

WITH ONE VOICE 2012

America's Adults and
Teens Sound Off About
Teen Pregnancy



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Off About Teen Pregnancy

A PERIODIC NATIONAL SURVEY
BILL ALBERT | AUGUST 2012

TheNationalCampaign.org | StayTeen.org | Bedsider.org

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INTRODUCTION

With One Voice 2012 is the latest in a series of national surveys dating back to 2001 commissioned and released by The National Campaign. These surveys have asked teens and adults a core set of questions about sex, contraception, teen pregnancy, and related issues.

The surveys are undertaken with two primary goals in mind. First, we think it is important to regularly assess and report on American opinion on teen pregnancy and related issues. Second, we believe that these periodic surveys of public opinion serve as a helpful addition to the behavioral data collected by the federal government through such important projects as the National Survey of Family Growth and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

Key findings. Our sincere hope is that the results of *With One Voice 2012* provide parents, practitioners, policymakers, and others with helpful information and possible guidance. Some of the key findings from the 2012 survey include:

- Teens make clear that **parents matter** more than many probably think (teens say parents *most* influence their decisions about sex);
- there is great agreement among adults about the importance of teaching teens about **the value of delaying sex and the importance of using contraception** (more than seven in 10 support this approach);
- there is much more **that unites teens and adults** than divides them when it comes to teen pregnancy and related issues (the survey results surface precious few differences among different racial/ethnic groups); and

- that the **remaining challenges** in convincing young people to delay pregnancy and parenthood may be more profound than many have thought (about four in 10 teens believe it doesn't matter whether you use birth control or not, pregnancy just happens).

Readers should note the following about how the results are presented in this publication:

- The questions in this poll were developed by The National Campaign and the exact wording of the survey questions are provided throughout.
- As a general matter, survey results are reported for young people age 12-19 and adults 20 and older unless otherwise noted.
- Subgroup differences, such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity are noted when these differences appear compelling.
- Some of the responses to various questions do not quite total 100 percent due to rounding and due to our decision not to report, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, the percentages of respondents who answered "don't know" or refused to answer the question unless such responses totaled more than five percent.

OVERVIEW

PARENT POWER

- Teens continue to say that parents *most* influence their decisions about sex—more than peers, popular culture, teachers and educators, and others.
- Nearly four in 10 teens (38%) say parents most influence their decisions about sex, compared to 22% who cite friends. All other influencers garnished single digit responses from teens.
- Nearly nine in 10 teens (87%) say that it would be much easier for teens to delay sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.
- If their children are having sex, eight in 10 adults (79%) say that they hope their children will talk to them so they can help ensure they are using birth control.

ABSTINENCE AND CONTRACEPTION

- The overwhelming majority of teens (87%) and adults (93%) agree that it is important for teens to be given a strong message that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school.
- Most teens (49%) and adults (74%) wish young people were getting information about *both* abstinence and contraception rather than either/or.
- Non-Hispanic black (60%) and Hispanic (58%) teens are more likely than non-Hispanic white (44%) teens to say that teens should be getting more information about both abstinence and contraception.

PUBLIC POLICY

- When asked about *federally funded* programs designed to prevent teen pregnancy, 65% of adults believe these taxpayer supported programs should provide teens with information about both birth control and postponing sex. Again, *both* not either/or.
- At least 62% of adults in all regions of the country, of all educational levels, and all race/ethnicities support federal efforts to provide teens with information on both abstinence and contraception.
- Seven in 10 (72%) adults believe that teen pregnancy prevention programs that are federally funded should primarily support those programs that have been proven to change behavior related to teen pregnancy.
- Three-quarters of adults and teens (75%) agree that policymakers who are opposed to abortion should be strong supporters of birth control.
- About seven in 10 adults (68%) believe their community needs more efforts to prevent teen pregnancy.

- Nearly nine in 10 adults and teens (89% and 90% respectively) say teen pregnancy is an important issue even when compared to

other social and economic problems facing the country.

KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

- Nearly all teens (97% of girls and 94% of boys) believe it is important for them to avoid getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant at this time in their lives.
- Most teens (86% of those age 15-19 and 75% of those age 12-14) say they have all the information they need to avoid an unplanned pregnancy.
- However, many admit they know “little or nothing” about condoms (47%) and birth control pills (72%).
- Fully four in 10 teens (42%) say it doesn’t matter whether you use birth control or not, when it is your time to get pregnant, it will happen.
- Some 67% of teen girls and 53% of teen boys who have had sex wish they had waited longer.
- Most teens (84%) incorrectly believe that most high school-age teens have had sex.
- Nine in 10 teens (91%) say they want to be married before they have/father a child.

MEDIA

- Three-quarters of teens (75%) agree with the following statement: “When a TV show or character I like deals with teen pregnancy, it makes me think more about my own risk of becoming pregnant/causing a pregnancy and how to avoid it.”
- Three-quarters of teens (73%) and adults (75%) say that what they see in the media about sex, love, and relationships can be a good way to start conversations with adults/teens about these topics.
- Many teens (47%) and parents of teens (75%) say they have discussed sex, love, and relationships together because of something they saw in popular media.
- Among those teens who have seen the MTV shows *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*, 77% say the shows help teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenting.
- Both adults (57%) and teens (69%) believe increased media attention has been one reason for the extraordinary declines in the U.S. teen pregnancy rate over the past two decades.

METHODOLOGY

Data presented in *With One Voice 2012* are drawn from two national surveys—one with teens and one with adults. Both surveys were conducted by Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS.com), an independent research company. The survey was developed by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy with assistance from SSRS.

The adult survey is weighted to provide a nationally representative estimate of the adult population age 20 and older (some of whom are parents of teens, some of whom are not). Telephone interviews were conducted by SSRS with 1,032 adults between March 14 and March, 21, 2012. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.05 at the 95% confidence level.

The teen survey is also weighted to provide a nationally representative estimate of young people age 12-19. Telephone interviews were conducted by SSRS with 1,002 young people between March 14 and April 5, 2012. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-3.10 at the 95% confidence level.

Interviews with those age 18 and older were conducted as part of an SSRS omnibus survey, EXCEL, a national, weekly, dual-frame bilingual telephone survey. Each survey consists of a minimum of 1,000 interviews, half of whom were male and half of whom were female, of which 150 interviews are completed with respondents on their cell phones. EXCEL uses a fully-replicated, stratified, single-stage random-digit-dialing (RDD) sample of telephone households.

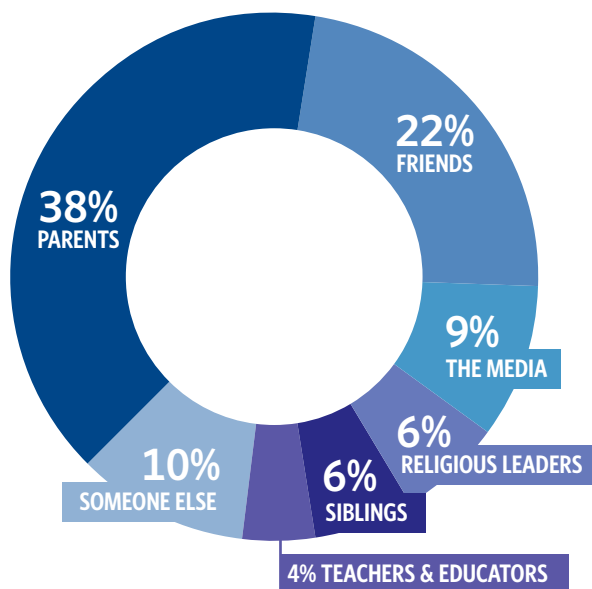
Sample telephone numbers are computer generated. Interviews with those age 18 and younger were conducted using a separate omnibus survey.

The order in which respondents were asked questions were rotated. In addition, when answer options were presented, they were also rotated. This rotation helps eliminate “question position” bias.

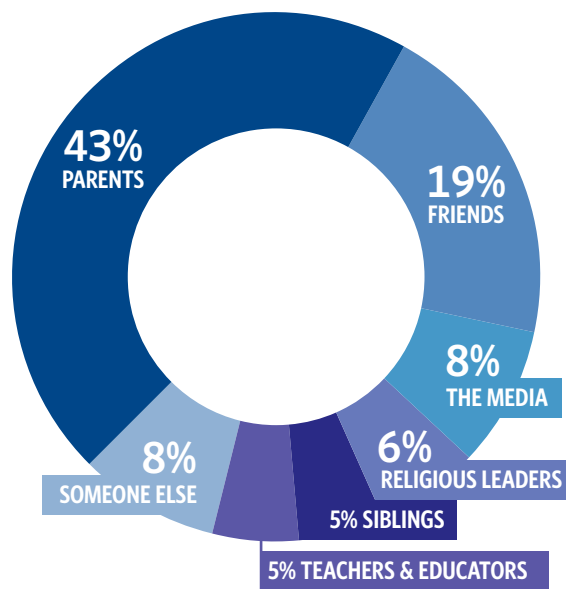
PARENT POWER

When it comes to your/teens' decisions about sex, who is most influential?

