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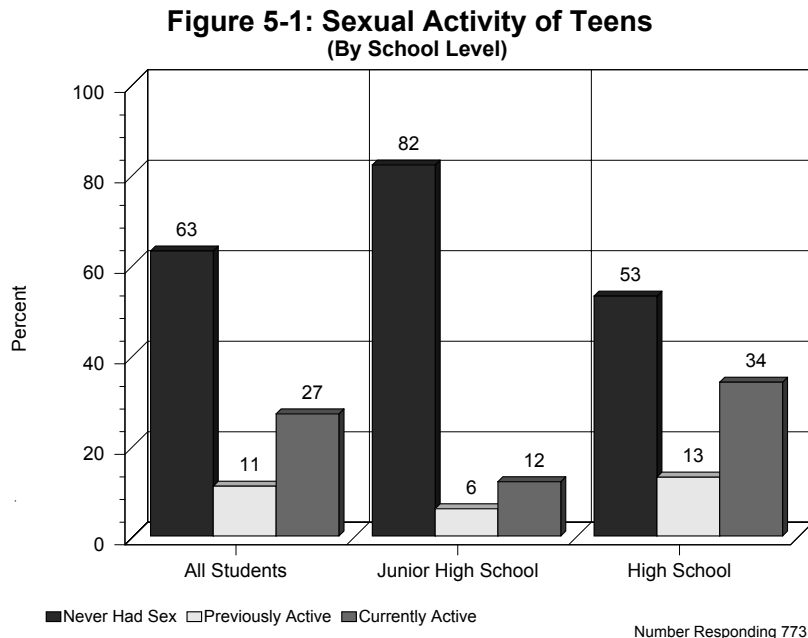
## CHAPTER 5 Sexuality

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One of the biggest fears for many parents is that their children will become sexually active before they are ready. This fear includes concern about an unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), emotional harm, and sexual abuse. Most parents feel that early sexual experience will, in some way, harm their children. Early sexual experiences have been found to lead to greater risk for multiple partners, STDs and pregnancy (Valois, Oeltmann, Waller, & Hussey, 1999).

### Sexual Activity

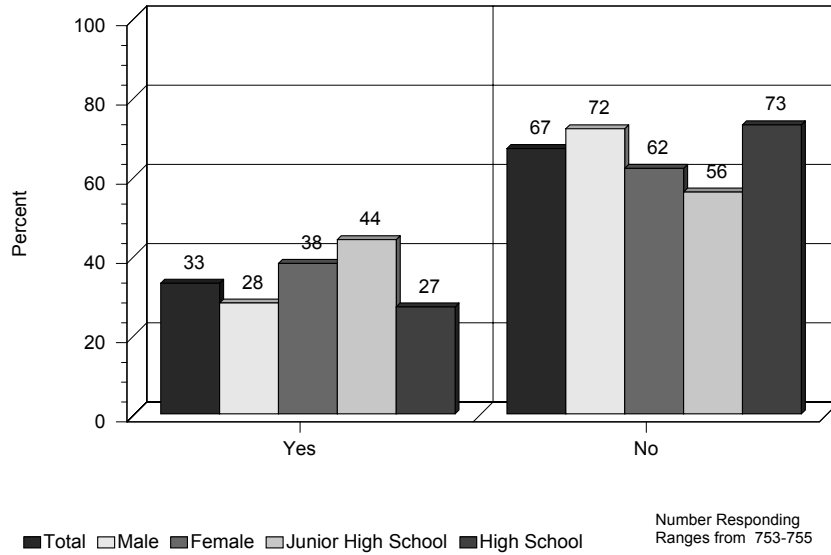
The United States has the highest teen childbirth rates of any industrialized Western nation, despite the fact that teenage pregnancy, childbirth, and abortion rates have all declined in the 1990's (CDC, 1995; Ventura, Mosher, Curtin, Abma, & Henshaw, 2000). One out of four (25%) U.S. women have had a pregnancy by age 18 (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994). Figure 5-1 shows 37% of teens surveyed have had sexual intercourse (junior high school, 18%; high school, 47%).



*Note: Due to rounding, some graphs may not total 100%.*

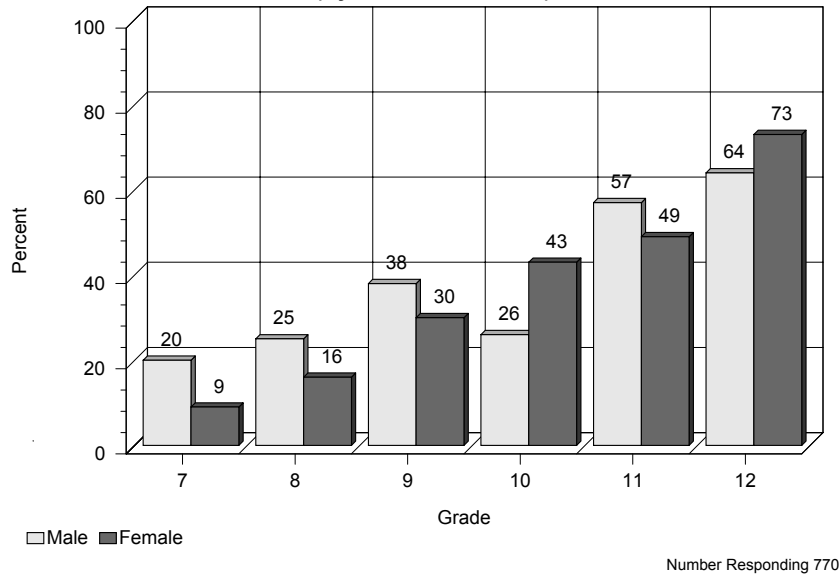
Figure 5-2 shows the percentage of teens who chose not to participate in sexual activities such as sexual intercourse, touching/being touched in private areas, mutual masturbation or oral sex. One out of three students (33%) have chosen to abstain from sexual activities.

**Figure 5-2: Teens Who Chose Not to Participate in Sexual Activities**



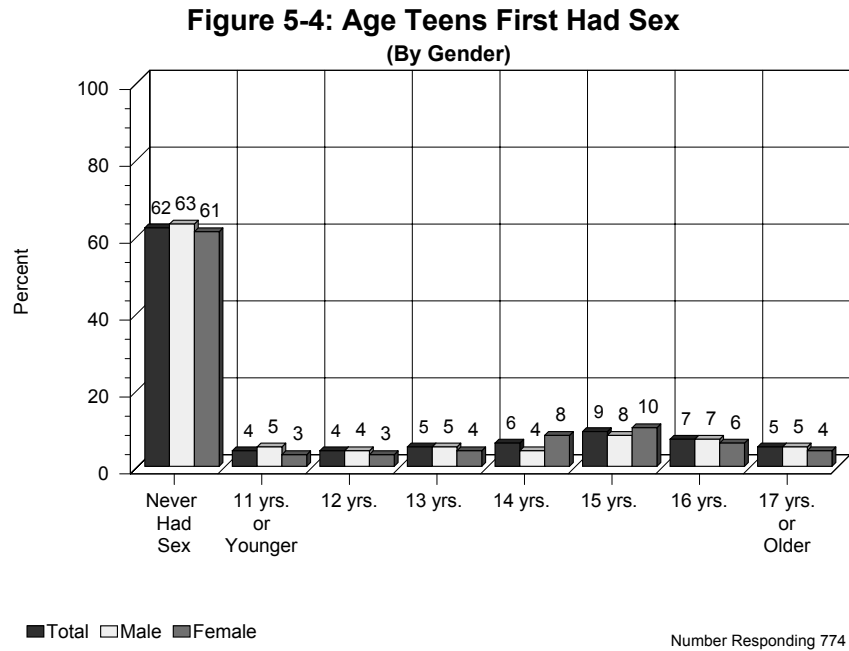
Teens are having sex at a young age. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 38% of males and 30% of females reported they have had sexual intercourse. Figure 5-3 shows teens become more sexually active as they get older. Seventy percent (70%) of local teens in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (males, 64%; females, 73%) reported having had sexual intercourse.

