



The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization supported largely by private donations. The mission of the National Campaign is to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families by reducing teen pregnancy. The Campaign's goal is to reduce the teen pregnancy rate by one-third between 1996 and 2005.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY
1776 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NW
SUITE 200
WASHINGTON, DC 20036
(202) 478-8500
(202) 478-8588 FAX
CAMPAIGN@TEENPREGNANCY.ORG
AOL KEYWORD: CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY
CFC #: 1976

www.teenpregnancy.org



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America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy

An Annual National Survey

December 2003

WITH ONE VOICE 2003

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview and summary *page 1*

Methodology *page 7*

Messages

Abstinence messages *page 8*

Mixed messages? *page 10*

Teen pregnancy messages *page 11*

Beliefs

Sex and committed relationships *page 12*

Peer perceptions *page 14*

Adult perceptions *page 15*

Opposition to teen sex *page 16*

Sex and regret *page 17*

Virginity *page 18*

Marriage and children *page 19*

Abstinence and Contraception

Abstinence first *page 20*

More of both *page 21*

Advice for policymakers *page 22*

Parents and Other Influences

Influential parents *page 24*

Morals, values, and religious beliefs *page 25*

Relationship role models *page 26*

Conversations with parents *page 27*

Initiating conversations with parents *page 28*

Friends, Dating, and Relationships

Parties with no adults in the house *page 30*

Older partners *page 31*

Talking about contraception *page 32*

Media

The consequences of sex *page 34*

Media as conversation starter *page 35*

Boys and Men

Getting a different message *page 36*

Overview and Summary

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is proud to present the findings from our annual national survey of public opinion. *With One Voice 2003* offers important insights for parents, program leaders, funders, policymakers, and the media about teen sex and pregnancy and about factors that influence teens' decisions about sex. This publication is the third in a yearly series of national surveys released by the National Campaign asking adults (aged 20 and older) and teens (aged 12–19) a consistent, core set of questions about teen pregnancy and related issues. Made possible through a generous grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the *With One Voice* series provides both a yearly snapshot of what Americans think about these issues as well as some sense of how their attitudes are evolving.

As we have noted in each volume of *With One Voice*, the National Campaign has undertaken nationally representative annual surveys of public opinion for two primary reasons. First, we think it is important to regularly assess the content and direction of the “national conversation” regarding teen pregnancy and share these results with policymakers, the media, state and local leaders, practitioners, parents, and teens themselves. Second, we view these surveys of public *opinion* to be a critical supplement to the *behavioral* data collected regularly by the federal government (through, for example, the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System). Because attitudes can affect behavior, these regular surveys on teen sex and pregnancy enhance our understanding of the teen pregnancy problem and what to do about it.

The following pages provide complete results of the survey, the exact wording of the questions used, and year-by-year comparison data when available. Some additional analysis and comment are also provided for many of the survey results.

It is our sincere hope that these findings provide parents with compelling evidence of their influence over their children's sexual decisions. Over two decades of research, supported by surveys such as this one, make it clear that parents can and should play a very important role in helping young people make sound decisions about sex. It is also increasingly clear that parents influence whether their teenagers become pregnant or cause a pregnancy. In short, when it comes to teens and sex—whether they believe it or not—parents are powerful and they can use this power in constructive, helpful ways.

We also hope that adults share the findings of these surveys with the young people in their lives and, to the extent they are comfortable, that teens talk to each other about some of the issues highlighted in this survey. For example, we note with concern that nearly seven out of ten teens overestimate the percentage of their peers who are sexually active. This mismatch is important for young people to know and discuss because teens who believe their peers are sexually active are more likely to have sex themselves.

Finally, we hope that these survey results show that the majority of adults and teens in this country continue to hold a practical, moderate view about teen sexual behavior and pregnancy prevention. They do not pit abstinence *against* contraception. Rather, they see a role for both. They believe that young people should be strongly encouraged to delay having sex *and* should also be given information about contraception. They also believe that those teens who are sexually active should have access to contraception. As such, they stand outside the heated rhetoric that often accompanies this set of issues and speak “with one voice” of reason and common sense.

Survey Headlines

- Parents continue to underestimate their influence on their teenagers' decisions about sex.
- Support for providing young people with a strong abstinence message is overwhelming.
- Support is also strong for giving young people information about contraception.
- Few teens, however, feel that they are getting enough information about both abstinence and contraception.
- The clear majority of adults and teens believe that teens should not be sexually active but teens who are should have access to contraception.
- Teens continue to express more cautious attitudes toward sex than is perhaps generally believed.
- Teens overestimate the percentage of their peers who have had sex.
- Adults mistakenly believe that rates of teen sexual activity and pregnancy have been increasing over the past several years.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Parents continue to underestimate their influence. When asked who most influences their decisions about sex, teens say parents (45%) are more influential than friends (31%), religious leaders (7%), teachers and sex educators (6%), the media (4%), and others. For their part, however, parents seem to be suffering from a crisis of confidence. Parents underestimate their own influence (only 32% of adults believe parents are most influential) and mistakenly believe that teens' friends are most influential (48%). Young adolescents (aged 12–14), in particular, cite parents as most influential. More than half of this age group (53%) say parents are most influential and only 24% say friends are most influential. Parents need to know that they are viewed as most influential by teens of *all* ages and by both boys and girls. *See chart 14.*

Discussions between parents and teens are important. An overwhelming majority of teens (88%) surveyed believe it would be easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen

pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents. *See chart 17.*

Parents are relationship role models. Nearly six in ten teens (59%) say that when it comes to healthy, responsible relationships, their parents are their role models. By contrast, only 12% say their friends are their role models, 5% say other family members, and 4% cite their friends' parents. Still, about one in ten teens (11%) say that they don't have any relationship role models. *See chart 16.*

Support among adults and teens for providing a strong abstinence message to young people remains strong. Nearly all of the adults (94%) and teens (92%) surveyed believe that it is important for teens to be given a strong message from society that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school. Support for this position has remained remarkably consistent over the past three years. *See chart 1.*

Support for a strong abstinence message is coupled with strong support for providing teens with information about and access to contraception. Few teens feel they are getting enough information about these topics. Only 13% of teens believe they are getting enough information about abstinence and contraception. Six in ten teens (60%) and three-quarters of adults wish that teens were getting more information about abstinence *and* contraception rather than just one or the other. By contrast, few say they want more information for teens *only* about abstinence (18% of adults, 9% of teens) or more information *only* about contraception (5% of adults, 11% of teens). The message to policymakers is similar. Nearly identical percentages of adults (67%) and teens (66%) urge policymakers in Washington to place greater emphasis on encouraging teens not to have sex *and* greater emphasis on contraception, rather than *just* abstinence or *just* contraception. *See charts 12 and 13.*

Americans believe in an “abstinence first” approach. As has been the case in past Campaign public opinion surveys, the clear majority of adults (71%) and teens (59%) believe that teens

should not be sexually active, but teens who are should have access to birth control. By contrast, 20% of adults and 23% of teens believe teens should not be sexually active and should not have access to birth control; 7% of adults and 18% of teens think it's okay for teens to be sexually active as long as they have access to birth control. *See chart 11.*

Stressing abstinence to teens while also providing them with information about contraception is not viewed as a “mixed message.” Nearly seven in ten adults (68%) and nearly eight in ten teens (77%) view such a message as “clear and specific.” The percentage of those who believe that this message is clear and specific has remained nearly unchanged over the past three years. *See chart 2.*

Teens overestimate the percentage of their peers who have had sex. Nearly seven in ten teens (68%) in grades 9–12 believe that teens their age have had sex. However, the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which surveys students in grades 9–12, indicates that 46% of students in high school have had sex. Teens’ *perception* of what their friends are doing is particularly important because a teen who believes his or her friends are sexually active is more likely to initiate sex, and is less likely to do so if he or she believes that peers are not sexually active. Interestingly, teen girls (66%) are far more likely than boys (57%) to believe their peers are sexually experienced. *See chart 5.*

Adults are in the dark about teen sex and pregnancy. Nearly seven in ten adults (68%) believe that the percentage of teens who have had sex or gotten pregnant has been increasing in recent years. In fact, teen pregnancy rates declined 27% between 1990 and 1999 (most recent data available), teen birth rates have declined 31% between 1991 and 2002, and the percentage of high school students who had had sex also declined between 1991 and 2001. (The YRBS reports that in 1991, 54% of high school students had had sex; in 2001 the percentage was 46%.) *See chart 6.*

Sexually experienced teens regret that they didn’t wait longer to have sex. A clear majority of sexually experienced teens surveyed (67%, up from 63% in 2002) say they wish they had waited longer before having sexual intercourse. Nearly eight in ten (77%) sexually experienced teen girls and six in ten (60%) sexually experienced teen boys report that they wish they had waited. *See chart 8.*

Views on virginity. Although 48% of adults (up from 39% last year) believe that it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins, only 26% of teens feel that way. The percentage of teen boys who think it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins increased rather dramatically from last year (from 24% in 2002 to 33% in 2003). *See chart 9.*

Where are the adults? Nearly half (42%) of teens in grades 9–12 say that they have been at a party in the past six months with boys and girls where no adults were present. Among teens aged 12–14, one in five (19%) say they have been in such a situation. *See chart 19.*

Adults do not believe that teens are getting a clear message that teen pregnancy is wrong. Although 87% of teens say they are getting a clear message that teen pregnancy is wrong (67% strongly agree, 20% agree somewhat), only 43% of adults believe that to be the case—down from 63% in 2001. *See chart 3.*

Teens express more cautious attitudes and values toward sex than is perhaps generally believed:

- ▶ The overwhelming majority of teens (85%)—both boys and girls—say that sex should only occur in a long-term, committed relationship.
- ▶ Nearly three in ten teens (28%) say they have become more opposed over the past several years to teens having sex. Eleven percent say they have become less opposed and 58% report their view on the matter is unchanged.
- ▶ Fully 84% of teens believe that teen pregnancy prevention programs should teach young people to be married before they have a child.

- And, as noted previously, 92% of teens say teens should receive a strong abstinence message from society, and of those who have had sex, two-thirds (67%) say they wish they had waited longer to do so. *See charts 4, 7, 10, 1, and 8.*

The role of morals, values, and religious beliefs. Two-thirds of teens say their own morals, values, and/or religious beliefs (34%) and concerns about their future (34%) influence their decisions about sex; more than concerns about pregnancy (17%) or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs, 15%). *See charts 15.*

Media matters. Nearly nine in ten adults and teens (87% and 88% respectively) wish the media showed more or talked more about the consequences of sex, including teen pregnancy. At the same time, many teens and parents of teens find that the media offers terrific ways to begin discussions about sex and its consequences. Nearly half of teens (45%) say that in the past year or so, something in the media sparked a conversation with their friends or parents about the consequences of sex. Nearly six in ten parents of teens (58%) say they had such a conversation with their children or friends because of something they saw in the media. *See charts 22 and 23.*

What about the boys? Nearly six in ten teens overall (49% of boys and 70% of girls) believe that teen boys often receive the message that sex and pregnancy are not a big deal. More than six in ten adults (66%) believe the same. *See chart 24.*

What's remained constant, what's changed? Taken together, the following charts indicate that American adults and teens views about teen sex and pregnancy have remained almost unchanged over the past three years. For example:

- Nearly all of those surveyed believe teens need more information about abstinence and contraception.
- Few Americans believe that encouraging teens to remain abstinent while also providing them with information about contraception sends young people a confusing, mixed message.

- A clear majority of adults and young people continue to believe that teens should not be sexually active but those who are should have access to contraception.

Still, there are several areas where changes in opinion have been rather dramatic. For example:

- The percentage of adolescents (88% in 2003) who believe it would be easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents increased nearly 19 percentage points between 2002 and 2003.
- The percentage of adults (43% in 2003) who believe that teens are getting a clear message that teen pregnancy is wrong declined 20 percentage points between 2001 and 2003.
- The percentage of teens who think it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins increased from 19% in 2002 to 26% in 2003. This increase was particularly steep among teen boys—33% say it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins, up from 24% in 2002.

NOTE TO READER

For all National Campaign survey work, we hope that those concerned with preventing adolescent pregnancy will use these data to advance their important work. For example, many communities have conducted their own local polling and compared their results with our national results. To help with these comparisons, the following charts provide not only the answers to our survey questions, but also the exact wording of the questions themselves.

Some of the following charts present data from previous Campaign surveys in 2001 and 2002, and some present data only from 2003. This simply reflects whether or not a particular question was asked in one or more of these three years. Campaign survey questions before 2001 are also noted where relevant.

As a general matter, survey results are reported for adults aged 20 and older and teens aged 12–19. When subgroup differences seem important, responses are presented in more refined cat-

egories, such as parents of teens, younger teens (aged 12–14), older teens (aged 15–19), and teens in grades 9–12 or grades 5–8. Survey responses by gender, age, and race/ethnicity are also noted when subgroup differences appear interesting.

Some of the responses to various questions do not quite total 100 percent. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, we chose not to display the percentages of respondents who answered “don’t know” or refused to answer, unless such numbers seemed important.

Finally, some data from the survey presented here were previously released by the National Campaign in the September 2003 publication, *The Parent Gap: Teen Pregnancy and Parental Influence*. *The Parent Gap*, along with all previous polling conducted for the National Campaign, can be found at: www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/data/polling.asp.

Methodology

Data presented in *With One Voice 2003: America's Adults and Teens Sound Off About Teen Pregnancy*, are drawn from two national surveys, one of young people aged 12–19 and the other of adults aged 20 and older. Of the young people interviewed, 46% were boys and 54% were girls, 64% were aged 15–19 and 36% were aged 12–14. Of the adults interviewed, 79% were parents. The survey was designed by the National Campaign with assistance from International Communications Research (ICR).

