

# Safe Sex Practices Among Racial and Ethnic Minority High School Students: 2019 U.S. YRBS

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INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

Safe sex practices among high school students help prevent pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and HIV. These practices include the use of condoms, birth control pills, and other contraceptives. Trends among high school students over the past twenty years indicate a decrease in safe sex practices, especially among ethnic and racial minorities. These differences among races/ethnicities can be seen throughout many data analyses and literature (Harper et al., 2018) (Wiltner et al., 2018).

The decline in safe sex practices being more pronounced in minority youth indicates a greater risk for pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and HIV. It is important to further explore these racial differences and look for possible causes and implications. The purpose of the current study was to analyze data from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey and look at racial differences in safe sex practices among high school students in the U.S. We hypothesized that ethnic and racial minority high school students in the United States will report higher percentages of not wearing a condom during last sexual intercourse as well as higher percentages of not using other forms of birth control prior to last sexual intercourse.

METHODS AND RESULTS

## METHODS

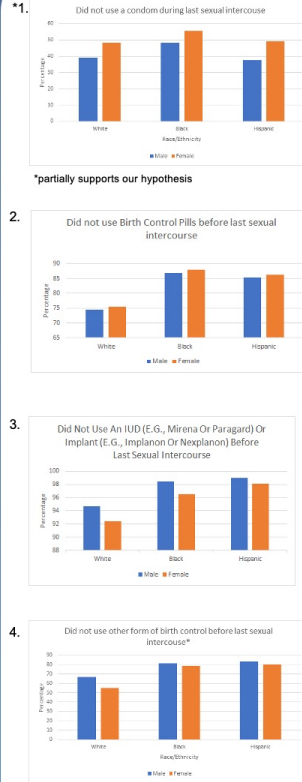
The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is part of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). Data is collected at the national level from designated middle and high schools. We reviewed responses to specific high school survey questions from the 2019 YRBS for this secondary data analysis. We analyzed data on the 2019 YRBS site and looked specifically at condom use, pill, IUD, or shot use, and dual birth control use among high school students. We then looked at how these responses vary across non-Hispanic white, black, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native high school students.

## RESULTS

- 1. Question: "Did Not Use A Condom During Last Sexual Intercourse"
  - Results: black=51.8%, Hispanic/Latino=43.8%, white=44.2%
- 2. Question: "Did Not Use Birth Control Pills Before Last Sexual Intercourse"
  - Results: black=87.1%, Hispanic/Latino=84.6%, white=70.9%
- 3. Question: "Did Not Use An IUD (E.G., Mirena Or Paragard) Or Implant (E.G., Implanon Or Nexplanon) Before Last Sexual Intercourse"
  - Results: black=97.6%, Hispanic/Latino=98.5%, white=93.5%
- 4. Question: "Did Not Use Birth Control Pills; An IUD (E.G., Mirena Or Paragard) Or Implant (E.G., Implanon Or Nexplanon); Or A Shot (E.G., Depo-Provera), Patch (E.G., Orthoevra), Or Birth Control Ring (E.G., Nuvaring) Before Last Sexual Intercourse"
  - Results: black=80.3%, Hispanic/Latino=81.8%, white=60.5%
- Question: "Did Not Use Any Method To Prevent Pregnancy During Last Sexual Intercourse"
  - Results: black=23%, Hispanic/Latino=13.3%, white=8.4%

FIGURES

## FIGURES



\*partially supports our hypothesis

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

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The results from the data analysis mostly support our hypothesis that high school students of minority races and ethnicities in the United States are less likely to practice safe sex. The percentage of black students who did not use condoms was higher than that for the other races/ethnicities. Although the percentages for this question were very similar for Hispanic/Latino students and white students, the percentage was slightly higher for white students, which is contrary to our hypothesis. Furthermore, black and Hispanic/Latino students both had higher percentages than white students for not using other forms of birth control including pills, IUDs, implants, shots, patches, or rings. We found this to be the case when looking at the specific questions of each form of birth control as well as for the question that looks collectively at all other forms of birth control excluding condoms. These findings did support our hypothesis.

Possible explanations for minority students being less likely than white students to use forms of birth control include:

- Lack of knowledge (Craig et al., 2014)
- Lack of sexual education
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Differing socioeconomic status
- Differing cultural norms
- Utilize forms not analyzed in this study

Although several studies have found similar results to this data analysis, a study by Santelli et al. (2000) found that adolescent sexual behavior did not differ across race/ethnicity nor socioeconomic status. This contrast may be due to changes in sexual behavior over time or differences in the economy, education, and healthcare systems. The findings from the current study reflect subtle changes in racial/ethnic differences, suggesting that while birth control use still varies across race and ethnicity, condom use appears to be more similar across white students and minority students. Further research should be done to investigate possible reasons for recent racial/ethnic differences in sexual behavior.