**Figure 5-3: Teens Who Have Ever Had Sexual Intercourse (By Grade and Gender)**



The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS) found nationally, 49.9% (N.H., 42.9%) of high school students (*grades 9-12*) have had sexual intercourse at some time in their lives (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). New Hampshire ranks 20<sup>th</sup> out of 28 states surveyed by the CDC.

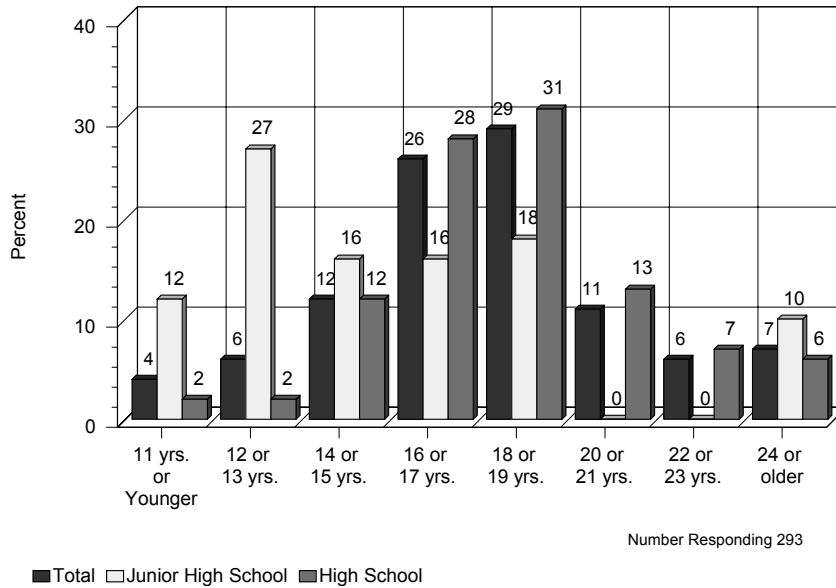
Thirty-five percent (35%) of local teens reported they first had sex by the age of 16 or earlier. The average age for teen sexual intercourse is 14 years old. Figure 5-4 shows the range of teen age for first sexual intercourse.



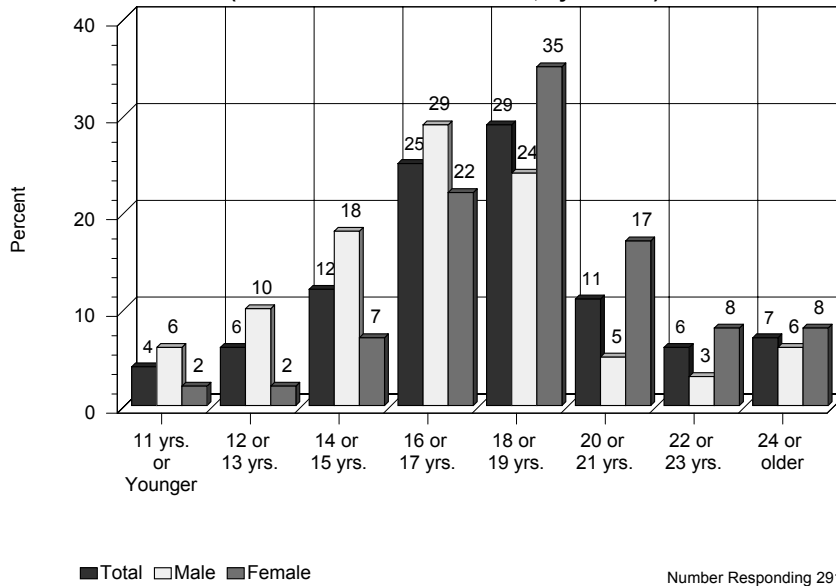
The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS) found nationally, 8.3% (N.H., 5%) of high school students (*grades 9-12*) have had sexual intercourse before the age of 13 (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). New Hampshire ranks 25<sup>th</sup> out of 30 states surveyed by the CDC.

Teens were asked the age of their oldest sexual partner. Figures 5-5 and 5-6 show the breakdown by gender and school level. The partners of most teens are between the ages of 16 to 19 years old.

**Figure 5-5: Age of Teens' Oldest Sexual Partner**  
(Of Those Who Have Had Sex, by School Level)

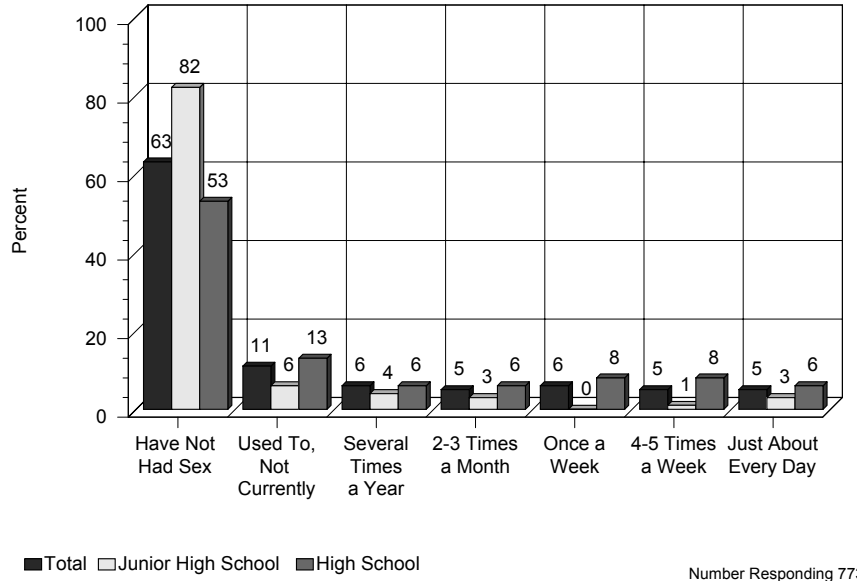


**Figure 5-6: Age of Teens' Oldest Sexual Partner**  
(Of Those Who Have Had Sex, by Gender)

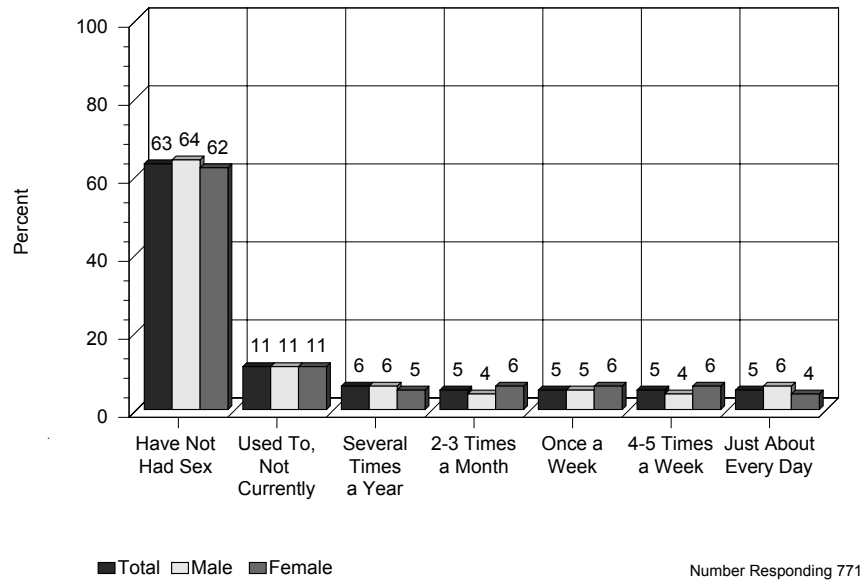


Figures 5-7 and 5-8 show how often teens have sex, based on the school level and gender.

