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High-Risk Sexual Behavior Among Young Urban Students

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A substantial number of adolescents, including many as young as 11, engage in high-risk sexual behavior. In a 1992 survey of 2,248 urban students in grades 6, 8 and 10, 45% of respondents, including 28% of sixth graders, were sexually active; the majority of sexually experienced students had had two or more partners. Among sexually active respondents, however, the level of condom use at last intercourse was higher than expected (71%). Results of multivariate analyses indicate that students in grades 8 and 10 were significantly more likely than sixth graders to be sexually experienced; males, blacks and socioeconomically disadvantaged students were significantly more likely than their female, white and better-off counterparts to be sexually active. The effects of gender and race interacted in some cases, and race and socioeconomic status had significant independent effects on rates of sexual intercourse. While males and black students reported high levels of sexual activity, they also were more likely than young women and Hispanics to have used condoms at last intercourse.

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