REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES TO LIFE CHANCES

New and Existing Evidence on the Impact of Contraception on Women’s Economic Empowerment

Researchers from many academic institutions and think tanks have studied the relationship between contraception and women's economic empowerment. In both the developing and developed world, the evidence suggests that access to contraception is not only correlated with but can even cause women's economic empowerment and drive economic growth.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before and after girls become sexually active, access to contraception allows them to plan for better futures by investing in education.

Contraception helps women get into the workforce—and excel in professional fields.

By opening opportunities for women, contraception has the power to transform entire economies.
In Indonesia, local access to family planning helped girls stay in school for a full extra year. Family planning was found to be three times as powerful as school quality for keeping girls in school.1

In Malaysia, young girls living in areas with family planning clinics stayed in school on average half a year longer—and the most vulnerable girls saw the largest gains.2

In the US, young women with unrestricted access to contraception during late adolescence were 17% more likely to be enrolled in university at age 21.3

As teenagers, some Colombian girls saw family planning clinics open in their local counties. As adults, those same girls were 7% more likely to participate in the formal labor force.4

In the US, earlier legal access to contraception increased women's formal labor force participation by 8%,5—and more women chose professional career tracks like law and medicine.6

Among American working women, those with early legal access to contraception accumulated 650 extra hours of work experience by age 35, helping them advance in their careers and earn higher salaries.7

Women's economic participation—enabled by contraceptive access and increasing education attainment—is a key driver of economic growth.8

Contraception accounted for about a third of female wage growth in the 1990s,9 helping to close the gender wage gap. But the average US woman still earns 18% less than the average American man.10

According to one study, achieving gender parity in economic participation could add $28 trillion (25%) to the global economy by 2025.11