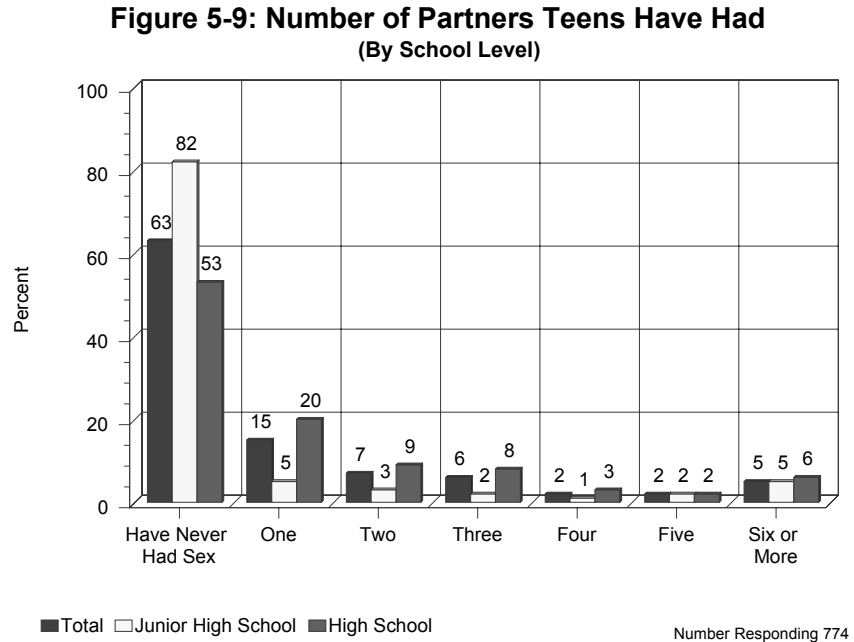
**Figure 5-7: Frequency of Sexual Activity (By School Level)**



**Figure 5-8: Frequency of Sexual Activity (By Gender)**



We asked local youth how many sexual partners they have had in their lifetime. Nine percent (9%) of local teens surveyed responded they have had sex with 4 or more partners (junior high school, 8%; high school, 11%). Figure 5-9 shows all responses broken down by school level.



The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS) found nationally, 16.2% (N.H., 10.9%) of high school students had sexual intercourse with four or more partners in their lifetime (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). New Hampshire ranks 27<sup>th</sup> out of 30 states surveyed by the CDC.

Figure 5-10 shows that 11% of males and 9% of females reported they had 4 or more partners in their lifetime.

**Figure 5-10: Number of Partners Teens Have Had (By Gender)**

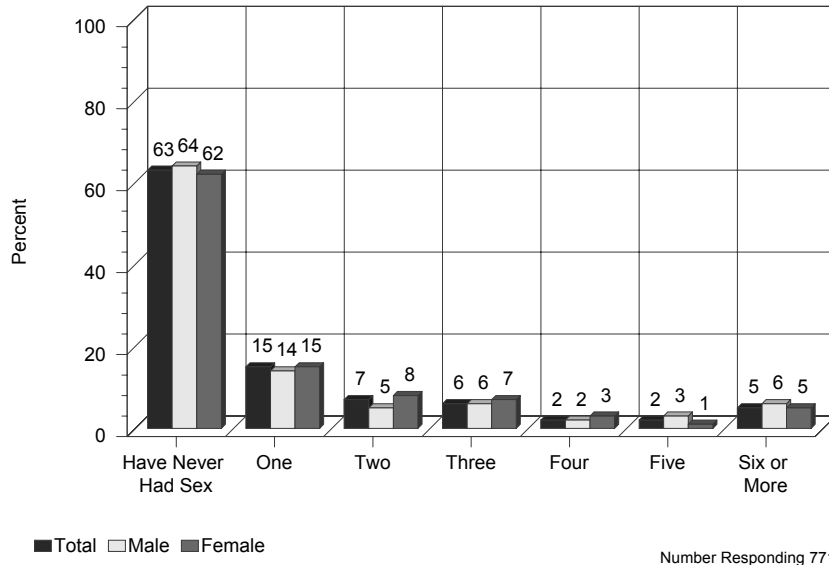
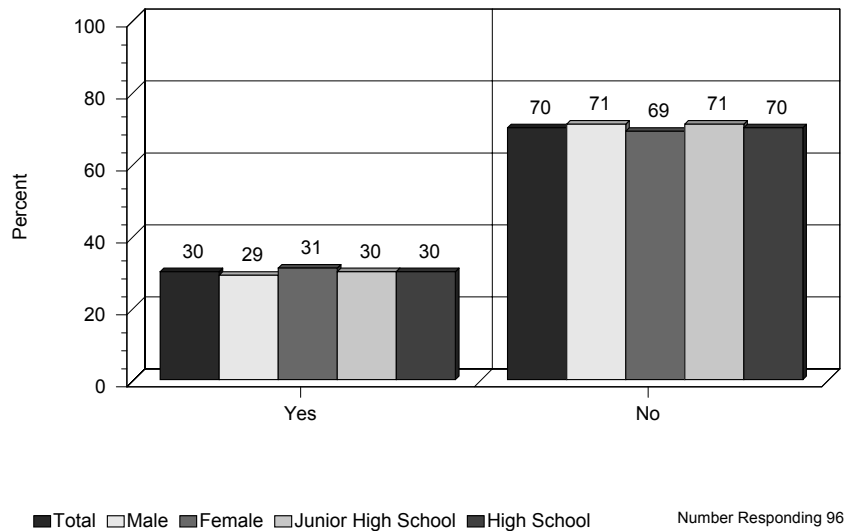


Figure 5-11 shows that 30% of sexually active teens said they used alcohol or other drugs before the last time they had sex (males, 29%; females, 31%; junior high school, 30%; high school, 30%). The influence of alcohol or other drugs can easily lead to failure to use any birth control methods at all, or at the very least, to not use them correctly.

**Figure 5-11: Teens Who Used Alcohol or Drugs Before the Last Time They Had Sexual Intercourse**  
(Of Those Who Have Ever Had Sex)



The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study (YRBS) found nationally, 24.8% (N.H., 21.3%) of sexually active high school youth used alcohol or drugs before the last time they had sex (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2000). New Hampshire ranks 28<sup>th</sup> out of 29 states surveyed by the CDC.

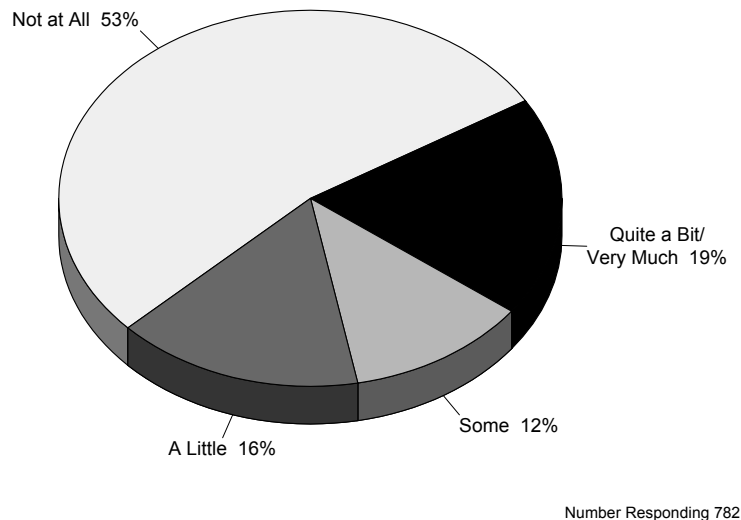
## Teenage Pregnancy

Early unplanned pregnancy or parenthood not only affects the future life prospects of the young mother or father, but it also puts the baby at higher risk for both short and long-term health and social problems. How teens perceive the costs of their actions can give us insight into understanding why some teens are sexually active while others are not. If we wish to design programs that prevent or delay the occurrence of sexual intercourse or help teens make responsible decisions about sex, it is critical to understand the consequences teens associate with sexuality activity.

In 1998 there were 7 live births to mothers 17 years and younger and 28 to mothers 18-19 years of age in Coos County (out of a total of 291 live births) (Andrew Chalsma, Bureau of Health Statistics and Data Management, personal communication, June 26, 2000). This is troubling due to increased health risks related to teenage pregnancy and the emotional, social and economic costs of early parenthood. Because "live birth" data does not include the number of miscarriages or induced abortions in the teen population, or births to local teens occurring outside the county, the number of teen pregnancies can be assumed to be higher than the number of live births to teens. Nationally, approximately 47% of all teen pregnancies resulted in live births (Hayes, 1987).

