

SEXUAL HEALTH

BY THE NUMBERS A FACT SHEET

The National Education Association believes that the developing child's sexuality is continually and inevitably influenced by daily contacts, including experiences in the school environment. The Association recognizes that sensitive sex education can be a positive force in promoting physical, mental, emotional, and social health and that the public school must assume an increasingly important role in providing the instruction. The Association urges that formal sex education should include parent/guardian orientation and be planned and implemented with careful attention to developmental needs, appropriateness to community settings and values, and respect for individual differences. The Association also believes that to facilitate the realization of human potential, it is the right of every individual to live in an environment of freely available information and knowledge about sexuality (National Education Association Resolution B-40).

Youth Sexual Activity

- According to one study, teens who reported being highly satisfied with their relationship with parents were 2.7 times less likely to engage in sex than teens who had little satisfaction with their parental relationships. Relationship satisfaction was associated with a lower probability of engaging in sex, higher probability of using birth control if sex occurred, and lower probability of pregnancy during the ensuing 12 months.¹⁰
- A study found that when parental responsiveness was high, sexual discussions between parents and teens were significantly associated with increased condom use during most recent intercourse.¹¹
- When asked why they had sex for the first time, 13 percent of young men ages 13 to 18 cited pressure from their friends compared to seven percent of young women. Eight percent of young women and one percent of young men cited pressure from a partner as a factor.¹³
- Among male high school students, 73.8 percent of African Americans, 56.8 percent of Latinos, and 40.5 percent of whites reported having had sexual intercourse. Among female high school students, 60.9 percent of African Americans, 46.4 percent of Latinos, and 43.0 percent of whites reported having had sexual intercourse. Overall, African American students were significantly more likely than Latino or white students to have had sex (67.3, 51.4, and 41.8 percent respectively).¹²
- Sexually active African American high school students were significantly more likely than their white

or Latino peers to report condom use (72.8, 62.5, and 57.4 percent, respectively). Students in grades nine, 10, and 11 were significantly more likely to use condoms than were students in grade 12 (69.0, 69.0, 60.8, and 57.4 percent, respectively).¹²

HIV/AIDS

- In the United States, the estimated HIV prevalence rate in young men ages 15 to 24 is over five times higher than the rate in Germany, nearly three times higher than the rate in the Netherlands, and about 1 1/2 times higher than that in France.¹⁴
- In the United States, the estimated HIV prevalence rate in young women ages 15 to 24 is six times higher than the rate in Germany, nearly three times higher than the rate in the Netherlands, and is the same as that in France.¹⁴

Sexually Transmitted Infections

- The gonorrhea rate among U.S. teens is 74 times higher than the rate among teens in either the Netherlands or France, 10 times higher than in Canada, and seven times higher than in England and Wales.⁶ The chlamydia rate among U.S. teens is 20 times higher than among teens in France, five times higher than in England and Wales, and twice as high as in Canada.⁶
- Gonorrhea rates were higher among women ages 15 to 19 and men ages 20 to 24 than among other age groups. The overall U.S. rate was 129 per 100,000



population; among 15- to 19-year-old women, the rate was 703; among 20- to 24-year-old men, it was 564.¹

- Genital human papillomavirus (HPV), which may cause genital warts, is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the United States and, perhaps, the most common STI among sexually active youth. In a recent study, the rate of HPV was five percent among youth ages 12 to 19, and 15 percent among those ages 20 to 29.³
- The highest age-specific chlamydia rates occurred among women ages 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 (2,536 and 2,447 per 100,000 women, respectively).¹
- In a nationwide survey of lesbians, 17 percent reported a history of sexually transmitted infection (STI).⁹
- In studies, chlamydia occurred among 18 percent of street youth and 15 percent of young women in juvenile detention facilities.¹ Fifty percent of 18- to 21-year-old youth living in an urban neighborhood known as a major area for drug sales and drug injection had HSV-2 (genital herpes) (37 percent of young men and 64 percent of young women).⁷
- Recent data document rising rates of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia among young men who have sex with men.⁸

Teen Pregnancy

- Thirty-four percent of young women become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20—about 820,000 a year. Eight in ten of these pregnancies are unintended and 79 percent are to unmarried teens.¹⁵
- Teen mothers are less likely to complete high school (only one-third receive a high school diploma) and only 1.5% have a college degree by age 30.¹⁶

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