

PPFA Consent Survey Results Summary

In October 2015, Planned Parenthood surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2,012 adults 18-95 across the U.S. The survey, conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago, investigated knowledge and beliefs about consent and sexual assault.

There are divergent views about what constitutes sexual assault, especially when both people are intoxicated. Women showed a better understanding of the definition of consent and assault.

- **Consent means affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. There are varying beliefs about which behaviors do and do not communicate consent.**

- Between 19% and 37% of people indicated they strongly agree that taking off their own clothes (35%), getting a condom (37%), nodding in agreement (24%), engaging in foreplay (22%) or not saying 'no' (19%) indicates consent for more sexual activity. However, between 12% and 13% of people indicated they strongly disagree that these behaviors mean consent (with one exception; 20% of people indicate they strongly disagree that not saying 'no' is giving consent).
- These results are consistent with a recent survey from Kaiser and The Washington Post last summer.

- **Nearly everyone believed sexual activity when one person is incapacitated or passed out is sexual assault** (92%). However there is still much confusion to address with young people around when alcohol is involved, but there isn't a clear difference in sobriety.

- **On average, women had a clearer understanding of what actually constitutes consent, regardless of age, education, marital status, and race/ethnicity.**

- Women were statistically significantly more likely than men to strongly agree that:
 - Consent must be given at each step in a sexual encounter (women 27%, men 19%)
 - If a person initiates sex, but during foreplay says they no longer want to, the person has not given consent to continue (women 36%, men 31%)
- And women were statistically significantly more likely than men to strongly disagree that:
 - Consent for sex one time is consent for future sex (women 75%, men 64%)
 - Mixed signals can sometimes mean consent (women 45%, men 35%)
 - Engaging in foreplay such as kissing or touching means someone is giving consent for more sexual activity (women 17%, men 10%)
 - Someone not saying no means they are giving consent for more sexual activity (12% women, 9% men)

- **With the same controls, women were also statistically significantly less likely to hold misconceptions about sexual assault**, including being more likely than men to strongly disagree that:

- If a woman is sexually assaulted while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for what happened (women 57%, men 48%)
- When women go to parties wearing revealing clothes, they are asking for trouble (women 48%, men 35%)
- Sexual assault accusations are often used by women as a way of getting back at men (women 25%, men 13%)

There is strong support for teaching about consent and sexual assault in schools, but most students didn't get education about consent when they were in middle school.

- **The vast majority of people think middle school sex education should include consent and sexual assault**, including:

- how to ask for consent (75%)
- how to give consent (74%)
- how to say no to sex (93%)
- how to recognize whether your partner is giving consent (82%)
- the role of alcohol and drugs in consent (85%)
- how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (91%)
- how to reduce your risk of being sexually assaulted (95%)
- rights if you have been sexually assaulted (93%)
- support services if you have been sexually assaulted (96%)
- healthy and unhealthy relationships (89%)

- Though **most people didn't learn about it** in middle school themselves. Only a minority of people learned about:

- how to ask for consent (14%)
- how to give consent (16%)
- how to say no to sex (25%)
- how to recognize whether your partner is giving consent (15%)
- the role of alcohol and drugs in consent (21%)
- how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (17%)
- how to reduce your risk of being sexually assaulted (20%)
- rights if you have been sexually assaulted (19%)
- support services if you have been sexually assaulted (21%)
- healthy and unhealthy relationships (21%)

- **And even more people think high school sex education should include consent and sexual assault**, including:

- how to ask for consent (88%)
- how to give consent (87%)
- how to say no to sex (97%)
- how to recognize whether your partner is giving consent (93%)
- the role of alcohol and drugs in consent (94%)
- how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (95%)
- how to reduce your risk of being sexually assaulted (97%)
- rights if you have been sexually assaulted (97%)
- support services if you have been sexually assaulted (98%)
- healthy and unhealthy relationships (95%)

- Though **most people also didn't learn about consent** in high school:

- how to ask for consent (21%)
- how to give consent (25%)
- how to say 'no' to sex (33%)
- how to recognize whether your partner is giving consent (23%)
- the role of alcohol and drugs in consent (31%)
- how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (23%)
- how to reduce your risk of being sexually assaulted (29%)
- rights if you have been sexually assaulted (28%)
- support services if you have been sexually assaulted (29%)
- healthy and unhealthy relationships (32%)

Many parents (n=892) report that they have talked with their teens about consent and sexual assault, though most people say their parents didn't talk with them.

- **Parents report that they have talked about consent and sexual assault with their kids:**

- how to ask for consent (42%)
- how to give consent (47%)
- how to say no to sex (63%)
- how to recognize whether your partner is giving consent (45%)
- the role of alcohol and drugs in consent (65%)
- how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (50%)

- how to reduce your risk of being sexually assaulted (61%)
 - rights if you have been sexually assaulted (51%)
 - support services if you have been sexually assaulted (50%)
 - healthy and unhealthy relationships (77%)
- Notably, **parents talked with their daughters more than their sons** about how to say no to a sexual activity, how to reduce the risk of being sexually assaulted, and rights and support services available if they have been sexually assaulted.
 - **Most people report that their own parents did NOT talk with them** about consent and sexual assault when they were growing up:
 - how to ask for consent (19%)
 - how to give consent (22%)
 - how to say no to sex (34%)
 - how to recognize whether your partner is giving consent (21%)
 - the role of alcohol and drugs in consent (29%)
 - how to avoid sexually assaulting someone (23%)
 - how to reduce your risk of being sexually assaulted (32%)
 - rights if you have been sexually assaulted (24%)
 - support services if you have been sexually assaulted (22%)
 - healthy and unhealthy relationships (40%)

People are paying attention to sexual assault, and believe a lot more needs to be done to do to prevent it, support survivors, and deal with those who are accused of assault.

- There is currently **a lot of awareness about sexual assault on college campuses** (64% saw or read at least 1-2 news stories about the topic).
- Most people think that **too little is being done to educate about sexual assault** in high schools (63%) and colleges (61%). In addition, people think the news media (50%), pop culture (54%), and workspaces (49%) aren't doing enough to educate on this important issue.
- Over half of people felt **too little is being done to deal with those accused of sexual assault** in US laws and policies (58%), workplaces (53%), high schools (62%) and college campuses (65%). Similarly, the majority of people felt **too little was being done to support the victims of sexual assault** in US laws and policies (62%), workplaces (58%), high schools (64%) and college campuses (67%).
- People thought **workplaces should provide resources** for people who experience sexual assault or relationship violence (82%), training of staff and management on assault (84%), and employee access to counseling and support services for sexual assault (87%).