



SERIOUS
THREATENING
DEADLY

NATIONAL ONLINE
SURVEY OF 18-21 YEAR OLDS
ON SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS &
SEXUALLY-TRANSMITTED DISEASES

PREPARED FOR

WOMEN'S HEALTH & SEXUALITY AT
THE CLARE BOOTHE LUCE POLICY INSTITUTE

BY

THE POLLING COMPANY™, INC./WOMANTREND

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THE CLARE BOOTHE LUCE POLICY INSTITUTE IS A NONPROFIT FOUNDATION DEDICATED TO PREPARING AND PROMOTING CONSERVATIVE WOMEN LEADERS. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

CLARE BOOTHE LUCE POLICY INSTITUTE
112 ELDEN STREET, SUITE P
HERNDON, VIRGINIA 20170
(703) 318-0730 • FAX (703) 318-8867
WWW.CBLPI.ORG • WWW.SENSEANDSEXUALITY.ORG
INFO @ CBLPI.ORG

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Methodology

the polling company™, inc./WomanTrend conducted this survey of 1,012 college-aged adults (18-21 years of age) and presented the findings to the Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute in this report and analysis. Questions were developed using the *Sense and Sexuality* guide, which was developed by Dr. Miriam Grossman while on staff as a Senior Fellow at the Luce Institute.

Seven substantive questions and one additional demographic inquiry on current education or work status were added to a nationwide online youth omnibus survey.¹ All substantive questions were closed-ended in nature.

The survey was fielded August 13-24, 2009. Respondents for this survey were selected from an opt-in panel, and had expressed prior consent to participate in online surveys such as this.

The demographics of this audience closely match the overall population of 18-21 year olds with respect to gender, region, and race.

When sample is based on a self-selected population and not a probability sample (in which everyone in the population has a non-zero chance of being selected), no conclusions can be drawn with respect to sampling error.² Like any other traditional telephone survey, online polls are subject to many types of error.

This report and its key findings and conclusion focus on the outcomes of women, the primary audience for the Luce Institute. Men were also queried in this project; outcomes among men are highlighted in textboxes throughout the analysis.

¹ Demographic queries included confirmation of age, race, state of residence, marital status, educational attainment, and income.

² American Association of Political Opinion Research (AAPOR).

Key Findings

- ***Awareness of sexually-transmitted diseases is high.*** On a scale of one to ten where “one” is “not at all knowledgeable” and “ten” is “extremely knowledgeable,” a majority of young women (61%) assessed with a “7” or higher their levels of knowledge of the symptoms, signs, transmission modes, and treatments of sexually-transmitted diseases. Fewer than one-in-ten women surveyed felt uninformed (scoring themselves with a “1”, “2”, or “3”). Midwestern and African-American women expressed the highest savvy with STDs.
- ***It’s (almost unanimous) that STDs are a “serious problem”*** among young people today. Ninety-one percent of women surveyed said that sexually-transmitted diseases pose “very” (58%) or “somewhat” (33%) serious problems. An additional 4% of women said the diseases are “just a little bit” serious while not a single respondent deemed them “not at all serious.”
- ***Acquaintance with STDs gets personal.*** Nearly one-half of women (49%) agreed with the statement, “*I know someone who has contracted or transmitted a sexually-transmitted disease.*” More than two-in-three (68%) African-American women knew someone who had contracted an STD, compared to 48% of Hispanics, and 47% of Whites.
- ***Women Do Not Underestimate the Prevalence of STDs:*** Thirty-seven percent of women surveyed believed there to be more than 30 sexually-transmitted diseases while an additional 18% thought the number ranged between 21 and 30. Thirty-two percent estimated there to be between 11 and 20 STDs and just 6% estimated there to be fewer than 10. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) tracks nine STDs, but there are thought to be at least 25 diseases or infections transmitted through sexual activity; these women understand the sizeable presence and variation of STDs.
- ***Knowledge of the Reproductive System Does Not Translate Into Knowledge of the Endocrine System.*** In two separate questions about biology, women admitted knowing little about either the hormone Oxytocin or the chemical reactions that occur when drinking. In both cases, majorities of women across racial, regional, and educational lines confessed no acquaintance with the hormone or reactions.
 - ***Only 16% knew that Oxytocin fosters bonding relationships; and***
 - ***Only 18% knew that nucleus accumbens triggers people to be attracted to those around them when alcohol is imbibed.***
- ***About Last Night...:*** Nearly one-half (49%) of women believed their female peers experienced remorse following at least three out of every five casual hookups. Caucasian women were ten points more likely than Hispanics and 14 points more likely than African-Americans to presume remorse was felt this often (47% vs. 37% vs. 33%).

