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Adult Sexual Behavior in 1989:
Number of Partners, Frequency, and Risk

Tom W. Smith

NORC
University of Chicago

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Sexual behavior may be the most important of all human activities. It is the process by which the species is reproduced,

is the central behavior around which families are formed, and is a key component in the emotional lives of individuals. It is also central to a number of social and medical problems: marital difficulties and divorce; the crimes of rape, incest, and child molestation; the reproductive issues of infertility, sterility, contraception, unwanted pregnancies, and abortion; and sexual transmitted diseases (STDs).

Yet probably less systematic, scientific research has been carried out on the sexual behavior of Americans than any other topic of importance. Only one national sample has focused on sexual behavior (Klassen, Williams, and Levitt, 1989) and only about a dozen national surveys have collected any notable information on sexual behavior.

Even with AIDS currently making accurate information on sexual behavior of immediate, life-and-death concern, the collection of scientific information on sexual matters is being thwarted by political opposition (Chicago Tribune, 3/30/1989; 8/3/1989). Because of the dearth of scientific data and the importance of the topic, information on sexual behavior is a precious commodity.

Data

This paper reports on one small, but notable, light in the darkness that surrounds contemporary sexual behavior. In 1988 and 1989 NORC at the University of Chicago sponsored the addition of a small number of questions on sexual behavior on the General Social Surveys (GSS). The GSS are national, full-probability samples of the adult, household population of the United States (Davis and Smith, 1989). At the end of the in-person interview respondents were asked to complete and return in a sealed envelope a short self-administered questionnaire on sexual behaviors. In 1988 the questions asked about the number of sex partners during the last year, their relationship to the respondent, and their gender. In 1989 questions on frequency of sexual intercourse and the number and gender of sex partners since age 18 were added (for exact wordings see Appendix 1: Question Wordings).

Outline

While not going into great depth, the GSS questions allow a preliminary accounting of some of the basic parameters of current (during the last 12 months) and past (since age 18) sexual behaviors. We will examine the basic demography of sexual behavior including the number of sex partners, sexual abstinence, infidelity among married couples, gender preference in sex partners, and frequency of sexual intercourse. We will consider how each of these

behaviors differs across sub-groups in the population. We will then use the information on sexual behaviors to characterize people as engaging in relatively safe or relatively risky actions regarding STDs in general and AIDS in particular

Number of Sex Partners

On average adult Americans have 1.16 sex partners during a year (Table 1). Men report considerably more sex partners than women, but an analysis of these reports suggests that most of the sex difference is probably due to a combination of male overreporting and female underreporting. The male/female differences occur entirely among those not currently married (Smith, 1990a; 1991). The number of sex partners also varies considerably by marital status. The widowed with a mean of 0.21 have the fewest partners, followed by the currently married (0.96), the divorced (1.31), the never married (1.84), and the separated (2.41). In terms of age there is a fairly regular decline from 1.76 partners for those under 30 to 0.35 partners for those over 70. The number of sex partners does not vary significantly by race, education, or region of residence. Somewhat more partners are found for people living in metropolitan areas, but the relationship is not very strong. A multivariate regression analysis indicates that gender, age, marital status, and community type are all independent predictors of number of sexual partners.

Sexual Abstinence

About 22% of adult Americans had no sex partners during the last year (Table 1). This number has struck some as unexpectedly high, but two surveys and two different ways of measuring sexual abstinence have produced the same estimate (Smith, 1991). Abstinence is greater among women than men. It is lowest among the currently married (9.2%), intermediate among the never married, separated, and divorced (20.0-25.9%), and highest among the widowed (85.9%). There is a curvilinear relationship between age and abstinence, starting at 12.9% among those under 30, falling to 7.3% among those 30-39, and then rising steadily to 68.1% for those 70 and over. Abstinence is higher among the less educated. It is not related to race or region and has only a weak association with community type. A multivariate regression analysis indicates that gender, age, marital status, and education are independent predictors of sexual abstinence, but that community type does not make a statistically significant independent contribution.