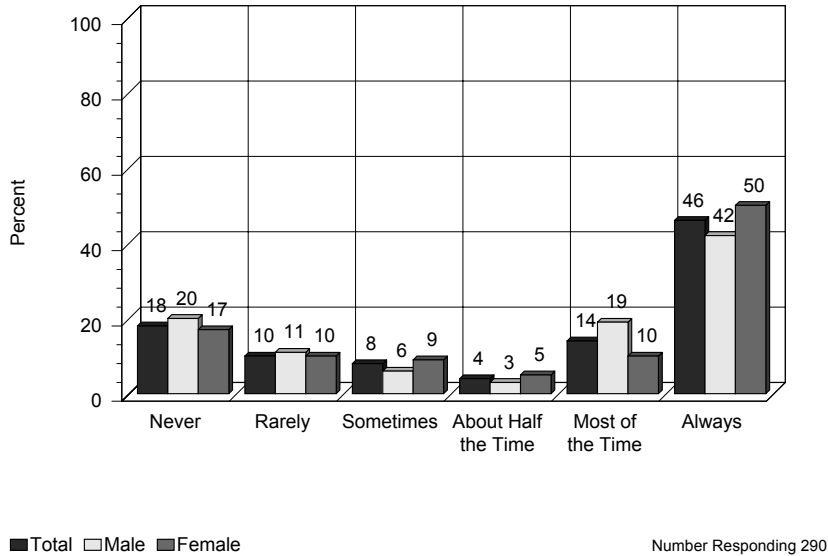
We asked teens how much they worried about getting pregnant or getting someone else pregnant. Figure 5-12 shows that 47% of teens worried to some degree about pregnancy (junior high school, 37%; high school, 51%; males, 44%; females, 47%).

**Figure 5-12: Pregnancy as a Teen Worry**



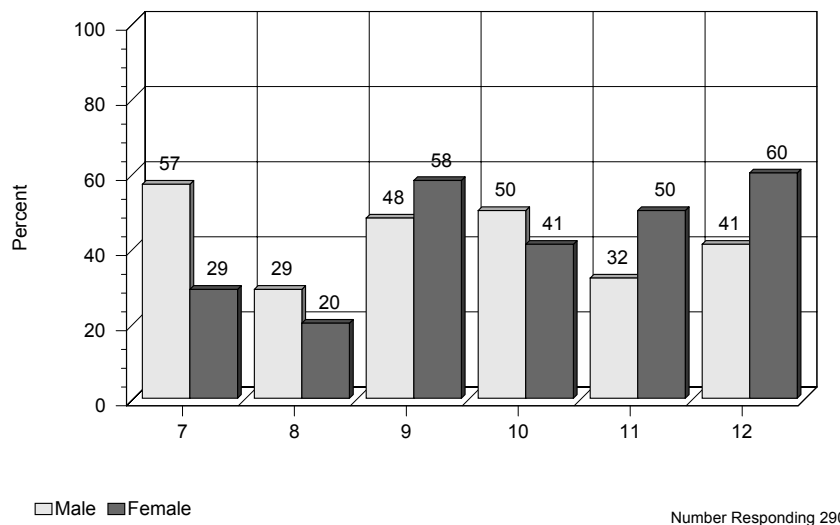
Of those students who report current or past sexual activity, 46% said they "always" use some form of birth control (males, 42%; females, 50%), while 18% of students who report being sexually active "never" use any form of birth control (males, 20%; females, 17%). Figure 5-13 shows the frequency of birth control use of sexually active male and female students.

**Figure 5-13: Birth Control Use by Sexually Active Teens  
(By Gender)**

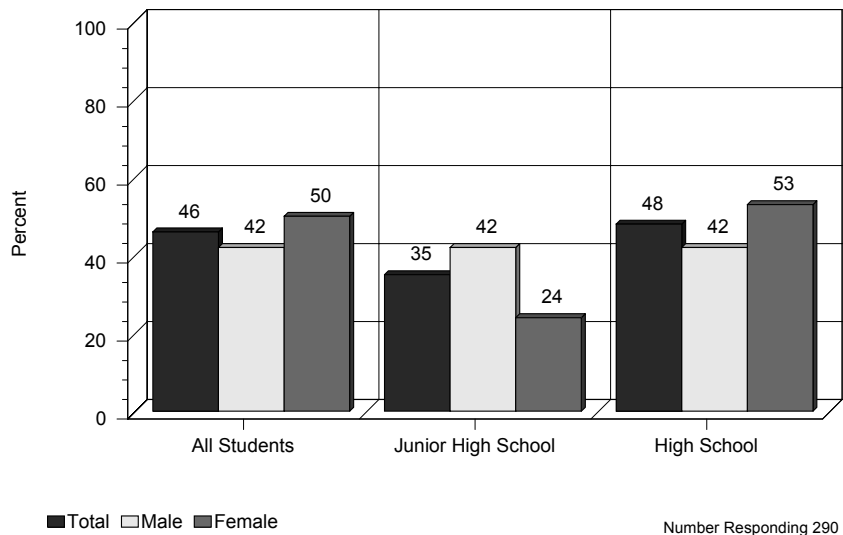


According to Healthier People in Wisconsin (Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, 1990), after teens become sexually active, they usually wait on average twelve months before they begin to use contraception. Recent national statistics indicate teen contraceptive use does not vary by age (Adams, Schoenborn, Moss, Warren & Kann, 1995). This is troubling since the health risks associated with a pregnancy are much greater for younger teens. Figure 5-14 shows the breakdown by grade and gender for sexually active teens (currently and previously) who "always" use birth control. Figure 5-15 gives a similar breakdown by school level and gender.

**Figure 5-14: Sexually Active Teens Who Always Use Birth Control (By Grade and Gender)**



**Figure 5-15: Sexually Active Teens Who Always Use Birth Control (By School Level and Gender)**

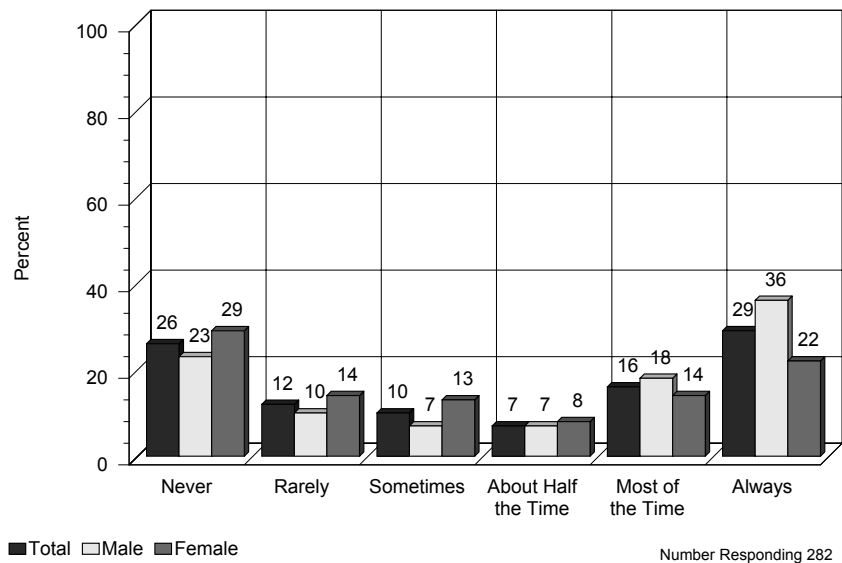


## Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Teens who are sexually active run certain risks that can affect their health and their future. In 1998, an estimated 29 New Hampshire teens age 15-19 were infected with gonorrhea, and 428 were infected with chlamydia (Adamski, C., 1999). AIDS has become the 6th leading cause of death in the 15-24 age group in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999) estimates youth in the 13-24 age group in the U.S. account for 15% of the reported cases from June 1998 to June 1999. In New Hampshire, from 1981 to 1999 there were 852 cases of AIDS reported; of these, 41 were reported in 1999 alone. In Coos County, there were four AIDS cases reported and one HIV case reported since 1995 (Adamski, C., 1999).

