

To conduct the NEWSWEEK poll, the Gallup researchers assigned women interviewers last week to telephone a representative national cross section of 895 women between the ages of 21 and 45. About one-fourth of the women reported they had been using the pill during the last three months, and these were interviewed further on their current use of the pill as well as their experience with it and their latest views on it. The results are therefore projectable, says The Gallup Organization, to all U.S. women 21 to 45 who have used the pill during the past three months. About 28 per cent of them are college graduates, and 65 per cent hold high-school diplomas. Forty-four per cent are married to men in white-collar jobs with incomes above \$10,000.

Doubts: Of the total of 41 per cent who have now quit or who are thinking of quitting the pill, a quarter say they have had doubts and anxiety because of side effects they have experienced themselves, or because friends of theirs have had side effects. A 26-year-old Whittier, Calif., college graduate, for example, told an interviewer of "a girl friend who almost died from a blood clot which was attributed to birth-control pills." A small number of women say they have given them up for no particular reason. But the biggest single group of defectors—roughly a third—said their doubts about the pill were directly related to the hearings of Sen. Gaylord Nelson's Monopoly subcommittee, where some experts testified about a possible link between the use of the pill and scores of disorders including blood clots and cancer.

Most of the women who quit because of the hearings were especially alarmed about clotting problems and cancer. A 22-year-old Mission, Texas, housewife quit the pill after five years of use because "I heard that it could cause cancer and heart disease, so I talked it over with my husband and he told me to stop." "I guess with all the talk about clots," said the 24-year-old wife of an East Keansburg, N.J., manual laborer, "I'm beginning to suffer from imaginary symptoms."

The influence of the recent bad news about the pill is easy to understand. An astonishing 87 per cent of American women have heard or read about the Senate pill hearings, a degree of awareness rare on public issues or events. And no matter what their own personal reaction, more than a third, on the basis of the reports, are prepared to believe that the pill is linked to cancer, blood-clotting problems, diabetes and heart trouble. There remain, however, a good many women who are not particularly frightened by what they have heard. Twenty per cent of the users believe that the relationship between the pill and cancer, or between the pill and blood clotting, has yet to be established, and another 14 per cent believe that conflicting testimony has made it impossible to reach positive conclusions about the hazards. "It seems to me most of the people who testified stressed the detrimental effects," said a wary housewife in Morristown, N.J. "You could die in childbirth just as easy as taking the pill," noted the wife of a Hastings, Neb., laborer.

Concern: One of the main purposes of the Nelson hearings was to determine whether women are being adequately informed by their doctors about the suspected dangers of oral contraceptives. And in the light of the survey, the subcommittee's concern was well founded. A startling two-thirds of pill-taking women say they have never been told about possible hazards by their physicians. On the other hand, only 16 per cent of women have taken the trouble themselves to discuss the dangers of the pill with their doctors as a result of the Senate investigation. Most of these were reassured by their physicians that the pill is safe and that they have prescribed it for a considerable time without noting serious side effects. An Omaha woman quoted her doctor as saying that he had prescribed the pill "long before they were called birth-control pills and never had any patient get cancer or anything else."

Less than 1 per cent of women have found their doctors to be totally against the pill. A Norfolk, Va., woman reported that her physician told her oral contraceptives were "not natural." And still other physicians seem evasive to their uneasy patients when asked about the risks of the pill. A 26-year-old Denver woman reported that her physician "couldn't be tied down to an answer."

The poll's findings of widespread alarm among women who have been on the pill proved consistent with soundings by NEWSWEEK correspondents among leading gynecologists across the U.S. Some said that, unfortunately, they could foresee an increase in unwanted pregnancies. "I've seen three pregnant women