Profile of College-Aged Adults (18-21 Year Olds) from Online Survey

Are you currently...
(ALLOWED MULTIPLE RESPONSES)

<u>Total</u> (N=1102)	<u>Women</u> (N=524)	<u>Men</u> (N=488)	
80%	83%	76%	Enrolled in school full-time.
8%	6%	9%	Enrolled in school part-time.
46%	51%	41%	Working part-time.
12%	11%	13%	Working full-time.
14%	12%	16%	Unemployed.
*	*	*	Do Not Know
*	-	*	Refuse

Educational Attainment

<u>Total</u> (N=1102)	<u>Women</u> (N=524)	<u>Men</u> (N=488)	
82%	78%	84%	High School Graduate
11%	15%	10%	College Graduate
1%	1%	1%	Graduate School
5%	5%	5%	Other

Demographic Profile of the Audience (Totals Only; Self-reported)

Gender

52% Female
48% Male

Marital Status

89% Single, Never Married
7% Living with Partner
3% Married
2% Other

Region

22% Midwest
31% Northeast
22% South
24% West

Household Income

34% <\$25,000
21% \$25,000-\$49,999
16% \$50,000-\$74,999
12% \$75,000-\$99,999
17% \$100,000+

Race and Ethnicity

63% Caucasian/White
14% Hispanic Origin
12% African-American/
Black/Caribbean American
6% Asian American/Pacific
Islander
1% Native American, Inuit, or
Aleut
4% Other

Analysis of Findings

Awareness and Knowledge of STDs

To begin the survey, young women aged 18-21 were asked to assess their general levels of knowledge with regard to the symptoms, signs, transmission modes, and treatments of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs). A majority (55%) of female respondents scored themselves in the middle on the sensitive topic of STDs, giving themselves 4's, 5's, 6's, or 7's on a scale of 1-10, where one was "not at all knowledgeable" and ten was "extremely knowledgeable." **High levels of knowledge (8, 9, 10) outpaced low levels of awareness (1,2,3) by a margin of 5-to-1 (40% vs. 8%).**

Young women who call the Midwest home were much more likely than those in other areas of the country to rate their knowledge with "9's" or "10's" on the aforementioned scale (25% vs. 23% of those in the West, 20% of Southerners, 15% of Northeasterners).

Additionally, young women who live with their partners were a whopping 20 points more likely to say they are "extremely knowledgeable" (an 8-10 rating) than those in other types of relationships (58% vs. 38% of those married and 37% of single, never married ladies).

Eight percent of women said they had low levels of knowledge.

While overall it is encouraging that such a small percentage confessed minimal knowledge, it demonstrates that the work is not done. These young women need

to know more in order to adequately protect themselves from catching these diseases. **Arming themselves with data about what could happen will help them avoid the unfortunate "If only I'd known" scenario referenced in Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute's *Sense and Sexuality* publication.**

On a scale of "one" to "ten" where "one" is "not at all knowledgeable" and "ten" is extremely knowledgeable", how would you assess your personal level of knowledge as it relates to the symptoms, signs, transmission modes, and treatments of sexually transmitted diseases?

