



Fact Sheet

OVERVIEW

The National Women's Health Resource Center (NWHRC) and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP) commissioned a survey designed to explore women's attitudes and behaviors regarding their sexual health. The "Sex and a Healthier You" campaign is a public education initiative which seeks to educate women about healthy sexual function and to help health care providers address this issue with their patients more comfortably. NWHRC and ARHP are jointly launching the campaign to advance positive sexual health messages to consumers and health care providers.

Sexual Health and Well-Being

When asked how important sexual health is to overall health, most women (81%) say it is important.

- Women ranked having a healthy sex life higher than career satisfaction, home ownership, traveling and social life but lower than financial security, physical health, mental health, marriage, and having children
- One-third of women say sexual health is very or extremely important to overall health
- 79% of women say being sexually healthy means satisfaction with their sex life; 78% say that it means having a good relationship with their partner, and 65% say it's experiencing sexual desire (65%)
- Three-quarters of women surveyed believe they should have sex once a week or more to be considered sexually healthy
 - Interestingly, 54% actually had sex this frequently over the last four weeks
- More than half of women surveyed (57%) believe they are having too little sex
 - Those who have experienced a sexual health issue* are more likely to report this than those who have not

Women and Sexual Health Issues

The majority of women surveyed (70%) say they have experienced a sexual health issue. However, fewer than one in five of these women actually sought the help of a health care provider.

- 22% of women who have ever experienced a sexual health issue felt very or extremely concerned about it
- 36% of women have experienced lack of desire in the past year
 - Lack of desire was the most commonly reported sexual health issue
- When asked about the steps women took when they experienced a sexual issue, 39% did not do anything, followed by 38% who talked to their spouse/partner
- 13% of women gave a possible symptom of sexual dysfunction, such as lack of desire, as the main reason for having too little sex

Women and Health Care Providers

Many women say they would be comfortable talking to their health care provider about their sexual health issues, but few women (18%) actually visited a health care provider about them.

- 38% of women say they did not think their sexual health issue was important enough to visit a health care provider

- Among the women who visited a health care provider regarding their sexual health issue, women reported that less than half of the providers asked questions, performed exams, provided other advice or suggested treatment

Women and Relationships

When asked how important their sex life is to their relationship satisfaction, 82% of women say it is important and 41% say it is very or extremely important.

- 71% of women in relationships who have not experienced a sexual health issue are significantly more likely to have sex at least once a week
- Women who have experienced a sexual health issue are more likely to be unsatisfied with their relationship

Sex in Your 20s, 30s, 40s

The term “women in their 20s” refers to women aged 18-29; “women in their 30s” refers to women aged 30-39; and “women in their 40s” refers to women aged 40-49.

20s

- 57% of women say they engage in sexual activity at least once a week
- 39% of women have experienced the inability to have an orgasm and 34% report pain during intercourse
- 40% of women have experienced lack of desire

30s

- 63% of women say they engage in sexual activity at least once a week
- Women in their 30s are most likely to have experienced lack of desire (51%)

40s

- 44% of women say they engage in sexual activity at least once a week
- 47% of women have experienced lack of desire

* The survey defined “sexual health issue” as any of the following six conditions: a lack of desire to engage in sexual activity, not being able to become sexually aroused, not being able to have an orgasm, pain during intercourse, excessive desire to engage in sexual activity, or vaginal dryness.

Survey Methodology

The National Women’s Health Resource Center (NWHRC), in partnership with the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP), commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct an online survey to explore women’s attitudes, behaviors and perceptions regarding their sexuality. This survey was conducted online within the United States between March 4-13, 2009 among 1,200 women aged 18-50 who reside in the U.S. Of the 1,200 women who participated in this survey, 254 were African American, 252 were Hispanic, and 125 were Asian American. The survey was sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (BIPI).