



SPRING 2024

# LSU STUDENTS ON EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION KNOWLEDGE & ACCESS

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This survey is an official project of  
the LSU Manship School of Communication's  
Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs.



# ABOUT THE 2024 LSU EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION KNOWLEDGE & ACCESS SURVEY

In August 2023, Alyson Neel, a professional-in-residence at the LSU Manship School of Mass Communication, was compiling various on-campus resources for her course syllabus. While reviewing the LSU Student Health Center (SHC) website, she explored the range of health services offered. However, she noticed a gap: there was no mention of emergency contraception (EC) among the available options. Upon further inquiry, she learned that the LSU SHC only provided EC to survivors of sexual assault who came forward.

This discovery prompted key research questions: What do LSU students know about EC? What are their perceptions of and attitudes toward it? What barriers, if any, do they encounter in accessing EC? And do they support measures to expand education and access to EC on campus?

To address these questions, we designed a survey informed by national instruments and tailored to LSU's campus with input from LSU stakeholders and local community organizations. We'd like to thank those individuals as well as the Reilly Center for Media and Public Affairs and multiple Manship professors for their support.

To our knowledge, this survey is the first of its kind at LSU, representing an initial step toward understanding students' reproductive health needs and preferences. We hope it inspires ongoing research and action to ensure student health services align with the needs of the campus community.

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# METHODOLOGY

An online survey was disseminated between February 20 and March 15, 2024. Distribution methods included in-person visits and email outreach to 28 classes (4,195 students total) across six colleges at LSU: Humanities & Social Sciences (HSS), Business (BUS), Mass Communication (MC), Science (SCI), Coast & Environment and Agriculture (Ag). A total of 665 survey responses were analyzed ( $\pm 3.76\%$  MOE, 95% confidence level).

**The following LSU and community entities and organizations reviewed the survey instrument prior to its dissemination:**

LSU Student Health Center (LSU SHC), LSU Women's Center, Lift Louisiana, ReJAC, Big Easy EC, LSU Feminists in Action, Gulf South Plan B and the Louisiana Department of Health.

## LIMITATIONS

*This research was conducted without dedicated funding. To manage costs, we distributed the survey through large, demographically diverse undergraduate classes at LSU. While this sampling method has inherent limitations, the demographics of our respondents largely aligned with broader patterns, offering meaningful insights within our resource constraints. Future studies should consider expanding sampling methods to enhance representativeness and build upon these preliminary findings.*

# LSU ENROLLMENT: SPRING 2024

- Total LSU undergraduate population: **29,108** for on-campus enrollment, **1,907** for online enrollment
- Year at LSU
  - Freshmen: 30.8%
  - Sophomores: 22.3%
  - Juniors: 20.7%
  - Seniors: 26.1%
- Gender/sex
  - Male: 45.0%
  - Female: 55.0%
- Race/ethnicity
  - White: 54.1%
  - Black: 18.3%
  - Two or more races: 3.4%
  - Hispanic: 9.8%
  - Asian: 3.2%
- Louisiana vs. out of state (2022 freshmen class)
  - Louisiana: 67.5%
  - Out of state: 32.5%

**Source:** [https://www.lsu.edu/data/student-data/census-day-enrollment/enrollment-summaries/5\\_enrollment\\_by\\_unit\\_and\\_year\\_classification/spring/ensu\\_2024s\\_5.pdf](https://www.lsu.edu/data/student-data/census-day-enrollment/enrollment-summaries/5_enrollment_by_unit_and_year_classification/spring/ensu_2024s_5.pdf)



# DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENTS\*

- Year at LSU

- **Juniors: 31.7%**
- Sophomores: 27.3%
- Freshmen: 26.0%
- Seniors: 14.0%
- Do not know: 1.0%

*While juniors are over-represented, the breakdown between upperclassmen and underclassmen is more representative of the student body.*



- Sex on birth certificate

- **Female: 67.5%**
- Male: 29.9%
- Decline to answer: 2.6%

- Race/ethnicity (check all that apply)

- White: 59.9%
- Black: 18.2%
- Two or more races: 7.0%
- **Hispanic, LatinX: 5.8%**
- Asian: 4.7%
- Prefer not to respond: 3.7%

- I think of myself as...

