

Male students' knowledge about and attitude towards emergency contraception.

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Approximately 50 million pregnancies are interrupted around the world every year. Latvia is one of the countries in the EU with the highest abortion rate per 1000 newborn (435/1000, 2008.). Emergency contraception (EC) is the only method which can prevent an unwanted pregnancy after an unprotected intercourse. Many research show that knowledge about EC is insufficient among young people, especially among men. It is important for man to care about contraception equally as for woman in their sexual relationship, that's why men knowledge about EC as well as opportunity for women to use it is one of the essential factors that can influence unwanted pregnancy count and, respectively, the lowering of the abortion rate.

- Research hypothesis**
- In Riga Stradins University (RSU), male students of the Social Science Faculty (SSF) are less informed about EC and its use than male students of the Medical Faculty (MF).
 - I year male students are less informed about EC and its use than III year male students.

Research objective

Define the level of knowledge and attitude towards emergency contraception of male students in different faculties of the RSU.

Results

From the planned 230 questionnaires, 208 were issued for the survey, because 22 students were absent on the day of the survey. 128 questionnaires were returned. Response rate was 61.5%. 4 questionnaires stated that respondents did not want to participate in the survey. Overall, data were analyzed from 124 questionnaires.

Respondents' age description

- Average age – 20 +/- 1.5 years
- Majority - 19 years (42.7%), 21 years (33.9%)

Respondents' sexual activity

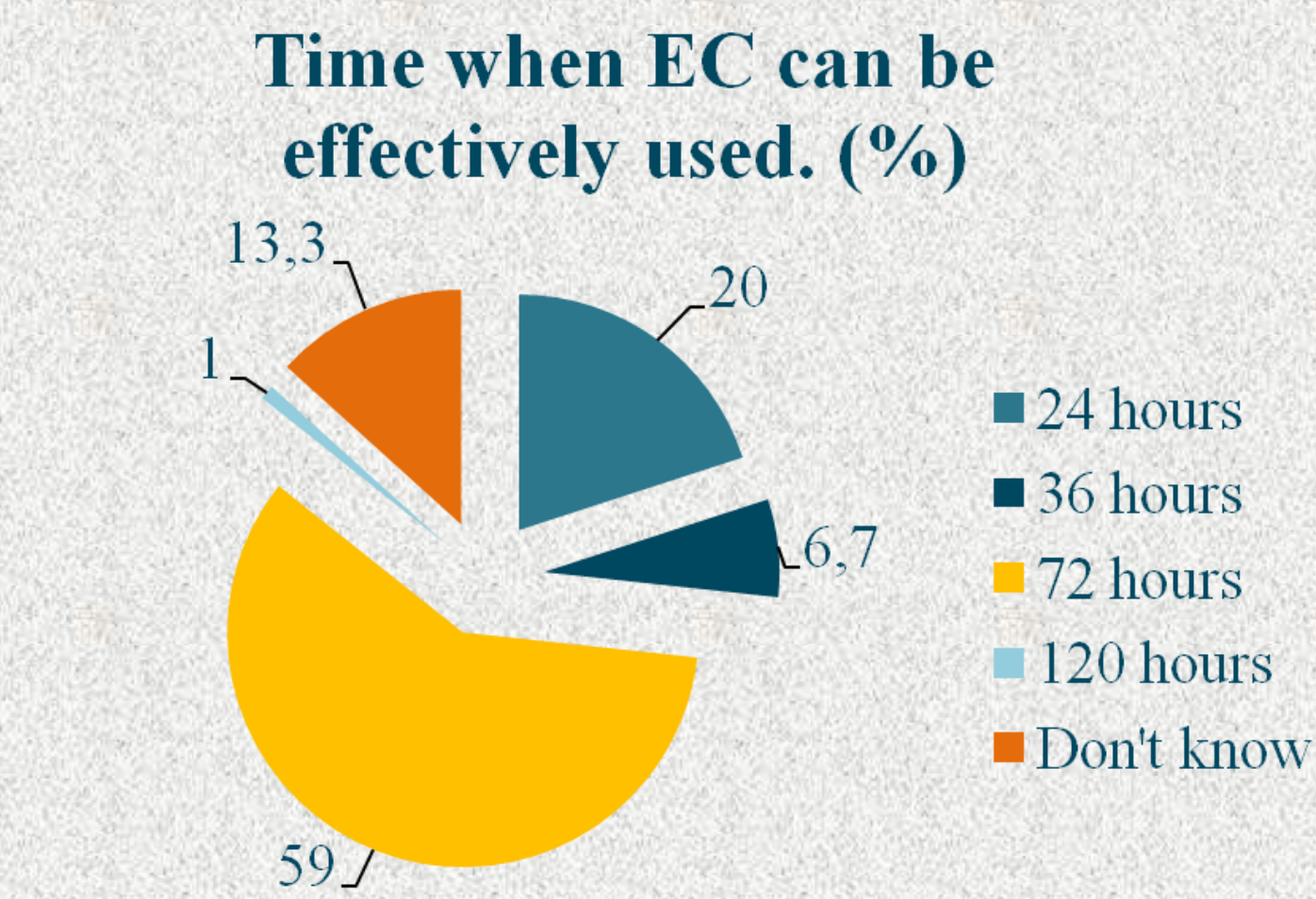
- 79.8% - sexually active
- 20.2% - sexually inactive