Total (N=1102)	Women (N=524)	Men (N=488)	
8%	8%	8%	Total Low Level of Knowledge (NET)
2%	1%	2%	1 – Not At All Knowledgeable
1%	1%	2%	2
5%	6%	4%	3
55%	52%	57%	Total Mid Level of Knowledge (NET)
7%	7%	7%	4
12%	10%	13%	5
13%	14%	12%	6
23%	21%	25%	7
37%	40%	35%	Total High Level of Knowledge (NET)
19%	19%	19%	8
8%	10%	6%	9
10%	11%	10%	10 – Extremely Knowledgeable
1%	1%	1%	Do Not Know
*	*	*	Refused
6.69	6.77	6.60	MEAN

Spotlight on Men

- *Hispanics were nine points more likely than white males to give their STD knowledge top scores of “10” or “9” (21% vs. 12%).*
- *Those who cohabit with their partners were much more likely than single males to report high levels of STD knowledge (50% of married and 52% of males who live with their partner, compared to 32% of singletons).*
- *Fifty-five percent of men who attend college full-time gave themselves “mid-levels” of knowledge with regard to the symptoms, signs, transmission modes, and treatments of STDs.*

STD = Serious, Threatening, and Deadly

Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) of all 18-21 year old respondents surveyed felt STDs were a “serious” problem, the majority strongly so. Young women were slightly more likely (91% vs. 87%) than young men to say sexually-transmitted diseases were a grave problem, and with much more intensity. In fact, a majority (58%) of young women said this was a “very serious” issue, compared to just 41% of their male counterparts.

Among women currently enrolled full-time in school, the issue gained momentum with nearly all (94%) believing that STDs were a “very” or “somewhat” serious problem. Eighty-four percent of part-time students concurred.

African-American and Hispanic women were more apt than their Caucasian counterparts to say STDs are very serious problem (77% vs. 72% vs. 51%).

Additionally, two-thirds (67%) of young women residing in the Southern states said STDs were a very serious problem among young women, compared to 61% in the West, 56% in the Midwest, and 52% in the Northeast.

In your opinion, how serious of a problem are sexually-transmitted diseases among (ASKED FEMALE: “young women” ASKED MALE: “young men”) today? (ROTATED TOP TO BOTTOM AND BOTTOM TO TOP)

<u>Total</u> (N=1102)	<u>Women</u> (N=524)	<u>Men</u> (N=488)	
89%	91%	87%	Total Serious (NET)
51%	58%	43%	Very Serious
38%	33%	44%	Somewhat Serious
5%	4%	8%	Total Not Serious (NET)
5%	4%	7%	Just A Little Bit Serious
*	-	1%	Not At All Serious
4%	4%	5%	Do Not Know/Cannot Judge
*	1%	*	Refused

Spotlight on Men

- More than nine-in-ten young Black (95%) and Hispanic (92%) males felt STDs were either “very” or “somewhat” serious problems among young men, with the plurality strongly so. Eighty-four percent of white males felt this way, but intensity was lacking (35% “very” vs. 49% “somewhat” serious).
- The majority (51%) of Southern males reported STDs to be “very serious” problems, compared to 44% Westerners, and 39% of both Midwesterners and Northeasterners.
- College men were more apt to downplay the weightiness of STDs, with the plurality saying the problem is only “somewhat serious,” rather than very (45% vs. 41%) among young men. This was reversed among college women, as the majority (58%) deemed the problem “very serious” and 35% considering it a “somewhat serious” concern among young women.

1, 2, 3...Yikes.

As shown in the textbox to the right, the pluralities of both men and women believed there to be “more than 30” sexually-transmitted diseases, though women were slightly more likely than men to say this (37% vs. 34%).

College-aged males were nearly twice as likely as their female counterparts to admit they weren’t sure how many STDs were out there. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tracks just nine “reportable” sexually-transmitted diseases, including Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Syphilis, and genital warts for its annual reports.

However, other sources cite at least 25 diseases or infections transmittable through sexual activity. At least one-half of men and women proffered estimations greater than 20.

More than two-fifths (41%) of white women believed there to be more than 30 STDs, compared to 33% of Black women and 28% of Hispanic ladies. Among those in school, nearly two-fifths (39%) of female full-time students felt there were more than 30 STDs, as did 36% of their male counterparts.

