

Five Country Study of women's attitudes and knowledge regarding fertility

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Background

- The demographics of women seeking to conceive has changed, with many women now seeking pregnancy when older.
- When unsuccessful, this can lead to disappointment, with the sentiment "I wish I had known more about fertility" often given, indicating basic knowledge of fertility is missing.
- Having a life-plan and expecting a high degree of control over major events in life is now prevalent and appears to extend to pregnancy planning.

Objective: To understand women's attitudes towards becoming pregnant, how good their fertility knowledge is, and determine whether it varies between countries?

Methods

- On behalf of SPD, Ipsos Suisse SA surveyed a minimum of 1,000 women in each of five countries: US, UK, Germany, Italy and China.
- The survey took place between 27th of July to 7th of August 2018 and covered a broad range of fertility and pregnancy themes, including knowledge and attitudes.
- Participants were women aged 20-45 years old who were able to have children and who chose to take part in our survey from Ipsos Panel.
- Interviews were conducted online.

Results

The lifestyles of the participants in this survey are shown in Figure 1. The most prevalent lifestyle were women looking to have children in the future.

Fertility Knowledge

Fertility knowledge varied between countries; Figure 2 shows knowledge regarding definition of the menstrual cycle and Figure 3 shows understanding of the number of fertile days.

Figure 1: Lifestyles of the women participating in the study.

