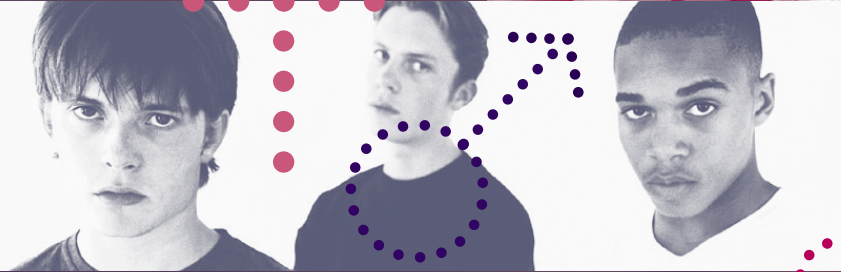


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sexsmarts
a public information partnership



More than a third of teens say there is a double standard for boys and girls and four in five agree that even parents have different expectations from girls versus boys. Nine in ten say that girls get bad reputations because of having sex—at the same time, more than three-quarters say that girls often lose their boyfriends because they *won't* have sex—a fate experienced by far fewer boys. When it comes to the roles that girls and boys play in relationships, teens say that talking about safer sex and contraception is mostly left up to the girl while it is usually the boy who makes the “first move.”

Teens also say they are facing a lot of pressure about sex—from their peers and partners—pressures felt by both girls and boys. At the same time many are also concerned about the consequences of sex—namely pregnancy and disease. Many teens also have misperceptions about what type of protection birth controls pills and condoms provide and hold mixed views about what carrying condoms might mean about them. Eight in ten say that girls—or boys—who carry condoms look prepared but at the same time, seven in ten say it would seem like the boy was expecting sex or that the girl was “easy.”

This survey snapshot explores perceptions of gender roles among teens. It is based on a national random sample telephone survey with 512 teens ages 15 to 17 conducted from September 5 to 10, 2002 by International Communications Research (ICR) for the Kaiser Family Foundation and *seventeen* magazine. Additional information is included from focus group discussions conducted with teen girls in Chicago, IL July 24, 2002. This is the seventh in a series of nationally representative surveys conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and *seventeen* magazine.

Gender Roles

A Series of National Surveys of Teens About Sex

SexSmarts is an ongoing public information partnership between the **Kaiser Family Foundation** and **seventeen** magazine to provide young people with information and resources on sexual health issues. The campaign addresses a range of topics from decision making about sex, including how to say no, to the real facts on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Under the partnership, the Foundation and *seventeen* periodically survey teens about their knowledge and attitudes about sex and sexual health. These nationally representative survey snapshots shed light on the issues facing teens today and their information needs. The campaign also includes special articles in the magazine, an online monthly column on seventeen.com, and other consumer education materials.

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“He gets the condoms and I get the birth control.”

—Teen Girl, 16.

Who’s Role is it Anyway?

Many traditional “gender roles” seem to persist in teen relationships. Boys are generally the ones asking out the girl, paying for things on the date, and making “the first move.” While girls more likely are bearing the responsibility for starting the conversations about sexual health issues like STDs

and contraception. Boys and girls also agree that the girl is usually the one saying “no” to sex—in fact three in five teens think that it is “easier” for girls to say “no” to sex than boys. Making sure that birth control is used is more often left to the girl—although it is usually the boy who provides the condom. When it comes to dating—while both boys and girls agree that it is usually up to the boy to ask a girl out for the first time and pay for things—girls are more likely to say that these can also be mutually shared responsibilities. (Figure 1)

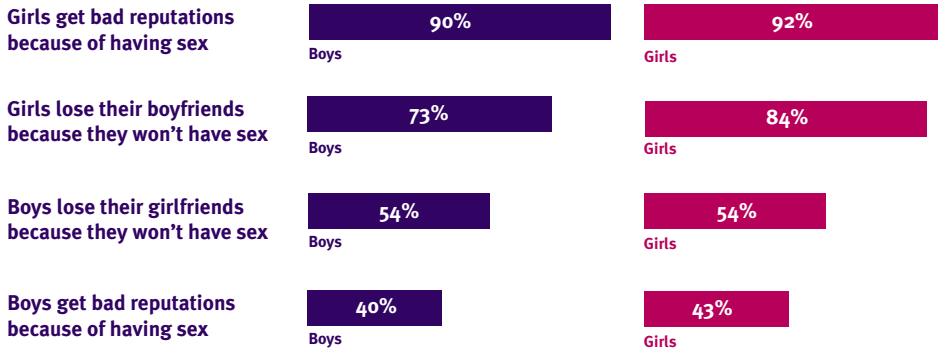
While nine in ten teens agree—both boys and girls—that girls get bad reputations because they *have sex*, many also say that girls often lose their boyfriends if they *won’t have sex*. Boys who do—or don’t—have sex do not face the same outcomes, for either their reputations or their relationships. Only half say boys lose girlfriends at least some of the time because they won’t have sex and even fewer say boys who have sex get bad reputations. (Figure 2)

