

IRGIN TERRITORY

What Young Adults Say
About Sex, Love, Relationships,
and The First Time

by Amy Kramer

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has a first time. It's one of the touchstones of human experience, a topic common in literature, cinema, dorm rooms, and diaries. It may hold different meaning for different people, but few people ever forget the first time they had sex.

By age 24, more than nine out of 10 people in the United States have had sex—for some it's brand new, for others it's been years since their first sexual experience. Young adults tend to be keen observers of their peers' relationships and they talk frequently about sex, love, relationships, and what it all means. Their circles of friends often include some people who have had sex early and often, some who are not experienced at all, and others who fall in between. They are out of high school and far enough away to think about those years objectively, while still close enough to recall details with some clarity. They are surrounded by lots of talk (and action) involving sex and relationships, and are forming lasting ideas about them. Indeed much of the media they consume is based on these themes. Given all this, young adults are the perfect cohort to offer up their thoughts about virginity and the "first time."

This topic is of interest because of its universality and because an individual's first sexual experience can influence their feelings and attitudes about sex and related issues for years to come. The more we know about young people's sexual experiences and how they feel about them, the better we are at communicating with them about risks, consequences, and contraception. We also know that delaying sex by even a year or two can protect younger teens from increased risk of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and other health issues, as well as the emotional consequences of having sex before they're really ready.

JUST THE FACTS

The First Time

On average, people in the U.S. have sex for the **first time** at about **age 17**.¹

By age 24, **nine in 10** people have had sex.²

More than **three-quarters** of young adults age 18–24 have had sex in the past year.³

Nearly half (47%) of all high school students report ever having had sex in 2011, a **decline** from 54% in 1991.⁴

Among 18–24 year-olds, **65% of women** and **51% of men** report that their first sexual experience was with a serious romantic partner; **15% of women** and **31% of men** said it was with some-one they were "just friends" with or had just met.⁵

Of those 15–19 year-olds who have had sex, **55%** say they **wish** they had **waited longer**.⁶

62.5% of men and 41.2% of women age 18–24 who were **younger than 20** the first time they had sex report that their first sexual experience was **wanted**. 5% of men and 10.8% of women describe it as **unwanted**.⁷

Contraception & The First Time

Among adolescents, **53% of females** and **45% of males** talked about contraception or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) with their partner before the first time they had sex.⁸

Among 18–24 year-old women, **78%** used some contraceptive method the first time they had sex and **66%** used condoms the first time; among men age 18–24, **83%** used some contraceptive method at first sex and **76%** used condoms.⁹

Pregnancy

Nearly **three in 10 girls** in the U.S. get pregnant at least once by **age 20**.¹⁰

Two out of three teen pregnancies in the U.S. are to girls **age 18–19**.¹¹

Among single, young adults age 20–24, **73%** of pregnancies are **unplanned**.¹²

In partnership with MTV's "It's Your (Sex) Life" campaign, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy contracted with GfK Custom Research LLC to look at how young adults think and feel about love, relationships, virginity, and the first time they had sex. Using their KnowledgePanel, GfK's Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Group conducted online interviews with 1,001 high school graduates age 18-24, January 7th-16th, 2014. Use of the

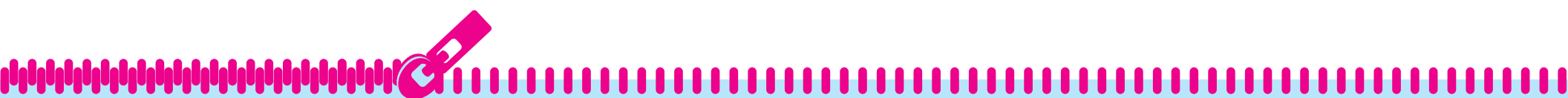
KnowledgePanel assures representative samples that are statistically valid and projectable to the population of adults age 18-24. The margin of error for this study is +/- 4.4%. (Please see pages 11-27 for the full questionnaire and responses).

Throughout the survey we asked young men and women what they thought, what they remembered, and how they felt about the first time they had sex, and how they feel about it

now. We asked those who are waiting to have sex about their reasons for doing so and we asked everyone what they thought about peers who delay their first sexual experience longer than is the norm. Our goal was to get at the "why" behind already known sexual activity data; not to investigate *what* they are doing but rather to try and understand how they *feel* about it.

Some key themes emerged from the survey, including:

- There is tremendous support among young adults for waiting longer to have sex; **virginity is widely accepted and respected** among young men and women, including those who have already had sex.
- Pressure to have sex is common too, but the pressure comes more from within than from others.
- Many **young adults want the media to show more and varied portrayals of those not having sex** and they want the media to improve the way they portray young adults' sex lives
- There are big differences between men and women—how they recall their first times, what they think the youngest teenagers need to know as they embark upon their high school social lives, what kinds of pressure exists, and where it comes from.
- Perhaps most surprisingly, most young adults—men *and* women, some sexually experienced, some not—place a much higher value on romance and relationships than they do on sex alone.



Our goal was to get at the "**why**" behind already known sexual activity data; not to investigate *what* they are doing but rather to **try and understand how they feel** about it.

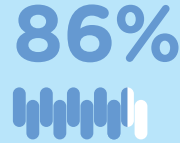
ACCEPTABILITY

Virginity among young adults is more widespread—and more acceptable—than many might think. According to data collected by the federal government, the average age that both men and women first have sex is 17. By age 22, about one in six women (17%) and one in five men (21%) have not yet had sex.^a Contrary to public perceptions (and media depictions), many people are proud of and comfortable with that choice.

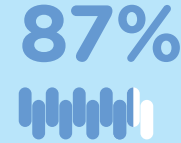
Their peers think highly of those who are waiting. According to our survey, among young adults age 18–24, nearly seven in 10 (69%) say it is acceptable for someone their age to be a virgin (27% say it's very acceptable). **Nearly half (46%) say they “feel respect”** (among women it's more than half—52%) for those their age who have not had sex, and one in four (26%) say it “makes me think more of them.” While one in four (26%) confess surprise at learning a peer is a virgin, one-third (34%) say they “don't give it a second thought.” Almost no one (less than one percent) says they think less of someone who hasn't had sex.

There is self-assuredness among those who haven't had sex. **Six in 10 (60%) say most or all of their friends know they are virgins.** Nearly two out of three (64%) say they are comfortable talking about their virginity with their friends, and nearly all of those who have never had sex (93%) say they've never lied about it. Nearly as many (90%) say they intend to wait until the time is right before having sex for the first time. (Only 6% said they'd rather have sex as soon as possible.)

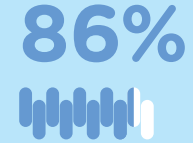
What Young Adults Want High School Freshmen to Know



of young adults say it's important for young teens to know that “it's okay to be a virgin when you graduate from high school.”



