Questions

- Is premarital sexual intercourse okay and, if yes, at what age?

- What is the average age at first intercourse?
  - Males
  - Females

- What is the percentage of students who lose their virginity in high school?
  - Males
  - Females

The influence of the media

Your Reports

Top 20 Teen Programs

1. American Idol
2. Simpsons
3. Desperate Housewives
4. Survivor: Palau
5. CSI
7. The O.C.
8. Family Guy
9. Survivor: Vanuatu
10. One Tree Hill
11. Nanny 911
12. Lost
13. The 70s Show
14. WWF: Smackdown
15. 7th Heaven
16. Quintuplets
17. Without a Trace
18. 24
19. Arrested Development
20. America’s Next Top Model
Sexual Content

- Talk about sex
  - Characters discussing their own or others’ sexual actions or interests
- Depictions of sexual behavior including
  - Sexual intercourse (also strongly implied)
  - Intimate touching, passionate kissing, physical flirting
  - Only included if the behavior was primary or substantial emphasis of the scene
- Sexual content scenes were coded for mention of possible risks or responsibilities associated with sexual activity
  - Mentions of contraception, condoms, safer sex, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, abortion, abstinence or waiting to have sex

Amount of sexual content on TV continues to increase

How much content?
Among shows in 2005 with sexual content
the number of sex-related scenes per hour
Age of Characters involved in depictions of sexual intercourse, over time
Less likely than in the past to be under the age of 25

But more likely to have just met
Relationships of characters involved in intercourse, over time

References to safer sex or sexual risks or responsibilities remain rare on TV. And following an increase in 2002, the proportion of shows including such references has leveled off.
Percent of shows with references to sexual risks or responsibilities over time, by type of sexual content

Does it matter?
Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior

• national telephone survey
• In spring 2001 and re-interviewed the same group 1 year later, in spring 2002.
• Final sample of 1762 adolescents,
• 12 to 17 years of age, who participated in both interviews.
• 48% female, 77% white, 13% African American, 7% Hispanic, and 4% Asian or other race.

Measured
survey measured:
- TV viewing habits,
- sexual knowledge,
- attitudes and behavior,
- and a large set of demographic and psychosocial variables
Changes in the “Targets” of Intimacy

- Intimacy with peers is hypothesized to replace intimacy with parents
- Intimacy with peers of the opposite sex is thought to take the place of intimacy with same-sex friends
Dating and Romantic Relationships in Adolescence

- High school dating no longer functions as mate selection, now recreational

Dating and Romantic Relationships

- Romantic relationships are very common, in the past 18 months
  - 25% of 12-year-olds reported having one
  - 50% of 15-year-olds reported having one
  - 70% of 18-year-olds reported having one
Patterns of Dating

- Dating can mean a variety of things
  - group activities involving boys and girls
  - casual dating in couples
  - serious involvement in a steady relationship
- Transitions into and out of romantic relationships can be difficult for adolescents
  - breakups are the leading cause of the first major depressive episode

Dating and Romance

- More adolescents experience mixed-sex group activities like parties or dances than dating, or having a serious boyfriend or girlfriend
- Dating develops gender identity, learning about oneself as a romantic partner, and establishing and maintaining status and popularity in the peer group

Three Phases in Adolescent Romance

1) Discover an interest in socializing with potential romantic and sexual partners; relationships last a few weeks (between 11 and 13)
2) Move toward more meaningful dyadic relationships; relationships last about 6 months (from about 14 to 16)
3) Begin to think about the long-term survival and growth of romantic relationships; average relationship is over a year (around 17 or 18)
Effects of Dating

• Early and intensive dating before age 15
  – Stunting effect on psychosocial development
• Adolescent girls who do not date at all
  – Retarded social development, excessive dependency on parents, feelings of insecurity
• Moderate degree of dating
  – Potentially most valuable pattern

The Impact of Dating on Adolescent Development

• Characteristics of the romantic partner and the relationship impact how dating affects adolescent development
• However, in general, adolescent romance has a powerful impact on emotional states
• Adolescents’ real and fantasized relationships trigger strong emotions
  – Most emotions are positive; however, 40% are negative (involving anxiety, anger, jealousy, and depression)

Violence in Dating Relationships

• High proportion of adolescents believe that physical violence in a relationship is acceptable
• 40% of adolescents experience violence in a romantic relationship
  – Males and females are equally likely to be the victim
  – Common among heterosexual and LGBT relationships
Violence in Dating Relationships

• Victims are more likely to be depressed, contemplate suicide, use illegal drugs, become pregnant during adolescence, and drop out of school

Sexual Attitudes Among Adolescents

• Most teens today believe it is acceptable to have intercourse before marriage as long as it takes place within the context of a loving, intimate relationship
• Decline in acceptance of the double standard
What are they doing?