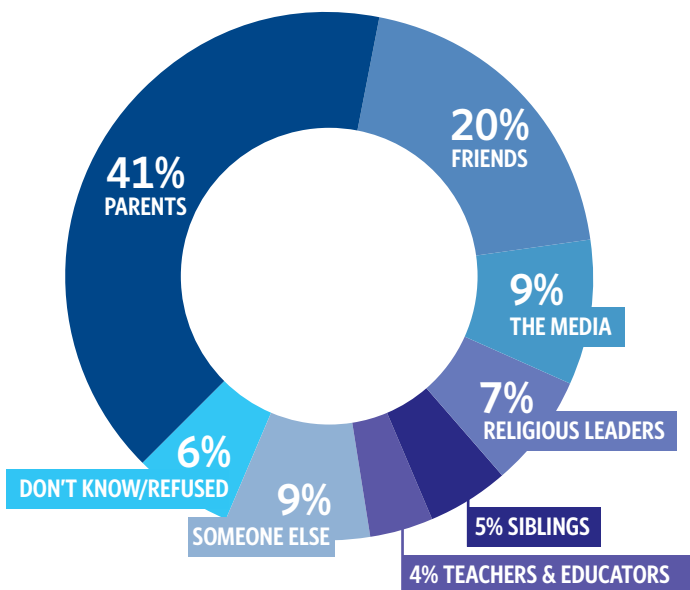
TEENS AGE 12-19



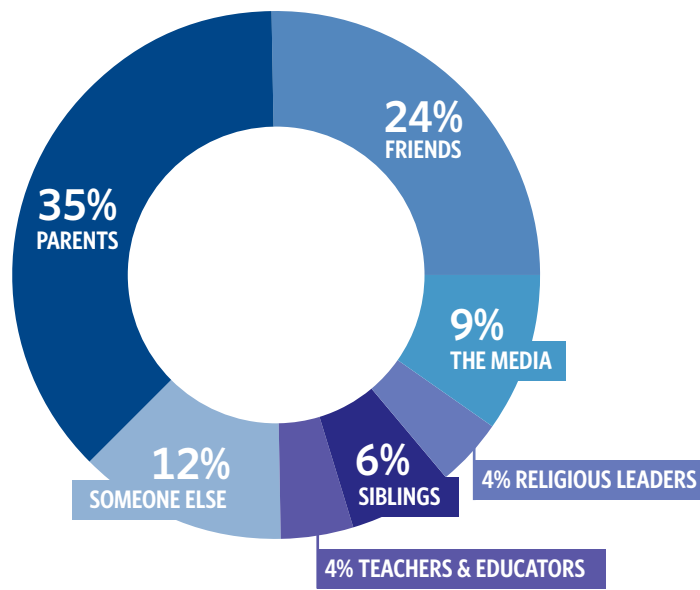
TEENS AGE 12-14

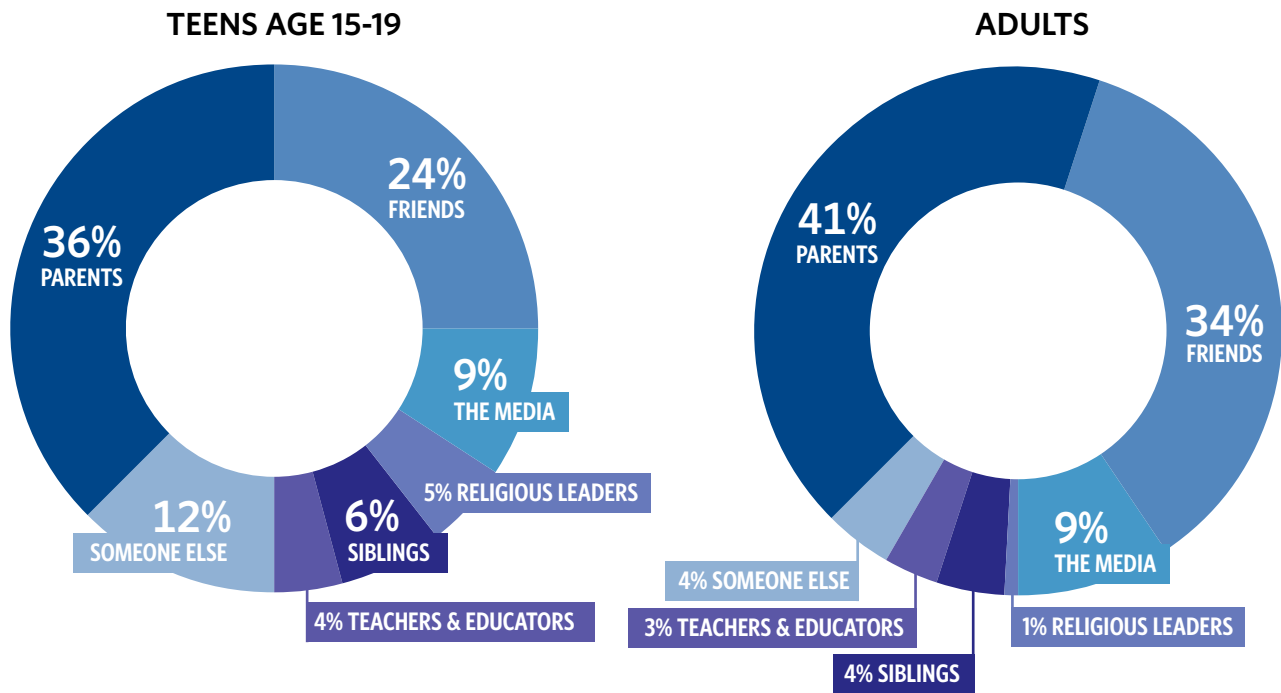


TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19



TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19





FAST FACT: Hispanic adults (53%) are more likely than non-Hispanic black (43%) and non-Hispanic white adults (41%) to say that parents most influence teens' decisions about sex.

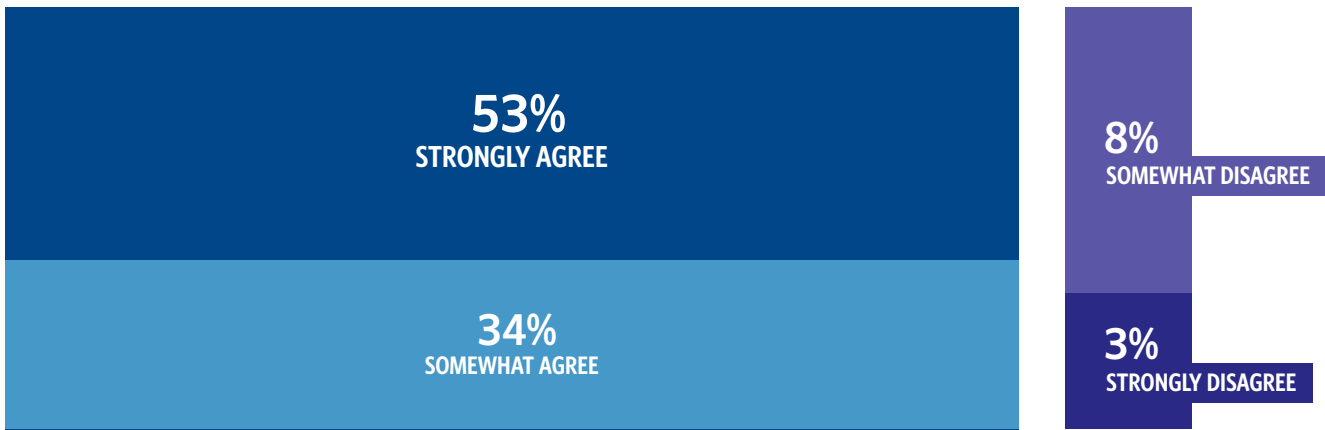
Context and Comment: The results reported in this survey regarding parental influence should come as no surprise. Teens continue to say that parents *most* influence their decisions about sex—a finding consistent with all previous National Campaign surveys. This is particularly heartening news given the large body of social science research suggesting that overall closeness between parents and their children, shared activities, parental presence in the home, and parental caring and concern are all associated with a reduced risk of early sex and teen pregnancy. Teens who are close to their parents and feel supported by them are more likely to delay sex, have fewer sexual partners, and use contraception more consistently.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“It would be much easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.”

TEENS AGE 12-19

87% AGREE

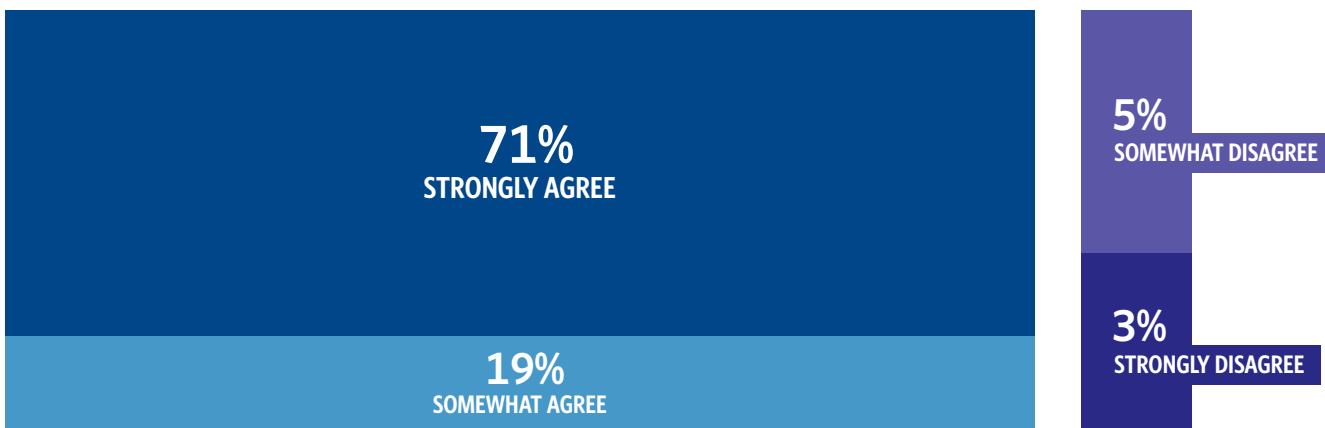
11% DISAGREE



ADULTS

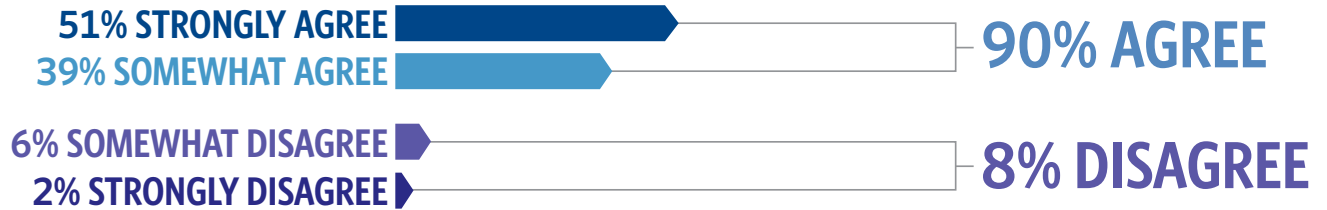
90% AGREE

8% DISAGREE

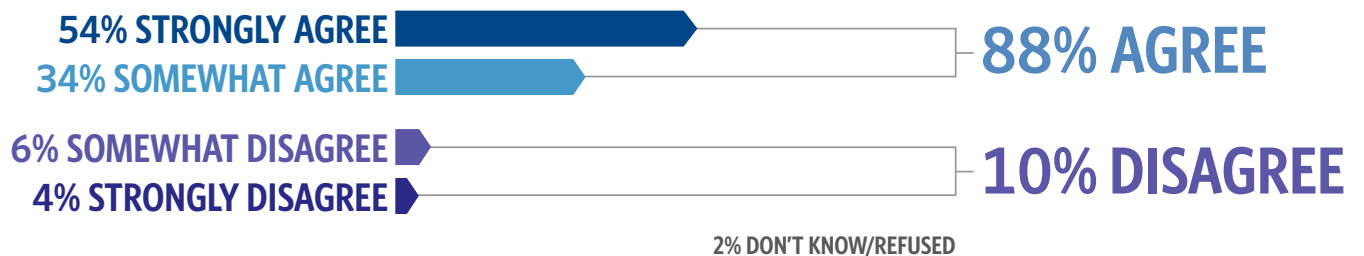


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
 “Parents believe they should talk to their kids about sex but often don’t know what to say, how to say it, or when to start.”

