

Common Sense

**TEENS AND ADULTS SPEAK OUT ABOUT
TEEN PREGNANCY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**It's time
to change the
conversation.**

**DC
Campaign
to Prevent
Teen Pregnancy**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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It is released on their behalf by DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Additional reports from the survey and the focus groups will be published during the coming months.

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This survey was conducted by telephone from November 1999 through January 2000. During that period 1,600 District residents age 11 and older were interviewed, including 790 African-Americans, 367 Hispanics and 356 whites. Hispanics were interviewed in their choice of English or Spanish. Respondents were selected at random.

The final results were weighted to the District population, so that African-Americans, whites and Hispanics, and residents of different ages, were represented in their actual proportions (as estimated by Census projections). The margin of error for results based on the entire sample is plus or minus 3 percentage points. The margin of error for results based on subgroups is larger, ranging from 4 to 6 percentage points. Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.

This survey was complemented by 22 focus groups and five mini-groups with preteens, teens, and parents, as well as 12 in-depth interviews with community leaders and teen pregnancy experts. These focus groups were conducted in 1998 and 1999.

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- Making birth control, and information about how to use it, more available
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INTRODUCTION

The rates of teenage pregnancy in Washington, DC have long been significantly higher than those in the rest of the nation: one in six girls in DC becomes pregnant each year, compared to one in ten nationally. The consequences for teen parents, their children and for the economic and social health of our city are dramatic.

For decades, many local agencies, supported by public and private funding, have worked with young people in programs to prevent both first and subsequent pregnancies among teens. Despite such efforts, the District's teen pregnancy rates have remained inordinately high. In addition to issues of funding and coordination, a critical missing ingredient in these collective efforts has been current research on the District that would enable programs to reflect this city's specific characteristics, beliefs and needs.

Recognizing this, in late 1998 a group of local foundations, led by the Summit Fund of Washington, commissioned public opinion research about District of Columbia adults and teens. Their intent was to discover what adults and young people actually think about the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy in the District, and about what should be done to prevent teen pregnancy. This information is intended to benefit not only foundations engaged in supporting teen pregnancy prevention efforts but also policy makers and programs in the District.

This groundbreaking survey of 1,600 adults and adolescents is a major part of this effort to understand teen pregnancy in a local context. *Common Sense: Teens and Adults Speak Out About Teen Pregnancy in the District of Columbia* is the first of a series of reports to be published based on the research.

A striking finding of the survey is that on the question of preventing teen pregnancy - unlike other issues which may divide District residents - **THERE IS A REMARKABLE CONSENSUS ACROSS RACES AND AGES ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING PREGNANCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS.** Even more important, they are also **UNITED IN THEIR VIEWS ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO PREVENT IT.**

DC citizens do not suffer from the political or ideological divides that sometimes polarize communities and prevent agreement on solutions that will benefit young people. They are both knowledgeable and pragmatic about approaches to teen pregnancy prevention. They

know that the only way to prevent pregnancy is either to abstain from sex, or to use contraceptives effectively every time. They also understand that many other factors need to be present for teens to be motivated to make healthy, responsible choices.

There is indeed a community mandate to be drawn from these results.

The survey shows that although the majority of District residents believe that things are going pretty well in DC these days, most feel that **CHILDREN AND TEENS ARE BEING LEFT BEHIND.**

Washingtonians know about teen pregnancy first hand, and understand that it has serious consequences for teens and for the community at large.

There is widespread **CONSENSUS THAT TEEN PREGNANCY IS A MAJOR PROBLEM IN THE DISTRICT - ON A PAR WITH DRUGS, VIOLENCE AND POOR SCHOOLS - AND ONE THAT NEEDS TO BE ACTED UPON NOW. TEENS THEMSELVES PUT TEEN PREGNANCY SECOND ONLY TO VIOLENCE AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS IN THEIR LIVES.**

Despite the severity of the problem, District residents believe there are viable solutions. They understand that many parts of the community, and many approaches, must focus together on changing the education and opportunities available to our young people. In fact, **THERE IS A STUNNING CONSENSUS AMONG DC RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO REDUCE TEEN PREGNANCY:**

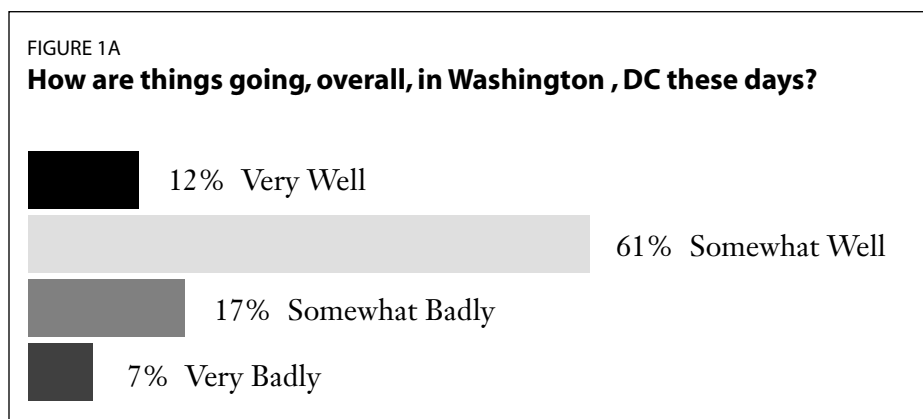
- parents talking more effectively and frequently with their children about sexual issues;
- more investment in positive activities for children and teens after school hours;
- community-based sexuality education that teaches about pregnancy and disease prevention in addition to encouraging abstinence;
- more school participation in sexuality education; and
- more prevention messages in the media.

