

**Fertility control
into the hands of
women**

The 14th FIAPAC Conference

Riga, Latvia
Riga Stradiņš University

9-10 September 2022

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Fears about contraception – An explanation of the contraceptive paradox?

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Gynmed Clinic, Vienna, www.gynmed.at

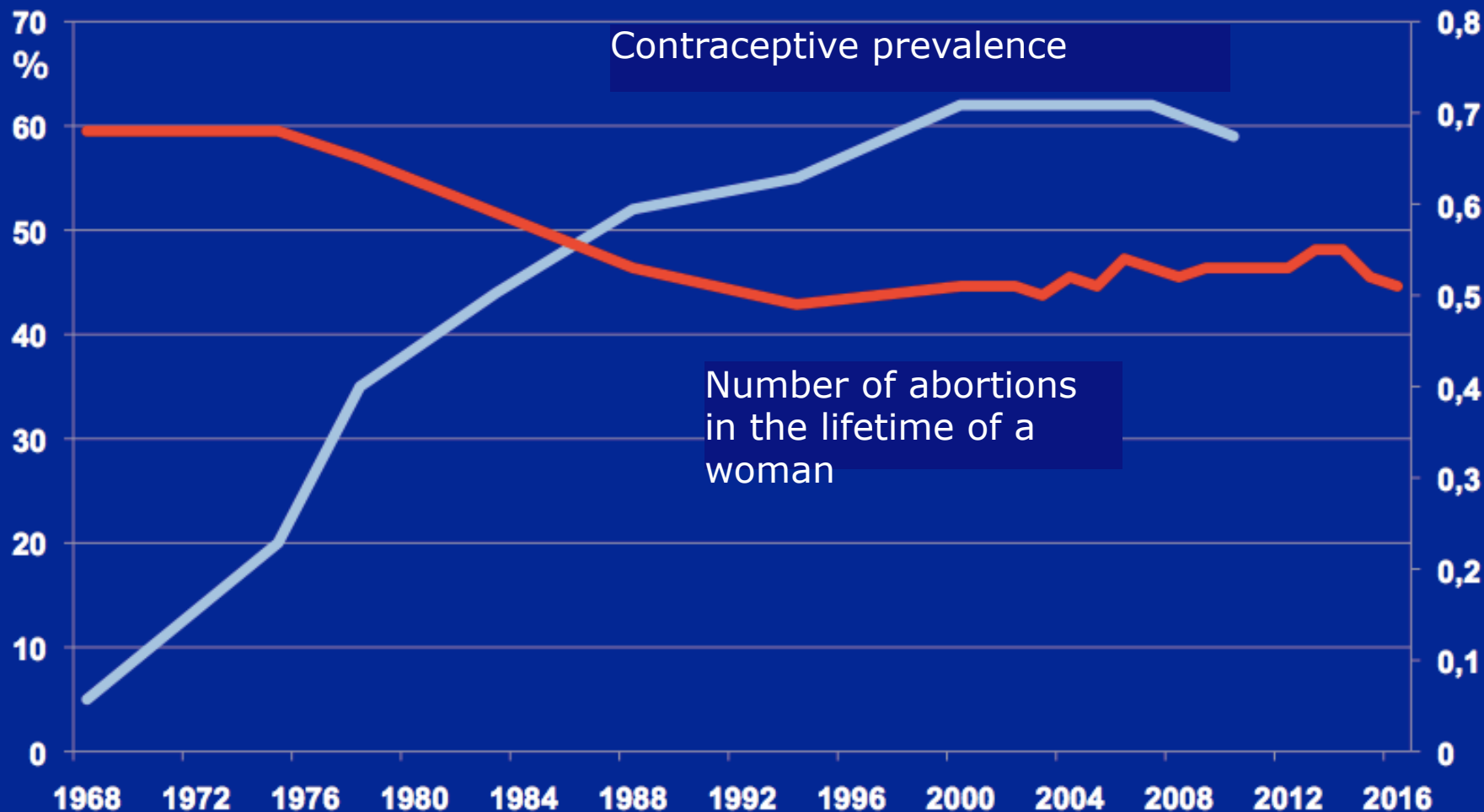
Museum of Contraception and Abortion, www.muvs.org

