

Making the Connection...

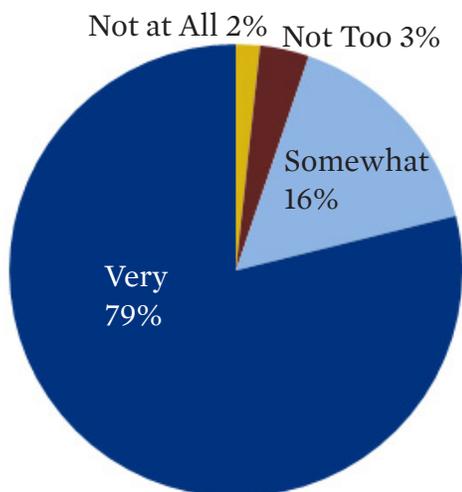
PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION

Teen pregnancy prevention programming is an effective way to reduce teen pregnancy,¹ yet this programming is often not made available for a variety of reasons. Public support is likely a factor in administrative support of sexual health education programming in schools. To gain insight on the public's perception of teen pregnancy and sexual health education, the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (SC Campaign) commissioned a survey in the fall of 2011. The following results are highlights from the survey.

TEEN PREGNANCY IS IMPORTANT

- The vast majority of South Carolinians are concerned about teen pregnancy.
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of South Carolinians rate teen pregnancy as a somewhat or very important problem in their community.

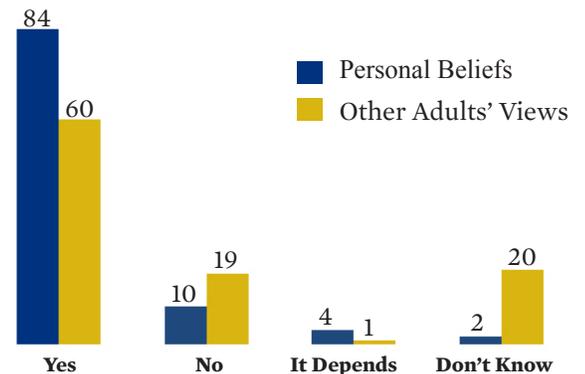
Percent of South Carolinians Who Rate Teen Pregnancy as an Important Problem



SUPPORT OF SEX ED

- 84% of South Carolinians believe that sexuality education which emphasizes abstinence as the first and best option for young people, but also teaches youth about the benefits and importance of using contraception to prevent pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections should be taught in school.

Percent of South Carolinians Who Believe Sex Education Should be Taught in Public Schools Compared to What they think Others Believe



BUT WHAT DO OTHERS THINK?

- People tend to underestimate support for sex education in schools. While almost 85% support sex education in schools, only 60% think others support it.
- A much higher percentage of Black respondents (72%) than White respondents (56%) believe that other adults also support sex education. Additionally, a much larger percentage of people with a high school diploma (69%) think that others would support sex education than those with a college degree (51%).

THE LINK TO TEEN PREGNANCY

A perceived lack of support may prevent some school officials and parents from advocating for effective sexual health education. South Carolinians overwhelmingly think that teen pregnancy is an important issue and support pregnancy prevention programming in schools that emphasizes abstinence and provides medically accurate and age appropriate information about condoms and contraception.

However, there is some uncertainty and inaccurate beliefs regarding others' support for the programming. Twenty percent of South Carolinians indicate that they simply don't know if others support sex education. Additionally, the amount of perceived opposition to sex education is nearly twice the amount of actual opposition. These differences may lead to lower school and administrative support, and therefore, less availability of sex education in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Get talking! South Carolinians are encouraged to be vocal in their support of comprehensive sexuality education for youth. Remind neighbors, school administrators, and politicians that research shows the vast majority of South Carolinians believe teen pregnancy is an important problem and support sex education in schools.

Work with your local school district's Comprehensive Health Education committee to ensure age-appropriate, science-based teen pregnancy prevention programs are available for middle and high school students.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were collected by the University of South Carolina's Institute for Public Service and Policy Research (IPSPR) through randomized landline and cell phone interviews with residents age eighteen and older living in the State of South Carolina. Survey items related to teen pregnancy prevention were identified by the staff of the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Interviewing for this study was completed between October 24 and November 21, 2011. A total of 659 fully completed interviews and 8 partially completed landline interviews were conducted, as well as 1 partial and 146 completed cell phone interviews. Data presented have been weighted to correct any potential biases in the sample on the basis of age, race, sex, and number of individuals age 18 or older living in the household. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

REFERENCES

¹Kirby D. *Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. 2007. Washington DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Retrieved from http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/EA2007/EA2007_full.pdf