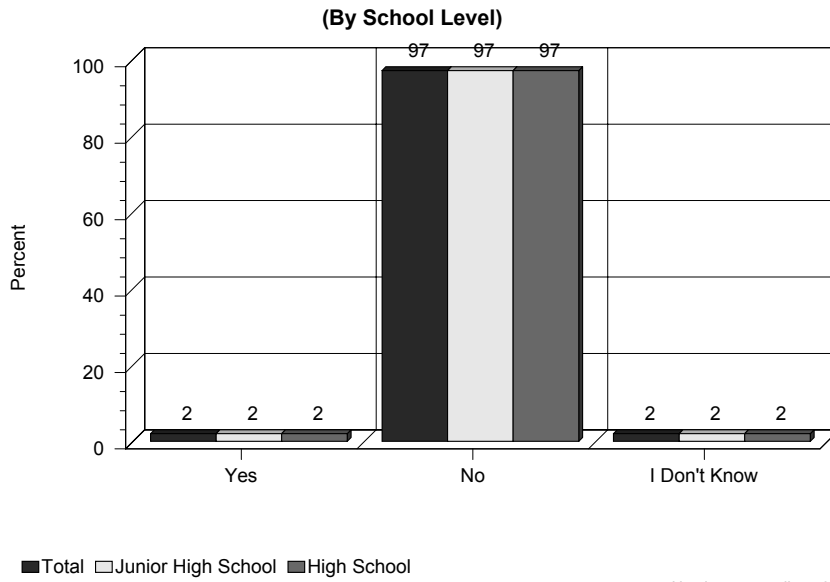
Local teens were asked *"If you have had sexual intercourse, how often do you or your partner use a condom?"*. Only 29% of sexually active teens said they *"always"* did; over one out of four (26%) said they *"never"* use a condom. Forty-six percent (46%) of sexually active junior high school students reported they always use a condom (males, 52%; females, 35%) and 26% of all high school students do so (males, 32%; females, 20%). Figure 5-16 shows the frequency of condom use by sexually active teens.

**Figure 5-16: Condom Use by Teens**  
(Of Those Who Have Ever Had Sex, by Gender)

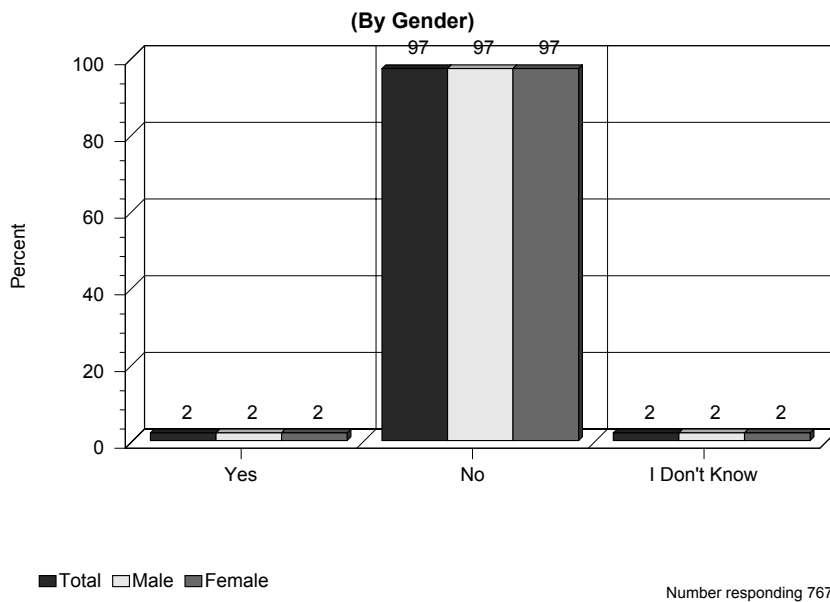


We asked local teens if they had ever had a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Four percent (4%) of teens reported that they have had or didn't know if they had an STD. Figure 5-17 shows the breakdown by school level and Figure 5-18 does the same by gender. There is no difference in the responses of males and females or junior and high school students.

**Figure 5-17: Teens Who Have Had an STD**



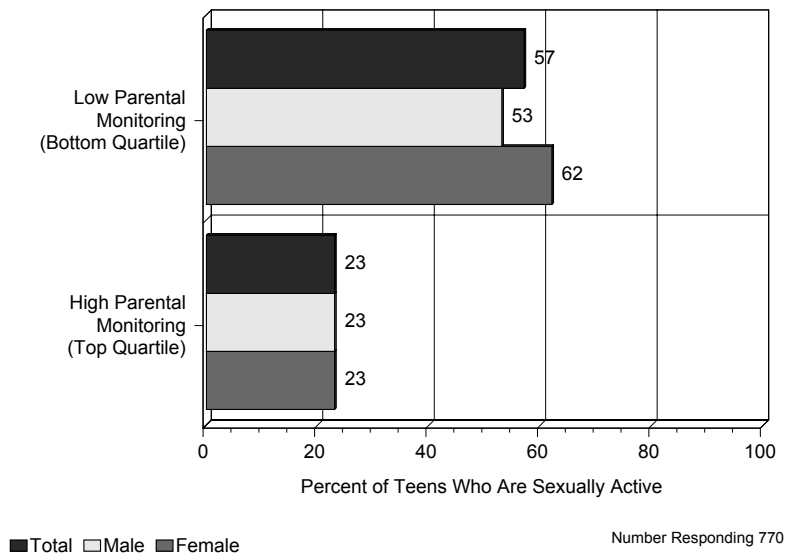
**Figure 5-18: Teens Who Have Had an STD**



## Parents' Role in Level of Teen Sexual Activity

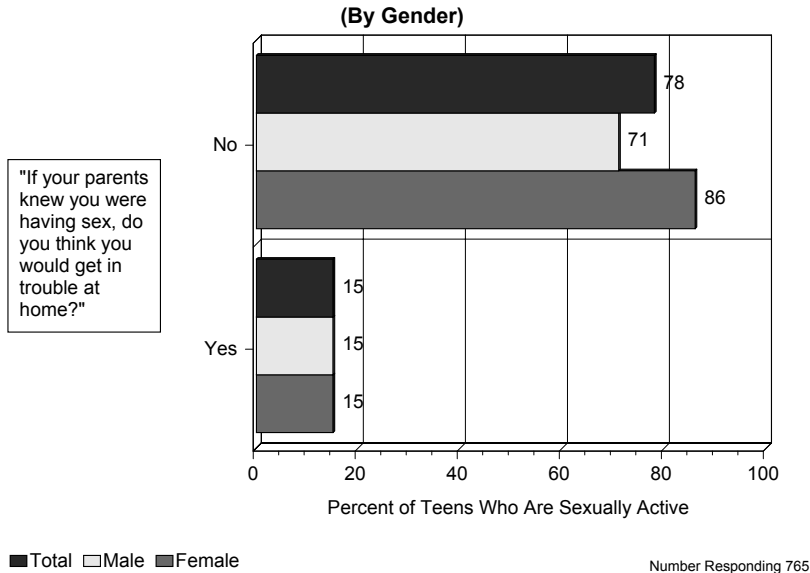
Parental monitoring is an important factor in preventing adolescent sexual activity. Parental monitoring refers to parents' supervision and awareness of their child's activities. In this survey the students were asked to respond to a series of eight questions concerning the amount of information parents have about the students' whereabouts, activities, plans and companions (see Chapter 7 pp. 142-143). The responses to these eight questions were summed for each student to create a parental monitoring scale. The scale was then divided into quartiles for the graph below. Figure 5-19 shows out of all teens surveyed, teens with low parental monitoring are more likely to have sex (low monitoring, 57%; high monitoring, 23%). Higher levels of parental monitoring are related to lower levels of sexual activity.