The findings of this research send a clear message. Both adults and young people in the District are deeply worried about the high rates of teen pregnancy. Moreover, they are in powerful agreement about the need for parents, schools, government and private organizations to play a role in helping teens postpone pregnancy so that they will not have to face the difficult consequences that follow.

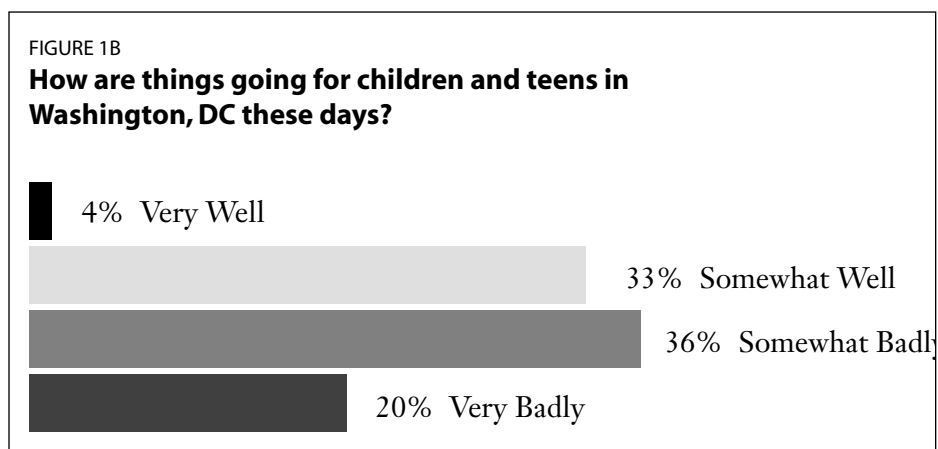
MAIN FINDINGS

Although most District residents believe that things are going pretty well in DC these days, they believe that children and teens are being left behind.

- **SEVEN IN TEN (73%) DC RESIDENTS FEEL THINGS IN THE CITY ARE GOING WELL** (see Figure 1A), although relatively few (12%) feel that things are going very well. Whites (81%) and Hispanics (76%) are most enthusiastic about the city's direction - African-Americans (69%) slightly less so.

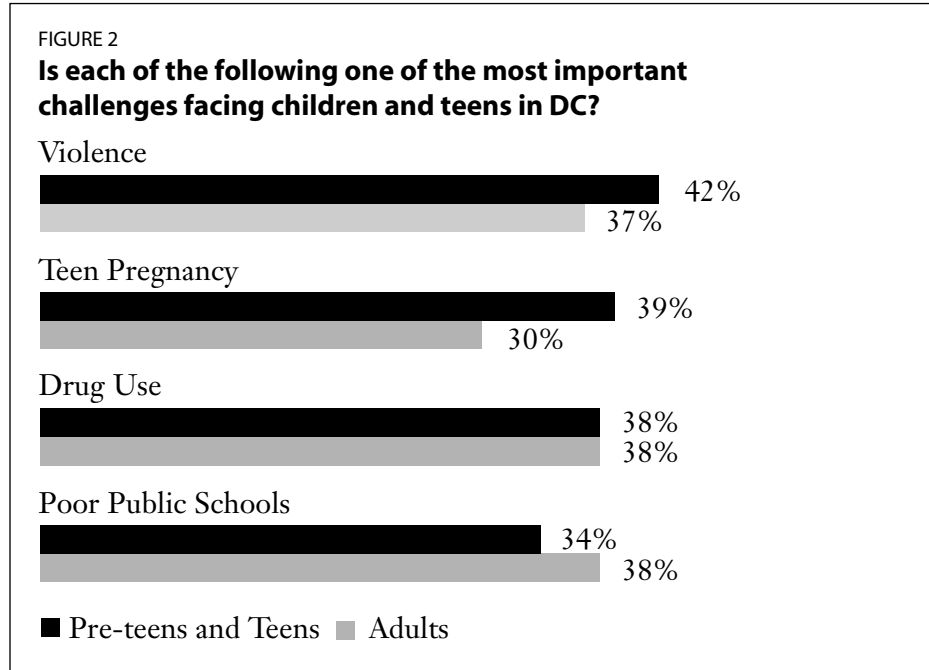


- **DISTRICT RESIDENTS ARE MUCH LESS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING FOR DC'S CHILDREN AND TEENS** (Figure 1B). Over half (56%) feel things are going badly, including one in five (20%) who say things for young people in DC are going very badly. African-Americans are most pessimistic about the outlook for teens and children; a full quarter (26%) feel things are going *very* badly. Fewer Hispanics (15%) and whites (8%) feel the situation is so dire. Teens themselves are slightly more positive in their feelings.



Residents believe that teen pregnancy ranks among the top concerns for teens. Indeed, they are almost as concerned about teen pregnancy as they are about drugs, violence and poor public schools.