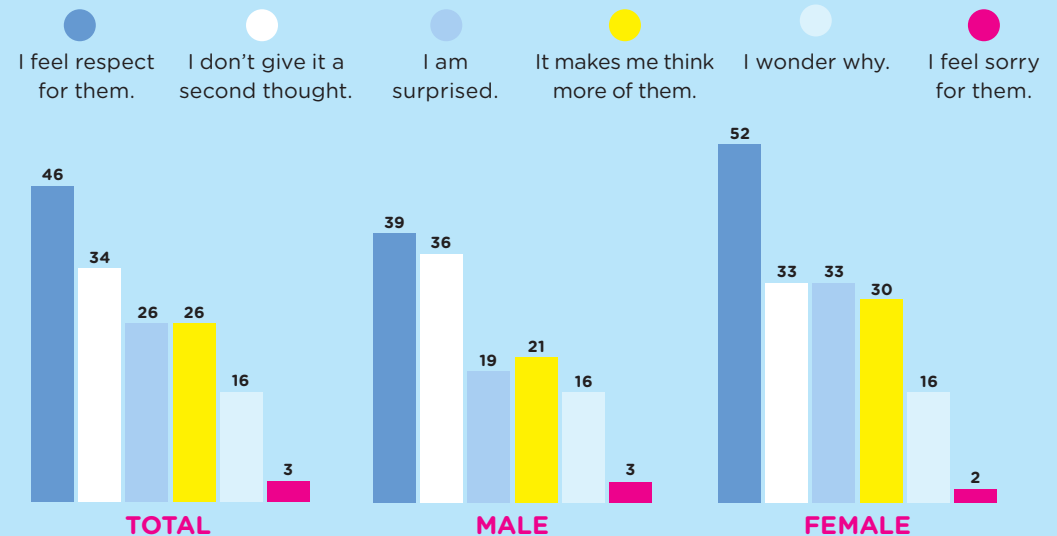
say it's important for high school freshmen to know that “sex doesn't guarantee a relationship will last.”



say it's important for them to know that “sex doesn't make you an adult.”

69% Among young adults age 18–24, say it is acceptable for someone their age to be a virgin.

When I find out someone my age is a virgin:



More than one-third (37%) of young adults who haven't had sex say they're waiting until they get married (among women it's nearly half—47%). One-third (35%) say they haven't found the right person yet, and one in four (26%) say they are waiting until they fall in love. More women than men say religious reasons are their motivation for waiting (28% vs. 16%) or that they “just don't feel ready” (28% to 17%). One in five men (21%) say they haven't had sex yet due to “lack of opportunity.”

With regard to serious romantic relationships, more than half of all young adults surveyed (58%) don't care whether or not their partner is a virgin, including 63% of those who are sexually active already and 50% of those who are virgins themselves.

Yet despite their open-mindedness about virginity and waiting, young adults still overestimate how early their peers are becoming sexually active, how many of them are having sex, and how important sex is to them.

For example, data collected by the federal government show that slightly less than half (47%) of high school students have ever had sex—46% of girls and 49% of boys.⁹ However, according to our study, nearly six in 10 young adults (59%) think a majority of high schoolers are having sex. **Although the average age that people first have sex is 17 for boys and girls, two-thirds (66%) of young adults think it's 16 or younger for girls.** Even more (69%) think it's 16 or younger for boys.

Young adults also believe that sex is more important to their peers than it is to them. More than half (52%) think that “for most people my age, a fulfilling romantic relation-

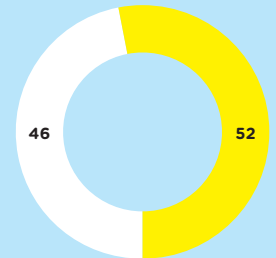
ship needs to include sexual intercourse.” Yet nearly three out of four (72%) say they could be happy in a romantic relationship that did not include sexual intercourse. Women (76%) are more inclined than men (67%) to say they could be happy in a sexless relationship. Even a majority of sexually active young adults (62%) say they could be happy in a relationship without sex, as do two-thirds (66%) of 23- and 24-year-olds (the oldest group surveyed).

Young adults clearly overestimate what their peers are doing sexually. This can influence their own decisions in a more indirect but significant way. Research has shown that when young people overestimate how many of their peers are having sex, they tend to think having sex is the norm, and if they perceive that by not having sex they are outside the norm, it can be more difficult to delay sex. In fact, **two-thirds (66%) of young adults think it would help teenagers wait longer if they knew less than half of their peers were sexually active.**

Most young adults, whether they've had sex or not, also value and desire relationships as strongly (if not more so) than they do sex. As between relationships and sex, relationships win. When asked if they would *prefer* to have sex but not within a serious romantic relationship or if they'd rather be in a serious romantic relationship that did not include sex, more than three-quarters of young adults (78%) opted for a relationship without sex. Again, women (85%) were more likely than men (71%) to put romance above sex, but strong majorities for both genders clearly say they'd rather have a serious relationship than uncommitted sex. Even 72% of those who have already had sex said they'd choose a relationship over sex, as did 82% of 23- and 24-year-olds.

Which comes closer to your view?

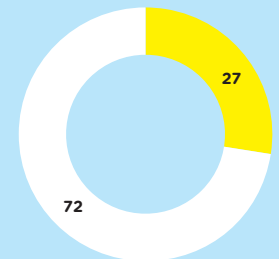
For most people my age, it is possible to have a fulfilling romantic relationship that does not include sexual intercourse.



For most people my age, a fulfilling romantic relationship needs to include sexual intercourse.

Which comes closer to your view?

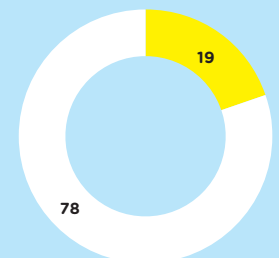
I could be happy in a romantic relationship that does not include sexual intercourse.



I could not be happy in a romantic relationship unless it includes sexual intercourse.

If you had to choose:

I would rather be in a serious romantic relationship that doesn't include sex.



I would rather be having sex but not be in a serious romantic relationship.

THE FIRST TIME

The first time a person has sex isn't quite what romance novels and love songs would have you believe. **Less than half (46%) of sexually active young adults say their first time was a "mostly good experience."** Nearly one in three (30%) say it was equal parts good and bad, while one in five (20%) say it was "mostly bad." This is particularly true among women—only 37% say their first time was mostly good, and 29% say it was mostly bad. Among men, more than half (56%) say their first time was mostly good and just 9% say it was mostly bad.

When asked to reflect on how they felt at the time, women recall their first sexual experiences less positively than men do. Just 3% of men say they regretted their first sexual experience immediately afterward; five times as many women (16%) remember feeling that way.

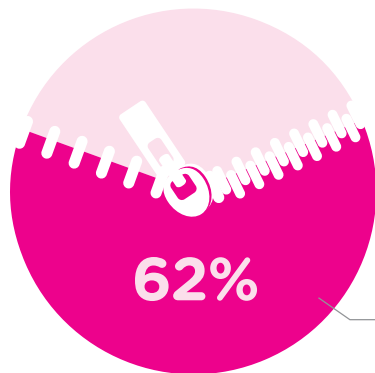
Twice as many women (24% vs. 12% for men) say they didn't think they were ready when they had sex for the first time. Three times as many women (18% vs. 6% for men) say they were pressured into it the first time they had sex. More than one in four men (27%) say their first time made their relationship stronger, for women it was only 15%.

