

# The acceptability of the female condom for young women in Australia

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## Background

- The female condom, also known as the internal condom, is the only female-initiated method of protection against both unintended pregnancy and sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- Use of the female condom appears to be low in Australia, and little is known regarding its acceptability.

**Aim:** Exploratory study to examine young women's self-reported experiences, potential barriers and overall acceptability of using the female condom

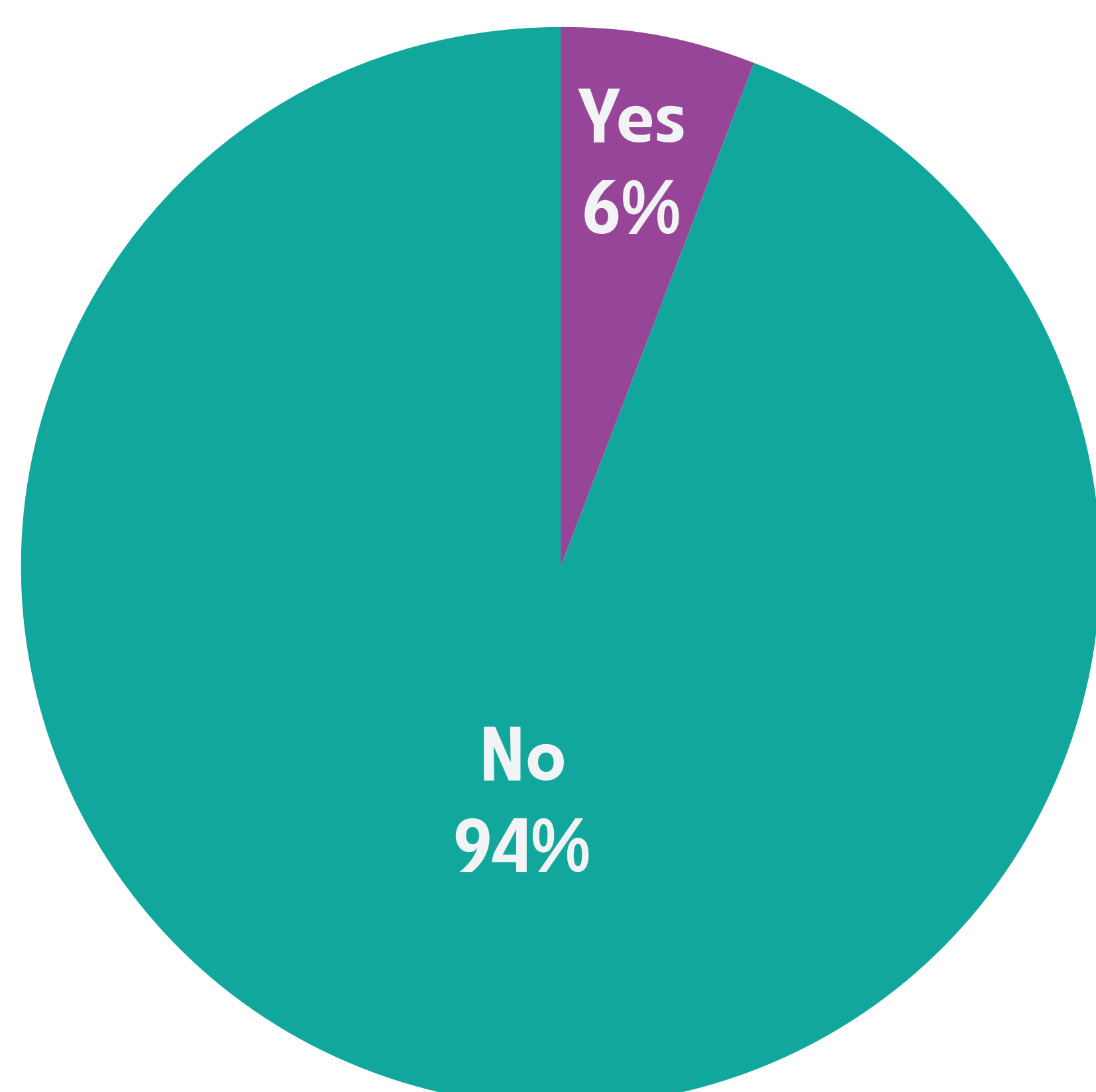
## Methods

- **Eligibility criteria:** Female, 16-25 years, heterosexually active, and living in NSW.
- **Procedure:** Each participant was given 3 female condoms (FC2 nitrile), an instructional video, plus written information. After using or even attempting to use at least one, they were invited to complete an online survey.
- **Measures:** The survey explored participant views, experiences and factors contributing to their likelihood of reusing the female condom.