TEENS AGE 12-19



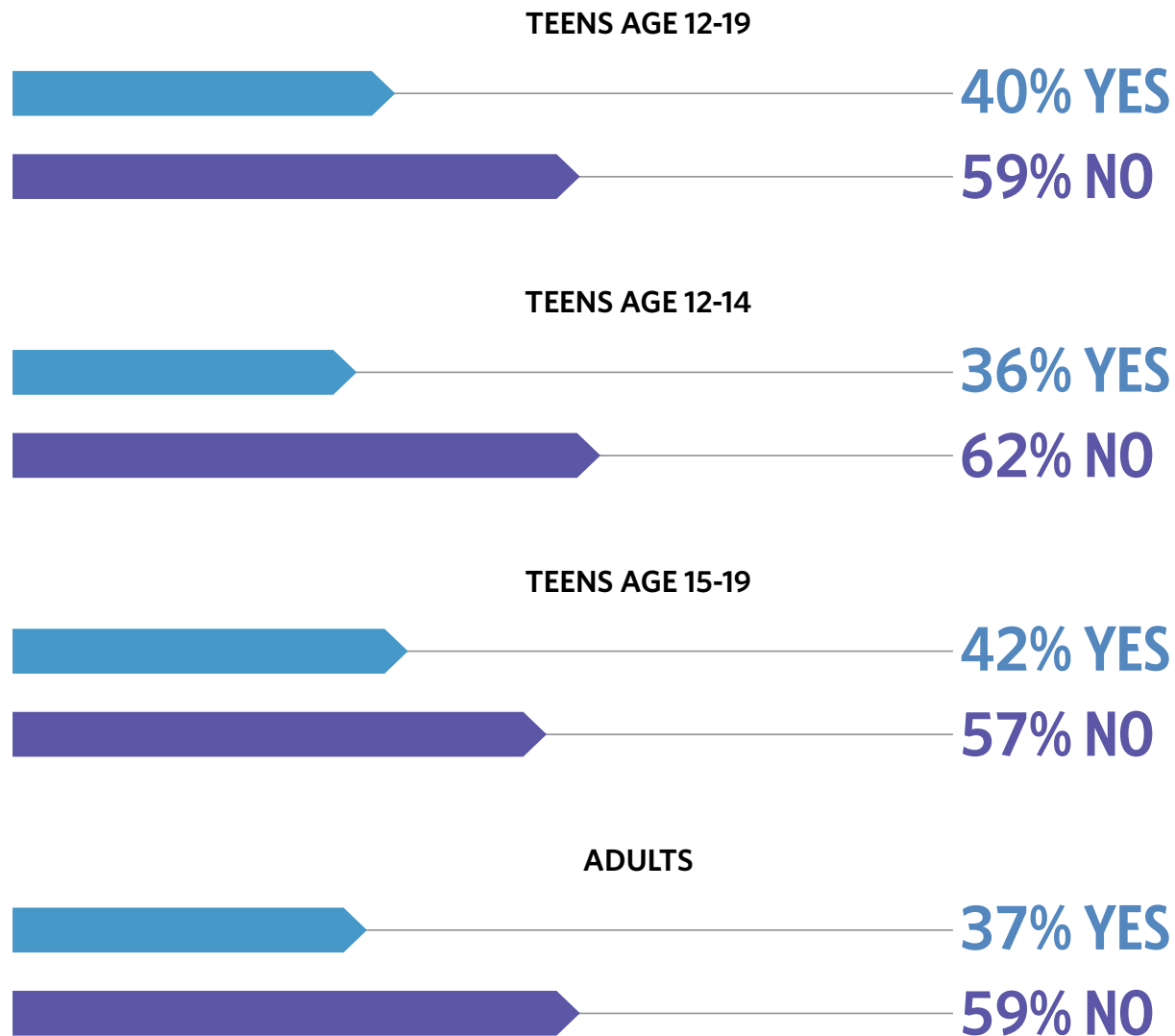
ADULTS



FAST FACT: Hispanic teens (60%) are more likely than non-Hispanic black (55%) and non-Hispanic white teens (48%) to *strongly* agree that parents don’t know what to say about sex or when to start the conversation. The same pattern holds true for adults—Hispanic adults (70%) are more likely than non-Hispanic black (65%) and non-Hispanic white adults (59%) to strongly agree that parents need help when it comes to talking to their kids about sex.

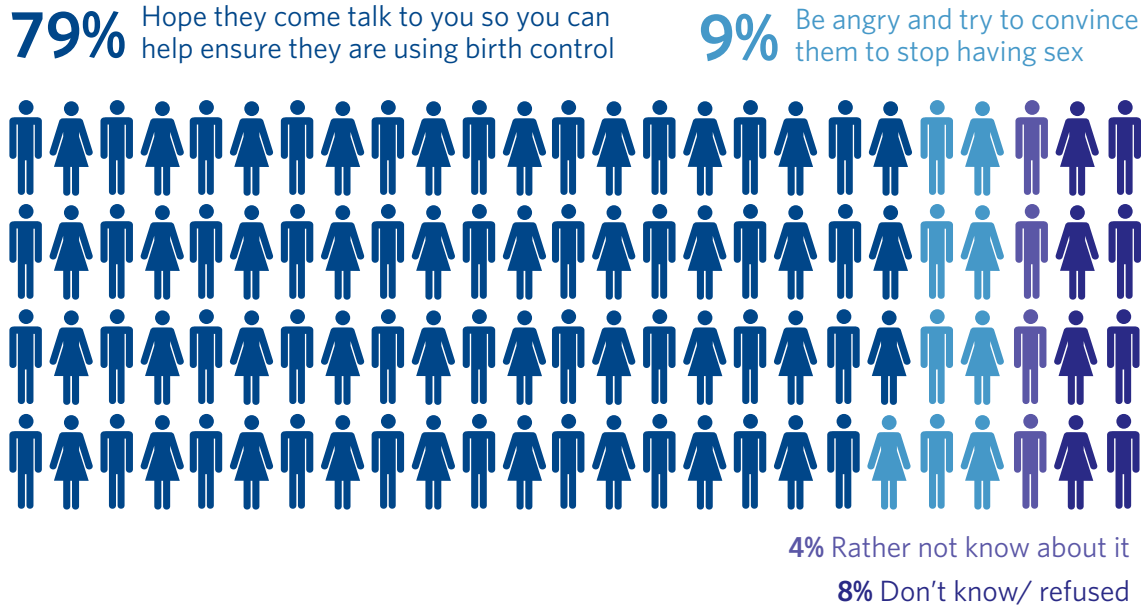
Context and Comment: Three things are clear from the data on parents presented here and in previous surveys: (1) Teens really do want to hear from their parents about sex, contraception, and relationships, (2) what parents say and do matters considerably, and (3) parents continue to say that they really do need help when it comes to talking to their children about sex and related topics.

Suppose a parent or other adult tells a teen the following:
“I strongly encourage you not to have sex. However, if you do,
you should use birth control or protection.” Do you think this
is a message that encourages teens to have sex?



If your teen were having sex would you rather not know about it, hope they come talk to you so you can help ensure they are using birth control, or be angry and try to convince them to stop having sex?

ADULTS WHO ARE PARENTS OF TEENS



FAST FACT: Among parents of teens, a clear majority of all race/ethnicities hope their child will talk to them if they are having sex, including 82% of non-Hispanic white parents, 74% of non-Hispanic black parents, and 69% of Hispanic parents.

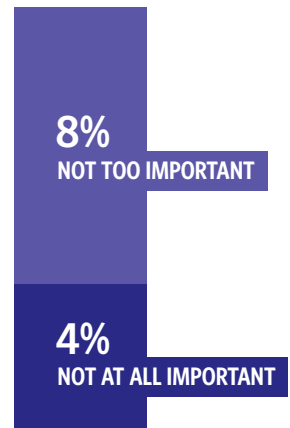
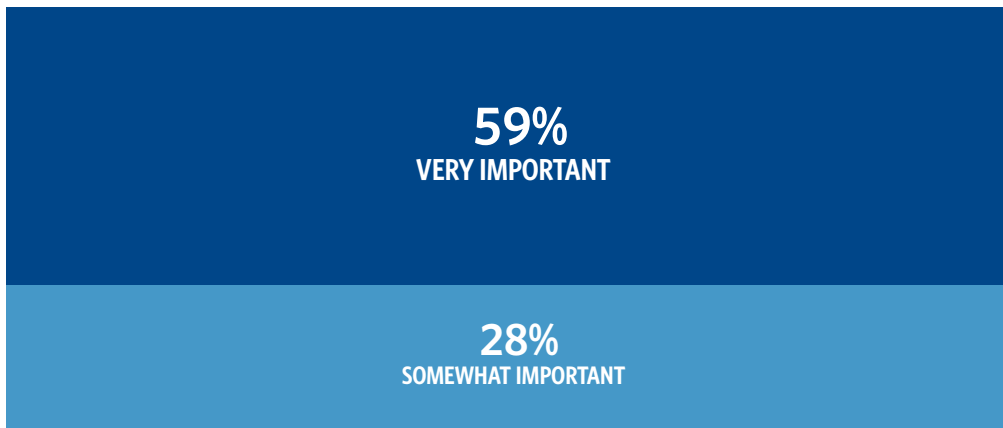
ABSTINENCE AND CONTRACEPTION

How important do you think it is for teens to be given a strong message that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school?

TEENS AGE 12-19

87% IMPORTANT

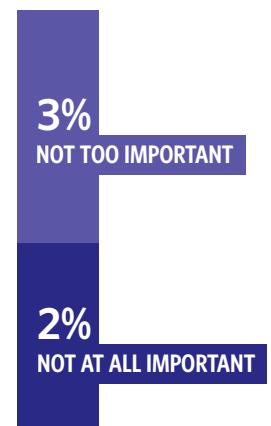
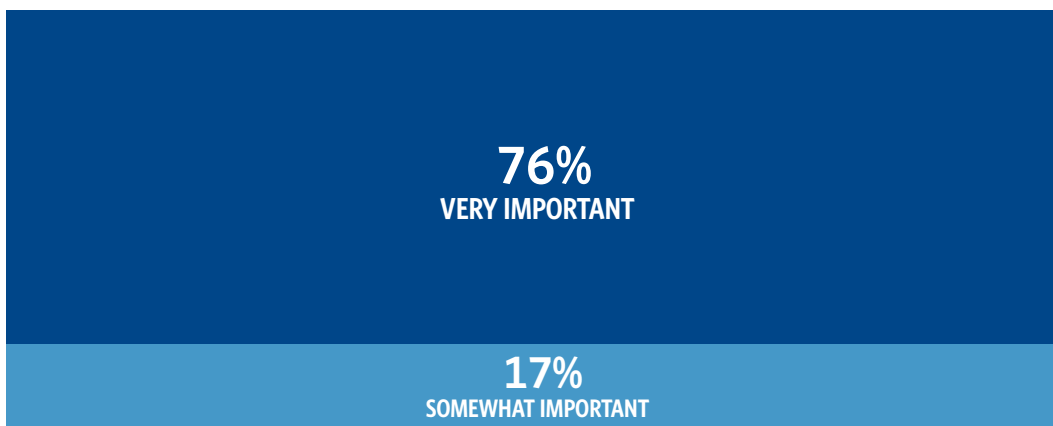
12% NOT IMPORTANT



ADULTS

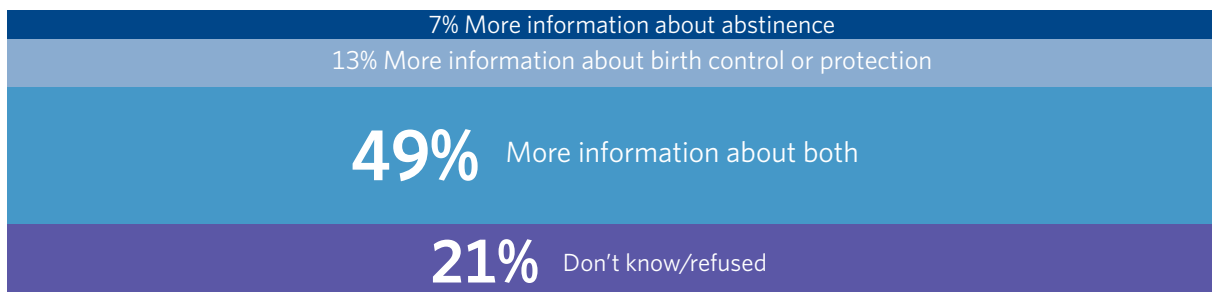
93% IMPORTANT

5% NOT IMPORTANT

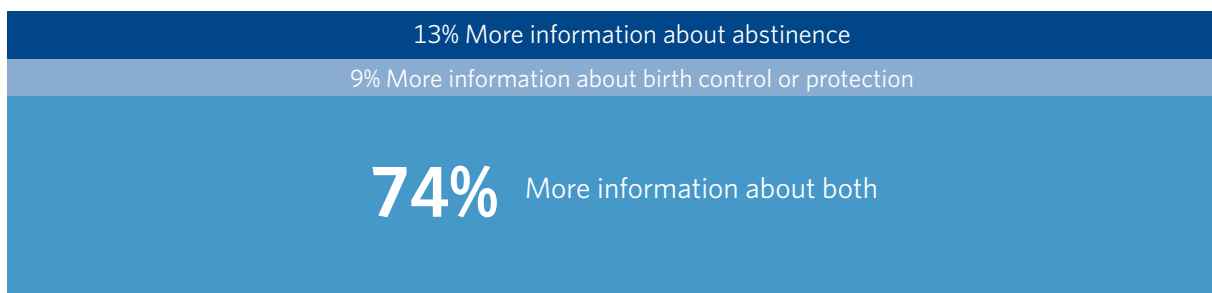


Do you wish you/teens were getting more information about abstinence, more information about birth control or protection, or more information about both?