- TEENS THEMSELVES PLACE TEEN PREGNANCY SECOND ONLY TO VIOLENCE AS A PROBLEM IN THEIR LIVES



- THE MAJORITY (85%) OF DC RESIDENTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT TEEN PREGNANCY, INCLUDING OVER HALF (52%) WHO SAY THEY ARE *VERY* CONCERNED. As Table 1 shows, African-Americans are most likely to feel personal concern about this issue followed by Hispanics and whites.

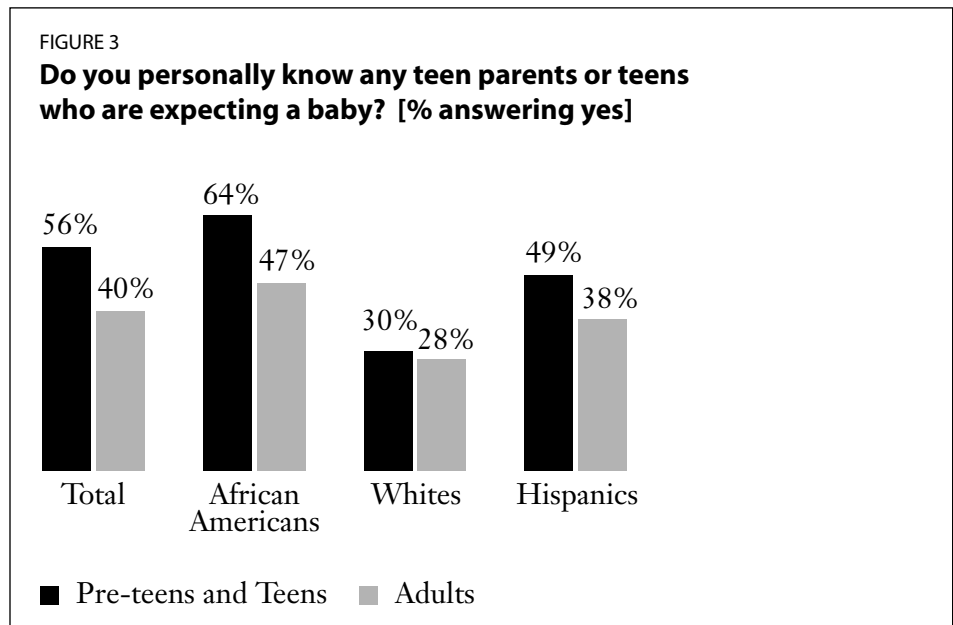
TABLE 1
How concerned are you personally about teen pregnancy in DC?

	Total	African-Americans	Whites	Hispanics
Very Concerned	52	61	37	45
Somewhat Concerned	33	26	46	41
Not Too Concerned	10	8	13	8
Not Concerned At All	4	3	4	4

Residents know about teen pregnancy first hand, and understand that it has serious consequences for teens and the community at large.

- **RESIDENTS OF DC - YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE - KNOW THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TEEN PREGNANCY AND TEEN PARENTHOOD.** More than three quarters believe teen parents are less likely than other teens to finish high school (78%), go to college (84%), and get a good job (76%). Respondents also agree teen parents are more likely to need government assistance (86%).
- **WASHINGTONIANS, ESPECIALLY TEENS AND PRE-TEENS, SEE TEEN PREGNANCY ALL AROUND THEM.** As Figure 3 shows, over half of the African-Americans surveyed know a teen parent or parent-to-be, as do almost half of Hispanics and three in ten whites.

Everybody – all the girls in my family – they’re all young and pregnant. They all got pregnant at 13, 14, 15...
—Young Woman, Age 15-19



- Almost a quarter (23%) of adults with children in the survey became parents when they themselves were teens - 32% of African-Americans and 23% of Hispanics had been teen parents.

Washingtonians are united across lines of race and age about how to reduce teen pregnancy. They are pragmatic, and support a combination of approaches:

- **Invest in expanded activities for young people;**
- **Invest in parents;**
- **Make birth control – and information about how to use it – more widely available;**
- **Involve schools in sexuality education; and**
- **Place more prevention messages in the media.**

1. Investing in young people

DC residents believe it is vital to invest in DC's young people - there is near universal support for creating more extensive and positive activities for our children and teens.

- **IN THE SURVEY, DISTRICT RESIDENTS WERE ASKED TO REGISTER THEIR OPINION ABOUT A NUMBER OF TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION STRATEGIES. THE MOST POPULAR STRATEGY, SUPPORTED BY 96% OF THOSE SURVEYED INCLUDING BOTH TEENS AND ADULTS, IS GETTING TEENS AND CHILDREN MORE INVOLVED IN ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL, CHURCH AND IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.**