Teens report that the double standard is alive and well among both parents and peers. More than four in five agree that parents have different expectations for girls than boys, and a third say there is still a double standard for girls when it comes to sex. This opinion was reported almost *twice* as frequently by girls than boys.

FIGURE 1. Roles in Relationships
Percent who say the roles in a relationship are usually played by:



FIGURE 2. Sex and Reputations
Percent who say *a lot* or *sometimes*:

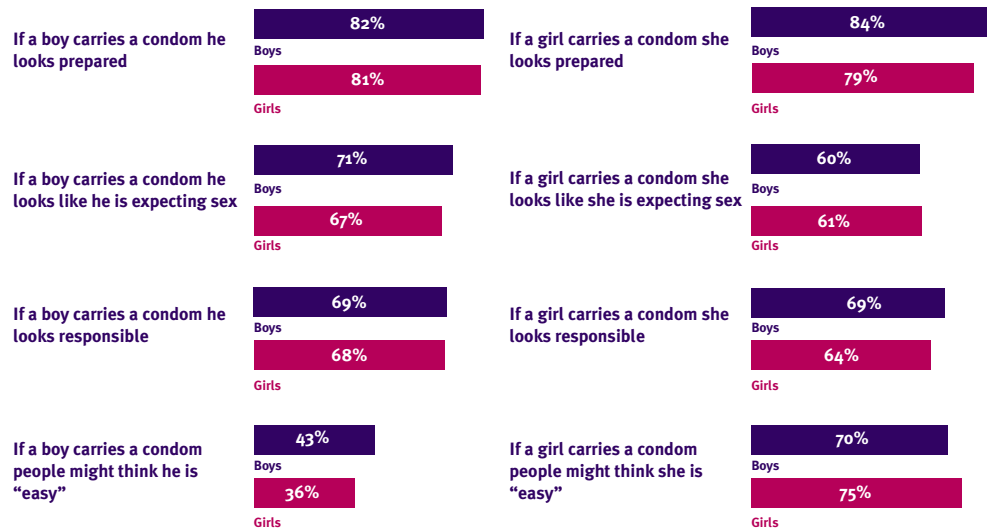


When it comes to virginity, the message is similar. More than nine in ten boys and girls agree that it is a “good thing” for a girl to be a virgin — while fewer think the same applies to boys who are not sexually active. Girls are considerably more likely to consider oral sex a “bigger deal” than boys; four in ten boys consider oral sex to be “not as big of a deal as intercourse” while fewer than three in ten girls feel the same.

Carrying Condoms

Teens have conflicting views when it comes to condoms and what carrying one might imply. On the one hand eight in ten say a girl carrying a condom looks “prepared” and almost seven in ten say she would seem “responsible” — yet seven in ten also say she seems “easy” and six in ten say it implies she is “expecting sex.” The mixed feelings seem to apply to boys as well. Eight in ten teens say that a boy carrying a condom seems “prepared” and seven in ten say he looks “responsible” — similar percents say he would look like he was expecting sex. (Figure 3)

FIGURE 3. Condom Attitudes
Percent responding *strongly* or *somewhat* agree:



“Carrying a condom around doesn’t necessarily mean you sleep around. It’s just smarter to have one on you, than to not have one at all.”

— Teen Girl, 17.



Pressure

When it comes to sex and relationships both boys and girls report feeling pressure—from their friends and partners—but both tend to say that the pressure that girls feel from boys is the greatest. Peer pressure tends to affect boys greater with two-thirds of boys agreeing that they feel pressure from other boys—and, even more girls believe that this is the case. (Figure 4)

About two-thirds of teens say people their age wait less than six months before having sex — including more than one in five who say they wait less

than a month. Boys are nearly twice as likely as girls to say people date for a month or less before having sex (28% vs. 16%) although about equal numbers agree that many people wait six months or longer (27% vs. 29%). Sexually active teens are more likely than teens who have not had sex to report peers have shorter dating periods before having sexual intercourse with a partner. Nine in ten teens agree that most young people have sex before they are really ready, and nearly two-thirds say once you’ve had sex with a partner it is hard to say no in the future.

