
Toplines



HARVARD UNIVERSITY
JOHN F. KENNEDY
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

National Public Radio/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School of Government

Sex Education in America

Principals Survey

January 2004

Methodology

The NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School National Survey on Sex Education is part of an ongoing project of National Public Radio, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Representatives of the three sponsors worked together to develop the survey questionnaire and to analyze the results, with NPR maintaining sole editorial control over its broadcasts on the surveys. The project team includes:

From NPR: Marcus D. Rosenbaum, Senior Editor; Susan Davis, Associate Editor; Ellen Guettler, Assistant Editor.

From the Kaiser Family Foundation: Drew Altman, President and Chief Executive Officer; Matt James, Senior Vice President of Media and Public Education and Executive Director of kaisernetwork.org; Mollyann Brodie, Vice President, Director of Public Opinion and Media Research; and Rebecca Levin, Research Associate.

From the Kennedy School: Robert J. Blendon, a Harvard University professor who holds joint appointments in the School of Public Health and the Kennedy School of Government; Stephen R. Pelletier, Research Coordinator for the Harvard Opinion Research Program; John M. Benson, Managing Director of the Harvard Opinion Research Program; and Elizabeth Mackie, Research Associate.

The results of this project are based on two nationwide telephone surveys: a survey of the general public and a survey of principals. The survey of the general public was conducted among a random nationally representative sample of 1,759 respondents 18 years of age or older, including an oversample of parents of children in 7th through 12th grade which resulted in interviews with 1001 parents. Statistical results for the total survey were weighted to be representative of the national population. The margin of sampling error for the survey is plus or minus 3 percentage points for total respondents and plus or minus 4.7 percentage points for parents. The survey of principals was conducted among 303 principals of public middle, junior, and senior high schools across the country. Schools were randomly and proportionally selected from a national database of public schools by type of school (middle, junior, and senior high). Statistical results were weighted to be representative of public middle, junior, and senior high schools in the United States based on geographic region and type of residential area (urban, suburban, non-metropolitan). The margin of sampling error for the survey is plus or minus 6 percentage points for total respondents. For results based on subsets of respondents the margin of error is higher.

Princeton Survey Research Associates conducted the fieldwork for both surveys between September and October, 2003. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

An asterisk () indicates a response of less than 1%.*

The Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private operating foundation dedicated to providing information and analysis on health care issues to policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the general public. The Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

Q1 Is your school a junior high school or middle school, a high school, or a comprehensive, all-grades school?

- 29** Junior high or middle school
- 62** High school
- 9** Comprehensive, all-grades school

Q2 And how many students attend your school?

- 25** 300 or less
- 18** 301-500
- 29** 501-1000
- 28** More than 1000
- 0** Don't know
- 0** Refused

Q3 Next, I am going to read you a list of issues that teens today may face. For each one, please tell me how big a problem you think it is among teens in general. First, what about (Insert) – is it a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem at all?

List items were rotated

a suicide

- 20** A major problem
- 61** A minor problem
- 19** Not a problem at all
- 1** Don't know
- 1** Refused

b unwanted pregnancy

- 39** A major problem
- 51** A minor problem
- 9** Not a problem at all
- 0** Don't know
- 1** Refused

c getting HIV/AIDS

- 19** A major problem
- 54** A minor problem
- 22** Not a problem at all
- 5** Don't know
- *** Refused

d poor academic performance

- 46** A major problem
- 50** A minor problem
- 3** Not a problem at all
- 1** Don't know
- *** Refused

e getting sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV/AIDS

- 29** A major problem
- 52** A minor problem
- 12** Not a problem at all
- 5** Don't know
- 1** Refused

f violence

- 31** A major problem
- 59** A minor problem
- 10** Not a problem at all
- *** Don't know
- *** Refused

g use of alcohol or other illegal drugs

- 68** A major problem
- 25** A minor problem
- 3** Not a problem at all
- 3** Don't know
- 1** Refused

Q4a You said suicide|unwanted pregnancy|getting HIV/AIDS|poor academic performance|getting sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV/AIDS|violence|use of alcohol or other illegal drugs were major problems. Which one would you say is the biggest problem?

Based on those who said more than one is a major problem

- 2** Suicide
- 7** Unwanted pregnancy
- 0** Getting HIV/AIDS
- 23** Poor academic performance
- 1** Getting sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV/AIDS
- 13** Violence
- 53** Use of alcohol or other illegal drugs
- 1** Don't know
- 1** Refused

n=196

Q4b And which one is the second biggest problem?