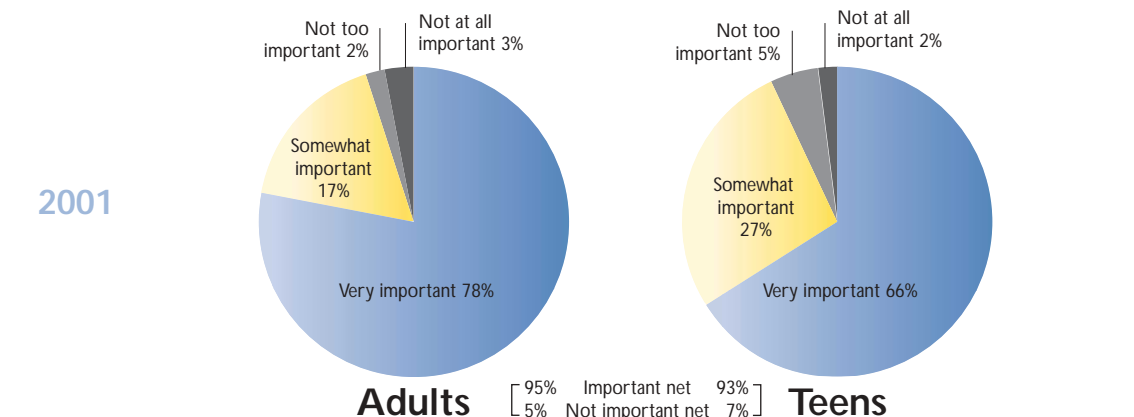
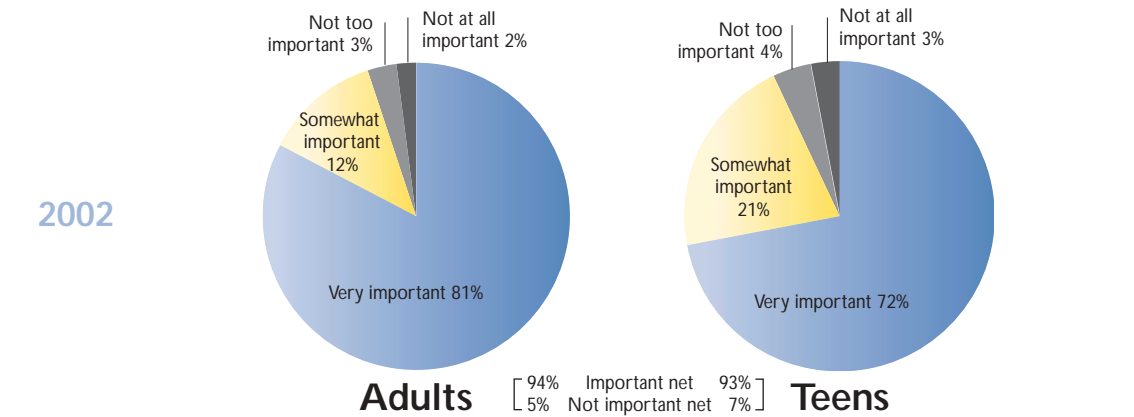
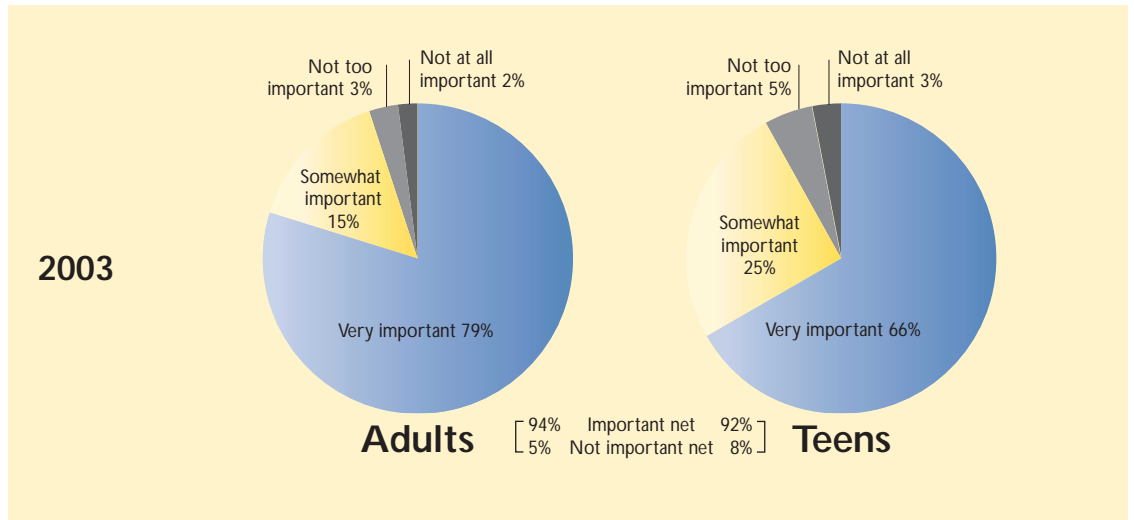
The teen survey is weighted to provide a nationally representative estimate of young people aged 12–19. Field work for this survey was conducted between August 21 and September 10, 2003. Telephone interviews were conducted by ICR with 1,000 young people. The sample for this study was drawn using two different methods. The first sample source used random digit dial (RDD). RDD numbers are drawn from telephone households throughout the continental United

States. As a second sample source, a database of households with teenagers aged 12–19 was tapped. All interviews were conducted using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The CATI system ensures that all questions are rotated and that when answer options are presented, they are also rotated. This rotating eliminates “question position” bias. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3 percentage points.

The adult survey is also weighted to provide a nationally representative estimate of the adult population, aged 20 and older. Field work for this survey was conducted between August 20–24, 2003. Telephone interviews were conducted by ICR with 1,008 adults. This survey was done as part of a national, twice-weekly telephone omnibus survey using a fully-replicated, stratified, single-stage RDD sample of telephone households. Sample telephone numbers are computer-generated. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 3 percentage points.

CHART 1
Question: How important do you think it is for teens to be given a strong message from society that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school?

MESSAGES



Comment and further analysis (*data not shown*): Support for providing teens a strong abstinence message has remained remarkably consistent over the past seven years. In 1997, 95% of adults surveyed by the National Campaign said it was important for teens to be given a strong message from society they should abstain from sex until they are at least out of high school. In that same year, teen support for this position was also 95%. (Note, though, that only 12–17 year-olds were surveyed in 1997 compared to 12–19 year-olds in each of the past three years.)

This chart, along with others that follow, strongly suggest that most Americans see a difference between providing young people with a strong abstinence *message*, and support for abstinence-only education as a *strategy*. That is, adults and teens believe that abstinence is the first and best choice for young people and strongly support messages to that effect. However, they stop well short of supporting efforts that would provide young people with information only about abstinence.

MESSAGES

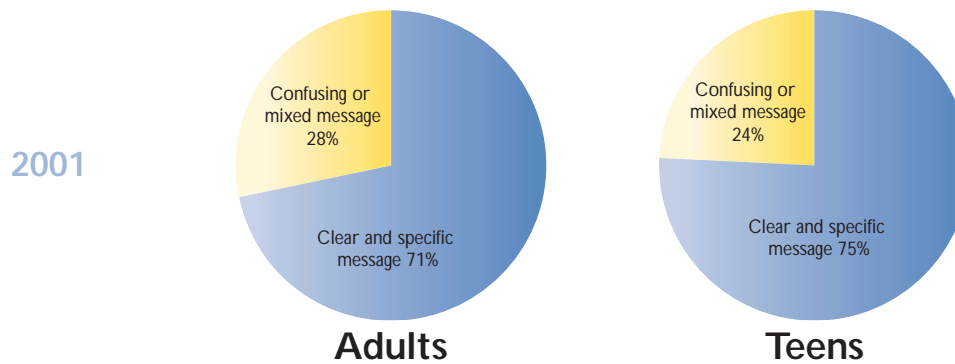
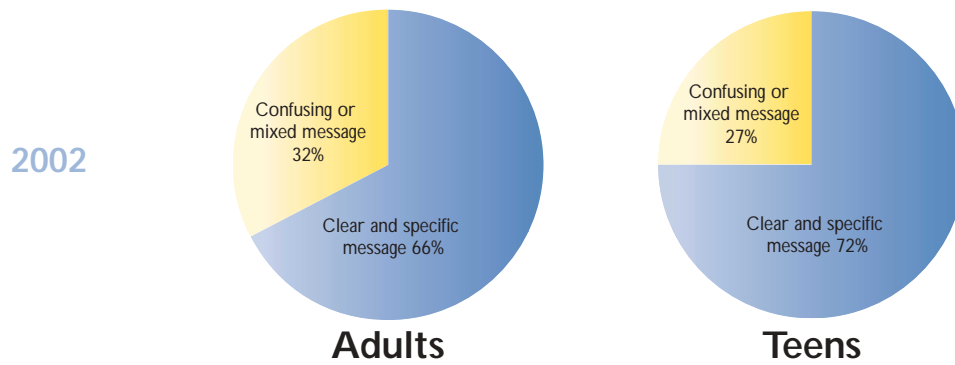
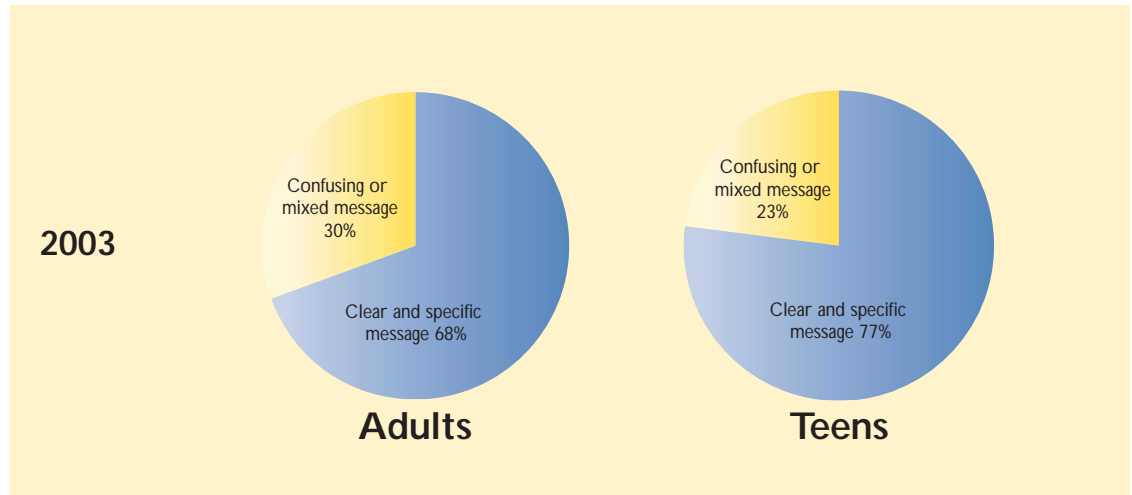
CHART 2

Question:

Suppose a parent or other adult tells a teenager the following:

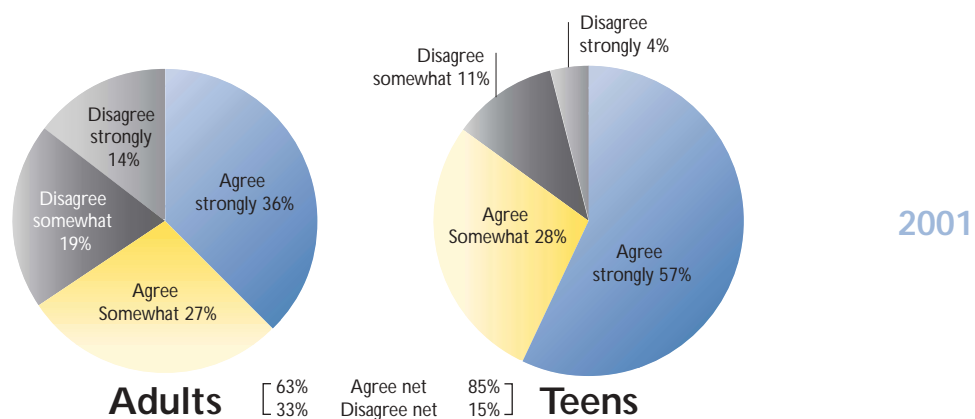
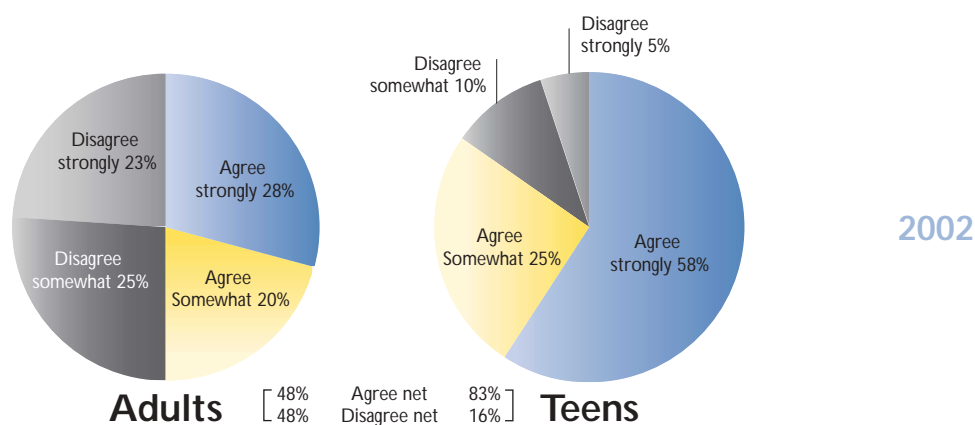
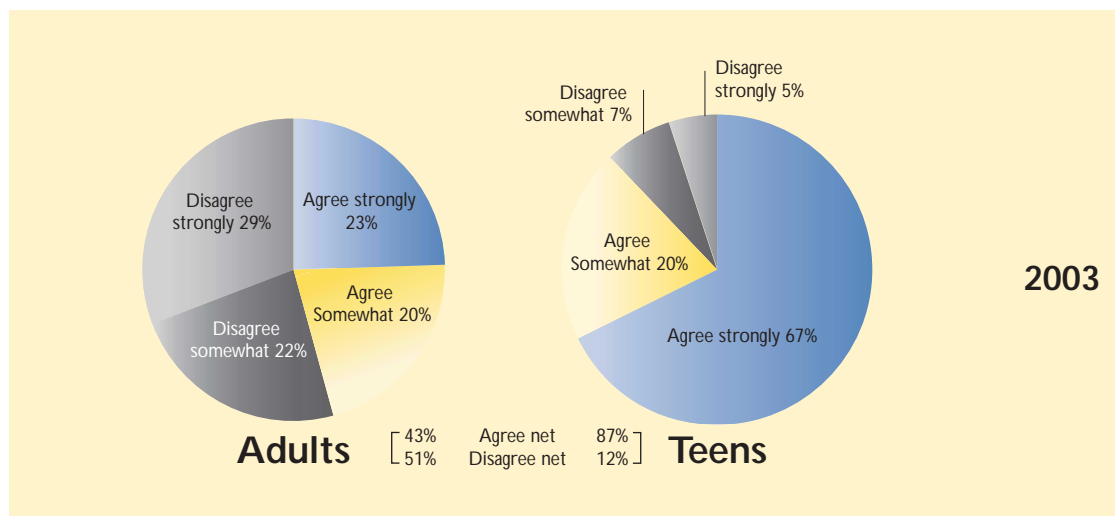
"I feel very strongly that not having sex at all during your middle and high school years is your best option and the right thing to do. I also think it is important for you to receive information about birth control or protection. But again, I think not having sex is your best option."

Do you think this is a clear and specific message or do you think it is a confusing or mixed message?