2. Investing in parents

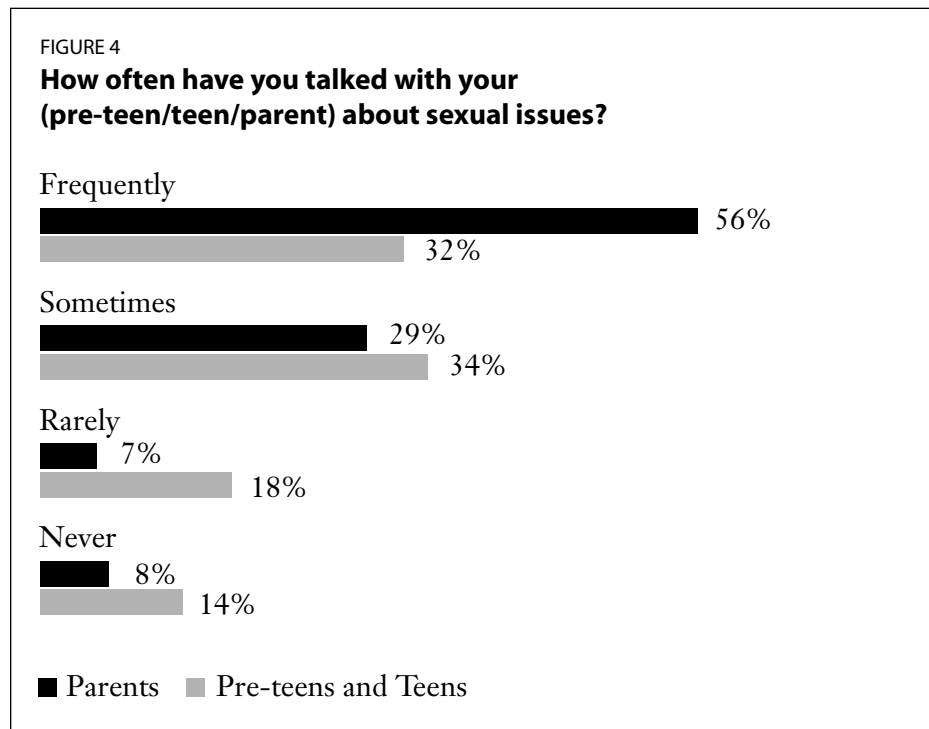
Washingtonians agree that parental responsibility is vital to any and all teen pregnancy prevention efforts. They want programs for parents to help them develop the skills they need to address sexual issues with their children.

- **THE VAST MAJORITY OF DC RESIDENTS (91%) AGREE THAT IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS TO BE INVOLVED IN TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION.**

You have to start the dialogue... You don't want others teaching where you can teach. And you don't know what [your child's] classmates are saying.
—Parent

- **DISTRICT RESIDENTS OVERWHELMINGLY AGREE THAT PARENTS SHOULD INITIATE DISCUSSIONS WITH THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT SEX (89%), RATHER THAN WAITING FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO BROACH THE SUBJECT (6%).** Interestingly, adults (90%) feel more strongly about this than teens (78%). The majority of adults and adolescents alike feel these conversations need to start young. Most believe that they should be occurring by the time the child is aged 10 to 12.
- **PARENTS REPORT MORE FREQUENT DISCUSSIONS OF SEXUAL MATTERS WITH THEIR CHILDREN THAN DO YOUNG PEOPLE.** As Figure 4 illustrates, the majority of parents with children 11-18 say they discuss sexual topics with their children frequently (56%), but pre-teens and teens say something different.

You have a lot of parents that are naïve enough not to think their kids need to know. And when they get ready to give [the information] to them it's too late.
—Grandparent



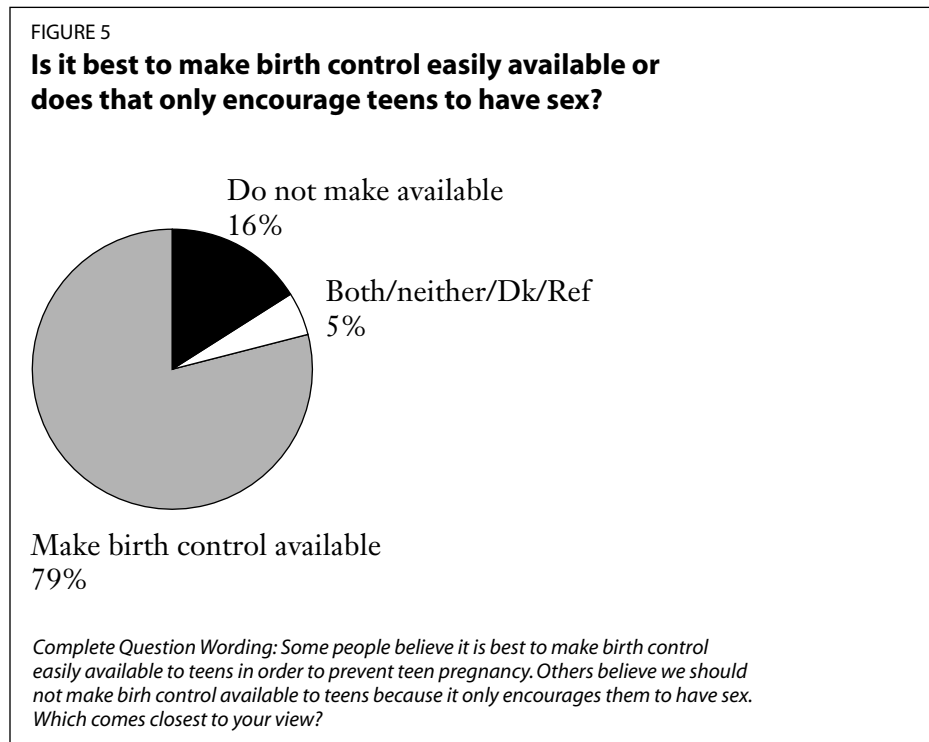
- **WHEN WE ASKED PARENTS AND 11-18 YEAR OLDS HOW COMFORTABLE THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT SEX,** eight in ten (78%) parents said they are very comfortable talking to their children about sexual issues, compared with less than half (46%) of children who said they were comfortable talking to their parents.
- **THERE IS NEAR UNANIMOUS SUPPORT (95%) FOR CREATING PROGRAMS TO TEACH PARENTS HOW TO TALK TO THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUAL ISSUES.**