- **Female: 65.0%**
- Male: 28.9%
- Decline to answer: 2.8%
- Genderqueer/gender nonconforming: 2.6%
- Transgender man: 0.3%
- Transgender woman: 0.2%
- Additional category: 0.2%

- High school in La?

- Yes: 67.5%
- No: 32.5%

\*616 survey responses



# SURVEY TOPLINES

- **Students are generally aware of EC and know where to get it.** The vast majority of LSU students who responded to the survey had heard of EC prior to the survey (96.0%), think other students are generally aware EC is an option for preventing a pregnancy in the event of unprotected sex or contraceptive failure (91.0%), and know where to get EC (87.0%).
- **Yet, significant knowledge gaps remain.** For example, less than half of student respondents are sure that EC is legal in Louisiana, and 34.0% of students believe the myth that EC can be used to terminate a pregnancy.
- Students report **cost (65.0%), anxiety/stigma (62.0%) and lack of accurate information (56.0%)** as the most common barriers to accessing EC.
- **The vast majority of students who responded to the survey voiced support for all measures we provided to educate and expand access on campus,** e.g., on-campus vending machines with low-cost EC, broader access to low-cost EC at the LSU SHC.
- **Most students know where to get birth control but are not aware (74.0%) that the LSU SHC provides multiple forms of birth control.**

## BIGGEST REPORTED BARRIERS TO EC ACCESS

- 1 COST (65.0%)
- 2 ANXIETY/STIGMA (62.0%)
- 3 LACK OF ACCURATE INFORMATION (56.0%)



## EC KNOWLEDGE

### VAST MAJORITY OF STUDENTS HAVE HEARD OF EC, KNOW WHERE TO GET IT

- Prior to this survey had you ever heard of EC?\*

- **Yes: 95.5%**
- No: 3.9%

*\*665 survey responses*

- If you or your partner wanted to use emergency contraception, do you know where you could get it?\*

- **Yes: 87.0%**
- No: 7.1%
- I am not sure: 6.0%

*\*637 survey responses*

- In general, do you think LSU students are aware that emergency contraception is an option for preventing a pregnancy after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure?\*

- **Yes: 90.8%**
- No: 9.3%

*\*651 survey responses*



## EC KNOWLEDGE

### STUDENTS MOST COMMONLY LEARNED ABOUT EC FROM THEIR PEERS, IN HIGH SCHOOL

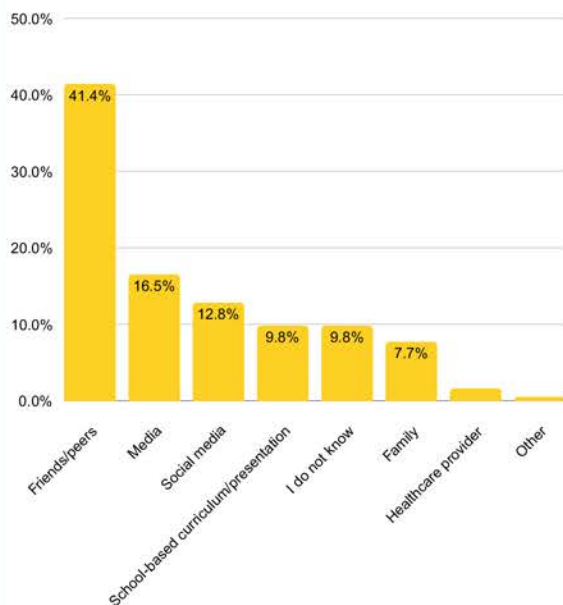
- How did you first learn about EC?
  - **Friends/peers: 41.4%**
  - Media: 16.5%
  - Social media: 12.8%
  - School-based curriculum/presentation: 9.8%
  - I do not know: 9.8%
  - Family: 7.7%
  - Healthcare provider: 1.6%
  - Other: 0.5%