Comment: Some argue that stressing abstinence to teens while also providing them with information about contraception sends teens a confusing, "mixed message." These results show that both adults and teens disagree with this view. Moreover, a significant body of research has made it clear that sex education programs that discuss contraception *do not* hasten the onset of sex, nor increase the number of sexual partners (see *Emerging Answers*, www.teenpregnancy.org).

CHART 3
Proposition:
Teenagers are/I'm
getting a clear
message that
teen pregnancy
is wrong.



Comment: Although two-thirds of teens agree strongly that they are getting a clear message that teen pregnancy is wrong, the remaining third are not so sure (20%) or actually disagree (12%). Moreover, half of adults (51%) believe teens are not getting a clear message that teen pregnancy is wrong. If a significant minority of teens say they are *not* getting a very clear message about the appropriateness of teen pregnancy, how can we be surprised by continued high rates of adolescent pregnancy in this country? These data show a real need for more straightforward conversations with young people about postponing pregnancy and parenthood until they are older.

MESSAGES

CHART 4
Proposition:
Personally, I believe that sex should only occur in a long-term, committed relationship.

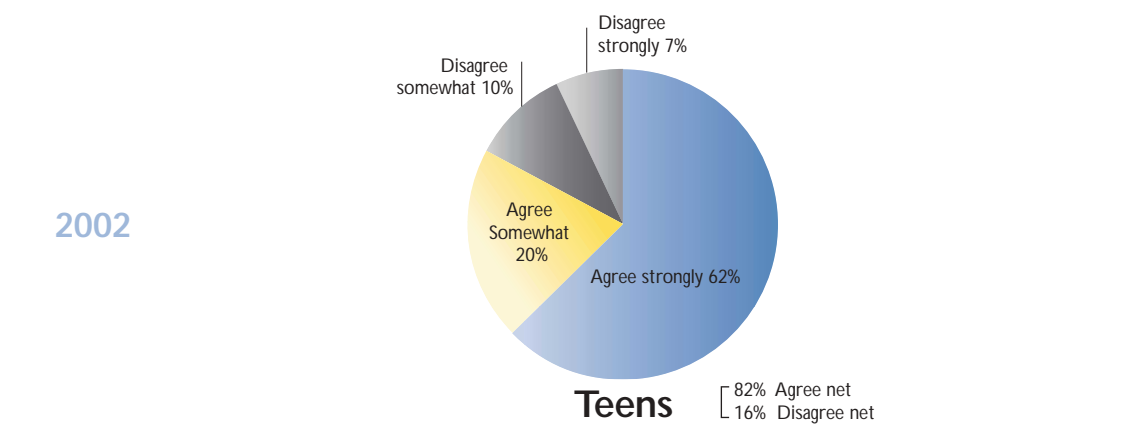
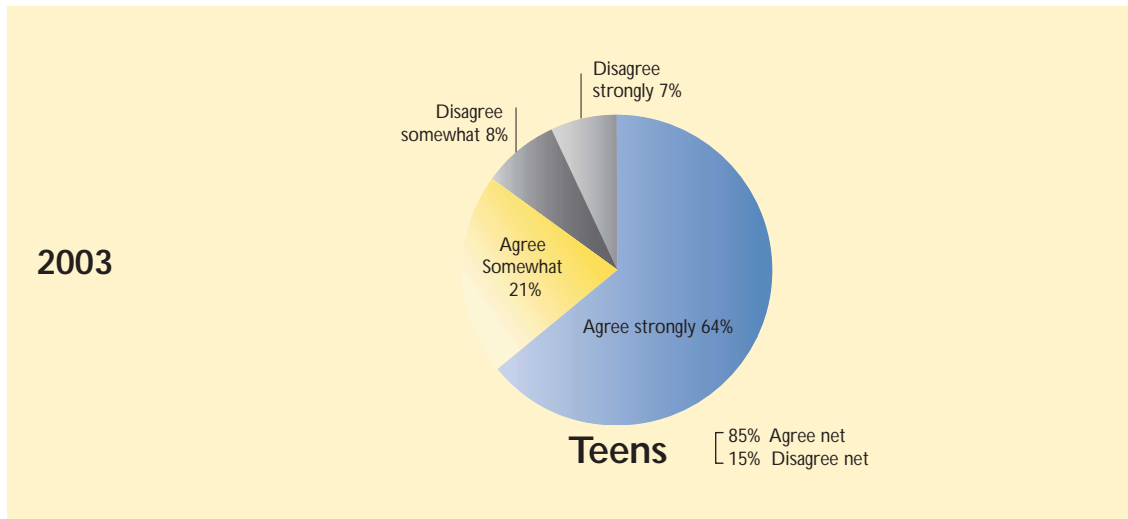
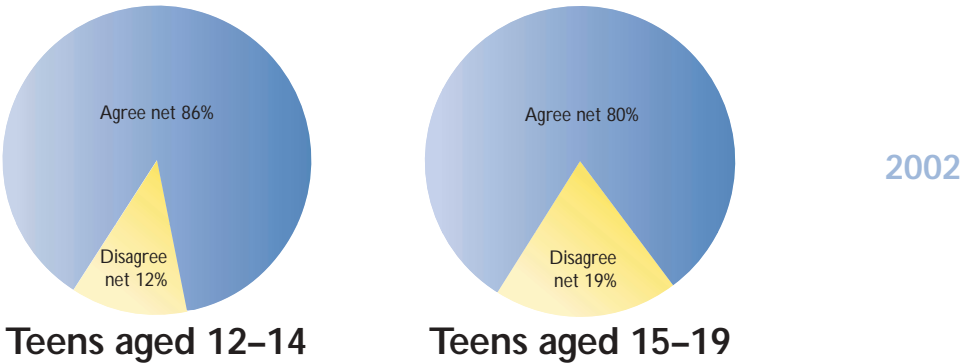
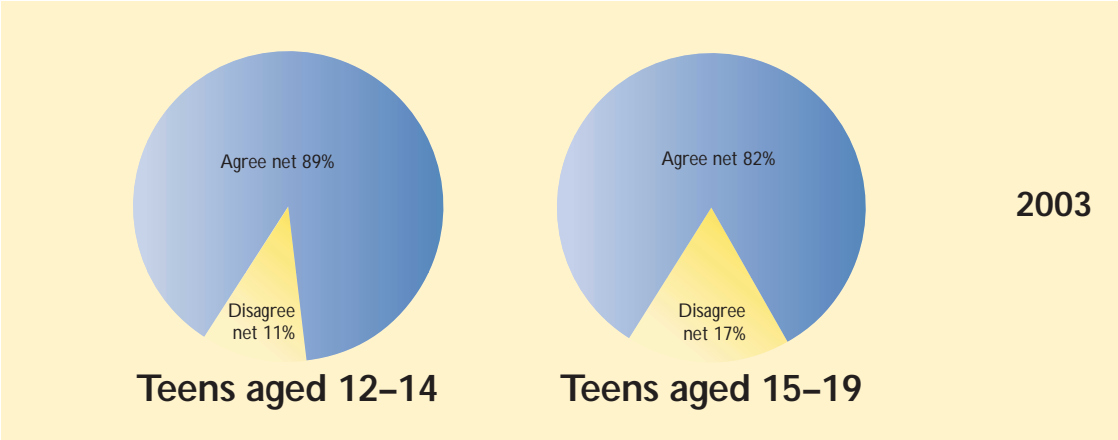
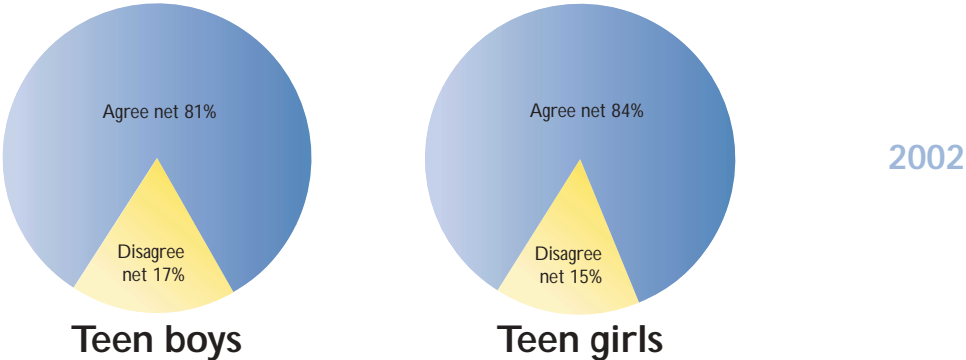
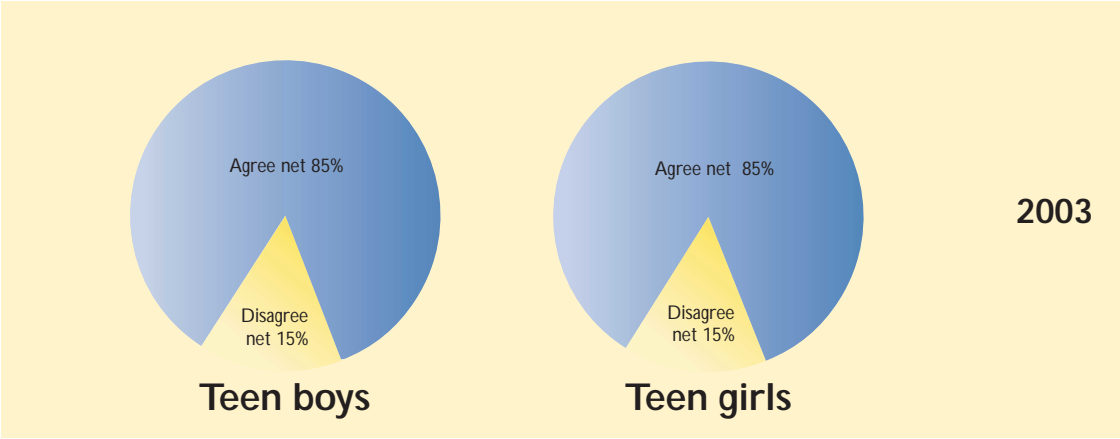
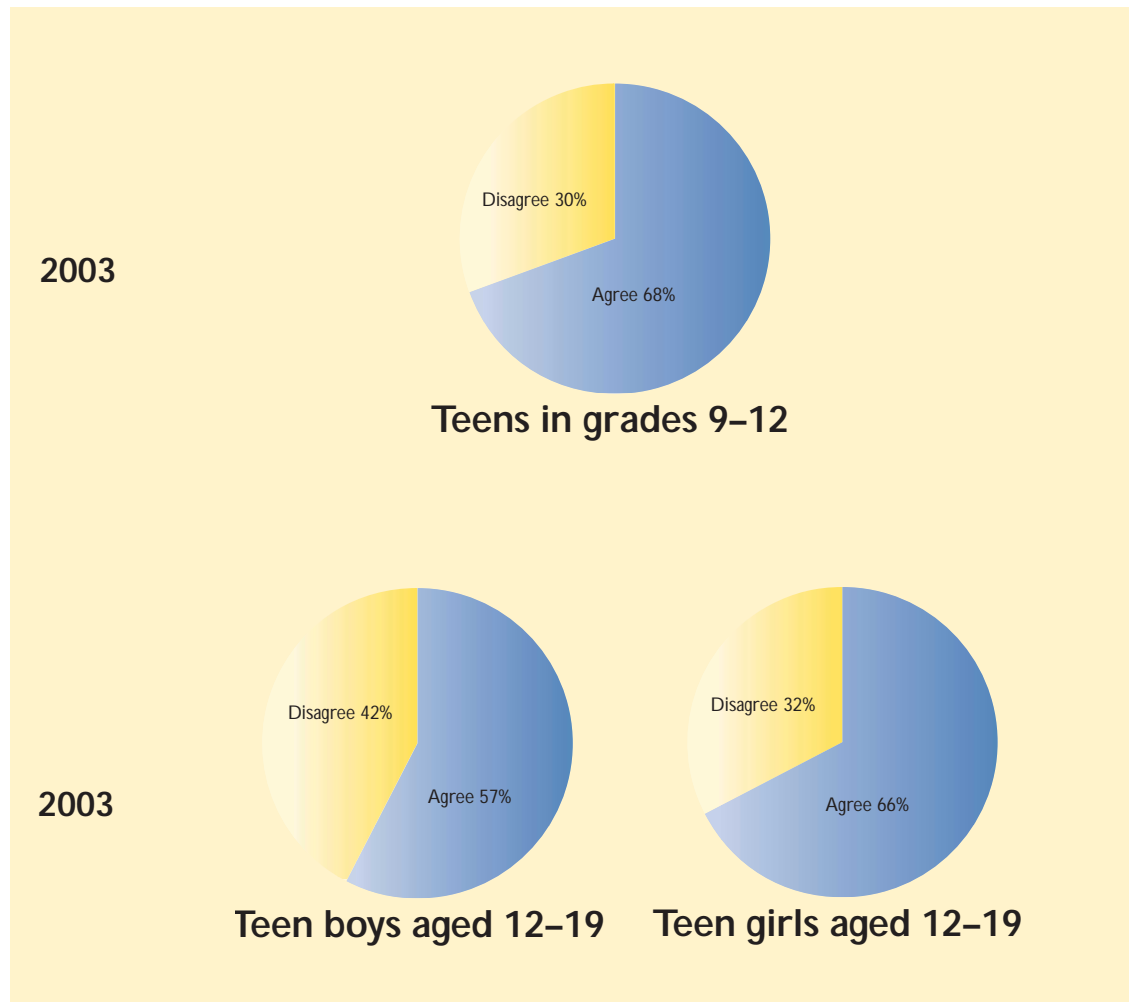


CHART 4
(Continued)



BELIEFS

CHART 5
*Proposition: Most
 teens my age
 have had sex*



Actual percentage of teens in 2001 grades 9-12 who had had sex.

Every two years the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention release data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a nationally-representative analysis of teens in grades 9-12. The 2001 YRBS (the most recent available) finds that 46% of those in grades 9-12 had had sexual intercourse.

