

# Measuring and Interpreting Men's Use of Contraception in the Context of Multiple Formal and Informal Partnerships: The Case of Nigeria and Senegal

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## Short Abstract

In settings where men use contraception with one partner but not another, measures of men's current use of contraception are unlikely to capture men's overall contraceptive use behaviors. This paper compares men's reports of contraceptive use using multiple measurement techniques. Recent data from urban men from Nigeria and Senegal collected by the Measurement, Learning & Evaluation project are compared to male data from Demographic and Health Surveys from Nigeria and Senegal. Descriptive analyses compare men's level of use (and methods used) overall and by partner. We show that at the aggregate level, men's current use of contraception is similar to partner-specific levels. However, when we cross men's current use with partner-specific use, about 20% of men have discordant responses; that is, the man says he currently does not use but reports use with a recent partner or vice versa. Recommendations are made for future studies of contraceptive use among men.

## Long Abstract

### Introduction

Previous research on contraceptive use among women, men, and couples has indicated that there are important distinctions in contraceptive use patterns depending on who is reporting the use. At the aggregate level, comparing women and men's use of family planning, men often report higher overall family planning use as compared to their female counterparts (Becker et al., 2006; Koffi et al., 2012; Ngom, 1997). When analyses are limited to couples, use rates are closer, however, there are still important distinctions observed. In particular, previous research indicates that husbands report higher overall periodic abstinence use whereas wives generally report greater use of female controlled methods such as pill, IUD, and female sterilization (Ezeh and Mboup, 1997). Analyses of couple-level contraceptive use are complicated by the practice of polygyny where men take multiple wives and thus the approach used to measuring men's contraceptive use may lead to biased results (Becker et al., 2006). Moreover, in locations where men have multiple informal partnerships (e.g., girlfriends rather than wives), typical survey questions that ask men about their "current use" of family planning may be misleading if a man is using with one partner but not another. A recent multi-country analysis by Koffi and colleagues (2012) that examined couple-level condom and contraceptive use created husband's "current use" based on their report of condom and contraceptive use at last sex. The authors demonstrated that among monogamous couples that reported having sex in the last twenty-eight days, there was only fair agreement ( $\kappa < 0.33$ ) in husband and wife use in Liberia and Namibia and slightly higher agreement in Madagascar (Koffi et al., 2012). Likewise, Becker and colleagues (2006) examined the reliability of husbands' and wives' reports of contraceptive use by limiting the analysis to only those couples where both partners reported having one spouse and no extramarital sexual intercourse. This analysis demonstrated that

husband's reported use remained higher than wives and the authors concluded that husbands are likely to be over-reporting use rather than wives under-reporting. From their analysis, the authors recommend using the wife's reported contraceptive use as a measure of couple use (Becker et al., 2006). This recommendation seems reasonable for couple-level analyses; however, it does not provide guidance on men's family planning use behaviors at a broader, non-couple-level. In particular, given that men may use with one partner but not another, measures of "current use" may not be meaningful to examine men's overall use behaviors (Ngom, 1997).

This paper uses multiple measurement techniques to examine men's contraceptive use patterns and capture a more accurate picture of men's use of contraception. Data come from multiple sources that provide the ability to compare men's level of use (and methods used) overall and by partner. Recommendations are made for future studies seeking to improve the measurement of men's contraceptive use in the context of multiple formal and informal partnerships.

## **Methods**

Data for this analysis come from two main data sources. First, recently collected data from the Measurement, Learning & Evaluation (MLE) project are used to compare standard measures of "current use" of contraception among men to partner-specific measures in urban samples in Senegal and Nigeria where multiple formal partnerships are common. In Nigeria and Senegal, the MLE project collected baseline data as part of the evaluation of Urban Reproductive Health Initiative in each country (the program in Nigeria is being implemented by the Nigerian Urban Reproductive Health Initiative and the program in Senegal is being implemented by the Initiative Sénégalaise de Santé Urbaine). In each country, data were collected from women and men in six major urban areas; a representative sample of women and men were included in each site. Men were asked two types of questions on the MLE surveys. First, all men were asked if they are currently using any method of family planning and if so, what method they are currently using. Second, men who had sex in the last year were asked partner-specific questions on family planning use at last sex with up to three sexual partners in the last year. These partner-specific questions are used to compare to the overall "current use" measure.

