

## Adolescents in Ghana

### HOME AND LIFE

- Half of Ghanaian adolescents aged 12–19\* live in rural areas.
- 96% of adolescents have a religious affiliation; of these, nearly 9 in 10 feel that religion is very important to them and attend a religious service at least once a week.
- About three-quarters of young women and more than half of young men report that their parents or guardians always know where they go out at night, what they do with their free time or who their friends are.
- More than 9 in 10 of all adolescents are unmarried; however 7% of 15–19-year-old women are married.
- Of the 9% of 15–19-year-old women who have given birth, 42% did not want their last birth at all, and an additional one-third wanted the birth at a later time.

### SCHOOL

- 7 in 10 young women and about 8 in 10 young men are currently in school, and similar proportions expect to complete secondary or higher education.
- Of those adolescents who stop schooling, one-quarter cite inability to pay school fees, more than one-third say that they have completed schooling or had enough,

nearly 1 in 10 are not interested, and nearly 1 in 10 females cite pregnancy as the main reason for leaving.

- 51% of females and 38% of males have attended sex education classes or talks; of these, 93% did so before they first had sex.
- 9 in 10 adolescents who have attended school believe it is important for sex education to be taught in schools.

### WORRIES

- More than 40% of adolescents are very worried about getting HIV/AIDS.
- About 1 in 3 adolescents are very worried about getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant.
- Half of adolescents are worried about their health, and at least 1 in 3 are worried about getting enough to eat.

### SEX

- 92% of 12–14-year-olds have never had sex, never had a boyfriend or girlfriend, and

never experienced kissing or fondling, but nearly two-thirds or more have heard of each of these activities.

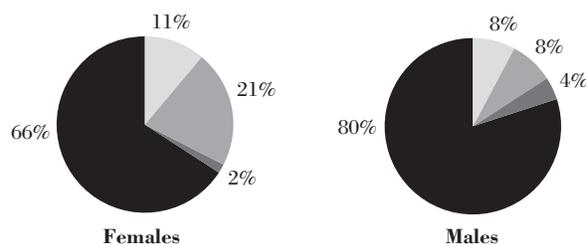
- 29% of 15–19-year-old females and 15% of such males have had sex.
- 9 in 10 adolescents think that both young women and young men should remain virgins until they marry.
- 1 in 4 young women and 1 in 5 young men have been touched, kissed, grabbed or fondled in an unwanted sexual way.

### FIRST SEX†

- 9 in 10 female adolescents and 7 in 10 males had sex for the first time with a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse. For nearly 3 in 10 males, the first partner was a casual acquaintance.
- About two-thirds of adolescents did not use any contraceptive method the first time they had sex.
- 30% of females and 12% of males reported that they were not at all willing at the time of their first sexual intercourse.

chart a  
Parental Communication

Most adolescents say that neither parent has talked to them about sex.



% of 12–19-year-olds whose parents have ever talked to them about sex-related matters

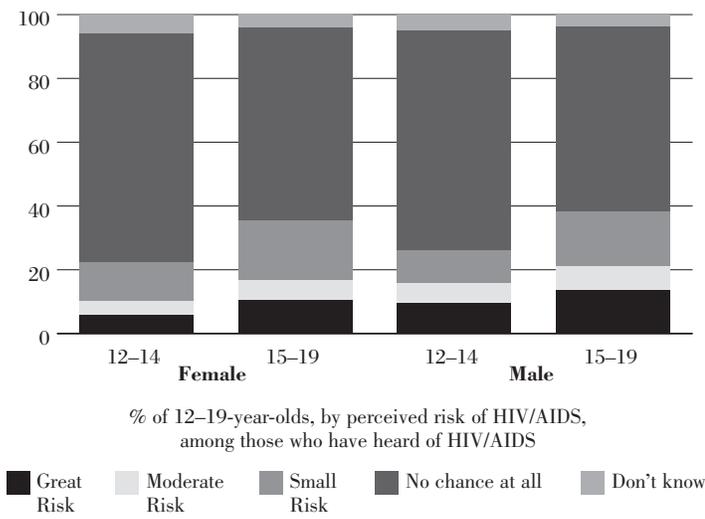
Legend: Both parents (light grey), Mother only (medium grey), Father only (dark grey), Neither parent (black)

\* “Adolescents” refers to 12–19-year-olds unless otherwise specified.

