

Teen Sexual Activity and Birth Control Use in New York City

Nearly half of public high school students in New York City (NYC) and nationwide say they have had sex. About 1 in 3 are currently sexually active (had sex in the last 3 months). Encouraging adolescents to delay sex—or, if sexually active, to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—requires education, support, and services. Without access to birth control, sexual activity during adolescence poses health, social, and economic risks including pregnancy and STIs. Left untreated, curable but often asymptomatic STIs, such as chlamydia, can cause infertility and other

serious health problems.

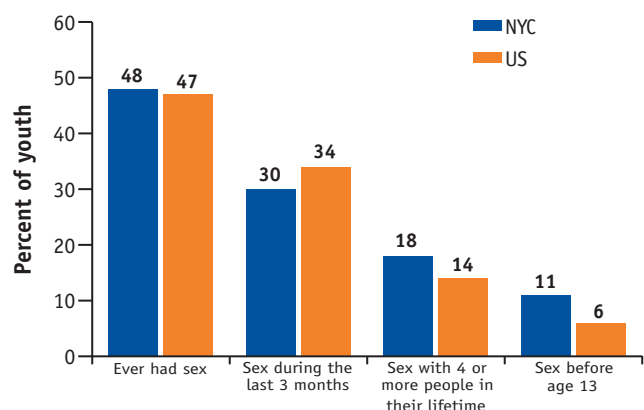
Teen parents are less likely to complete high school, and their infants are at higher risk for low birth weight, behavior disorders, child abuse, and future poverty. A recent citywide survey of youth, presented in detail below, indicates that more than 9,400 females and 7,500 males report that they have been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant.

This report presents new information about teen pregnancy and STI risk as well as birth control use among sexually active NYC youth in grades 9 through 12. It also provides recommendations for parents, schools, health care providers and others to help protect

About 1 in 3 youth are currently sexually active

- Overall, nearly half of NYC youth (48%) say they have had sex (41% of 9th graders and 58% of 12th graders). Of those, nearly two thirds (63%) say they are currently sexually active. This means that about 1 in 3 NYC youth report current sexual activity. The proportion who report current sexual activity has fallen to 30% (down from 37% in 2001). This is lower than the national rate (34%).
- The proportion of NYC youth who have ever had sex (48%) is about the same as nationwide—and has been stable since 1997.
- Nearly 1 in 5 NYC youth report having had 4 or more sex partners in their lifetime. About 1 in 10 (11%) had sex before age 13.

Percent of youth in NYC and the US reporting sexual activity, 2005

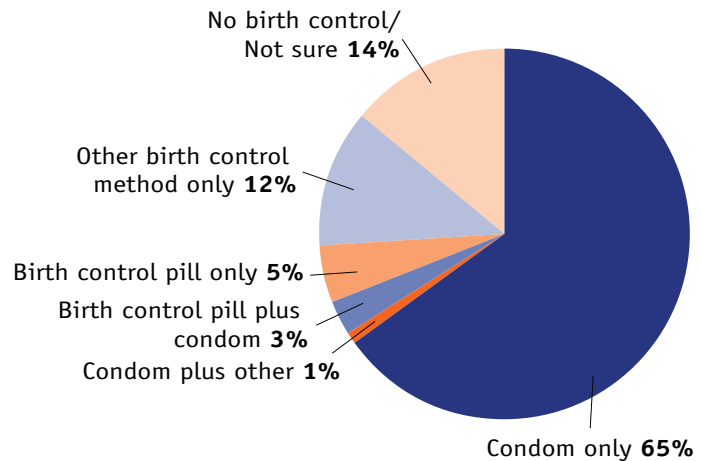


Note: This report is based on results of the 2005 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a self-administered, anonymous questionnaire adapted for New York City from protocols developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey has been conducted every other year since 1997 by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Education. This sample, taken from the New York City public high schools, provides prevalence data for the city as a whole, each borough, and the three NYC DOHMH District Public Health Office (DPHO) target areas (South Bronx, North and Central Brooklyn, and East and Central Harlem). For full details, see "My Community's Health" at nyc.gov/health.