Based on those who said more than two were major problems

- 3** Suicide
- 19** Unwanted pregnancy
- 3** Getting HIV/AIDS
- 22** Poor academic performance
- 7** Getting sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV/AIDS
- 15** Violence
- 28** Use of alcohol or other illegal drugs
- 2** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=138

Q5 When it comes to teen pregnancy, STDs, and teen sexual activity in general, do you think they are bigger problems at your school than they are in other schools in the country, smaller problems, or about the same?

- 5** Bigger problems
- 45** Smaller problems
- 47** About the same
- 2** Don't know
- 0** Refused

Q6a Has sex education been taught in your school during the last two years? By sex education we mean any classes or talks in school that discuss the basics of human reproduction, dating and relationships, abstinence, AIDS, pregnancy prevention and the like. These topics may have been taught in a separate sex education course, as part of another course, like health or science, or as independent lessons in the school auditorium or gym.

- 90** Yes
- 8** No
- 1** Don't know
- 0** Refused

Q6b Was sex ed taught in your school PRIOR to two years ago?

- 84** Yes
- 8** No
- 8** Don't know
- 0** Refused

Q7 Have there been any significant changes in your sex ed curriculum over the past two years, or not?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

25 Yes
69 No
5 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

Q8 Do you think there has been more debate or controversy in your community over sex education during the last few years, or not?

13 Yes
85 No
2 Don't know
0 Refused

Q9 What grade or grades receive sex education at your school?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

Multiple answers accepted

1 Kindergarten
***** First grade
0 Second grade
0 Third grade
***** Fourth grade
3 Fifth grade
15 Sixth grade
27 Seventh grade
31 Eighth grade
53 Ninth grade
45 Tenth grade
24 Eleventh grade
19 Twelfth grade
0 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

Q10 Are students required to take sex ed or is sex ed optional?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

69 Required
30 Optional
1 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

Q11a In your school, how is sex ed taught? As a separate sex ed course, as part of another course, or as specific lessons taught independently of any other course?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 4** Separate sex ed course
- 87** Part of another course
- 9** Specific lessons taught independently of any other course
- 0** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

Q11b What course is it part of?

Based on those whose school teaches sex ed as part of another course

- 74** Health class
- 5** Physical education/gym
- 9** Biology/Science
- 2** Family/Consumer science
- 2** Life management/Living skills
- 7** Taught in more than one course
- 1** Other (Specify)
- 1** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=239

Q12 In your school, are boys and girls together in all sessions or are there any sessions in which boys and girls are taught separately?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 73** All sessions together
- 26** Sessions taught separately
- 1** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

Q13 Which of these statements best describes your school's approach to sex education?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 30** Abstinence from sexual intercourse is best for teens. Sex ed classes do not provide information about condoms and other contraceptives.
- 47** Abstinence from sexual intercourse is best for teens but some teens do not abstain, so information about condoms and other contraception is provided.
- 20** Abstinence from sexual intercourse is not the most important thing. We teach teens to make responsible decisions about sex.
- 3** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

Q14 How long does sex education typically last in your school? Does it last for one class period, several class periods or special sessions, half of a semester or quarter, a school year, or something else?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 6** One class period
- 65** Several class periods or special sessions
- 19** Half of a semester or quarter
- 2** A school year
- 7** Something else
- 1** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

Q15 Overall, do you think your school spends too little time, too much time, or the right amount of time to teach sex education properly?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 28** Too little time
- 1** Too much time
- 70** The right amount of time
- 1** Don't know
- 1** Refused

n=275

Q16 Who is mostly responsible for teaching sex education in your school: a health teacher, a physician or nurse, a counselor, a physical education instructor, or some other teacher?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

66	Health teacher
8	Physician or nurse
*	Counselor
5	Physical education instructor
14	Some other teacher
6	Responsibility equally divided between two or more teachers
1	Don't know
0	Refused

n=275

Q17 Do you feel that your teachers have received enough training to teach sex ed well or not?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

83	Yes
15	No
2	Don't know
0	Refused

n=275

Q18 How useful do you think students find sex education as it is taught in your school? Would you say very useful, somewhat useful, not very useful, or not useful at all?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

38	Very useful
57	Somewhat useful
4	Not very useful
1	Not useful at all
1	Don't know
0	Refused

n=275

Q19 How much attention do the parents of your students pay to sex education and how it is taught? Would you say parents pay a lot of attention, some attention, only a little attention, or no attention at all?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