TEENS AGE 12-19



ADULTS



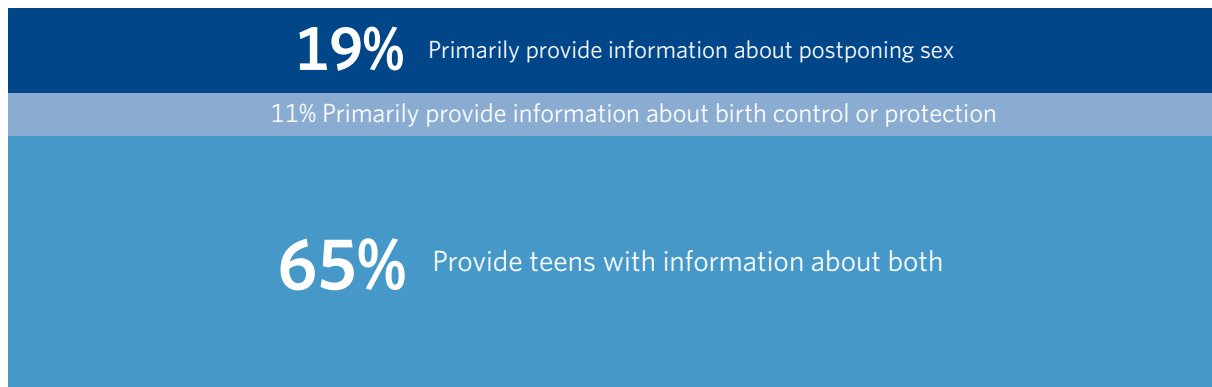
FAST FACT: Hispanic adults (86%) are more likely than non-Hispanic black (78%) and non-Hispanic white adults (72%) to say they want teens to get more information about abstinence and birth control. For their part, non-Hispanic black (60%) and Hispanic teens (58%) are more likely than non-Hispanic white teens (44%) to say they want more information about abstinence and birth control.

Context and Comment: Charts six and seven, as well as previous National Campaign surveys, make clear that adult and teens view messages about abstinence and contraception as complimentary, not contradictory. That is, most adults and teens agree that young people should be given a clear and strong message about the value of delaying sex *and* be provided with information about birth control. Not either/or; both. This common sense belief is reflected in real world behavior—the extraordinary progress the nation has made in reducing teen pregnancy and childbearing over the past two decades has been driven by a combination of less sex and more contraception.

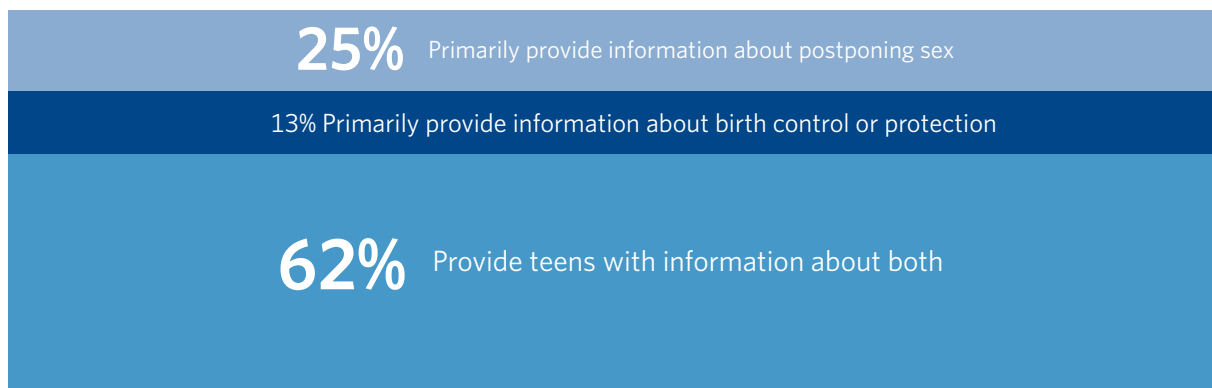
PUBLIC POLICY

Thinking about federally funded programs designed to prevent teen pregnancy, do you think the primary message of these programs should be to encourage teens to postpone sex, provide teens with information about birth control, or provide teens with information about postponing sex *and* birth control or protection?

ADULTS

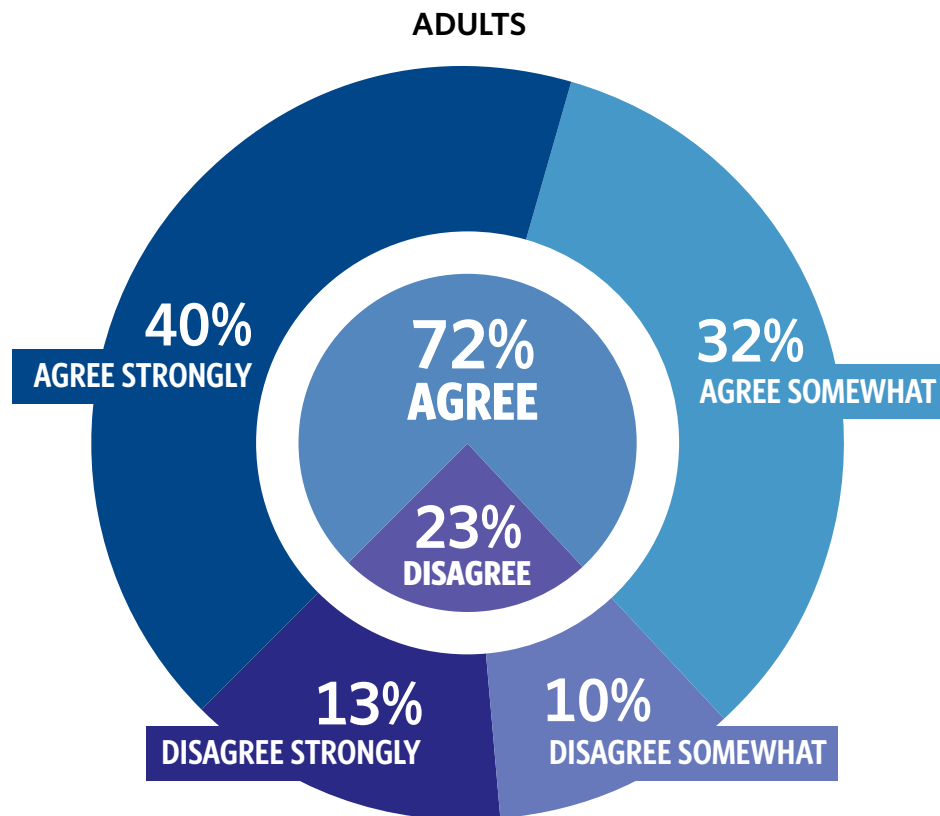


PARENTS OF TEENS



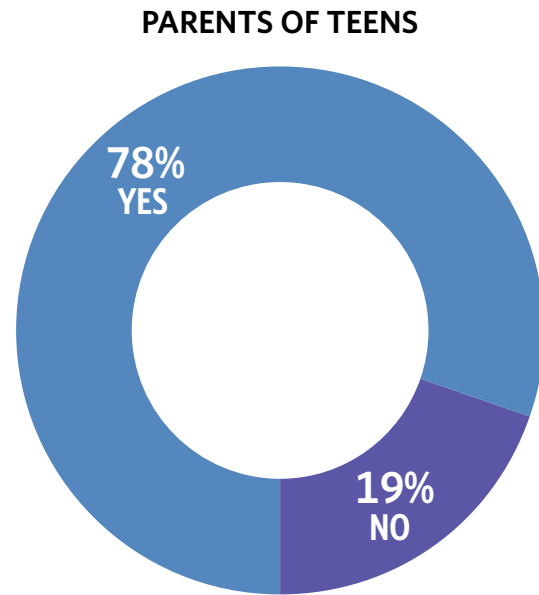
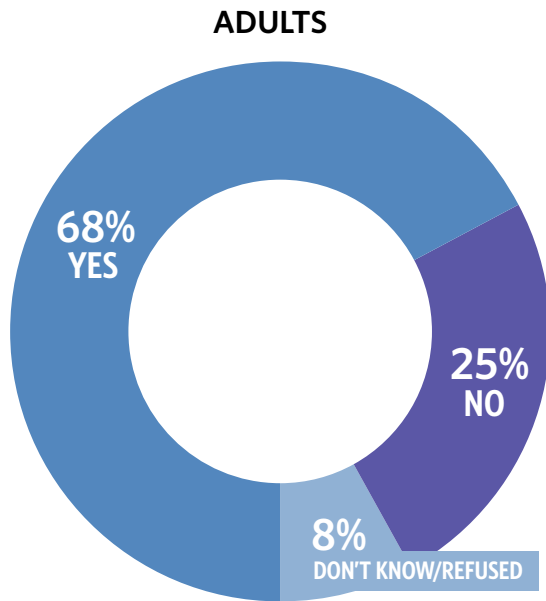
FAST FACT: At least 62% of adults in all regions of the country, of all educational levels, and all race/ethnicities support federal efforts to provide teens with information on both postponing sex and birth control.

Thinking about federally funded programs designed to prevent teen pregnancy, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **“Federal funding should primarily support those programs that have been proven to change behavior related to teen pregnancy.”**



FAST FACT: Support for proven, federally funded efforts to prevent teen pregnancy is widespread. At least 71% of adults in all regions of the country, of all educational levels, and all race/ethnicities support federal funding primarily for programs that have been proven to change teen sexual activity and/or contraceptive use.

Do you think your community needs more efforts to prevent teen pregnancy?

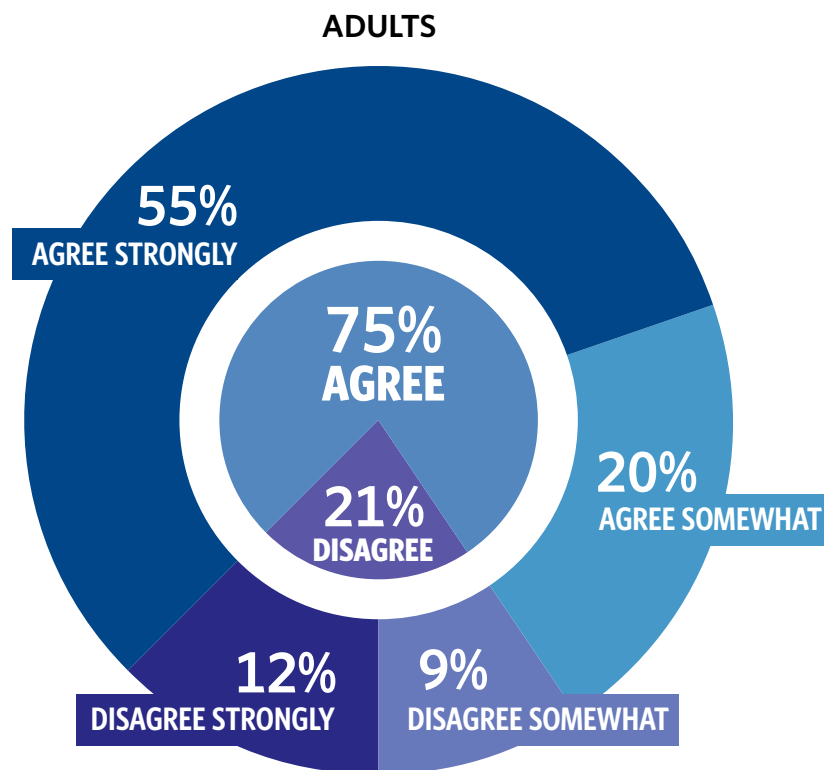


FAST FACT: Hispanic (83%) and non-Hispanic black adults (79%) are more likely than non-Hispanic white adults (63%) to believe that more efforts to prevent teen pregnancy are needed in their community.

Context and Comment: Even though U.S. teen pregnancy and birth rates are at historic lows, the clear majority of adults nationwide believe more needs to be done in their community to help prevent teen pregnancy. Smart thinking. Despite the impressive progress all 50 states have made in preventing too-early pregnancy and parenthood, it remains the case that nearly three in 10 girls get pregnant by age 20.