Number of Sex Partners Since Age 18

Since age 18 adults report an average of 7.15 sex partners. Again men report considerably more partners than women and again most of this difference appears to result from differential misreporting. The fewest adult lifetime partners are reported by the widowed (3.01), followed by the currently married (5.72), the never married (8.67), the separated (11.75), and the divorced (13.30). Number of lifetime sex partners has a weak and complex association with age. It increases from 6.08 among those under 30 to 9.71 for those 40-49 and then falls to 3.51 among those over 70. Since this is a cumulative measure, one would normally expect an increase across ages as the years of opportunity lengthened or perhaps a rise followed by a levelling-off at an age during which few additional partners are accumulated. We suspect that the increase through age 49 reflects this process. After that age we suspect that a cohort effect off-sets age-accumulation. We believe that members of cohorts representing people over 50 have actually had fewer sex partners than younger cohorts. With the number of partners increasing across cohorts (i.e. from older to younger) and across years lived since turning 18 (i.e. from younger to older), the net result is the curvilinear relationship observed in Table 2. This curvilinear pattern is more pronounced among those not currently married and among men. Among currently married women, adult lifetime partners does not differ across age groups.

More sex partners are reported by people living in central cities than in rural areas, although the highest number is not associated with the largest cities. Number of adult sex partners is unrelated to race, education, and region.

Marital Fidelity

Faithfulness within marriage is a widely shared norm (Niemi, Mueller, and Smith, 1989; Greeley, Michael, and Smith, 1990; Smith, 1990b). About three-fourths of Americans consider sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse always wrong. Despite much chatter about open marriages and "swinging" and the contention by pop and pseudo-scientific studies about the normalcy of infidelity (Smith, 1988; Smith, 1989a), Americans actually seem to live up to the norm of fidelity fairly well (Greeley, Michael, and Smith, 1990). Over a given year 1.5% of married people have a sex partners other than their spouse (Table 3). Men and women do not significantly differ in their infidelity levels. Infidelity does seem to increase with age (and presumably with the age of the marriage). Infidelity is higher among blacks than among whites and other races. Infidelity also tends to be higher among the less educated and in some suburbs, but these relationships are weak. Infidelity does not significantly vary by region.

"Chasteness"

While we do not have any precise information on how many people are faithful across the life of their marriage, we can use the information on number of partners since age 18 to calculate what % have been "chaste." "Chaste" refers to those reporting no more sex partners since age 18 than marriage partners. Chaste respondents may or may not have had sexual intercourse with future marriage partners before or between marriage(s). Those respondents who are not "chaste" may have always been faithful within marriage, since their "extra" partners may have been before and/or between marriage. "Chasteness" serves as a minimum estimate of the % that have been faithful throughout their married life.

Over all 48% of married adults can be considered chaste. More women than men are chaste, with 65% reporting no extra partners compared to 30% for men. Misreporting probably exaggerates the gender difference however. Except for a slight drop between those under 30 and those in their 30s, chasteness rises with age. As the discussion about sex partners since 18 above indicated, the rise in chasteness with age is most probably a cohort effect. There is little or no association between chasteness and race, education, region, or community type.

Current Sexual Orientation

Given the current concentration of AIDS among male homosexuals, information on the sexual orientation of Americans is especially important. We find 98.5% of sexually active adults have been exclusively heterosexual during the last year. This number is substantially above the 90% figure often bandied about, but is in line with the best available estimates (Fay, et al., 1989).

In 1989 there were no gender differences in sexual orientation, but comparable figures in 1988 had shown more male than female homosexuals. Given the small number of homosexuals and bisexuals identified in the sample, these and other estimates are subject to considerable sampling error. Marital status is the only background variable related to sexual orientation (Table 4). Heterosexuals are concentrated in the ever married categories and bisexuals and homosexuals among the never married.

Sexual Orientation During Adulthood

Almost all of the adult population has been sexually active since age 18 (Table 5). Only 2.9% report no partners since age 18 and a number of these are people in their late teens who were sexually involved in the last year, but not since turning 18. For 11.9% there is missing information on number of sex partners, so we

