

# Fertility Knowledge of Women in the United States of America



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## Introduction

- Women are increasingly delaying motherhood, choosing to postpone pregnancy until they reach a period in life when raising children is consistent with their career paths or life goals<sup>1</sup>
- When women decide that the time is appropriate to conceive, they wish to do so quickly, leading to disappointment if conception does not happen as quickly as they would have hoped<sup>2,3</sup>
- There are only a number of days in each menstrual cycle where intercourse can lead to conception, and there is considerable intra- and inter-individual variation in this timing, making mistiming of intercourse an important reason for failing to conceive<sup>4,5</sup>
- A lack of knowledge and understanding of fertility is commonly expressed. Furthermore, women's perception of the characteristics of their menstrual cycle is often inaccurate<sup>6</sup>
- This study sought to assess the understanding of fertility among women in the USA

## Methods

- This study involved 1000 women based in the USA, aged 20–45 years, who were able to bear children
- Participants were asked to complete a 30-minute, multiple-choice, internet-based survey, administered by Ipsos Suisse (Geneva, Switzerland)
- The survey focused on the participants' knowledge and understanding of the menstrual cycle, fertility, and ovulation

## Results

### Study population

- Of the 1000 participants, the average age was 33 years, and 48% (n=480) were employed full-time (Table One)

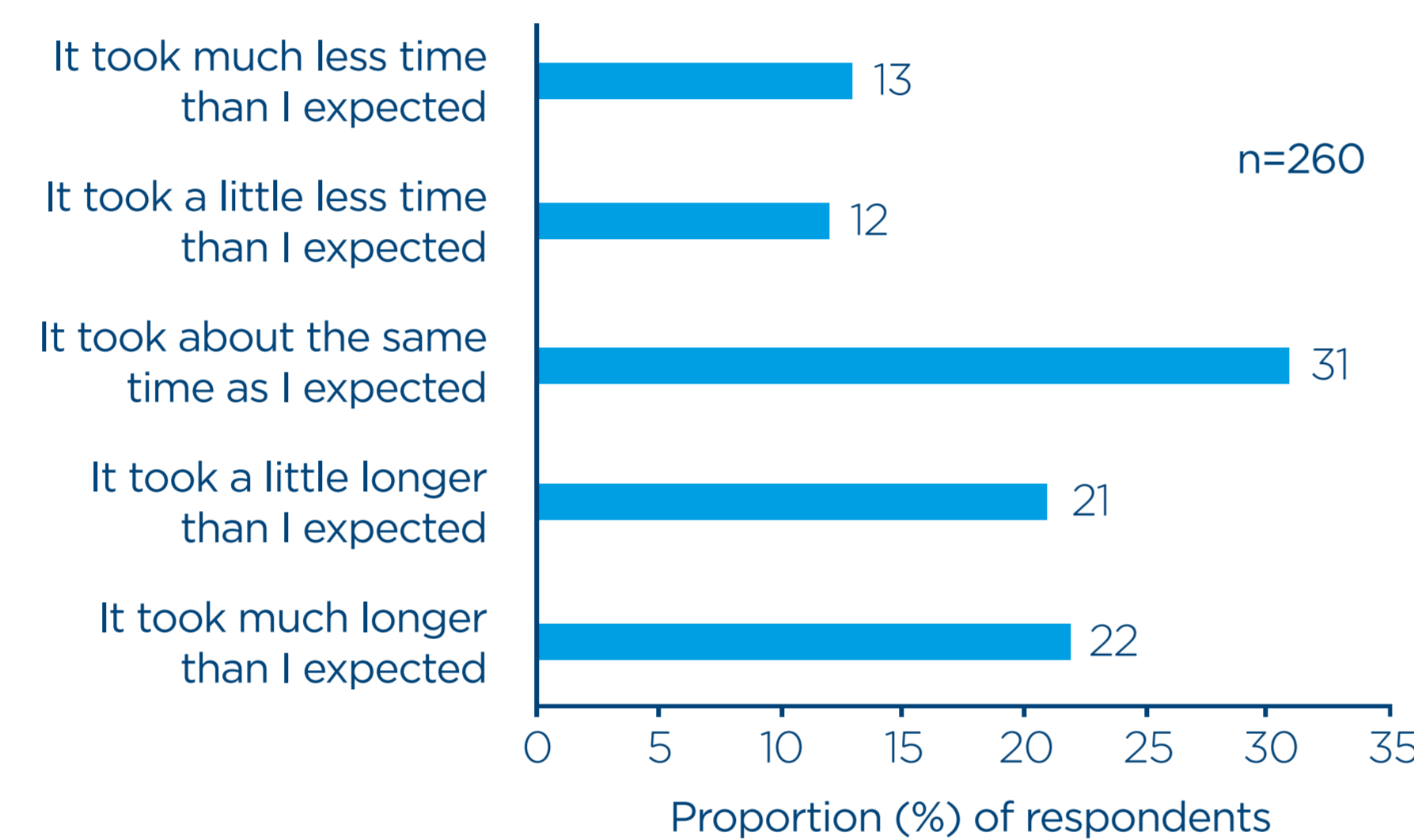
Table One: Sample composition

	US women
Sample size, N	1000
Age, %	
20–34 years	57
35–45 years	43
Average age, years	33
Number of people in household, %	
1	14
2	23
3	23
4	23
≥5	17
No answer	1
Occupation, %	
Employed full-time	48
Employed part-time	14
Not employed	31
Student	7