It is also worth noting that adults see a clear role for the federal government in preventing teen pregnancy. As a general matter, taxpayers want federally funded efforts to prevent teen pregnancy to encourage young people to delay sex and provide them with information about birth control. They also want to be sure that their money is well spent; investing only in those efforts that have been shown through careful evaluation to actually change teen behavior.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **“Policymakers who are opposed to abortion should be strong supporters of birth control.”**



FAST FACT: Even though a clear majority of Hispanic adults (62%) agree that abortion opponents should be strong supporters of birth control, they are far less likely to think so than non-Hispanic black (86%) and non-Hispanic white adults (76%).

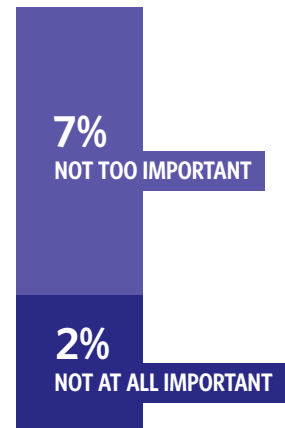
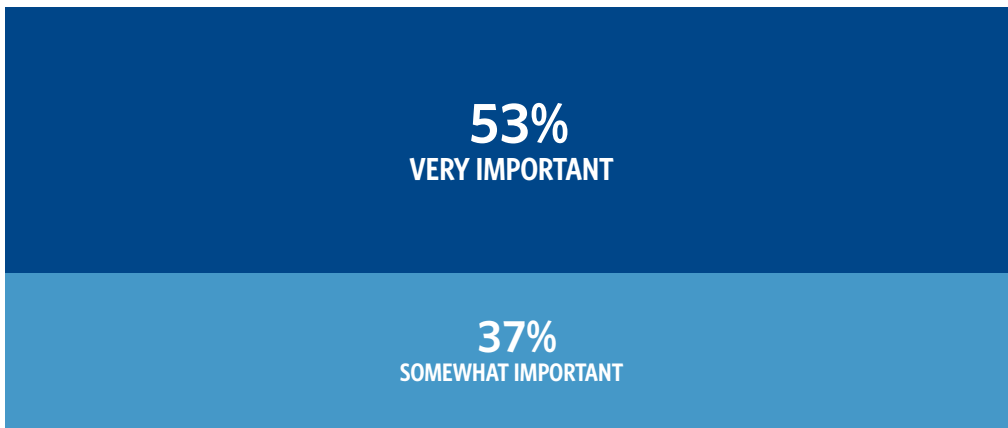
Context and Comment: Over the past year, much of the public discourse about contraception has been considerably less than enlightening. In particular, the number of public figures and policymakers cynically conflating abortion and birth control has been especially disheartening and puzzling. That men and women of good will disagree about abortion is understandable; the hostility to preventing the unplanned pregnancies that frequently lead to abortion is not. The survey data presented here suggest that most Americans hold a more prescriptive point of view about abortion, contraception, and public policy—opposition to abortion should be closely tied to strong support of birth control.

Compared to other social and economic problems facing this country, how important is the problem of teen pregnancy?

TEENS AGE 12-19

90% IMPORTANT

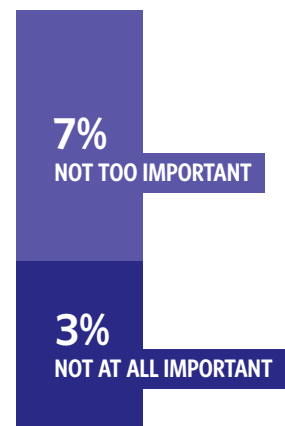
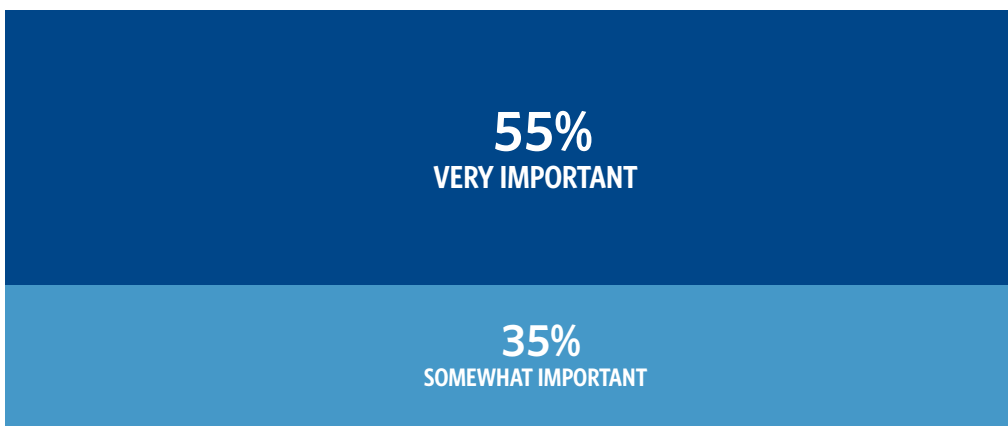
9% NOT IMPORTANT



ADULTS

90% IMPORTANT

10% NOT IMPORTANT



KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

How important is it for you to avoid getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant right now?

TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19

97% IMPORTANT

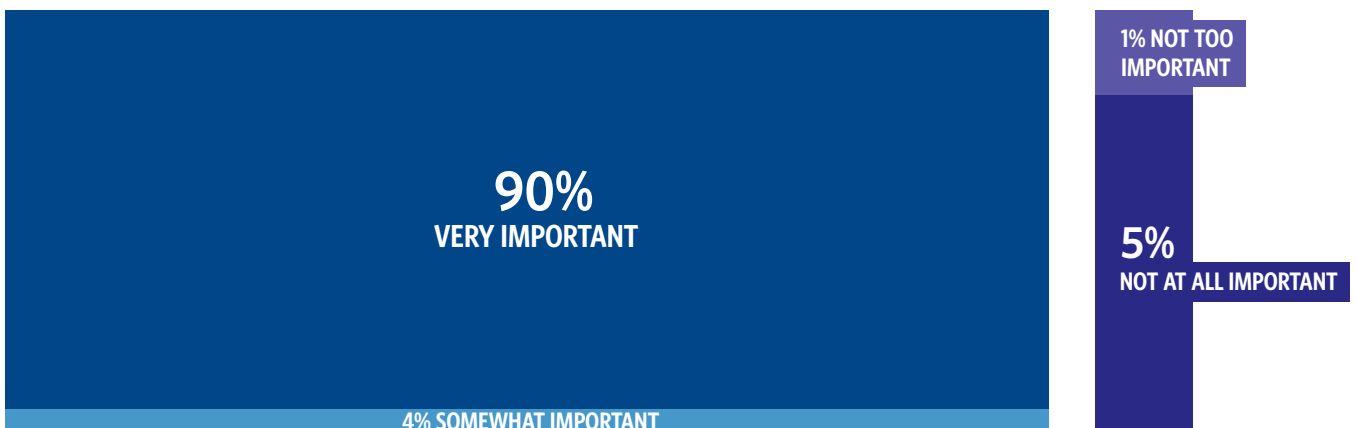
3% NOT IMPORTANT



TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19

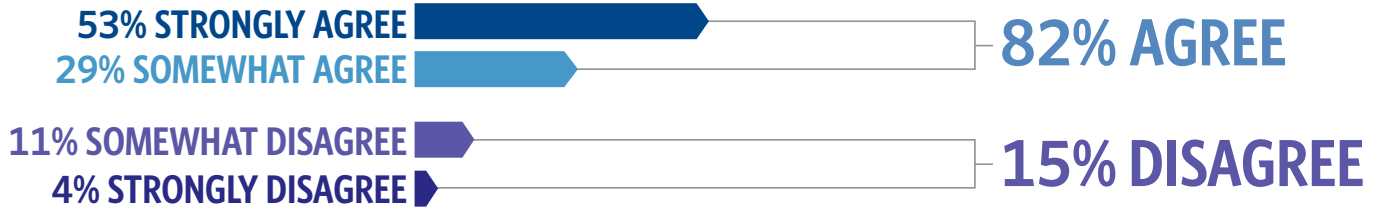
94% IMPORTANT

6% NOT IMPORTANT

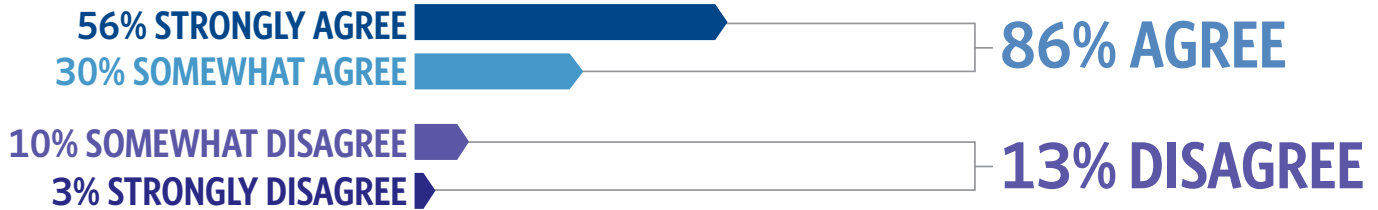


I have all of the information I need to avoid an unplanned pregnancy.
Do you agree or disagree?

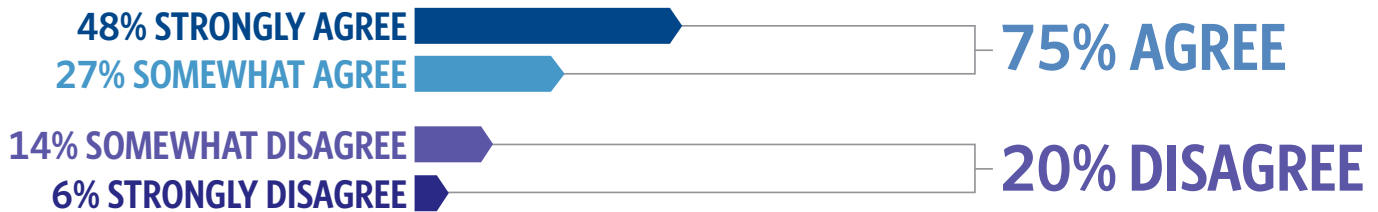
TEENS AGE 12-19



TEENS AGE 15-19

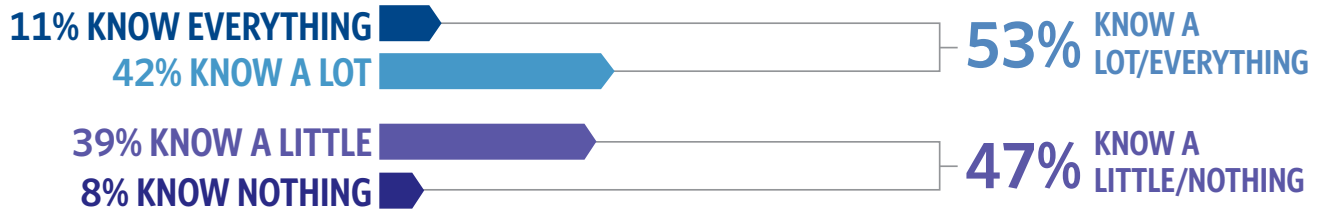


TEENS AGE 12-14

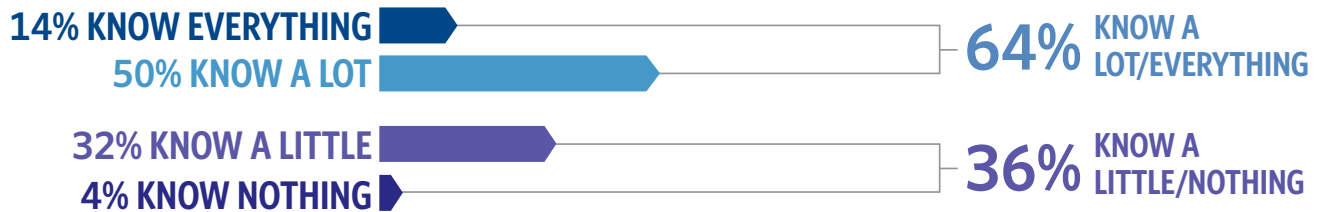


Overall, how much do you feel you know about male condoms and how to use them?