The second data source we use are the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) from Senegal (2005) and Nigeria (2008) to compare the varying approaches used in these countries to measure men's partner-specific contraceptive use. In each country, a representative sample of men was interviewed from randomly selected clusters and households within these clusters. In the Senegal and Nigeria DHS, each man was asked about use of a method (other than a condom) to prevent or avoid pregnancy the last time they had sex with up to three partners in the last 12 months. This question, in combination with reported condom use at last sex was used to measure men's "current use" of contraception. Descriptive comparisons are made across these varying methods of asking men about contraceptive use and recommendations are made for future surveys of men in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Preliminary Results

Preliminary results from Senegal and Nigeria using the recently collected urban data from the MLE project indicate that using the standard “are you and your partner currently using any method to avoid a pregnancy” question, 51.3% of men in Senegal and 50.1% of men in Nigeria report current use. When use by partner is examined, we see that at the aggregate level, the results are similar (see Table 1). In Senegal 51.2% of men report using with their last partner; 62.3% report using with the second to last partner. In Nigeria 46.5% of men report using with their last partner and 56.4% report using with the second to last partner. In both countries, use of any method is higher with the second partner than the first. Notable in the Senegal and Nigeria MLE data is that men report much higher condom use at last sex with their second partners than with their first partner (or on the “current use” question).

Also presented in Table 1 are the results of current contraceptive use in the Senegal DHS and the Nigeria DHS. Overall, current use of any method among men in Senegal is at 25.7% and current use of condoms is at 18.5%; use with the second partner is slightly higher at 19.3%. Notably, current use, as defined by the DHS, is use with the last partner. In Nigeria, current use among men who had sex in the last year is at 26.8%, most of this use is condom use (18.2%). As found in the MLE data, use of condoms with the second partner in Nigeria is higher than use with the first partner (37.7%).

When we compared current use to partner-specific use, however, a different story is found (see Table 2). In Senegal, about 6% of men in the sample report currently using a modern or traditional method but not using with their last sexual partner and conversely 8% report not currently using but using with their last partner. For men with a second partner, we find even more discordance. In particular, about 12% of men who report currently using a modern or traditional method are not using a method with their second partner while about 17% of men who are not currently using a modern or traditional method report using a method with their second partner.

In Nigeria, 10% of men who report currently using a modern or traditional method reported non-use with the first partner, and 6% of men who reported current non-use reported using a modern or traditional method with their current partner. The pattern is similar for the second partner where nearly 8% of men who report being a current user of a modern or traditional method report non-use with their second partner and 9% of men who were current non-users reported using a method with their second partner.

Overall, the disagreement on reporting on current use compared with partner-specific use is close to 15% in Senegal for the first partner and 30% for the second partner. In Nigeria, disagreement on reporting for use with the first partner was 18% and 20% for the second partner.

In Table 3, we look at current use and whether a condom was used with the second partner using the Senegal and Nigeria DHS data; results are also stratified by urban and rural areas so that the urban sample can be compared to the MLE results. Notably, current use is based on use with the first partner; therefore, this comparison provides a perspective on the bias introduced using men’s use with their first partner to represent their overall current use. The results show agreement on reporting is fairly uniform across urban and rural areas in Senegal at 70% and 67%, respectively, with agreement at the national level at 69%. In Nigeria, agreement is higher at the national level (75%) with urban areas having higher agreement than rural areas (82% vs. 67%). That said, it is notable

that in urban areas, 14% of men in Senegal and 30% of men in Nigeria who report non-use with their current partner (first partner) reported using a condom with the second partner. If use with the first partner is used as the measure of current use for these men, it misses the fact that men may use different strategies with different partners. In rural areas the percentages are smaller, however, in Nigeria, there are still 14% of men who are considered non-users who report condom use with their second partner.

## **Conclusions**

Men play an important role in ensuring that effective contraception is used when an unmet need is identified at the individual or couple level. Understanding men's family planning use behaviors is crucial to know if men are supportive of contraception and to ensure that men are targeted with the best methods to meet their fertility desires with each of their partners. As indicated by Ngom (1997) in his paper on men's unmet need, some men may appear anti- and pronatalist at the same time due to their differing family planning needs by wife/partner. The preliminary analyses presented in this paper bring into focus the measurement issues around studying men's contraceptive use and demonstrates that by focusing on "current use" or use with just the last partner, we are missing important pieces of the male contraceptive use puzzle. Future studies seeking to examine men's contraceptive use and unmet need will need to measure men's partner-specific use patterns of all contraceptive methods rather than simply examining use with the last partner.

