

Sexual Behavior

Nationwide, early initiation of sexual intercourse is associated with having a greater number of lifetime sexual partners, increased risk of STDs and pregnancy, and decreased condom usage.⁽¹⁾ Prevalence estimates suggest that young people aged 15–24 years acquire half of all new STDs.⁽²⁾ Among high school students nationwide in 2021, 30% had sexual intercourse during their life, 6% had sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their life, and 20.7% had sexual intercourse with at least one person during the three months before the survey.⁽³⁾ The percentage of sexually active students who used a condom during last sexual intercourse has been declining since 2003 (63% - 52%).⁽⁴⁾

2023 Results

The following are findings related to various issues related to sexual behavior among NJ students for 2023:







- Less than one-in-five NJ students were currently sexually active (17%) as defined by having sexual intercourse in the past three months.
- 5% of students have had sex with 4 or more partners in their lives.
- Sexual intercourse before the age of 13 was reported by 3% of students.
- Among students who were sexually active in the past 3 months, almost two-thirds reported using a condom during their last sexual intercourse (62%).

Other findings in these areas include the following:

- 6% of students reported having an HIV test and 3% report testing for an STD.
- Among currently sexually active students, 23% used birth control pills; an IUD (such as Mirena or ParaGard) or implant (such as Implanon or Nexplanon); or a shot (such as Depo-Provera), patch (such as OrthoEvra), or birth control ring (such as NuvaRing) before their last sexual intercourse with an opposite-sex partner to prevent pregnancy.
- Among currently sexually active students, 11% of students did not use any method to prevent pregnancy during their last sexual intercourse.
- The survey included a question asking students if they identify as transgender and another question asking students how they describe their sexual identity. A student is considered Heterosexual/Cisgender if they answered they were not transgender and that they described themselves as heterosexual (straight). All others were identified as LGBTQ+ and include students who answered that they are transgender or are not sure if they are transgender or those who describe themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, or some other way. Among New Jersey high school students, 76% are classified as Heterosexual/Cisgender and 24% as LGBTQ+.

Trend Summary

The 10-year trend related to sexual behavior issues among New Jersey youth is generally positive. The percentage of students who were currently sexually active declined from 29% to 17% from 2013 to 2023. Likewise, sex with more than four partners in one’s life (12% to 5%) and sex before the age of 13 (5% to 3%) both declined in this 10-year period. The use of condoms before one’s last sexual encounter increased slightly from 59% to 62%, though the change was not significant.

Percentage of New Jersey Youth Who	2013	2019	2021	2023	Trend
Sexual Intercourse Before the Age of 13 <i>had sexual intercourse for the first time before the age of 13</i>	5%	3%	2%	3%	Decrease in negative behavior 
Sexual Intercourse with Multiple Partners <i>had sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their life</i>	12%	7%	4%	5%	Decrease in negative behavior 
Currently Having Sexual Intercourse <i>had sexual intercourse with at least one person in the past 3 months.</i>	29%	24%	18%	17%	Decrease in negative behavior 
Used a Condom <i>among students who had sex in the past 3 months, used a condom during their last sexual intercourse</i>	59%	63%	52%	62%	No change in behavior 
HIV <i>were ever tested for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)</i>	9%	8%	3%	6%	Decrease in negative behavior 
Sexually Transmitted Disease <i>were tested for a sexually transmitted disease (STD) other than HIV, such as chlamydia or gonorrhea</i>	—	7%	4%	3%	Decrease in negative behavior 

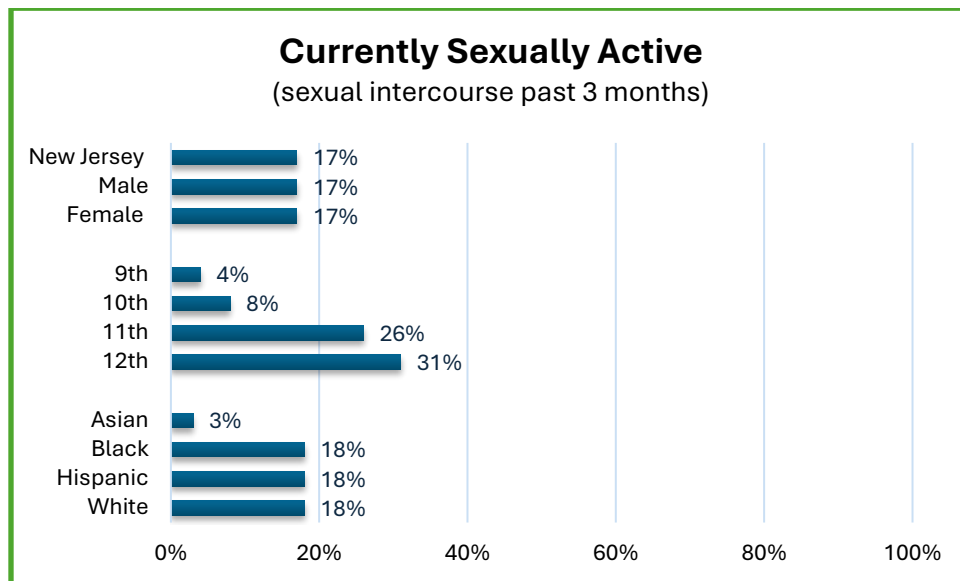
Note: Trend analysis was performed by the CDC on data from 2013 to 2023 to determine which differences across years were statistically significant. For questions not asked in all survey years, the trend analysis was performed from 2021 back to the last consecutive year in which the question was asked.

Demographic Breakdown

Under one-in-five NJ high school students (17%) were currently sexually active and have had sex in the past 3 months.

- **Gender** – Males and females (17% each) were equally likely to have had sex in the past 3 months.
- **Grade** – Current sexual activity increases by grade as those in 12th (31%) and 11th (26%) grades were more likely than those in 10th (8%) and 9th (4%) grades to have had sex in the past 3 months.

- **Race/Ethnicity** – Whites, Black and Hispanics were equally likely to have had sex in the past 3 months (18%) but only 3% of Asians reported current sexual activity.



Resources

- New Jersey Resources for Instruction:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/wellness/prevention/curr.shtml>
- ETR Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP):
<http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.home>
- RAND Promising Practices Network on Children, Families and Communities:
<https://www.rand.org/topics/teen-pregnancy.html>