*\*637 survey responses*

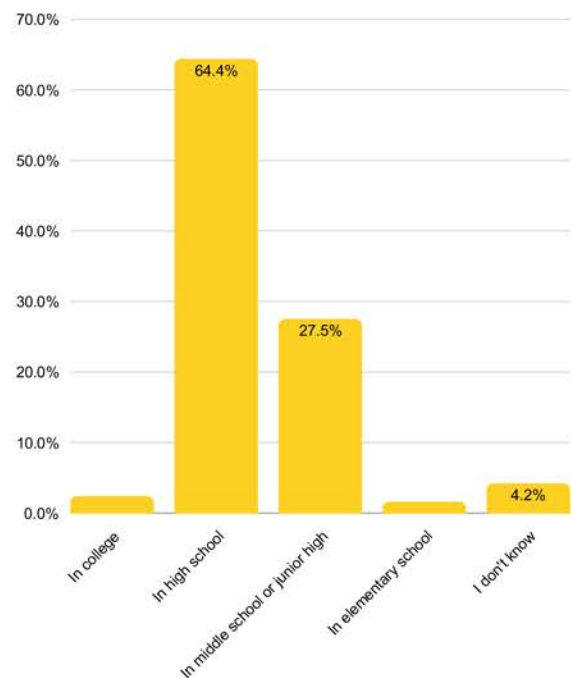
- When did you first learn about EC?
  - In college: 2.4%
  - **In high school: 64.4%**
  - In middle school or junior high: 27.5%
  - In elementary school: 1.6%
  - I do not know: 4.2%

*\*637 survey responses*

**More than 18X** as many students learned about EC through media or social media compared to those who learned about it from their healthcare provider



**Majority of students learn about EC in high school**



## EC ATTITUDES

### MAJORITY OF STUDENTS STRONGLY APPROVE OF EC USE IN MOST SITUATIONS

How much do you approve or disapprove of someone using emergency contraception in each of the following situations?\*

	Strongly A	Somewhat A	Neither	Somewhat D	Strongly D	Not Sure
If a person was raped	<b>87.5%</b>	3.1%	3.4%	1.4%	2.2%	2.3%
If a condom broke	<b>78.5%</b>	8.4%	5.1%	1.9%	4.1%	2.0%
If no protection was used	<b>65.6%</b>	12.8%	8.4%	5.3%	6.4%	1.6%
In any situation	<b>63.8%</b>	11.5%	12.3%	4.2%	3.7%	4.4%

\*642 survey responses



## EC KNOWLEDGE

### LESS THAN 50% OF STUDENTS ARE SURE EC IS LEGAL IN LA; ABOUT 34% BELIEVE THE MYTH THAT EC CAN BE USED TO TERMINATE A PREGNANCY

Please select how certain you are that the following statements are True or False.\*

	Definitely T	Probably T	Probably F	Definitely F	Do Not Know
You have to be above a certain age	11.0%	<b>33.9%**</b>	23.8%	19.8%	11.6%
You do not need a prescription	<b>59.6%</b>	17.2%	5.8%	12.8%	4.5%
You need an ID	6.0%	23.8%	27.9%	<b>30.1%</b>	12.4%
EC is legal in Louisiana	<b>45.5%</b>	29.1%	8.6%	4.1%	12.7%
EC can be used to terminate a pregnancy	11.5%	21.4%	20.6%	<b>33.4%</b>	13.2%
Your BMI has no impact on the effectiveness of EC***	3.8%	8.6%	28.7%	<b>37.9%</b>	21.0%

\*637 survey responses

\*\*The plurality of student responses selected the incorrect answer. There is no age restriction to purchase EC in the U.S.