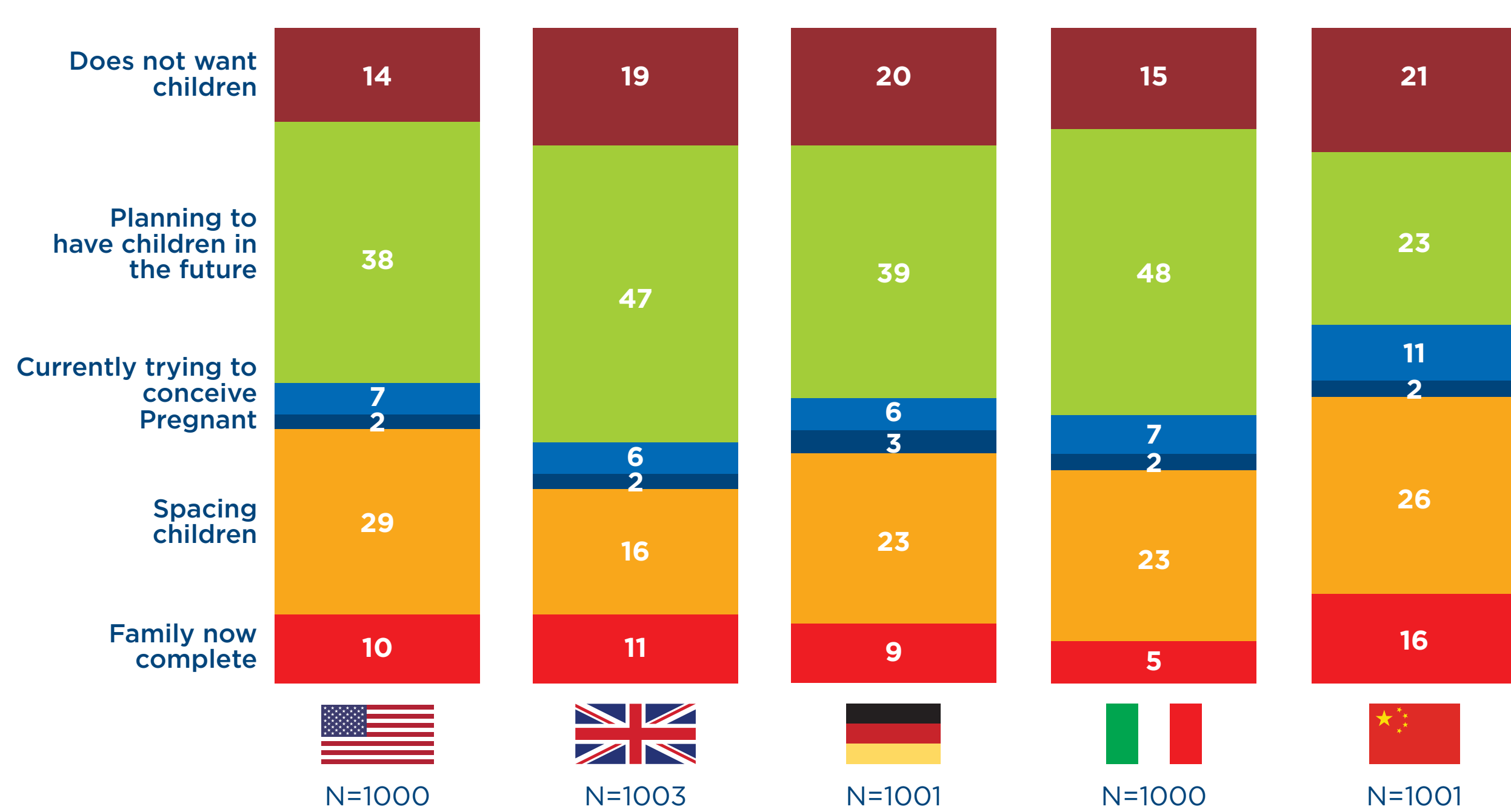


Figure 2: Description of menstrual cycle. Respondents selected answers when presented with the question "What would you say is the most accurate description, for you personally, of a "menstrual cycle?"

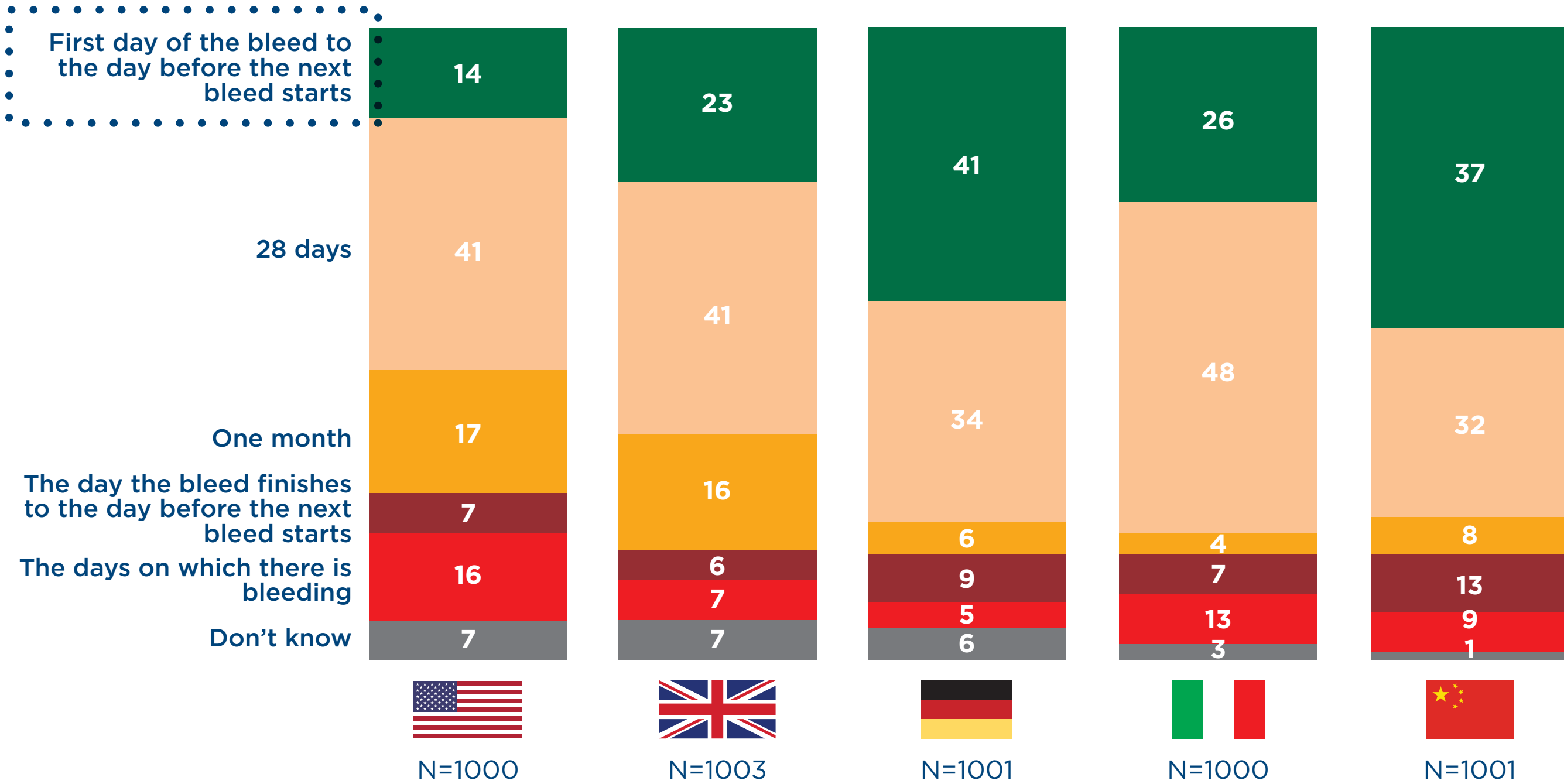
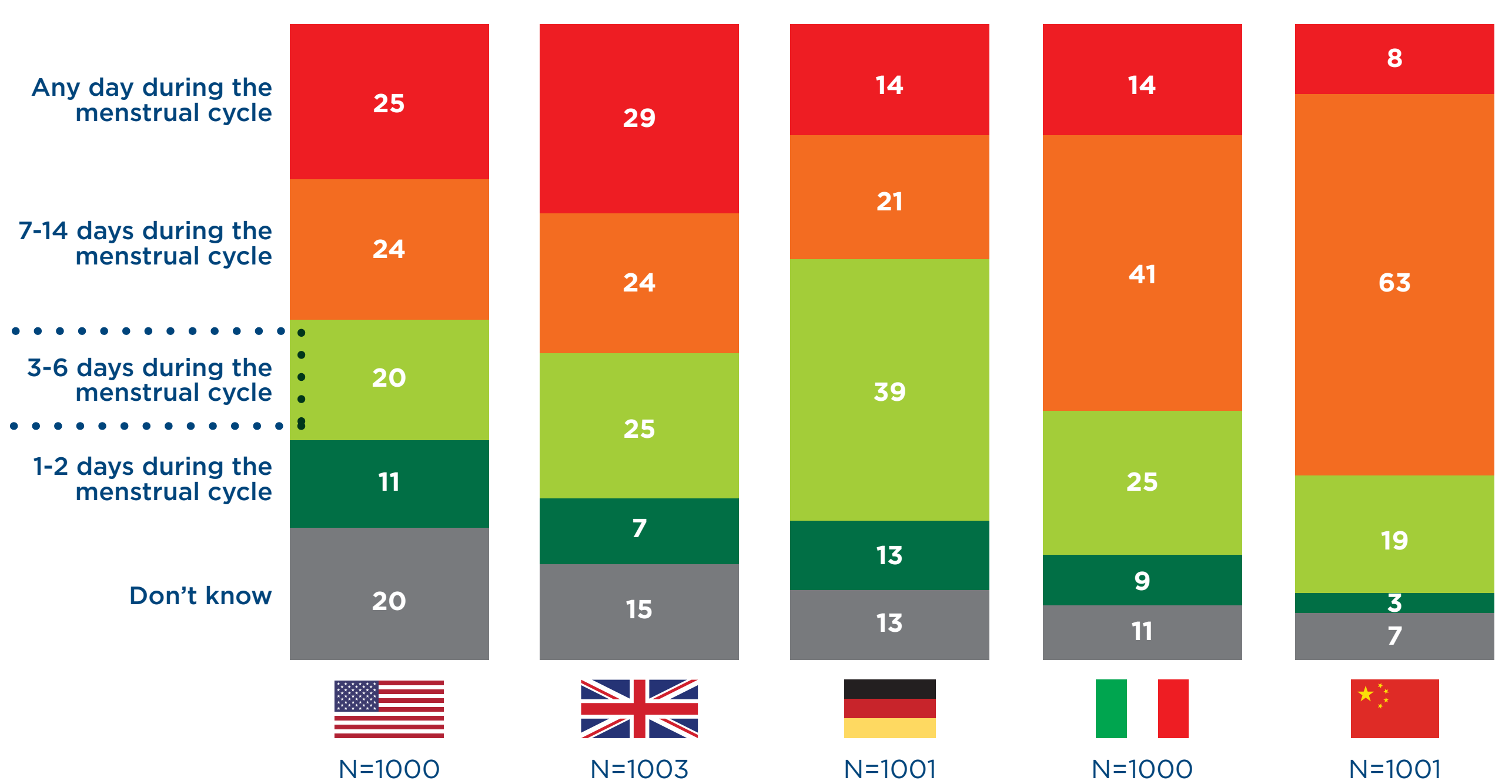


