Adolescent contraceptive use

DATA FROM THE SIERRA LEONE DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY (SLDHS), 2013

Adolescent population: who are they?

In the Republic of Sierra Leone, there are nearly 1.5 million adolescents aged 10–19 years – 23.1% of the country’s total population. About half of adolescents live in rural areas, 54.5% of adolescent girls and 55.9% of adolescent boys.

By age 19, the mean number of years of schooling attended by adolescent girls is 6.7, while for adolescent boys it is 8.5. Among adolescents who become parents before age 20, the average age at which Sierra Leonean adolescent girls have their first baby is 16.5 years, while the average age at which adolescent boys first become fathers is 17.7.

Sexual activity and marital status

Analysis of data from the SLDHS shows that over 333,000 Sierra Leoneans aged 15–19 are currently sexually active – they are either unmarried and have had sex in the last three months or they are in a union (i.e. married or living together). On average, among adolescents who had sex before age 20, adolescent girls first have sexual intercourse at age 15.8 years and adolescent boys at 16.4 years.

Among unmarried adolescents, 56.2% of adolescent girls report ever having sex and 44.9% are currently sexually active; among adolescent boys, 43.9% report ever having sex, while 33.8% are currently sexually active.

Among all Sierra Leonean adolescents, 18.8% of adolescent girls and 0.9% of adolescent boys are in a union. Among these adolescents, the mean age of the first union is 16.0 years for adolescent girls and 17.5 for adolescent boys.

What can be done to support Sierra Leonean adolescents to prevent unintended pregnancy?

Plan for how, when and where different groups of sexually active adolescents (married and unmarried, boys and girls, rural and urban) use and do not use contraception.

Learn the reasons why adolescents are not using contraception, and develop policies and programmes to better address their needs.

Understand that adolescents may get contraception from a variety of sources and ensure that each of these sources can provide high quality services for adolescents.
Contraceptive use and non-use among adolescent girls

Unmarried, sexually active

According to SLDHS\textsuperscript{i} analyses, 82.2\% of unmarried, sexually active adolescent girls report not wanting a child in the next two years, and 54.1\% of them are currently using a method to prevent pregnancy. The main reasons these adolescents report for not using a contraceptive method include:

- infrequent sex (24.1\%)
- fear of side-effects or health concerns (19.6\%)
- not married (14.2\%)

Among all unmarried, sexually active adolescent girls aged 15–19, 48.6\% are not using a method of contraception. Injectable contraceptives are the most common modern method used (22.1\% of these adolescent girls) and 13.3\% are using implants, which are considered to be one of the most effective methods. Only a small proportion, 1.2\%, are using a traditional method (withdrawal or periodic abstinence) (see Figure 1).

In union

According to SLDHS\textsuperscript{i} analyses, 37.9\% of adolescent girls in a union report not wanting a child in the next two years, yet only 10.9\% of them are currently using any method to prevent pregnancy. The main reasons these adolescents report for not using a contraceptive method include:

- breastfeeding (62.8\%)
- not having sex (33.9\%)
- she is opposed (6.7\%)

Among all adolescent girls in a union aged 15–19, 92.2\% are not using a method of contraception. Injectable contraceptives are the most common modern method used (3.3\% of these adolescent girls), while 1.0\% are using IUDs or implants, which are the most effective modern methods (see Figure 2).


LEARN MORE AT who.int/reproductivehealth/adol-contraceptive-use
Adolescent contraceptive use

ANALYSIS OF THE SIERRA LEONE DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY, 2013

Among adolescents who had sex before age 20, the average age at first sex is

- 15.8 years for adolescent girls
- 16.4 years for adolescent boys

Among adolescents who become parents before age 20, the average age at first birth is

- 16.5 years for adolescent girls
- 17.7 years for adolescent boys

REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

1.5 million adolescents ages 10-19

What can be done to support Sierra Leonean adolescents to prevent unintended pregnancy?

**Plan for how, when, and where different groups of adolescents use or don’t use contraception.**

**Learn the reasons why adolescents are not using contraception.**

Report not wanting a child in the next two years

- 82.2% sexually active, unmarried adolescent girls
- 37.9% adolescent girls in union

Main reasons for not using contraception

- Sexually active, unmarried
  - 24.1% infrequent sex
  - 19.6% fear of side-effects or health concerns
  - 14.2% not married
  - 6.7% she is opposed

- In union
  - 62.8% breastfeeding
  - 33.9% not having sex

**Understand that adolescents may get modern contraception from a variety of sources.**

- Sexually active, unmarried
  - 68.1% from a government facility
  - 15.4% from a pharmacy

**Learn more at** who.int/reproductivehealth/adol-contraceptive-use

REASONS FOR NON-USE:

- Not married
- Not having sex
- Infrequent sex
- Menses has not returned after birth
- Breastfeeding
- Fatalistic (up to god)
- She is opposed
- Husband/partner is opposed
- Religious prohibition
- Knows no method
- Knows no source
- Fear of side effects/health concerns
- Inconvenient to use
- Others opposed
- Lack of access/too far

SOURCE OF METHOD:

- Government facility
- Private facility
- Pharmacy
- Shop
- Friends or parents
- Other
- Community Health Worker