

utilization

The pharmaceutical industry has estimated the numbers of women taking oral contraceptives, based on the numbers of tablets distributed in the United States. The approach is straightforward: Since each user takes 20 tablets per cycle and the average woman has 13 cycles per year, the number of tablets sold, divided by 260, gives the average numbers of users during the year. The following estimates have been prepared by this method for the period 1961-65:

1961	408,000
1962	1,187,000
1963	2,235,000
1964	3,950,000
1965	5,000,000

Another estimation has been made by Westhof and Ryder¹ of Princeton University in the study to be published shortly. Using a carefully selected and distributed sample of about 5,600 married women living with their husbands and under the age of 45, they derived the following estimates: Ever used:

Using in late 1965	3,815,000
Used previously, may use again	1,341,000
Will not use again	1,232,000
	<u>6,388,000</u>

Never used:

May use in future	4,676,000
Will not use	12,794,000
Never heard of it	787,000
	<u>18,257,000</u>

These estimates are in general agreement with those of the drug industry. The discrepancies in the two sets of data are accounted for largely by the group of women that uses the drugs for purposes

other than contraception, the unmarried women, and those over 45. Another approach to utilization is furnished by investigations such as those of Dr. McEvilla in Lawrence County, Pa. Through the cooperation of the physicians, the pharmacists, and the medical society of the county, every prescription for drugs of all kinds has been placed on a computer program that is capable of yielding data on utilization and adverse reactions with hitherto unavailable precision. In 1965 these data indicate that 7.4 percent of women in Lawrence County between the ages of 15 and 44 had never used oral contraceptive compounds. This figure is somewhat lower than the estimated national average, probably because of the particular population sampled.

Finally, based on the following assumptions, a rough estimate of future use of the oral contraceptives in the United States can be made. Assuming (1) Series B population projection,² (2) 46 percent of each cohort of married women starting oral contraception at the same rate as the women who were under 25 years of age in 1965, (3) no further changes to orals by older women, and (4) about 60 percent of ever-users are current users, the following table is derived:

Projected Number of Women in Millions Using Oral Contraceptives in 1985

Year	Total women	Ever-users	Current users
1970	43.3	10	6
1975	46.9	13	8
1980	51.9	16	10
1985	56.4	19	12

¹ Westhof, C. F. and Ryder, N. Presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America on Friday, April 30, 1966, New York City.

² Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 329, March 10, 1966.