Perhaps not surprisingly, six in 10 (62%) young women who have had sex say they would change something about their first time if they could. Two-thirds (67%) say they would have waited longer—the most common reason for wanting a first time do-over—and half (51%) wish they had been older. More than half (59%) would have done it with someone they loved and nearly as many (55%) would have done it with someone who loved them. Only 15% of sexually active young adult women say their first time was "better than [they] expected it would be," while more than three times as many (48%) say it was "not as good as [they]

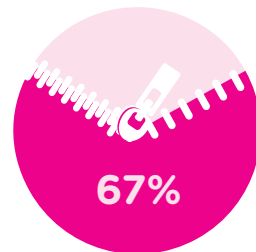
expected." Among men, one in four (25%) said it was better than they expected—about the same amount who said it was worse (27%).

When asked to look back on their first sexual experience and reflect on how they feel about it now with the benefit of hindsight, the positive feelings women had in the heat of that first experience have dissipated dramatically. Half of women (51%) say they felt "happy" about their first time at the time but only 24% feel happy about it now. Half (50%) say they felt "loved" at the time but only 25% feel that way about it today. One-third of women (32%) say they felt "mature" when they had sex for the first time, but looking back only 21% say so now. Similarly, negative feelings have increased over time: only 18% of women say they were "sad" when they had sex for the first time, but now one in four (25%) look back on it with sadness. **One in five (22%) were "regretful" then, but more than one in three (37%) look back on it with regret today.**

Women Who Want a First Time Do-Over

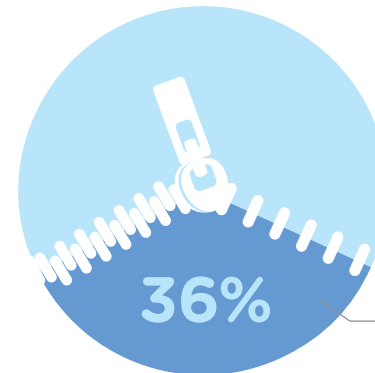


Women Who Wish They'd Waited Longer

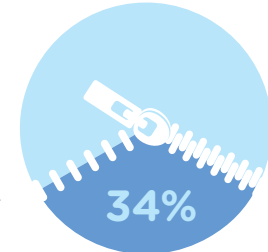


62% of women age 18-24 who have already had sex say they would change something about their first time if they could re-do it. Of those, **67%** say they would have waited longer.

Men Who Want a First Time Do-Over



Men Who Wish They'd Waited Longer

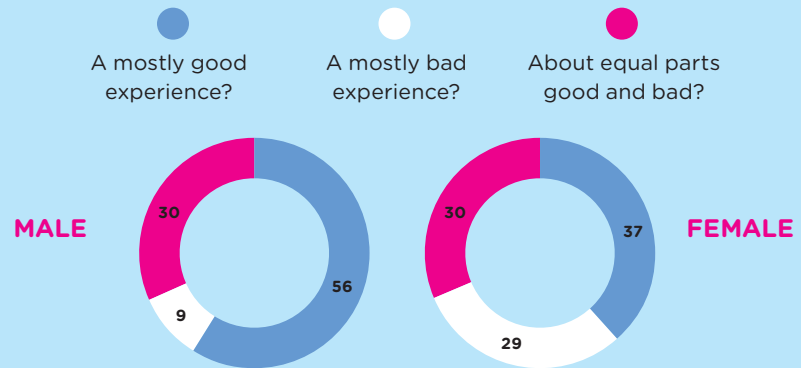


36% of men age 18-24 who have already had sex say they would change something about their first time if they could re-do it. Of those, **34%** say they would have waited longer.

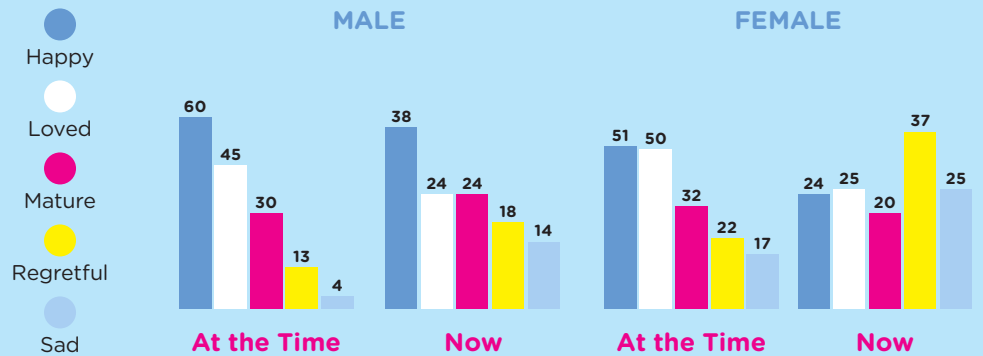
Men are more satisfied with their first sexual experiences—59% say they wouldn't change anything even if they could. Still, upon reflection, the positive feelings they had about the first time they had sex have diminished as well. Six in 10 (60%) say they felt "happy" at the time, but only 38% feel that way about it now. While 45% say they felt "loved" then, only 24% would say so in retrospect. Only 4% felt "sad" at the time, but looking back 14% are sad about it now. Of those men who would do something differently if they could re-do their first time, one-third would have waited longer (34%) and about the same proportion would have chosen a different partner (35%). Nearly one in five (18%) of those men who would take a do-over if possible say they wouldn't have put so much pressure on themselves to get it over with the first time.

The age that people first have sex seems to matter as well. Simply put, **the younger men and women are when they first have sex, the more likely they are to regret the experience at the time and to have negative feelings in the future.** Among men and women who first had sex at or before age 17, 53% were "happy" about it at the time while only 23% are happy about it now. Among those whose first time was at or after age 18, nearly six in 10 (59%) were "happy" at the time and nearly half (45%) still feel that way. Of those who were 17 or younger at first sex, 42% felt "loved" at the time but only 17% would describe their first sexual experience that way today. But for those who were 18 or older, more than half (57%) felt "loved" at the time and 39% still say they were. One in five (21%) of those who became sexually active at age 17 or younger were "regretful" when they first had sex, and nearly one-third (31%) feel that way about it today. Among those who were 18 or older, only 12% were "regretful" when it happened, though that number has nearly doubled (22%) as they look back on it now.