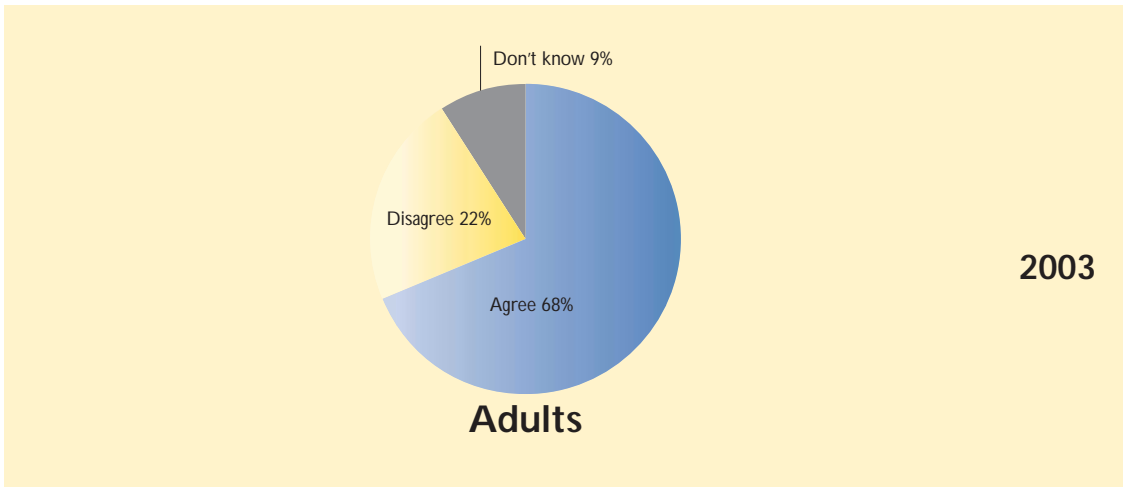


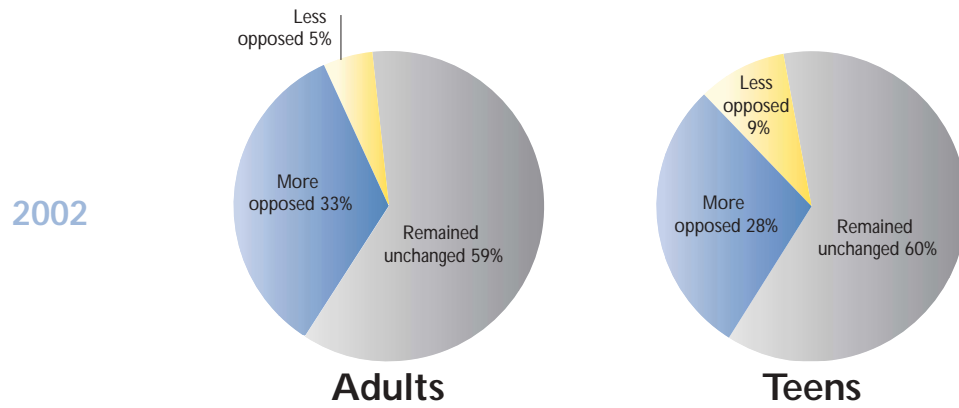
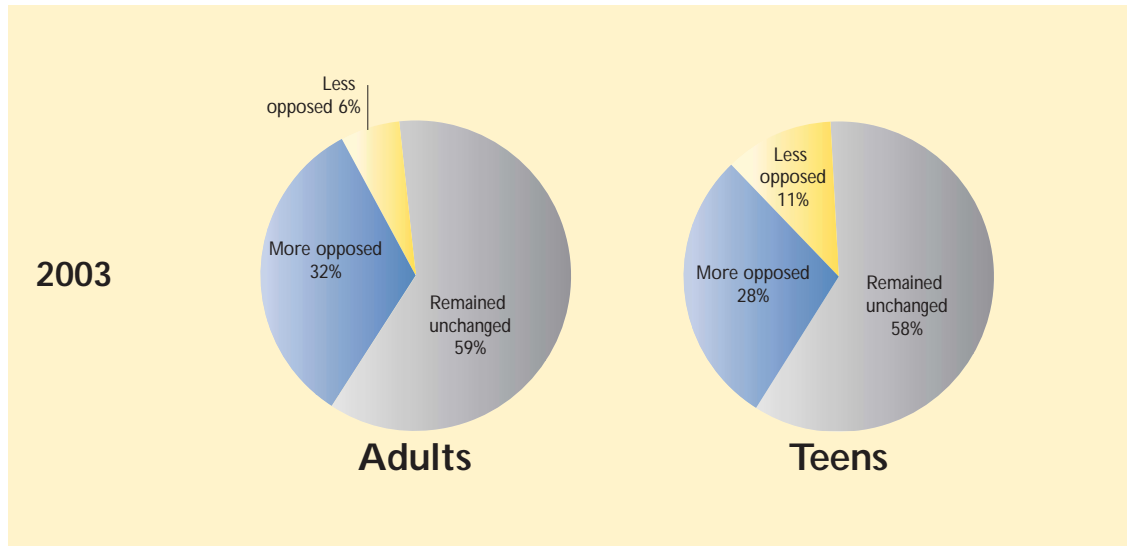
CHART 6
Proposition: The percentage of teens who have had sex or gotten pregnant has been increasing in recent years.

Actual teen pregnancy, birth and sexual activity rates.

Teen pregnancy rates declined 27% between 1990 and 1999; teen birth rates declined 31% between 1991 and 2002; and the percentage of teens in high school who had had sex declined from 54% in 1991 to 46% in 2001.

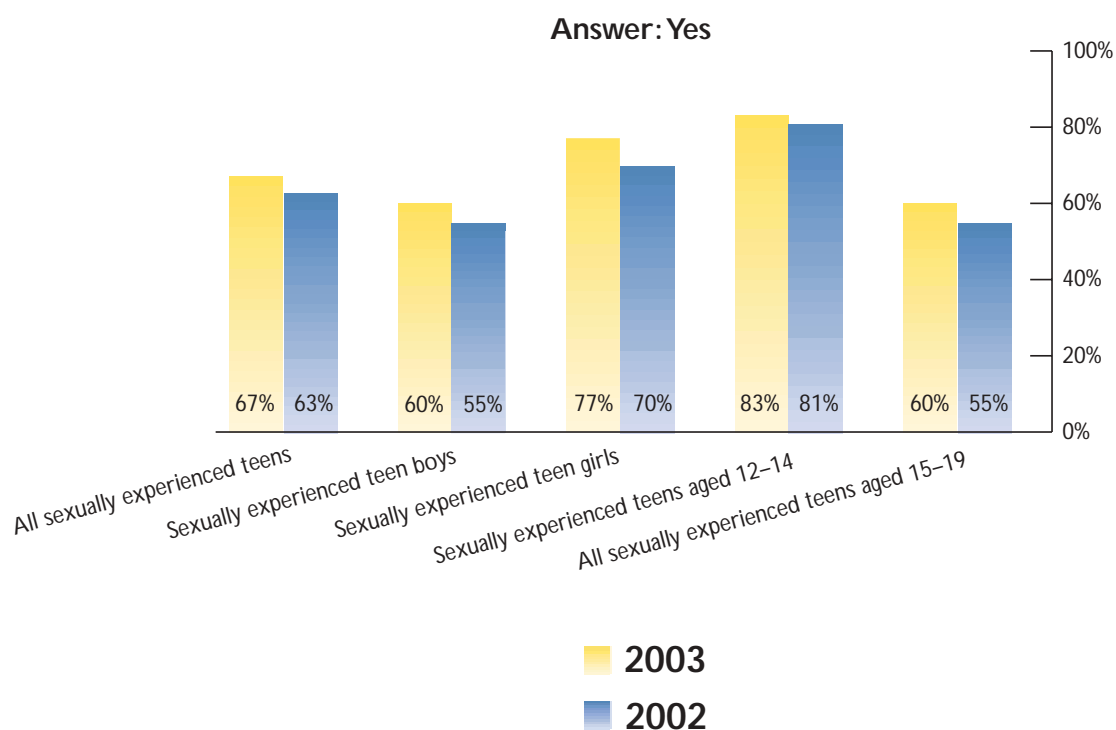
Context and comment: As noted in the summary, what teens *think* other teens are doing has an impact on their behavior. Common sense suggests and research confirm, that a teen who believes his or her friends are sexually active is more likely to initiate sex, and is less likely to do so if he or she believes that peers are not sexually active.

CHART 7
Question: When it comes to teens having sex, over the past several years, would you say that you have become more opposed, less opposed, or remained unchanged in your views?



BELIEFS

CHART 8
 Question: If you have had sexual intercourse, do you wish you had waited longer?

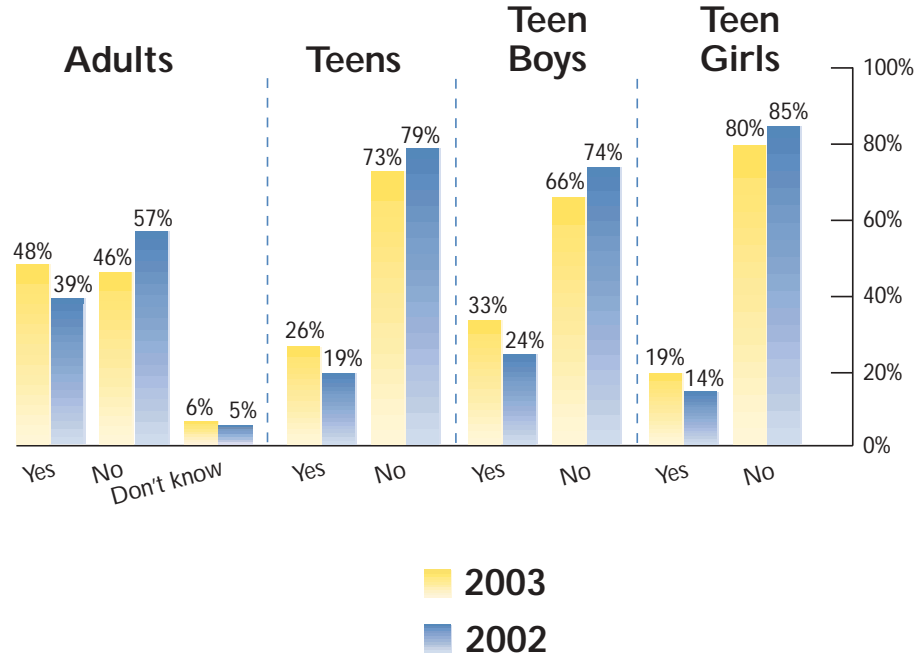


Comment and additional analysis (data not shown): Fully 40% of teens in this survey say they are *not* sexually experienced. However, of those who report they have had sex, a clear majority of boys and girls (both older and younger) say they wish they had waited.

When polled by the National Campaign in 2000, 63% of sexually experienced teens (55% of boys and 72% of girls) said they wished they had waited longer. The survey in 2000 canvassed teens aged 12-17; the 2003 poll shown above, however, is of teens aged 12-19.

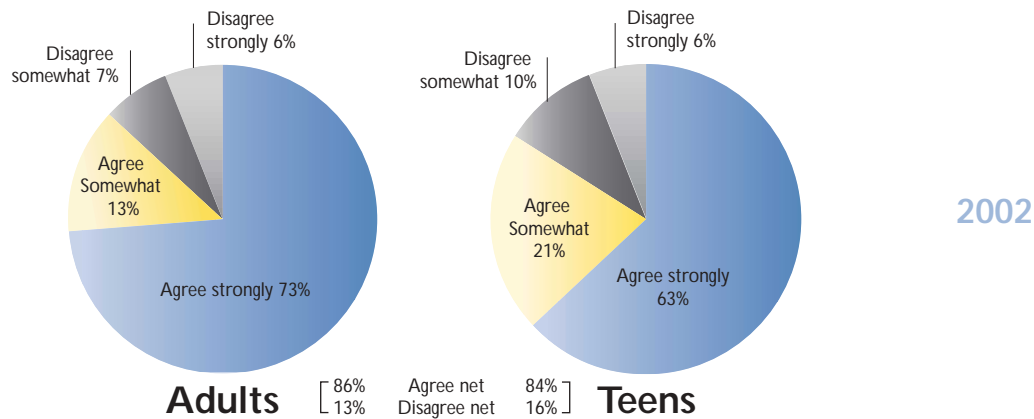
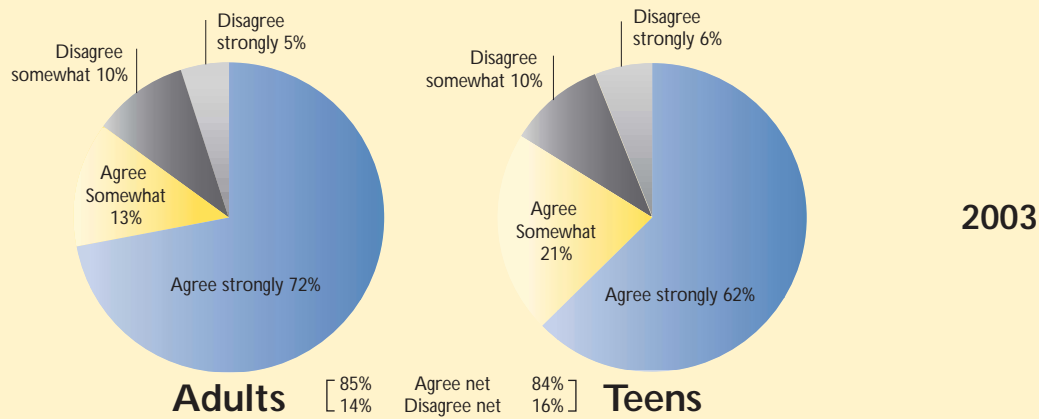
These findings and others in this report suggest that teens may well have a more cautious attitude toward sex than is generally believed: Large majorities of teens believe that sex should only occur in long-term, committed relationships, more than twice as many teens say they have become more opposed to teens having sex rather than less opposed, nearly all teens surveyed believe that they should be receiving a strong abstinence message from society, and of those who have had sex, two-thirds say they wish they had waited longer to do so.

CHART 9
 Question: Do you think it is embarrassing for teens to admit they are virgins?



Additional analysis (data not shown): Attitudes about whether it is embarrassing for teens to admit virginity differed by race. For example, half of White adults compared to only a third of African-American adults believe that virginity is embarrassing for teens.

CHART 10
Question: Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Teen pregnancy prevention programs should teach young people to be married before they have a child?"