### Attitudes to and expectations of becoming pregnant

- When asked “Which one of these statements best describes your state of mind regarding getting pregnant?”
  - 74% selected “I want to maximize my chances of getting pregnant as soon as possible”
  - 26% selected “I prefer to let nature take its course”
- When asked “How long, on average, do you think it takes for a woman to become pregnant?”, younger women (aged 20–24 years) were more optimistic, with an average expectation of 4.4 months, compared with women aged over 35 years, who cited 5.8 months on average
- Participants whose most recent pregnancy was planned were asked “How did you feel about the length of time it took you to become pregnant?”: 43% responded that it took longer than expected (Figure One)
- When also asked “At what point, if at all, did you become worried you may be having problems getting pregnant?”, participants started to become worried after an average of 5.9 months, with 27% becoming worried in the first 3 months

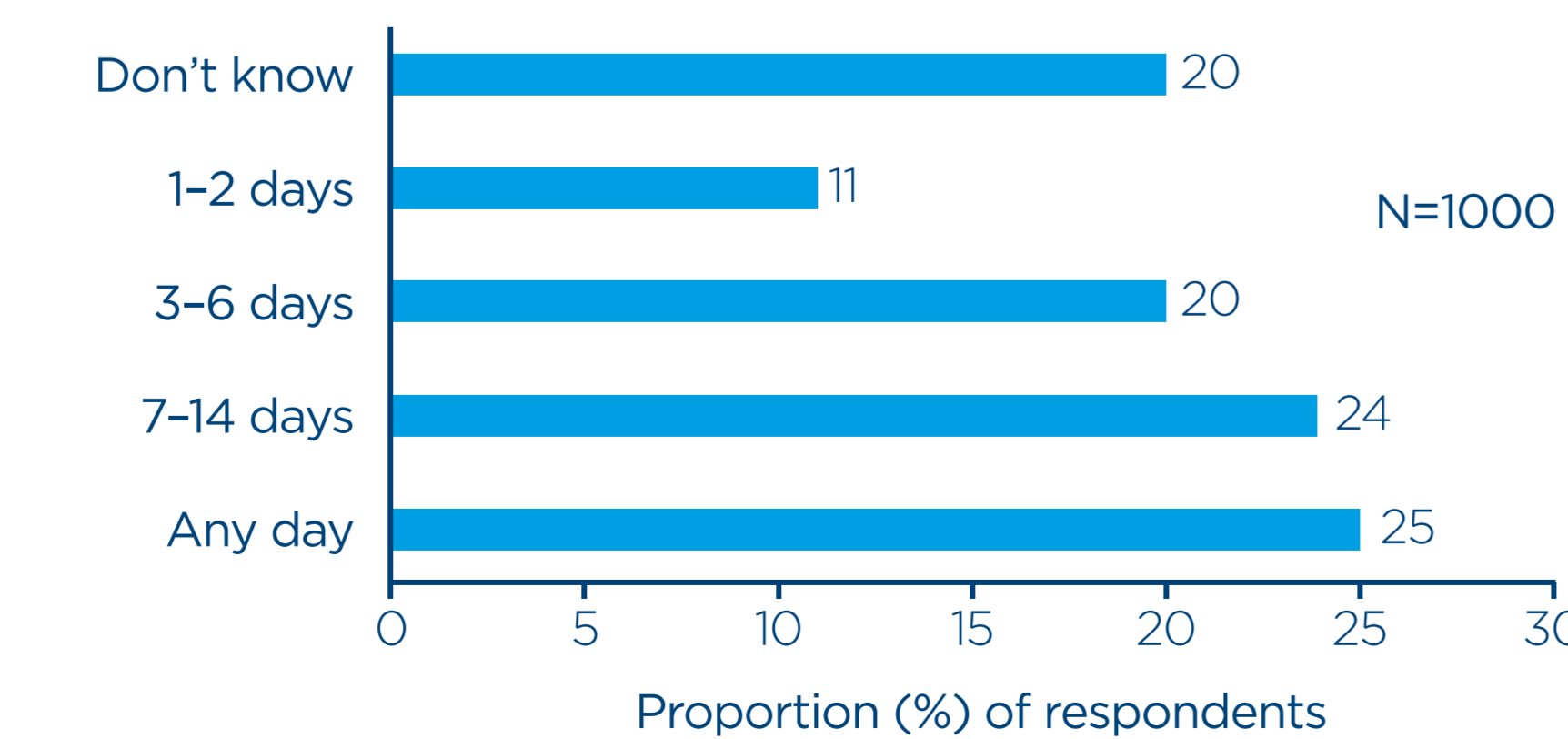
Figure One: Survey responses to the question “How did you feel about the length of time it took you to become pregnant?”