**Figure 5-19: Relationship Between Parental Monitoring and Level of Teen Sexual Activity (By Gender)**



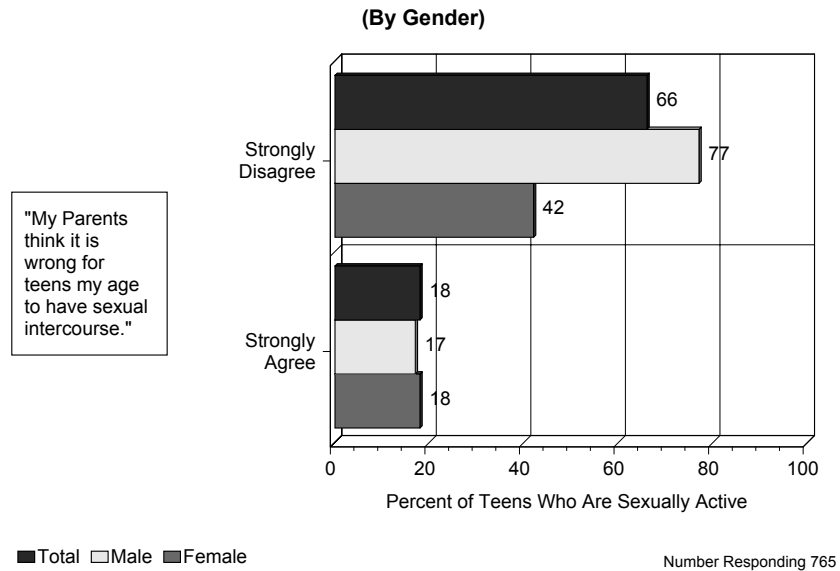
Another strong parental influence on levels of teen sexual activity is whether or not teens think they will get in trouble if their parents knew they were sexually active. Figure 5-20 shows that teens who do not feel they will get in trouble at home are more likely to be sexually active (not get in trouble, 78%; get in trouble, 15%). The belief that they will get in trouble is strongly related to low levels of teen sexual activity for both males and females.

**Figure 5-20: Relationship Between Level of Sexual Activity and Thinking They'll Get in Trouble at Home**



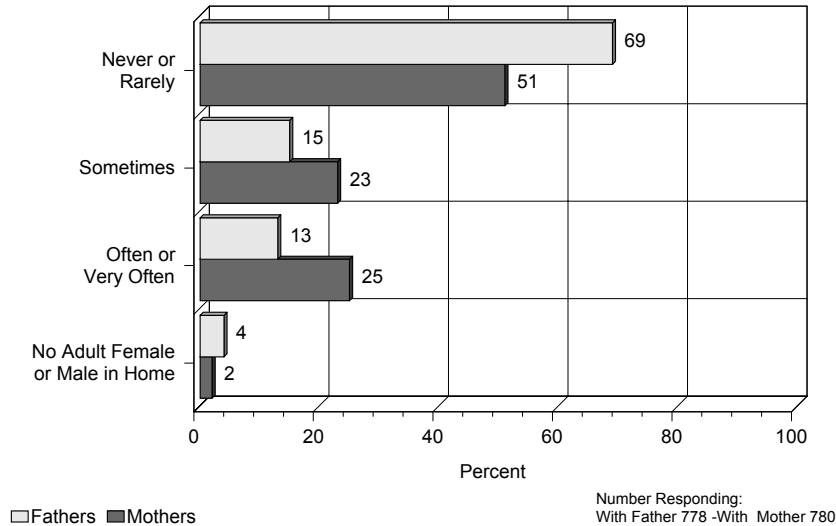
There is evidence suggesting children who talk with their parents about sexuality and their values are less likely to be sexually active, if the values parents convey discourage early sexual activity. In Figure 5-21, the relationship is shown between teens' perceptions of their parents' values about teen sexual activity and the level of sexual activity on the teens' part. Students who don't believe their parents think it is wrong for them to have sex are more than three times as likely to engage in sex as are students who believe their parents do think it is wrong for them to have sex (66% vs. 18%).

**Figure 5-21: Relationship Between Teens' Perceptions of Parental Values and Level of Teen Sexual Activity**



A high percentage of local teens do not have good talks with their parents about sexuality issues. Figure 5-22 presents how often in the past year teens have had good talks with their mothers or fathers about "whether or not it's okay for teenagers to have sex." Overall, 51% of teens have "rarely" or "never" talked with their mothers and 69% "rarely" or "never" talked with their fathers in the past year about sexuality.

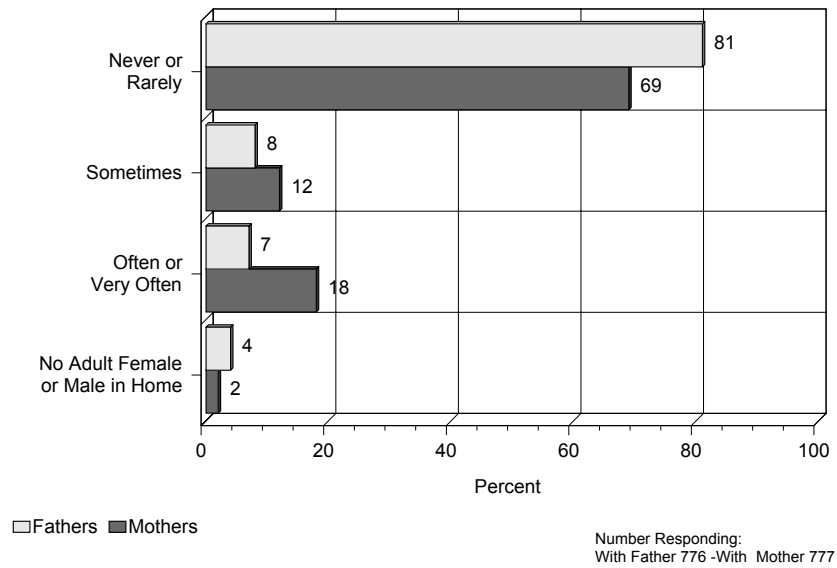
**Figure 5-22: Talks with Father or Mother About Whether or Not It's Okay to Have Sex (In the Past Year)**



Some people believe if you talk to teens about sex, you will encourage it by planting ideas in their heads. Contrary to this belief, a study based on TAP data found teens who are sexually active are more likely to be so because they perceive fewer costs, not because they perceive more benefits (Small et al., 1993). In other words, sexually active teens may not be perceiving the consequences realistically. This would suggest that teens need help (information) in seeing the responsibilities and costs that come with sexual intercourse and in making sensible decisions about sexuality.

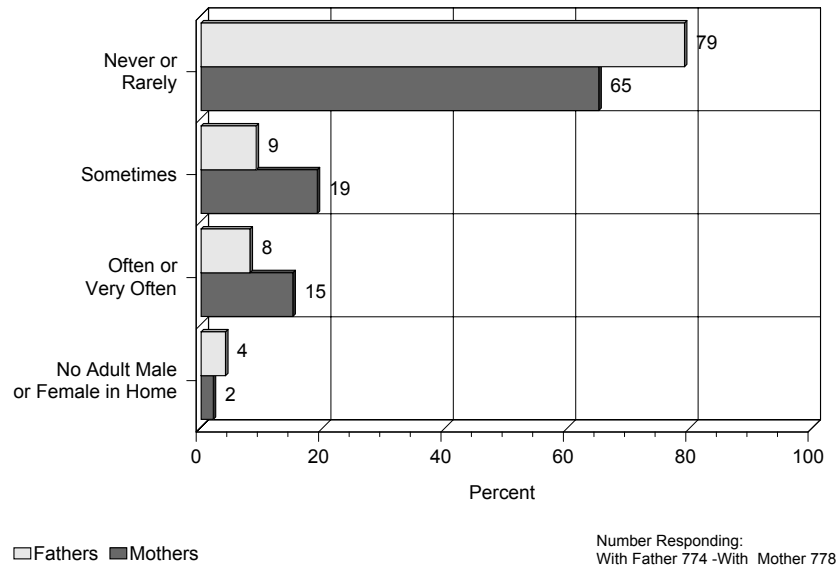
Sixty-nine percent (69%) of local teens reported "rarely" or "never" having a good talk with their mother about birth control in the past year, while 81% reported "rarely" or "never" having a good talk with their father. Figure 5-23 shows how often in the past year teens have had a good talk about birth control with their parents. These findings indicate the majority of local teens and parents simply do not talk with one another about sexuality issues.

**Figure 5-23: Talks with Father or Mother About Birth Control**  
(In the Past Year)



We also asked local teens about the frequency of discussions about AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) with their parents. More than three out of four (79%) students said they “*never*” or “*rarely*” spoke with their fathers about AIDS or other STDs, and 65% said the same for their mothers. Figure 5-24 shows the breakdown of responses.