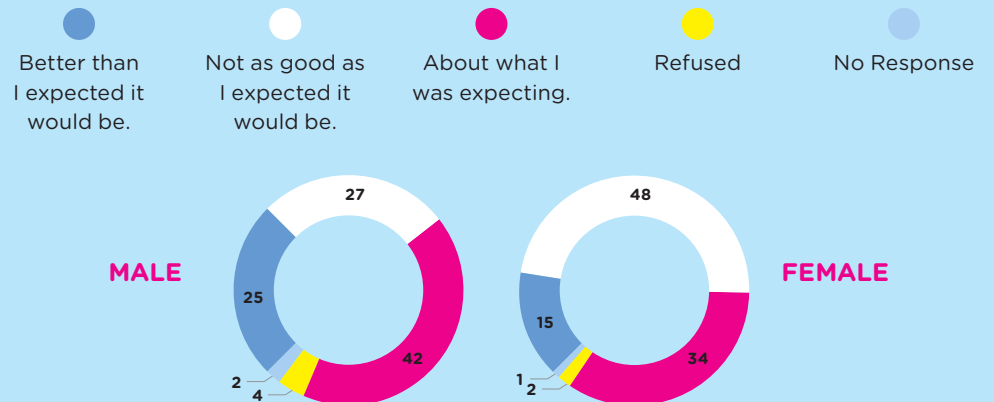
Thinking back to your first time, was it:



Thinking back to your first time:



My first time was:



What Young Adults Want High School Freshmen to Know

85%

say it is important for high school freshman NOT to “believe everything you hear about other people’s sex lives.”

83%

say it’s important for high school freshmen to know “you don’t have to have sex with someone just because you’ve done it before.”

86%

say it’s important for high school freshmen to know “you don’t have to do anything sexual that you’re uncomfortable with.”

75%

say it is very important for high school freshmen to learn about protection before they become sexually active.

PRESSURE

Even though virginity is acceptable and respectable, young people still feel and are affected by pressure to become sexually active. Much of this pressure comes from themselves and how they experience the world—not directly from others. For example, when young adults are asked to look back on their high school lives, more than four in 10 (44%) say that “images and messages in popular media” were a source of sexual pressure during those years. Contrary to what many adults believe, when it comes to sexual pressure, no other factor (friends, partners, siblings, self, etc.) is cited as often as media.

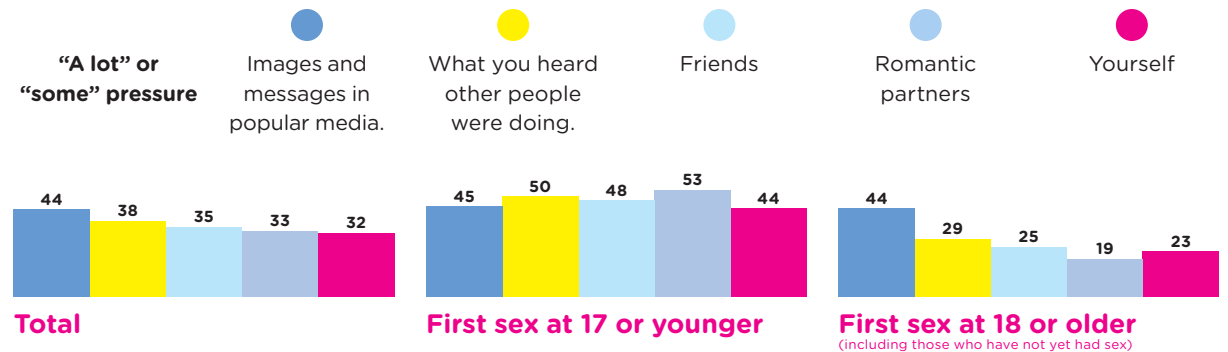
After media, the most-often cited source of pressure to have sex comes from an individual’s own perceptions about their peers: nearly one in four (38%) say they felt pressure in high school based on “what [they] heard other people were doing.” Interestingly, those who started having sex at age 17 or younger are much more likely to cite “what [they] heard others were doing” as a source of pressure to have sex than were their peers who waited longer or are still waiting. Half (50%) of

those whose first sexual experience was at or before age 17 say other people’s rumored sexual activity was a source of pressure for them, while just 29% of those who were older when they started having sex—or are still waiting—say the same.

Among men, nearly four in 10 (38%) say the pressure to have sex came from themselves (for women it was 27%). Among those whose first sexual experience was at or before age 17, nearly half (44%) cited themselves as a source of pressure vs. just 23% of those who were 18 or older.

Women (42%) were more likely than men (25%) to say they felt pressure in high school from a romantic partner to have sex. Men (38%) were slightly more likely than women (31%) to say that the pressure to have sex as a teen came from their friends. Those who say their first sexual experience was something they were “pressured into” are three times more likely to be women than men; women are also more likely to say their first time was something they “just wanted to get over with.” Those who were 17 or younger the first time they had sex are also more likely to say they were pressured into it the first time.

Thinking back to high school, how much pressure did you feel from each of the following to have sex?



With the benefit of 20–20 hindsight, one in four women (25%) look back on their first time and say in retrospect they wouldn't have put so much pressure on themselves to get it over with.

Though they don't start having sex any later than boys, girls seem to be more likely to get a strong message about not having sex in high school. Two in three women (66%) say they felt parental pressure to remain a virgin while in high school, and nearly one in three women felt such pressure from their friends (30%) or siblings (29%). More than half of women (55%) felt religious pressure to remain abstinent, and even more (57%) felt that pressure coming from within themselves. In every case, significantly fewer men reported feeling pressure to remain a virgin in high school from any of these sources.

Pornography—more accessible and widespread for this generation than for any generation that came of age before them—can also influence young people's ideas about sex in real life. Nearly nine in 10 young adults (85%) say that people “have unrealistic expectations about sex because of what they see in porn.” Nearly half (49%) say these unrealistic expectations occur “frequently.” These views are nearly universal among this cohort: there is little difference on this topic between men and women, or virgins and non-virgins, or those who became sexually active at a younger age vs. an older age.

COMMUNICATION & CONTRACEPTION

More than half (58%) of sexually active young adults say their first time was with someone they were in a serious relationship with, so it's not surprising that about as many (60%) felt they had good communication with their first partner. **Nearly two out of three (64%) say they talked with their first partner about the fact that it was their first time.** Nearly seven in 10 (68%) say they used a condom the first time they had sex.

However, for those who began having sex at a younger age, confidence and communication was not as strong. Among those who were 17 or younger their first time, about half (54%) say they felt they had good communication with their partner and slightly more (58%) said they talked with that partner about the fact that it was their first time. Among those who were 18 or older, seven out of 10 (70%) felt they had good communication, and a full three out of four (75%) talked about the fact that it was their first time. Condom use at first sex remained steady regardless of age.

Among those young adults who have not yet had sex, more than two-thirds (69%) say they are comfortable talking to a partner/potential partner about their virginity, although less than half (45%) say they are comfortable talking to them about birth control and protection. Half of women (50%) who have not had sex say they have already thought about what kind of protection they're going to use the first time, and 40% of men say they've thought about it too. Among those who have already had sex, nearly three-quarters (74%) are comfortable talking to a partner/potential partner about birth control and protection.