can not be certain of their sexual orientation. One group (6.7%) mentioned partners of the opposite sex, but did not give an answer about the number of same sex partners. A second group (5.1%) report being married and/or having had a child, but incomplete or contradictory information on sex partners since age 18. If these uncertain groups are distributed according to the ratios of heterosexuals to bisexuals and homosexuals in the raw data, then 90.9% of adults are estimated to have been exclusively heterosexual since age 18 and 6.3% as homosexual or bisexual. However, an examination of the demographic and attitudinal profile of these groups showed them to resemble heterosexuals much more than homosexuals and bisexuals. In addition, a close inspection of the instruments of those who answered the opposite, but not the same, sex question indicated that many of those may have considered this question as not applicable. If we classify them all as heterosexuals, we estimate 92.6% of adults have been exclusively heterosexual and 5.5% have been homosexual or bisexual. Overall it appears that 3% have not been sexually active as adults, 91-93% have been exclusively heterosexual, 5-6% bisexual, and less than 1% exclusively homosexual. Of those reporting same gender partners since age 18 (n=76), 16% are not currently sexually active, 22% are currently engaged in homosexual relations, 59% are now in heterosexual relations, and 3% are missing information.

Frequency of Sexual Intercourse During Last Year

On average adults report engaging in sexual intercourse 57 times per annum (Table 6). More sexual activity is reported by men (66 times) than women (51 times). There are no significant difference in the frequency reported by married men and women however. The gender difference occurs entirely among the unmarried (Smith, 1991). As before, we suspect that this difference is due in part to reporting error. Activity is greatest among the currently married and separated (many of whom were probably living with their spouse for much of the last year). It is somewhat lower among the never married and divorced and much lower among the widowed (remember that 86% had no partners during the last year). Sexual frequency also declines with age from about 78 times per annum for those under 40 to 8 times per annum for those over 70. This decline is partly due to the declining proportion married with age, but it also shows up among the currently married. Frequency also shows a weak curvilinear association with education. The lower frequency among the less educated is a function of their higher average age, but the cause of the apparent decline among those with post college education is uncertain. Race, region, and community type have little association with frequency of sexual intercourse. A multivariate regression analysis indicates that age, marital

status, education, and gender all independently affect sexual frequency.

Current Sexual Behavior Related to AIDS

Three of the sexual behaviors we measure are related to one's likelihood of contracting AIDS (and most other STDs). People with multiple sex partners, less familiar sex partners, and male homosexual partners are at greater risk than those with none or few sex partners, close sex partners, and sex partners other than male homosexuals. Table 7 shows the distribution of these three types of relatively high risk behaviors. We have classified those with five or more partners, those with partners who are paid for sex or pay for sex, casual dates, or pick-ups, and male homosexuals and bisexuals as in high risk groups. By these definitions 2.4% are at high risk due to multiple partners, 3.2% due to unfamiliar partners, and 0.7% due to their sexual orientation.

When we combine these factors together, we classify 6.8% at relatively high risk (one or more high risk behaviors). Groups at relatively high risk include males, the never married, the young, non-whites, and perhaps people from larger metropolitan areas (Table 8). Showing the least high risk behavior are women, the widowed, the elderly, whites, and people from rural areas. Region is not related to risk and less education is related to no and low risk, but educational groups do not vary in the proportion engaging in high risk behavior. Risk is thus relatively greatest among the young and unattached and among minorities living in large metropolitan areas.

Past Sexual Behavior Related to AIDS

In analyzing past sexual behavior, the available information is quite limited. We can identify people with many vs. few partners and those involved in male homosexual and bisexual vs. heterosexual relationships. However, since we know only that one engaged in these sexual activities since turning 18, we can not tell if the risky behaviors were engaged in since AIDS became a threat (i.e. since the late 1970s). We find that 31.2% have had five or more partners since turning 18 and that 5.1% have been male homosexuals or bisexuals. Combining together these two risk related sexual behaviors indicates that the following distribution of relative risk: 2.9% high risk on both behaviors, 30.5% high risk on one, 23.7% moderate risk, 40.0% low risk, and 2.9% no risk.

Overall 33.4% have engaged in relatively risky behavior although only 2.9% have been risky on both number of partners and sexual orientation. Table 9 indicates that since age 18 risk has been greater among men, the never married, the young and middle

aged, and people in metropolitan areas. Risk is lowest among women, the widowed, the elderly, and people in rural areas. There is little association between risk and race, education, or region.