Knowledge about Emergency contraceptives

Out of 124 persons having answered to: “Do you know what an emergency contraception is?”, 84.7% replied “Yes” and 15, 3% stated that they have not heard anything about it. Comparing different faculties, 81.8% of the MF students answered affirmatively and 91.6% of the SSF.

Correct definition of an emergency contraception (% of affirmative answers to question “Do you know what an emergency contraception is?”)

- Defined correctly (large hormone doses in tablets) – overall – 89.5%, MF – 87.5%, SSF – 93.9%
- Defined incorrectly – 10.5%.



Considerations about side effects

- 55.2% - answered affirmatively.
 - ✓ MF students – 61.1% (I year – 55.6%, III year – 66.7%)
 - ✓ SSF students – 42.4% (I year – 44.4%, III year – 40%)

- 41.9% did not know about side effects
- 2.9% denied the side effects

! Headache, nausea and irregular menstrual cycle were noted as side effects.

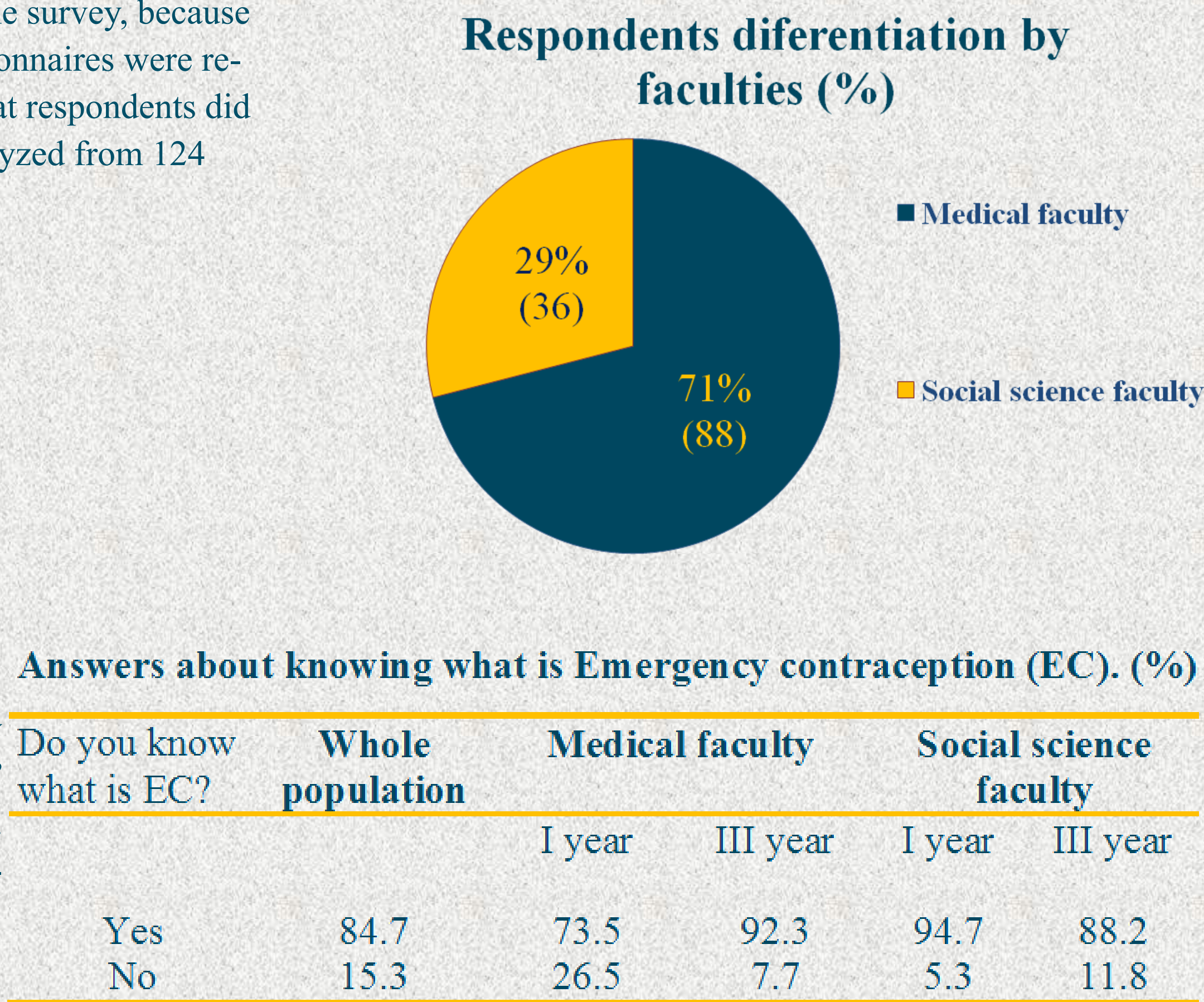
Students' awareness about EC

All of the students participating in the survey had to answer questions in this section.

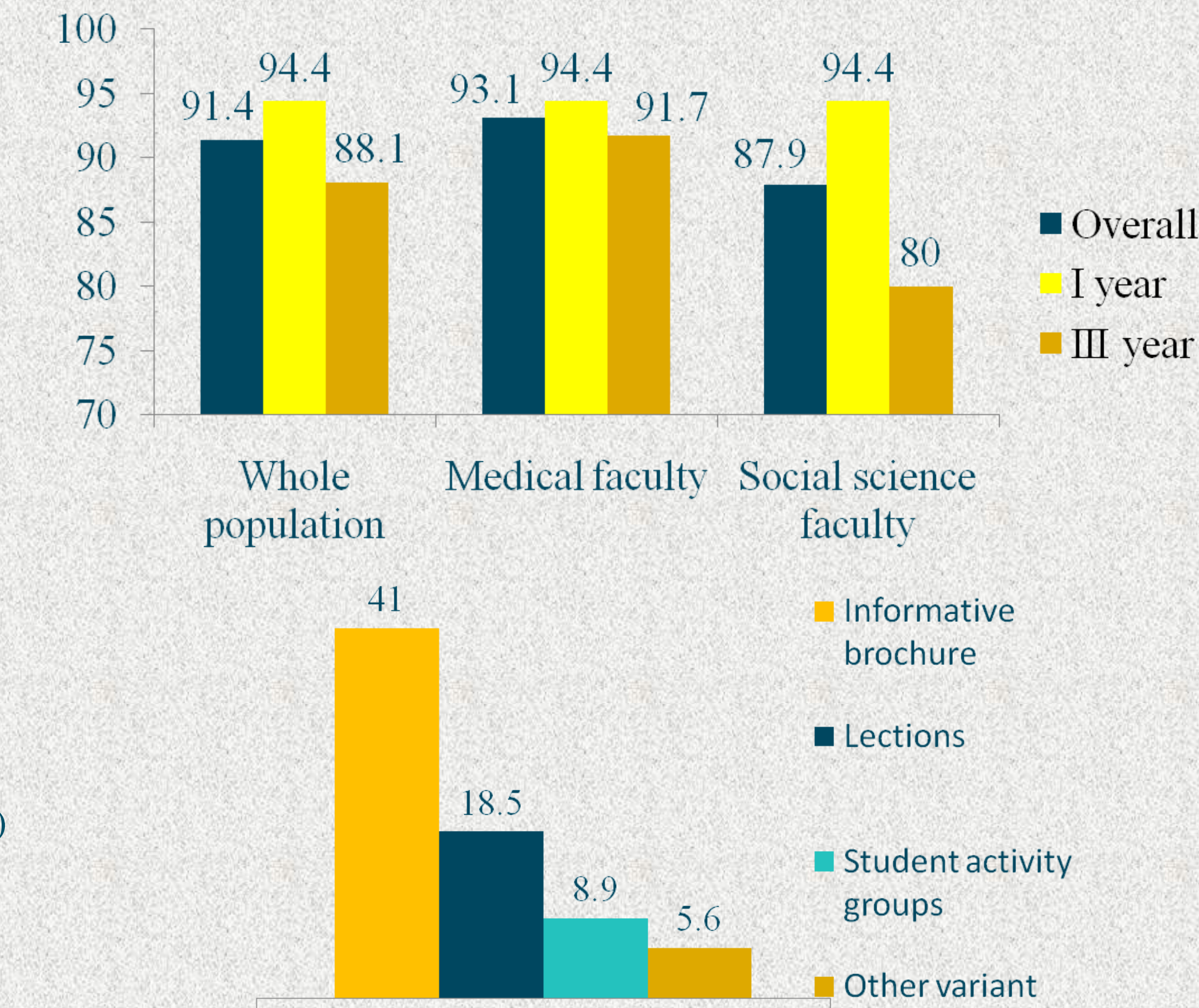
- ✓ 54.8% of respondents stated that men are insufficiently informed about EC and 16.1% were of opinion that information is sufficient.
- ✓ 74.2% respondents noted that they wanted to get more information about EC.

