

Sexual Behaviors

The following report is based on a portion of self-reported data from the 2002 Hamilton County Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), conducted among 2,752 Hamilton County students in grades 9 through 12. A total of 19 schools, including 16 public and 3 private schools, participated in the survey. The questionnaire was designed by the Centers for Disease Control with eight questions generated by the Chattanooga Hamilton County Regional Health Council. The questionnaire included 96 questions addressing behaviors concerning personal safety, violence, depression and suicidal thoughts, tobacco use, alcohol and drug use, sexual behaviors, diet, and exercise. Within the analysis, all discussions of differences between respondent groups are based on differences which are statistically significant.

The survey was administered in the classroom and relies on anonymous, self-reported responses.

Please note that, in this report on sexual behaviors, some analysis is reflective of all students, including students who have not participated in sexual activities. Other analysis is reflective only of students who have participated in sexual activity. For example, data about age of first sexual intercourse and use of contraceptives are based on students who have had sexual intercourse. On the other hand, data concerning the incidence of sexual intercourse within the past three months, and number of sexual partners are based on all students. The particular student base is noted in the analysis.

Executive Summary

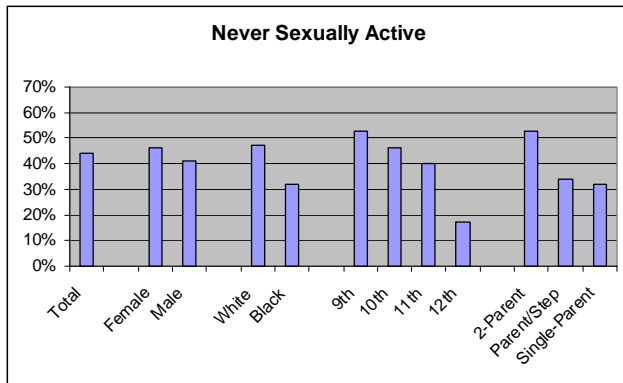
- ▼ Overall, 44% of student respondents had ever had sexual intercourse, and 30% had sexual intercourse within the past three months. Forty-five percent have ever participated in oral sex.
- ▼ Forty-four percent of students surveyed have had neither sexual intercourse nor oral sex.
- ▼ The percentage of students who have ever had sexual intercourse increases with grade level, from 37% in 9th grade to 54% in 12th grade.
- ▼ While males and females were equally likely to have ever had sexual intercourse, male students initiate sex at an earlier age. Forty-two percent of males and 28% of females who have had sexual intercourse report that their first experience occurred before age 14. Further, male students were more likely than female students to have had four or more sexual partners (40% vs. 31%), used alcohol or drugs before intercourse (28% vs. 16%), used condoms last time (64% vs. 56%), and had oral sex (49% vs. 41%).
- ▼ A significantly higher percentage of black students (64%) than white students (38%) have ever had sexual intercourse. In addition, among those having sexual intercourse, black students were more likely than white students to have had sexual intercourse before age 14 (25% vs. 13%), had four or more sexual partners (31% vs. 28%), and to have ever been or gotten someone pregnant (10% vs. 4%). A larger proportion of black students (67%) than white students (56%) used a condom the last time they had intercourse.
- ▼ Seven out of ten students do not consider oral sex as “having sex.”
- ▼ Forty-five percent of students reported ever participating in oral sex. White students (49%) were more likely than black students (32%) to have ever participated in oral sex. Fewer white students (28%) consider oral sex as “having sex” than black students (38%).

- ▼ Students from two-parent homes were less likely than students from parent/stepparent or single-parent homes to have engaged in sexual activity. Better performing students (primarily A's or B's) were less likely to be sexually active than poorer performing students (primarily C's, D's, or F's).
- ▼ One-third of students who have ever had sexual intercourse have had one sexual partner, while an equal number have had four or more partners.
- ▼ Six out of ten students who have had sexual intercourse used a condom the last time. Twelfth grade students were less likely to use a condom (51%) than students in the other grades (ranged from 61% to 63%).
- ▼ In a separate question, students were asked to name the primary form of birth control used the last time they had intercourse. The most popular form of birth control was condoms (49%), followed by birth control pills (16%), withdrawal (13%), Depo-Provera (3%), and some other method (3%). Thirteen percent did not use any form of birth control.
- ▼ Five percent of all students surveyed, and 11% of students who have had sexual intercourse, indicated they had been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant. Among students who did not use any birth control last time they had sex, the percentage reporting pregnancies increased to 29%.