Predictors of Sexual Behavior

The various sexual behaviors that we have examined (number of current and past sexual partners, sexual abstinence, current and past sexual orientation, and frequency of sexual intercourse) and the related exposure to risk do not appear to be strongly influenced by either class or sub-cultures. Variations across educational levels are small and regional, community, and racial difference are sporadic and usually modest.

However, culture plays an important role in shaping sexual behavior in two other ways. First, marriage remains a central institution for the regulation of sexual behavior. Monogamy is both widely endorsed as a moral ideal and followed (at least on a year-to-year basis) by the vast majority of spouses. Marital status also affects numbers of sexual partners and sexual frequency. In addition, active homosexuals and bisexuals tend to have never been married.

Second, social conventions and accepted practices have changed across recent generations. The reports on number of partners over one's adult lifetime indicate that members of earlier cohorts have had significantly fewer partners than members of more recent cohorts. This change in behavior was accompanied by increased social acceptance of premarital sex (Smith, 1990).

Finally, frequency of sexual intercourse and number of partners decline with age even controlling for marital status and gender. While it is impossible to definitively separate out aging and cohort effects, we believe that the decline in sexual frequency is largely a biological effect (James, 1983; Jasso, 1985; Kahn and Udry, 1986; Udry, Deven, and Coleman, 1982). Number of partners is probably a function of both cohort and aging effects. The same biological factors that reduce frequency probably tend to reduce number of partners. In addition, having been raised in a less permissive sexual climate, members of earlier cohorts may restrict their number of partners in accordance with their socialization.

Conclusion

While much more detailed sexual information and larger samples are needed to fully assess the general public's exposure to AIDS and other STDs and their probable spread, information from the 1989 GSS provides some rough, preliminary estimates. On the positive side the relatively low recorded incidence of male homosexuals indicates the population most exposed to AIDS is smaller than often

assumed. Similarly the high annual fidelity rates indicate that most married couples are not opening themselves to exposure by their own sexual behavior or that of their spouse. Likewise, the 22% sexually inactive are immune to receiving (or spreading) AIDS through their sexual behavior.

On the negative side there is still an appreciable share of the population (6.8%) involved in relatively risky sexual behavior such as having multiple and/or unfamiliar partners. Of course this group may be taking other precautions (e.g. avoiding riskier forms of sexual intercourse and using condoms). Among the groups most exposed to risk are young, unmarried males and perhaps minority cultures in our larger cities.

Whether risks have changed in recent years is hard to tell. Some people (11-12%) report having changed their sexual behavior because of AIDS (Greeley, Michael, and Smith, 1990), but time series data are lacking to confirm switches to less risky behavior. At one extreme both our discussion of cohort effects above and the general literature on the "sexual revolution" (Cannon and Long, 1971; Chilman, 1978; Clayton and Bokemeier, 1980; DeLamater and MacCorquodale, 1979; Hofferth, Kahn, and Baldwin, 1987; Hunt, 1974; Klassen, Williams, Levitt, Rudkin-Miniot, Gunjal, 1989; Smith, 1985; Turner, Miller, and Moses, 1989; and Smith, 1990) suggest more permissive (and thus riskier) sexual behavior over time. Comparisons of the 1988 and 1989 GSS however indicate no significant change in number of partners or marital fidelity over that recent span. Whether sexual behaviors changed from the late 1970s and early 1980s (prior to the recognition of the AIDS danger) to the mid-to-later 1980s (after that recognition) is not presently possible to determine.

Table 1

Number of Sex Partners During Last Year

(1989)

	Mean	% Abstinent
All	1.16	22.1%
Gender		
Men	1.49***	14.1***
Women	0.91	28.0

Marital Status

Married	0.96***	9.2***
Widowed	0.21	85.9
Divorced	1.31	25.9
Separated	2.41	20.0
Never Married	1.84	24.6

Age

18-29	1.76***	12.9***
30-39	1.25	7.3
40-49	1.27	10.3
50-59	0.97	21.4
60-69	0.68	40.4
70+	0.35	68.1

Race

White	1.11	22.3
Black	1.64	21.6
Other	1.08	18.2

Education

Not High School	1.07	37.5***
High School	1.20	20.3
Jr. College	1.13	11.4
College	1.19	14.2
Post College	1.02	13.3