**Figure 5-24: Talks with Father or Mother About AIDS or STDs  
(In the Past Year)**



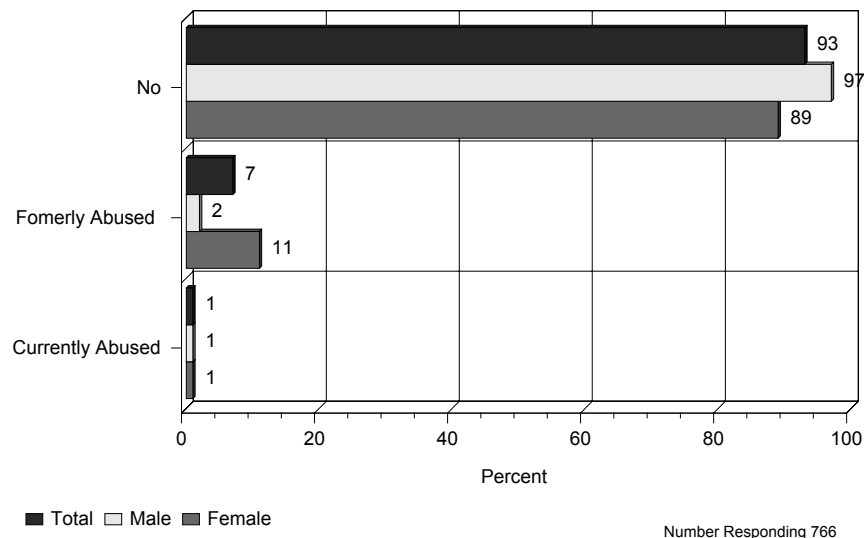
## Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a problem which occurs across all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups (Anderson, Martin, Mullen, Romans & Herbison, 1993; Berenson, San Miguel & Wilkinson, 1992; Cosentino, 1989; Priest, 1992; Roosa & Tein, 1997). The actual prevalence of sexual abuse nationwide is unknown. Nonetheless, it is generally assumed the problem is far greater than one would expect and far greater than statistics presently reveal. There were 1,319 allegations of child sexual abuse in New Hampshire in 1997 (B. Bloom, Department of Children, Youth and Families, personal communication, January 5, 2000).

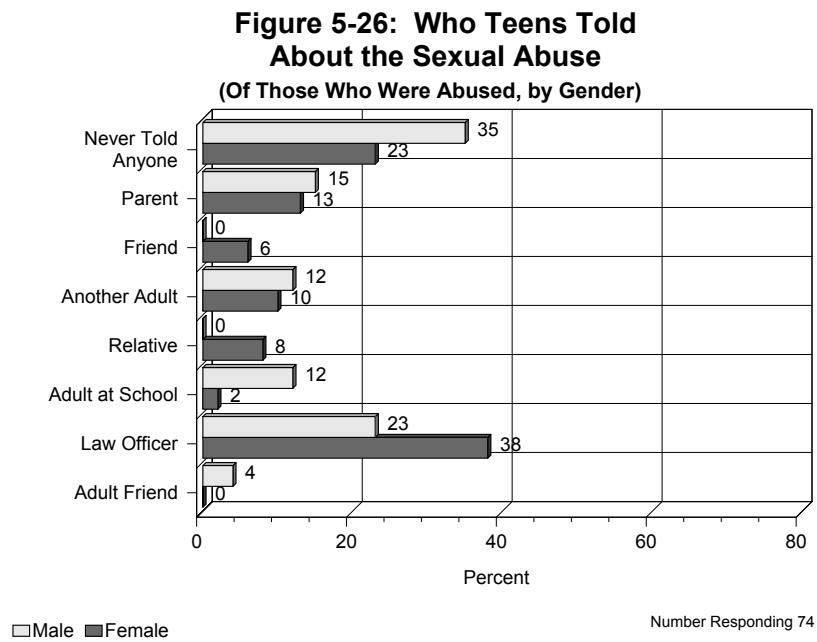
Youth who are victims of prolonged sexual abuse usually develop low self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, and an unhealthy perspective on sexuality. They may become withdrawn and potentially suicidal (Facts for Families: Child Sexual Abuse, 1997). Studies show a link between sexual abuse and early onset of voluntary intercourse among females (Butler & Burton, 1990; Roosa & Tein, 1997). However, high levels of parental monitoring and support from at least one parent decreases the risk sexually abused adolescents will develop problem behaviors (Luster & Small, 1997).

Local youth were asked “*Have you ever been sexually abused by an **adult**? (Sexual abuse is when someone in your family or another person does sexual things to you or makes you do sexual things to them that you don’t want to do.)*” Figure 5-25 shows that 8% of students reported forced sexual activity by an adult (males, 3%; females, 12%). Seven percent (7%) of these cases were reported as past occurrences. One percent (1%) of teens reported being abused at the time of the survey.

**Figure 5-25: Teens Who Have Been Sexually Abused by an Adult (By Gender)**



It is important to question teens who have been sexually abused about whether they told anyone about the abuse and who they told. Seventy-four students (10%) reported having been sexually abused. Of those who were sexually abused, 35% of males and 23% of females reported that they never told anyone. Of those who were sexually abused, both males and females told of their sexual abuse more often to a law officer (males, 23%; females 38%) than to a parent (males, 15%; females, 13%). Figure 5-26 shows who teens who have been abused by an adult told.



## Forced Sexual Activity by Another Teen

Earlier in this chapter, data were presented regarding the incidence of sexual activity among local youth. It is important to note that some percentage of sexual activity among teens is a response to emotional or physical pressure on the part of another teen. Because of concern over this phenomenon, the TAP survey asked students "Have you ever been *made* to do something sexual that you didn't want to do by another teenager?" The expression "something sexual" connotes sexual activities that include kissing, touching and sexual intercourse. Fifteen percent (15%) of all teens responded "yes" to this question (males, 11%; females, 20%). Figure 5-27 shows the percentage of those who responded "yes" by grade and gender.

**Figure 5-27: Teens Who Have Been Forced to Do Something Sexual by Another Teen**  
(By Grade and Gender)

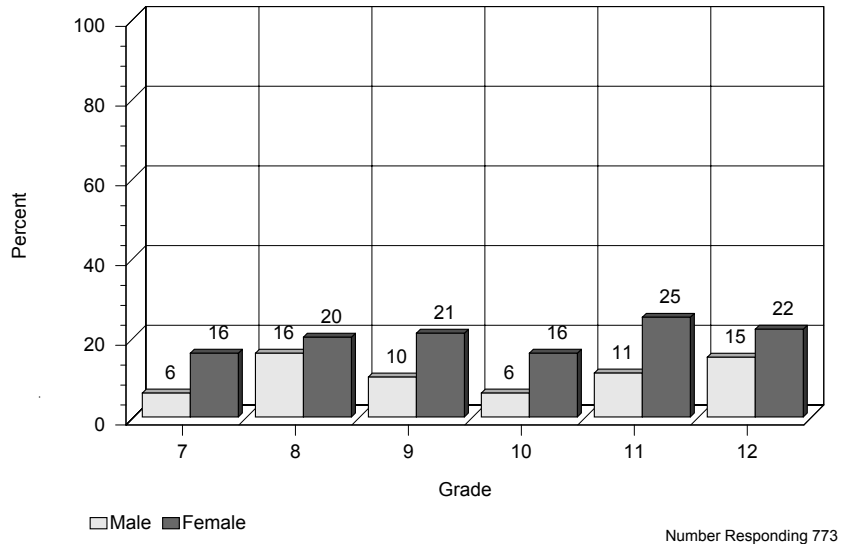
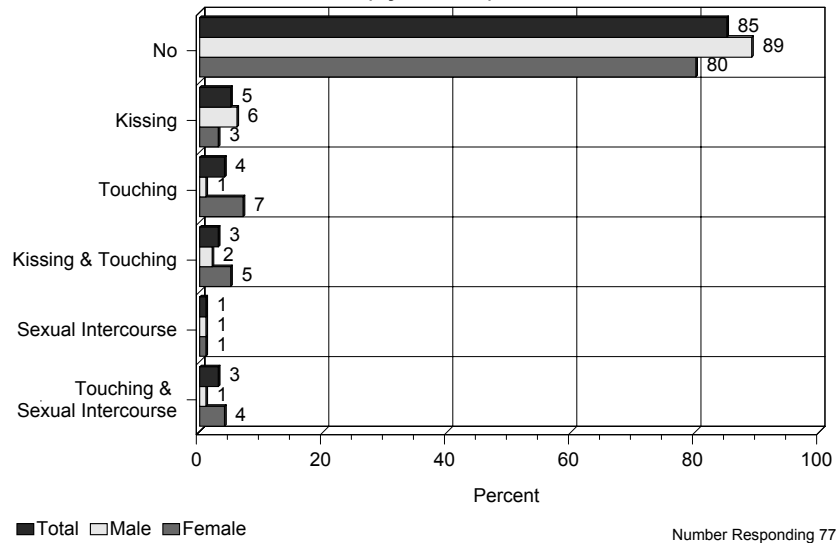


Figure 5-28 shows all responses broken down by gender.