Most youth rely on condoms for birth control

- More than two thirds (69%) of sexually active NYC youth use condoms, compared to 63% nationwide.
- Youth who used a condom the last time they had sex are less likely to have ever been pregnant/gotten someone pregnant (11%) than those who did not (27%).
- Only 8% of NYC youth report using birth control pills, versus 18% nationwide.
- Dual protection—using condoms to protect against HIV and other STIs and additional contraception to prevent pregnancy—is uncommon. Only 4% of sexually active NYC youth report using condoms with another form of birth control (i.e., pill, “shot”/injection of hormonal contraception, or some other method), versus 8% nationwide.

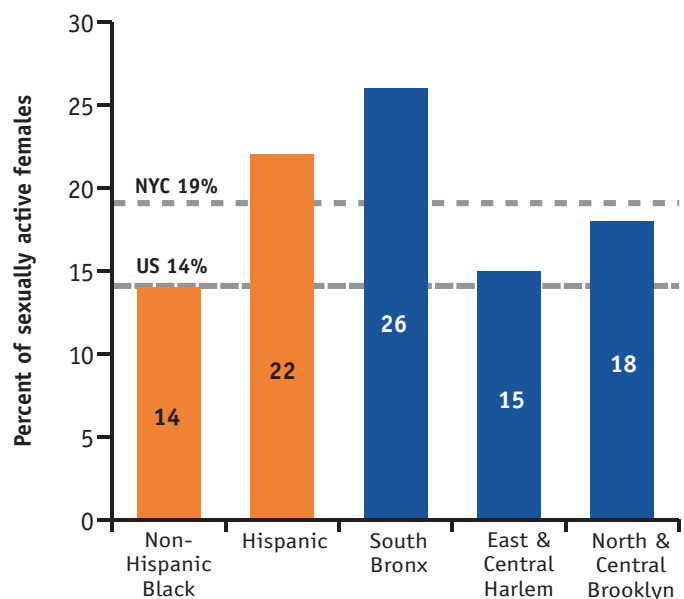
Percent of NYC youth who used birth control the last time they had sex, by method, 2005



Birth control use among females varies by neighborhood and race/ethnicity

- Overall, nearly 1 in 5 sexually active females (19%) did not use birth control the last time they had sex, compared to 14% nationwide.
- Hispanic females (22%) are more likely than non-Hispanic black females (14%) to report having sex without birth control.
- Among three areas in NYC with persistently high teen pregnancy rates (South Bronx, East and Central Harlem, and North and Central Brooklyn), females in the South Bronx (26%) are most likely to report having sex without birth control.
- Reports of no birth control use among females are similar across the NYC boroughs.

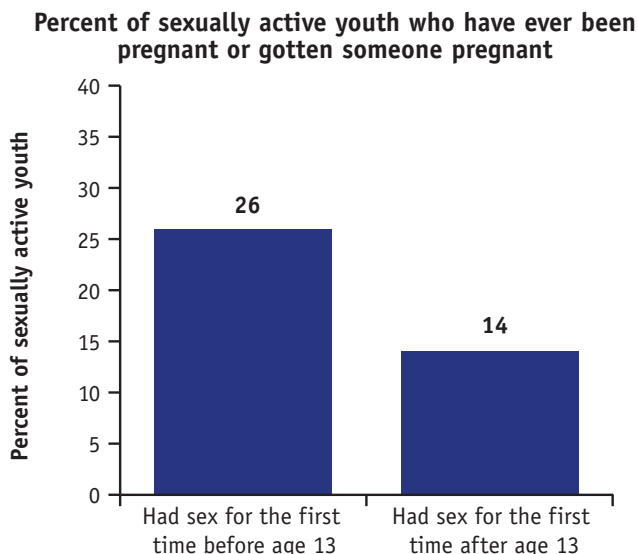
Percent of females who did not use birth control the last time they had sex*



*The NYC average includes non-Hispanic whites, Asians and “other” race/ethnic groups not shown here due to small sample sizes.