Hispanic males (37%) were most apt to believe there to be more than 30 different STDs, followed by Whites (33%) and Blacks (32%).

To the best of your knowledge, how many sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) exist today?

<u>Total</u> (N=1102) *	<u>Women</u> (N=524) *	<u>Men</u> (N=488) -	
			Less than 5
6%	6%	7%	6-10
17%	16%	18%	11-15
15%	16%	13%	16-20
11%	10%	13%	21-25
7%	8%	6%	26-30
35%	37%	34%	More Than 30
8%	6%	11%	Do Not Know
*	1%	*	Refused

Knowledge May Be Power, But Awareness is Key

Nearly one-half (49%) of young women and 39% of men agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” with the statement, **“I know someone who has contracted or transmitted a sexually-transmitted disease.”** Women were nine points more likely than men to agree strongly (29% vs. 20%). This may be due to the fact that women are typically more open and vocal with friends about their sexual behavior and health situations. Women cohabitating with a partner³ were more likely than married women or single women to agree (68% vs. 52% vs. 47%).

The frightening numbers revealed on this survey mirror data from the CDC on STD rates among young people. Unfortunately, students may already be, or know someone who is, a statistic before even entering college.

According to the CDC’s 2007 Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Report,⁴ more than 3,000 in every 100,000 young women aged 15-19 have already contracted Chlamydia, while just 615 out of 100,000 men in the same age group will also have the disease. The Chlamydia rate for males increases among those aged 20-24, but drops slightly for women in that age bracket.

What is even more disconcerting, is that this survey of young people revealed that more than two-thirds (68%) of African-American women knew someone who had contracted an STD, compared to 48% of Hispanics, and 47% of Whites. This also coincides with data from the CDC, which states:⁵

- In 2007, African-Americans had 8.6 times the reported Chlamydia rates of Whites, and 2.95 that of Hispanics.

³ Note the small n-size (N=40) for this cohort.

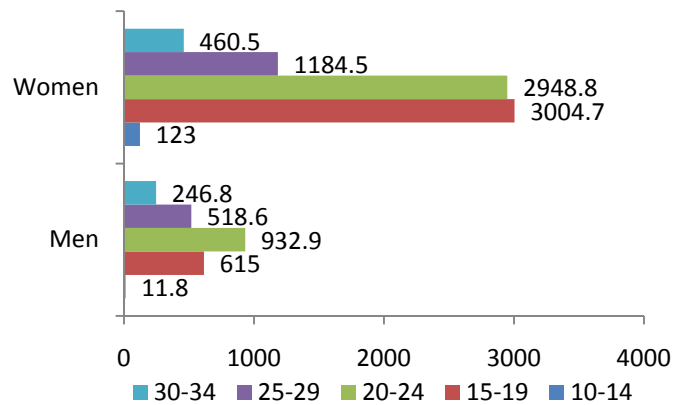
⁴ Centers for Disease Control – STD Prevention Division. Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2007, Chlamydia.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, STD Health Disparities. February 19, 2009.

Please assess your level of agreement with the following statement. Keep in mind that your identity is anonymous and your answers can never be traced back to you. “I know someone who has contracted or transmitted a sexually-transmitted disease.”