Among Those Who Have Not Had Sex for the First Time Yet

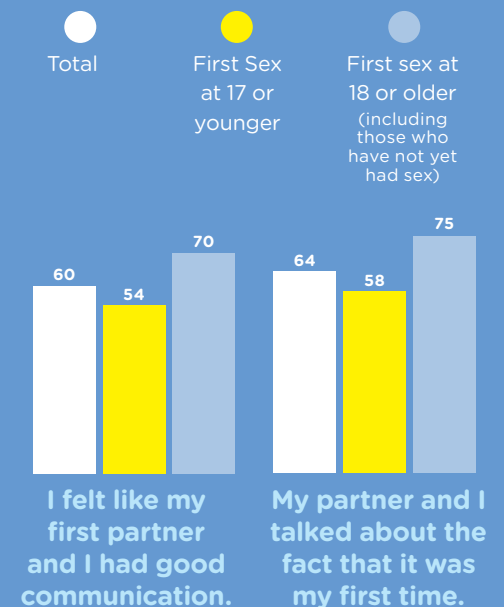
50% 

of women and

40% 

of men say they have thought about what kind of protection they'll use the first time they have sex.

Thinking back to your first time:



Interestingly, those who are sexually active have an easier time than those who are not when it comes to talking to new partners about waiting to have sex. Of those who have had sex before, 63% say they are comfortable having such conversations while only 52% of those who haven't had sex say they feel the same way. Women are more comfortable than men with such conversations; two-thirds of women who have had sex (70%) say they are comfortable talking with a new partner about waiting to have sex, as opposed to 55% of men who say the same.

Women are also slightly more confident than men about what they know about birth control. Two in three women (66%) say they “know everything they need to know” to prevent pregnancy while just over half of men (56%) say the same. Only one in five (19% of men, 21% of women) say they wish they knew more. More than one-quarter (28%) of young adults say they wish they knew more about preventing sexually transmitted infections while slightly more than half (52%) say they already know everything they need to on that front.

When asked how comfortable young people feel talking to partners about communication and contraception, in every instance men were much more likely to choose the non-answer (“neither agree nor disagree”) than women were. For example, when asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I know everything I need to know about preventing pregnancy,” nearly twice as many men chose the “neither” option than women did (27% vs. 14%). For “I wish I knew more about sexually transmitted infections and how to prevent them,” men opted for the “neither” option 45% of the time, and 35% opted out of answering when asked about their comfort level in discussing waiting to have sex with a new partner.


MEDIA


Most young adults strongly agree that they want more from the media when it comes to portrayals of sex and virginity. Men, women, younger, older, sexually active, and not—they all say they want pop culture to do a better job with these topics. **Nearly nine in 10 (86%) say they “wish media like movies and TV shows portrayed sex, love, and relationships among people my age in a more realistic way.”**


Even though young adults themselves are accepting and open-minded about virginity, they don't often see that attitude reflected back in the media they consume. Most (89%) say that popular media makes it seem like people who have sex are “cooler” than those who don't; more than half (56%) say that this happens *frequently*. There is no difference of opinion between men and women on this topic or between those who have had sex vs. those who have not.

Young adults want to see more portrayals of peers who are not sexually active, and they want to hear more about reasons for waiting. Nearly three out of four young adults (74%) say they wish movies and TV shows “did a better job of exploring why people are virgins” and even more (86%) wish the media “portrayed virginity in a more realistic way.”

Media can be a powerful influence on young people—more people report pressure to have sex coming from “images and messages in popular media” than they do from partners or friends. But media can also be a source of support for young people looking for reasons not to have sex. More stories about virgins, virginity, waiting, and the many reasons why young people choose not to have sex could go a long way in helping them feel more comfortable about delaying sex.

85% 
of **virgins** wish TV and movies portrayed virginity in a more realistic way.

87% 
of **non-virgins** wish TV and movies portrayed virginity in a more realistic way.

77% 
of **virgins** wish TV and movies did a better job of exploring why people are virgins.

73% 
of **non-virgins** wish TV and movies did a better job of exploring why people are virgins.

CONCLUSION

This survey makes it clear that young people are confident and comfortable with the decision to delay sex and that getting the word out more broadly about those who decide to delay sex could spare their peers—as well as younger teens—a lot of disappointment and regret. Whether it's waiting for the right time or the right person, young adults want teens to learn from their experiences and not to rush into sex.

The younger people are when they have sex for the first time, the more likely they are to experience sadness and feelings of regret about it—both at the time and long after the fact. The older people are when they become sexually active, the more likely they are to say it was a better experience, the more equipped they are to talk to their partner about feelings and contraception, and the more likely they are to feel happy and loved. Their statements, combined with the health risks that generally accompany early sex, make a strong argument for a more public conversation about how much young people support the idea of waiting longer to start having sex.

So how to encourage young people to wait longer? Even broad acceptance of virginity doesn't necessarily translate into waiting longer, nor does widespread open-mindedness on the topic provide immunity from pressure to become sexually active.

Media can certainly help. By a 2 to 1 margin, young adults across the board think it would help teens wait longer to have sex if they knew less than half their peers were sexually active. Plus, nearly everyone wants more realistic portrayals of relationships and virginity in the media they consume. Not just dramatic depictions of the motivations behind why characters have sex, but also more exploration of the reasons why they choose not to.

Making virginity more realistic and relatable is what young people want to see in their media, and what those who care about young people—like parents and health care providers—can offer elsewhere. Despite young adults' confidence and openness about virginity and waiting, they could use more support on this front early on. As they navigate the teen years, young people want to know that waiting to have sex is, in fact, quite normal.

Even those who have had sex feel strongly that they don't need to have sex in every relationship, although they exaggerate how important sex is to their peers. Not having sex is the norm for many and most would prefer a stable, committed relationship to an arrangement that includes little more than sex.

Whether or not they have had sex, young men and women agree that it is important to think about contraception and preventing STIs—and how to communicate about these topics with partners—before they have sex. Despite conventional wisdom and the messages that are often served up by popular culture, young adults take sex seriously and value protecting their bodies as well as their hearts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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By a **2 to 1 margin**, young adults across the board think it would **help teens wait longer** to have sex if **they knew less than half their peers were sexually active**.

FULL QUESTIONNAIRE & RESPONSES

Have you ever been in a serious romantic relationship?

	Total	Male	Female
Yes	65	61	70
No	33	37	29
Refused	2	2	1

Have you ever been in love?



	Total	Male	Female
Yes	73	69	76
No	27	30	24
Refused	1	1	*

Have you ever had sex?

	Total	Male	Female
Yes	65	64	66
No	34	35	34
Refused	1	1	*

In your opinion, about what percentage of high school students have had sex?

	Total	Male	Female
0	*	*	*
1-10	2	3	2
11-20	3	2	4
21-30	7	6	8
31-40	9	11	7
41-50	17	18	16
51-60	12	12	11
61-70	12	12	13
71-80	19	19	19
81-90	10	8	12
91-100	6	6	6
Refused	3	3	2
Mean (including 0)	60.5	59.5	61.5

If you had to guess, what do you think is the average age a female has sex for the first time?

	Total	Male	Female
11-15	38	40	36
16-17	46	44	47
18-22	13	13	13
23-24	1	*	2
Refused	3	3	3
Mean (Excluding 0)	16.0	15.8	16.1

If you had to guess, what do you think is the average age a male has sex for the first time?