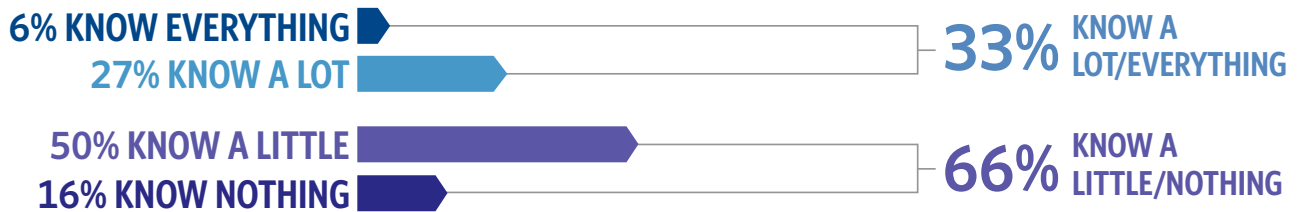
TEENS AGE 12-19



TEENS AGE 15-19



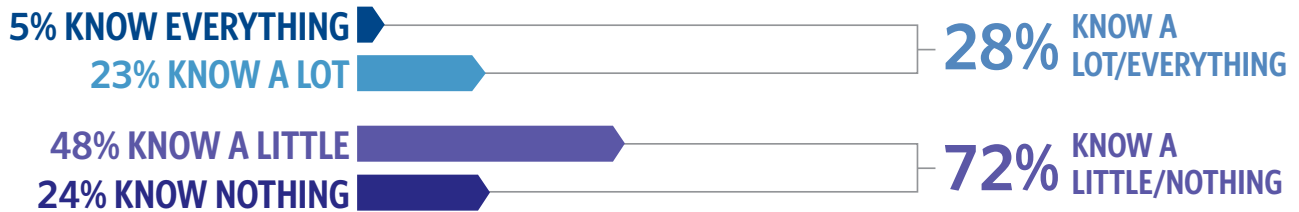
TEENS AGE 12-14



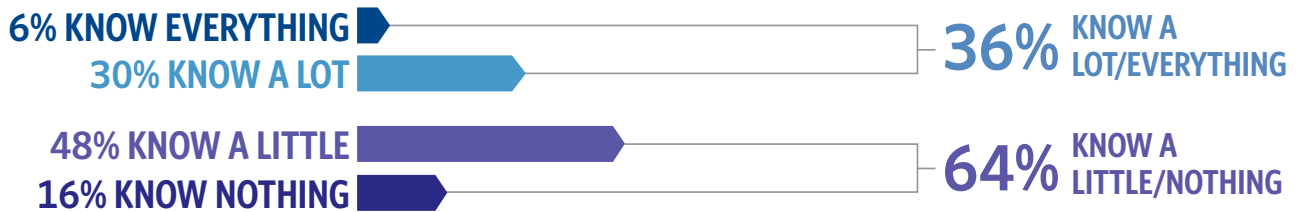
FAST FACT: Teen girls (53%) are more likely than teen boys (41%) to say they know little or nothing about male condoms.

Overall, how much do you feel you know about birth control pills and how to use them?

TEENS AGE 12-19



TEENS AGE 15-19

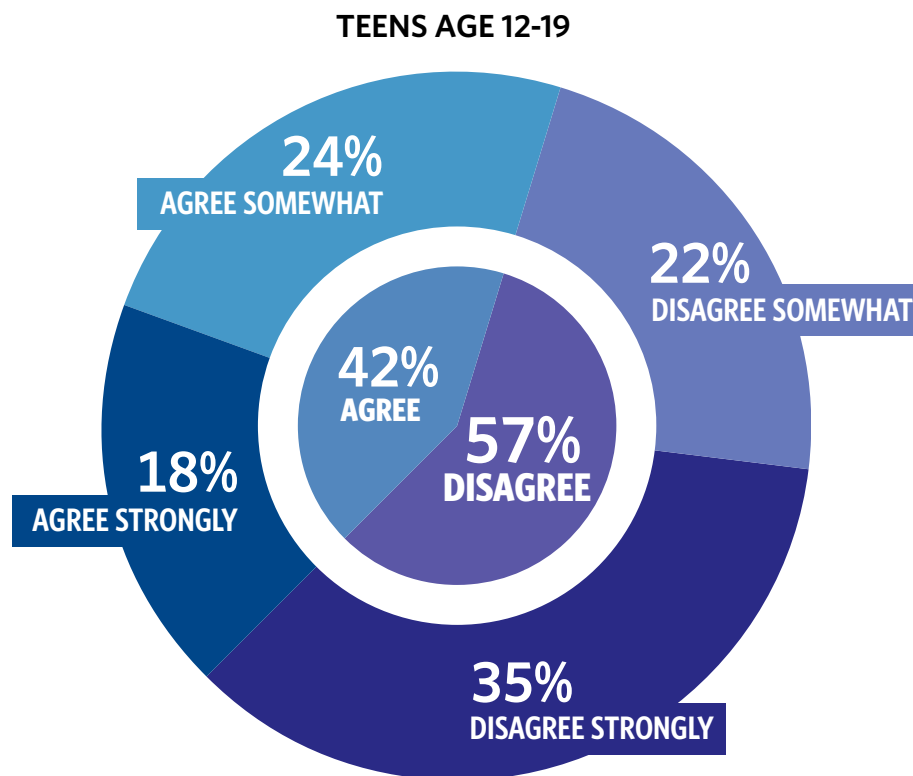


TEENS AGE 12-14



FAST FACT: Teen boys (87%) are far more likely than teen girls (56%) to say they know little or nothing about birth control pills.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “It doesn’t matter whether you use birth control or not, when it is your time to get pregnant it will happen.”



FAST FACT: Hispanic and non-Hispanic black teens (47% and 44% respectively) are slightly more likely than non-Hispanic white teens (38%) to agree pregnancy will happen whether one uses birth control or not.

Context and Comment: Taken together, Charts 15-18 underscore that getting sexually active teens to use contraception consistently and carefully goes beyond simple issues of cost, access, and information. Although about eight in 10 teens say they have all the information they need to avoid an unplanned pregnancy, many teens (including older teens) say they know little or nothing about condoms and birth control pills, the two most commonly used methods of contraception. Moreover, an alarming four in 10 teens are skeptical about the effectiveness of birth control—recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century.

If you have had sexual intercourse, do you wish you had waited longer?

SEXUALLY EXPERIENCED TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19

67% YES

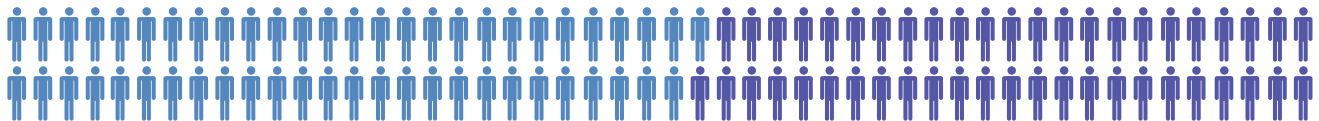
33% NO



SEXUALLY EXPERIENCED TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19

53% YES

47% NO



SEXUALLY EXPERIENCED TEENS AGE 15-19

55% YES

45% NO



SEXUALLY EXPERIENCED TEENS AGE 12-14

78% YES

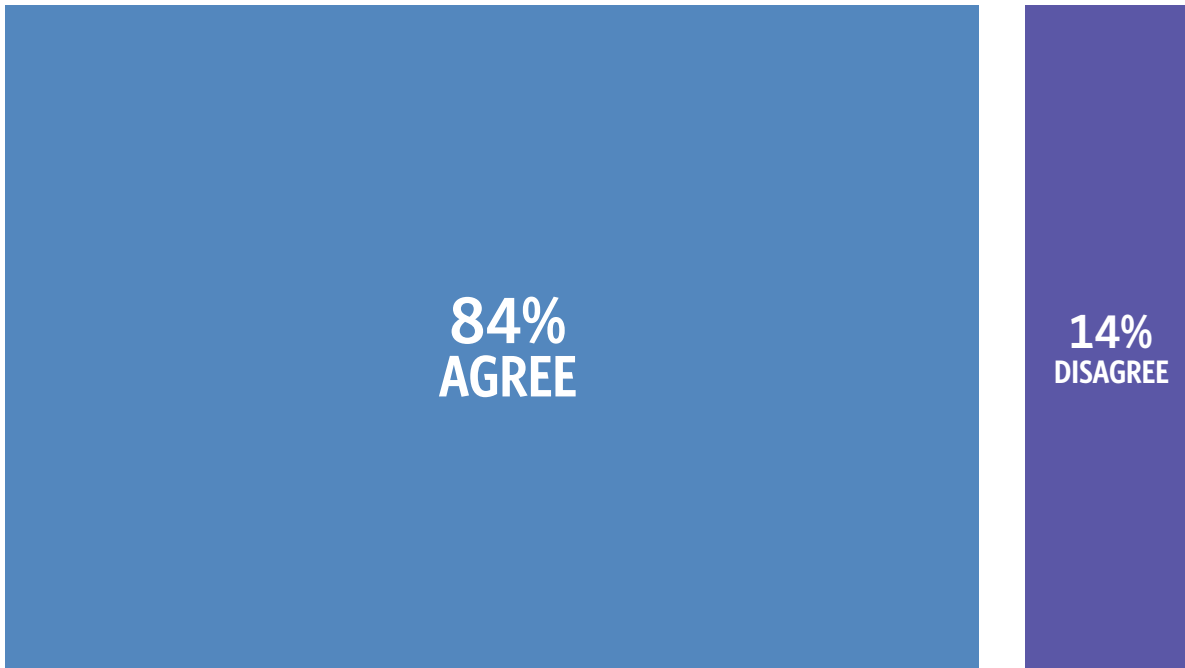
22% NO



Context and Comment: In retrospect, many teens wish they had waited longer to have sex. This particular finding is not surprising to those who have seen previous National Campaign surveys. In fact, over the years, one of the most consistent findings reported in the *With One Voice* series has been the regret many teens feel about the timing of early sexual activity.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Most high school-age teens have had sex.”

TEENS AGE 12-19

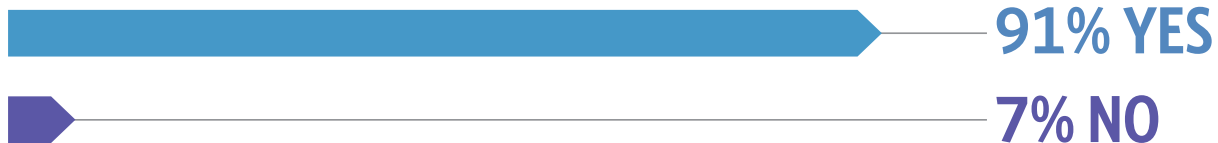


FAST FACT: Teen girls (89%) are more likely than teen boys to believe most high school age youth have had sex.

