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# **Teen Births Up, but We're Not Down: *Why Age Matters When it Comes to Teen Pregnancy Prevention***

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*In collaboration with*  
**The Philip R. Lee  
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Policy Studies**

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# Presenter Disclosures

Shelly Koenemann

The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose



# Session Objectives:

- Identify age as an important focal point
- Compare and contrast contraceptive attitudes and behaviors between younger and older youth
- Discuss how findings can provide context for age-appropriate prevention efforts



# Programs, Research on Early Sex

- Limited for younger youth
  - Adolescents under 15 account for small proportion of teen pregnancies
  - Conservative societal attitudes toward adolescent sexuality
  - Difficulty consenting, asking sensitive questions
- “14 & Younger: The Sexual Behavior of Young Adolescents” (National Campaign, 2003)
  - NLSY, 1997
  - Add Health, 1994-96
  - NSFG, 1995



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# Why Focus on Young Adolescents?

- Early sexual activity linked to greater # of partners, increased risk of teen pregnancy<sup>1</sup>
- Children of mothers under 15 are more likely to experience health problems such as low birth weight<sup>2</sup>
- Sex among young adolescents 10-14 less likely to be wanted<sup>3</sup>, legally consented<sup>4</sup>
- Timing is right for prevention - precede onset of pregnancy risk, long-term benefits to youth



# What We Know: Knowledge, Communication

- Knowledge - majority of youth report receiving sex education, but have low levels of knowledge about reproductive biology and contraception<sup>5</sup>
- Parent communication –
  - Parents report talking a moderate amount with their children age 12-14 about sex; children recall less communication than parents<sup>5</sup>
  - Many parents are unaware of child's sexual activity<sup>5</sup>



# What We Know: Sexual Activity

- Sexual experience – 1 in 5 adolescents has had sex before age 15<sup>5</sup>
- Oral sex, anal sex – Less is known about these activities in youth under age 15
- Frequency of sex – Younger youth are not having sex often or with many partners<sup>5</sup>



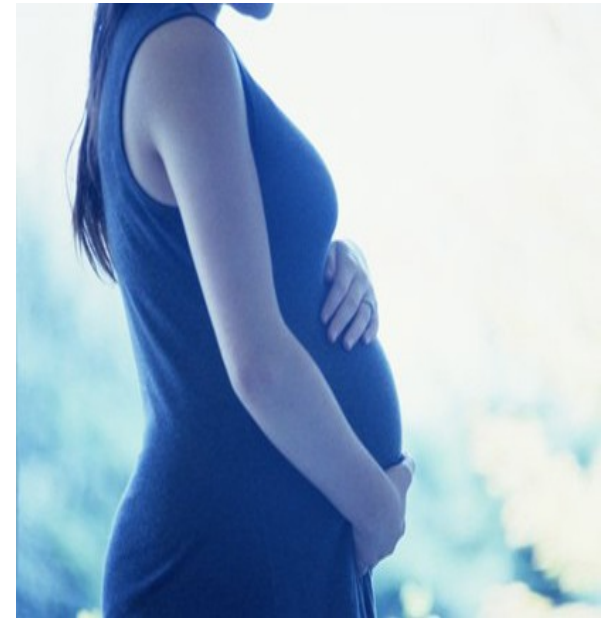
# What We Know: Contraception

- Contraceptive use –
  - One-half to three-quarters of youth under 15 report using contraception the first time they had sex<sup>5</sup>
  - 54% girls and 66% boys age 12-14 report using contraception the last time they had sex<sup>5</sup>
  - 12-15 yr olds had lowest reported contraceptive use in the past (46%), among pregnant females 12-19<sup>6</sup>



# What We Know: Pregnancy

- Pregnancy -
  - About 1 in 7 sexually experienced 14-yr old girls report having been pregnant<sup>5</sup>
  - In 2006, the youngest teens, ages 10-14 yrs, were the only age group under 20 yrs whose birth rate did not increase<sup>7</sup>



