

Sexual Health and Activity

Survey Results

National College Health Assessment

Spring 2003

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* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

Sexual Health and Activity

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* significant to ≤ .05, ** significant to ≤ .01, ***significant to ≤ .001

Sexual Health and Activity

Introduction and Methodology

The National College Health Assessment (NCHA) survey instrument is a comprehensive survey designed to assess all aspects of students' health including general health, alcohol and drug use, sexual health and activity, exercise habits, and nutrition. This report pertains to the, approximately, 35 items regarding students' sexual health and sexual activity. Items cover topics including amount of sexual activity in the past year and past 30 days, perception of the sexual activity of a typical student, sex of partner, type of sexual activity, frequency of activity, birth control and STD protection.

Reference to the NCHA comparative information refers to the national sample for the spring 2003 survey conducted by the American College Health Association (ACHA), which consists of 19,497 respondents from 33 schools around the country.

Reference to the OSU sample refers to the spring 2003 administration of the survey on the main campus of The Ohio State University. A random sample of 3,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students were surveyed, 562 responses were collected (18.7%). The sample from The Ohio State University is not exactly comparable to the national sample, primarily in that the OSU sample contains more graduate students, and therefore older students, than the national sample. This is partly accounted for by including analysis by class rank and age, but this difference needs to be considered in interpreting comparisons to the national findings.

In the analysis, various student populations were stratified by gender, age category, class rank, international status and campus residence. Some distinctions were made for ethnicity and sexual orientation; however, caution is recommended in the interpretation of the results given the small sample size.

Some distinctions are made for high-risk drinkers, which are categorized by the definition used in the Spring 2002 CORE Alcohol and Drug survey, an undergraduate study administered by the Core Institute at Southern Illinois University. A high-risk drinker is categorized as someone who drank five or more drinks at one sitting in the past two weeks. Reference to time frames such as, within the last year, within the last month or 30 days, etc. are in relationship to the day the survey was administered in April 2003.

* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

Findings

Sexual Orientation

Students responded to questions categorizing their **sexual orientation** as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or unsure. In addition, the gender of their sexual partners was compared to the self-reported sexual orientation categories to address issues related to labels of sexual orientation (n=546).

- Based on **self-reported sexual orientation**, 94.7% indicated they were heterosexual, 2.0% gay/lesbian, 2.4% bisexual, and 0.9% unsure, resulting in 5.3% being categorized as gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- Based on **self-reported behavior**, 6.2% of OSU students reported behavior that would categorize them in the gay, lesbian, or bisexual categories.
- The respondents that reported themselves as **gay/lesbian** listed only same sex partners for the last year (n=11).
- Among the **heterosexual** respondents, 1.5% reported having only same sex relationships, or both male and female relationships in the past year (n=523).

Number of Sexual Partners

Students were asked to report their number of sexual partners and the perceived number of partners for the typical student in the past year. Students overestimated the number of partners for a typical student (See Chart 4.1). For example, the majority of students (77.3%) report having one or fewer partners in the last year, however 87.8% of students perceive the 'typical student' as having had 2 or more sexual partners in the last year.

In reporting their number of sexual partners in the last year, 25.0% (NCHA 28.3%) of OSU students report abstaining from sex in the past year, 52.3% (NCHA 46.5%) of students report a single partner, and 22.7% (25.2%) report multiple partners (See Chart 4.1). A single-sample t-test comparing the OSU average to the NCHA population indicated no significant differences.

- **OSU men** (n=223) reported a slightly higher average number of sex partners (See Chart 4.2) than **OSU women** (n=330), but a higher number also reported abstaining.
- Overall, the average number of sexual partners for **OSU women** reported in the past year was 1.28, SD = 1.579, as compared to 1.27, SD = 1.98, reported for the women in the **NCHA** population. A single-sample t-test was run comparing the OSU average to the NCHA population and no significant difference was found.
- For **OSU men**, the average number of sexual partners reported in the past year was 1.36, SD = 2.287, as compared to a significantly higher average of 1.72 reported for the men in the NCHA population, $t(223) = -2.359^*$.

* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

Chart 4.1: Within the past school year, with how many partners, if any, have you had sex, and with how many partners do you think the typical student at your school has had sex (oral, vaginal, or anal)?

