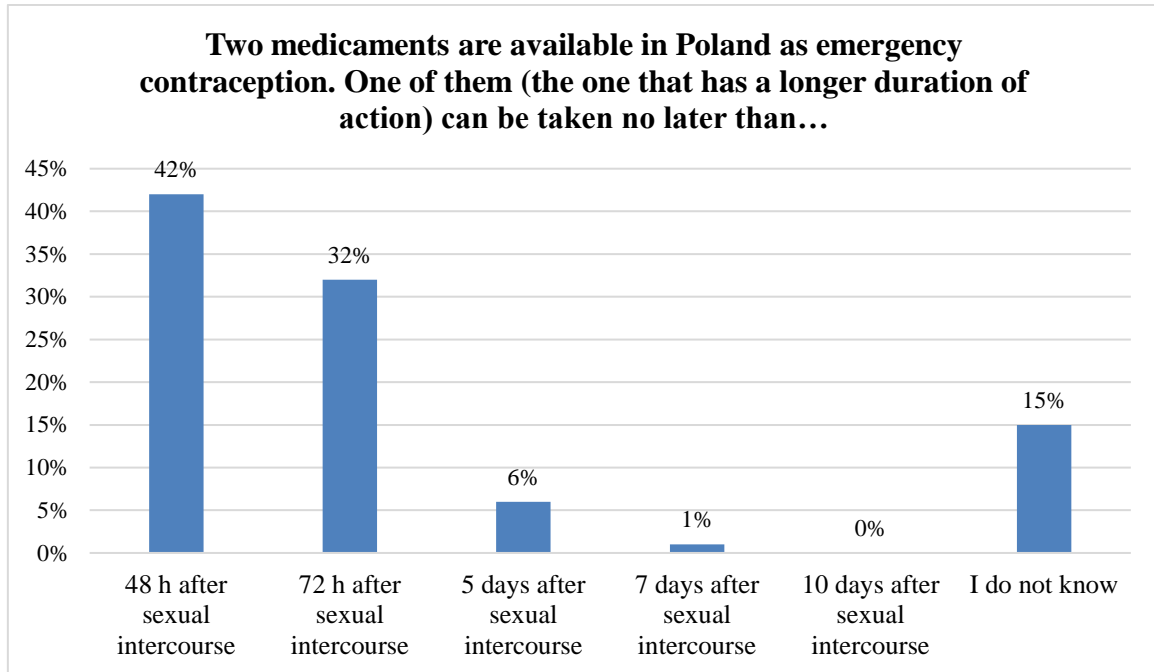


Figure 4. HS group answers to the question: “Two medicaments are available in Poland as emergency contraception. One of them (the one that has a longer duration of action) can be taken no later than...”