I. Students Never Sexually Active

Forty-four percent of students have not engaged in either oral sex or sexual intercourse. Students who have not engaged in either activity are more likely to be:

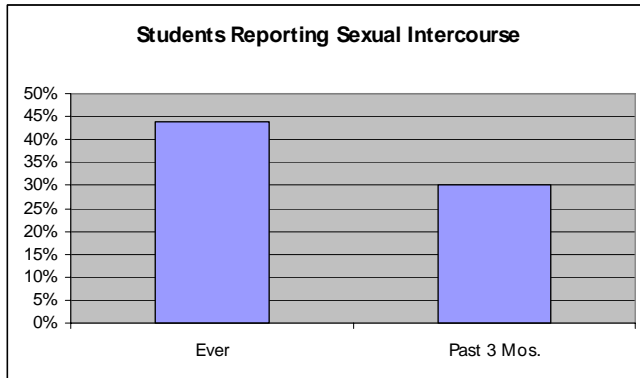
- ▼ Female than male (46% vs. 41%)
- ▼ White students than black students (47% vs. 32%)
- ▼ In 9th grade, with percentages decreasing with each grade level (9th – 53%; 10th – 46%; 11th – 40%; 12th – 17%)
- ▼ Living in a two-parent home than in a parent/stepparent home or single-parent home (53% vs. 34% and 32%)



II. Sexual Intercourse

A. Ever Had and Had Within Past Three Months

Overall, 44% of students have ever had sexual intercourse and 30% have had intercourse within the past three months.



1. Ever Had Intercourse

Overall, 44% of students reported they had ever had sexual intercourse. Males and females were equally likely to have ever had sexual intercourse. The incidence of students who have ever had sexual intercourse is higher among:

- ▼ Black students than white students (64% vs. 38%)
- ▼ Poorer performing students (mostly C's, D's, or F's) than better performing students (mostly A's or B's) (58% vs. 34%)
- ▼ Twelfth grade students, and decreases with grade level (12th – 54%; 11th – 48%; 10th – 41%; 9th – 37%)
- ▼ Students from single-parent and parent/stepparent families than students from two-parent families (58% and 54% vs. 34%)

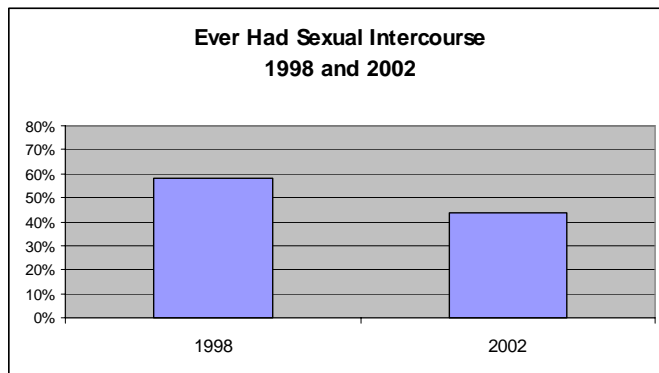
2. Sexual Intercourse within the Past Three Months

Thirty percent of all students reported they had engaged in sexual intercourse within the past three months (current sexual activity). Male and female students were equally likely to be currently sexually active. The incidence of currently sexually active students is higher among:

- ▼ Black students than white students (41% vs. 27%)
- ▼ Poorer performing students than better performing students (40% vs. 24%)
- ▼ Twelfth grade students, and decreases with grade level (12th – 42%; 11th – 34%; 10th – 28%; 9th – 12%)
- ▼ Students from single-parent and parent/stepparent families than students from two-parent families (40% and 40% vs. 23%)

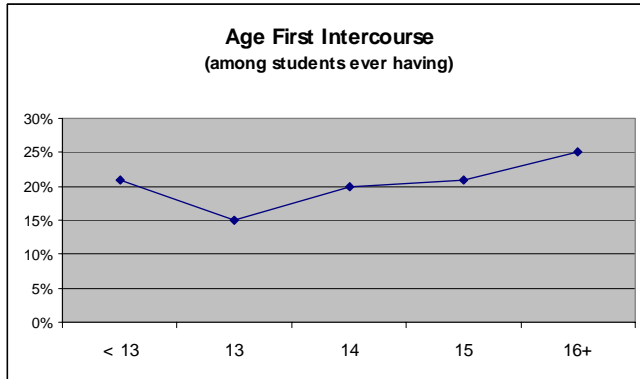
B. Comparison to the 1998 YRBS Survey

The relative number of students who have ever had sexual intercourse declined 14 percentage points since the 1998 survey (from 54% to 44%).