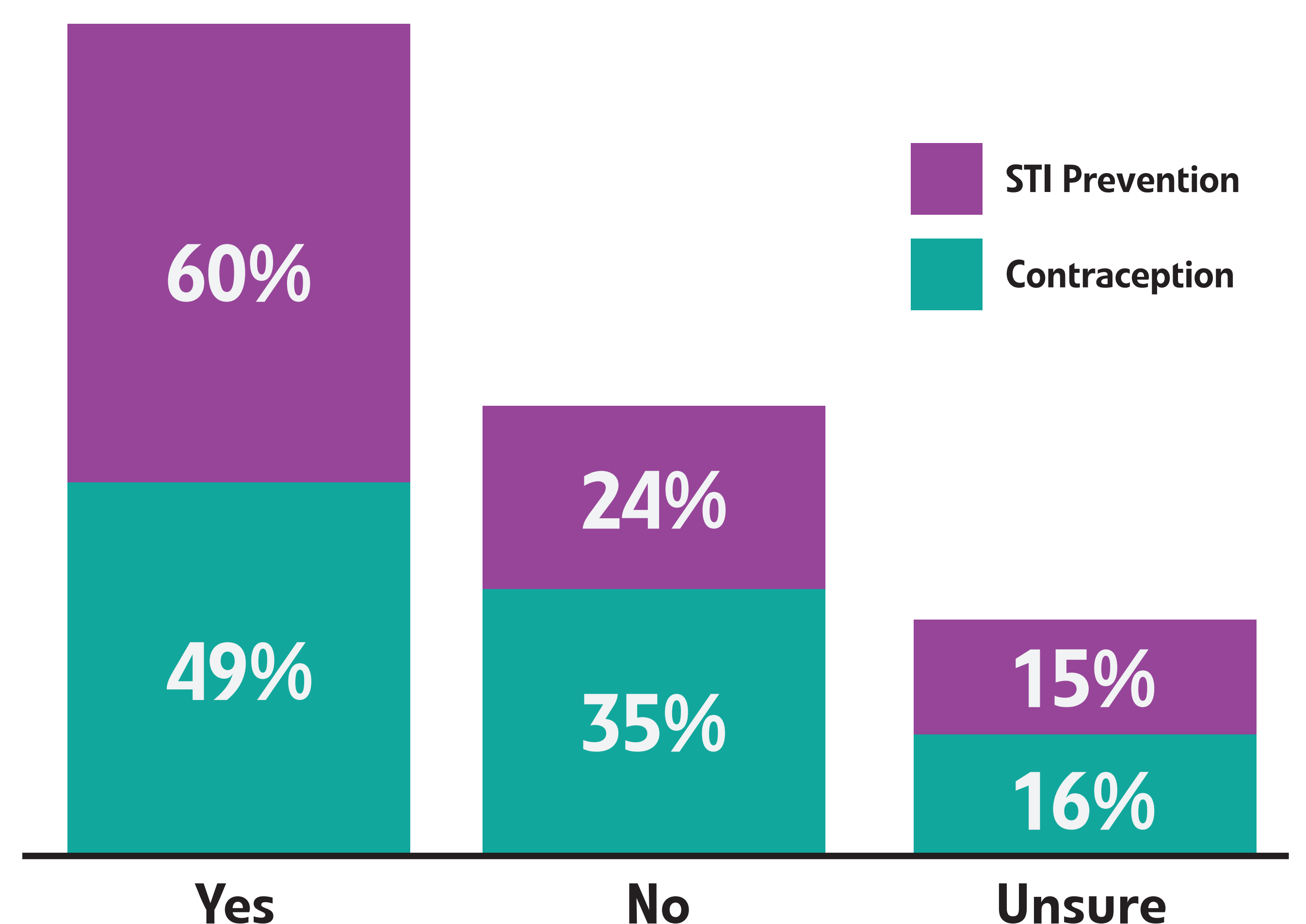
## Results

- 94 young women (mean = 21.4, range = 16-25) completed the online survey.
- The majority were aware of the female condom before the study (81%), but previous use was very low (6%).
- Most who were previously aware of the female condom had obtained information about it from the internet (38%).
- Half of the sample (48%) experienced some difficulty inserting the female condom, however there was little to no associated discomfort during insertion (mean rating = 2.5/5).
- Many participants (56%) would consider paying \$1-2 per female condom, with fewer suggesting they would pay the current average retail price of \$3-5 (36%).
- Many women favoured the ability to take control of their own contraception and STI prevention with the female condom (58%), and would consider future use of this method (for STI prevention: 61%; for contraception: 49%).

### 'Had you used the female condom before participating in this study?'



### 'In which instances would you consider using the female condom again (now or in the future)?'



## Conclusion

- The female condom may be a suitable option for young women, particularly those who want to be in control of their own STI prevention and/or contraception.
- Current retail prices of female condoms may present a barrier to use and opportunities for reducing costs should be considered to increase accessibility for young people.
- Further education in schools and via healthcare providers could increase awareness and correct use of the female condom. Digitalised health promotion efforts should also be considered as a method of information delivery across media platforms that young women frequently use.
- Findings may support clinicians when discussing STI prevention and contraceptive options with clients, as well as contribute towards the development of key messages for future educational materials.
- Future research should explore the experiences of others, including men, trans and gender diverse people, and others in the LGBTIQ+ community.