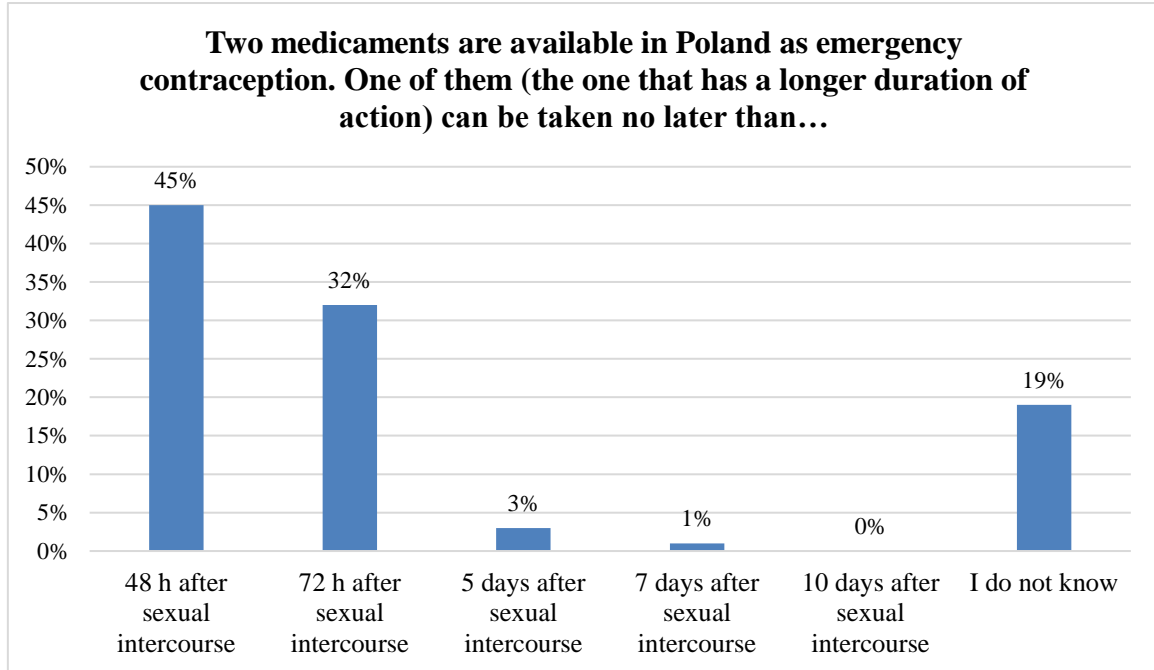


Figure 5. Non-HS group answers to the question: “Two medicaments are available in Poland as emergency contraception. One of them (the one that has a longer duration of action) can be taken no later than...”

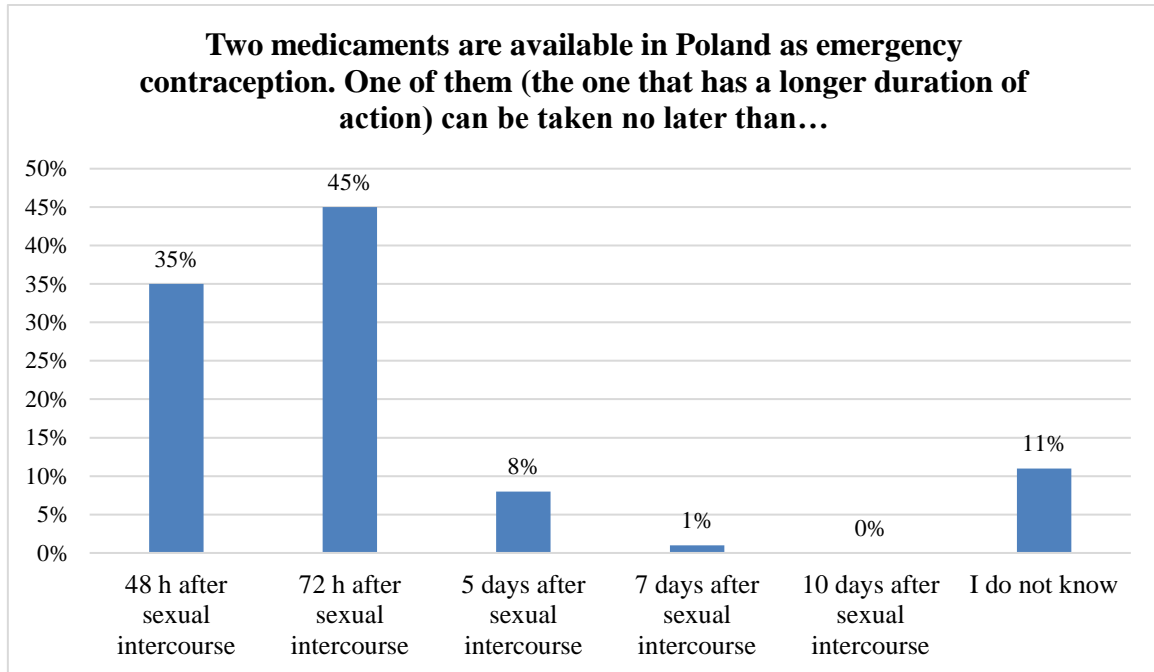


Figure 6. MS group answers to the question: “Two medicaments are available in Poland as emergency contraception. One of them (the one that has a longer duration of action) can be taken no later than...”