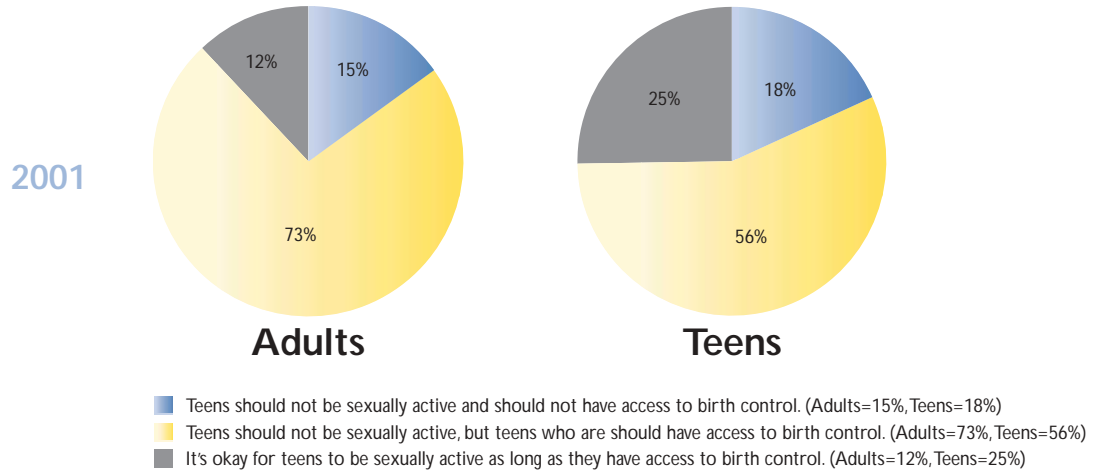
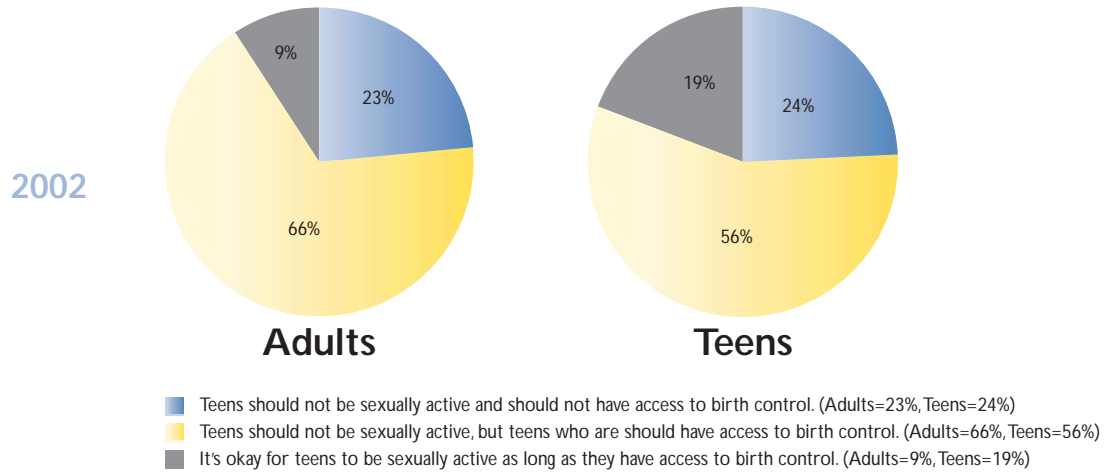
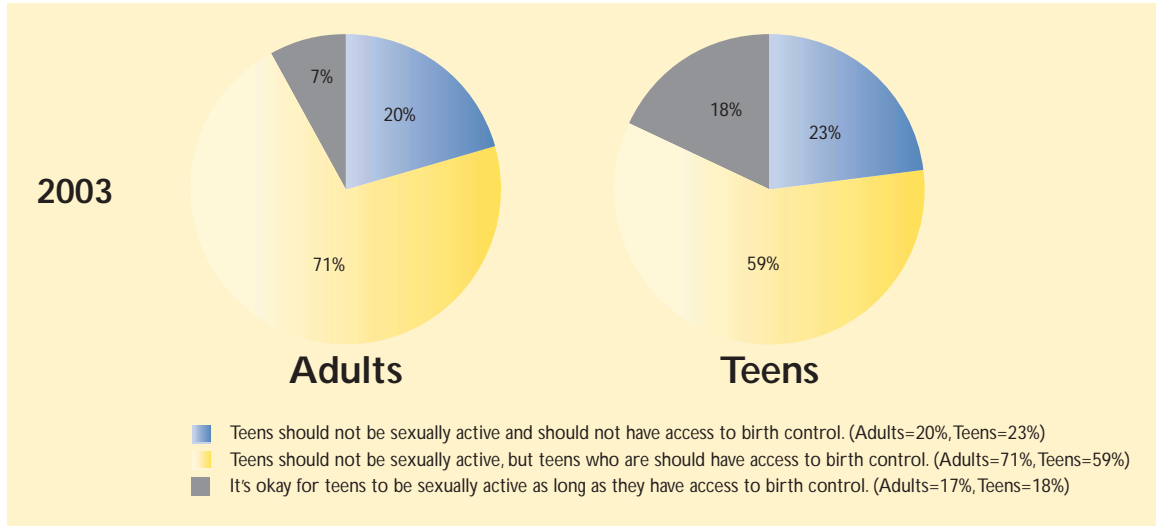


Context: The overwhelming support expressed here (for two years running) among those aged 12–19 for having children within marriage is in stark contrast to findings from other surveys. For example, a 2003 report from the National Marriage Project indicates approximately half of high school boys (49%) and girls (54%) believe that “having a child without being married is experimenting with a worthwhile lifestyle or not affecting anyone else.” This and similar findings led Project Co-Directors Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe to conclude that “getting married and becoming a parent seem to be entirely separate life pursuits” for many young people (see www.marriage.Rutgers.edu).

BELIEFS

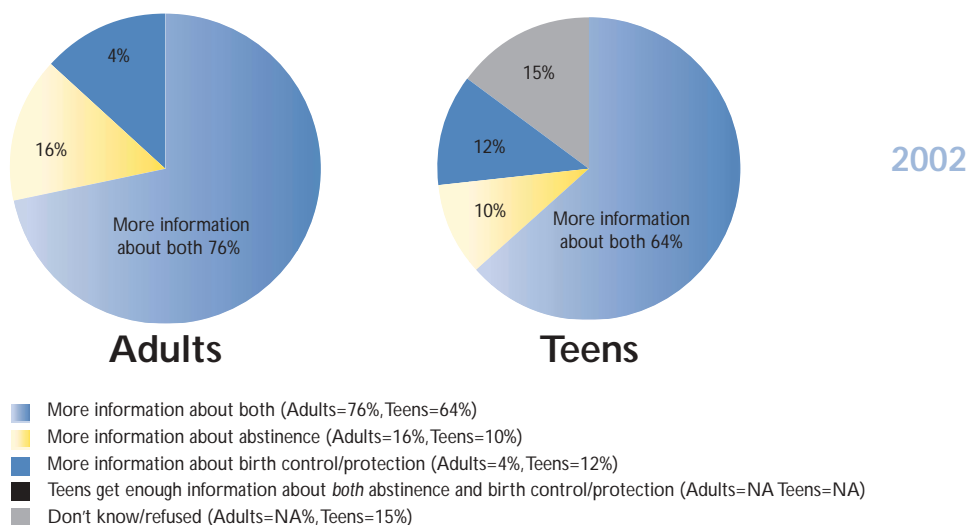
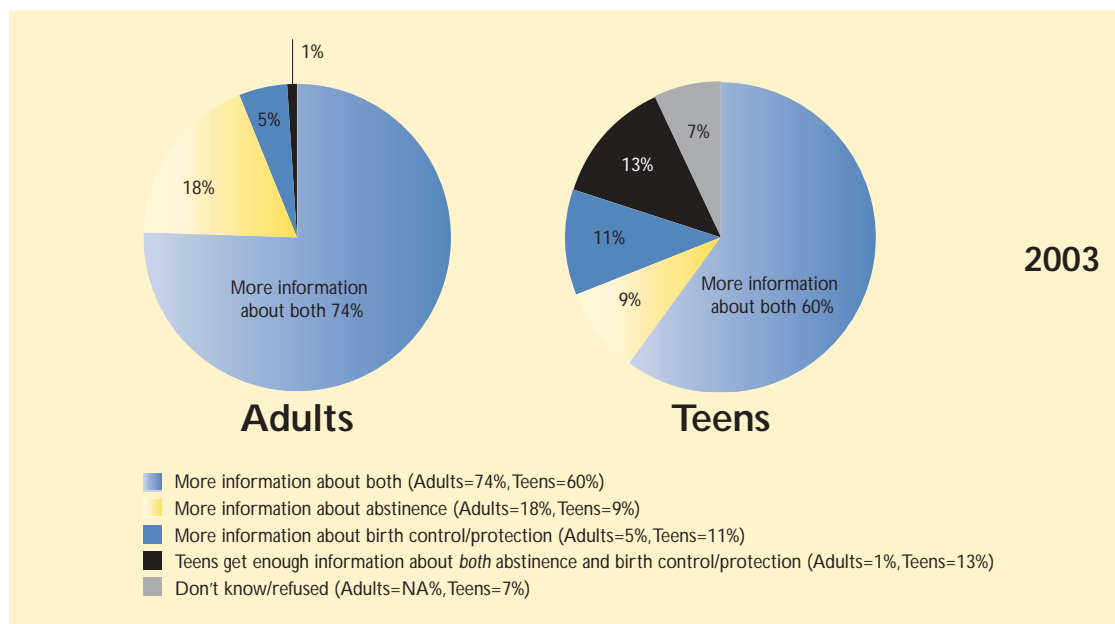
ABSTINENCE AND CONTRACEPTION

CHART 11
 Question: I'm going to read you three statements about teens and sex. Please tell me which one comes closest to your view:



Comment and additional analysis (data not shown): Compared to older adolescents (14% of those aged 15–19), far more younger adolescents (37% of those aged 12–14) believe that teens should not be sexually active and should not have access to birth control. This finding suggests that abstinence messages may be better received among this younger age group. Still, as noted in chart 1, teens of all ages overwhelmingly support strong abstinence messages.

CHART 12
 Question: Do you wish teens were getting more information about abstinence, more information about birth control or protection, or more information about both?



ABSTINENCE AND
 CONTRACEPTION

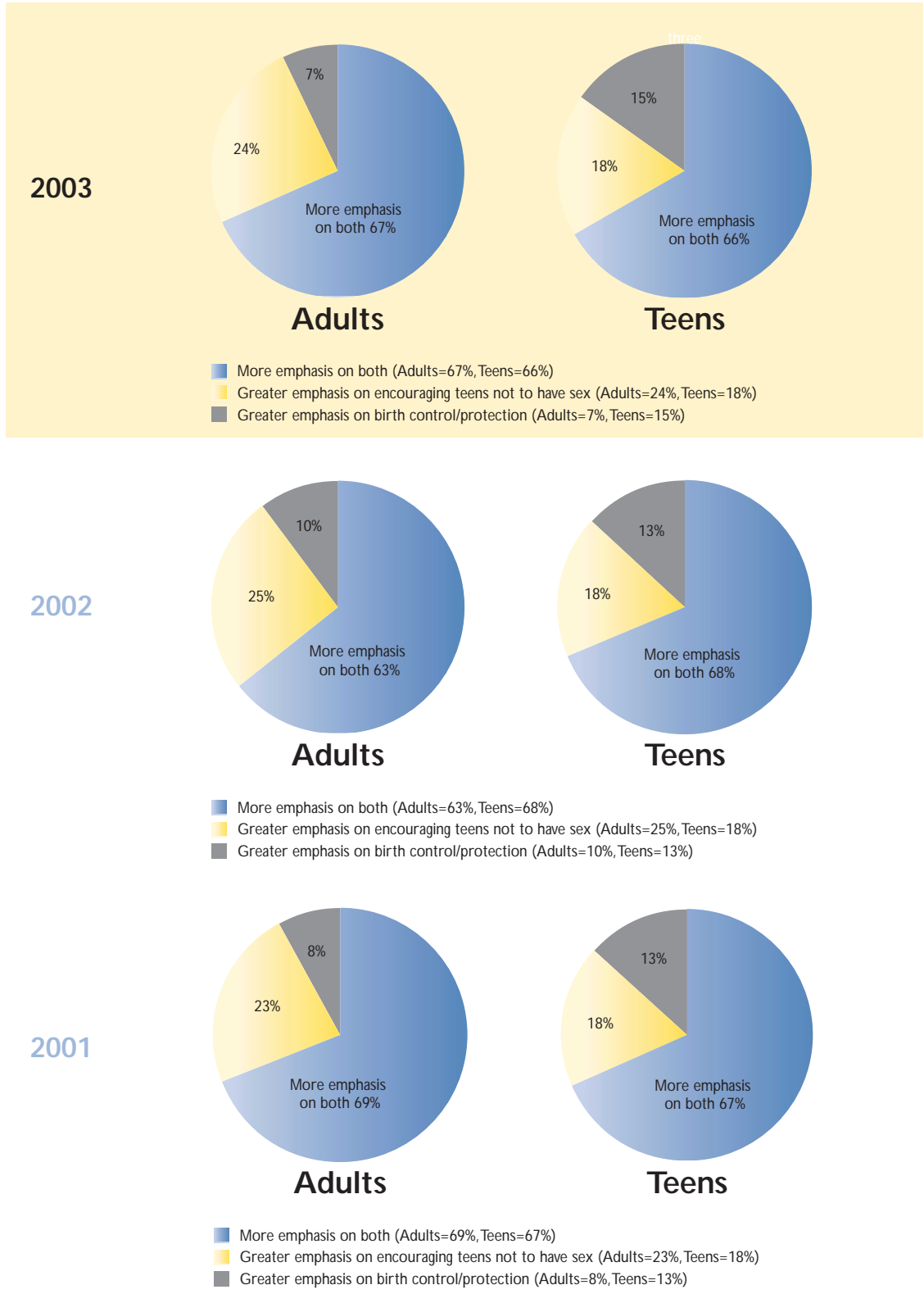
Comment and additional analysis (data not shown): Only 13% of teens feel teens are getting enough information about both abstinence and contraception. Overall, 60% of teens say they wish they were getting more information about both. African-American (76%) and Hispanic (64%) adolescents are far more likely than Whites (54%) to say that they want more information about abstinence *and* contraception, rather than either/or.

African-American adults (86%) are also more likely than White adults (73%) to say that teens should receive more information about both abstinence and contraception. (Data on Hispanic adults were not available.)

Note that the answer option, “teens get enough information about both abstinence and birth control/protection,” was *not* offered in 2002.

