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# Women Speak For Themselves ● ● ●

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Women  
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## How the Message of “Contraception and Abortion are Key to Women’s Equality” Fails Women and Society

The HHS Mandate has provoked two national conversations. The first concerns religious freedom. The federal government has imposed a mandate without exceptions for most religious institutions, or for religious individuals or private entities, requiring them to buy insurance for services which violate their conscience. Robust legislative, judicial and grass roots responses are underway.

The second debate concerns the centrality of “free” birth control and early abortifacients (the morning and week after pills) to the cause of women’s freedom. This debate was begun – likely for political/electioneering reasons – by the Executive Branch of government when it announced that anyone opposing governmental programs and efforts toward the most widely available contraception and early abortion drugs, was conducting a “War on Women.”

Since that time, it has been wonderful to witness women having the debate everyone assumed was over and done: whether women’s lives are better today in their relationship and marriage contexts, because of birth control and abortion.

This is a vast topic and cannot be handled fully in the confines of one “fact sheet.”

### **Women Speak for Themselves would like to insert into this debate at least this thought:**

*This debate is not about women’s legal right to buy and use contraception, a legal right guaranteed in law<sup>1</sup> and not the subject of the WSFT campaign. It is not about whether women should have the right and the responsibility to determine the number and spacing of their children. They should. It is rather about whether practically and culturally severing human sexual relations from the fact of their originating new, vulnerable human lives, improves the lives of women, and along with them, of men, children and society. A great deal of reliable data indicates that the answer is “no” in some important aspects. This is the question the purveyors of the “War on Women” theme steadfastly refuse to engage. WSFT would like them, and all people of good will, to engage it, to get past sound-bites and onto the hard questions for the sake of women and all society.*

## What the available data tells us:

The researchers who have amassed the data are not themselves pro-life. They are simply taking economic and sociological and psychological theories to their logical conclusions. What they find, in short, is that massively available birth control and abortion have altered the sex, mating and marriage "markets" so that the very problems everyone hopes they will solve – nonmarital pregnancies and births, sexually transmitted infections, high abortion rates, and yes, poverty – have worsened, instead of improved.

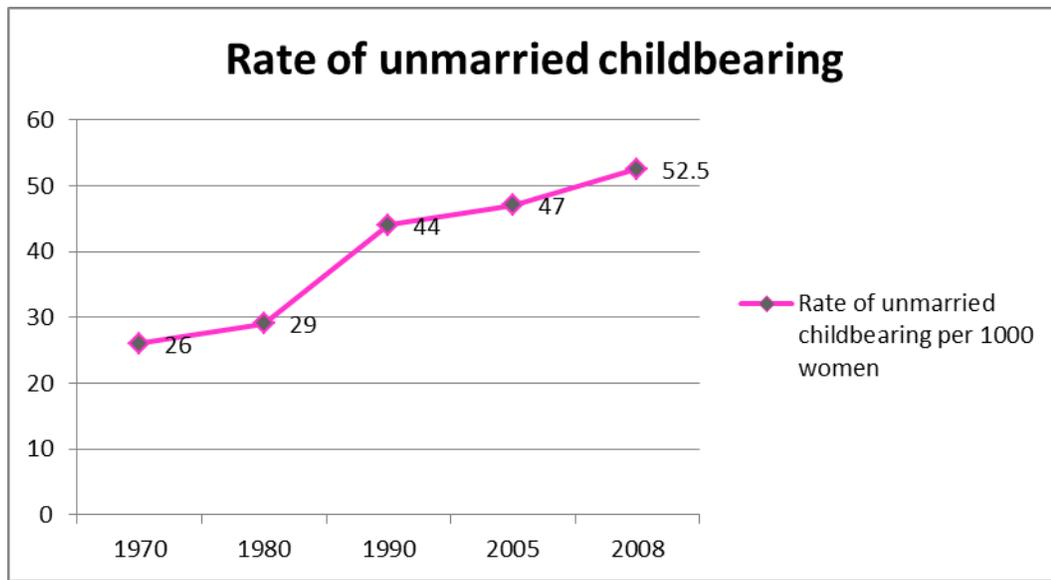
This happens as sexual intimacy becomes the normal price of a relationship, while at the same time women are expected to ensure either that pregnancy does not occur, or that if it does occur, they will resort to abortion. "Shotgun" marriages are out, in other words, once women have the right (read: "responsibility") to use contraception

with abortion as (in the words of our Supreme Court) "backup." Between contraceptive method and use failures, and human nature's "risk compensation" response when told that birth control and abortion are failsafe insurance policies – policies trumpeting the "women's freedom" aspects of both are correlated with more nonmarital sex with all its attendant consequences. Risk compensation refers to human beings' willingness to engage in more risky behavior when they perceive that its dangers have been reduced or eliminated. Think increased speeding deaths following safety belt mandates. The same outcomes hold true not only in the U.S., but in other countries testing this hypothesis. In other words, contraceptive use is nearly universal, but rather than curbing problematic consequences, the "relationships market" it creates seems to fuel them.