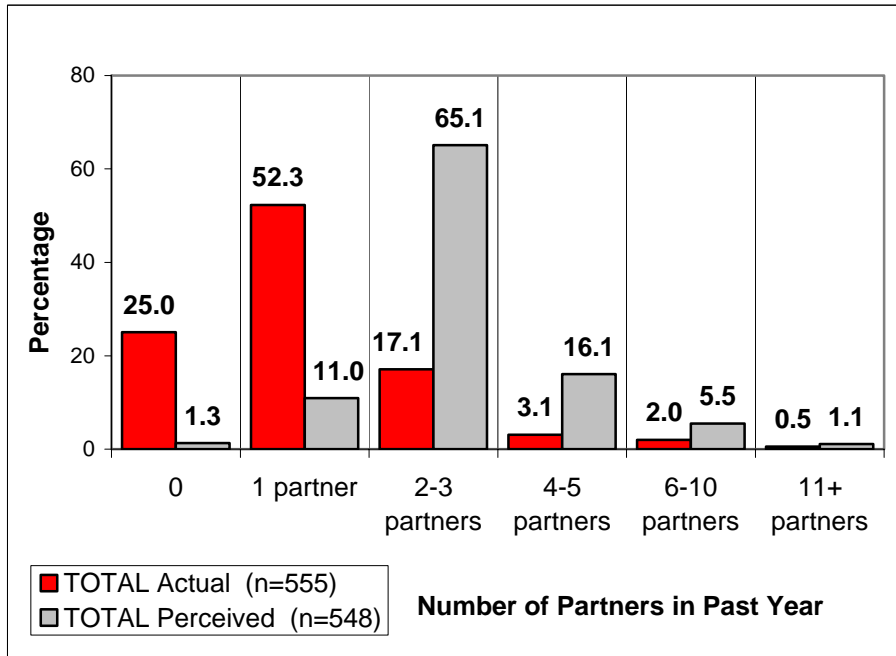
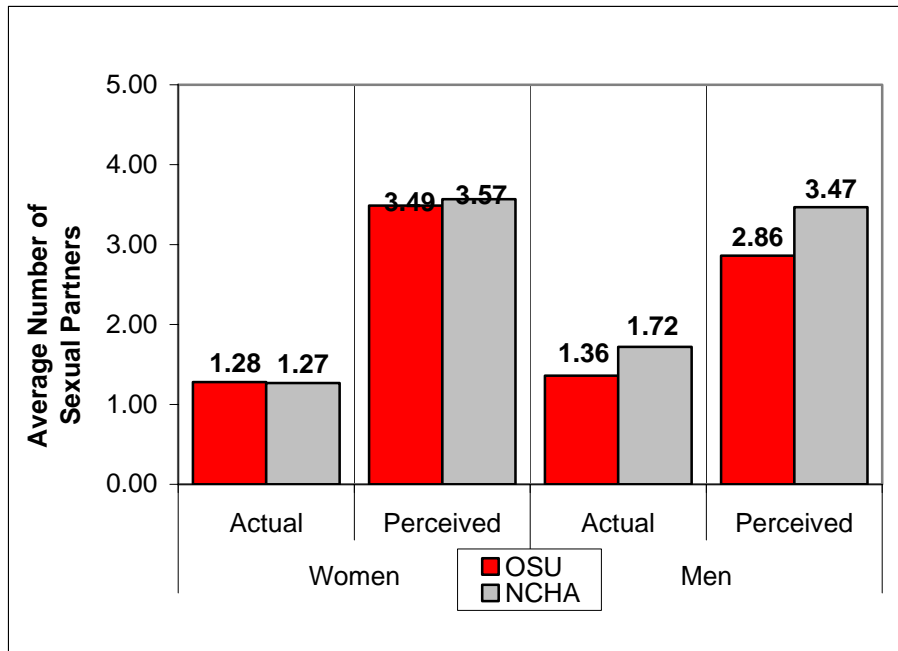


Chart 4.2: Within the past school year, with how many partners, if any, have you had sex (oral, vaginal, or anal)? Within the last school year, with how many partners do you think the typical student at your school has had sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) by Gender?



