

**HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIOLOGY HIGHLIGHT**  
**JANUARY 1999**  
**FINDINGS FROM THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR MODULE**  
**OF THE OHIO BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM, 1997**

**Introduction**

The Ohio Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is conducted to monitor the prevalence of lifestyle risk factors associated with the major causes of premature morbidity and mortality in Ohio's adult populations. The Ohio Department of Health, through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has been collecting behavioral risk factor prevalence data on a monthly basis since 1984. This information is collected using random digit dial telephone interviews. In 1997, a new module to address sexual behaviors was included in the survey. This module examines sexual behaviors of the general population, and can be used to determine to what extent the general population is engaging in behaviors that could put them at risk for HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The sexual behavior module contains eight questions related to sexual behavior. These questions were asked of adults, ages 18–49. The questions address the following issues: (1) the number of sexual partners the respondent had during the past twelve months; (2) was a condom used the last time the respondent had sexual intercourse; (3) if a condom was used, for what reason(s) was it used; (4) how effective does the respondent feel a properly used condom is in preventing HIV infection through sexual activity; (5) the number of **new** sex partners the respondent had during the past twelve months; (6) if any of the following situations applied to the respondent: intravenous drug use in the past year, treated for a sexually transmitted disease in the past year, tested positive for HIV, had anal sex without a condom in the past year; (7) has the respondent been treated for a sexually transmitted or venereal disease in the past five years; and (8) if the respondent had been treated for a sexually transmitted disease (STD), was he/she treated at a health department STD clinic.

The sample size for the sexual behavior module was 1,687 adults aged 18-49. The number of “don't know/not sure” and “refused” responses was less than 10% of the sample size for each question in the sexual behavior module. For analysis, the data collected for these questions was weighted to ensure that they are representative of Ohio's adult population, aged 18-49. Data are based on individual responses, so there is the possibility of reporting bias.

**Findings from the Sexual Behavior Module of BRFSS** (summarized in the accompanying table)

The majority (85%) of adults aged 18-49 in Ohio reported having sexual intercourse during the past twelve months, but most adults (87%) have not had any new sex partners during the past year. Eight percent of adults report two or more partners in the past twelve months. Younger adults, ages 18-34, reported having more sex partners and more new sex partners than adults aged 35-49.

Most adults (94%) think a properly used condom is effective in preventing HIV infection. Of the people using condoms, 51% used a condom the last time they had intercourse to prevent pregnancy and disease, 37% used a condom to prevent pregnancy, and 10% used a condom to prevent disease. A larger percentage (29%) of young adults, ages 18-34, reported using a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to adults aged 35-49 (10%).

Four percent of adults reported one of the following behaviors or situations during the past year: using intravenous drugs; treated for a sexually transmitted or venereal disease; testing positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS; having anal sex without a condom. The stated question only asked if any of these situations applied to the respondent; it did not ask the respondent to specify which one(s).

**Ohio Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System  
Sexual Behavior Module, 1997  
Estimated Prevalence (%) of Respondents, Ages 18-49**

Question	Weighted Percentage of Respondents, Ages 18-49						
	Total	Male	Female	Age 18-34	Age 35-49	White	Black / Other
Number of sexual partners in past twelve months							
None	15%	15%	14%	16%	13%	14%	20%
1	77%	75%	80%	71%	84%	78%	70%
2-3	7%	8%	6%	10%	3%	6%	8%
4 or more	1%	2%	1%	2%	<1%	1%	2%
Number of new sex partners during past twelve months							
None	87%	85%	88%	79%	95%	88%	85%
1	9%	9%	9%	14%	4%	9%	12%
2-3	3%	4%	2%	5%	1%	3%	3%
4 or more	1%	2%	<1%	2%	<1%	1%	1%
Used a condom during last sexual intercourse	20%	21%	18%	29%	10%	19%	29%
Reason condom used during last sexual intercourse							
Prevent pregnancy	37%	41%	33%	30%	60%	42%	17%
Prevent disease	10%	11%	9%	10%	10%	9%	16%
Prevent pregnancy and disease	51%	48%	55%	60%	24%	48%	62%
Other Reason	2%	1%	3%	1%	6%	2%	6%
Effectiveness of a properly used condom for preventing HIV infection							
Very effective	45%	45%	45%	47%	43%	45%	44%
Somewhat effective	49%	48%	50%	48%	50%	49%	50%
Not at all effective	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Have used IV drugs in past year, and/or been treated for STD in past year, and/or tested positive for HIV, and/or had anal sex without a condom in past year	4%	5%	3%	5%	4%	4%	5%
Treated for sexually transmitted disease (STD) during past 5 years	2%	1%	4%	3%	2%	2%	6%
Of those treated for an STD, percent treated at a health department STD clinic	43%	62%	39%	49%	34%	45%	38%

### **Conclusion**

This survey suggests that the majority of adults in Ohio aged 18-49 have engaged in sexual activity in the past year; however only a low percentage of the population reported having multiple sex partners and the majority of adults did not report any new sex partners in the past year. The majority of adults think a properly used condom is effective for preventing HIV infection. A small percentage of adults report having used intravenous drugs in the past year, or being treated for a sexually transmitted disease, or being tested positive for HIV, or having had anal sex without a condom in the past year. Because of the sampling strategy, this survey reflects the behaviors of **all** adults aged 18-49 in Ohio, not just individuals who might be engaging in behaviors that put them at risk for HIV infection. These results can be used to plan intervention and educational programs to target high-risk behaviors.

For further information on this report, please contact Robert Indian at (614) 644-7025 for information on the BRFSS, or the HIV/AIDS Surveillance Program at (614) 466-1388.