C. Age at First Sexual Intercourse

Among students who had ever had sexual intercourse, 21% had their first experience before age 14. Twenty-five percent were age 16 or older.

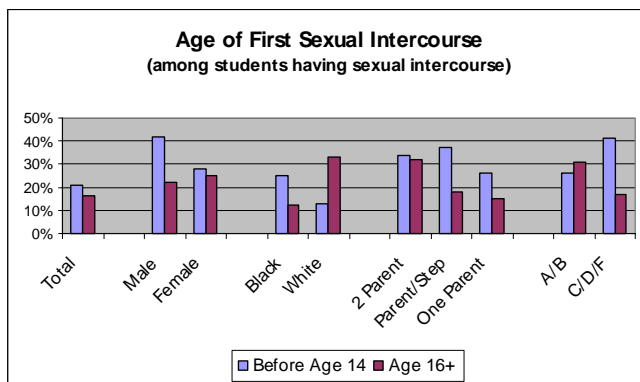


Not only are race, school performance, and living situation associated with ever having sexual intercourse, these characteristics are also associated with initiating sexual intercourse at a younger age. In addition, although both genders are equally likely to have ever had sexual intercourse, male students have their first experience at a younger age than female students. Among students ever having sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse before age 14 is more common among:

- ▼ Male students than female students (42% vs. 28%)
- ▼ Black students than white students (25% vs. 13%)
- ▼ Students from parent/stepparent or single-parent homes than from two-parent families (37% and 34% vs. 26%)
- ▼ Poorer performing students than better performing students (26% vs. 41%)

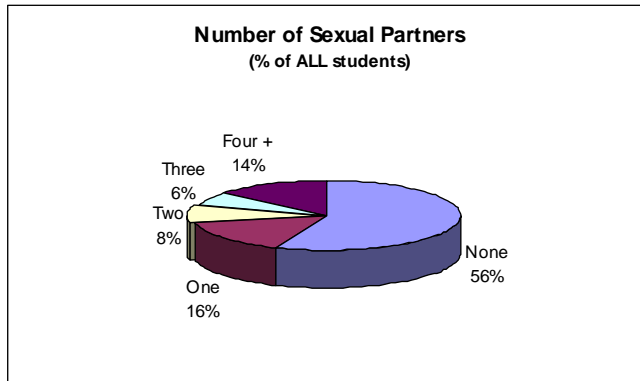
Conversely, delaying first sexual intercourse until age 16 or older is more common among:

- ▼ White students than black students (33% vs. 12%)
- ▼ Students from two-parent homes than from parent/stepparent or single-parent homes (32% vs. 18% and 15%)
- ▼ Better performing students than poorer performing students (31% vs. 17%)



D. Number of Sexual Partners

Fourteen percent of all students reported they have had sexual intercourse with four or more partners. This represents about one-third of all students who have had sexual intercourse. Fifty-six percent of students indicated they have never had sexual intercourse.

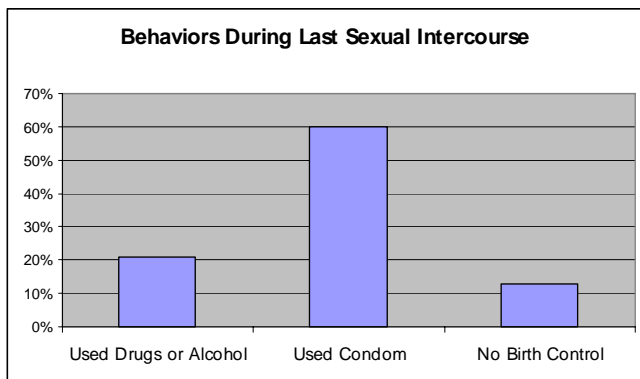


Having had four or more sexual partners is associated with several demographic characteristics as well as other risk behaviors. Having four or more sexual partners is more common among:

- ▼ Male students than female students (17% vs.11%)
- ▼ Black students than white students (23% vs.11%)
- ▼ Students from parent/stepparent and single-parent homes than two-parent homes (21% and 21% vs.9%)
- ▼ Poorer performing students than better performing students (21% vs.9%)
- ▼ Students who drink alcohol than students who don't drink (23%vs. 8%)
- ▼ Students who have had forced intercourse than those who have not (38% vs.14%)
- ▼ Students who have used ecstasy than students who have not (45% vs.11%)

E. Behaviors During Last Intercourse

Students indicated, for the last time they had sexual intercourse, whether or not they used alcohol, condoms, and their primary method of birth control. The percentages of students using drugs or alcohol, condoms, and no birth control are illustrated graphically below.



1. Alcohol or Drug Use

Among students who had ever had sexual intercourse, 21% used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse. Use of drugs or alcohol before the last sexual intercourse was higher among:

- ▼ Male students than female students (28% vs.16%)
- ▼ White students than black students (25% vs.19%)
- ▼ Poorer performing students than better performing students (26% vs. 21%)

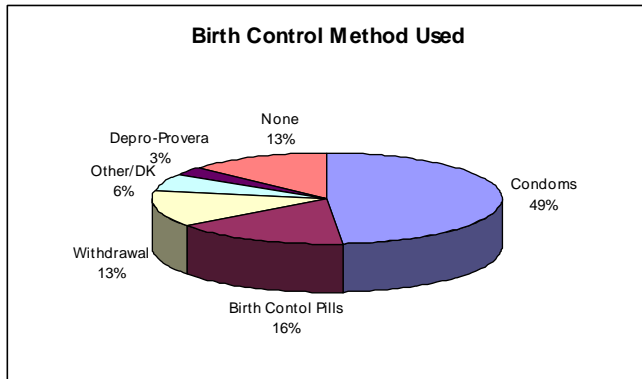
2. Condom Use

Sixty percent of students who had ever had sexual intercourse used a condom last time. Condom use was higher among:

- ▼ Male students than female students (64% vs. 56%)
- ▼ Black students than white students (67% vs. 56%)
- ▼ Students in 9th through 11th grade than 12th grade (average of 62% vs. 51%)

3. Birth Control Method

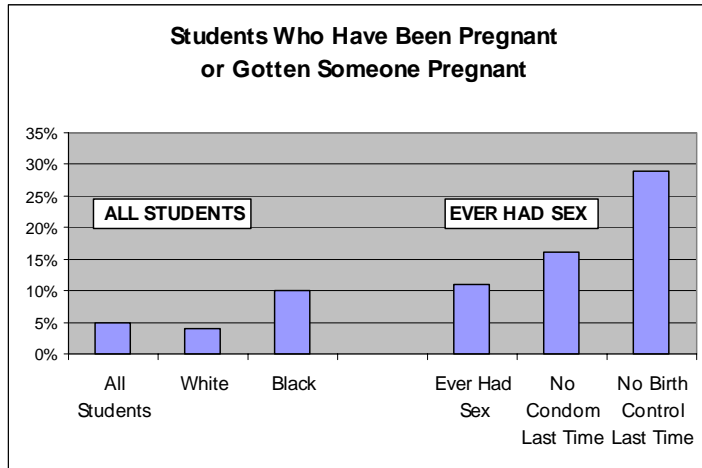
Condoms, used for contraception by 49% of students the last time they had intercourse, were the most popular form of contraception, followed by birth control pills (16%), withdrawal (13%), Depo-Provera (3%), or some other method (3%). Thirteen percent did not use any form of birth control.



F. Pregnancy

Five percent of **ALL** students surveyed reported they had ever been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant, including 5% of all white students and 13% of all black students.

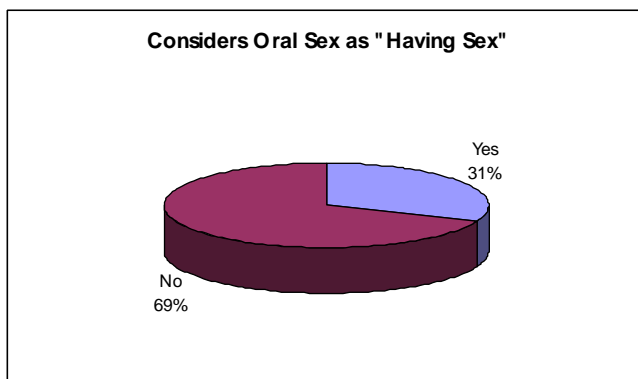
Among students who had ever had sexual intercourse, 11% had been or gotten someone pregnant. Reported pregnancies were significantly higher among students not using birth control (29%) and among students **NOT** using condoms (16%) the last time they had sex.