* significant to ≤ .05, ** significant to ≤ .01, ***significant to ≤ .001

- Significant differences were also reported between **OSU men** and NCHA men on perceived sexual activity at their school. OSU men reported an average number of partners of 2.86, SD = 3.018, as compared to NCHA men who reported an average of 3.47, SD = 6.04, $t(219) = -3.002^{**}$.
- Independent samples t-tests were run comparing **OSU men** and **OSU women** on reported number of partners and on perceived number of partners, and no significant differences were found.
- **High-risk drinkers** (n=221) reported a significantly higher average number of sex partners in the past year with 1.92, SD = 2.647, as compared to **low-risk drinkers** (n=331) who reported an average of 0.9 partners in the past year, SD = 0.961, $t(259.1) = -5.490^{***}$.
- **International students** (n=38) reported a lower average number of sexual partners with 0.84 in the past year, SD = 0.638, as compared to **resident students** (n=509) reporting an average of 1.34, SD = 1.947, $t(102.745) = -3.665^{***}$.
- **Off-campus** students reported an average number of sexual partners of 1.46 in the past year, SD = 2.074, (n=414), whereas on-campus students (n=141) reported an average of 0.88, SD = 1.111, sexual partners, $t(453.009) = -4.170^{***}$.

Frequency and Perceived Frequency of Sexual Activity

Overall

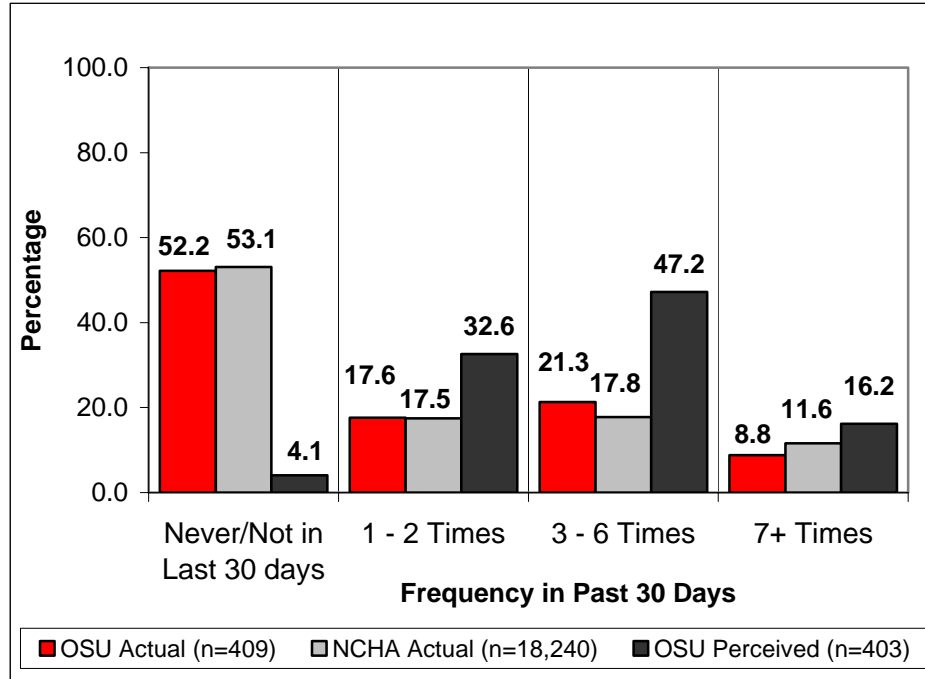
Students were asked to report both type and frequency of their sexual activity in the past year and the past 30 days. For the 30 days prior to the survey, 47.8% reported participation in oral sex, 51.2% in vaginal sex, and 3.7% in anal sex (Charts 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Independent sample t-tests were run comparing OSU to NCHA respondents both overall and by gender to compare the frequency of sexual activity in the last 30 days; no significant differences were found with the exception that OSU women reported slightly, but significantly, higher rates of vaginal intercourse than the NCHA sample.

Oral Sex

The perceived frequency of oral sexual activity was higher than self reported activity. While the majority, 52.2%, of **OSU Students** report that they had not participated in oral sex in the last 30 days, only 4.1% of students perceive that level of activity as representing the typical student (Chart 4.3).

* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

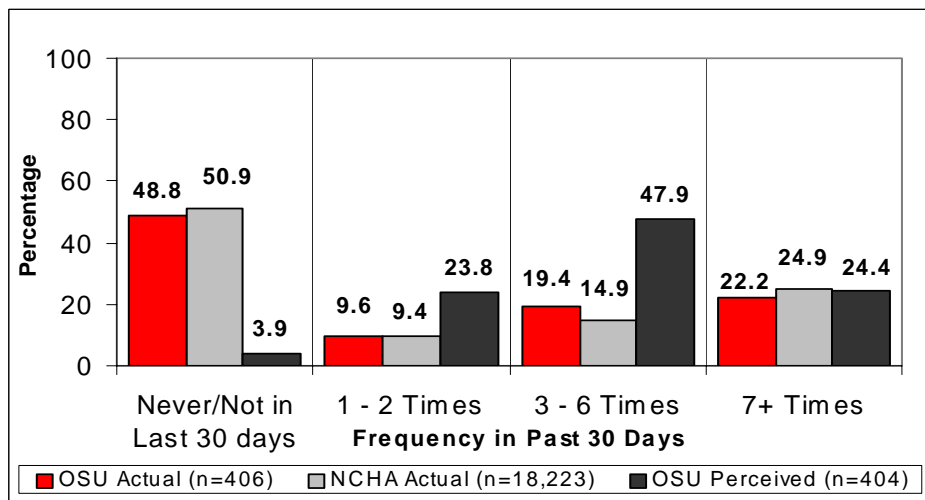
Chart 4.3: Within the last 30 days, if you have been sexually active, how many times did you have, and how many times do you think the typical student has had oral sex?



Vaginal Intercourse

Twenty-nine percent (29.0%) of **OSU students** reported never having **vaginal intercourse** and an additional 19.8% of students reported that they had not done so in the last 30 days. As with other sexual activities, students perceive other students to be more active than indicated by self reported information (Chart 4.4).

Chart 4.4: Within the last 30 days, if you have been sexually active, how many times did you have, and how many times do you think the typical student has had vaginal intercourse?

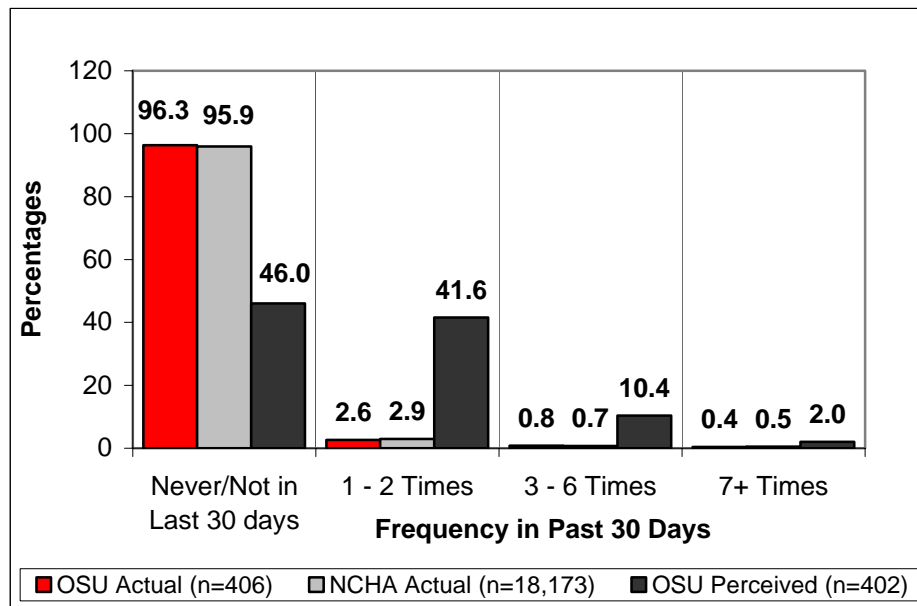


* significant to ≤ .05, ** significant to ≤ .01, ***significant to ≤ .001

Anal Intercourse

Only 3.7% of **OSU students** reported having **anal intercourse** in the past thirty days while 54% of students perceive the typical student as having participated in the last 30 days (See Chart 4.5).