3. Birth control: education and availability

Washingtonians are pragmatic when it comes to teen pregnancy prevention. While residents would prefer that teens postpone sex, they also believe that sexually active teens are a reality. Therefore, Washingtonians say that teens need to be educated about sexuality, birth control and disease prevention. A large majority believes that birth control – and information on how to use it – should be widely available to teens.

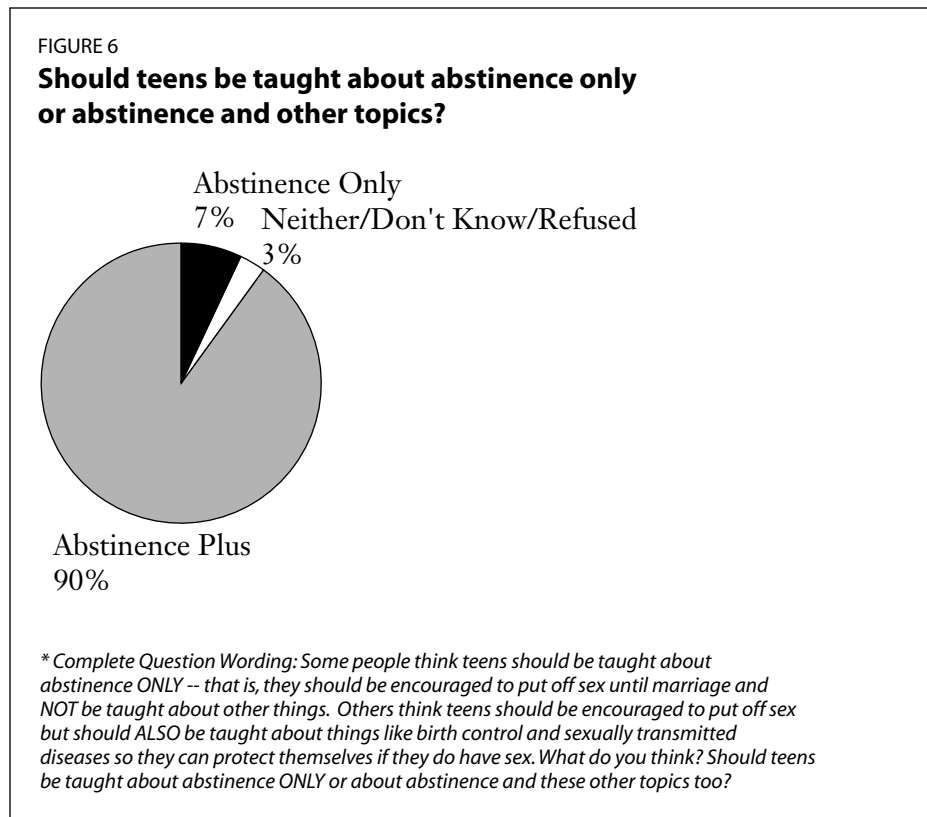
- **AS FIGURE 5 SHOWS, EIGHT IN TEN (79%) DISTRICT RESIDENTS, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR AGE OR BACKGROUND, AGREE IT IS BEST TO MAKE BIRTH CONTROL EASILY AVAILABLE TO TEENAGERS.** In comparison, one in six (16%) believe birth control should not be easily accessible.

You just can't hand somebody a condom and assume they know how to use it. You need to [teach] it in health class for sixth through ninth graders. [You need to teach about] all of it: how the female body works, how the male body works. . . .
—Young Man, Age 18-24



- **DISTRICT RESIDENTS SUPPORT MAKING CONDOMS WIDELY AVAILABLE TO TEENS AS A MEANS OF PREGNANCY PREVENTION; 82% SAY THEY SUPPORT SUCH A MEASURE, INCLUDING SIX IN TEN (60) WHO STRONGLY SUPPORT IT.** Among young people, 94% of those 15-18 years old support this plan, as do 80% of younger teens.

- Focus group results suggest that birth control has to go beyond availability to easy, discreet accessibility. As one teen girl explained, “[The places where they have free condoms], I know some people at my school, they’re embarrassed. They don’t want to walk in and go in that big basket (of condoms) when everybody’s sitting there in the waiting room...” Focus group results suggest condoms, and condom use, must become free from embarrassment and stigma.
- **AS FIGURE 6 SHOWS, NINE IN TEN (90%) RESIDENTS BELIEVE TEENS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO POSTPONE SEX, WHILE ALSO BEING TAUGHT ABOUT THINGS LIKE BIRTH CONTROL AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES. FEWER THAN ONE IN TEN (7%) FEEL SEXUALITY EDUCATION SHOULD FOCUS SOLELY ON ABSTINENCE.** Strong support for teaching about a broad range of sexual topics exists across all groups - African-Americans (91%), whites (90%), and Hispanics (88%) all support this approach. Likewise, teens (89%) and adults (91%) both prefer teaching about pregnancy and disease prevention while also encouraging teens to postpone sex.



