

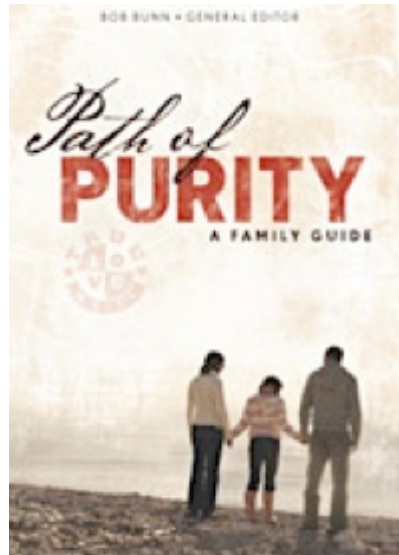


Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 11, 2011

Federal CDC Study Shows More Teens Remaining Abstinent

It's a phenomenon many in today's culture are having a hard time pegging. In a society where sex has become something of an obsession, the latest study from the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) showing that an increasing number of teens and young adults are remaining sexually abstinent, is news indeed.

In its survey of 5,300 young people between the ages 15 and 24, the CDC's [National Center for Health Statistics](#) found that 27 percent of males and 29 percent of females in that age group said they had never had sex — a figure that is up significantly from the 22 percent of both men and women in that category from the CDC's 2005 study.



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For 15- to 17-year-olds, the most recent survey found that 68 percent of boys and 67 percent of girls had never had sex, with 53 percent of boys and 58 percent of girls age saying they had never had sexual contact of any kind. That increase in abstinence is significant, especially when compared to figures from 2002, when only 46 percent of boys and 49 percent of girls ages 15-17 said they had had no sexual experience.

The latest numbers contrast with the perception among many Americans — fueled by the media's unrelenting portrayal of America's youth as sex-obsessed — that teens and young adults are moving ever further away from traditional moral values.

"The public's general perception is that when it comes to young people and sex, the news is bad and likely to get worse," Bill Albert of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy told the [Washington Post](#). In reality, he said, "many young people have been very receptive to the message of delaying sexual activity. There's no doubt about it."

In addition to increased efforts from parents to teach their kids moral values and to make sure they have a solid foundation of faith that includes attending church, the introduction of abstinence-only sex education in schools has played a role in decreased sexual activity among teens and young adults, argued Valerie Huber, executive director of the National Abstinence Education Association.

But Huber told [Baptist Press News](#) that with budget cuts over the last year, "one hundred sixty-nine abstinence education programs lost funding and over one million students lost access to the very programs that can support and encourage the positive trends represented by this data."

Huber said that the latest numbers should be used to inform public policy on sex education in the schools. "Funding priority should be given to programs that support this healthy trend rather than



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capitulating to those who want to normalize sex among teens and simply offer contraception as a solution," she said. "The data render null and void the 'abstinence is unrealistic' claims made by anti-abstinence advocacy groups."

Richard Ross, co-founder of a faith-based abstinence movement called [True Love Waits](#), noted the positive and affirming message teens get from abstinence-only sex ed. programs, compared to the comprehensive "wait if you can" sex ed pushed in many public schools.

"Those in the abstinence-until-marriage movement tell teenagers we have great faith in their ability to make promises and keep promises," Ross told BP News. "We tell them we believe in them. We show them powerful advantages that come with living in moral purity. We surround them with peers and significant adults who support them in purity promises."

By contrast, Ross noted, the comprehensive sex education crowd makes preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease the focal point of their programs. "This suggests to the teenagers that leaders have little confidence they can remain abstinent," he said. "In fact, if abstinence is mentioned in those programs, it often is presented as an afterthought."

With the two different approaches to teens and sex in mind, Ross asked rhetorically: "Which of those two movements seems more responsible for the fact that more and more students are choosing abstinence?"

The answer to that question isn't difficult to determine.

Related article: [Sex and the "Study"](#)

Photo: [Path of Purity: A Family Guide](#) is a guide for parents to promote sexual abstinence.



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