12	Pay a lot of attention
38	Some attention
40	A little attention
6	No attention at all
4	Don't know
0	Refused

n=275

Q20 When it comes to sex education and how it is taught, would you say that the parents pay more attention to it than they do to other academic subjects, less attention, or about the same?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 9** Pay more attention
- 39** Less attention
- 52** About the same
- 1** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

Q21 Which of the following best describes your school's policy about sex ed? Parents have to give permission for their child to take sex ed. Parents are notified of sex ed, but don't have to sign a permission slip. Or, parents are not notified and do not have to sign a permission slip?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 29** Parents have to give permission
- 44** Parents are notified of sex ed, but don't have to sign a permission slip
- 24** Parents are not notified and do not have to sign a permission slip
- 1** Don't know
- *** Refused

n=275

Q22 Last year, roughly what percentage of parents, if any, did not allow their children to take sex ed either by not giving permission or taking them out of sex ed? Was it zero, one or two percent, three to five percent, or more than five percent?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

- 54** Zero
- 34** One or two percent
- 5** Three to five percent
- *** More than five percent
- 5** Don't know
- *** Refused

n=275

Q23 Which of the following ways, if any, does your school try to involve parents in their children's sex ed experience? Does your school (Insert)?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

a invite parents to attend orientation sessions about sex ed

30 Yes
68 No
2 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

b invite parents to attend classes to teach them about sexuality and sexual health issues

22 Yes
76 No
1 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

c send materials home to parents about sex ed or involve parents in parent/child homework

62 Yes
35 No
3 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

Q24 Which of these statements best describes your school's approach to sexual orientation:

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

39 Our school has organized programs and efforts to promote tolerance and understanding about all sexual orientations.
58 There has been no organized effort by the school to talk about sexual orientation.
1 Our school teaches that homosexuality is wrong.
1 Don't know
1 Refused

n=275

Q25 Is there a gay student organization or a gay-straight student alliance or similar group at your school, or not?

10 Yes
89 No
***** Don't know
0 Refused

Q26 You have probably heard of abstinence pledges, in which students sign an agreement not to engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. Thinking about the students at your school, are many students signing these pledges, or are few or no students signing them?

- 9** Many
- 60** Few or no students
- 30** Don't know
- 1** Refused

Q27 Is it your impression that over the last few years more students have been signing these pledges, fewer students have been signing them, or about the same number of students have been signing them?

- 15** More
- 4** Fewer
- 41** About the same
- 39** Don't know
- 1** Refused

Q28 How much influence has (Insert) had in deciding what topics your school's sex ed curriculum covers? A great deal, some, not too much, or no influence at all?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

a the federal government's abstinence only funding

- 3** A great deal
- 16** Some
- 25** Not too much
- 48** No influence at all
- 8** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

b your state government

- 19** A great deal
- 27** Some
- 20** Not too much
- 27** No influence at all
- 7** Don't know
- 0** Refused

n=275

c your local government or school board

29 A great deal
34 Some
15 Not too much
20 No influence at all
2 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

Q29 In recent years, how often have the following happened in your community in regard to sex education programs? First/Next, (Insert). Has this happened very often, somewhat often, not that often or not often at all?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

List items were rotated

a someone in your community wrote a letter to a newspaper

***** Very often
4 Somewhat often
12 Not that often
79 Not often at all
4 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

b someone in the community contacted you or one of your teachers

2 Very often
12 Somewhat often
22 Not that often
60 Not often at all
4 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

c a candidate raised sex education as an election issue

0 Very often
2 Somewhat often
6 Not that often
89 Not often at all
3 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

d you were contacted by an elected official

0 Very often
2 Somewhat often
5 Not that often
92 Not often at all
1 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

e you were contacted by a community or religious leader

1 Very often
9 Somewhat often
15 Not that often
73 Not often at all
2 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

f you were contacted by a family planning group such as planned parenthood

6 Very often
13 Somewhat often
19 Not that often
60 Not often at all
2 Don't know
0 Refused

n=275

g you were contacted by someone from your school system's central office

5 Very often
14 Somewhat often
19 Not that often
60 Not often at all
2 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

Q30 And how involved (Insert) in deciding what topics your school's sex ed curriculum covers?
Very involved, somewhat involved, not too involved, or not involved at all?