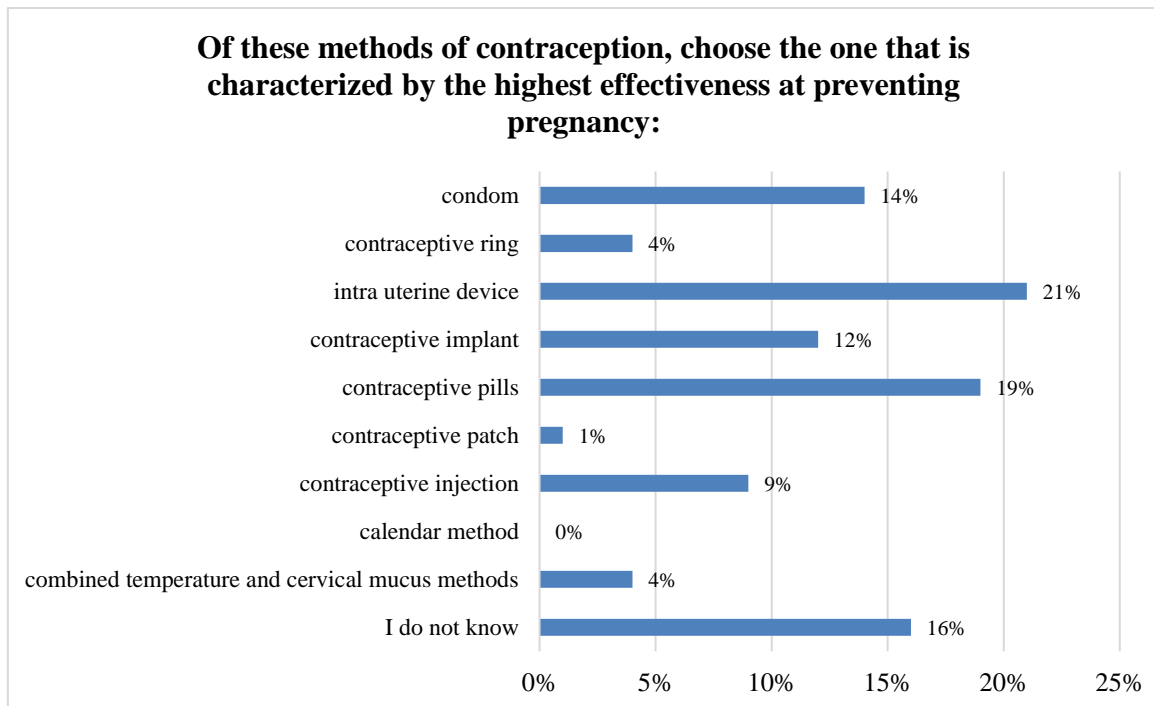


Figure 7. HS group answers to the question: “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the highest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