Region

New England	1.07	27.6
Mid-Atlantic	1.12	22.8
E. No. Central	1.26	18.3
W. No. Central	1.04	24.8
South Atlantic	1.15	22.5
E. So. Central	1.23	21.2
W. So. Central	1.12	20.4
Mountain	0.76	29.8
Pacific	1.36	19.4

Mean

Abstinent

Community Type

Lrg. Cent. Cities	1.37*	25.3%*
Oth. Cent. Cities	1.70	25.9
Sub. Lrg. Cities	0.98	17.6
Sub. Oth. Cities	1.15	17.6
Other Urban	1.06	22.7
Other Rural	0.95	23.4

(n=1401)

*=statistically significant at .05 level

**=statistically significant at .001 level

***=statistically significant at .0001 level

Note: For these and other bivariate comparisons in subsequent tables the tests of statistical significance for means (e.g. mean number of partners) employed one-way analysis of variance, while for categories (e.g. % abstinent) chi square tests were utilized.

Table 2

Number of Sex Partners Since Age 18

	Mean
All	7.15
Gender	
Men	12.26***
Women	3.32
Marital Status	
Married	5.72***
Widowed	3.01
Divorced	13.30
Separated	11.75
Never Married	8.67
Age	
18-29	6.08*
30-39	8.38
40-49	9.71
50-59	9.28
60-69	4.65
70+	3.51
Race	
White	7.30
Black	5.84
Other	7.18

Education

Not High School	4.59
High School	7.50
Jr. College	6.84
College	8.40
Post College	10.54

Region

New England	7.48
Mid-Atlantic	5.48
E. No. Central	6.47
W. No. Central	5.88
South Atlantic	6.81
E. So. Central	5.25
W. So. Central	10.97
Mountain	6.07
Pacific	10.01

Means

Community Type

Lrg. Central Cities	7.98**
Oth. Central Cities	11.37
Sub. Lrg. Cities	5.94
Sub. Oth. Cities	9.72
Other Urban	5.96
Other Rural	3.84

(n=1398)

*=statistically significant at the .05 level

**=statistically significant at the .001 level

***=statistically significant at the .0001 level

Table 3

% of Currently Married Having Sex Partners Other Than Spouse

(1989)

All 1.5%

Gender

Men	2.1
Women	0.8

Age

18-29	1.0***
30-39	0.0
40-49	1.2
50-59	1.8
60-69	4.5
70+	1.4

Race

White	1.3**
Black	5.3
Other	0.0

Education

Not High School	4.0*
High School	0.9
Jr. College	0.0
College	1.0
Post College	1.8

Region

New England	0.0
Mid-Atlantic	2.0
E. No. Central	3.2
W. No. Central	1.2
South Atlantic	0.8
E. So. Central	0.0
W. So. Central	3.0
Mountain	0.0
Pacific	1.0

Community Type

Lrg. Central Cities	0.0*
Oth. Central Cities	0.0
Sub. Lrg. Cities	5.6
Sub. Oth. Cities	1.7
Other Urban	0.6
Other Rural	2.3

(n=761)

*=statistically significant at the .05 level
 **=statistically significant at the .001 level
 ***=statistically significant at the .0001 level

Table 4

Sexual Partners During Last Year

(1989)

% Exclusively Heterosexual

All	98.4%
Gender	
Men	98.4
Women	98.4
Marital Status	
Married	99.7***
Widowed	100.0
Divorced	98.3
Separated	100.0
Never Married	93.6
Age	
18-29	97.4
30-39	98.3
40-49	99.5
50-59	97.7
60-69	99.0
70+	100.0
Race	
White	98.4
Black	99.1
Other	97.5
Education	
Not High School	98.3
High School	98.6
Jr. College	98.7
College	98.0
Post College	97.4
Region	
New England	98.2
Mid-Atlantic	99.3
E. No. Central	98.9

W. No. Central	98.9
South Atlantic	96.4
E. So. Central	97.5
W. So. Central	100.0
Mountain	100.0
Pacific	98.1

% Exclusively Heterosexual

Community Type

Lrg. Central Cities	98.5
Oth. Central Cities	97.1
Sub. Lrg. Cities	99.1
Sub. Oth. Cities	97.8
Other Urban	98.6
Other Rural	99.3

(n=1059)

*=statistically significant at the .05 level

**=statistically significant at the .001 level

***=statistically significant at the .0001 level

Note: Covers only the sexually active; those with one or more sex partners during the last year.