Based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

List items were rotated

a were parents

13 Very involved
35 Somewhat involved
15 Not too involved
29 Not involved at all
7 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

b was the school board

26 Very involved
35 Somewhat involved
10 Not too involved
27 Not involved at all
2 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

c were school administrators, such as the superintendent

28 Very involved
37 Somewhat involved
10 Not too involved
19 Not involved at all
4 Don't know
1 Refused

n=275

d were teachers

36 Very involved
43 Somewhat involved
7 Not too involved
10 Not involved at all
4 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

e were students

8 Very involved
33 Somewhat involved
15 Not too involved
36 Not involved at all
7 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

f were religious leaders

5 Very involved
17 Somewhat involved
11 Not too involved
56 Not involved at all
10 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

g were politicians, such as the governor or your local city council

3 Very involved
9 Somewhat involved
8 Not too involved
72 Not involved at all
8 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

h were other community members

7 Very involved
29 Somewhat involved
19 Not too involved
36 Not involved at all
8 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

i were family planning groups such as Planned Parenthood

8 Very involved
18 Somewhat involved
14 Not too involved
51 Not involved at all
10 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

- j** were physicians and nurses
- | | |
|-----------|---------------------|
| 21 | Very involved |
| 41 | Somewhat involved |
| 7 | Not too involved |
| 23 | Not involved at all |
| 7 | Don't know |
| * | Refused |
- n=275

Q31 Over the last couple of years, have there been discussions or debate in the PTA, school board, or at any public meetings about (Insert)? How about (Insert)?

Item a based on total, items b-e based on those whose school taught sex ed during last two years

List items were rotated

- a** whether or not to teach sex ed at all
- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 15 | Yes |
| 82 | No |
| 4 | Don't know |
| 0 | Refused |

b what topics to teach in sex ed, such as birth control or sexual orientation

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 23 | Yes |
| 74 | No |
| 4 | Don't know |
| 0 | Refused |

n=275

c teaching abstinence only

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 26 | Yes |
| 69 | No |
| 5 | Don't know |
| 0 | Refused |

n=275

d whether sex ed classes should be single-sex or coed

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 13 | Yes |
| 82 | No |
| 4 | Don't know |
| * | Refused |

n=275

e how parents give permission for their children to take or be taken out of sex ed

28 Yes
69 No
3 Don't know
***** Refused

n=275

Q32 Would you describe these discussions as very calm, somewhat calm, somewhat heated or very heated?

Based on those who say there has been debate on sex ed issues

41 Very calm
40 Somewhat calm
9 Somewhat heated
***** Very heated
10 Don't know
0 Refused

n=135

Q33 Did these discussions result in any changes in the sex ed curriculum?

Based on those who say there has been debate on sex ed issues

25 Yes
74 No
2 Don't know
0 Refused

n=135

Q34 Does your school's health program currently make condoms available to students who ask for them, or not?

7 Yes
90 No
2 Don't know
0 Refused

Q35 In the last few years, do you think more students or fewer students have become active in organizations concerned with promoting teenage sexual abstinence?

36 More students involved
13 Fewer students involved
34 No change (Volunteered)
18 Don't know
0 Refused

Q36a I just have two last sets of questions about your school. What percent of your students are from lower income families? Just your best estimate is fine.

- 34** 25% or less
- 33** 26% to 50 percent
- 17** 51% to 75 percent
- 14** 76% to 100 percent
- 2** Don't know/Refused

Q36b And what percent of your students are from middle income families? Just your best estimate is fine.

- 24** 25% or less
- 37** 26% to 50 percent
- 28** 51% to 75 percent
- 8** 76% to 100 percent
- 3** Don't know/Refused

Q36c And what percent are from upper income families? Just your best estimate is fine.

- 84** 25% or less
- 12** 26% to 50 percent
- 1** 51% to 75 percent
- 1** 76% to 100 percent
- 3** Don't know/Refused

Q37a Now thinking about the racial and ethnic composition of your student body--what percent of your students are white? Just your best estimate is fine.

- 19** 25% or less
- 9** 26% to 50 percent
- 18** 51% to 75 percent
- 53** 76% to 100 percent
- 1** Don't know/Refused

Q37b And what percent of your students are African American or black? Just your best estimate is fine.

- 78** 25% or less
- 13** 26% to 50 percent
- 3** 51% to 75 percent
- 5** 76% to 100 percent
- 1** Don't know/Refused

Q37c And, finally, what percent of your students are Latino or Hispanic? Just your best estimate is fine.

- 80** 25% or less
- 8** 26% to 50 percent
- 6** 51% to 75 percent
- 4** 76% to 100 percent
- 1** Don't know/Refused