Black and Hispanic women were more likely than white women to have used the pill inconsistently (odds ratio, 2.1 for each). Women with less than a high school degree were more likely than those with a college degree to have been inconsistent pill users (2.1). The longer a woman had been using the pill, the less likely she was to indicate that inconsistent use was the reason she had become pregnant. Inconsistent condom use and condom breakage or slippage were predicted by some of the same characteristics. For example, adolescents younger than 18 were less likely than women aged 30 or older to report inconsistent condom use (odds ratio, 0.3) and condom breakage or slippage (0.5). Black women were more likely than white women to report both forms of imperfect use (2.1 for each). Odds were similarly raised for women who intended to have a child or more children. A further predictor of inconsistent condom use was having an income below 100% of poverty, whereas further predictors of breakage or slippage were being unmarried and having less than a high school education.

We used logistic regression to examine characteristics associated with inconsistent pill and condom use, as well as condom breakage and slippage (Table 7, page 301). For each category of problem, the comparison group was women who reported they had used the method perfectly. Black and Hispanic women were more likely than white women to have used the pill inconsistently (odds ratio, 2.1 for each). Women with less than a high school degree were more likely than those with a college degree to have been inconsistent pill users (2.1). The longer a woman had been using the pill, the less likely she was to indicate that inconsistent use was the reason she had become pregnant.

The most common reasons women gave for not having used condoms consistently were that they perceived themselves to be at low risk (20%), they lacked a condom (14%) and they did not expect to have sex (13%). Other reasons were women’s and partners’ lack of inclination to use a condom (6% and 4%, respectively). Eleven percent of inconsistent condom users indicated multiple reasons for irregular use (not shown).

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