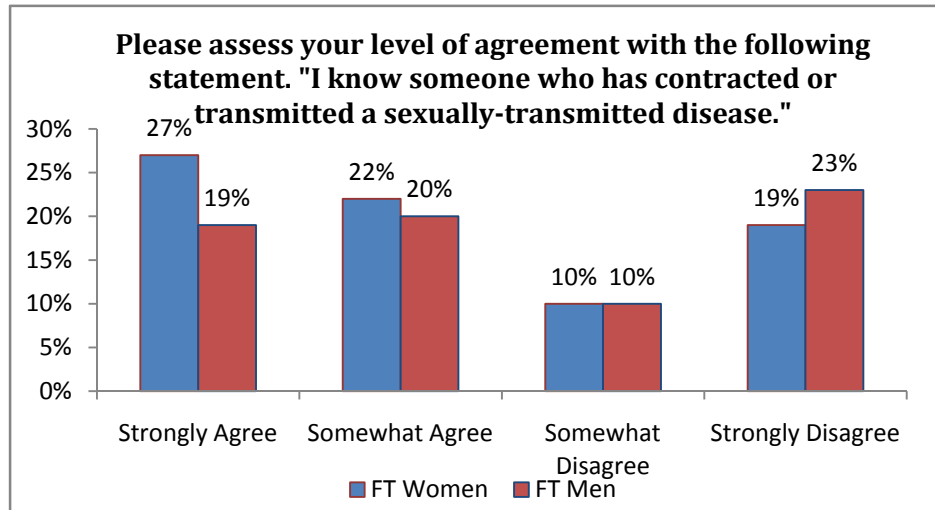
Total (N=1102)	Women (N=524)	Men (N=488)	
45%	49%	39%	Total Agree (NET)
25%	29%	20%	Strongly Agree
20%	20%	19%	Somewhat Agree
31%	28%	34%	Total Disagree (NET)
10%	10%	9%	Somewhat Disagree
21%	18%	25%	Strongly Disagree
22%	20%	24%	Do Not Know
1%	1%	1%	Refused
3%	3%	2%	Not Applicable

Rate of Chlamydia Per 100,000 by Gender and Age



- In that same year, African-Americans also reported cases of Gonorrhea 9.6 times more often than Hispanics and a whopping 19.1 times more than Whites.
- Also in 2007, African-Americans had 7 times the number of reported cases of Syphilis than Whites, and 3.25 more than Hispanics.

As shown in the nearby chart, women enrolled in college full time were much more likely than their male counterparts to “strongly agree” that they know someone with an STD. Again, this may be because women are more open to sharing this



information with others than men typically are. However, this disconnect in awareness of who is actually infected could lead to even more young women becoming statistics. What’s more – young women are more apt to actually get tested for STDs than men. According to a study published in the American Journal of Health Education, more than three-in-five (61%) of female college students in the Northeast had taken an STD test compared to 36% of men.⁶

Spotlight on Men

- More than two-fifths (42%) of African-American men agreed that they knew someone with an STD, compared to 38% of White men and 36% of Hispanics.
- Young men in the Midwest were much more likely than those in other regions to have friends with an STD (46% of Midwesterners, vs. 39% of those in the Northeast, 38% in the Western states, and 33% of Southerners).

STD Facts

- Young folks aged 15-24 have a whopping (and frightening) five times the reported Chlamydia rate of the general population.
- That same age group has four times the reported gonorrhea rate of the general public
- Adults 20-34 have an eye-popping three times the reported syphilis rate their younger counterparts, those aged 15-19.

Source: "The Toughest Part is Admitting You Haven't Been Tested" WHAM 13 – Rochester, NY. August 24, 2009.

⁶"The Toughest Part is Admitting You Haven't Been Tested" WHAM 13 – Rochester, NY. August 24, 2009.

Oxywhat?

Majorities of both college-aged men and women admitted cluelessness when it comes to the role of the Oxytocin. Men were 8 points more likely than women to report ignorance (70% vs. 62%). According to the publication *Science Direct*, “Oxytocin (Oxt) is a nonapeptide hormone best known for its role in lactation and parturition... Oxt is [also] important for social memory and attachment, sexual and maternal behavior, and aggression. Recent work implicates Oxt in human bonding and trust as well.”⁷

To the best of your knowledge, what role does the hormone Oxytocin play?