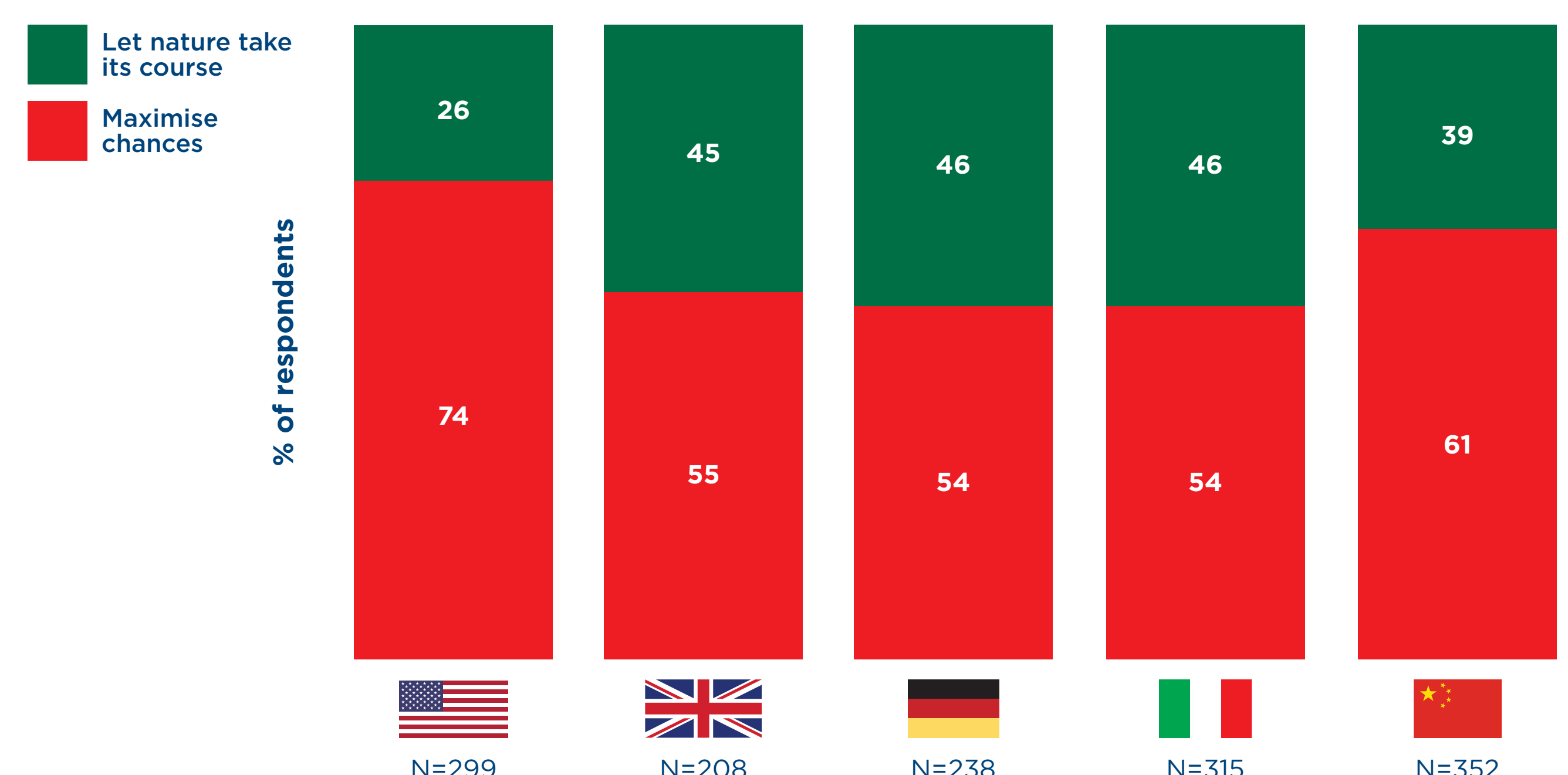
Figure 3: Number of fertile days in a menstrual cycle. Responses to the question "As far as you know, on how many days during a woman's menstrual cycle is she able to get pregnant?"