- **BY A TWO-TO-ONE MARGIN, RESIDENTS BELIEVE THAT IT IS BETTER TO ENCOURAGE TEENS TO PUT OFF SEX UNTIL THEY ARE OLDER AND MORE MATURE (66%), RATHER THAN TELLING THEM SPECIFICALLY TO WAIT FOR MARRIAGE (29%).** Teens and parents in the focus groups also felt that expecting teens to postpone sex until marriage is simply unrealistic. Moreover, focus group results suggest some teens do not expect to ever get married because they see so few marriages around them. Interestingly, though the majority (56%) of girls 11 to 14 favor the argument about waiting until they are older, four in ten (42%) favor the marriage message, more than any other group.

4. School involvement

Residents agree schools play a vital role in teen pregnancy prevention through sexuality education.

- **AS TABLE 2 ILLUSTRATES, DC RESIDENTS FEEL THAT BEYOND PARENTS AND TEENS THEMSELVES, SCHOOLS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN PREGNANCY PREVENTION.** Focus group respondents also said that schools play a vital role in educating pre-teens and teens about sexual issues.

TABLE 2

How important is it that this group be more involved in preventing teen pregnancy in DC?

	% Saying Very Important
Parents	91
Teens themselves	82
Schools	78
Radio personalities on stations popular with teens	66
Local religious leaders	64
Professional male athletes	62
Professional female athletes	62
Political Leaders	55

- **SCHOOLS ARE AN ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT RESOURCE FOR TEENS AND PRE-TEENS WHOSE PARENTS DON'T TALK TO THEM ON THESE ISSUES.** Most parents in the focus groups who admit they are uncomfortable or unwilling to talk to their children about these sexual issues say they still want their children to have access to information about pregnancy and disease prevention. Thus, they support broad-based sexuality education in the schools and, more broadly, the development of knowledgeable, reliable, non-parent resources.

5. Media involvement

The media, because of its substantial influence on the attitudes and behavior of teens, is perceived to be an important partner.

- **NINE IN TEN (89%) DC RESIDENTS SUPPORT USING TV, RADIO AND OTHER MEDIA TO ENCOURAGE TEENS TO MAKE HEALTHY, RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS ABOUT SEX, INCLUDING THREE QUARTERS (76%) WHO STRONGLY SUPPORT SUCH EFFORTS.** As Table 2 (see page 11) illustrates, DC residents also see a role for professional athletes, both male (62%) and female (62%), radio personalities on the stations that teens listen to (66%) and local religious leaders (64%).
- **ADULTS AND TEENS WOULD LIKE THE MEDIA USED AS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE.** Perhaps because they understand the power of the media, adults and teens would like it used more as a positive influence in teen pregnancy prevention. The media rarely shows people waiting to have sex and practicing safer sex.

There is widespread awareness that teens who are sexually active do not use birth control consistently. Views about the reasons vary widely. Survey responses reveal major differences between boys' and girls' motivations around sexuality, birth control and pregnancy.

- **MANY TEENS IN DC ARE SEXUALLY ACTIVE.** Four in ten (41%) of the 11 to 18 year olds surveyed say they have had sex, including a third (32%) who say they have done so in the last year. As Table 3 shows, older teens are more likely to say they are sexually active than younger ones, boys more likely than girls.

I'm 14, so I figure I pretty much know everything about sex.
—Boy

TABLE 3

**Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
Have you had intercourse in the last 12 months?**

	Ever	Past 12 Months
Girls	32	27
11-14	17	12
15-18	49	44
Boys	49	37
11-14	34	21
15-18	66	55

- In the focus groups, teens explained that some teen girls are sexually involved with men much older than themselves; a few teen boys also say they have sex with older women. Focus group respondents also explained that some teens engage in casual sexual encounters.
- **ADULTS, TEEN BOYS AND TEEN GIRLS AGREE ON WHY GIRLS HAVE SEX. THE MAJORITY (76%) AGREES PRESSURE FROM BOYS IS A MAJOR REASON.** Girls 11-18 are even more likely than their male counterparts to feel this is a major reason (see Table 4). Teens are more likely than adults to say love is a factor. Two-thirds of boys, and almost as many girls, believe girls have sex because it is fun and feels good.

- Focus group results suggest that teen girls, and even teen boys, use sex as a way to get attention, feel loved and boost their self-esteem. They also have sex in an effort to feel older and more mature.

TABLE 4

Is this a major reason girls have sex?

