

## 2. ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTIVE SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESTRICTION MEASURES

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**Introduction.** As a public health emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced every aspect of human life. The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a consequence on sexual health services, being a major public health issue.

**Aim of study.** The aim of the study was assessment of the impact of COVID-19 social distancing measures in The Republic of Moldova on access to contraceptive services.

**Methods and materials.** The Republic of Moldova became part of a cross-sectional multi-country study called “International Sexual Health And Reproductive Health during COVID-19” (I-SHARE) with a common instrument in participating countries as an online survey [<https://ishare.web.unc.edu/>]. The study included 248 participants. IBM SPSS Statistics V21.0 software was used to analyse the statistical data.

**Results.** The average age of respondents of the study was  $33.5 \pm 9.9$  years, varying in the limits of 18-68 years. The majority of participants were women (200/248, 80.6%), 19.0% (47/248) men and 0.4% (1/248) identified themselves as other sex. 64.0% (158/248) of the participants were legally married and living together, 11.7% (29/248) - not legally married but living with a partner, 6.1% (15/248) were in a relationship but not living together. In 2% (5/248) cases the relationship ended during or after COVID-19 social distancing measures, albeit, 60% (3/5) of them consider that their relationship brake-up was precipitated by COVID-19 social distancing measures. The current methods of contraception used by the respondents was of the interest. As a result of the research, it was discovered that some of the participants used different contraceptive methods at the same time. However, the condom was the most popular method of contraception, followed by withdrawal and pills. Only 68 responders were seeking or obtaining contraceptive services before the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore 37/68 (54.4%) chose medical providers, and 45.6% (31/68) selected other sources for obtaining contraceptive services. However, during COVID-19 social distancing measures, only 32/248 (12.9%) participants were seeking or obtaining contraceptive services, 68.7% (22/32) asked medical providers and 31.3% (10/32) selected other sources. According to the study, the COVID-19 social distancing measures prevented or hindered only one respondent (0.4%) from seeking or receiving contraception, however the person did not identify the reason.

**Conclusion.** Our findings reveal that during the period of the COVID-19 social distancing measures, participants solicited or obtained fewer contraceptive services, which was accompanied by an increase in the frequency of accessing contraceptive services, particularly from medical providers.