Students' use of EC and attitude towards it

- ✓ 23.4% of participants had offered EC to the partner before the survey
- ✓ 88.7% would offer EC to the partner in case of emergency



Student's differentiation, who think that EC harm women's health. (%)



Best way to inform students about EC (%)

Information source about EC. (%)

| Information source | Whole population | Medical faculty | | Social science faculty | |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------|------------------------|----------|
| | | I year | III year | I year | III year |
| Internet | 29.5 | 36.1 | 25 | 27.8 | 26.7 |
| Family | 3.8 | 2.8 | 5.6 | 0 | 6.7 |
| School | 39 | 41.7 | 36.1 | 55.6 | 20 |
| University | 10.5 | 2.8 | 19.4 | 16.7 | 0 |
| Sexual partner | 20 | 13.9 | 25 | 11.1 | 33.3 |
| Friends | 14.3 | 8.3 | 16.7 | 16.7 | 20 |
| Mass media | 31.4 | 36.1 | 36.1 | 22.2 | 20 |

Additional note

Unfortunately, analyzing data with the SPSS 17 software, in most cases there were no statistical significance. It was statistically significant, that III year students are more materially independent than I year students ($p < 0.05$), and III year MF students are more aware that EC is used after the sexual intercourse than I year MF students ($p = 0.04$).



Research methods

An anonymous survey with a closed and structured questionnaire consisting of 23 questions. The data received was analyzed and used to describe and compare the groups respectively:

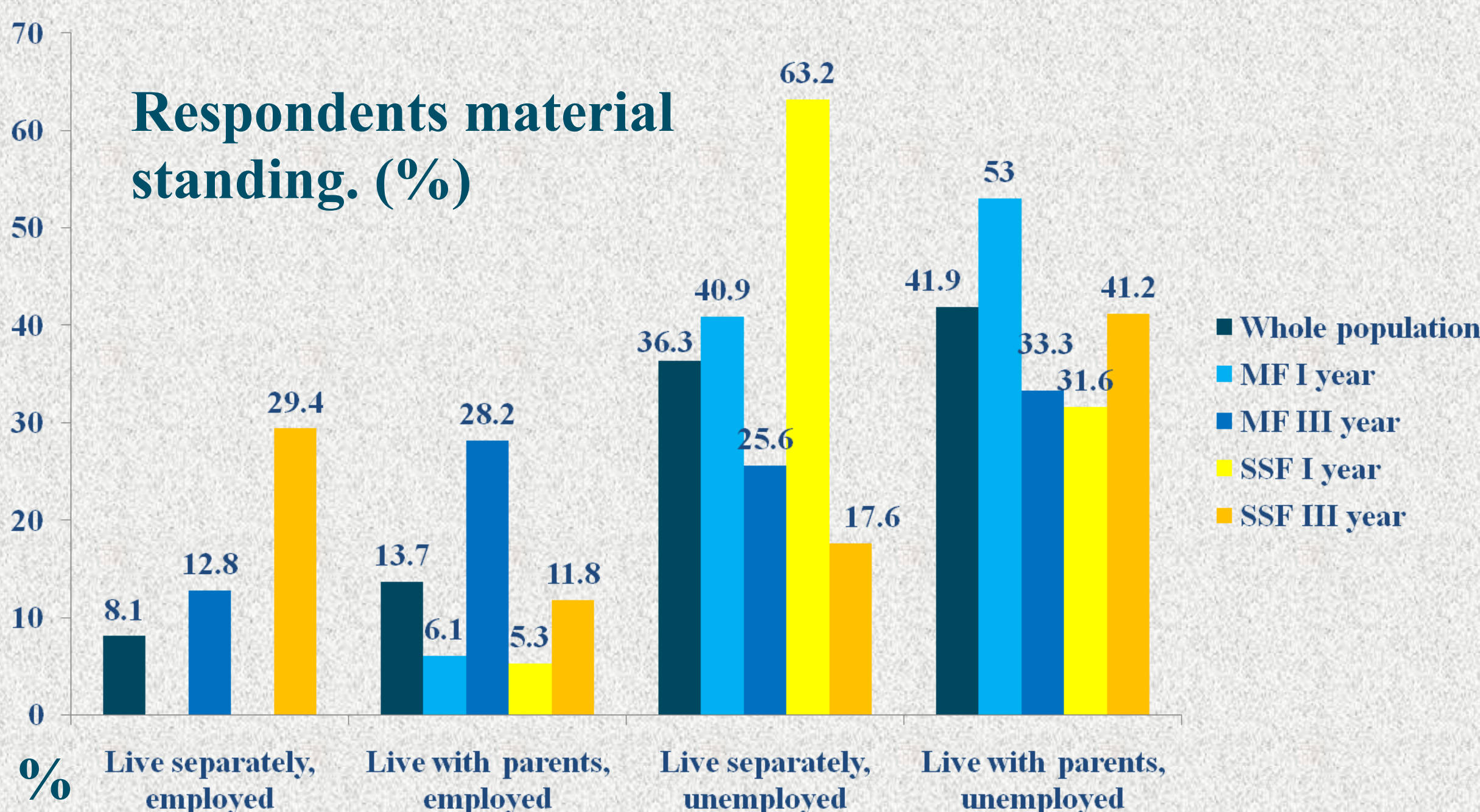
1. I year and III year students' answers
2. MF and SSF I year students' answers
3. MF and SSF III year students' answers
4. Answers among I and III year students within one faculty
5. Answers were analyzed using statistical software MS Excel 2007 and SPSS 17.