<u>Total</u> (N=1102)	<u>Women</u> (N=524)	<u>Men</u> (N=488)	
66%	62%	70%	I do not honestly know.
14%	16%	13%	It encourages bonding relationships.
10%	11%	9%	It regulates women’s menstrual cycles.
9%	10%	8%	It increases fertility.
1%	1%	1%	Refused

Sixty-three percent of female collegians admitted to being in the dark on the effects of Oxytocin on their brains. Ignorance was deep and wide, spanning key demographics like **race, ethnicity, region, educational status, income and marital status.**

Only 16% correctly said (or guessed) that Oxytocin “*encourages bonding relationships.*” No demographic groups stood out as more likely than the average to know this correct answer. An additional 11% believed it *regulates their menstrual cycles*, and just 9% thought it *increases fertility.*

Spotlight on Men

- Nearly seven-in-ten (69%) university men admitted to no knowledge of Oxytocin, while 13% said it “encourages relationships,” 9% thought it “regulates women’s menstrual cycle,” and 8% that is “increases fertility.”
- White and Black males were more apt than Hispanics to be in the dark about Oxytocin (72% and 71% respectively, vs. 63%).

⁷ “Oxytocin: The great facilitator of life,” *Science Direct*. April 10, 2009.

Alcohol on the Brain

Here again, majorities of both men and women were unaware as to the effects alcohol has on the *nucleus accumbens* section of the brain. In fact, lack of knowledge in the brain – about the brain – was fairly equal across genders – with 57% each admitting off the bat that “*I do not honestly know.*”

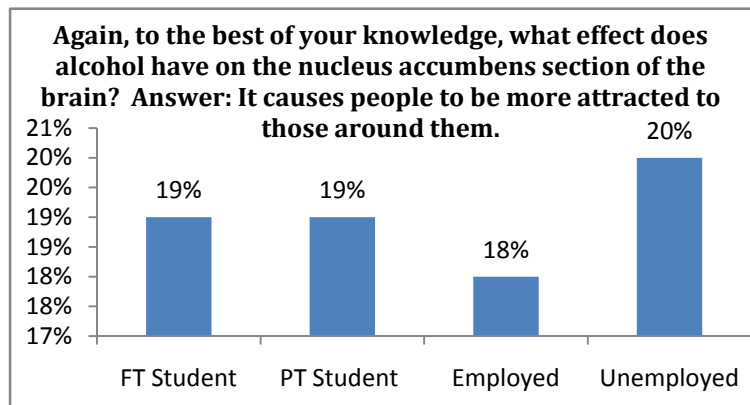
Overall, 18% of women knew (or guessed correctly) that the effect of alcohol on the *nucleus accumbens* “causes people to be more attracted to those around them.” No cohort stood out as more likely than most to know this answer.

Hispanic women were more apt than those of other ethnicities to fess up to their unawareness (68% vs. 60% of Blacks and 56% of Whites), though majorities of all races were unsure what impact drinking could have on this particular section of the brain.

Fifty-eight percent of women enrolled in school full-time did not know what effect the beers they drink would have on the section of the brain cited in the question. However, nearly one-fifth (19%) correctly said, “*it causes people to be more attracted to those around them,*” otherwise known as “beer goggles.” **More proof that “alcohol makes him hot...when he’s not” as stated in *Sense and Sexuality.***

Again, to the best of your knowledge, what effect does alcohol have on the nucleus accumbens section of the brain?

Total (N=1102)	Women (N=524)	Men (N=488)	
57%	57%	57%	I do not honestly know.
18%	19%	18%	It causes people to be more attracted to those around them.
18%	18%	18%	It causes people to be more aggressive.
6%	6%	6%	It causes people to be more anxious about those around them.
1%	1%	*	Refused



Approximately the same percentages of respondents knew that alcohol can leave one with the so-called “Coyote Ugly” sensation the next morning, regardless of educational attainment or work status, as shown in the nearby chart.

Spotlight on Men

- White men were nine points more likely than both Blacks and Hispanics to be unaware (60% vs. 51%) of the affects of alcohol on the brain.
- Full-time male students were three points more likely than their female counterparts to say aggressive behavior is the result alcohol has on the nucleus accubens section of the brain (20% vs. 17%), a statistically-insignificant difference.
- Fifty-six of guys in school did not know the effects, and 18% - similar to the response from women – knew the correct answer.