Table 5

Sexual Partners During Adulthood

	Raw Data	Estimates	
		Same Ratios(a)	Profile(b)
Heterosexual	79.8%	90.9%	92.6%
Bi/Homosexual	5.5	6.3	5.5
Bisexual	4.9	5.6	4.9
Homosexual	0.6	0.7	0.6
Virgins	2.9	2.9	2.9
Uncertain(c)	11.9	---	---
Straight/Bisexual	6.7	---	---
Not Virgins	5.1	---	---
Missing	0.1	---	---

(n=1401)

- a Same Ratio=assigns uncertain cases according to observed ratios in raw data.
- b Profile=assigns uncertain cases based to the profile or pattern of known and uncertain cases to other demographic and attitudinal items.
- c Straight/Bisexual=respondents reported opposite sex partner(s), but gave no answer to same sex question. Depending on missing data, would be either heterosexual or bisexual. Not Virgin=respondents who reported being married and/or having had children, but no did not give information on number of partners since age 18.

Table 6

Frequency of Sexual Intercourse During Last Year

(Estimated Number of Times Had Intercourse per Annum)

	Mean
All	57.4
Gender	
Men	66.4***
Women	50.6
Marital Status	
Married	67.3***
Widowed	5.7
Divorced	55.2
Separated	66.1
Never Married	54.9
Age	
18-29	77.8***
30-39	78.3
40-49	66.9
50-59	46.1
60-69	22.6
70+	8.2
Race	
White	66.0

Black	68.2
Other	63.1

Education

Not High School	45.6*
High School	60.6
Jr. College	66.8
College	64.2
Post College	50.5

Region

New England	60.2*
Mid Atlantic	57.0
E. No. Central	55.3
W. No. Central	55.1
South Atlantic	51.8
E. So. Central	51.6
W. So. Central	77.4
Mountain	43.5
Pacific	65.4

Mean

Community Type

Lrg. Central Cities	50.5
Oth. Central Cities	53.5
Sub. Lrg. Cities	67.1
Sub. Oth. Cities	62.2
Other Urban	56.8
Other Rural	53.5

(n=1361)

*=statistically significant at .05 level
 **=statistically significant at .001 level
 ***=statistically significant at .0001 level

Table 7

Current Sexual Behavior Related to AIDS

A. Number of Sex Partners

None 22.6%

1	64.9
2-4	10.7
5+	2.4
	(1396)

B. Relationship to Sex Partners+

No Partners	22.2%
Regular Partner	64.2
Close	8.4
Not Close	3.2
Not Reg. Part.	2.0
	(1386)

C. Sexual Preference

Heterosexual, Female Homosexual	
No Sex Partners	99.3
Male Homosexual, Bisexual	0.7
	(1367)

D. Overall Risk++

None	22.1%
Low	61.8
Low-Moderate	3.2
Moderate-High	6.1
High	5.5
Multiple High	1.3
	(1394)

+Regular Partner=spouse or "regular sexual partner"

Close="Close personal friend," "Neighbor, co-worker, or long-term acquaintance," or "Other"

Not Close="Casual date or pick-up" or "Person you paid or paid you for sex"

Not Reg. Part.=Not a Regular Partner, but relationship not specified ++None=no sex partners

Low=one sex partner, regular sex partner, heterosexual or female homosexual

Low-Moderate=one sex partner, close sex partner, heterosexual or female homosexual or two-four sex partners, regular sex partner, heterosexual or female homosexual

Moderate-High=two-four sex partners, close sex partner,
heterosexual or female homosexual
High=five+ sex partners or not close sex partner or
male homosexual, bisexual
Multiple High=two or more High behaviors

Table 8

% Engaged in Risky Current Sexual Behavior

(% High + Multiple High Risk)a

All	6.8%
Gender	
Men	11.8***
Women	3.1
Marital Status	
Married	1.6***
Widowed	2.9
Divorced	9.2
Separated	10.9
Never Married	21.0
Age	
18-29	14.4***
30-39	6.1
40-49	4.1
50-59	5.2
60-69	4.5
70+	1.3
Race	
White	6.3*
Black	10.1
Other	10.9
Education	
Not High School	6.8***
High School	6.8
Jr. College	5.6
College	8.0
Post College	6.7
Region	