Chart 4.5: Within the last 30 days, if you have been sexually active, how many times did you have, and how many times do you think the typical student has had anal intercourse?



Group Differences in Activity and Perception

Table 4.2 displays significant differences that were found between men and women and between OSU and the NCHA sample, including:

- 57.3% of OSU women reported being sexually active with vaginal intercourse in the last 30 days, as compared to a significantly lower 50.5% of NCHA women, $\chi^2(1) = 5.855^*$ (Table 4.2).
- Significant differences were also found between OSU women and OSU men for the frequency of vaginal intercourse and anal intercourse in the last 30 days (Table 4.3).
- Sexually active **graduate/professional** students (n=155) showed a slightly higher level of activity for the last 30 days as compared to **undergraduates** (n=369).
- Of graduate/professional students 65.1% reported having vaginal intercourse in the past 30 days, as compared to 45.5% of undergraduates, $\chi^2(1) = 16.558^{***}$.

* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

Table 4.2: Within the last 30 days, if you have been sexually active, how many times did you have oral, vaginal or anal sex? (Percentages of all students reporting being sexually active in past 30 days)

	Women				Men			
	OSU Actual (n=320)	NCHA Actual (N=18,240)	Difference	$\chi^2(df=1)$	OSU Actual (n=222)	NCHA Actual (N=18,158)	Difference	$\chi^2(df=1)$
Oral Sex	50.3	46.7	3.6		44.1	47.1	-3.0	
Vaginal Intercourse	57.3	50.5	6.8*	5.855	42.4	45.6	-3.2	
Anal Intercourse	2.2	3.4	-1.2		5.6	5.3	0.3	

Table 4.3: Within the last 30 days, if you have been sexually active, how many times did you have oral, vaginal, or anal sex? (Percentages of all students reporting being sexually active in past 30 days)

	OSU Women (n=320)	OSU Men (n=222)	Difference	$\chi^2(df=1)$
Oral Sex	50.3	44.1	6.2	
Vaginal Intercourse	57.3	42.4	14.9***	11.275
Anal Intercourse	2.2	5.6	-3.4*	4.143

Differences were found in information reported by students based on whether they lived **on-campus** (n=139) or **off-campus** (n=403). It is important to note that on-campus and off-campus differences are likely attributable to the age of the student rather than the living environment.

- Students living on-campus reported significantly lower sexual activity for oral sex compared within the last 30 days, with 37.4% of on-campus and 51.4% of off-campus reported participation, $\chi^2(1) = 8.069^{**}$.
- 33.6% of on-campus and 57.3% of off-campus students reported participation in vaginal intercourse in the last 30 days, $\chi^2(1) = 23.496^{***}$.
- On-campus students reported 0.0% participating in anal intercourse in the last 30 days, which was significantly less than off-campus students, $\chi^2(1) = 7.181^{**}$.
- First year students (n=76) reported a significantly lower frequency of sexual activity in the past as compared to other students (See Table 4.4).

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Table 4.4: Within the last 30 days, if you have been sexually active, how many times did you have, and how many times do you think the typical student has had vaginal sex? (Percentages of all students reporting being sexually active in past 30 days)

	First Year Under- graduates (n=74)	Second Year Under- graduates (n=88)	Third Year Under- graduates (n=95)	Fourth Year Under- graduates (n=70)	Fifth Year Under- graduates (n=42)	χ^2 (df=4)
Vaginal Intercourse	31.6	41.9	45.5	56.9	48.9	11.061*

Condom Use

Students were asked to report their frequency of condom use during three types of sexual activity: oral sex, vaginal intercourse and anal intercourse, along with the perceived use of condoms by the typical student on campus. The perceived condom use was far greater than the actual condom use reported in all three categories (See Charts 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11).

In a separate question asking whether sexually active OSU and NCHA students used a condom the last time they were sexually active, the number of students who reported using a condom the last time during oral sex was 2.7% (NCHA 3.3%), 45.4% (NCHA 48.6%) for vaginal intercourse, and 17.7% (NCHA 23.0%) for anal intercourse. A chi square analysis was run comparing OSU and NCHA results; no significant differences were found.