Percentage of High School Students Who Ever Had Sexual Intercourse, by Sex* and Race/Ethnicity, † 2011

Percentage of High School Students Who Were Currently Sexually Active,* by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, † 2011
The Timing of Sexual Initiation

• Adolescents are more likely to lose their virginity during certain times of the year
  – May, June, July common regardless of romantic involvement (prom, graduation)
  – Holiday season in December is peak time for serious relationships

Sexual Activity

• Median age at first intercourse
  – 16.9 boys; 17.4 girls

• Girls
  – For many ~ 30% the first time is not voluntary
  – Partners are the same age or 1-3 years older
  – ¼ of girls report partners who are 4 or more years older
  – The younger the girl when she first had sex for the first time, greater the average age difference
Percentage of High School Students Who Ever Had Sexual Intercourse, 1991 – 2011†

The percentage of sexually active adolescents increased during 1970s and 80s; decreased slightly from 1995 to 2001.

One-third of adolescents have early sexual intercourse (before ninth grade).

Greatest increase in prevalence of premarital intercourse has been among females.

Proportion of high school student who had sexual intercourse: 1960-2000

Sexual Promiscuity

[Graphs and data showing trends and statistics related to sexual activity and promiscuity]
Psychological and Social Characteristics of Sexually Active Adolescents

- Early (before 16) sexual activity correlates with:
  - experimentation with drugs and alcohol,
  - a low level of religious involvement,
  - tolerance of deviant behavior,
  - a lower interest in academic achievement,
  - a higher orientation toward independence
  - less likely to use contraception

Sexually Active Adolescents

What Influences Sexual Activity?

- Hormones are especially important for boys
  - testosterone surge sparks initial interest in sex for boys and girls (girls are also influenced by estrogens)
  - boys who are more popular with girls and mature earlier tend to initiate sex earlier than unpopular boys
  - biological factors have a very strong influence on boys' sexual behavior

- Context is especially important for girls
  - important predictors of girls' involvement in sexual intercourse are whether their friends are doing it or whether they have sexually permissive attitudes
Parental Influences on Sexual Activity

- Authoritative parenting is associated with adolescents who are
  - less likely to become sexually active at an early age
  - less likely to engage in risky sexual activity
- Parent-adolescent communication about sex
  - stops them from engaging in risky sexual behaviors, but does little to prevent them from being sexually active in general

Sexual Activity and Household Composition

- Household composition predicts sexual involvement
  - especially among girls
  - adolescents whose parents are in the process of divorcing as well as girls who live in single-parent households are more likely to be sexually active earlier than their peers
  - true regardless of when (or if) a divorce took place

Single-Parent Homes and Adolescent Girls’ Sexual Behavior

- Social influences have stronger affect on girls than boys
- Single-parent mothers might be dating and this might model sexual activity to their adolescent
- Girls are more likely to respond to problems at home by going outside the family for alternative sources of support
- Genetic influences
Antecedents of Risky Sexual Behavior

Peer Influences on Sexual Behavior

• Having sexually active peers establishes a normative standard that having sex is okay
• Peers also can communicate directly about sex, with friends or with potential partners
• Risk factors for sexual activity are cumulative
Virginity Pledges
• Only works for younger adolescents
  – no effect on high school students
• Those who take a virginity pledge are less likely to use contraception
• Other contexts in which virginity pledges do not work
  – in schools where very few students take virginity pledges
  – in schools where nearly everyone pledges

What Does Sex Mean to Boys?
• Boys are more likely to...
  – keep matters of sex and intimacy separate
  – have experienced orgasm through masturbation
  – interpret intercourse in terms of recreation than intimacy

What Does Sex Mean to Girls?
• Girls are more like to...
  – integrate sexual activity into an existing capacity for intimacy and emotional involvement
  – take the view that sex is combined with romance, love, friendship, and intimacy
  – feel conflicted afterward because of societal pressures and worries about pregnancy
% who had sex before 15, 18 and 20 in different countries

Pregnancies among women aged 19 and younger in selected industrialized countries

Percentage of High School Students Who Used a Condom During Last Sexual Intercourse, by Sex and Race/Ethnicity, 2011

National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2011
Adolescents’ Reasons for Not Using Contraception

- Lack of planning
- Lack of access
- Lack of knowledge
- Taken together, what can adults do to improve the contraceptive behavior of adolescents?
Adolescent Birth Control Methods

- Many adolescents report using the withdrawal or rhythm methods of contraception, two of the least effective ways to prevent pregnancy.

Teenage Pregnancy and Childbearing

- Nearly one-third of American women become pregnant by age 20.
  - Not all pregnancies result in childbirth (~33% are aborted, ~15% end in miscarriage).
  - Very few American teen births result in adoptions.
- America’s teen birth rate is higher than all other industrialized countries.

What Causes Teen Pregnancy?

- The most important difference between teens who become pregnant and those who do not is contraceptive use.
  - 85% of teen pregnancies are unintended.
- Ambitious, well-educated, middle- to upper-class women who live in wealthier areas are more likely to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.
Teen Pregnancy: The Role of the Father

- Teen fathers are likely to...
  - have problems with self-esteem, school, work, aggression, drugs, and alcohol
  - have fathered a child previously
  - experience adverse effects on mental health and educational development (more likely among White and Hispanic men than Black men)
  - receive little support or help in becoming responsible parents

Consequences for Children of Teen Mothers

- Environment of single parenthood and poverty are more harmful than mother's relative youth for child development
  - however, adolescent mothers may perceive their babies as being more difficult and have problems interacting with them
- Mothers who were more intelligent and better adjusted before the birth of their infant have greater parenting skills later