

Media Release

7 March 2008



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY:

WOMEN DESERVE BETTER REPRODUCTIVE OPTIONS

Australia's leading sexual and reproductive healthcare organisation, Marie Stopes International, today called on the Commonwealth Government to give women something to celebrate on International Women's Day – better reproductive options.

"International Women's Day should be a time for women to celebrate their reproductive freedom," said Jill Michelson, Operations Manager of Marie Stopes International.

"Yet recent research has shown that the majority of women were using contraception at the time of their unplanned pregnancy.

"This simply isn't acceptable and, on International Women's Day, Australian women deserve more."

The research - Real Choices: Women, Contraception & Unplanned Pregnancy - found that of the 2,041 women who commenced the study, 1,033 women confirmed having experienced an unplanned pregnancy, and 60% of those were using at least one form of contraception at the time.

Other key findings in the report include:

- At the time of their unplanned pregnancy, the largest group of women using contraception were on the pill (43%), while 22% were using a condom.
- Nearly half of all women do not take into consideration protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) when choosing their method of contraception.
- 1 in 10 women either rarely or never felt comfortable to ask their partner to wear a condom.
- 36% of women who were not using contraception at the time of their unplanned pregnancy had not been planning or expecting to have sex.
- 17% of women who hadn't used contraception at the time of their unplanned pregnancy believed they weren't fertile, or wouldn't become pregnant.
- 21% of the women using contraception at the time of their unplanned pregnancy were using more than one method.
- 80% of women didn't seek emergency contraception and of those, 44% did not because they thought they would not become pregnant.
- 63% were aged 24 or younger at the time of their unplanned pregnancy.
- Nearly three quarters of women (74%) want governments to expand women's reproductive options by improving their access to a range of contraception, with 70% supporting guaranteed paid maternity leave.

"These figures are proof of the need to increase the range of contraceptive options in Australia, invest in research to improve contraceptive efficacy and implement a dedicated contraceptive user education campaign," said Ms Michelson.

"And what better time for the Rudd Government to start addressing this than on International Women's Day."

Real Choices: Women, Contraception & Unplanned Pregnancy was commissioned by Marie Stopes International and conducted by WebSurvey, enlisting the database of Pureprofile to select the sample. Invitations were extended so as to obtain weighted samples with regard to age and residency by state as ascertained by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A copy of the research key findings can be downloaded from <http://www.mariestopes.com.au/research>.

About Marie Stopes International: Marie Stopes International is a not-for-profit sexual and reproductive healthcare provider, with centres in the ACT, Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and Western Australia. The organisation offers a range of services, including abortion, vasectomy, sexually transmitted infection check-ups and contraception. Surplus proceeds from Australian activities support the work of the Marie Stopes International Partnership, which delivers sexual and reproductive health services to over four million people in 38 countries worldwide.

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