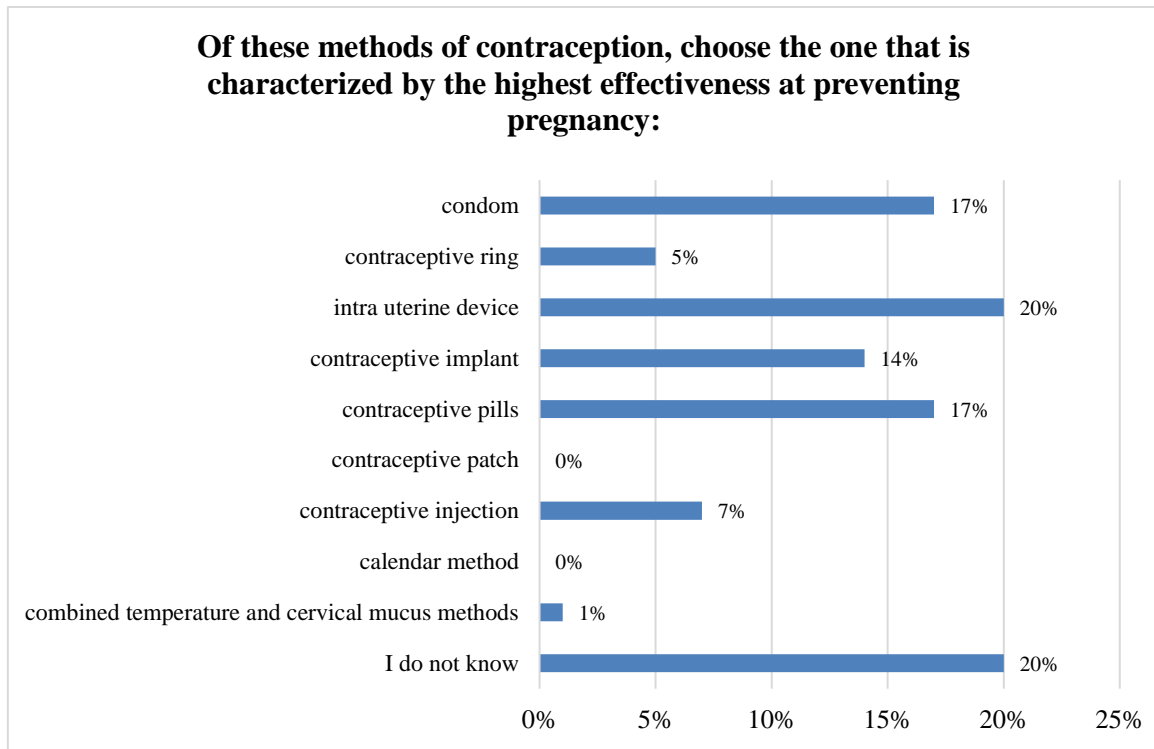


Figure 8. Non-HS group answers to the question: “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the highest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

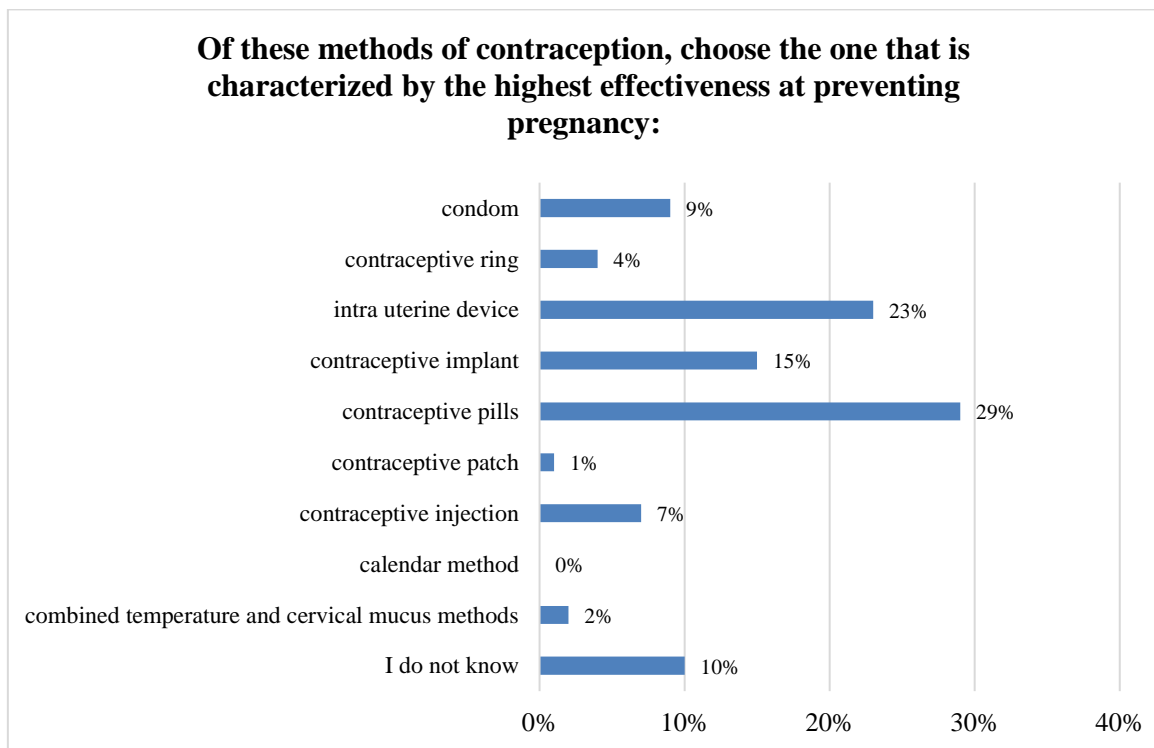


Figure 9. MS group answers to the question: “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the highest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

