



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 14, 2011

Study Reveals That Teens Desire Abstinence Until Marriage

A new study from a youth research organization finds that even amidst a culture in which an aggressive media encourages teens to become sexually active, a solid majority still want to embrace traditional values regarding sex. According to the latest research by OneHope, a Christian youth outreach that provides research to non-profit organizations, 61 percent of American teens want to remain abstinent until marriage, with an additional 63 percent saying that while they have already been sexually active, they would like to return to a place of sexual purity.



The group's 91-page report on youth in the U.S. is part of its larger "Spiritual State of the Children" study that takes the spiritual pulse of children and youth all over the world. The latest study, which in late 2010 surveyed 5,108 U.S. teens between the ages of 13 and 18, found, among other things, that:

- 82 percent of teens said they believe God intended marriage to last a lifetime.
- 64 percent said religion is somewhat or very important to them.
- 80 percent said parents had at least some influence over their thoughts and actions (followed by teachers and friends).

On a more alarming note, the survey found that:

- 69 percent of the teens surveyed said they regularly watch MTV (sponsors of such fare as the overtly sexualized weekly teen drama *Skins*).
- 65 percent said they believe that truth is relative.
- 52 percent said they believe spiritual development is not necessary for a satisfying life.
- 50 percent said they considered an unmarried man and woman a family.
- 34 percent said they spend less than 15 minutes a week talking with their fathers about things that matter to them.

In light of some of the more negative findings, the fact that such a high percentage of America's youth want to remain sexually abstinent until marriage surprises many media observers, who note the aggressive way in which television promotes sex to teens. For example, a 2005 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 70 percent of the most watched teen programs included some form of sexual content, from flirting to depictions of sexual intimacy.

Similarly, according to a recent report by the Parents Television Council, at least 64 percent of all TV shows contain sexual content. And in one of its most recent studies, the group found that Hollywood has specifically targeted teenage girls, with many prime-time and teen-oriented programs depicting female



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teens as sexually active.

While experts confirm that education programs which emphasize sexual abstinence until marriage can be important factors in persuading young people to wait on having sex, they emphasize that the most important factor in teen sexual purity is parental involvement — a factor most parents readily agree with.

According to research published in the January 2011 issue of the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#), nearly 98 percent of parents believe that they *should* be the primary individuals teaching their children about sex. However, only 24 percent of the 1,600 parents surveyed believed that parents *are* the primary communicators of sex education to children.

While the study demonstrates a discrepancy between where parents think their kids should get information and counsel on sex, and where they actually get such information, the study confirms previous research showing that parents actually exert the most influence on the decisions their kids make about sexual activity, and also confirms that most teens want parents to be the primary sex educators.

The bottom line, according to most researchers and experts on teen sexuality: Regardless of the pressure coming at teens from the media, peers, and other sources, parents are the single most important factor in determining whether or not teens will remain sexually abstinent until marriage.



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