### Fertility knowledge

- Only 14% of participants choose the most appropriate definition of the ‘menstrual cycle’: “First day of the bleed to the day before the next bleed starts”
- Only 20% chose the correct response to the question “How many days during the menstrual cycle is a woman fertile?” (“Fertile for 3–6 days during their cycle”), with 25% believing that pregnancy is possible following intercourse on any day of the cycle (Figure Two)
- It was more common for younger women to believe that pregnancy is possible following intercourse on any day of the cycle, with 38% of respondents aged 20–24 years (n=138) selecting this option

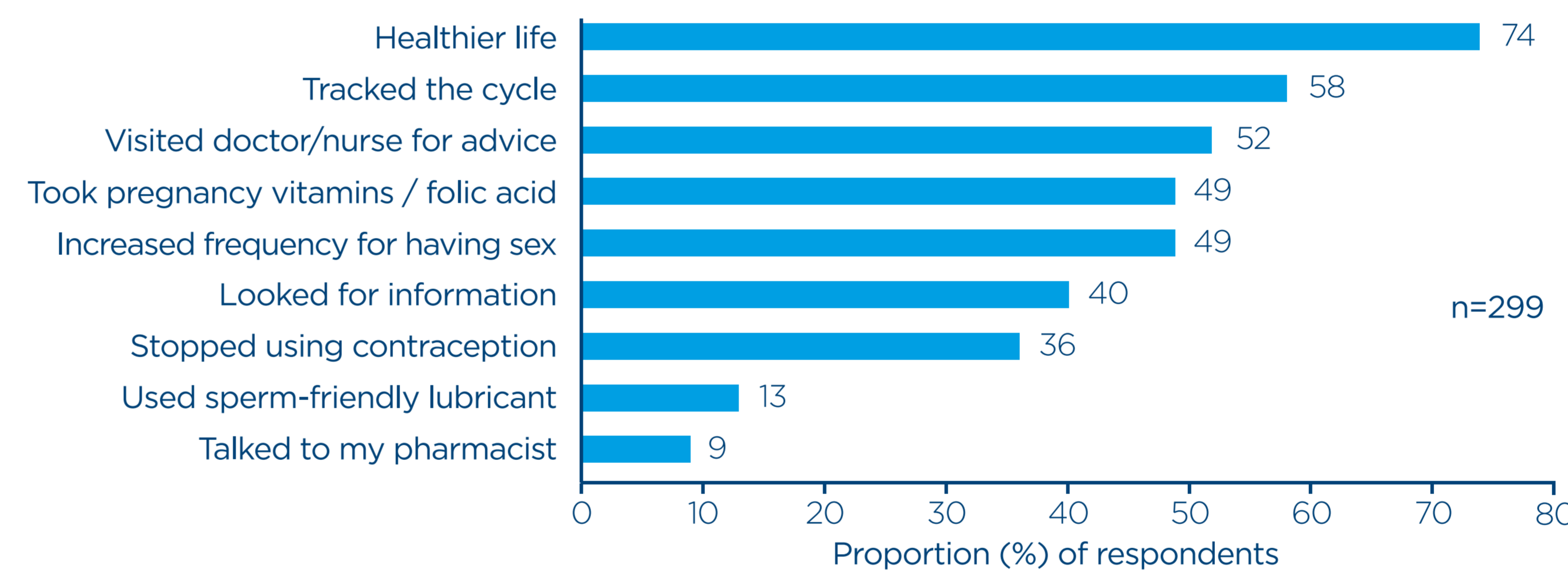
Figure Two: Survey responses to the question “As far as you know, on how many days during a woman’s menstrual cycle is she able to get pregnant?”