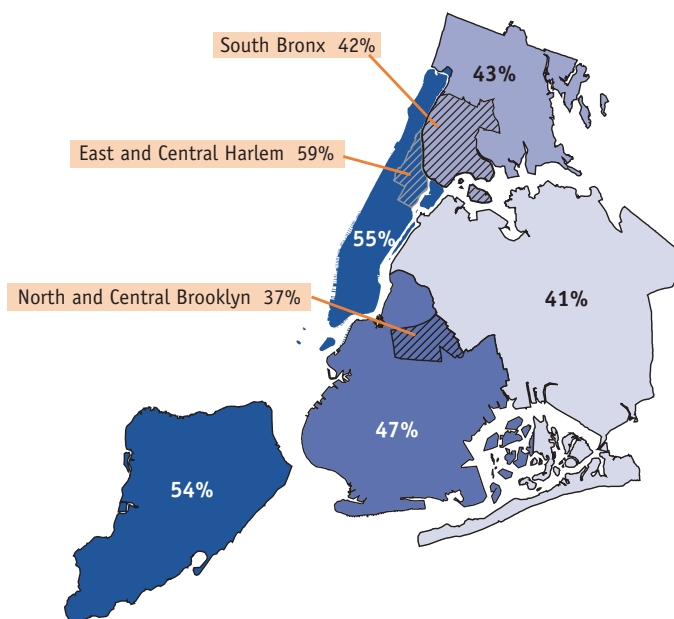
Age of first sex is associated with pregnancy

- Overall, 6% of NYC youth surveyed say that they have either been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant, with 12th graders more likely to report a history of pregnancy than younger teens (8% of 12th graders compared to 5% of 9th graders).
- Among sexually active youth, 16% say they have ever been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant.
- Sexually active youth who first had sex before the age of 13 are more likely than others to say they have ever been pregnant/gotten someone pregnant (26% vs. 14%).



Knowledge of emergency contraception varies by gender and borough

Percent of NYC youth who have heard of emergency contraception



- Overall, less than half (47%) of NYC youth have heard of emergency contraceptive pills (EC), sometimes called “morning-after” pills. Among sexually active youth, only 56% report that they have heard of EC.
- Females are more likely than males to report that they have heard of EC (54% vs. 39%).
- Youth in higher grades are more likely than younger teens to report knowledge of EC (63% of 12th graders vs. 36% of 9th graders).
- Youth in Manhattan (55%) and Staten Island (54%) are more likely to report knowledge of EC than youth in Queens (41%) and the Bronx (43%).
- Youth in East and Central Harlem more commonly report having heard of EC than youth in North and Central Brooklyn (59% vs. 37%).

Plan B® is the only FDA-approved brand of emergency contraceptive pills (EC). It is a safe and effective method of pregnancy prevention when no other birth control is used, when a birth control method fails, or after forced sex. If taken within 72 hours of unprotected sex, Plan B® is up to 89% effective in preventing pregnancy — and is moderately effective if taken up to 5 days after unprotected sex. The sooner EC pills are taken after unprotected sex, the more effective they are. In New York City, adults 18 and over can purchase Plan B® over the counter in pharmacies; women of all ages can get Plan B® free at Health Department STD clinics, and at little or no cost at clinics throughout the city. More information is available by calling 311.

Recommendations

Parents can help adolescents develop and practice healthy behaviors:

- Encourage your teenager to delay sexual activity.
- Emphasize the importance of using birth control and condoms if your teen becomes sexually active.

Schools, youth programs and other adults should provide opportunities for adolescents to develop healthy and productive lives:

- Provide age-appropriate sex education and encourage parent-child communication.
- Create opportunities for adolescents to develop academic, social, arts, athletic, and vocational competence.

Health care providers should take a sexual history of all adolescent patients and offer them sexual and reproductive health services:

- Take a sexual history and psychosocial assessment, including screening for physical and sexual violence, and test for pregnancy and STIs when indicated.
- Encourage adolescents to delay initiation of sexual intercourse.
- Help sexually active adolescents choose an appropriate method of birth control.
- Urge all sexually active adolescents to use latex or polyurethane condoms to protect against HIV and other STIs—no matter what kind of birth control they use.
- Encourage sexually active adolescents to limit their number of sexual partners.
- Counsel all adolescents about EC and give sexually active female adolescents advance prescriptions and/or pill packs during routine healthcare visits.

Sexual and reproductive health resources:
www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/ms/ms-public.shtml
 NYC DOHMH Healthy Teens Initiative:
www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/ms/ms-hti-guide.pdf
 Free and low cost services for adolescents and adults: Call 311
 Free NYC Condoms:
 Call 311 or visit www.nycondom.org
 Free and confidential STD clinics:
www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std2.shtml
 For more information:
http://www.ppnyc.org
www.advocatesforyouth.org/professionals.htm
www.adolescenthealth.org/PositionPapers.htm
www.Not-2-Late.com
www.teenpregnancy.org
 NYC YRBS
www.nyc.gov/health/epiquery

A report from the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey



NYC Vital Signs

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