ABSTINENCE AND CONTRACEPTION

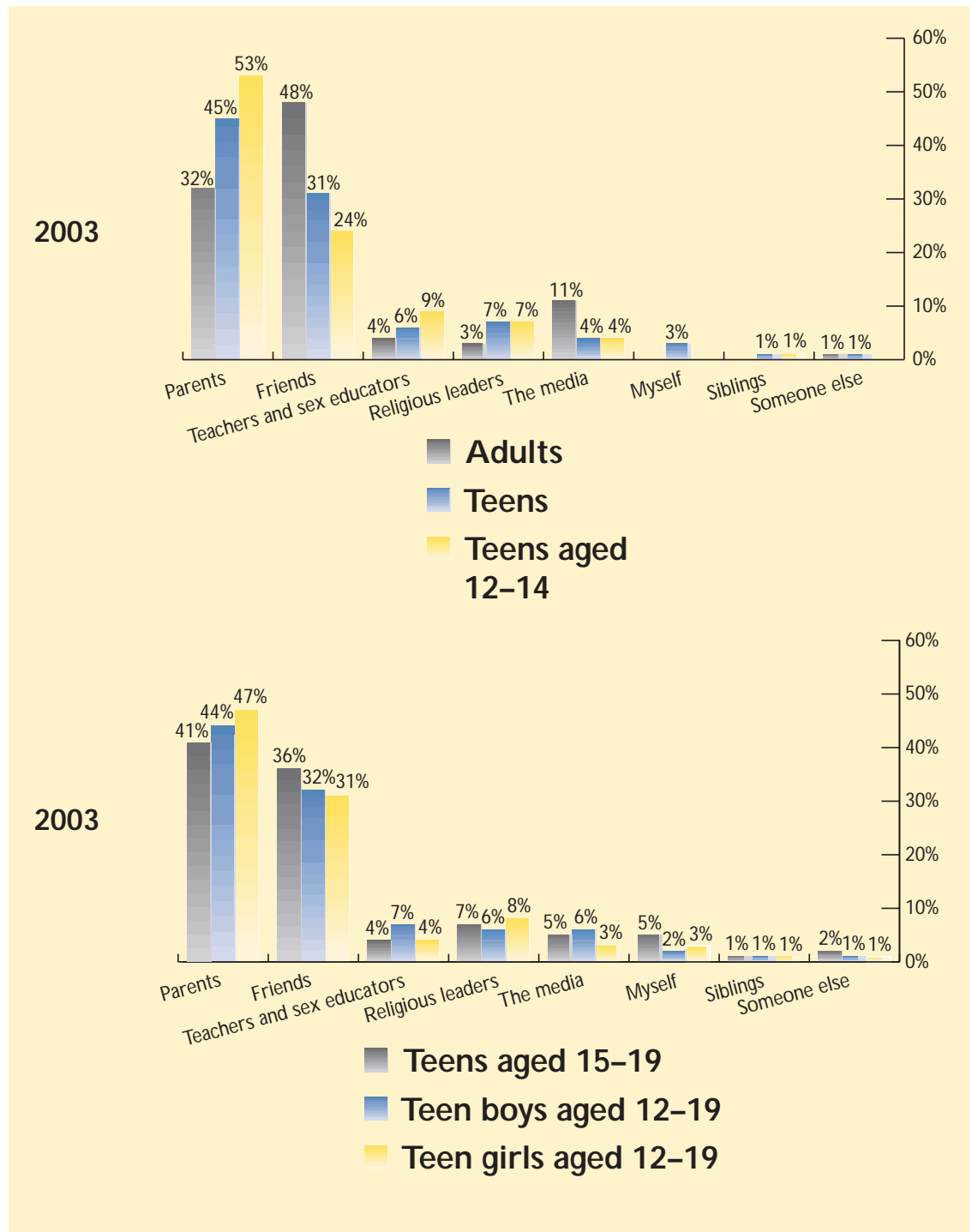
CHART 13
Question: If you were going to offer advice to policymakers in Washington regarding teen pregnancy, would it be greater emphasis on encouraging teens not to have sex, greater emphasis on birth control or protection, or more emphasis on both?



Comment: Despite often heated debates “inside the beltway” and among various advocacy groups about the best approach to preventing teen pregnancy, these data make clear that a solid majority of Americans do not pit abstinence against contraception. They believe there is room for—and a clear need for—more of both. It is also worth noting that about two-thirds of adults and teens have consistently stated that they want policymakers to support both abstinence *and* contraception.

PARENTS AND OTHER INFLUENCES

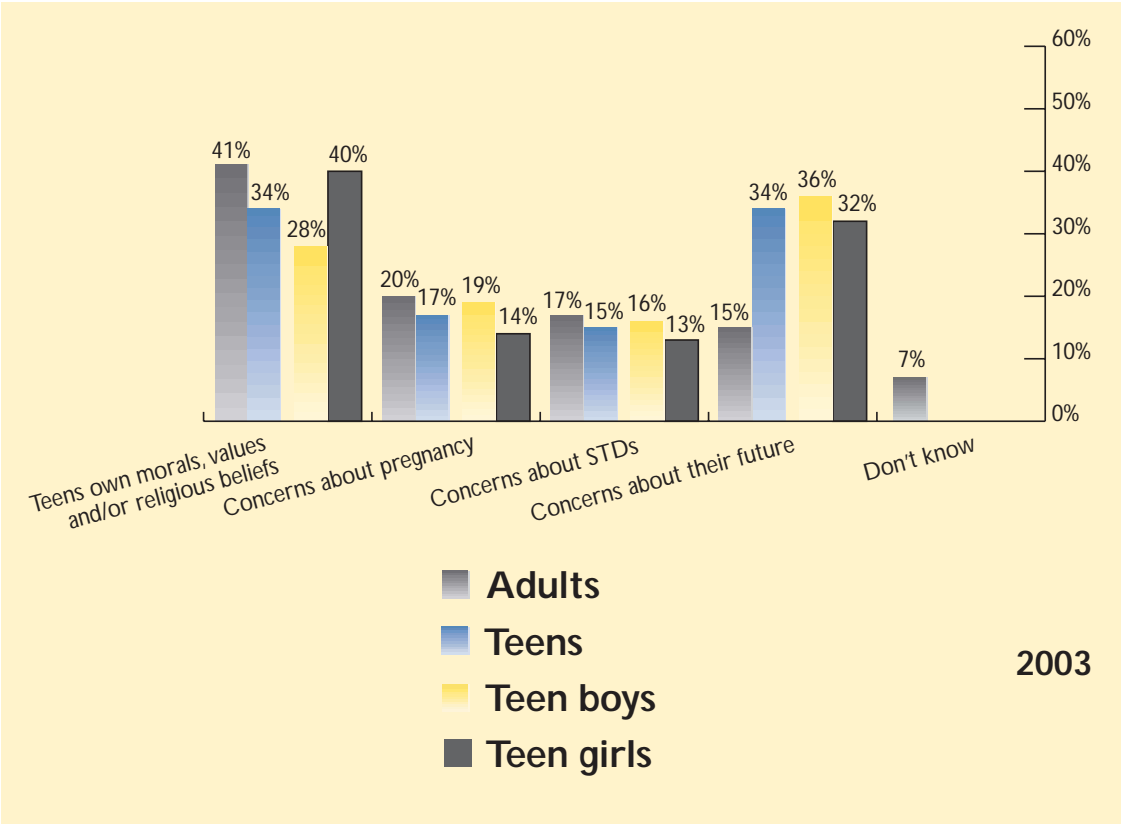
CHART 14
Question: When it comes to teens'/your decisions about sex, who is most influential?



Comment: Over the years, the National Campaign has asked many questions about who and what influences teens' decisions about sex. For example, this year adults and teens were asked two separate questions about influence in an attempt to distinguish between the influence of individuals (parents, teachers, etc) and the influence of beliefs (morals and values, concerns about the future, etc).

Although each of these questions—and their answer options presented in these polls—have varied slightly, several common themes have emerged over the last three years. Teens consistently say parents and their own morals, values, and/or religious beliefs most influence their decisions about sex. For their part, parents continue to underestimate their own influence and overestimate the influence of other factors, such as friends and the media.

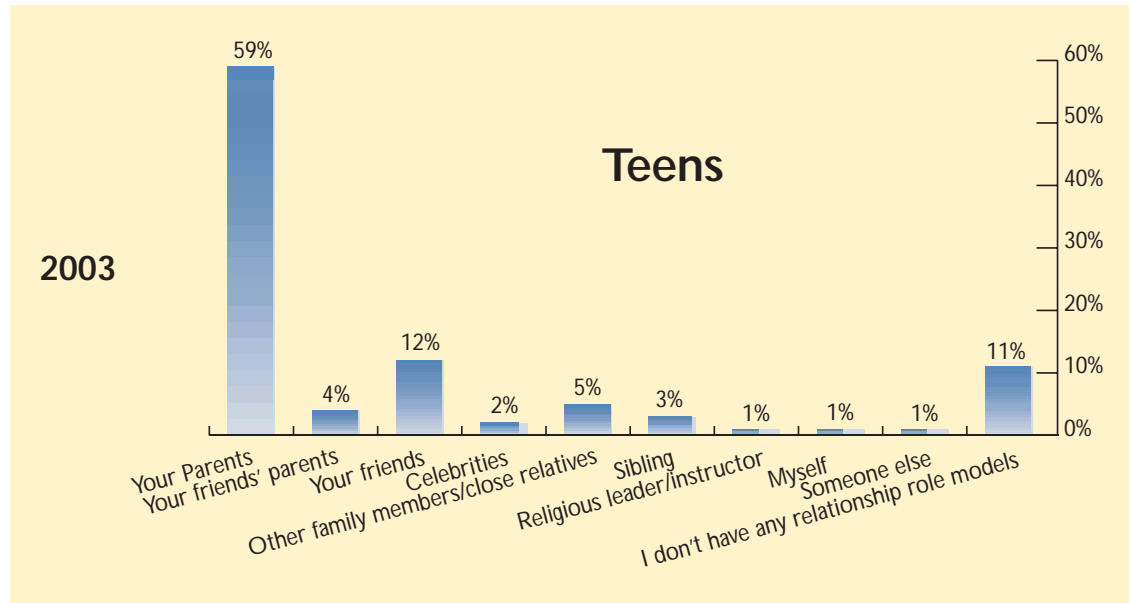
CHART 15
Question: When it comes to teens'/ your decisions about sex, which of the following beliefs influences you the most?



OTHER PARENTS AND INFLUENCES

Comment: By a wide margin, adolescent girls (40%) are more likely than boys (28%) to say that their own morals, values, and/or religious beliefs influence their decisions about sex. Teen boys report that “concerns about my future” (36%) most influence their decisions about sex. This particular finding is consistent with the view that teen boys may be more attuned to such issues as financial pressures or the risks of legal entanglement than are girls.

CHART 16
 Question: Among the following, when it comes to healthy, responsible relationships, who is/are your role model(s)?

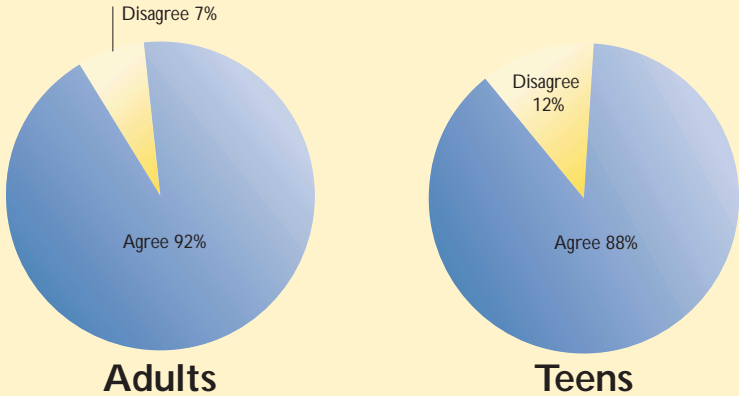


Comment and additional analysis (data not shown): Once again, teens are making clear just how influential the adults in their lives are. For example, one way to interpret the data above is to note that two-thirds of teens (68%, which is the total of those who chose parents, friend's parents, or other family members) say the adults in their lives serve as relationship role models. Young adolescents (aged 12–14) are more likely than older teens (aged 15–19) to say that their parents are their relationship role models (64% and 56%, respectively). Older adolescents (14%) are twice as likely as younger adolescents (7%) to say that they have no relationship role models in their lives.

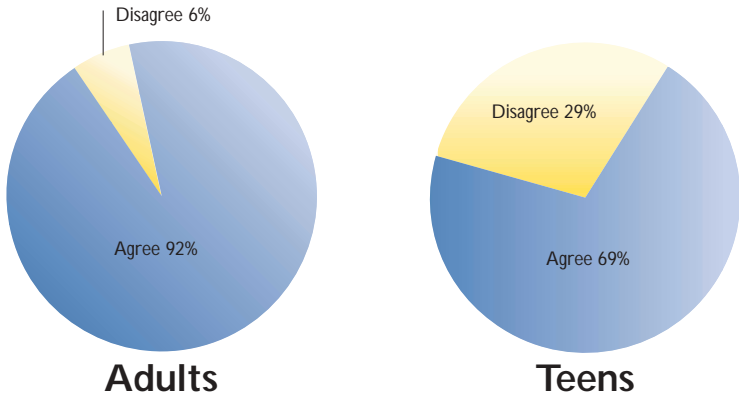
PARENTS AND OTHER INFLUENCES

CHART 17
Proposition: It would be much easier for teens to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.

2003

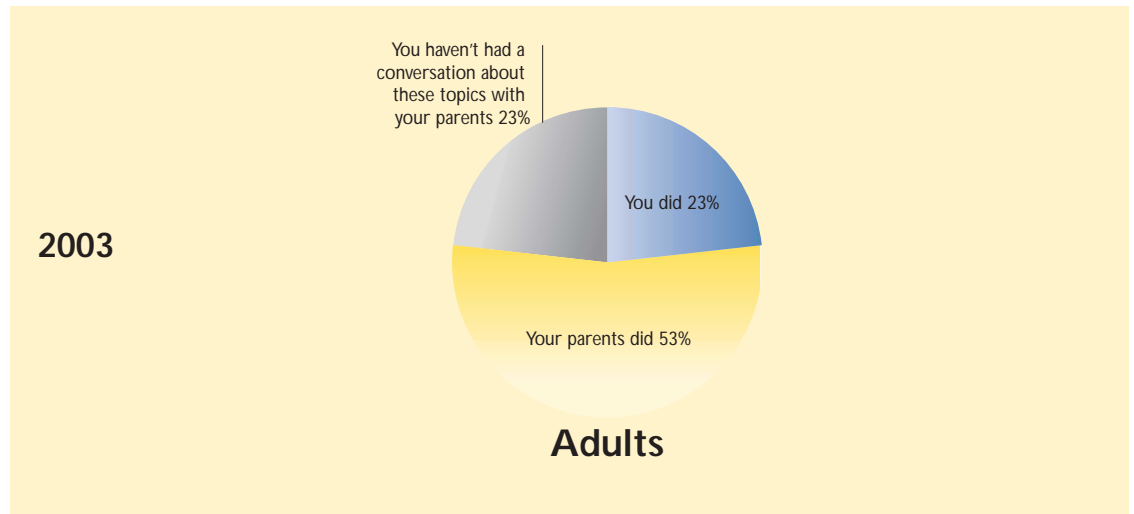


2002



OTHER PARENTS AND INFLUENCE

CHART 18
Question: The last time you discussed sex, birth control, or pregnancy with your parents, who started the conversation?