Gynmed Clinic
Vienna and Salzburg, Austria
www.gynmed.at

Karolinska Institutet
Department of Women's and Children's Health
Stockholm, Sweden

The contraceptive paradox

France



Contraceptive Paradox

Unwanted pregnancies and abortions remain stable in most West-European countries despite the wide availability of highly effective contraception



Better understand women's decision making process to support them avoiding unwanted pregnancies



Preliminary results of a study

N=399 women post abortion

Questionnaire on demographics, use of contraception, fertility perception, desire to avoid a pregnancy, influence of family and friends, attitudes towards hormones, the pharma industry, and naturalness

August 2016 and December 2018

Predictors of not using contraception:

What we know already:

- Older age
- Being unemployed
- Single
- A moderate desire to avoid a pregnancy

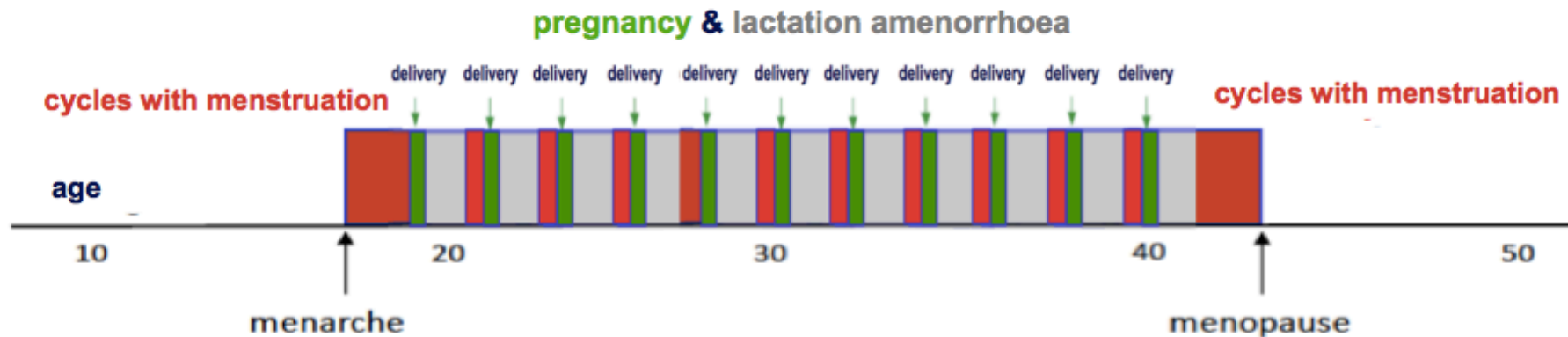
Predictors of not using contraception cont:

Results of our study:

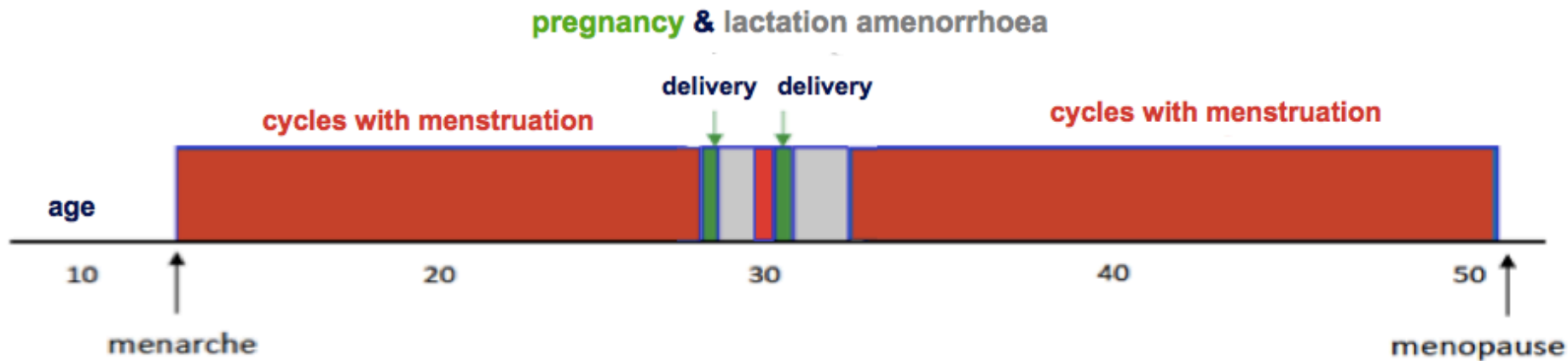
- Underestimating one's own fertility or the partner's fertility
- Overestimating efficacy of medium effective methods
- Hormone skepticism

