



# THE LAW OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

THE SOCIETAL IMPACT OF BIRTH CONTROL

— BY: SAMANTHA LEJEUNE —

*RESEARCH ASSOCIATE*

POPULATION  
RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE



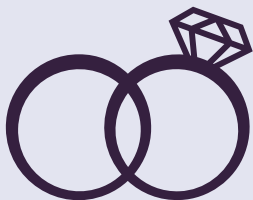
## Summary

Since its introduction in 1960, the birth control pill has had a profound and largely negative impact on society. While it promised women control over their fertility, this promise turned out to be an illusion. Instead of empowering individuals, birth control has contributed to rising divorce rates, a decline in marriage, and a growing devaluation of motherhood and family life. It has fueled the rise of promiscuity and led to a weakening of traditional values that once prioritized strong relationships and family structures. Furthermore, the pill has contributed to societal shifts that have lowered the standards for relationships and increased dissatisfaction in marriage. This fact sheet explores the far-reaching negative effects of birth control, revealing its deep and lasting consequences on both individuals and society.

### Shift in Mate Preferences

**Altered Mate Selection:** Hormonal birth control (HBC) can change a woman's natural mate preference, leading her to favor men with more feminine traits. [1] Women who discontinue using the pill may experience a shift in their preferences, leading to dissatisfaction and contributing to rising divorce rates. [2]

### Decline in Marriage Rates and Trust in Marriage



**Marriage Decline:** Since the approval of the birth control pill in 1960, marriage rates have steadily dropped. 67% of Baby Boomers and 83% of the Silent Generation were married between the ages of 25-37, compared to only 46% of Millennials. [3,4] The average age of women getting married went from 20.8 in 1960 to 27.8 in 2017. [5]

**Divorce Surge:** Divorce rates have more than doubled since 1960. [6] In the U.S., there is now one divorce every 46 seconds, highlighting the decline in trust in the institution of marriage.



### Cultural and Biological Effects on Men

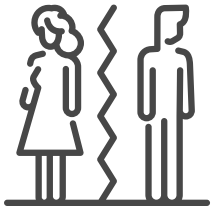
**Impact on Male Masculinity:** Birth control's effect on mate selection has contributed to a shift toward effeminate male traits. [7] Furthermore, estrogen from contraceptives has entered water supplies, leading to decreased sperm concentration and mobility in males. [8]

## Undermining Motherhood and Family Values



**Disdain for Motherhood:** Birth control has contributed to a societal shift that often devalues motherhood and traditional family roles. Reflecting this change, the average age at which women start a family has risen significantly, from 22.6 years in 1980 to 27.5 years in 2023. [9, 10] A projected 1-in-4 women will remain childless for their entire life. [11] Women who prioritize motherhood over a career are frequently viewed as less ambitious and face criticism for their choice.

## The Rise of Promiscuity and Decline in Relationship Quality



**Increased Promiscuity:** The availability of birth control has made casual sex more common by eliminating its consequences. [12] This has contributed to a rise in male and female promiscuity and weakened the moral foundations that historically underpinned marriage.

**Lowered Standards for Relationships:** With fewer consequences for sexual activity, the criteria for choosing partners have become less stringent. Men and women no longer seek partners who they can envision being with long-term. [13] This leads to more casual relationships, which can degrade the overall quality of romantic partnerships.



## Feminist Movements and Self-Sufficiency

**Fostering Feminism:** Birth control has been linked to the rise of feminist movements that emphasize self-sufficiency, materialism, and career over family life. [14] The pill has encouraged the notion that personal fulfillment can only be achieved through professional success, diminishing the value of motherhood.



## Conclusion

The introduction of birth control has not only altered personal relationships but has also had a significant impact on society. From the decline in marriage and rising divorce rates to the devaluation of motherhood and the rise of feminist ideologies, birth control has reshaped cultural norms in ways that have negatively affected families, fertility, and childbearing.



# References:

---

1. Alvergne, Alexandra, and Virpi Lummaa. "Does the Contraceptive Pill Alter Mate Choice in Humans?" *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, no. 3, Elsevier BV, Mar. 2010, pp. 171–79. Crossref, doi:10.1016/j.tree.2009.08.003.
2. Williamson, Chris. *The Psychological Impact Of Hormonal Birth Control - Dr Sarah Hill*. YouTube, 21 Nov. 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpoUl1MzTq4>.
3. "Products - Publications and Information Products from the National Center for Health Statistics." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/index.htm>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
4. "Webinar Recording: How to More Efficiently Raise Money from Older Donors in 2024 | Webinars | Resources | FreeWill." *FreeWill For Nonprofits | Your Most Impactful Gifts Start Here*, <https://www.nonprofits.freewill.com/resources/webinars/how-to-more-efficiently-raise-money-from-older-donors-in-2024>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
5. "Median Age at First Marriage, 2017." *Bowling Green State University*, <https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/payne-median-age-first-marriage-fp-19-06>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
6. "Products - Monthly Vital Statistics Reports - Homepage." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | CDC*, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/mvsvr.htm#43\\_9s](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/mvsvr.htm#43_9s). Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
7. Little, Anthony C et al. "Oral contraceptive use in women changes preferences for male facial masculinity and is associated with partner facial masculinity." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* vol. 38,9 (2013): 1777-85. doi:10.1016/j.psyneuen.2013.02.014
8. "Endocrine Disruptors in Water and Their Effects on the Reproductive System - PMC." *PMC Home*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7139484/#ijms-21-01929-t008>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
9. "Crossover in the Median Age at First Marriage and First Birth: Thirty-Five Years of Change." *Bowling Green State University*, <https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/eickmeyer-payne-brown-manning-crossover-age-first-marriage-birth-fp-17-22.html>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
10. "CDC WONDER." CDC WONDER, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
11. "1 in 4: Projecting Childlessness Among Today's Young Women | Institute for Family Studies." Institute for Family Studies, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/1-in-4-projecting-childlessness-among-todays-young-women>. Accessed 25 Oct. 2024.
12. Hill, Sarah. *This Is Your Brain on Birth Control*. Penguin, 2019, p. 108.
13. Ibid, p. 203.
14. Ibid, p. 199.