\*\*\*The LSU Women's Center suggested a question on BMI's impact on effectiveness, a common knowledge gap it sees among students it serves.

## EC ACCESS

### MAJORITY OF STUDENTS' PROVIDERS HAVE NOT RAISED THE TOPIC OF EC

- Has your current healthcare provider spoken to you about emergency contraception during a routine office visit?\*
- Yes: 14.7%
- **No: 72.2%**
- I am not sure: 7.0%
- I do not have a healthcare provider: 6.2%

\*632 survey responses

- Because emergency contraception is optimally effective immediately following unprotected sex or contraceptive failure, some healthcare providers recommend having a supply “on hand” in case you need it. Has your current healthcare provider offered this option to you?\*
- Yes: 5.6%
- **No: 85.3%**
- I am not sure: 9.2%

\*631 survey responses

### STUDENTS REPORT MULTIPLE BARRIERS ON LSU'S CAMPUS

As far as you know, are any of the following major barriers to emergency contraception access for LSU students?\*

	Yes	No	I Am Not Sure
Out-of-pocket cost of EC	<b>64.7%</b>	10.7%	24.6%
Transportation	<b>42.2%</b>	32.6%	25.2%
Anxiety and/or stigma	<b>62.3%</b>	18.0%	19.7%
Lack of accurate info	<b>56.2%</b>	19.7%	24.2%
Language and/or other cultural barrier	35.1%	28.2%	<b>36.7%</b>

\*624 survey responses



## OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR BROADENING ACCESS ON CAMPUS

Do you support or oppose the following efforts to broaden access to and increase awareness of emergency contraception?\*

	Support	Oppose
On-campus vending machines with low-cost EC	85.4%	14.6%
Broader access to low-cost EC at the SHC	93.5%	6.5%
Student-run hotline for EC	87.4%	12.6%
On and off-campus hubs with EC (e.g., libraries)	84.3%	15.7%
Info on where students can access EC	93.6%	6.4%

\*611 survey responses

*We provided examples of steps taken by college campuses nationwide, including in the U.S. South.*

## BIRTH CONTROL

### MAJORITY OF STUDENTS DON'T KNOW THE LSU SHC IS AN OPTION\*

- If you or your partner wanted to use birth control (e.g., IUD, pills, condoms, implants), do you know where you could get it?\*

- **Yes: 93.0%**
- No: 7.0%

\*617 survey responses

- Do you know whether multiple forms of birth control are available at the LSU Student Health Center? (617)

- Yes: 25.3%
- No: 32.7%
- **I am not sure: 42.0%**

\*626 survey responses

The LSU SHC asked us to include questions about birth control.

*74.7% of students do not know or are unsure that the LSU Student Health Center offers multiple forms of birth control.*



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

## CONDUCT AN ANNUAL SURVEY

to monitor changes in LSU students' knowledge, attitudes and access to EC over time. **We also recommend that other Louisiana universities and colleges implement similar surveys** to help create a more comprehensive understanding of EC awareness and access statewide.

## CONDUCT FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

to gain a deeper understanding of students' personal reproductive and sexual health experiences. Follow-up interviews could reveal how identities—such as race, gender and socio-economic status—and environmental factors intersect to influence students' knowledge, attitudes and access to EC.

## CONDUCT FOCUS GROUPS

to explore shared experiences and differences among participants. Focus groups are a valuable tool for assessing public understanding of myths, legislative actions and systemic barriers related to EC. They also provide a collaborative setting to brainstorm community-driven solutions for addressing education and access gaps.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ABOUT BROADER BIRTH CONTROL ACCESS

could help identify gaps in education and access, inform targeted efforts and address the shifting legislative landscape—particularly in light of legislation in other states that seeks to restrict reproductive health options following the fall of *Roe v. Wade*.