	Girls 11-18	Boys 11-18	Adults
[Teen girls] think that they love some guy, and that guy is using them for sex.			
—Boy, Age 15-18			
The boy they are with is pressuring them	82	71	76
They are in love	59	63	47
Sex is fun and feels good	58	67	55
They are drunk or on drugs at the time	54	53	50
They don't want to be teased for being a virgin	51	48	46
They want to have a baby	34	37	35

- A third of residents say teen girls have sex because they want to have a baby. African-Americans (42%) are more likely to see this as a major reason than Hispanics (27%) or whites (24%). One teen girl in a focus group explained why some teen girls want to become mothers: “Sometimes the reason [teen girls decide to have babies] is because they never had attention in their life before and they want attention by having a baby. That’s how they think they’re going to get love.”
- **AS TABLE 5 ILLUSTRATES, SURVEY RESPONDENTS FEEL THAT BOYS HAVE SOME OF THE SAME REASONS AS GIRLS FOR HAVING SEX, AND SOME DIFFERENT ONES TOO. THE MOST OFTEN CITED IS THAT SEX IS FUN AND FEELS GOOD - 72% SAY THIS IS A MAJOR REASON TEEN BOYS HAVE SEX.** Peer pressure appears to be a bigger factor for boys than girls. Teens are more likely than adults to say drugs or alcohol can play a major role and to say that love is often a factor (35% vs. 24%).

TABLE 5

Is this a major reason boys have sex?

	Girls 11-18	Boys 11-18	Adults
Sex is fun and feels good	74	76	72
They don't want to be teased for being a virgin	71	66	58
They are drunk or on drugs at the time	56	56	46
The girl they are with is pressuring them	36	35	33
They are in love	34	38	24
They want to have a baby	18	18	14

If there's a guy and a girl in a room and they don't do anything, the boy feels like he's going to get made fun of or something . . .

—Boy, Age 11-14

- **AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN UNDERSTANDING WHY TEENS HAVE SEX IS THAT TEENS AND PRE-TEENS IN DC - LIKE TEENS EVERYWHERE - LIVE IN A SEXUALLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERE.** In the focus groups, teens say that even young children are bombarded with sexual messages not only in the media, but also at home, in their neighborhoods and in their schools.
- **EVERYONE SEEMS TO AGREE WHY SOME TEENS DO USE CONTRACEPTION CONSISTENTLY.** A large majority (87%) believes that a major reason some teens always use protection is the fear of getting AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Likewise, majorities view not being ready to have babies (89%), concern about what family and friends would think if they got pregnant or got someone pregnant (80%) and not wanting to drop out of school (74%) as major reasons.
- **ADULTS AND ADOLESCENTS BELIEVE MOST TEENS DO NOT USE BIRTH CONTROL CONSISTENTLY.** Overall, only fifteen percent say they think all (3%), or even most (12%), teens use birth control. Teens are more optimistic than adults about their peers' use of contraception, but still only three in ten teens and pre-teens (30%) believe all or most sexually active teens use some form of birth control.
- **THESE SURVEY FINDINGS CONFIRM THAT TEENS ARE NOT CONSISTENTLY PROTECTING THEMSELVES.** While six in ten (62%) of the sexually active teens surveyed insist that they use birth control all the time, the rest (38%) admit that they use it less often. Over one in ten (13%) say they never use it.

- **THERE IS SOME CONSENSUS ABOUT WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM USING CONDOMS (SEE TABLE 6). THREE QUARTERS OF RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT A MAJOR REASON BOYS DO NOT ALWAYS USE CONDOMS IS THAT SEX DOES NOT FEEL AS GOOD WITH CONDOMS.** Two-thirds of girls and almost as many adults and boys believe that teen boys do not really care if they get someone pregnant. Four in ten say boys are embarrassed to buy condoms.

TABLE 6

Is this a major reason boys might not use condoms?

	Girls 11-18	Boys 11-18	Adults
Sex does not feel as good when you use a condom	76	68	78
They don't really care if they get someone pregnant	64	57	60
Buying condoms is embarrassing	44	40	37
They don't want to look like they are planning to have sex by carrying condoms with them	39	43	27
They want to make sure they can get someone pregnant	30	28	19
They want a baby	22	25	15

- **THERE IS LESS AGREEMENT AS TO WHY GIRLS DO NOT USE BIRTH CONTROL.** As Table 7 shows, just over half of girls 11-18 surveyed say not wanting to look like they are “planning” for sex is a major reason teen girls do not use birth control. More than half of all teens say concerns about side-effects are a major reason.

Fewer than half of the teen girls surveyed believe that a major reason girls do not use birth control is that they really do not care if they get pregnant. A similar percent believe that some girls in fact want to get pregnant and have a baby.

TABLE 7

Is this a major reason girls might not use birth control?

	Girls 11-18	Boys 11-18	Adults
They don't want to look like they are planning to have sex by carrying condoms or telling guys they are on the pill	57	53	50
They think certain types have bad side-effects	58	54	45
They don't really care if they get pregnant or not	46	41	38
They want a baby	45	44	42
They want to make sure they can get pregnant	42	36	25
Birth control is too hard to get	30	39	30

- In addition to reasons listed above, teens in the focus groups also shared other reasons why they, and their peers, do not always use birth control. Many teens - both boys and girls - say that they don't always plan ahead when they are going to have sex. Some teens say stopping to put on a condom "ruins the moment." Many teens feel that their peers are willing to take the occasional risk. Teens also say that couples who are in long term-relationships often stop using protection because they feel they know and trust their sexual partner.