Oral Sex

Of the OSU students who reported participating in oral sex in the last 30 days (n=260), only 5.4% reported ever having used a condom, whereas 49.0% of students perceive that the typical student has used a condom during oral sex (n=522) (See Chart 4.6 & 4.7).

* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

Chart 4.6: Within the last 30 days, how often do you think the typical student at your school has used a condom during oral sex?

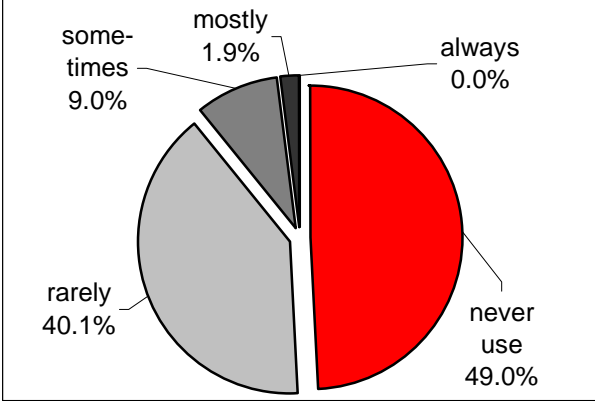
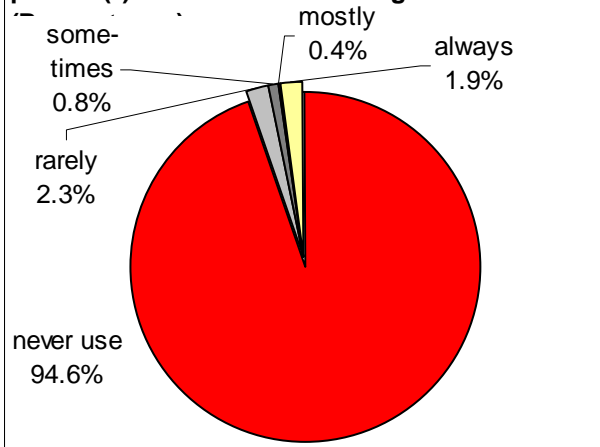


Chart 4.7: Within the last 30 days, if you are sexually active, how often did you or your partner(s) use a condom during oral sex?



Vaginal Intercourse

Of the OSU students reporting participating in vaginal intercourse in the past 30 days (n=270), 28.9% report having always used a condom and 39.3% report having never used a condom. The majority of students (66.4%) believe that they typical student mostly or always uses a condom, whereas what appears to be more typical (56.7% of students) is to never, rarely or sometimes use a condom (See Chart 4.8 & 4.9).

Chart 4.8: Within the last 30 days, how often do you think the typical student at your school has used a condom during vaginal intercourse?

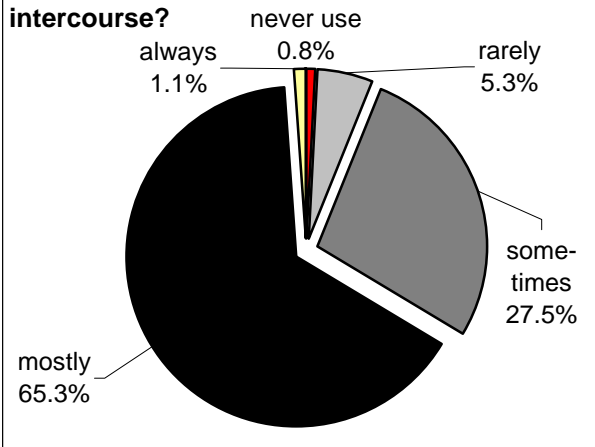
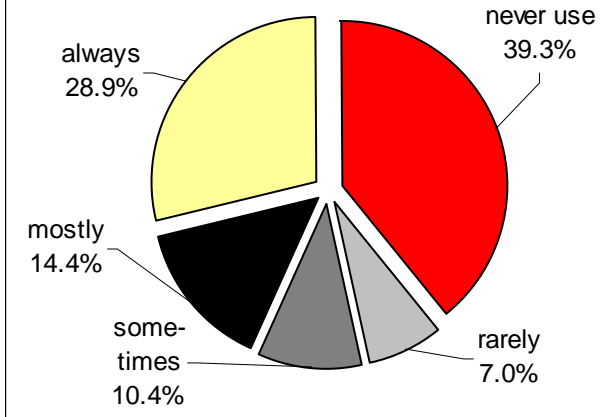