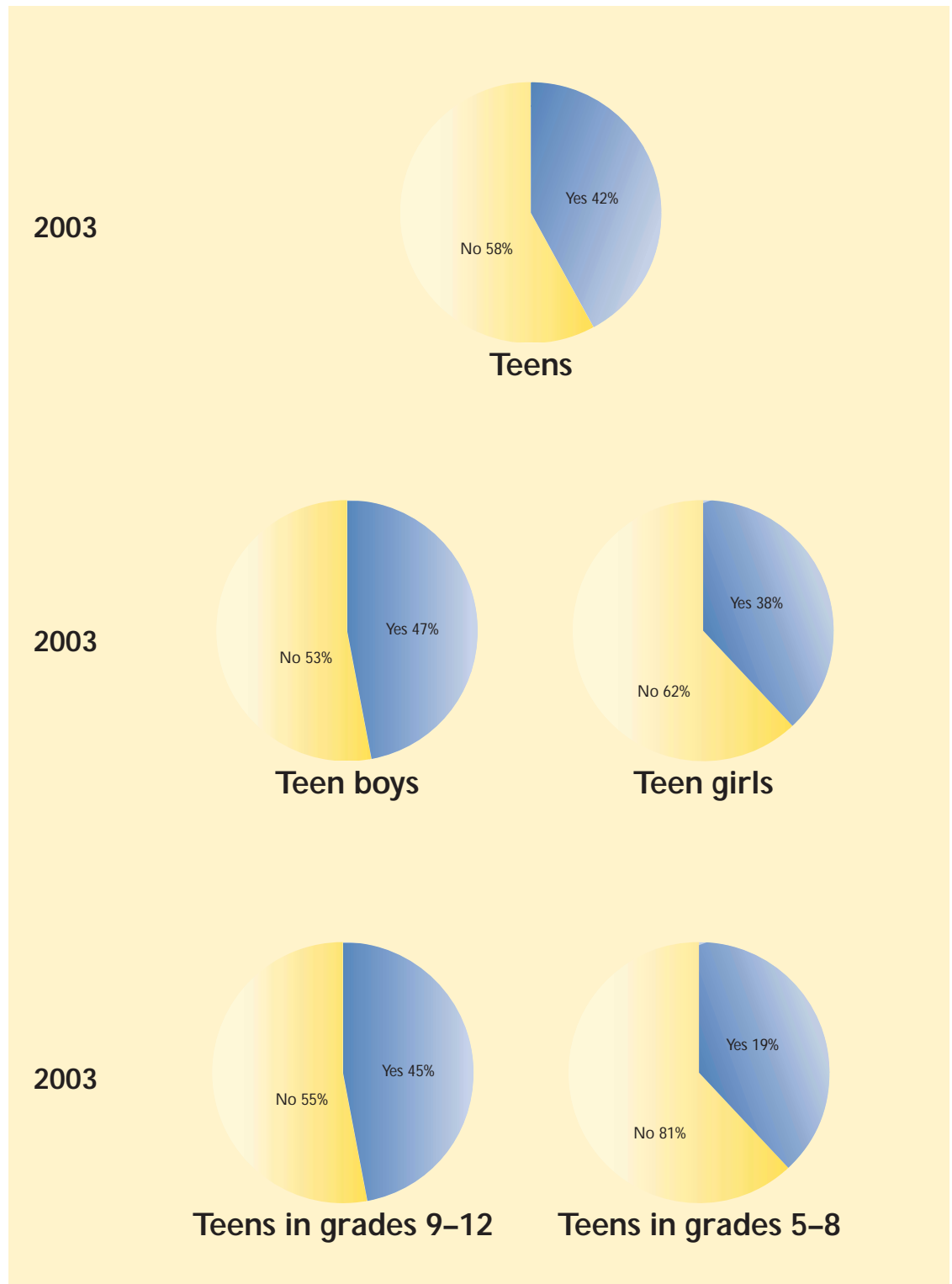


Comment and additional analysis (data not shown): Although 17% of those aged 12–14 say they initiated conversations with their parents about sex, birth control, and pregnancy, fully 26% of those aged 15–19 say they began such conversations with their parents. These data suggest that as adolescents grow older, they may be more comfortable in starting these conversations. An additional factor might be that parents feel their ability to influence their children's sexual decisions diminishes as their children grow older, and they therefore become less likely to begin these conversations.

PARENTS AND OTHER INFLUENCES

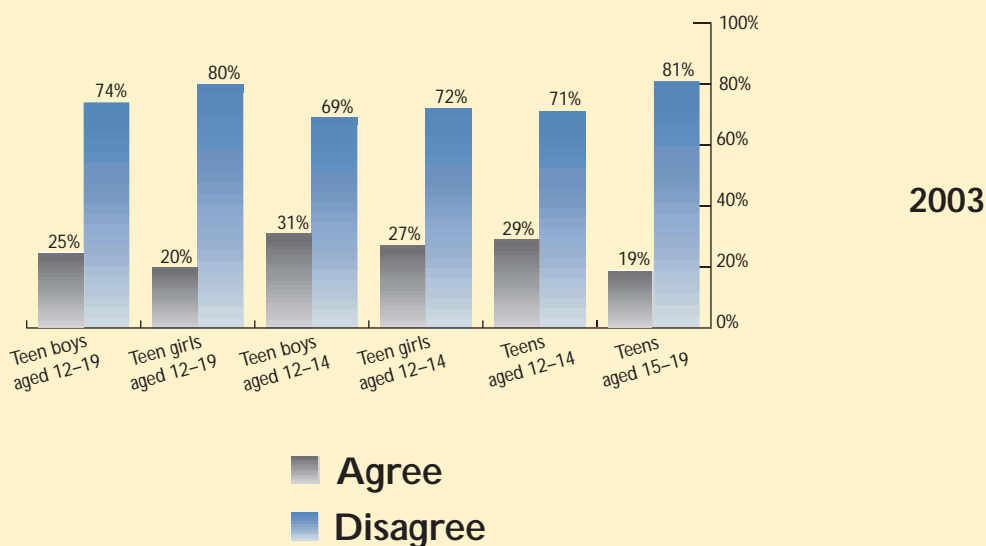
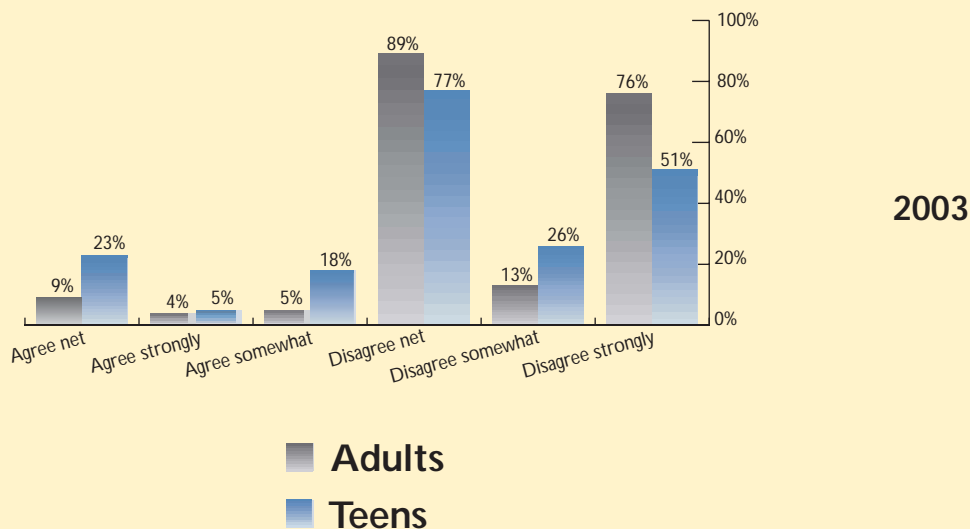


CHART 19
Question: In the past six months have you been at a party with boys and girls where there are no adults in the house?



Comment: Common sense and research make a strong case that supervising the social behavior of young people remains an important adult task. If parents and other responsible adults want to help the young people in their lives avoid too-early pregnancy and parenthood, they need to know where their children are, what they are doing, and with whom.

CHART 20
Proposition:
It's okay for
teens aged 14 or
younger to date
someone who is
three or more
years older?



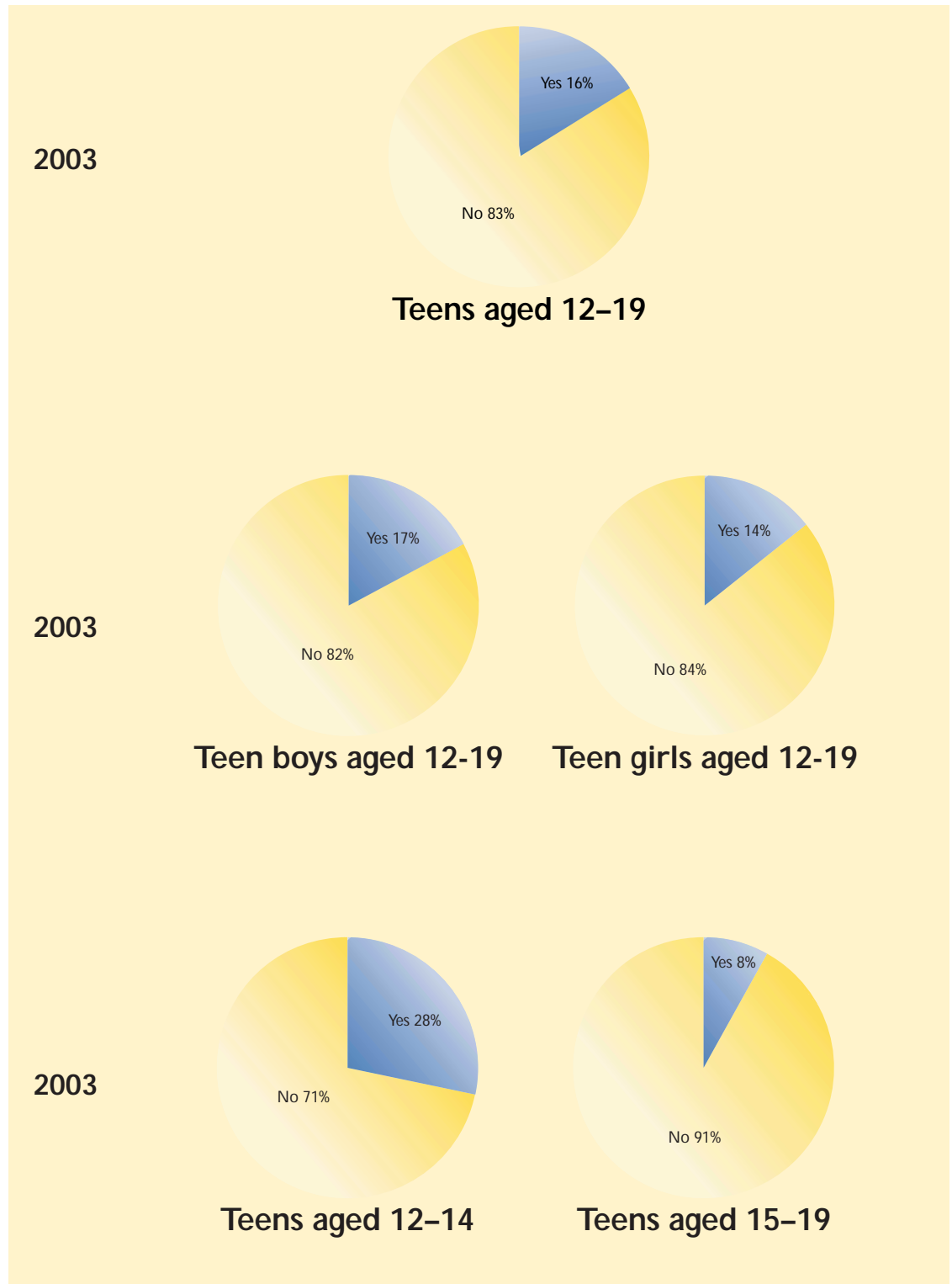
**FRIENDS, DATING,
 AND RELATIONSHIPS**

Comment: Research underscores the great risk inherent in younger teens dating older partners; in particular, younger teens who date older partners greatly increase their chances of having sex. For example, an examination of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in the National Campaign report, *14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents*, notes the following: 13% of same-age relationships among those aged 12-14 include sexual intercourse. If the partner is two years older, 26% of the relationships include sex. If the partner is three or more years older, 33% of the relationships include sex. It is also the case that some sexual relationships with young adolescents run afoul of state sexual consent laws.

These data also show that younger teens (aged 12-14) have more permissive attitudes than older teens (aged 15-19) about the appropriateness of dating someone three or more years older. For example, 29% of teens aged 12-14 think it is okay to date someone three or more years older compared to 19% of those aged 15-19.

FRIENDS, DATING, AND RELATIONSHIPS

CHART 21
Question:
Would you be embarrassed to talk with your (boyfriend/girlfriend) about birth control or protection?



Comment: Younger adolescents (aged 12–14) are significantly more likely than older adolescents (aged 15–19) to say that it would be embarrassing to talk about contraception with their partner (28% versus 8% respectively). This may be due to the fact that most younger adolescents have not had sex and therefore see no need to discuss contraception with their boyfriend/girlfriend and, therefore it's not embarrassing. It may also reflect the fact that younger teens find the topic of sex generally embarrassing. However, previous research from the National Campaign has shown that approximately one in five adolescents has sex by age 15 (*see 14 and Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents*, www.teenpregnancy.org). This gap between the percentage of young teens who are sexually experienced and the relatively large percentage of young teens who seem to be embarrassed to discuss contraception with their partner is a cause for concern and further underscores the need to urge teens—especially younger teens—to delay sex.

FRIENDS, DATING,
AND RELATIONSHIPS

CHART 22
Question: I wish the media showed more or talked more about the consequences of sex, including teen pregnancy.