III. Oral Sex

A. Does Not Consider Oral Sex as "Having Sex"

Seven out of ten students surveyed did not consider oral sex as "having sex." A greater proportion of white students than black students responded in this manner (72% vs. 62%). Response to this question was similar among males and females, grade level, and school performance.



B. Ever Participated in Oral Sex

Forty-five percent of students have ever participated in oral sex, a number equal to the percentage that has ever had sexual intercourse. Reported participation in oral sex was higher among:

- ▼ Male students than female students (49% vs. 41%)
- ▼ Twelfth grade students with participation decreasing with grade level (12th – 59%; 11th – 51%; 10th – 40%; 9th – 35%)
- ▼ White students than black students (49% vs. 32%)
- ▼ Students from parent/stepparent homes, followed by single-parent homes and two-parent homes (53%, 45% and 41% respectively)
- ▼ Poorer performing students than better performing students (53% vs. 40%)

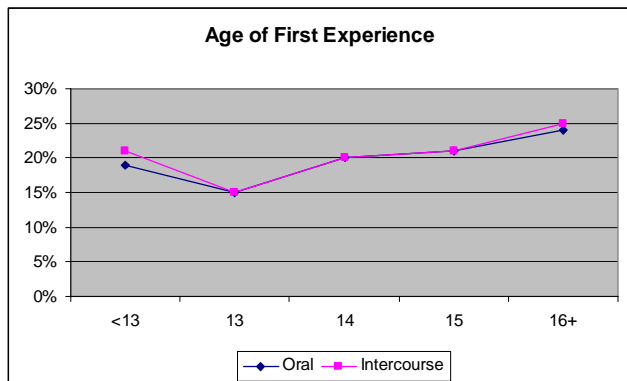
C. Age of First Experience

Among students who have ever participated in oral sex, 31% had their first experience before age 14.

Participation in oral sex before the age of 14 is more prevalent among:

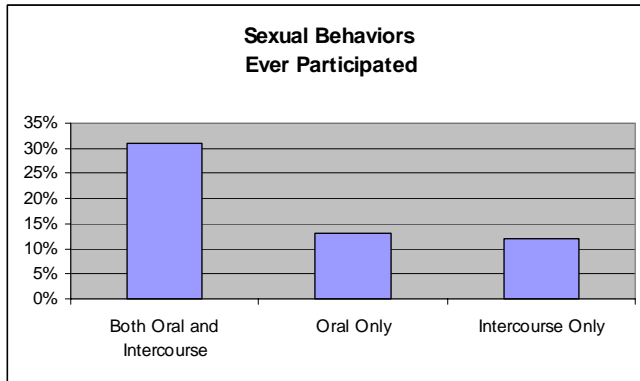
- ▼ Male students than female students (37% vs. 25%)
- ▼ Black students than white students (39% vs. 28%)
- ▼ Students from parent/stepparent homes and single-parent homes than two-parent homes (33% and 34% vs. 27%)
- ▼ Poorer performing students than better performing students (39% vs. 25%)

The age of first experience with oral sex mirrors that of sexual intercourse, as illustrated below.



D. Oral Sex and Other Sexual Behaviors

Although the same numbers of students have engaged in sexual intercourse as have participated in oral sex, these two groups are not necessarily comprised of the same students. In light of the large numbers of students who do not consider oral sex as “having sex,” it is hypothesized that some may have participated in oral sex but not sexual intercourse, and 13% of students report this experience. An almost equal number (12%) have had intercourse but not oral sex. Thirty-one percent of students have engaged in both behaviors.



About seven in ten students did not consider oral sex as “having sex.” This belief is held by the majority of students, regardless of their own experiences, as shown below.

Does Not Consider Oral Sex “Having Sex”

Had oral sex, but not intercourse	92%
Had both oral sex and intercourse	75%
Had intercourse, but not oral sex	69%
Had neither oral sex nor intercourse	61%