After birth control began to flood the U.S market in the 1960s and after the 1970 passage of the federal Title X program providing large-scale contraception handouts, and after the legalization of abortion in 1973, we have seen rates of all problematic outcomes shoot up. Sometimes one sees short term improvements for a few years in one or more of these outcomes, but rates have never fallen below the levels existing before such programs went into effect. Obviously, other simultaneous events bear responsibility too for our current predicaments. But this does not change the fact that the simplistic equation -- **more contraception + more abortion = women's freedom** – is not proved out.

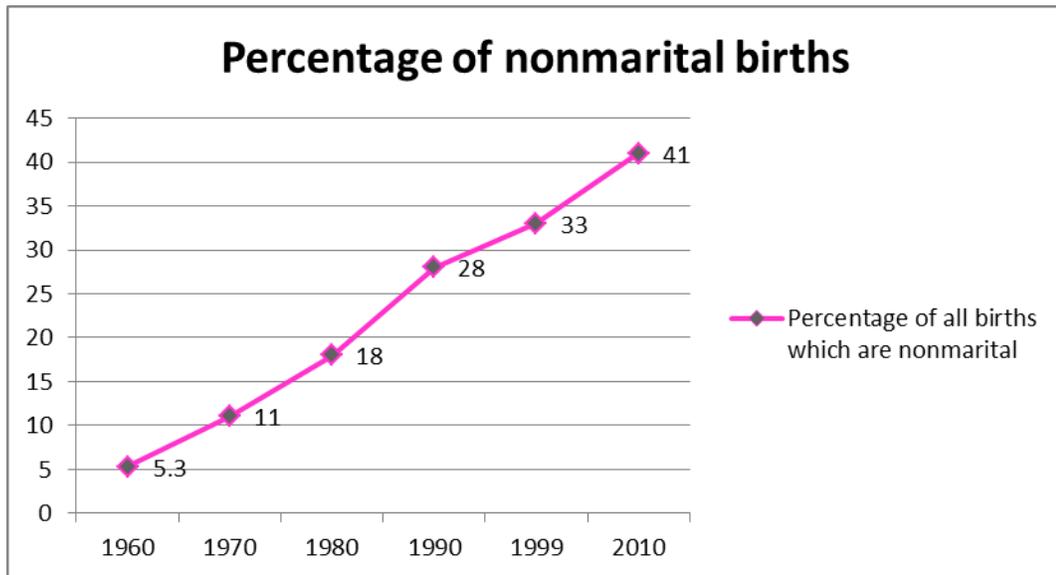
***"At the very least, it cannot be argued that separating human sexual relations from the notion of procreation has reduced the incidence of behaviors and outcomes which disadvantage women disproportionately."***

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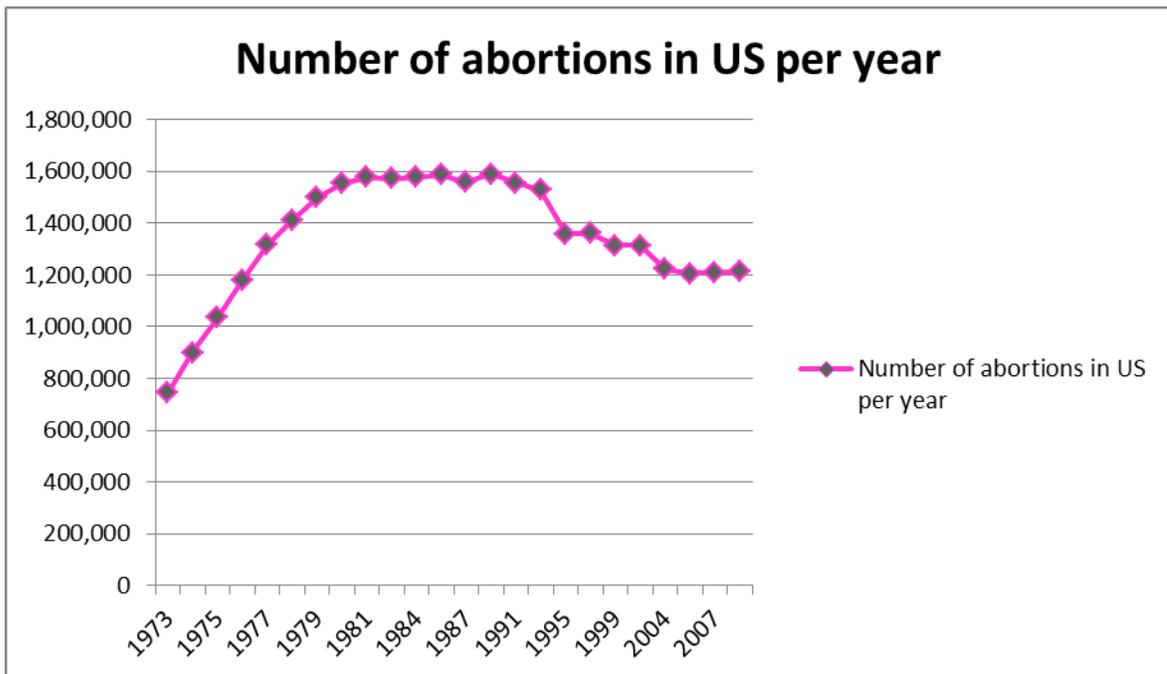