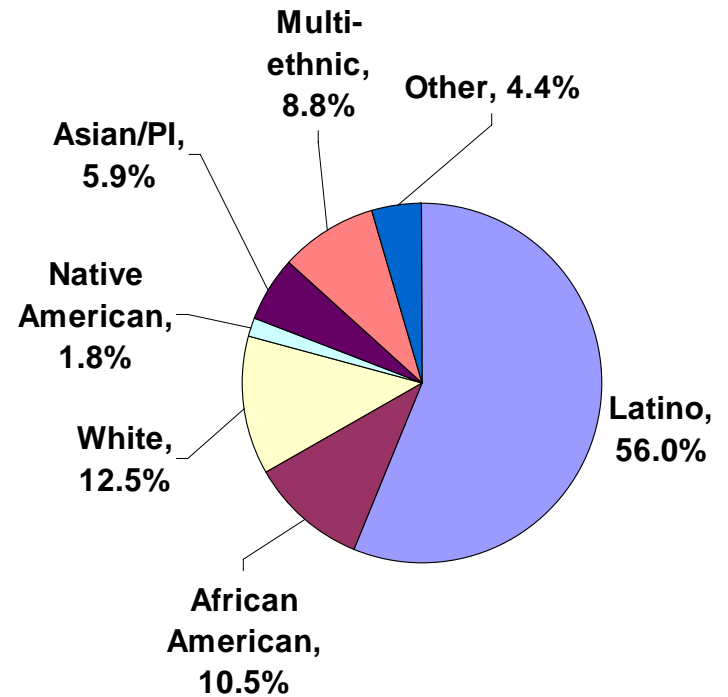
# Teen Pregnancy Prevention Survey

- Survey administered by Teen Pregnancy Prevention programs funded by the CA Office of Family Planning, before program implementation
- Compare younger (ages 10-14) and older (ages 15-19) youth on:
  - Protective and risk factors for teen pregnancy
  - Knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors relevant to pregnancy, STI prevention



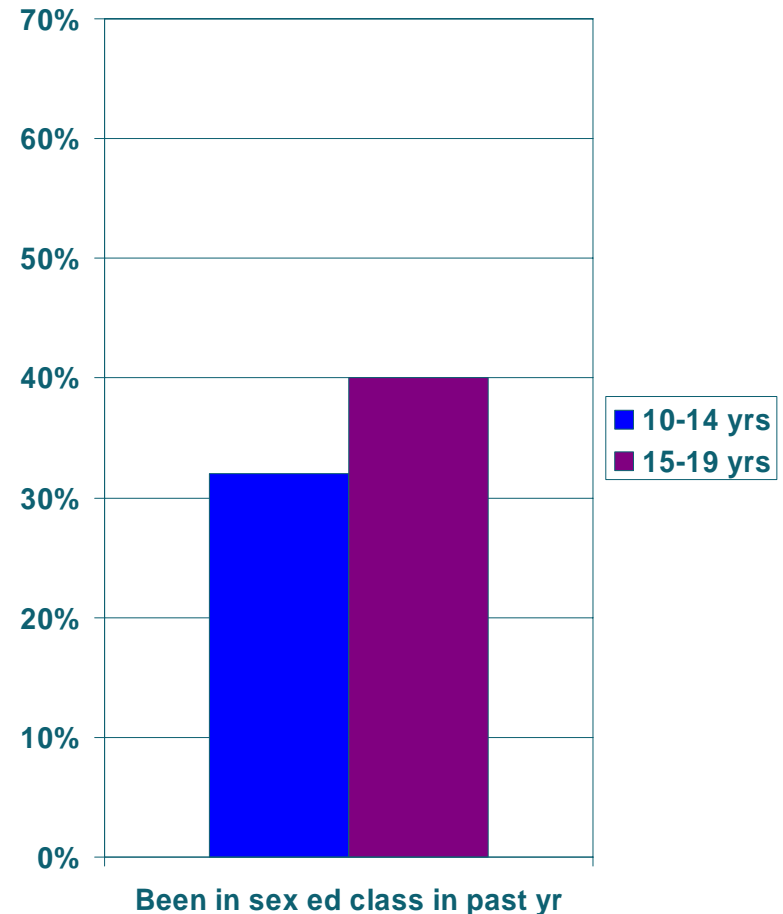
# Sample Description

- N = 12,185 youth
- Ages 10 to 19
  - 46% ages 10-14
  - 54% ages 15-19
- 50% male, 50% female
- Ethnically diverse – 56% Latino



# Findings: Knowledge

- Knowledge – 10-14 yr olds were less likely to:
  - Report having been in a sex education class in past year (32% younger vs. 40% older youth)
  - Answer questions correctly about:
    - STI/pregnancy prevention (5.3 vs. 6.4 out of 9)
    - Family planning services (1.5 vs. 2.0 out of 3)