	Total	Male	Female
11-15	44	41	47
16-17	42	45	40
18-22	9	11	8
23-24	1	1	1
Refused	3	2	3
Mean (excluding 0)	15.7	15.9	15.6

If you had to guess, what percentage of people do you think have sex before their 22nd birthdays?

	Total	Male	Female
0	*	*	*
1-10	*	*	1
11-20	1	*	1
21-30	2	1	3
31-40	2	2	2
41-50	6	7	6
51-60	6	6	6
61-70	10	11	9
71-80	23	22	23
81-90	29	28	29
91-100	19	20	18
Refused	3	3	3
Mean (including 0)	78.3	79.0	77.7

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“If teenagers knew that less than half of teens are sexually active,
it would help them wait longer to have sex.”**

	Total	Male	Female
Strongly agree	21	17	25
Somewhat agree	45	47	43
Somewhat disagree	22	22	22
Strongly disagree	10	12	8
Refused	2	2	1

Which one of the following statements comes closer to your view?

	Total	Male	Female
For most people my age, a fulfilling romantic relationship needs to include sexual intercourse.	52	57	47
For most people my age, it is possible to have a fulfilling romantic relationship that does not include sexual intercourse.	46	41	52
Refused	2	2	2

Which one of the following comes closer to your view?

	Total	Male	Female
I could be happy in a romantic relationship that does not include sexual intercourse.	72	67	76
I could not be happy in a romantic relationship unless it includes sexual intercourse.	27	32	22
Refused	1	1	2

If you had to choose, which one of the following statements comes closest to your view?

	Total	Male	Female
I would rather be in a serious romantic relationship that doesn't include sex.	78	71	85
I would rather be having sex but not be in a serious romantic relationship.	19	26	12
Refused	2	2	2

How socially acceptable or unacceptable do you think it is for someone your age to be a virgin?

	Total	Male	Female
Very acceptable	27	21	33
Somewhat acceptable	42	41	43
Somewhat unacceptable	25	31	19
Very unacceptable	5	5	5
Refused	2	2	1

When it comes to serious, romantic relationships, would you say you...

	Total	Male	Female
Prefer to be in a relationship with someone who is a virgin.	26	31	22
Prefer to be in a relationship with someone who is not a virgin.	14	10	18
Don't have a preference whether they are a virgin or not.	58	58	58
Refused	2	1	2

How often does the following happen...?

Total	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Refused	
Popular media like movies and TV shows make it seem like people who have sex are cooler than people who don't have sex.	56		33		6		2		2	
People have unrealistic expectations about sex because of what they see in porn.	49		36		9		2		3	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Popular media like movies and TV shows make it seem like people who have sex are cooler than people who don't have sex.	54	58	35	30	6	7	3	2	2	3
People have unrealistic expectations about sex because of what they see in porn.	46	51	36	37	11	7	3	2	4	3

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Total	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Refused	
I wish popular media like movies and TV shows portrayed sex, love, and relationships among people my age in a more realistic way.	39		47		9		2		3	
I wish popular media like movies and TV shows portrayed virginity in a more realistic way.	37		48		9		2		3	
I wish popular media like movies and TV shows did a better job of exploring the reasons why people are virgins.	30		44		20		3		3	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I wish popular media like movies and TV shows portrayed sex, love, and relationships among people my age in a more realistic way.	35	43	50	44	11	7	1	3	2	3
I wish popular media like movies and TV shows portrayed virginity in a more realistic way.	35	40	49	47	12	7	2	2	2	3
I wish popular media like movies and TV shows did a better job of exploring the reasons why people are virgins.	26	34	46	42	22	18	4	3	2	3

Which one of the following statements comes closest to your view?

	Total	Male	Female
Girls are under more pressure than guys to start having sex	25	22	28
Guys are under more pressure than girls to start having sex	27	29	24
Guys and girls are under about the same amount of pressure to start having sex	47	47	46
Refused	2	2	2

When you were in high school, how much pressure did you personally feel to stay a virgin?

	Total	Male	Female
A lot	10	7	13
Some	19	19	20
Not much	34	35	34
None	34	36	31
Refused	2	3	2

Thinking back to high school, how much pressure did you feel from each of the following to have sex?

	Total	A lot		Some		Not much		None		Refused	
Your parents or guardians		4		5		10		78		4	
Friends		9		26		25		37		3	
Romantic partners		11		23		21		41		4	
What you heard other people were doing		12		26		27		32		3	
Siblings		1		6		15		74		4	
Images and messages in popular media		13		31		24		29		3	
Yourself		7		24		25		40		3	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Your parents or guardians		3	4	6	3	9	11	77	78	4	3
Friends		10	8	28	23	24	27	34	39	4	3
Romantic partners		6	16	19	26	23	19	47	36	5	3
What you heard other people were doing		12	11	26	26	23	30	35	30	3	3
Siblings		1	2	8	4	16	14	72	76	3	4
Images and messages in popular media		13	14	32	29	20	27	32	26	3	3
Yourself		10	5	28	21	23	27	36	44	3	3

Thinking back to high school, how much pressure did you feel from each of the following to remain a virgin?


Total	A lot		Some		Not much		None		Refused	
Your parents or guardians	35		23		10		27		5	
Friends	6		17		30		42		5	
Romantic partners	5		11		25		54		5	
Your religion	30		20		9		38		4	
Siblings	11		12		18		53		5	
Images and messages in popular media	3		10		29		52		5	
Yourself	23		26		17		30		5	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Your parents or guardians	23	46	26	20	10	11	36	20	6	4
Friends	3	9	14	21	27	33	50	34	6	4
Romantic partners	4	6	11	11	21	27	58	51	6	5
Your religion	27	32	16	23	10	7	42	34	5	4
Siblings	7	14	10	14	17	19	59	48	6	4
Images and messages in popular media	1	4	12	9	25	34	55	49	7	4
Yourself	15	30	24	27	16	18	38	21	6	4



Have you ever gone farther than you wanted to in a sexual situation because a partner pressured you to?

	Total	Male	Female
Yes	20	11	29
No	77	85	70
Refused	2	3	1

Have you ever gone farther than you wanted to in a sexual situation because you were under the influence of drugs or alcohol?



	Total	Male	Female
Yes	16	12	20
No	82	86	79
Refused	2	3	1

Which one of the following statements come closest to your view?

	Total	Male	Female
Most of my friends these days have had sex.	58	56	60
Most of my friends these days have not had sex.	10	8	12
My friends are pretty evenly split between those who have had sex and those who have not.	14	14	15
I have no idea whether my friends have had sex or not.	14	19	10
Refused	3	4	3

How important do you think each of the following pieces of advice are for a high school freshman to know?


Total	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important	Refused
It's okay to be a virgin when you graduate from high school.	67	19	6	4	4
Don't stress about falling in love, it will happen someday.	62	21	9	4	4
You don't have to do anything sexual that you're uncomfortable with.	73	13	7	3	5
You don't have to have sex with someone just because you've done it before.	63	20	8	4	4
It's best to wait until after high school to have sex.	40	29	16	10	5
Don't believe everything you hear about other people's sex lives.	64	21	7	4	5
Learn about protection before you become sexually active.	75	12	6	3	4
Sex doesn't guarantee a relationship will last.	75	11	5	4	4
Sex doesn't make you an adult.	69	17	6	3	5
There's nothing wrong with having sex in high school.	11	27	30	28	4
Sex makes a high school relationship stronger.	4	10	21	61	5
If you don't have sex in high school you're missing out.	4	9	17	65	5

N = 1,001 * = less than 0.5 All numbers are percentages unless noted.

