

Abstinence

Obj. 4.5: Compare and contrast the benefits of and barriers to practicing abstinence.



Review the data on teen pregnancy and birth rates and answer the questions that follow.

Table 1

U.S. teenage pregnancy and birth rates are high compared to other developed countries.

International Data	U.S.	France	Germany	Netherlands	Canada	UK
Pregnancy rate (2002–5)	72.2	25.7	18.8	11.8	29.2	41.3 ^Δ
Birth rate (2006)	41.9	7.8	10.1	3.8	13.3	26.7

Rates are listed as numbers per 1000 girls 15–19 years old,
^Δ15–18 years old [1]–[4].

Source: [PLoS One. 2011; 6\(10\): e24658](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0024658). Published online 2011 October 14. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0024658
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3194801/table/pone-0024658-t001/>

1. Which country has the highest pregnancy rate? _____
2. Which country has the highest birth rate? _____
3. Which country has the lowest pregnancy rate? _____
4. Which country has the lowest birth rate? _____
5. List 3 or more factors you believe might be leading to much higher pregnancy and birth rates in the U.S. than these other countries?

DISCUSS

Considering the high teen pregnancy and birth rates in the U.S., what do you think should be done to reduce the crisis of teen pregnancy in our country?

**ABSTINENCE:****What Is It?**

Abstinence is not having sex. A person who decides to practice abstinence has decided not to have sex.

How Does It Work?

If two people don't have sex, then sperm can't fertilize an egg and there's no possibility of a pregnancy. Some forms of birth control depend on barriers that prevent the sperm from reaching the egg (such as condoms or diaphragms). Others interfere with the menstrual cycle (as birth control pills do). With abstinence, no barriers or pills are necessary because the person is not having sex.

You don't have to be a virgin to practice abstinence. Sometimes people who have been having sex decide not to continue having sex. Even if a person has been having sex, he or she can still choose abstinence to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the future.

How Well Does It Work?

Abstinence is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy. Although many birth control methods can have high rates of success if used properly, they can fail occasionally. Practicing abstinence ensures that a girl won't become pregnant because there's no opportunity for sperm to fertilize an egg.

Source: http://kidshealth.org/teen/sexual_health/contraception/abstinence.html

DISCUSS

1. What are some of the barriers to choosing abstinence? In other words, why is practicing abstinence difficult for some teens?
2. What are the benefits or advantages for a teenager who chooses abstinence?
3. What skills might help a person remain abstinent? (Examples: assertiveness, risk-aversion behaviors, planning for the future)
4. What percentage of teens (females and males, age 15-17) do you think have ever had sexual intercourse?



The following data comes from a report by the CDC called, “Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use, and Childbearing, 2002.” Analyze the data and answer the reflection prompt below.

Source: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/series/sr_23/sr23_024.pdf

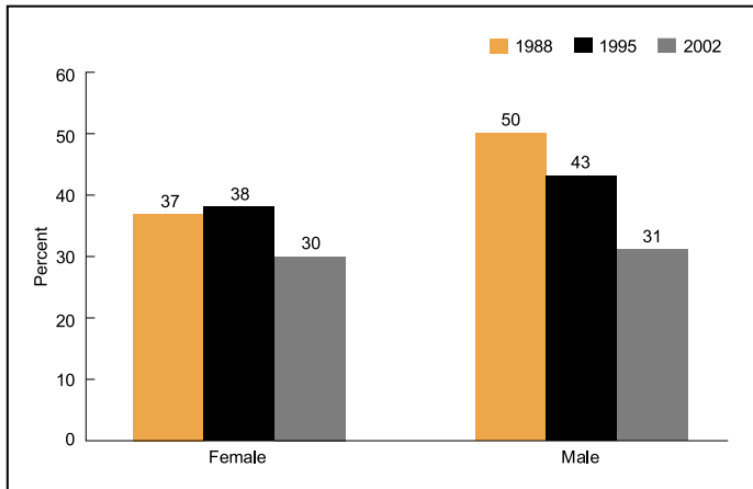


Figure 1. Percent of never married females and males 15–17 years of age who have ever had sexual intercourse: United States, 1988–2002

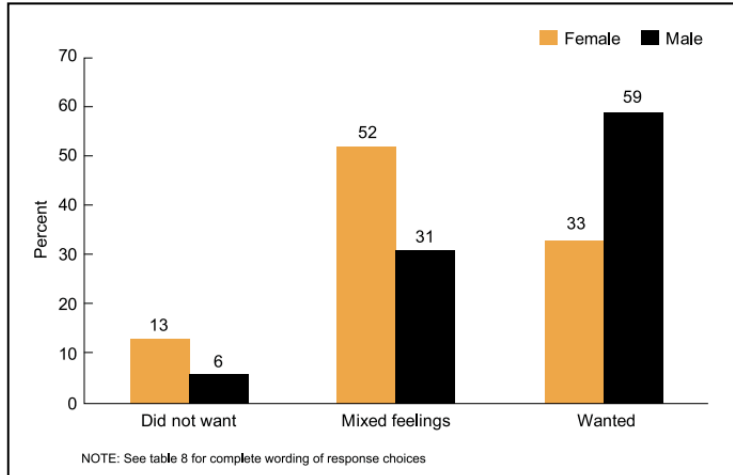


Figure 5. Percent of males and females 18–24 years of age at interview who had their first intercourse before age 20, by how much they wanted their first intercourse to happen when it did: United States, 2002

You are worried that you are the only one not having sex. You are dating someone, but you are not sure you are ready to have sexual intercourse. You are talking to a friend about choosing abstinence vs. using contraceptives with sex. Which decision do these data results support and why?



List 3 benefits and 3 barriers to practicing abstinence.

BENEFITS	BARRIERS



Some people would like to remain abstinent but struggle with refusal skills. Refusal skills are a set of skills that may help you avoid high-risk behaviors, especially ones increased by peer pressure or partner pressure. What are three strategies that someone could use to resist the pressure to have sex?