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The Determinants of First Sex by Age 14 in a High-Risk Adolescent Population

By Frank L. Mott, Michelle M. Fondell, Paul N. Hu, Lori Kowaleski-Jones and Elizabeth G. Menaghan

A study using data for mothers from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and their children aged 14 or older indicates that, after accounting for a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic antecedents, children are significantly more likely to become sexually active before age 14 if their mother had sex at an early age and if she has worked extensively. In addition, early sexual debut is eight times as likely among black boys as among non-Hispanic white boys. Children who use controlled substances at an early age are more than twice as likely to have sex before age 14 as those who do not, although the type of substance having an effect is different for girls (cigarettes) and boys (alcohol). Church attendance is an important determinant of delayed sexual activity, but only when a child's friends attend the same church.

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