How important do you think each of the following pieces of advice are for a high school freshman to know?

	Very important		Somewhat important		Not too important		Not at all important		Refused	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
It's okay to be a virgin when you graduate from high school.	55	78	25	14	10	3	6	1	4	4
Don't stress about falling in love, it will happen someday.	50	74	28	15	11	7	7	1	4	4
You don't have to do anything sexual that you're uncomfortable with.	62	84	20	7	9	4	4	1	5	5
You don't have to have sex with someone just because you've done it before.	49	77	29	12	11	6	7	1	4	5
It's best to wait until after high school to have sex.	33	46	30	29	19	13	12	7	5	4
Don't believe everything you hear about other people's sex lives.	56	71	24	19	9	5	6	2	5	4
Learn about protection before you become sexually active.	66	84	17	8	8	3	5	1	4	4
Sex doesn't guarantee a relationship will last.	66	84	16	7	7	4	6	2	5	4
Sex doesn't make you an adult.	58	78	22	12	9	3	5	2	5	4
There's nothing wrong with having sex in high school.	13	10	28	26	30	29	24	31	5	4
Sex makes a high school relationship stronger.	5	3	15	6	27	15	49	72	4	5
If you don't have sex in high school you're missing out.	5	4	12	6	25	10	52	76	6	4

When I find out someone my age is a virgin....




	Total	Male	Female	Virgin	Non-Virgin
I feel respect for them.	46	39	52	48	45
I am surprised.	26	19	33	16	32
It makes me think more of them.	26	21	30	28	24
I wonder why.	16	16	16	7	21
I think they are lying.	7	8	6	3	9
I feel sorry for them.	3	3	2	1	4
It makes me think less of them.	*	*	*	*	*
I don't give it a second thought.	34	36	33	39	32
None of the above	10	12	7	11	9
Refused	3	4	2	3	2

N = 1,001 * = less than 0.5 All numbers are percentages unless noted.

How much would you say you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Total	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree		Refused	
I know everything I need to know about preventing pregnancy.	31		30		21		10		4		4	
I know everything I need to know about preventing sexually transmitted infections.	24		28		25		13		5		4	
I feel comfortable talking to partners or potential partners about birth control and protection.	39		24		23		6		4		4	
I feel comfortable talking to partners or potential partners about preventing sexually transmitted infections.	34		23		27		8		4		4	
I wish I knew more about birth control and pregnancy prevention.	7		13		43		14		19		4	
I wish I knew more about sexually transmitted infections and how to prevent them.	9		18		40		14		15		4	
I feel comfortable talking to partners or potential partners about waiting to have sex.	32		27		28		6		4		4	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I know everything I need to know about preventing pregnancy.	28	35	28	31	27	14	8	13	5	3	4	4
I know everything I need to know about preventing sexually transmitted infections.	23	25	24	32	30	21	13	14	6	5	5	4
I feel comfortable talking to partners or potential partners about birth control and protection.	34	44	25	24	25	20	6	5	5	4	4	4
I feel comfortable talking to partners or potential partners about preventing sexually transmitted infections.	29	39	22	24	33	21	6	9	5	4	5	4
I wish I knew more about birth control and pregnancy prevention.	6	9	13	12	46	40	12	16	18	19	5	4
I wish I knew more about sexually transmitted infections and how to prevent them.	8	11	15	21	45	35	13	14	15	14	4	4
I feel comfortable talking to partners or potential partners about waiting to have sex.	26	37	25	29	35	21	4	7	4	3	4	4

There are many ways people express themselves physically and sexually with romantic partners, including male-female vaginal intercourse. Have you ever had male-female vaginal intercourse with a member of the opposite sex?



	Total	Male	Female
Yes	56	51	60
No	42	46	38
Refused	2	3	2

Which, if any, of the following are reasons you have not had male-female vaginal intercourse?

Base: Haven't had male/female vaginal intercourse	Total (n=379)	Male (n=187)	Female (n=192)
I am waiting until I get married	37	28	47
Haven't found the right person	35	32	39
Waiting until I fall in love	26	20	33
Just don't feel ready	22	17	27
Religious reasons	22	16	28
Don't want to risk pregnancy	20	15	26
Don't want to risk sexually transmitted infections	17	12	22
Lack of opportunity	17	21	12
My parents would be disappointed in me	16	13	20
I would be disappointed in myself	16	9	24
I think it's immoral	15	15	14
I'm not interested	13	9	17
I'm satisfied doing other things sexually that are not male-female intercourse	8	8	7
I'm gay/lesbian	4	5	2
I don't want to be gossiped about	3	*	6
I don't know	4	4	4
None of these are reasons for me	15	20	9
Refused	1	1	1

Have you ever lied and said you weren't a virgin?

Base: Have not had sex	Total (n=301)	Male (n=145)	Female (n=156)
Yes	6	9	2
No	93	88	98
Refused	1	3	*

How many of your friends would you say know you're a virgin?

Base: Have not had sex	Total (n=301)	Male (n=145)	Female (n=156)
All of my friends know	37	36	38
Most of them know	23	25	22
Just some of them know	19	18	21
None of them know	17	20	15
Refused	3	2	5

Do you want your first time to be with someone...

Base: Have not had sex	Total (n=301)	Male (n=145)	Female (n=156)
Who is also a virgin	40	43	38
Who is not a virgin	2	2	1
It makes no difference to me if my first partner is a virgin or not	54	51	56
Refused	5	4	5

Have you ever thought about what kind of protection you're going to use the first time you have sex?

Base: Have not had sex	Total (n=301)	Male (n=145)	Female (n=156)
Yes	45	40	50
No	53	59	47
Refused	3	2	3

Which one of the following statements comes closer to your view?

Base: Have not had sex	Total (n=301)	Male (n=145)	Female (n=156)
I would rather have sex as soon as possible.	6	8	4
I want to wait for the right time before I have sex.	90	89	90
Refused	4	3	5

In general, how comfortable would you be personally in each of the following situations?

Total Base: Have not had sex (n=301)	Very comfortable		Somewhat comfortable		Somewhat uncomfortable		Very uncomfortable		Refused	
Talking to a partner or potential partner about your virginity.	37		32		19		8		5	
Talking to a friend about your virginity.	34		30		17		15		5	
Base: Have not had sex Male: (n=145) Female (n=156)	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Talking to a partner or potential partner about your virginity.	30	44	29	34	24	14	13	2	3	6
Talking to a friend about your virginity.	22	46	32	27	24	10	19	11	3	6



Do you wish you knew more about each of the following, or not?

