

# Secondary students' sexual health survey

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Sexually active Australian secondary students tend to engage in responsible sexual behaviour but there is still room to improve knowledge and education for this group, according to a nationwide survey conducted by La Trobe University.

The sixth National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health, conducted in 2018 and released today, found 47 per cent of Year 10-12 students taking the survey had engaged in sexual intercourse. Of sexually active respondents, 76 per cent had sex at home; 65 per cent with a boyfriend or girlfriend; 62 per cent often or always used a condom; and 86 per cent with somebody about the same age.

Lead researcher at La Trobe University's Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society Dr. Christopher Fisher said the survey asked 6,327 Year 10-12 students in Government, Catholic and Independent schools from each state and territory, about their sexual behaviour and knowledge of sexually transmitted infections.

"Overall, young Australians have good knowledge of [sexual health](#), are behaving responsibly and are actively seeking out trusted, reliable sources of information," Dr. Fisher said.

He said more work is needed to help improve this age group's level of knowledge of HPV (the human papillomavirus) and viral hepatitis; to decrease reports of unwanted [sexual behaviour](#); and to further increase rates of condom use.

"This survey has evolved over time and is a key tool to support and inform policies around sexual [health](#) education and disease prevention, but I hope our report helps bring awareness to the wider community as well," Dr. Fisher said.

The survey, which started in 1992 and occurs every five years, is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health. Dr. Fisher said Australia is one of the few countries conducting such a study, making it significant internationally

"There are many positive findings, including that those young people

who are not yet sexually active don't feel pressured to start having sex until they're ready. Also, [young people](#) turn to a wide variety of sources of information to educate themselves about sexual health in addition to getting sexual health information in the school system. GPs are the most trusted source of information by far followed by female friends and mothers," Dr. Fisher said.

The [survey](#)'s findings included:

## Knowledge and Education

- 80 per cent answered questions about HIV correctly indicating a generally high awareness, largely unchanged since 2013 but down from 92 per cent in 1992
- 93 per cent believed they were at low or no risk of HIV infection, slightly up from 2013 at 95 percent—87 per cent did not believe they were likely to get an STI, largely unchanged since 1992—79 per cent accessed information about sexual health online almost doubled from 2013 at 44 per cent—The most trusted source of sexual health [information](#) was GPs (89 per cent), followed by their mother (60 per cent)
- 71 per cent were confident talking about sexual health with female friends—84 per cent received Relationships and Sexual Education at school, similar to 2013

## Behaviours

- Overall, 47 per cent had had intercourse, including 34 per cent of Year 10s, 46 per cent of Year 11s and 56 per cent of Year 12s
- 76 per cent of sexually active students had sex at home or their partner's home
- 77 per cent discussed sexual health before having sex

- 62 per cent of sexually active students had only one partner in the past year
- 53 per cent had not yet had [sexual intercourse](#)—89 per cent of those not yet sexually active did not regret their decision not to have sex yet
- 35 per cent of students indicated attraction to same or multiple genders

**More information:** Read the full survey findings [here](#).

Provided by La Trobe University

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