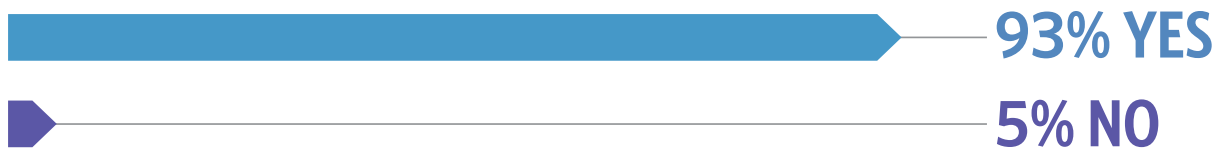
Context and Comment: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, less than half (47%) of high school students say they have had sex. Teens apparently have not received the news. More than eight in 10 teens surveyed incorrectly believe that most high school age youth have had sex. Research suggests that this misperception is important—teens who *think* their peers are having sex are far more likely to have sex themselves than those who believe their peers, by and large, are not sexually experienced.

Do you want to be married before you have have/father a child?

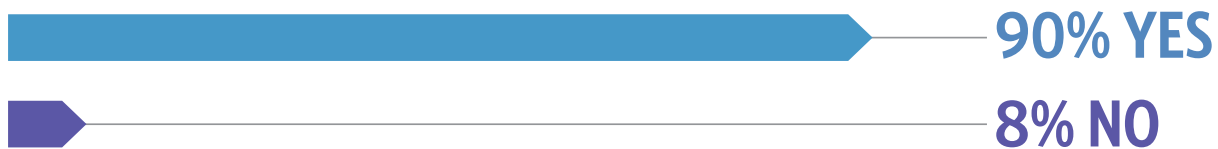
TEENS AGE 12-19



TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19



TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19



FAST FACT: An overwhelming proportion of teens—of all race/ethnicities, from all regions of the country, and of all ages—say they want to be married before having children.

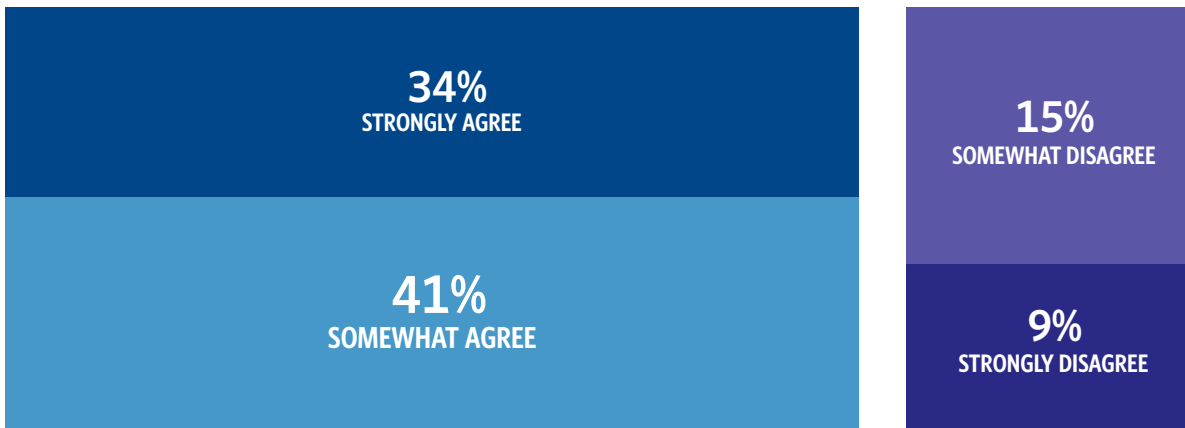
MEDIA

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“When a TV show or character I like deals with teen pregnancy,
it makes me think more about my own risk of causing a
pregnancy and how to avoid it.”

TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19

75% AGREE

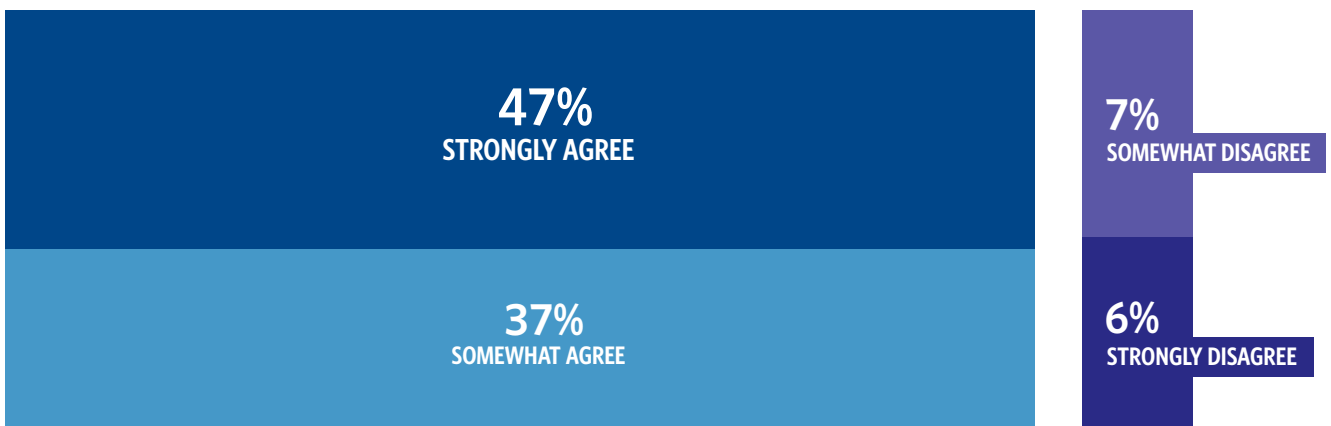
24% DISAGREE



TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19

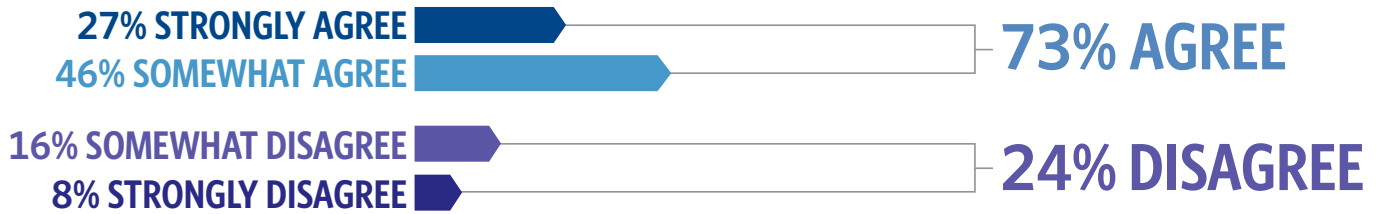
84% AGREE

13% DISAGREE

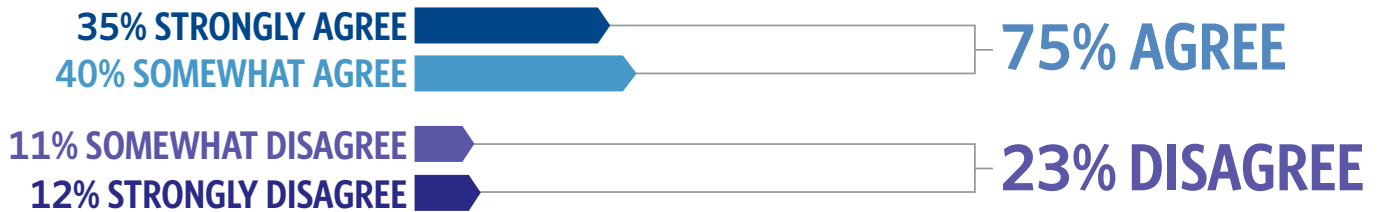


How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Stories and events in TV shows and other media about sex, love,
and relationships can be a good way to start conversations with
teens about these topics.”

TEENS AGE 12-19



ADULTS



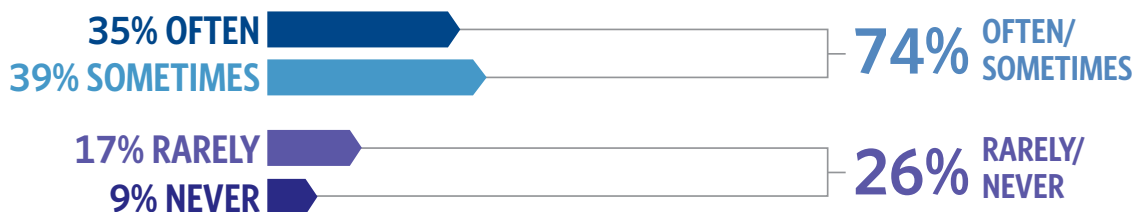
FAST FACT: Non-Hispanic black teens (85%) are more likely than Hispanic (76%) or non-Hispanic white teens (71%) to say the media is a good conversation starter when it comes to talking about sex, love, and relationships.

How often would you say you and your parents/children have talked about sex, love, and relationships because of something you saw in popular media (like television shows)?

TEENS AGE 12-19



ADULTS WHO HAVE TEEN CHILDREN



FAST FACT: Teen girls (57%) are far more likely than teen boys (36%) to say that popular media has sparked a conversation with their parents about sex, love, and relationships.

Context and Comment: When it comes to apportioning blame for any number of social ills, the media is frequently fingered as a culprit. Charts 22-24 tell a quite different story. Many teens and adults have used what they have seen in popular media as a springboard to talk with each other about challenging topics like sex, love, and relationships; surely a good thing. Moreover, many young people say that when shows they watch and the characters they identify with deal with teen pregnancy, that helps them think more about their *own* risk of early pregnancy and parenting; again, surely a good thing. In short, the media can be, and often is, a force for good on teen pregnancy and related issues.

Teen pregnancy has been the focus of many entertainment programs recently. Thinking specifically about MTV's *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* shows, do you think these shows (1) help teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenting, or (2) make pregnancy and parenthood look easy and fun?

TEENS AGE 12-19 WHO HAVE SEEN EITHER OR BOTH OF THE MTV SHOWS

77% Help teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenting

23% Make pregnancy and parenthood look easy and fun

ADULTS WHO HAVE SEEN EITHER OR BOTH OF THE MTV SHOWS

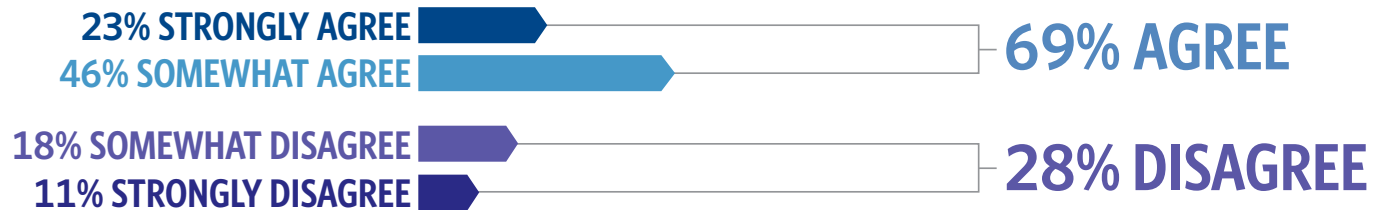
53% Help teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenting

48% Make pregnancy and parenthood look easy and fun

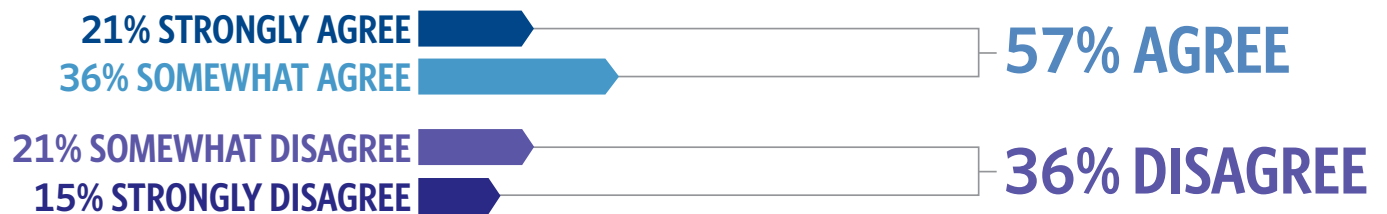
Context and Comment: The MTV programs *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom* have garnered millions and millions of teen viewers. The shows have also spawned a cottage industry of sorts—those who argue that the shows glamorize teen pregnancy and those who believe the shows are cautionary tales about the challenges of teen pregnancy and parenthood. Although adults who have seen the shows are almost evenly split about whether they are salacious or sobering, teens are decidedly not. The overwhelming majority of those who have seen the shows say they help teens better understand the challenges of pregnancy and parenting.