Total Base: Have not had sex (n=301)	Yes, I wish I knew more about this		No, I don't wish I knew more about this		Refused	
How to talk to a partner or potential partner about the fact that you have not had sex.	30		64		6	
How to talk to a partner about whether or not you are ready to have sex.	32		62		6	
Base: Have not had sex Male: (n=145) Female (n=156)	M	F	M	F	M	F
How to talk to a partner or potential partner about the fact that you have not had sex.	29	30	66	63	5	7
How to talk to a partner about whether or not you are ready to have sex.	29	34	66	59	5	7

This next series of questions will be about the first time you had sex. Even if you've had sex many times, in various ways, or with multiple partners—these questions refer ONLY to the very FIRST TIME.

How old were you the first time?

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
Less than 11	1	2	1
11-15	24	22	26
16-18	48	44	51
19-22	19	22	17
23-24	1	1	1
Refused	5	7	3
No Response	2	2	1
Mean (including 0)	16.8	16.9	16.7

Thinking back to your first time, would you say it was...

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
A mostly good experience	46	56	37
A mostly bad experience	19	9	29
About equal parts good and bad	30	30	30
Refused	3	4	2
No Response	2	2	1



Thinking back to your first time, was it with...

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
Someone you were in a serious relationship with	58	52	63
A friend you had never hooked up with before but knew already	17	20	15
A friend you were hooking up with	11	14	9
Someone else	5	3	7
Someone you had just met	4	5	3
Refused	3	4	2
No Response	2	2	1

Thinking back to your first time, what best describes the age of your partner?

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
They were more than 3 years older than I was.	10	4	14
They were between 1 and 3 years older than I was.	25	14	35
They were about the same age (no more than one year in either direction).	47	53	41
They were between 1 and 3 years younger than I was.	10	15	5
They were more than 3 years younger than I was.	1	3	0
I don't know how old my first partner was.	2	4	1
Refused	4	5	2
No Response	2	2	1

Which, if any, of the following are true about your first time?

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
I loved my partner	38	34	42
My partner loved me	38	39	37
It was unplanned	33	27	39
It was also my partner's first time	31	29	32
It was planned	27	28	25
It made my relationship better	20	27	15
I regret it now	19	11	27
I didn't think I was ready	18	12	24
I was pressured into it	12	6	18
I just wanted to get it over with	11	5	15
I regretted it immediately	10	3	16
I wish I had felt more comfortable talking to my partner about my feelings	9	4	14
It made my relationship worse	7	3	10
I was drunk/using drugs at the time	4	4	5
My partner was drunk/using drugs at the time	3	3	4
It happened against my will	2	0	4
None of these	9	12	5
Refused	2	3	1
No Response	2	2	1

Thinking back to your first time, which, if any, of the following are true?

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
We used a condom	68	74	63
We used contraception other than a condom (such as the pill, patch, ring, shot, Plan B)	18	14	21
We used withdrawal or pulling out	17	10	22
We talked about contraception or protection beforehand	17	13	21
We did not use any kind of contraception	9	7	11
We did not use any kind of protection	33	26	46
Refused	3	4	2

If you could re-do your first time, is there anything you would change?

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
Yes	49	36	61
No	47	58	36
Refused	2	3	2
No Response	2	2	1

How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

Total Base: Have had sex (n=696)	Strongly agree		Somewhat agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat disagree		Strongly disagree		Refused	
My partner and I talked about the fact that it was my first time.	39		25		11		6		15		3	
I felt like my first partner and I had good communication.	31		29		13		11		12		3	
Base: Have had sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Male: (n=304) Female (n=392)												
My partner and I talked about the fact that it was my first time.	36	42	21	29	12	10	8	5	17	12	4	1
I felt like my first partner and I had good communication.	33	29	34	24	10	15	9	12	7	16	5	2



Thinking about your first time, which, if any, of the following would you change? Please select all that apply.

Base: Would change something about first time and change applies	Total	Male	Female
Base	230	89	141
I would have done it with someone I loved	45	23	59
Base	231	82	149
I would have done it with someone who loved me	43	21	55
Base	109	30	78
I would have used a condom	50	45	52
Base	97	27	69
I would have used contraception	34	21	38
Base	21	7	14
I wish I had been sober	79	51	93
Base	18	5	13
I wish my partner had been sober	70	45	79
Base	322	113	209
I would have waited longer	56	34	67
Base	322	113	209
I wish I had been older	45	35	51
Base	322	113	209
I would have chosen a different partner	44	35	49
Base	322	113	209
I would have allowed myself to enjoy it more	22	25	21
Base	322	113	209
I wouldn't have put so much pressure on myself to get it over with	23	18	25
Base	322	113	209
I would change something else not listed here	25	27	24
Base	322	113	209
I wouldn't change anything	2	4	-
Refused	-	1	-

Thinking about your first time, which of the following is closest to your opinion?

Base: Have had sex	Total (n=696)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
My first time was better than I expected it would be.	19	25	15
My first time was not as good as I expected it would be.	38	27	48
My first time was about what I was expecting.	38	42	34
Refused	3	4	2
No Response	2	2	1

Below are some words people may use to describe their first time. Thinking back to your first time, please select the words that describe how you felt about it at the time in the left hand column, and the words that describe how you feel about it now in the right hand column.

Total Base: (n=696)	How I felt at the time		How I feel about it now	
Happy	55		31	
Loved	47		25	
Mature	31		22	
Nervous	72		5	
Embarrassed	31		16	
Confused	28		9	
It wasn't a big deal	24		32	
Relieved	28		14	
Regretful	17		28	
Sad	11		20	
None of these	4		7	
Refused	5		14	
No Response	2		2	
	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)	Male (n=304)	Female (n=392)
Happy	60	51	38	24
Loved	45	50	24	25
Mature	30	32	24	20
Nervous	65	78	4	6
Embarrassed	26	36	11	20
Confused	19	37	8	11
It wasn't a big deal	24	24	36	29
Relieved	33	24	16	13
Regretful	13	22	18	37
Sad	4	17	14	25
None of these	6	3	7	8
Refused	7	3	18	10
No Response	2	1	2	1

DEMOGRAPHICS

Which of the following best describes you?

	Total	Male	Female
Full-time student, not employed	20	17	23
Part-time student, not employed	4	4	4
Full-time student, employed	24	23	25
Part-time student, employed	4	3	6
Employed full-time	20	24	17
Employed part-time	8	10	6
Homemaker	4	1	8
Unemployed	12	16	9
Refused	2	2	3

Which one of the following best describes where you live?

	Total	Male	Female
Urban area	31	29	32
Suburban area	48	46	49
Rural area	19	23	16
Refused	3	3	3

Which of the following best describes your religious affiliation?

	Total	Male	Female
Christian	60	58	62
Jewish	2	2	2
Muslim	*	*	*
Buddhist	1	2	1
Other religion	8	8	8
No religion	25	27	24
Refused	3	3	3

Do you consider yourself to be...

	Total	Male	Female
Heterosexual or straight	90	91	88
Gay	2	4	*
Lesbian	1	*	2
Bisexual	3	1	5
Other	1	*	1
Refused	4	4	3



NOTES

ENDNOTES

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