Sexual Health Risks

Teens are juggling these pressures to become sexually active with concerns about pregnancy and disease. Three-quarters of boys say that getting a girl pregnant is at least somewhat of a concern for boys their age and three in five say they worry about HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Teen girls do tend to worry slightly more about these issues than boys—nine in ten say girls their age worry about getting pregnant and more than eight in ten say they are concerned about HIV/AIDS or other STDs. When it comes to what each gender is thinking about the other, it appears girls may underestimate how much boys worry about these sexual health issues, while boys may slightly overestimate the level of concern for girls. (Figure 5)

“With my friends, anywhere from... well, its usually six months.”
—Teen Girl, 16.



FIGURE 4. Sexual Pressures
Percent who say there is a lot or some pressure about sex:

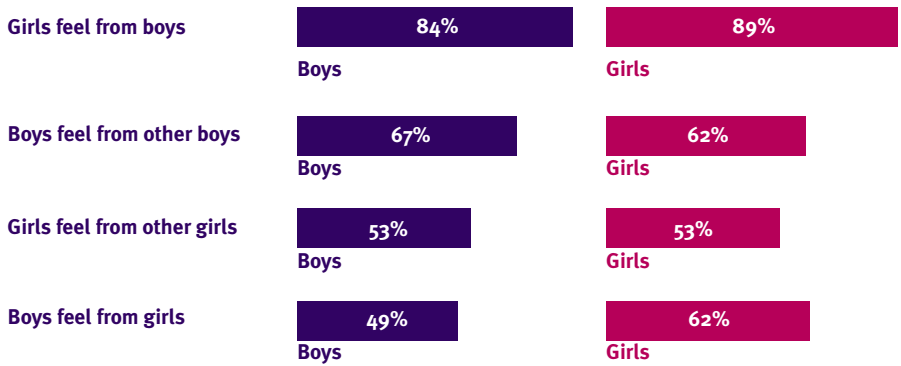
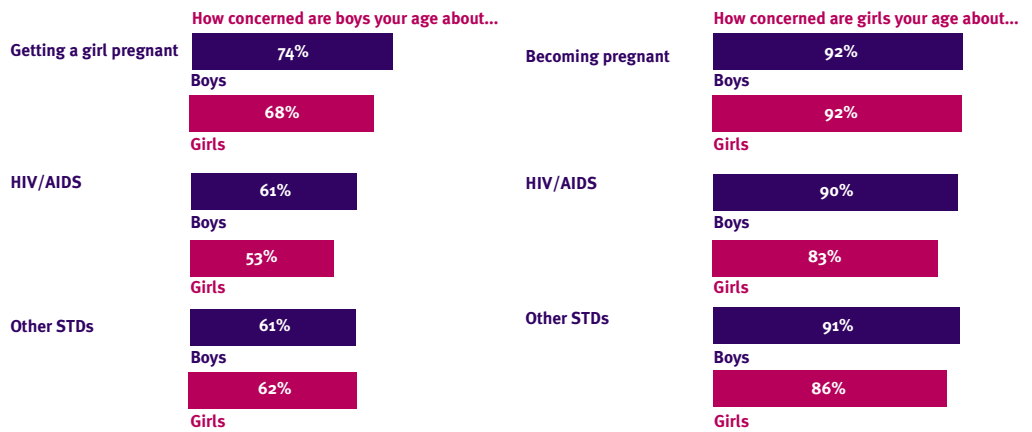


FIGURE 5. Concerns about Pregnancy and Disease
Percent who say their peers are very or somewhat concerned about:



Although both boys and girls hold some dangerous misperceptions when it comes to sexual health issues, girls are more knowledgeable than boys about some aspects of sexual health. More girls are aware that STDs can be spread even when a person has no symptoms and they are also more likely than boys to know that birth control pills provide no protection from STDs. But, girls are

more likely to *underestimate* the protection that condoms provide — both in terms of pregnancy and STDs. Only half of teen girls think condoms are effective at preventing HIV/AIDS and other STDs, versus three in five boys. And, while four in five boys consider condoms to be effective at preventing pregnancy, only two-thirds of girls agree.