### Behaviors when trying to become pregnant

- When asked what sources of information participants have used or would use to attain information on how to become pregnant (n=761 women willing to have children), the most common were the internet (47%) and doctor (38%); the least common were radio (2%), quick response code (3%), and pharmacist (6%)
- Among all conceivers (n=299), almost all (97%) responded that their partners were interested in being involved in trying for a baby
- When all conceivers (n=299) were asked which things they did or plan to do to help conception, the most common responses selected were ‘healthier life’ (74%) and ‘tracked the cycle’ (58%) (Figure Three)

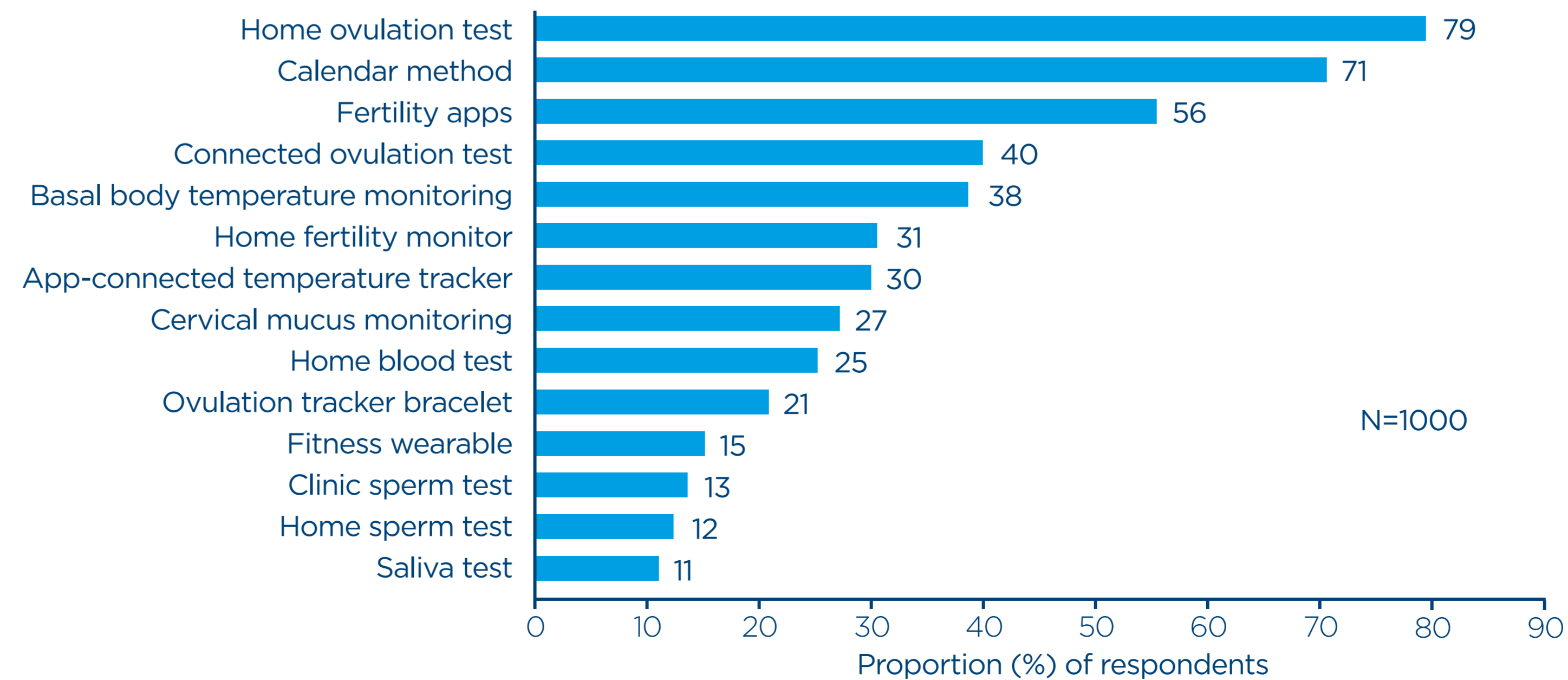
Figure Three: Survey responses to the question: “When you decided to get pregnant, or when you will decide, which of the following things did you do or do you plan to do?”



### Methods to help become pregnant

- When asked to select from a list what methods they had heard of to help achieve pregnancy, the most common answers were; home ovulation tests (79%), calendar methods (71%), and apps (56%) (Figure Four)

Figure Four: Survey responses to the question “Which of the following methods / products that can help you to get pregnant are you aware of?”



## Conclusions

- Women in the USA who are trying to conceive hope to become pregnant quickly and become anxious if it does not happen within their expected timeframe
- They are prepared to maximize the likelihood of a healthy pregnancy
- This study highlights a gap in basic fertility knowledge among many women in the USA
- Of concern was the large number of women who believed that pregnancy is possible following intercourse on any day of the cycle, as this could lead to mistiming of intercourse, resulting in failure to conceive
- Greater awareness and further education are required to equip women with a better understanding of their own fertility in order for them to maximize their chances of conception

## References

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## Declaration of interest

This study was funded by SPD Swiss Precision Diagnostics GmbH, the manufacturers of Clearblue™ pregnancy and ovulation tests. Lesley Foster and Giulia Zanzi are employees of Swiss Precision Diagnostics GmbH. Sarah Johnson is an employee of SPD Development Company Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Swiss Precision Diagnostics GmbH.