Study type

- Descriptive – comparative

Study population

- 230 male students from RSU SSF and MF I and III year.



Discussion

Based on the analysis of the received data, it can be stated that we cannot clearly judge about students' knowledge and awareness of EC, because answers' range about the EC definition, its use and time limit for use varies very widely. Presumably, knowledge is pretty superficial. 95.2% knew when to use EC, but only slightly more than a half of respondents, e.g. 59.4%, knew such specific things as time limit for use. Nevertheless, these results are better compared with the results of similar studies held in other countries. For example, in Sweden 38.8%, Australia 20%, or South Africa, where only 11.8% of respondents knew the time limit for use of EC.

As stated in the hypothesis, the MF III year students knew better about EC than the MF I year students. But, opposite to the MF, SSF I year students turned to be more aware and knowing than III year students from SSF, and this is similar to the study done in Nepal, where younger students also were more aware than their older colleagues.

The study also showed that the opinion about harmfulness of EC is quite widespread among students (91.4% stated so). That could be because of misinformation about EC itself, or because of students' opinion that if EC is large hormone doses, they should per rule harm women's health. Third possible cause is student's wrong interpretation of the question. It is possible, that the word "harmfulness" was understood as the presence of side effects when using EC.

Large amount of students e.g. 86.7% knew where to buy EC and that it is available over-the-counter (83.8%). This result is promising, as it shows that in the case of need the majority of respondents would use the EC, because it can easily be reached.

One of the positive things found in the study: most of the students stated they have very little information about EC and would like to get more. This means, that male students care about unwanted pregnancy problem and are ready to solve it.

It is worth suggesting that universities should provide more information about EC. One of the options to do so would be information brochures, as it was noted by the majority of students (41%).

Unfortunately, the study has had some disadvantages. It was impossible to interview all the male students registered in the university, who were matched the study criteria. Some students, who were interviewed, did not return the questionnaire thus lowering the response rate and statistical trustfulness. Despite this, compared with similar studies, the response rate was at a pretty high level. The study group also was limited only within one university (RSU), that is why we cannot state that those who did not return the questionnaire would answer the question similar to majority of students, and that knowledge of students from other universities is the same as in the RSU. In the end, the questionnaire should have been developed more specifically so it could be possible to get a deeper insight into the knowledge of students about EC.

Summary

- Knowledge about EC among male students is satisfactory.
- There is no difference in knowledge between RSU I year and III year students.
- SSF students know more about EC than the MF students.
- It is necessary to provide more information about EC to male students.
- University does not provide enough information about EC and its use.
- An epidemiologically wider study and a qualitative study would be required to generalize the study results for the male student population of Latvia.