Joyce A. Martin, et al, *births: Final Data for 2008, National Vital Statistics Reports (Vol. 59, no 1), December 2012*

## What the available data tells us (cont):



Joyce A. Martin, et al. Births: final data for 2010, National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 61, No. 1 (August, 2012) at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr61/nvsr61\\_01.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr61/nvsr61_01.pdf)



<http://www.guttmacher.org/datacenter/trend.jsp#> (sorted by state of occurrence)\*

\*Data taken from Guttmacher Institute and not CDC; the CDC does not mandate that states report abortion numbers, but Guttmacher has a close relationship with Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, and therefore receives better data.

## What researchers have to say:

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"[W]hen the cost of abortion is low, or contraceptives are readily available, potential male partners can easily obtain sexual satisfaction without making...promises [to marry in the event of pregnancy] and will thus be reluctant to commit to marriage." Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz<sup>1</sup>

The Pill is an outdated method because it does not work well enough; it is very difficult for ordinary women to take a pill every day" James Trussell, Princeton University<sup>2</sup>

**48% of women with unintended pregnancies & 54% of women seeking abortions were using contraception during the month they became pregnant<sup>3</sup>**

### Women are caught in a prisoners' dilemma:

A **prisoners' dilemma** is any social setting wherein all parties have a choice between cooperating with one another and noncooperation. **All parties would be better off if they chose cooperation, but -- like prisoners being held for questioning in separate chambers and offered individual deals which seemingly advantage the prisoner as an individual -- they accept what seems to be the best *individual* choice.** As a result, everyone involved is worse off. A woman in a dating market confronted by a man with choosing between a sexual relationship and no relationship is in the same position. Women as *a group* would be better off if they cooperated with one another and refused uncommitted sex, but women *individually*—and in a world where contraception and abortion make sex look "consequence free"—more often agree to uncommitted sex on the understanding that if they say "no," it is easy for the man to find another woman who will say "yes." Consequently, all women are worse off as the price of sex spirals down.

**In the first 12 months of contraception use 16.4% of teens will become pregnant.<sup>4</sup>**

**"[I]ncreasing access to contraception may actually increase long run pregnancy rates even though short run pregnancy rates fall." Economist Peter Arcidiacono<sup>5</sup>**

**"Contraceptives like the pill, initially developed as a "foolproof" means to reduce fertility, helped spark a sexual revolution that swept the globe." Matthew Connelly<sup>6</sup>**

According to **economist Timothy Reichert**, the prisoners' dilemma operates for women in the mating market as follows: **sex without the "cost" of pregnancy becomes the norm**, such that sexual partners don't even have to consider the possibility of marriage.<sup>7</sup>

More women than men begin populating the "marriage market" at a younger age because women generally want to have children sometime during their lives, but they are **biologically constrained to have them while they are younger**. By their early 30s, therefore, most women have entered the marriage market. Men have no similar, inbuilt impetus to leave the sex market and enter the marriage market. Thus, **women have more "power" in the sex market**, where they are relatively scarce, but face more competition in the marriage market, where they are competing for fewer men. **This translates into women more often striking "bad deals" at the margins in the marriage market.**

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<sup>1</sup> George A. Akerlof, Janet L. Yellen, and Michael L. Katz, An Analysis of Out of Wedlock Childbearing in the United States, 111 *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 277 (1996).

<sup>2</sup> D. Rose, The Pill 'has had its day as an effective contraceptive,' *The Times* (UK), June 26, 2008 at [timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article4215441.ece?articleid=4215441](http://timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article4215441.ece?articleid=4215441).

<sup>3</sup> Heather D. Boonstra, Rachel Benson Gold, Cory L. Richards, and Lawrence B. Funder, Abortion in Women's Lives, at [www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/05/04AiWL.pdf](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/05/04AiWL.pdf) at 6-7; Guttmacher Institute, Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States, July 2008, at [guttmacher.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html).

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<sup>4</sup> H.Fu et al., Contraceptive Failure Rates: New Estimates from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, 31 *Family Planning Perspectives* 31, 56-63, at 61 (1999).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Arcidiacono *et al*, Habit Persistence and Teen Sex: Could Increased Access to Contraception Have Unintended Consequences for Teen Pregnancies? Working Paper, Duke University Department of Economics (Oct 3, 2005), 1-38 at 31, at [www.econ.duke.edu/~psarcidi/teensex.pdf](http://www.econ.duke.edu/~psarcidi/teensex.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Harvard University Press 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Reichert, *Bitter Pill*, *First Things* (May 2010), 25-34.

