ly refer to use for STD prevention; in fact, the question on use at first intercourse refers simply to use of birth control methods. If this difference across the two surveys had any impact at all, the method most likely to be affected would be the condom, which is most widely recommended for protection against both pregnancy and STDs.

To examine whether respondents interpreted the questions similarly in both surveys, we compared responses from the two surveys to the questions on contraceptive use at first sexual intercourse. We assumed that if the questions were interpreted similarly by women in each cycle of the NSFG, the responses for women who had first intercourse in the same year would be very similar. Figure 1 shows that this is generally the case, with the level of condom use at first intercourse being relatively similar for each year. The only exception is in 1987, and this is probably due to the small sample size for this year in the 1988 survey. As expected, both surveys show a rising overall trend in condom use at first intercourse.

Thus, the different introductory statements probably had only a minimal effect on responses to questions on contraception. It remains uncertain, however, whether results for other measures of contraceptive use for which a similar consistency check cannot be done (such as use at last intercourse and use in the month of interview) were affected.

**Independent Variables**

We considered a number of demographic and social characteristics that were measured in the NSFG to be relevant in this analysis of condom use—age at interview, race or ethnicity, education, religion and poverty status. Two relationship characteristics are examined—union status and duration of the current relationship. Each respondent was asked about all of her male partners since January 1991, and from this partnership history we identified currently sexually active women’s most recent partner. In addition, we included in the analyses two measures of women’s likely need to practice contraception for birth control or for STD prevention—their future fertility preferences, and their number of sexual partners in the three months preceding the interview. For some unmarried, noncohabiting women, information on their number of partners in the past three months was missing (4% of the total number of women who had had sex in the three months before the interview). These women are shown as a separate category for the variable on number of partners.

We selected variables for inclusion in the analyses based on both theoretical and empirical indications that they are important predictors of condom use. Because the condom provides protection against STDs, it is more likely to be used by women who are at risk of or apprehensive about contracting these diseases. In the United States, exposure to multiple partners over relatively short periods of time, a key risk factor for STDs, tends to be higher among unmarried and younger women, black women and those who want more children.

Because of the active involvement of male partners in condom use, one would expect their characteristics to have a strong influence on whether the condom is used. Women were asked about some characteristics of their sexual partners only in the 1995 NSFG, however, so these data could not be used in an analysis of change. In addition, partners’ characteristics were highly correlated with respondents’ characteristics, and therefore are not included in these analyses.

**Regression Models**

- **Any condom use, 1988–1995.** We first use logistic regression to examine factors associated with any condom use in 1988 and in 1995. The dependent variable is a dummy variable with a value of one if a woman is currently using the condom (whether alone or along with another method) and zero if she is only using a method other than the condom. Thus, the analysis is based on all current contraceptive users, and the aim is to predict the likelihood that a woman will use the condom, given that she uses some contraceptive method.

This and subsequent analyses were limited to contraceptive users because factors underlying the decision to use a particular method instead of another may be very different from those informing the decision to use a contraceptive. Since the latter is not the focus of this research, we excluded nonusers from the regression models. Duration of the current relationship could only be included in the analysis of the 1995 NSFG, since this measure was not available for 1988.

We decomposed the change in condom use between 1988 and 1995 into three component parts: the part due to change in subgroup-specific rates of condom use, the part due to change in composition, and the part due to the interaction between condom use rates and subgroup composition.

- **Condom use alone and dual method use, 1995.** We used multinomial logistic regression to examine the impact of characteristics on current condom use, alone or along with a systemic method, among all current contraceptive users in 1995. The model that we estimated had a dependent variable with three categories: used the condom alone; used the condom along

*In the 1988 NSFG, the question was: “Think back, the first time you ever used a method of birth control, or had intercourse with a partner who used a method, which method on Card E-3 did you use? If you used more than one method that first time, please tell me about each one. For example, a woman’s partner might use a condom and she might use the pill on the same occasion.”

1The change due to rates is expressed by differences in the slopes (i.e., differences in regression coefficients and the intercepts). It shows the proportion of change in condom use that is due to changes in the rate at which group members translate their attributes into condom use. Composition change is expressed as the part of the overall change that results from differences in the means of the explanatory variables. It shows the proportion of change in condom use that is accounted for by change in group composition between the two periods. Finally, the interaction component is the covariation between the means and the coefficients of the two time periods; it is the interaction between the rates and composition changes over time.

17We used age of respondents at interview, rather than the respondents’ age as of the date used for selection of the survey sample.

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