Attitudes towards becoming pregnant

Attitudes to becoming pregnant varied between countries (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Attitudes to becoming pregnant, assessed by asking women currently trying or planning pregnancy, which statement reflected their opinion best "I want to maximise my chance of getting pregnant as soon as possible (using methods to identify my most fertile days, taking supplements, etc)" or "prefer to let nature take its course and wait".



Discussion

- There is a gap in the basic fertility knowledge among many women.
- Especially worrying was the proportion of women who believed that pregnancy was possible following intercourse on any day of the cycle, as this could lead to mistiming of intercourse when trying for a baby, and failure to conceive. This misconception was especially common in US and UK women.
- German women appeared to have more accurate fertility knowledge, suggesting an improvement in knowledge level is possible for other countries.
- Attitudes to becoming pregnant varied between countries, with US and Chinese women being more prepared to adopt methods to maximise their chances of conception.

Conclusion

Many women, especially in US and China, wish to take action to control their path to pregnancy, but they may be hindered by poor fertility knowledge. Dissemination of accurate fertility information is therefore important to enable women to achieve their desired family plans.

Declaration of interest

Study was funded SPD Swiss Precision Diagnostics GmbH, the manufacturer of Clearblue® fertility and pregnancy tests. LF and GZ are employees of SPD Swiss Precision Diagnostics GmbH; SJ and FC are employees of SPD Development Company Ltd, a fully owned subsidiary of SPD Swiss Precision Diagnostics GmbH. CM is an employee of IPSOS Suisse SA.