Natural fertility

prior to the pill

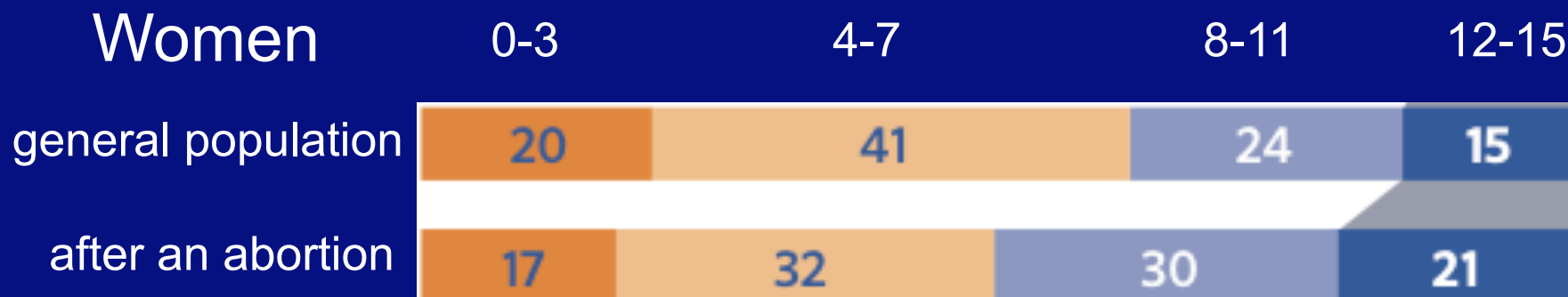


with effective contraception

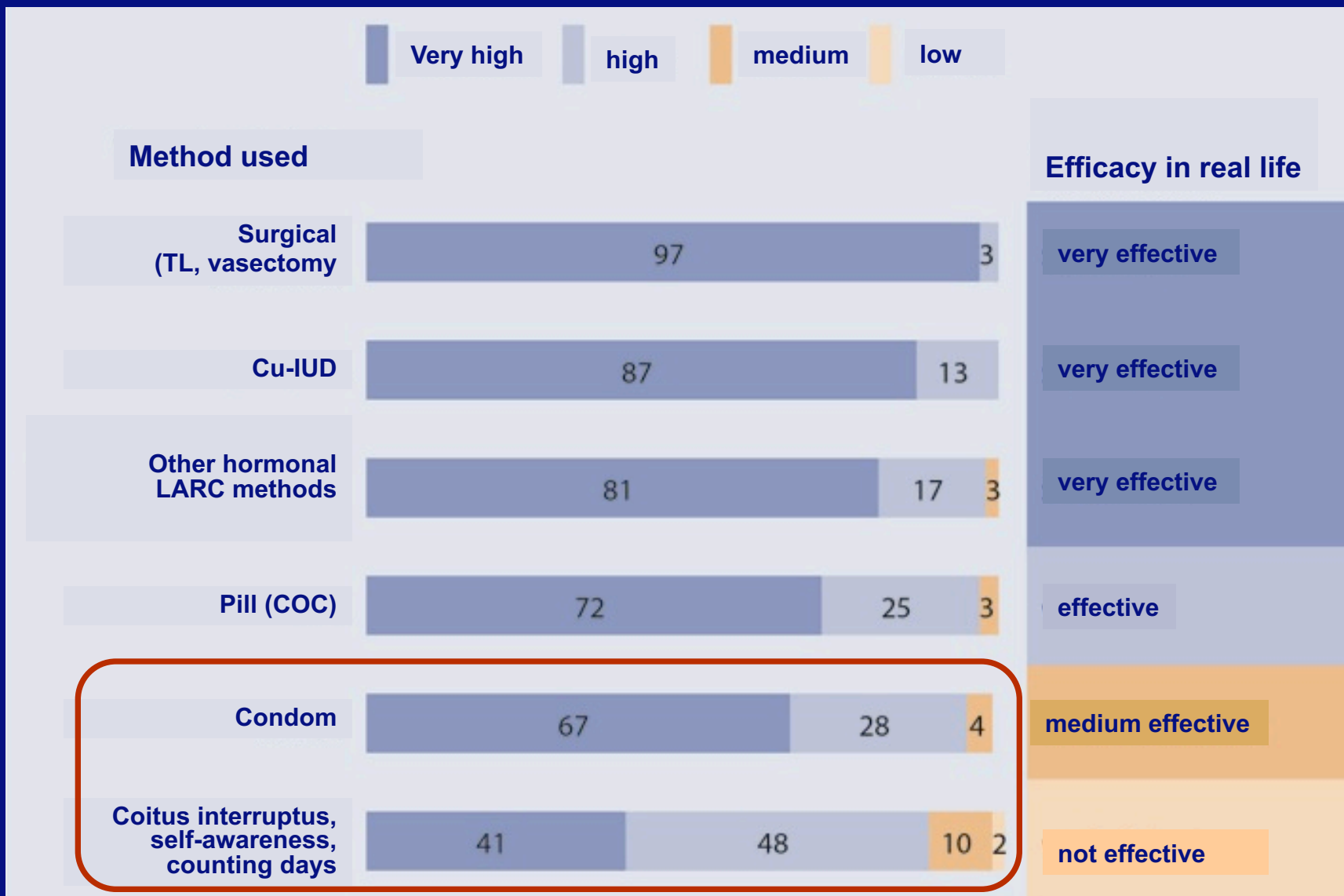


New problem: Highly effective contraception needed for most of the 35 fertile years

Estimated number of pregnancies in a woman's lifetime without contraception



Perception of efficacy of the method used



Percentage of couples having used that contraceptive method during the last 12 months, Contraceptive Paradox, C. Fiala
Austrian contraceptive prevalence survey, 2012, www.verhuetungsreport.at

Welcome! This is the place to learn NFP!

What is natural family planning (NFP)?

- NFP is a way of following God's plan for achieving and/or avoiding pregnancy. It consists of ways to achieve or to avoid pregnancy using the physical means that God has built into human nature.
- NFP consists of two distinct forms:
 1. **Ecological breastfeeding.** This is a form of child care that normally spaces babies about two years apart on the average.
 2. **Systematic NFP.** This is a system that uses a woman's signs of fertility to determine the fertile and infertile times of her cycle.
- Couples seeking to avoid pregnancy practice chaste abstinence during the fertile time of her cycle.

You can teach yourself how to practice both forms of NFP by using the short and easy-to-read manual *Natural Family*

Wege zu einer natürlichen und sicheren Verhütungsmethode

Und tschüss,
Hormone!

Ein Dokumentarfilm

57% of German women think OC is bad for their health in long term use.

Feministisches Frauen Gesundheits Zentrum e.V. Berlin



verändert den natürlichen Zyklus nicht.

WHICH BIRTH CONTROL METHODS DON'T HAVE HORMONES?



beforeplay.org



Arbeitsgruppe nfp

Natürlich und sicher

Auf den eigenen Körper hören

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Natural contraception 'effective'

A natural family planning method is as effective as the contraceptive pill, German research suggests.



natural birth control made simple

simples métodos de control de la natalidad

Pour une vie conjugale plus heureuse : LA CONTRACEPTION NATURELLE - ses avantages - d'après des nouvelles connaissances SANS LA "PILULE"

