presumably thought, that they were in mutually monogamous relationships throughout the prior year.

**Risk Status and Condom Use**

- **Condom use by risk status.** Approximately 19% of women who had been sexually active in the past year reported having used condoms to prevent STDs at some time during that year (Table 5). Women who reported in the NSFG that they were at risk of STDs because of multiple partnerships were much more likely to report use of condoms for this purpose than women who were not at risk of STDs (23–58% vs. 9%). Also, among those at reported risk for STDs, women who were at direct risk of contracting an STD were more likely to have used condoms for STD prevention than women who were at indirect STD risk alone (p<.001). The highest level of condom use (58%) was among women who reported both direct and indirect STD risk.

- **All women who were sexually active in the three months before interview, 19% said they were currently using the condom. Thirteen percent used it as their only method and 7% used the condom together with or alternating with another contraceptive method (not shown). Women at direct risk only were similar to those at both direct and indirect risk in their levels of consistent condom use and in their levels of condom use at last sex. They were more likely to be currently using the condom than either women who reported no STD risk or women reporting only indirect STD risk, whose levels of current condom use and condom use at last sex were relatively similar.**

- **While the condom’s effectiveness for both STD prevention and contraception depends on its correct and consistent use, only about two-thirds of current condom users said that their partner used a condom the last time they had sex. The level of use was significantly lower for women whose partners had other partners (50–60%) than for women at no risk or at direct risk only (about 70%).**

**Predictors of current and recent condom use.** Even after we controlled for the effects of relevant social and demographic factors, the odds of having used a condom for STD prevention were more than three times as great for women at direct risk for STDs as they were for women not at risk (Table 6). The effects of direct and indirect risk appear to be cumulative, as women at both types of risk were more likely to have used condoms for STD prevention than were women at only direct or at only indirect risk. However, being at indirect risk alone did not significantly increase the chance of condom use (p=.08).

- **Unmarried women were more likely to have used condoms for STD prevention, with cohabiting women being more likely than those who were married but less likely than those who were not in a union. Younger women and black women were more likely than others to report condom use for STD prevention. Interestingly, women with no children also were more likely to report condom use, even after the effects of marital status and age were controlled. Employment status was not a significant predictor in this or any other condom model (not shown).**

**Differences in current condom use according to STD risk status were much smaller and not statistically significant. Women at indirect risk only were marginally less likely to currently use the condom than were those at no STD risk (p=.055). The relationship between marital status and current condom use was statistically significant, but was not as strong as it was for condom use for STD prevention; the inverse relationship seen between age and use in the past year held for current use as well.**

- **However, some factors not significant in the analysis of use for STD prevention were important determinants of current condom use: Women whose income was less than poverty level, nonmetropolitan residents and less-educated women were less likely to be current condom users than were women with an income more than twice the poverty level, metropolitan residents and women with at least some college education. Race or ethnicity and parity were not significant predictors. Women in the Northeast were more likely to be current condom users than were women in other regions, and Catholics and women of other religions were more likely than Protestant women to be current users.**

- **The predictors of use at last sex mirror those of current use, but are stronger. The effects of indirect and direct risk are opposing: Women with multiple partners were more likely to have used condoms at last sex, but women whose partners had other partners were less likely to have done so. Women at both direct and indirect risk (the group of women at highest risk) were no more likely to have used the condom at last sex than were women not at any STD risk.**

**Analysis of condom use at last sex among those who reported themselves to be current users (taken to be an indicator of “consistency” of condom use) also indicates that indirect risk of STDs is negatively associated with consistent use. The odds of “consistent” use were only half as great for women at indirect risk alone as they were for those not at indirect risk. The indirect risk variable does not absorb any effect of direct risk: When indirect risk is excluded from the model, direct risk alone remains not significant, and when direct risk is excluded, indirect risk continues to be significant (not shown). This lack of any relationship between consistent use and direct risk of STDs within the past 12 months differs from a previous finding in 1988 that current condom users who were at direct risk of STDs within the past three months were less likely to use condoms at last intercourse than women who were not at direct risk of STDs.**

- **Formerly married current condom users were also less likely to be consistent users than were married women.**

**Discussion**

- **Having multiple sexual partners or having a partner who has multiple partners over a relatively short period of time are key behavioral factors that contribute to individuals’ risk for STDs. Our data on the number of partners in the past 12 months suggest that the popular perception that partnership levels are increasing rapidly is incorrect: During the period studied, neither men nor women reported an increase in their number of partners in the past year, and the proportion of men with**