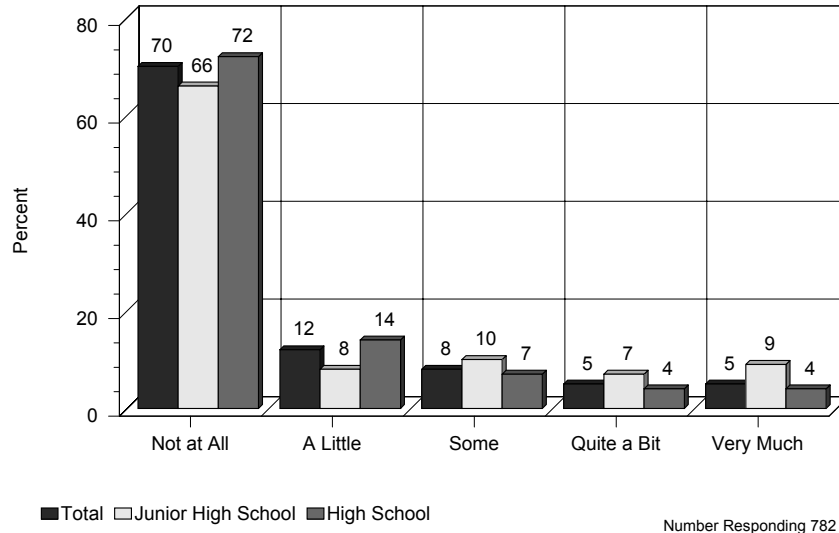
**Figure 5-28: Teens Who Have Been Forced to Do Something Sexual by Another Teen**

(By Gender)

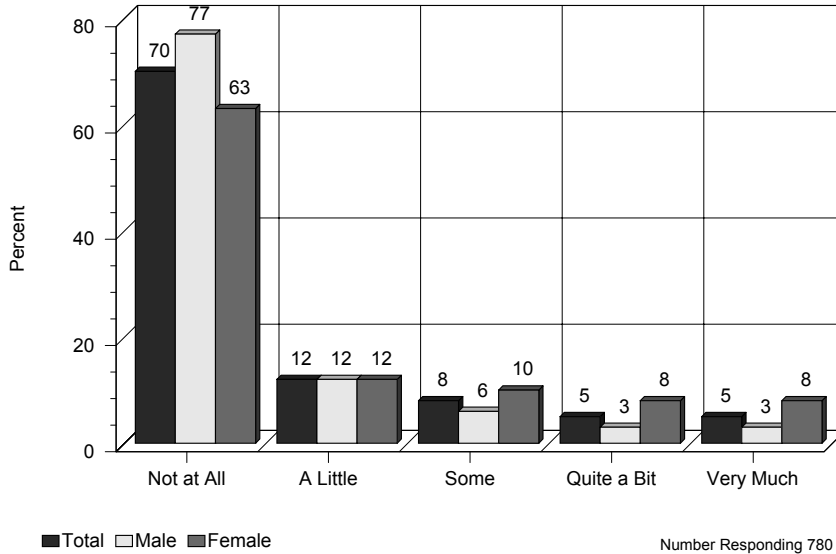


Thirty percent (30%) of students surveyed reported worrying to some degree about "being pressured into having sex." Figure 5-29 shows there is little difference between junior high school youth and high school youth being worried about this issue (34% vs. 29%). In both junior high school and high school, more females than males worry to some degree about this issue (junior high school males, 26%; junior high school females 42%; high school males, 21%; high school females, 35%). Figure 5-30 shows the total breakdown by gender.

**Figure 5-29: Teen Worries About Being Pressured Into Having Sex (By School Level)**



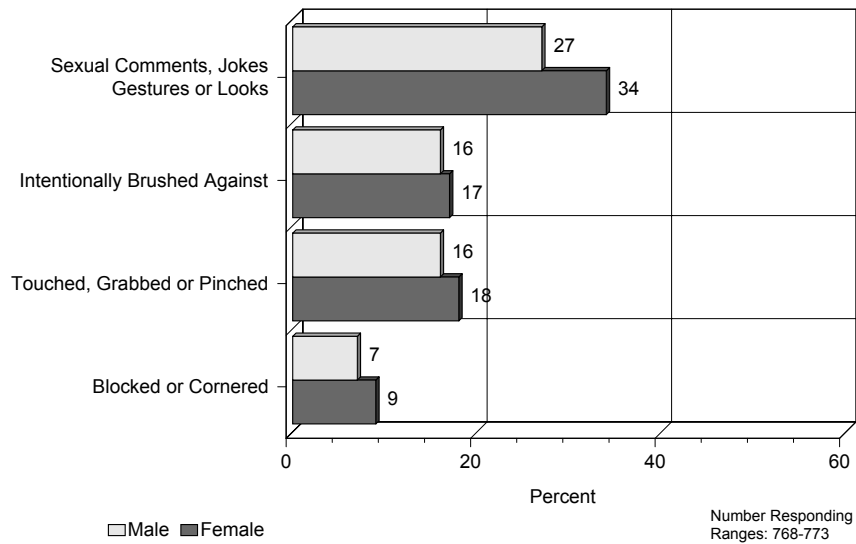
**Figure 5-30: Teen Worries About Being Pressured Into Having Sex (By Gender)**



## **Sexual Harassment in School**

Local youth were asked about sexual harassment in school. On at least one occasion, thirty-five percent (35%) have been touched, grabbed or pinched, 18% have been blocked or cornered, 30% have been intentionally brushed against, and 53% have had sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks made to them. Figure 5-31 shows the responses of “*occasionally*” or “*often*”, broken down by gender.

**Figure 5-31: Teens Who Have Been Sexually Harassed  
(Occasionally or Often, by Gender)**



### **Presentation Of Comparable Data**

In this section, Berlin data are compared with multi-community TAP data, national and New Hampshire statistics from the *1999 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBS)*. This survey is published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The YRBS surveys six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth and adults -- behaviors that contribute to unintentional and intentional injuries; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); unhealthy dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity. It is administered every other year and includes a national school-based survey conducted by the CDC as well as state, territorial, and local school-based surveys conducted by education and health agencies. Although the goal is to obtain representative samples, due to a lower than expected response rate, the results of the survey for New Hampshire should not be generalized to other students in the state.

The Teen Assessment Project report is a state-wide report based on five school districts surveyed from April 1998 through December 1999. A strong case can be made that these results are indicative of the behaviors, opinions, attitudes and beliefs of New Hampshire teens. These data represent 9105 teens from five different counties around the state – Merrimack, Hillsborough, Rockingham, Strafford, and Grafton. Geographically, these counties cover much of the state, excluding the northern tip. New Hampshire is a demographically homogeneous state particularly in terms of racial and ethnic make-up, and the school districts consist of students from both rural and urban communities. Due to the nature of this project, however, the survey process is not random. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the population of New Hampshire teens.

**Table 5-1: Sexuality Comparison**  
*(grades 9-12 only)*

<b>Question</b>	<b>YRBS<sup>1</sup> National %</b>	<b>YRBS N.H. % (ranking)</b>	<b>TAP<sup>2</sup> Multi- community %</b>	<b>TAP Berlin %</b>
Ever had sexual intercourse	49.9	42.9 (20 <sup>th</sup> of 28)	39	47
First sexual intercourse before age 13	8.3	5.0 (25 <sup>th</sup> of 30)	6	5

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<sup>1</sup> (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, 2000)

<sup>2</sup>(Teen Assessment Project, 2000)