“Regret is insight that comes a day too late”

In section three of Clare Boothe Luce Policy Institute’s publication, *Sense and Sexuality*, it is reported that 91% of girls “admit to having feelings of regret, at least occasionally” after a hook-up. Young women surveyed guessed that other women felt regret less often - either 61-90% (43%) or 31-60% (42%) of the time.

The plurality of women surveyed enrolled in school full-time (45%) believed their fellow females experienced regret between 61% and 90% of the time.

An additional 41% thought they felt it 31% to 60% of the time; 6% believed it happened at least nine-out-of-ten times.

White women were much more likely than 18-21 year olds of other races to say ladies felt remorse at least three out of every five times after a hook up (47% vs. 37% of Hispanics and 33% of Blacks).

A recent study of 1,000 Princeton University students was conducted in which women were asked if they had experienced regret after a casual hook-up. What percentage of women do you think expressed some sense of regret? (ROTATED TOP TO BOTTOM AND BOTTOM TO TOP)

<u>Total</u> (N=1102)	<u>Women</u> (N=524)	<u>Men</u> (N=488)	
1%	1%	1%	Less than 10%
8%	6%	9%	11%-30%
44%	42%	47%	31%-60%
39%	43%	34%	61%-90%
5%	6%	5%	More than 90%
3%	1%	5%	Do Not Know
*	1%	*	Refused

Spotlight on Men

- Slightly more than one-third of men thought women felt regret after a hook up 61%-90% of the time. Most thought it was less – just 31-60% of the time. A combined 10% thought it was less than 30% of the time.
- Fully three-in-five Black males thought women bemoaned casual make-out sessions or sex 31-60% of the time, compared to just 47% of Hispanics and 45% of Whites.
- White males were more likely than their Black or Hispanic counterparts to think women regretted their late night decisions more often – 61-90% of the time (37% vs. 29% of Hispanics and 22% of Blacks).
- A plurality of male students (46%) thought just 31% to 60% of ladies who locked lips lamented it later, while just slightly more than one-third (34%) felt it was higher: between 61% and 90% of the time. Just 5% thought it was more than 90%, and 9% said regretted happened rarely – just 11% to 30% of the time.

In Conclusion...

Young women were confident in their levels of knowledge of sexually-transmitted diseases, with the majority expressing high awareness of the signs, symptoms, and transmission modes of STDs. Additionally, most knew that STDs are not a problem to be taken lightly: though less than one-half believed they knew someone who had at least one STD, more than nine-in-ten proclaimed them to be “very” or “somewhat” serious problems among their fellow young women.

In addition to physical effects of casual hook-ups, women recognized another side effect: regret. The plurality of women overall – and majority of women enrolled in school full-time – recognized that their fellow females experienced disappointment in themselves at least three out of every five one-night stands.

Still, general knowledge of STDs did not translate into similarly high awareness of human chemistry or biology. Fewer than one-in-five women knew either a) that the effect of alcohol on the nucleus accumbens is an increased sense of attraction to people around them; or b) that the hormone Oxytocin fosters bonding between two people.

Unfortunately, many women admitted they lacked the specifics of hormonal operations that oftentimes lead to the transmission of these diseases. Alcohol, an all-too-often culprit in nights of regret, plays a detrimental role in the lives of many college youth; too few young women understood what it does to their minds and eventually, their bodies, too.

The stigma associated with mental health have (fortunately) minimized during the past few decades. Patients and doctors alike are beginning to recognize that mind and body operate in tandem and that the health of one affects and is affected by the other. In addition to educating women (and men) about the physical effects of random sexual rendezvous, it is important to add in the mental and emotional side effects of reckless and careless sexual activity (regret being one very negative emotion). This more supportive climate creates an opportunity to raise awareness of the detrimental emotional and psychological effects women (and men) undergo when casual hook-ups are part of students’ routines.

Educators and campus health officials have as much responsibility to educate young adults (and their mentors) about mental health as they do about physical health. The results of this survey suggest that those who support young women of this age group – student health counselors and nurses, student organization staff, and campus residential advisors – should consider advising them of the information contained in the *Sense & Sexuality* guide available at www.senseandsexuality.org.