

Not Just Another Thing to Do

**Teens talk about sex,
regret, and the influence
of their parents**

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A Summary of Findings from National I y Representative Survey of Teenagers Conducted for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy by International Communications Research

1

Nearly two-thirds of teens who have had sex wish they had waited.

- Sixty-three percent of teens surveyed who have had sexual intercourse wish they had waited longer.
- Of those that have had sex, more than one-half of teen boys (55 percent) and the overwhelming majority of teen girls (72 percent) said they wish they had waited longer to have sex.
- The majority of older teens (15-17 years old) surveyed also wish they had waited longer to have sex. Nearly six in ten older teens (58 percent) said they wish they had waited longer to have sex.

2

When it comes to their decisions about sex, teens say their parents are the *most* influential .

- When asked who or what influenced their decisions about sex the most, more teens cited their parents than any other influence (37 percent). In comparison, 30 percent of teens surveyed said that friends influenced their sexual decision-making the most.

3

More teens say they have gotten information or advice about sex in the past month from the media than from any other source.

- Sixty-one percent of teens surveyed said the media have provided them with information or advice about sex in the past month, 57 percent said their friends have, and 55 percent said their parents have.

4

While the overwhelming majority of teens say that teens should *not* be sexually active, most also say that teens who are sexually active *should* have access to birth control.

- Nearly eight of ten teens surveyed (78 percent) agreed that teens should not be sexually active.
- However, the majority of teens surveyed (54 percent) said that those teens who are sexually active should have access to birth control.
- Nearly one-quarter of teens surveyed (24 percent) said that teens should be abstinent and should not have access to contraception.
- Twenty-one percent of teens surveyed said it's okay for teens to be sexually active, as long as they have access to birth control.

5

“Don’t have sex until you’re at least out of high school, but, if you do, be certain to protect yourself against pregnancy and STDs,” is the advice the majority (64 percent) of teens would give to a younger brother, sister, or friend.

- One-quarter of teens surveyed (25 percent) said the advice they would give to a younger brother, sister, or friend would simply be “don’t have sex until you’re at least out of high school.”
- Only seven percent of teens surveyed would advise a younger brother, sister, or friend that “sex is okay as long as you love the girl or guy.”

6

Teens grade their sex or abstinence education classes as above average.

- When asked to give a grade from “A” to “F” to the sex or abstinence education classes they have taken in school, 39 percent of teens surveyed said the classes deserved a “B,” while 20 percent gave the classes an “A.”
- Only 11 percent of teens surveyed gave their school sex or abstinence education classes a below average, “D,” (5 percent) or failing (6 percent) grade.

A Note About the Survey

This report summarized the findings from an omnibus telephone survey of 501 teens aged 12 to 17. The survey is nationally representative and was conducted by International Communications Research of Media, Pennsylvania, on behalf of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. The polling took place June 7 - 11, 2000. The actual polling questions, answers, and respondent demographic information follows. The surveys are weighted to provide nationally representative and projectable estimates of the population 12-17 years old. The responses have a margin of error of plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

The Survey Questions and Responses

1 If you've had sexual intercourse, do you wish you had waited longer?

*Fifty-nine percent of teens surveyed said they had not had sex. Of those who said they have had sex, the responses broke down as follows:

	All Teens	Boys	Girls	Age 12-14	15-17
Yes	63%	55%	72%	73%	58%
No	32	39	25	26	36
Don't know	5	3	3	2	6

2 When it comes to your decisions about sex, which one of the following is most influential?

	All Teens	Boys	Girls	Age 12-14	15-17
Your Parents	37%	34%	40%	42%	32%
Your Friends	30	32	28	23	38
Your Religious Community	11	11	11	10	12
The Media (t.v., radio, magazines, web)	11	11	11	14	8
Brothers or sisters	4	3	5	5	3
Youth Organizations	2	3	1	2	3
Don't know	4	6	3	4	5

3 When thinking about the past month, please tell me if any of the following sources have provided you with information or advice about sex. How about...

	All Teens	Boys	Girls	Age 12-14	15-17
The Media (t.v., radio, magazines, web)	61%	59%	63%	59%	63%
Your Friends	57	56	58	52	62
Your Parents	55	53	58	57	53
Your Religious Community	27	25	29	21	34
Brothers or sisters	24	25	23	25	23
Youth Organizations	23	23	24	23	23
Political Leaders	9	12	6	7	10

The Survey Questions and Responses, continued

4

I'm going to read you three statements about teens and sex. Please tell me which one comes closest to your view:

	All Teens	Boys	Girls	Age 12-14	15-17
Teens should not be sexually active and should not have access to birth control.	24%	21%	27%	32%	16%
Teens should not be sexually active, but teens who are should have access to birth control.	54	53	56	52	56
It's okay for teens to be sexually active, as long as they have access to birth control.	21	25	17	15	27
Don't know	1	1	---	1	---

* The 78 percent figure cited in question four is the combination of the first two responses (24+54=78 percent).

5

Generally speaking, what advice would you give to a younger brother, sister, or friend?

	All Teens	Boys	Girls	Age 12-14	15-17
Don't have sex until you are at least out of high school.	25%	24%	26%	33%	17%
Don't have sex until you are at least out of high school, but, if you do, be certain to protect yourself against STDs and pregnancy.	64	63	65	58	70
Sex is okay as long as you love the girl or guy.	7	8	7	5	10
Sex is fun; enjoy yourself	1	1	---	---	1
Don't know	3	4	2	3	3

6

If you had to give a grade from "A" to "F" to the sex or abstinence education classes you have taken in school, on average, what grade would you give the classes?

	All Teens	Boys	Girls	Age 12-14	15-17
A	20%	18%	22%	20%	19%
B	39	38	39	42	35
C	21	23	18	15	26
D	5	5	5	4	6
F	6	8	4	6	6
Not applicable/did not have any sex education classes	6	4	9	9	4
Don't know	3	4	3	3	4