District residents share the same views on many pregnancy prevention issues, but they have different responses when asked what should happen if pregnancy occurs.

- Washingtonians are conflicted about what should happen if a teen gets pregnant. A quarter (24%) feel a pregnant teen should have an abortion. A quarter (23%) feel that the family should raise the baby, with or without help from the teen mother, and two in ten (18%) feel the teen mother should raise the baby herself. One in ten (13%) favor adoption. As Table 8 shows, there are diverse feelings across racial lines about the best course of action for a pregnant teen.

If you are in a relationship and you have experienced protected sex and been together for a while, then you probably want to experience it differently. In that case, I would say, [protection] is not necessary.
—*Teen Mom*

TABLE 8
If a teenage girl in DC gets pregnant what should she do?

	Total	African Americans	Whites	Hispanics
Have an abortion	24	20	33	21
Give the baby up for adoption	13	10	20	14
Raise the baby herself	18	28	4	13
Have her family raise the baby	18	22	10	20
Raise baby with help from family (vol.)	5	6	1	7
Marry father and raise baby together (vol.)	2	2	1	8
Don't know	20	12	31	17

- District residents are also divided about what decision most pregnant teens end up making. Four in ten (42%) feel most pregnant teens have the baby and their family ends up raising the child and two in ten feel most teens raise the child on their own (22%). Nearly a quarter (24%) thinks most teens terminate their pregnancies. Teens are almost twice as likely as adults to say that most pregnant teens get abortions (39% vs. 22%), suggesting many adults, including parents of teenagers (24%), are unaware of teens' abortions.
- **THE LACK OF AGREEMENT ON WHAT TO DO WHEN A TEEN BECOMES PREGNANT PRESENTS A MARKED CONTRAST TO THE BROAD CONSENSUS AMONG RESIDENTS ABOUT THE NEED TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY, AND THE MEANS TO DO SO.**

ABOUT DC CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is the result of a collaboration among a large group of community-based programs and people in this city who believes that the alarmingly high rate of teenage pregnancy is the heart of our most pressing urban problems. Preventing teen pregnancy is a high leverage intervention that is far more effective - and cost effective - than later efforts to cope with developmental disabilities, child abuse, school failure and poverty, that often affect families begun by teens.

In the course of two years of working in a thoughtful and inclusive coalition brought together by the Mayor's Committee to Reduce Teen Pregnancy, scores of local grass roots community programs — along with teenagers themselves and representatives of government and private foundations — came to the conclusion that the District of Columbia needed a coordinated and highly visible mechanism to attract a more powerful stream of resources and attention to this issue.

Pregnancy prevention efforts must take a dynamic new approach to become less fragmented, more effective, more deeply rooted in neighborhoods, and more widely recognized.

DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a response to that challenge. It is a private, non-profit organization formally launched in February, 2000. It is governed by a Board of Directors with longstanding leadership and commitment to youth and the well being of the city. Initial funding for DC Campaign comes from the Summit Fund of Washington with additional support from the Philip L. Graham Fund and the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz, Alexander and Margaret Stewart, Naomi and Nehemiah Cohen, and Consumer Health Foundations.

Mission

**TO REDUCE THE TEENAGE PREGNANCY RATE
IN WASHINGTON, DC BY 50% BY THE YEAR 2005.**

Strategy

Experience tells us that young people will make healthy and responsible choices about delaying pregnancy until they are adults if they have reason to believe that postponing it will have some benefit for them - in the immediate as well as the more distant future - as well as the skills to implement that decision.

Research tells us that teen pregnancy is less likely when boys and girls, regardless of income or race, feel strongly connected with their parents and other caring adults, experience success in school from an early age, have a sense of belonging, are confident that they have safe places to learn and play and interact with their peers, have easy access to teen-friendly family planning information and services, and believe that they can reach economic security if they work for it.

Beyond that, however, all adults must recognize that they have a critical stake and role in making sure our teenagers are protected as they grow into healthy and productive adults. The high rate of adolescent pregnancy in Washington, DC limits our future workforce and the social and economic health of the city.

Messages and teaching about sex, love, relationships and pregnancy prevention must be embedded in a comprehensive, neighborhood-based youth development strategy that surrounds young people with protection, support and opportunity for growth.

Going beyond the obvious remedies - abstinence or contraceptives - DC Campaign will foster a multitude of positive connections between adults and children in this community so that every young person has the necessary support to finish high school and become self-sufficient before starting a family.

Fields of Action

DC Campaign will not run clinics or programs, but will function as a catalyst for improved services across the spectrum of teen pregnancy prevention initiatives. DC Campaign will act as a transfer agent for skills, a lever to increase financial support for effective programs, a convener of experts and networks, a promoter of best practices, a training resource, and a purveyor of powerful messages about teen pregnancy prevention that will shine a high voltage spotlight on the issue. DC Campaign will:

- Work with the natural institutions - family, church, schools and neighborhoods - on which young people rely
- Attract the attention of every segment of the community to the importance of preventing teen pregnancy and encouraging each to play a role in the work
- Mobilize District teenagers to guide and lead the work
- Build on the many good programs that already exist
- Create a resource and clearinghouse for citizens, teenagers, colleagues and the media.

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**It's time
to change the
conversation.**

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to Prevent
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