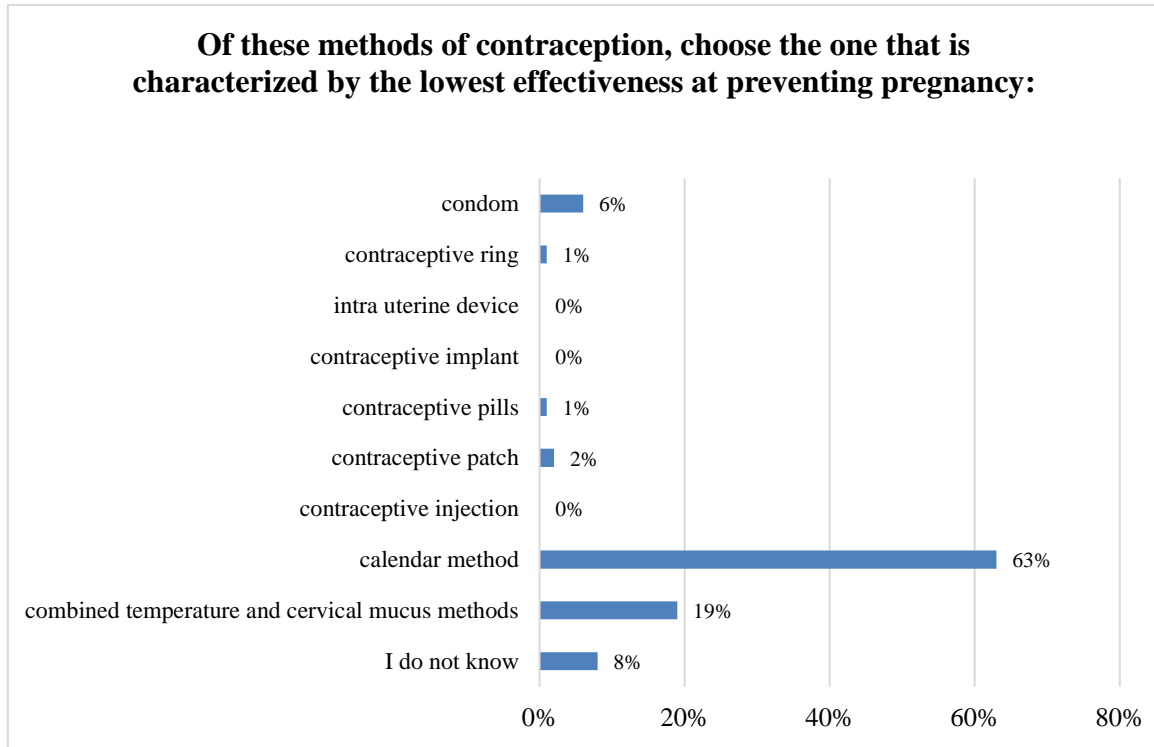


Figure 10. HS group answers to the question: “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the lowest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