New England	6.6
Mid Atlantic	5.7
E. No. Central	4.4
W. No. Central	6.1
South Atlantic	9.2
E. So. Central	7.7
W. So. Central	8.9
Mountain	3.6
Pacific	8.0

% High Risk

Community Type

Lrg. Central Cities	10.5*
Oth. Central Cities	9.5
Sub. Lrg. Cities	6.4
Sub. Oth. Cities	5.7
Other Urban	6.5
Other Rural	4.8

(n=1394)

*=statistically significant at .05 level
 **=statistically significant at .001 level
 ***=statistically significant at .0001 level

a See Table 9 for definition of High and Multiple High Risk

Table 9

% Engaged in Risky Past Sexual Behaviors(a)

	% One High	% Both High
All	30.5%	2.9%
Gender		
Men	48.0	2.8***
Women	17.3	3.0
Marital Status		
Married	28.1	0.8***
Widowed	11.9	0.7
Divorced	48.8	3.1

Separated	40.0	1.8
Never Married	33.3	10.1

Age

18-29	31.1	5.0***
30-39	38.4	4.3
40-49	40.9	1.2
50-59	27.2	1.2
60-69	21.3	2.2
70+	10.6	1.3

Race

White	31.0	2.8*
Black	27.2	4.3
Other	25.5	1.8

Education

Not High School	21.5	2.4
High School	32.3	2.4
Jr. College	30.3	3.4
College	34.7	4.5
Post College	35.6	5.6

Region

New England	28.0	2.7*
Mid Atlantic	26.8	2.6
E. No. Central	32.2	1.7
W. No. Central	23.9	1.5
South Atlantic	31.2	4.9
E. So. Central	22.9	2.9
W. So. Central	38.1	1.8
Mountain	26.2	1.2
Pacific	37.8	4.5

% One High % Both high

Community Type

Lrg. Central Cities	31.6%	6.3%*
Oth. Central Cities	34.4	2.1
Sub. Lrg. Cities	31.5	4.9
Sub. Oth. Cities	34.7	2.2
Other Urban	29.9	2.7
Other Rural	21.7	2.1

(n=1399)

*=statistically significant at .05 level
 **=statistically significant at .001 level
 ***=statistically significant at .0001 level

a Persons are deemed to have been engaged in high risk behavior if their had 5+ partners or were a male homosexual or male bisexual. Statistical significance refers to association between the demographics with all categories of the past risk variable (None, Low, Moderate, One High, and Both High), not just the two high risk categories presented above.

Appendix 1: Question Wordings

1989 GSS

Introduction: There is a great deal of concern today about the AIDS epidemic and how to deal with it. Because of the grave nature of this problem, we are going to ask you some personal questions and we need your frank and honest responses. Your answers are confidential and will be used only for statistical reports.

1. How many sex partners have you had in the last 12 months?
2. Was one of the partners your husband or wife or regular sexual partner?
3. If you had NO other partners besides your husband or wife or regular sexual partner, PLEASE GO TO Q.4.

If you had other partners, please indicate all categories that apply to them. CIRCLE ALL THE ANSWERS THAT APPLY.

- Close personal friend
- Neighbor, co-worker, or long-term acquaintance
- Casual date or pick-up
- Person you paid or paid you for sex
- Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)

4. Have your sex partners in the last 12 months been.....
 PLEASE CIRCLE ONE ANSWER.

Exclusively male

Both male and female
Exclusively female

5. About how often did you have sex during the past 12 months?

Not at all
Once or twice
About once a month
Two or three times a month
About once a week
Two or three times a week
Four or more times a week

6. Now thinking about the time since your 18th birthday,
(including the past 12 months) how many female partners
have you ever had sex with?

7. Now thinking about the time since your 18th birthday,
(including the part 12 months) how many male partners
have you ever had sex with?

8. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. PLEASE PLACE FORM IN ENVELOPE,
SEAL IT, AND GIVE TO THE INTERVIEWER.

NOTE: On another half sample question 1 (sexual frequency)
appeared between questions 5 and 6.

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