Examples of publications

Goal	Conclusions	reference
assessed associations between HC use and suicide attempt and suicide	these little-recognized potential side effects of HC, health professionals and women starting hormonal contraceptives should be informed about them	Association of HC with Suicide attempts and suicides. Skovlund et al. Am J Psychiatry. 2018
assessed associations between the use of HC and the risk of invasive breast cancer	Our data showed a higher risk of breast cancer with a longer duration of use of combined products ... we found that risks among women who used HC for less than 5 years rapidly decreased after discontinuation of hormonal contraception	Contemporary HC and the Risk of Breast Cancer. Mørch et al. N Engl J Med. 2017
whether use of HC is positively associated with subsequent use of antidepressants and diagnosis of depression	Use of HC was associated with subsequent antidepressant use and first diagnosis of depression at a psychiatric hospital among women living in Denmark. Adolescents seemed more vulnerable to this risk than women 20 to 34 years old.	Association of HC Depression. Skovlund et al. JAMA Psychiatry. 2016

„Assuming that the demonstrated associations are causal“

Hormone Skepticism – a barrier to contraceptive use

Women have a higher probability of using less effective or no contraception if they are skeptical of hormones

Reasons include the perception that:

- Exogenous hormones per se are dangerous
- Fear of side effects
- Reluctance to interfere with one's body
- Wish for natural contraception

Distrust in hormones seems to be partly related to the estrogens and gestagens (i.e., media reporting of adverse effects). A comparable hormone skepticism is not reported for other medical conditions like insulin dependent diabetes or hypothyreosis where hormonal treatment constitutes the gold standard and is not questioned.

Hormone Skepticism – a barrier to contraceptive use

The higher a woman's hormone skepticism, the lower the chance of using effective contraception.

Compared to women who are not skeptical of hormones, the probability of using effective contraception depends on the intensity of their skepticism:

Low skepticism > 20% use of effective methods

Moderate > 16%

Large > 9%

Very large > 7%

Hormone Skepticism – a barrier to contraceptive use

Hormone skepticism frequently shaped by the desire for a 'natural' body
The concern > hormones suppress the natural menstrual cycle



seen as particularly unfavorable by those women for whom regular bleeding holds a symbolic function, e.g. cleansing the body (Newton & Hoggart, 2015)

The contradiction:

A regular cycle in sexually active women naturally leads to pregnancy and subsequent temporary cessation of the cycle. Without access to effective contraception women would have many pregnancies and far fewer periods (Coutinho & Segal, 1999; Thomas et al., 2000)



**A continuous natural menstrual cycle
in sexually active women is 'unnatural' by definition**

Desire for natural contraception – not new

„Natural contraception“ is a fundamental contradiction going back to Hermann Knaus who declared having discovered:

„a natural yet arbitrary regulation of fertility“

eine natürliche und dennoch willkürliche Regelung der Fortpflanzung

Knaus Wr. Klin. Wschr. 1960

Hormone Skepticism can lead to a dilemma in women's contraceptive decision-making processes

Our study highlights a remarkable dilemma by hormone skeptic women:

- **on the one hand, they long for a natural body free from external hormones**
- **on the other hand, they want to have an effective contraception**

This explains the frequent choice of hormone free methods having a higher failure rate (Cleland, 2020).

Most women in our study (64%) used only moderately effective methods like condoms, periodic abstinence and withdrawal.

Hormone Skepticism can lead to a dilemma in women's contraceptive decision-making processes

- 79% experienced this dilemma between avoiding an unwanted pregnancy and their desire to live in a natural way
- The dilemma was strongest for higher Socio-economic-status (OR 1.15), and pharma distrusters ($p = 0.004$)
- Those who perceived a high dilemma used significantly less effective contraception ($p = 0.000$). (Piribauer et al. 2020)

We should address this conscious or unconscious dilemma of women expressing hormone scepticism in contraceptive counselling

To Margaret Sanger, birth control was the first freedom for women. “No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother,” she wrote.

Margaret Sanger Pioneer of Birth Control

By Lawrence Lader and Milton Meltzer
Illustrated with photographs



Women need to make a decision:
**Either they control their fertility
or
Fertility will control their life**

A museum for sex education to change the perception of natural fertility and make people understand the need for effective contraception for most intercourses in 35 years of fertility in a woman's life



Museum of Contraception and Abortion – in Vienna and online www.muvs.org