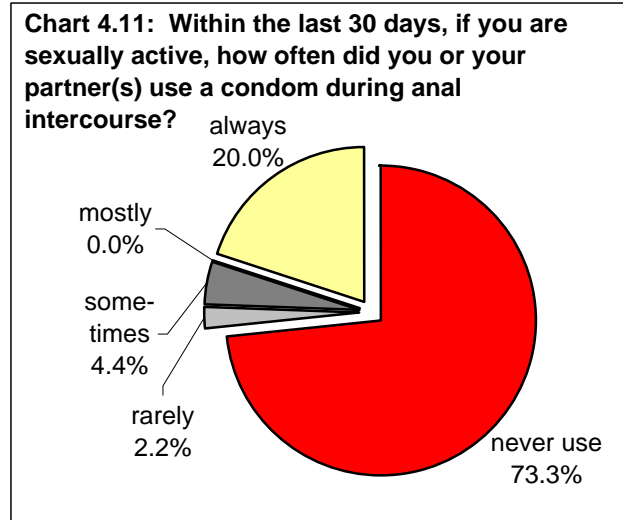
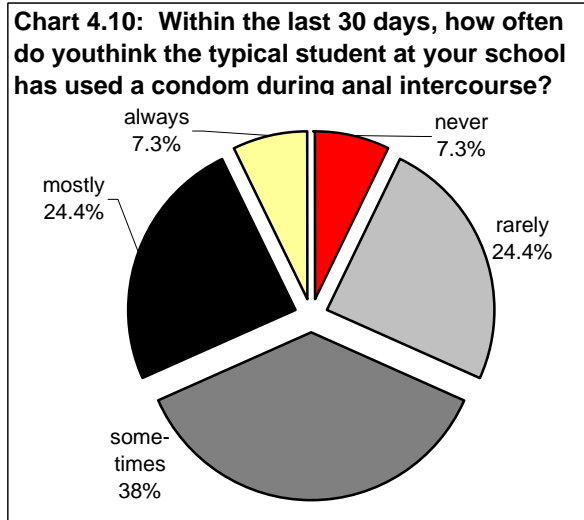
Chart 4.9: Within the last 30 days, if you are sexually active, how often did you or your partner(s) use a condom during vaginal intercourse?



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Anal Intercourse

Of the OSU students reporting participating in anal intercourse in the past 30 days (n=45), 73.3% reported never using a condom. Only 6.8% of students perceive the typical student as never using a condom (n=376) (Chart 4.10 & 4.11).



Group Differences in Condom Use

There were differences found between **undergraduates** (n=170) and **graduate/professionals** (n=170) and reported condom use. Of undergraduates, 31.8% report always using a condom during vaginal intercourse in the past 30 days, compared to 23.1% of graduate/professionals, $\chi^2(4) = 21.939$.

On-campus students (n=50) were significantly more likely to report always using condoms for vaginal intercourse in the last 30 days (44.0%), as compared to **off-campus students** (n=220) with 25.5% reporting always using a condom, $\chi^2(4) = 15.880^*$.

Although it appears that **younger students** may have a higher rate of condom use than **older students**, with 39.5% of 18-20 year olds reporting always using a condom, the difference based on age groupings is not statistically significant. (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: The percentage of students, active in the last 30 days, who report always using a condom during vaginal intercourse.

