with a systemic method; and used any other method than the condom. The resulting estimates show the effects of characteristics on the likelihood that a woman used the condom alone or with a systemic method, respectively, rather than used any other method.

**Sample Weights and Significance Testing**

All estimates presented are weighted national estimates. Standard errors were computed taking into account the complex sample design involved in both cycles of the NSFG. For the 1988 survey, we calculated these statistics using WestVarPC, a software package that computes estimates and replicates variance estimates. For the 1995 NSFG, we derived standard errors using STATA. We conducted two-tailed significance tests to ascertain the statistical significance of the difference between corresponding estimates computed from data for both years.

**Results**

**Levels and Trends in Condom Use**

Condom use is now quite common in the United States (Table 1). In 1995, 82% of women aged 15–44 who had had sexual intercourse had ever used the condom, an increase of 21 percentage points from the level reported in 1988 (61%). An earlier report showed that younger women are more likely to have ever used the condom than are older women: In the 1995 NSFG, 94% of women aged 15–19 who were ever sexually active had ever used the condom, compared with 87% of those aged 25–29 and 73% of those aged 40–44. This suggests that the increase in overall use between 1988 and 1995 resulted primarily from increased condom use among younger women.

To measure more recent experience, we examined condom use at first intercourse among women aged 15–24 (Table 1). Use of the condom at first intercourse increased substantially, from 30% in 1988 to 57% in 1995. This finding substantiates the rise, reported elsewhere, in condom use at first intercourse over the past 15 years among respondents to the 1995 NSFG who had premarital intercourse, from 25% in 1980–1984 to 54% in 1990–1995.

Use of the condom at last intercourse (among women who had sex in the three months before the interview) also increased significantly, from 13% in 1988 to 17% in 1995. Moreover, among women who had recently had intercourse, the proportion who were currently using the condom increased from 13% to 19% between the two surveys.

In the case of almost all measures in both years, condom use was substantially higher among women who were not in a union than among those who were (Table 1). In addition, increases in condom use among sexually active women who were not in a union were much larger than increases among all sexually active women or among women who were in a union. In fact, while current use varied little by union status in 1988 (12% vs. 16%), by 1995 those not in a union were twice as likely as those in a union to have used a condom at last intercourse (15% vs. 30%).

**Patterns of Method Use**

Condom use among all women who had had sex in the past three months rose significantly over time, from 13% in 1988 to 19% in 1995 (Table 2, page 268). The majority of current condom users in both years were using the condom alone—57% in 1988 and 66% in 1995. Almost all of the rise in condom use between 1988 and 1995 was due to increased use of the condom alone (five points of the six-percentage-point increase).

In 1995, nearly 7% of sexually active 15–44-year-olds used the condom with some other method, either systemic or nonsystemic; this was slightly higher than the level of about 6% observed in 1988. Use of the condom with a systemic method in 1995 was low in absolute terms, but higher than the comparable proportion in 1988 (3% vs. 1%). Paralleling the rise in condom use were small but significant declines in the use of nonsystemic methods alone and in nonuse of any method. In fact, the overall increase in method use, from 75% in 1988 to 78% in 1995, was due primarily to an increase in condom use, mainly in the use of condoms alone.

In both years, younger women were more likely to be using the condom (alone or with other methods) than were older women (Table 2). Overall condom use increased significantly between 1988 and 1995 in all age-groups except among women younger than 18 and those aged 40–44. Condom use alone accounted for the majority of condom use in all age-groups, and rose significantly from 1988 to 1995 for everyone but adolescents and women aged 40 or older.

In 1988 and 1995, never-married, noncohabiting women had a higher level of condom use than women of other union status (Table 2). Since this category includes most adolescent women, the finding is consistent with the age pattern. Condom use increased significantly between 1988 and 1995 among women of all union statuses, with the biggest increases among unmarried women. Among never-married women, use of systemic methods alone declined from 47% to 38%, while there were large increases in the use of the condom alone (from 11% to 21%) and the condom in combination with a systemic method (from 3% to 8%). The substantial increases in condom use were accompanied by a decline in the proportion of never-married women who were not using any method and were at risk of unintended pregnancy.

**Social and Demographic Determinants**

- **Levels and trends in condom use, 1988 and 1995.** The decomposition of the change in condom use between the two years indicates that about 86% of the rise in the overall level of condom use (from 17% of current users in 1988 to 24% in 1995) is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>In union</th>
<th>Not in union†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% who ever used condom</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>82.1***</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of 15–24-year-olds who used condom at first intercourse</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>56.6***</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in 3 months preceding interview</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>16.9***</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among women who had intercourse in last 3 months, % currently using condom</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>19.4***</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Women who used the condom and a nonsystemic method are included in the category “only condom use.” These women include both those who alternated the condom with another nonsystemic method and those who used them concurrently.

†These analyses are based on all sexually active women, because even though some may not be at risk of unintended pregnancy, they may be at risk of STDs.