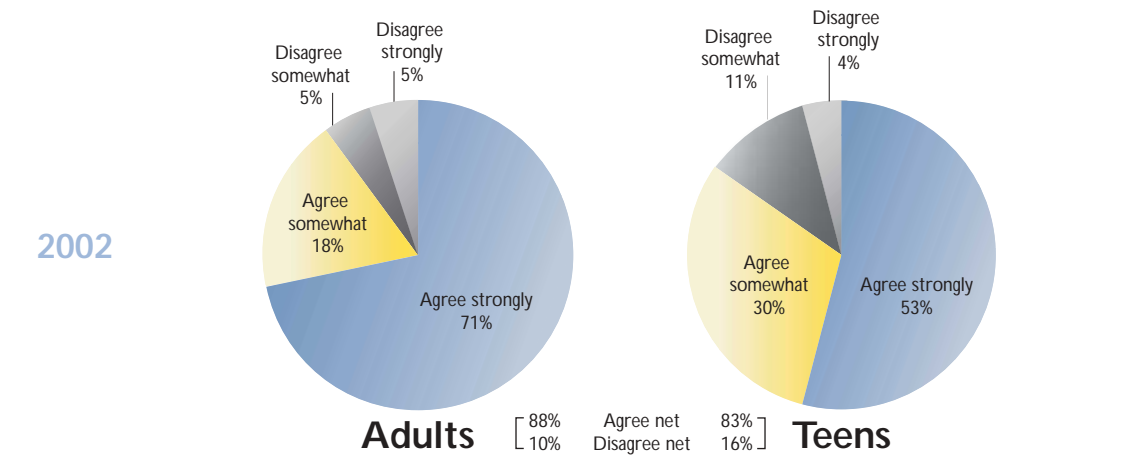
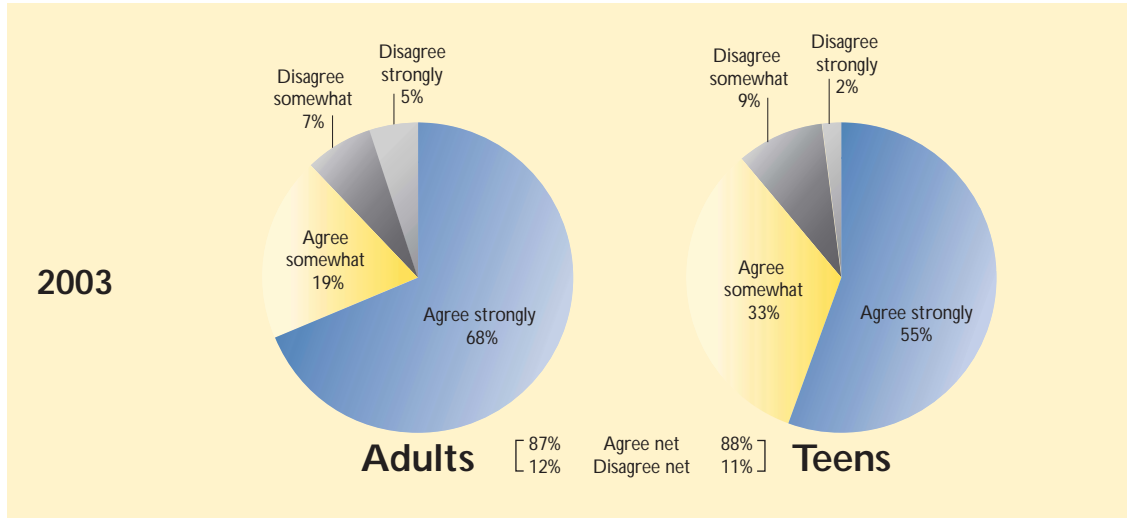
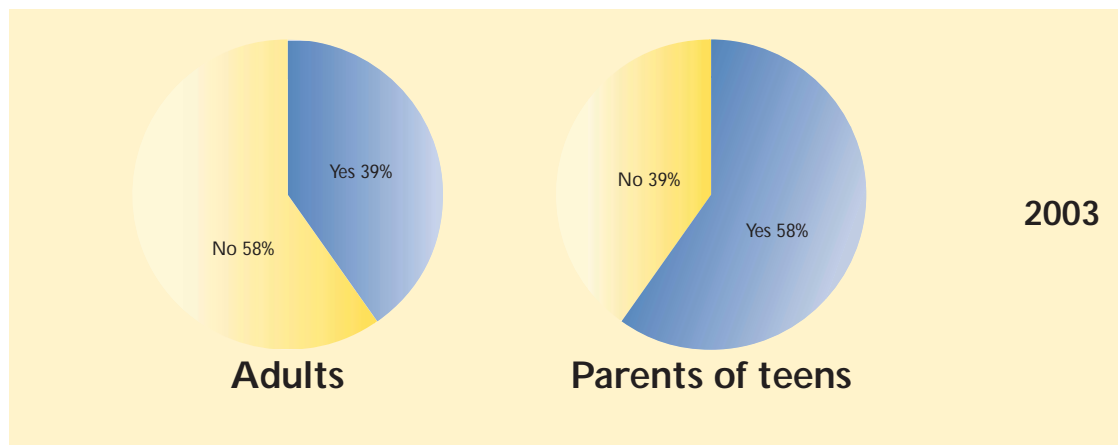
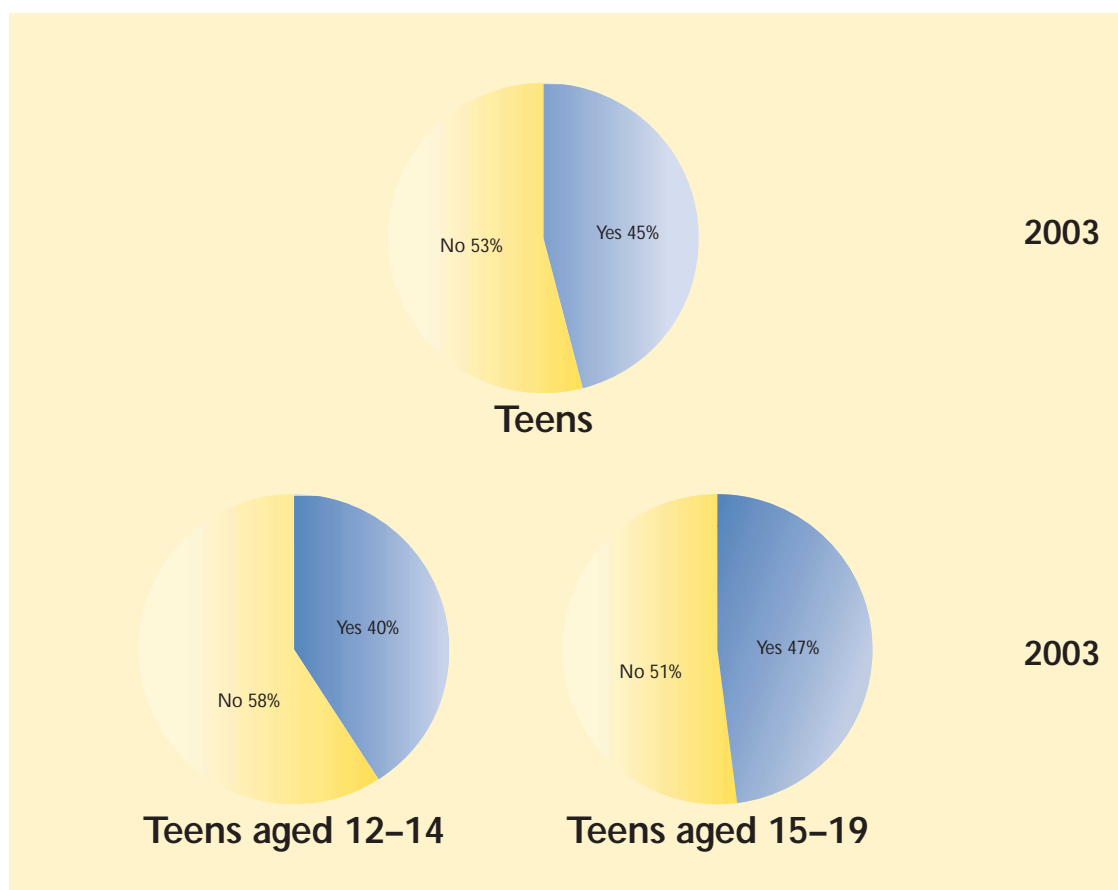


CHART 23

Question: Thinking about the past year or so, did something in the media start a conversation between you and your children or friends about the consequences of sex?



Question: Thinking about the past year or so, did something in the media start a conversation between you and your friends or parents about the consequences of sex?



Context and comment: These findings clearly show that the media can be a powerful tool to begin discussions about sexual behavior, values, and relationships. Media can help parents overcome reservations they might have about starting conversations on these topics (see chart #18), since their influence is so important (see chart #14).

The data here also strongly support a recent RAND (www.rand.org) study published in *Pediatrics* (www.pediatrics.org—*Pediatrics* Vol. 112 No. 5 November 2003, pp. 1115–1121) indicating that television entertainment programs can provide responsible sex education for adolescents, particularly if teen viewers watch the show with their parents and/or discuss the sexual messages they have seen on television with an adult.

CHART 24
Question: Teen boys often receive the message that sex and pregnancy are not a big deal.

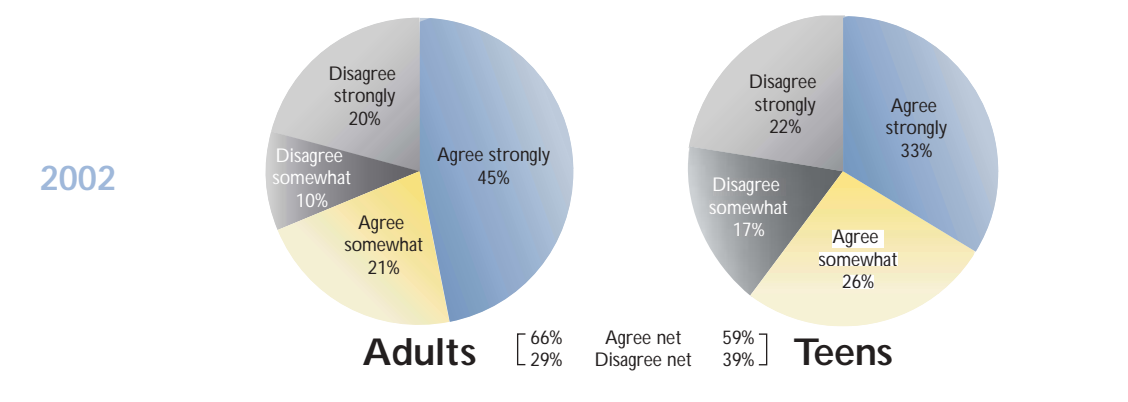
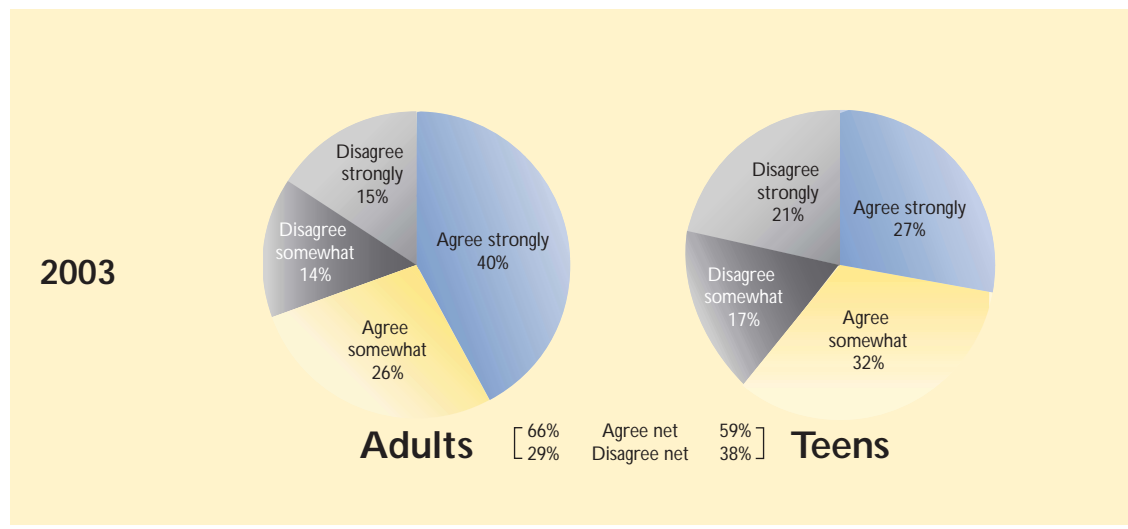
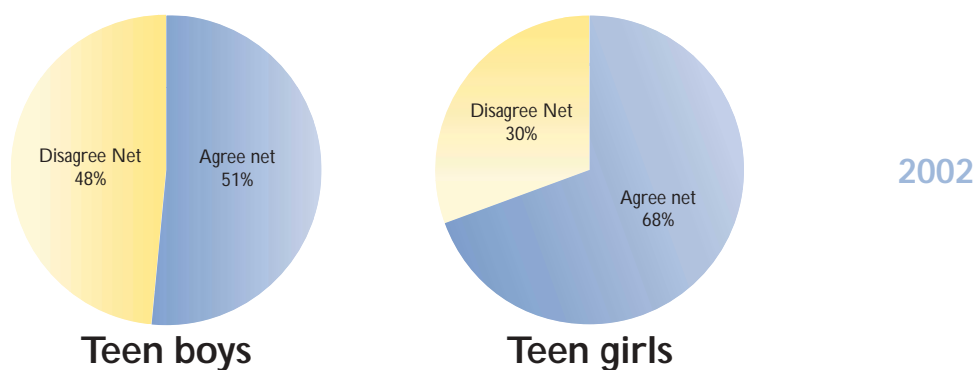
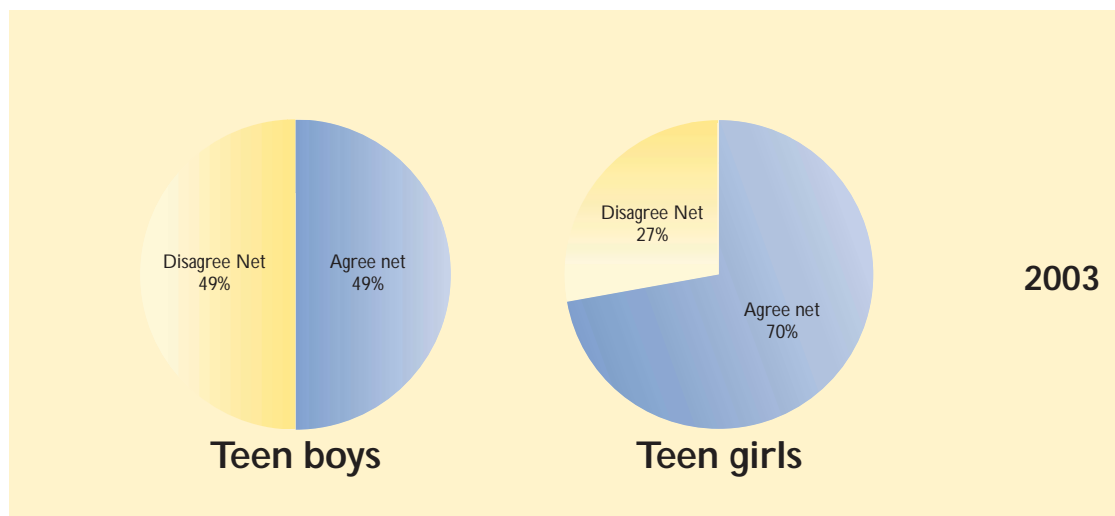


CHART 24
(Continued)



Context and comment: These findings show that a “double standard”—one encouraging teen girls to abstain from sex while offering teen boys a wink and a nod—may be alive and well. For too long, this country has relied on classes, lectures, clinics, and pamphlets targeted primarily to girls as a means for reducing teen pregnancy. Happily, this is changing as increased attention is being paid to the responsibilities of boys and young men in preventing teen pregnancy and the critical role that fathers play in the lives of their children. These data, however, suggest that more work needs to be done.