## **References**

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**Table 1. Men's use of family planning by survey and by measurement approach among men sexually active in the last 12 months**

	Senegal MLE	Senegal MLE	Senegal MLE	Nigeria MLE	Nigeria MLE	Nigeria MLE	Senegal DHS	Senegal DHS	Nigeria DHS	Nigeria DHS
	Current Use	Use with 1 <sup>st</sup> partner	Use with 2 <sup>st</sup> partner	Current Use	Use with 1 <sup>st</sup> partner	Use with 2 <sup>st</sup> partner	Current Use	Use of condoms at last sex with second partner	Current Use	Use of condoms at last sex with second partner
Using ANY method of FP	51.3%	51.2	62.2	50.1	46.5	56.4	25.7	na	26.8	na
Using MODERN method of FP	45.3	48.8	60.2	39.5	38.8	53.9	24.6	na	21.4	na
Using Condoms	30.7	36.9	51.4	27.4	28.3	48.7	18.5	19.3	18.2	37.7
Using a female controlled method*	14.3	11.6	7.3	12.2	10.1	5.1	6.0	na	2.1	na
Using traditional method	6.0	5.0	2.0	10.7	7.8	2.6	1.1	na	5.1	na
Not using any method	48.7	46.2	37.8	49.8	53.4	43.5	74.3	na	73.2	na
Weighted sample size	N=1260	N=1260	N=292	N=3520	N=3489	N=500	N=2690	N=550	N=10,828	N=1607

\*Pills, IUD, injections, implant, spermicide (rare...), female sterilization (does not include LAM)

\*Nigeria – current use based on DHS calculation which is from question on condom use at last sex and family planning use at last sex combined.

**Table 2. Concordance of men's report of modern contraceptive use by measurement method – Measurement, Learning & Evaluation data**

	MLE using with first partner			MLE using with second partner		
	Non-user	Traditional method	Modern method	Non-user	Traditional method	Modern method
<b>Senegal</b>						
Current Use of FP						
Non-user	40.6	<b>0.6</b>	<b>7.6</b>	26.1	<b>1.1</b>	<b>16.2</b>
Traditional method	<b>1.0</b>	4.3	<b>0.7</b>	<b>2.6</b>	0.5	<b>0.6</b>
Modern method	<b>4.7</b>	<b>0.2</b>	40.5	<b>9.1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	43.4
Total	Number of men with any partner = 1260			Number of men with two partners = 292		
	Agreement = 85.4%; Disagreement = 14.6%			Agreement = 70.0%; Disagreement = 30.0%		
<b>Nigeria</b>						
Current Use of FP						
Non-user	43.4	<b>0.7</b>	<b>5.6</b>	35.9	<b>0.5</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Traditional method	<b>4.0</b>	6.0	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	1.3	<b>2.9</b>
Modern method	<b>6.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	32.5	<b>6.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	42.6
Total	Number of men with any partner = 3489			Number of men with any partner = 500		
	Agreement = 81.9%; Disagreement = 18.1%			Agreement = 79.8%; Disagreement = 20.2%		

**Table 3. Cross-tabulation of current use and condom use at last sex for men with two partners who had sex in the last year, Senegal and Nigeria DHS**

<b>Panel A – Senegal DHS</b>	Using condoms at last sex with second partner (% yes) N=550	DHS using condoms at last sex with second partner (% yes) <b>Urban (n=215)</b>	DHS using with second partner (% yes) <b>Rural (n=336)</b>
Current use of modern FP at last sex			
Non-user	8.2	13.9	5.5
Traditional/folkloric	0.0	0.0	0.0
Modern	69.2	70.2	67.0
<b>Panel B – Nigeria DHS</b>	Using condoms at last sex with second partner (% yes) N=1607	DHS using condoms at last sex with second partner (% yes) <b>Urban (n=591)</b>	DHS using with second partner (% yes) <b>Rural (n=1016)</b>
Current use of modern FP at last sex			
Non-user	18.7	30.1	14.1
Traditional/folkloric	34.9	45.9	26.7
Modern	75.0	82.2	67.3