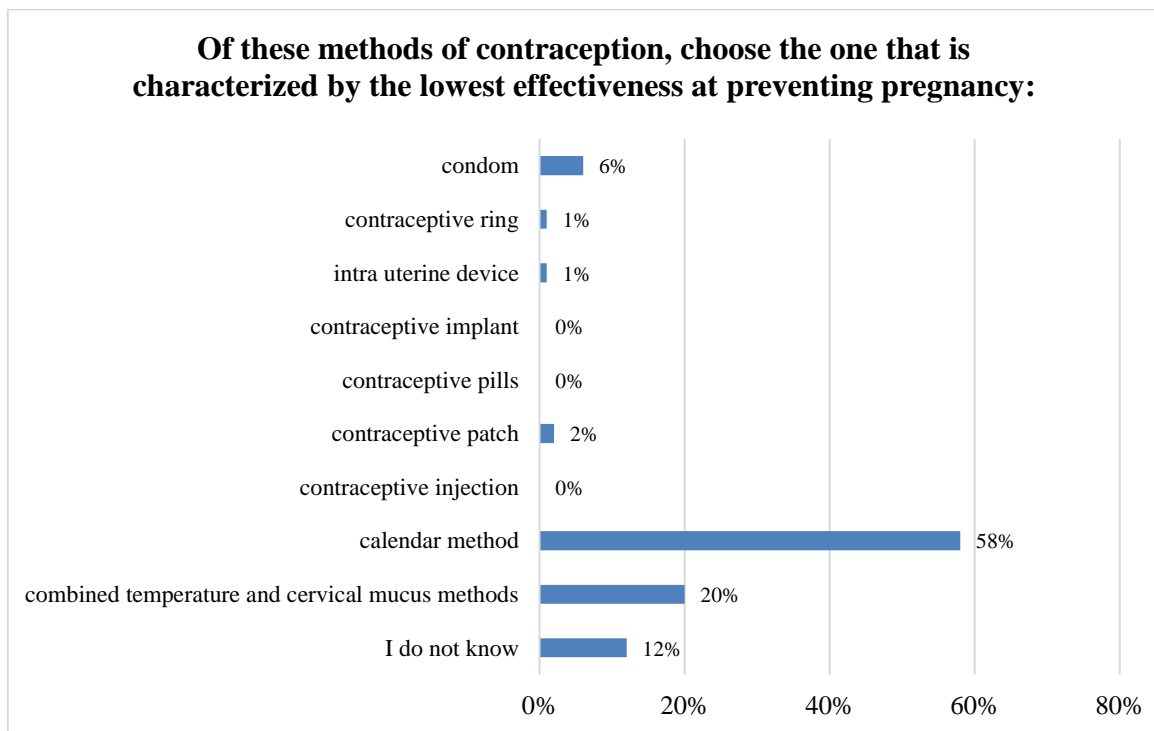


Figure 11. Non-HS group answers to the question: “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the lowest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

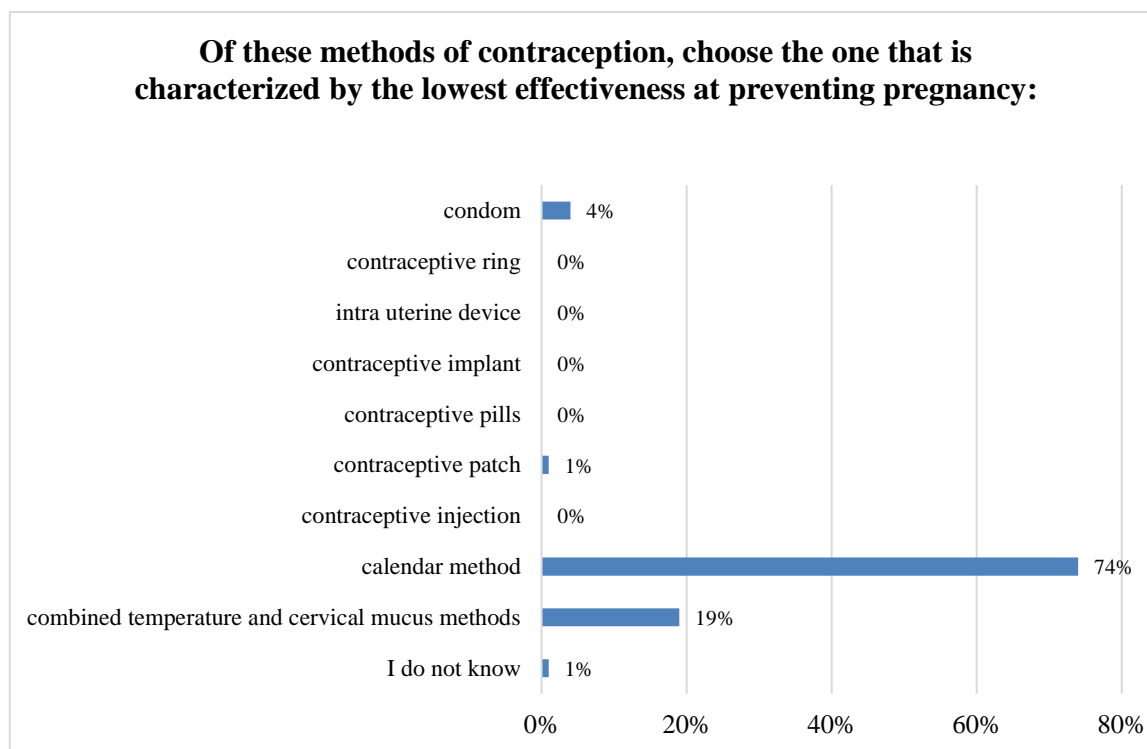


Figure 12. MS group answers to the question: “Of these methods of contraception, choose the one that is characterized by the lowest effectiveness at preventing pregnancy...”

5. CONCLUSIONS

Among Polish youth using contraception, the most commonly used methods were condoms, contraceptive pills and calendar method. Contraceptive injections were the least frequent method of contraception. Most respondents did not know the maximum time after which emergency contraception could be used. No more than one-fifth of participants in each group can indicate the correct answer regarding the contraceptive method with the highest effectiveness. Respondents of each group consider the calendar method to be the least effective method of contraception.

Polish youth has little knowledge about contraception and more attention should be devoted to spreading knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of contraceptive methods.

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