Teen pregnancy has declined by almost 40% over the past two decades. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: **“One reason for the decline is increased media attention to the issue.”**

TEENS AGE 12-19



ADULTS

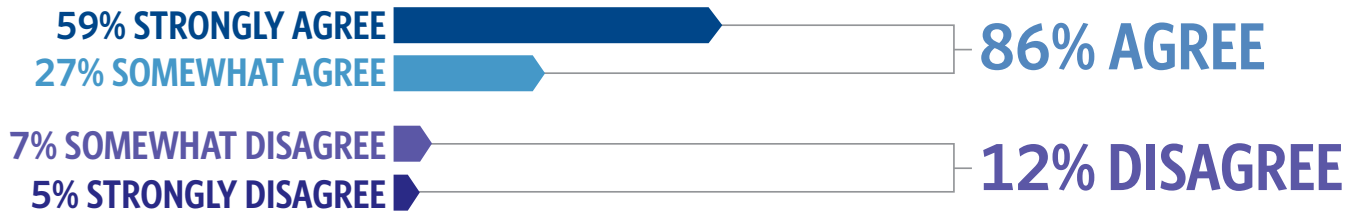


FAST FACT: Hispanic adults (72%) are more likely than non-Hispanic black (62%) and non-Hispanic white adults (55%) to say media attention has contributed to the declines in teen pregnancy.

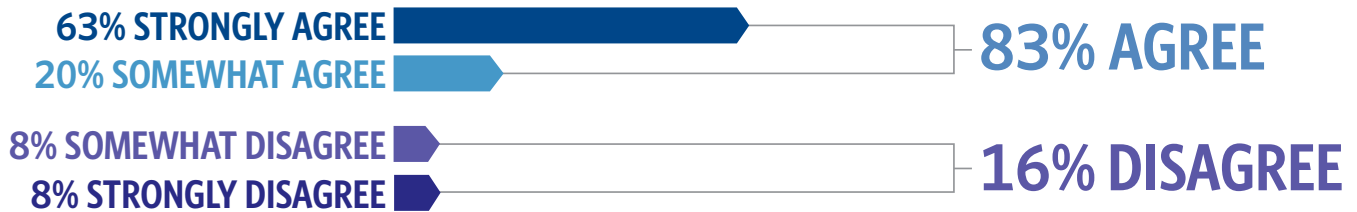
TEEN PREGNANCY AND EDUCATION

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
“Reducing teen pregnancy is a very effective way to reduce the high school dropout rate and improve academic achievement.”

TEENS AGE 12-19



ADULTS



Context and Comment: For more information and analysis on the important connection between teen pregnancy and educational attainment, as well as some of the innovative approaches being taken nationwide to help young people avoid teen pregnancy and complete their education, please see The National Campaign publication, *Teen Pregnancy and High School Drop Out: What Communities Can Do to Address These Issues* (available at www.TheNationalCampaign.org).

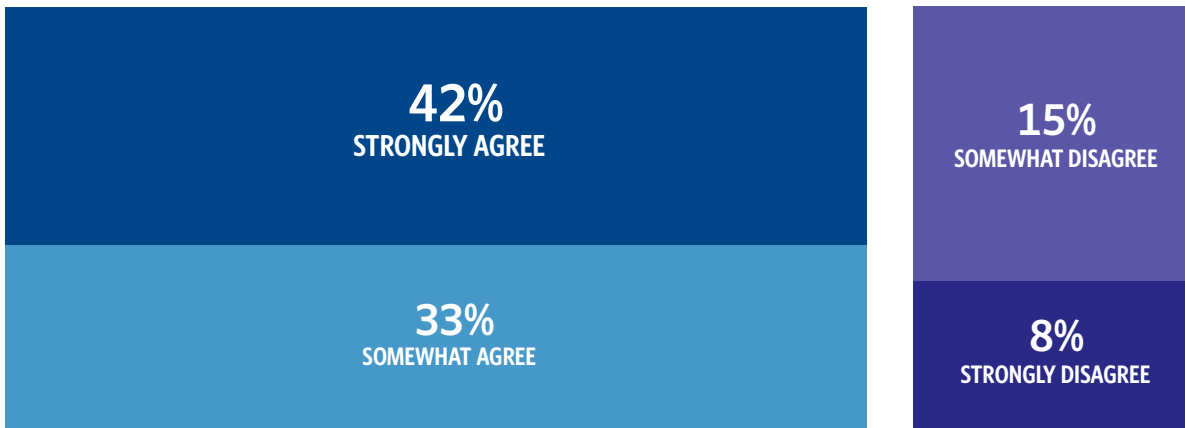
TEEN PREGNANCY AND RELIGION

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Religious leaders and groups should be doing more to help prevent teen pregnancy."

TEENS AGE 12-19

75% AGREE

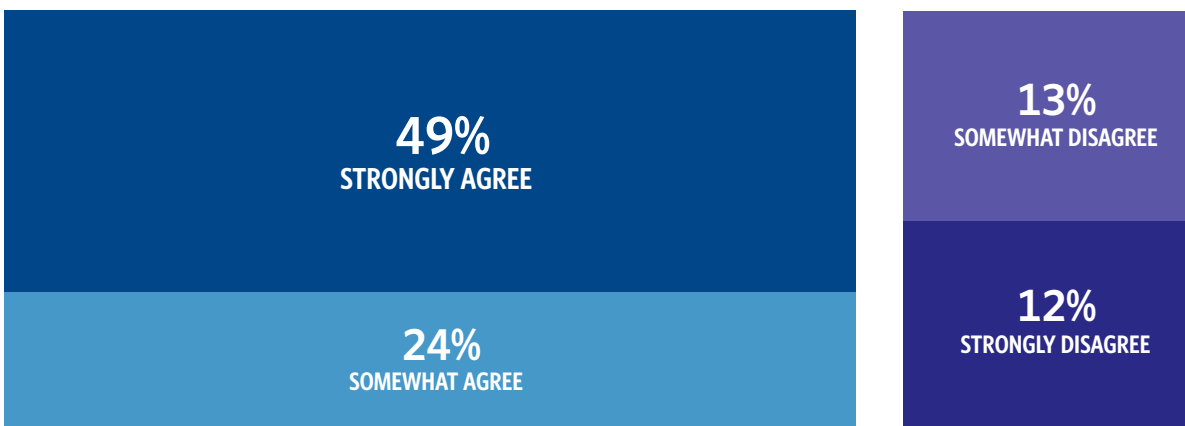
23% DISAGREE



ADULTS

73% AGREE

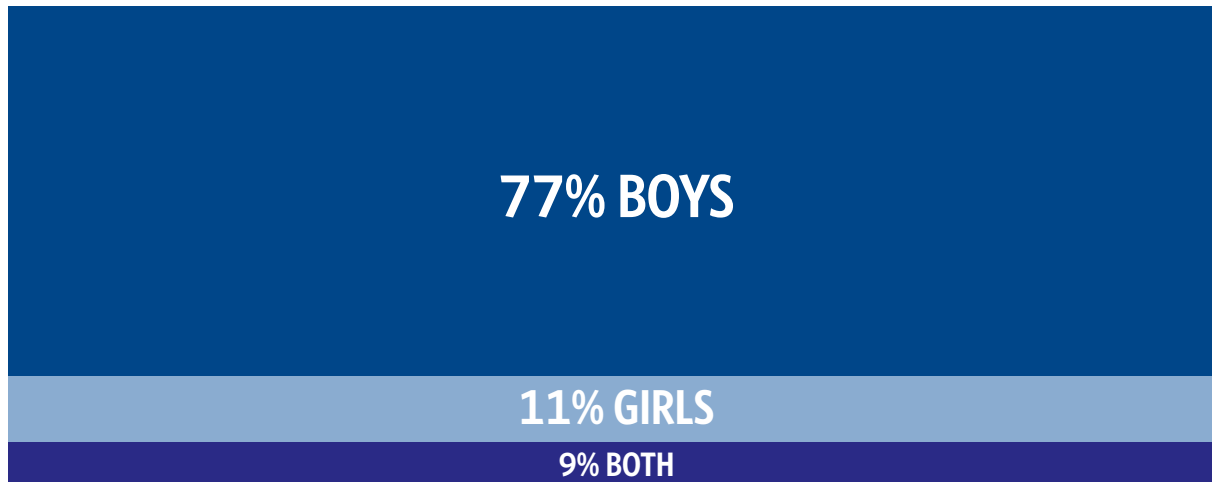
25% DISAGREE



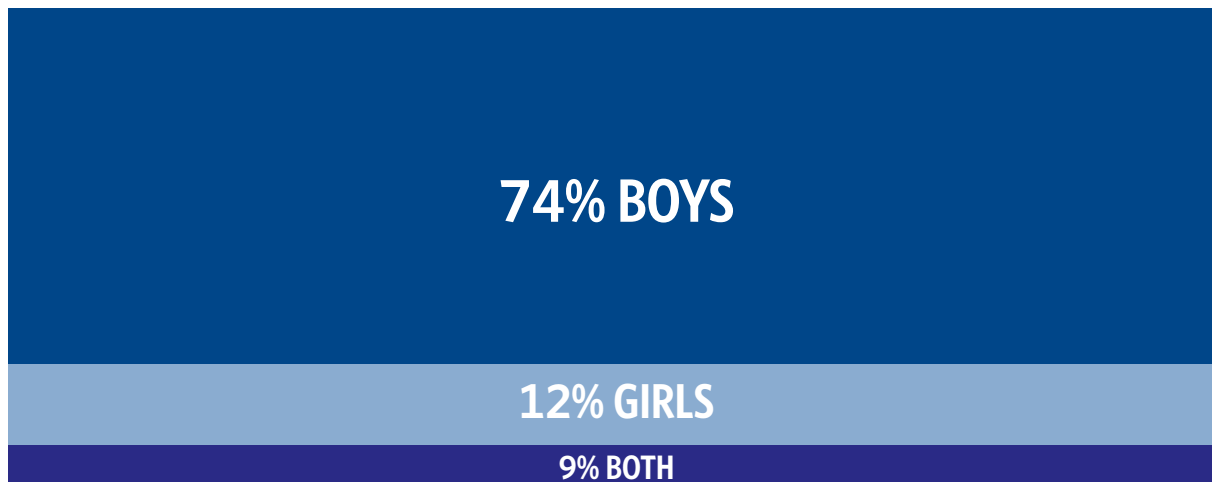
GENDER ROLES AND PRESSURE

Who is more likely to initiate sex?

TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19



TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19



Who is most likely to begin conversations about using birth control?

TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19

11% BOYS

85% GIRLS



2% Both

3% Don't know/ refused

TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19

20% BOYS

74% GIRLS



3% Both

3% Don't know/ refused

How often has someone pressured you to do sexual things that made you uncomfortable or took you father sexually than you wanted to go?

TEEN GIRLS AGE 12-19

68% NEVER

28% SOMETIMES



4% Often

TEEN BOYS AGE 12-19

81% NEVER

17% SOMETIMES



2% Often

FAST FACT: Among teen girls age 15-19, fully *one-third* say they are sometimes pressured to do sexual things that made them uncomfortable.



The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors.

If we are successful, child and family well-being will improve. There will be less poverty, more opportunities for young men and women to complete their education or achieve other life goals, fewer abortions, and a stronger nation.

TheNationalCampaign.org

StayTeen.org

Bedsider.org