† Among sexually experienced adolescents (those who have ever had sexual intercourse).

*chart b*  
**Risk Perception**

*Most adolescents do not feel they are at risk of getting HIV/AIDS.*



**CONTRACEPTION**

- The condom is the most commonly used method among sexually active<sup>‡</sup> adolescents who are using a contraceptive method.
- Nearly half of unmarried sexually active young women and more than one-third of all sexually active young men currently use no contraceptive method; 4 in 10 of these young women and half of these young men use the male condom.
- The main reasons young women did not use a condom the last time they had sex<sup>§</sup> were that they “felt safe” and their partner refused. For young men, the main reasons were that they “felt safe” and that they did not have a condom.
- Only 16% of married young women use the condom; 60% use no contraceptive method.

**HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)**

- 96% of all adolescents have heard of AIDS.

Of these,

—about 8 in 10 are familiar with ways to avoid transmission of the AIDS virus, such as not having sex at all, being monogamous with an uninfected partner, or using a condom consistently and correctly;

—nearly 40% have personally known someone who has died of AIDS; and

—three-quarters would be willing to care for a family member infected with HIV, but more than half would want the infection kept secret.

- About 6 in 10 adolescents have never heard of any STIs apart from HIV/AIDS.
- 21% of sexually experienced 15-19-year-old women and 5% of such men have had an STI.

**INFORMATION AND SERVICES**

- More than 6 in 10 adolescents who know of HIV/AIDS have received HIV information from teachers, health providers or the mass media; these are also

the sources adolescents prefer.

- Among those who know of any source, adolescents prefer to obtain contraceptives and STI treatment from government clinics and hospitals.
- 2 in 3 females and 4 in 5 males who have had an STI, did not seek treatment—mostly because they were embarrassed or thought it cost too much.
- 60% of adolescents know about HIV, know about testing and know a place where testing is done; 2% have ever been tested.
- Among adolescents who know about testing and have never been tested, 7 in 10 want to be tested.

- The most common reasons given by those who want to be tested but have not been are that they are not sexually active, they do not believe they are at risk for other reasons, it costs too much or they do not know where to go.

**MISPERCEPTIONS**

- Half or more adolescents do not know whether or do not think that a woman can get pregnant the first time she has sexual intercourse, if she has sex standing up or if she washes herself thoroughly immediately after sex.
- 1 in 5 adolescents who have heard of AIDS believe that the AIDS virus can be transmitted by sharing food, more than 1 in 3 by witchcraft or supernatural means and 4 in 10 by mosquito bites.
- 1 in 5 adolescents who have heard of AIDS are unsure whether or believe

<sup>‡</sup> Those who have had sexual intercourse in the previous 3 months.

<sup>§</sup> Among those who have had sexual intercourse in the previous 12 months.

that a man infected with the AIDS virus can be cured if he has sex with a virgin.

**SOURCES OF DATA**

These data are from a nationally representative, household-based survey of 4,430 youth aged 12-19. The survey was conducted in January-May 2004 and had an overall response rate of 89%. This survey was conducted as part of the project Protecting the Next Generation: Understanding HIV Risk Among Youth, undertaken in Ghana by the Guttmacher Institute and the University of Cape Coast in conjunction with ORC Macro, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research and Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana. The full set of results are published in the report Awusabo-Asare K et al., “Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Ghana: Results from the 2004 National Survey of Adolescents.”

This project is supported by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (grant no. 5 R24 HD043610). It is being carried out in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi and Uganda, and contributes to the global fight against the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic among adolescents by raising awareness of young people’s sexual and reproductive health needs with regard to HIV/AIDS, STIs and unintended pregnancy; communicating the new knowledge to a broad audience; and stimulating the development of improved youth-serving policies and programs.

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