	18-20 Years Old	21-24 Years Old	25-29 Years Old	30-45 Years Old	46+ Years Old
Vaginal Intercourse	39.5	27.5	15.9	29.7	0.0

* significant to $\leq .05$, ** significant to $\leq .01$, ***significant to $\leq .001$

Students in **uncommitted relationships** (single, divorced, separated or widowed) reported being more likely to use a condom as compared to those in **committed relationships** (married/domestic partner, or engaged or committed dating relationship) (See Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Within the last 30 days, if you are sexually active, how often did you or your partner:

	Use a condom during oral sex in the last 30 days (percentages)		Use a condom during vaginal intercourse in the past 30 days (percentages)		Use a condom during anal intercourse in the past 30 days (percentages)	
	Committed Relationship	Uncommitted Relationship	Committed Relationship	Uncommitted Relationship	Committed Relationship	Uncommitted Relationship
Always	1.7	2.4	24.7	38.1	13.8	31.3
Mostly	0.6	0.0	11.8	20.2	0.0	0.0
Sometimes	0.0	2.4	8.6	14.3	3.4	6.3
Rarely	2.3	2.4	7.5	6.0	3.4	0.0
Never	95.4	92.9	47.3	21.4	79.3	62.5

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)

Sexually active students who reported being **diagnosed with an STD** (Chlamydia, Genital herpes, Genital warts/HPV, HIV, Hepatitis B or C, Gonorrhea) in the past year were assessed as to their use of condoms during sexual activity (See Table 4.9). Of sexually active students, 8.4% report having been diagnosed with one or more STDs in the last year (genital herpes, genital warts, HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, or pelvic inflammatory disease.).

Some differences were also found for other student population and **HIV testing**, although the small sample size of GLBT students requires caution in interpreting results regarding that group:

- Respondents who had multiple partners (n=125) in the past year reported a greater likelihood to be tested for HIV in the last year (40.0%), as compared to respondents with one partner (n=288) in the past year (31.6%).
- **GLBT** students with multiple partners reported a significantly greater likelihood of having been tested for HIV (90.0%), as compared to **heterosexual** students with multiple partners; 36.6% reported getting tested for HIV in the past year, $\chi^2(2) = 32.489^{***}$.

* significant to ≤ .05, ** significant to ≤ .01, ***significant to ≤ .001

Birth Control and Unintentional Pregnancies

Of sexually active students, 5.9% reported that they or their partner have used emergency contraception (morning after pill), and 1.2% reports they or their partner as having had an unwanted pregnancy. OSU students who reported having vaginal intercourse in the past 30 days (n=442) were asked their preferred methods of contraception. Birth control pills (49.8%) and condoms (44.1%) were found to be the more popular choices for birth control for students who had participated in vaginal intercourse in the past 30 days.

Birth Control

No significant differences were reported between OSU men and women as to the type of birth control method used. However, the following differences were found between international and resident students.

- **International students** (n=38) reported being more likely to use fertility awareness (19.4%) as a form of birth control, as compared to 4.7% of resident students (n=514), $\chi^2(1) = 11.967***$.
- The use of birth control pills was reported by 16.1% of **international** students as a form of birth control, whereas 52.7% of resident students reported using the same, $\chi^2(1) = 11.844***$.

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Summary

Overall, responses from students at The Ohio State University are not compellingly different from the national sample. In both samples, approximately 95% of students report that they are heterosexual. Regarding sexual activity, approximately 25% are not sexually active, and the majority (70%) of students who are sexually active are active with only one partner. Only 22.7% of students report having been active with more than one partner in the last 30 days.

As with the national sample, the majority OSU students perceive the typical student as having a higher level of sexual activity than actual students report having. For example 87.7% of students describe the typical student as having had 2 or more partners, when it is much more typical, for students to have one partner or less (73.3% of all students).

Condom use is of particular concern, while Ohio State students do not appear to use condoms at a lower level than the national average, both samples indicate low usage. Of students who were sexually active in the last 30 days, only 28.9% report always using a condom during vaginal intercourse, and only 20.0% report always using a condom during anal intercourse. In comparison, 39.3% report never using a condom during vaginal intercourse, and 73.3% report never using a condom during anal intercourse. Condom use is slightly higher for students who are in an uncommitted relationship. However, of students in uncommitted relationships, still only 38.1% report always using a condom for vaginal sex and 31.3% report always using a condom for anal sex.

The low level of condom use is reflected in the percentage of sexually active students who report being diagnosed with STDs. Of sexually active students, 8.4% report having been diagnosed with one or more STDs in the last year (genital herpes, genital warts, HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, or pelvic inflammatory disease.). In addition 5.9% of sexually active students report that they or their partner have used emergency contraception (morning after pill), and 1.2% report having had an unwanted pregnancy.

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