# Findings: Parent Communication



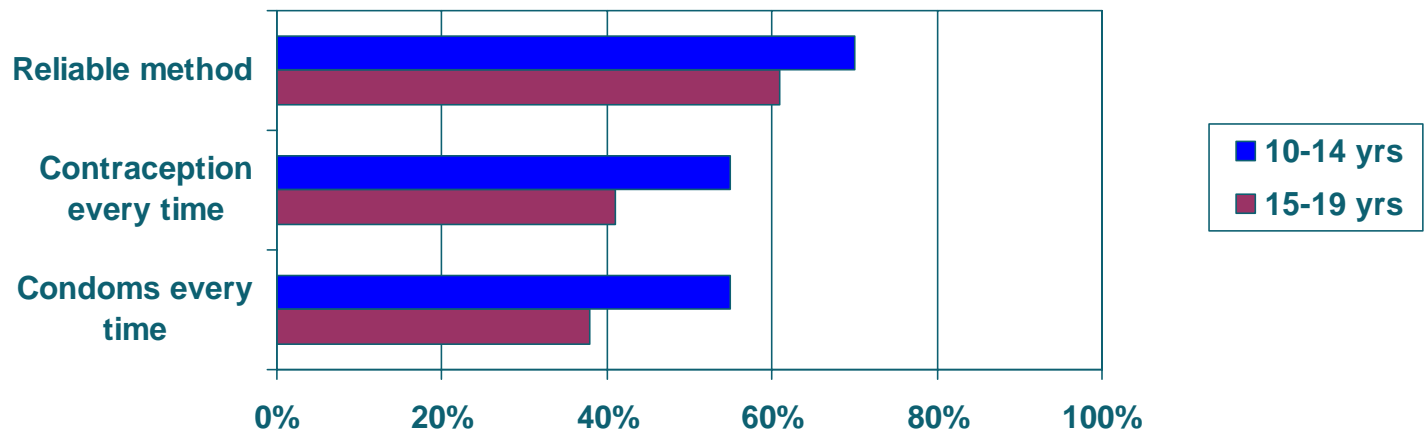
- Parent communication – 10-14 yr olds were less likely to report talking to a parent or adult about sex in past month (48% vs. 53% older youth)

# Findings: Sexual Activity

- Sexual experience – 18% of 10-14 yr olds reported having had sex (vs. 59% of older youth)
- Oral sex – 20% of 10-14 yr olds reported having had oral sex (vs. 47% of older youth)
- Frequency of sex –
  - The majority of sexually-active 10-14 yr olds reported having 1-2 lifetime partners, while the majority of 15-19 yr olds reported 3+ partners
  - Survey did not assess how often youth had sex

# Findings: Contraception

- Contraceptive use – Sexually-active 10-14 yr olds were more likely to report using:
  - A reliable method of contraception at last sex (70% vs. 61% of older youth)
  - Contraception every time having sex (55% vs. 41% of older youth)
  - Condoms every time having sex (55% vs. 38% of older youth)



# Findings: Condom Use

- Reasons for not using condoms – Most common reasons for not using condoms were:
  - 10-14 yr olds – didn't expect to have sex, didn't have condoms with me
  - 15-19 yr olds – didn't have condoms with me, doesn't feel good



# Findings: Pregnancy

- Pregnancy
  - 9% of 10-14 yr olds agree that getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant now would make them happy (vs. 15% of older youth)
  - 15% of sexually active 10-14 yr old females report having been pregnant (vs. 31% of older youth)



# Summary of Findings

- Consistent with national data:
  - Younger youth have lower levels of knowledge and communication with parents about sex
  - About 1 in 5 have had vaginal sex, oral sex
  - Number of partners is lower than for older youth
  - About 1 in 7 sexually active females 10-14 report having been pregnant



# Summary of Findings

- Surprising findings:
  - Younger youth were more likely to report using reliable and consistent contraception
  - Nearly 10% of younger youth agree that getting pregnant/getting someone pregnant would make them happy



# Recommendations

- Develop, implement, and evaluate age-specific pregnancy prevention programs
  - CA recently adopted health education content standards including sex education starting in 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- Further research with this younger group to understand attitudes, motivations, and behaviors
  - National decline in teen births for 10-14 yr olds
  - Positive findings in current study on contraceptive use for 10-14 yr olds

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## Questions?

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