

Iowa State University
Report to the Youth
Policy Institute of Iowa
June 11, 2018

Funded by Jim Casey
Youth Opportunities
Initiative award to YPII

Pregnancy and Parenting among Iowa Youth Transitioning from Foster Care

Report of Findings

Purpose

- Overarching Goal of Project
 - Develop and adopt new or revised policy, program, and practice recommendations to address the high rate of pregnancies and early parenting among Iowa youth transitioning from foster care
- Objectives
 - Understand foster youth experiences with pregnancy and parenting
 - Examine how foster youth experiences shape their understanding about pregnancy and parenting

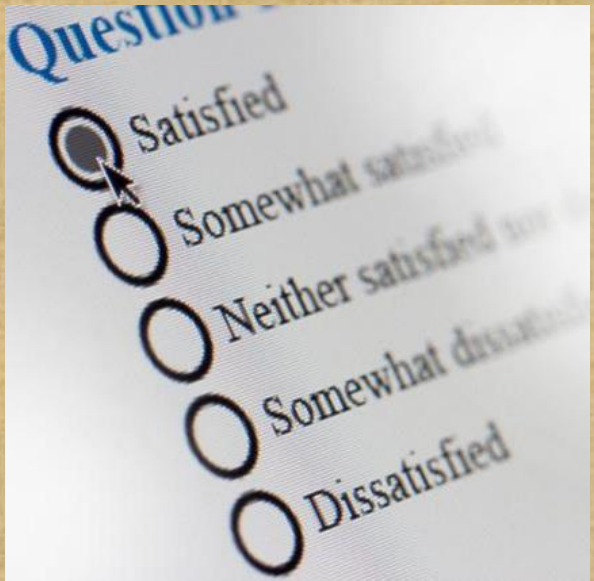
Participants and Approach

Participants

- Youth age 18–26 years
- Known to YPII who are receiving (or recently received) services from Iowa Aftercare Services Network and related YPII programs
- Emancipated from foster care at age 18 and voluntarily chose to participate in Aftercare Services
- N = 81

Approach

- Electronic survey
- Focus groups (participant subset)



Survey Results

Demographic Characteristics

Gender: 75% female

Race: 60.5% white, 24.7% AA, 21% other

Urbanicity: 56% urban

Education: 77.8% \geq high school degree

Employment:

45.6% work >30 hours/week; 21.5%
working <30 hours/week;
32.9% unemployed*

Income:

62.9% earn >\$900;
17.2% earning <\$900

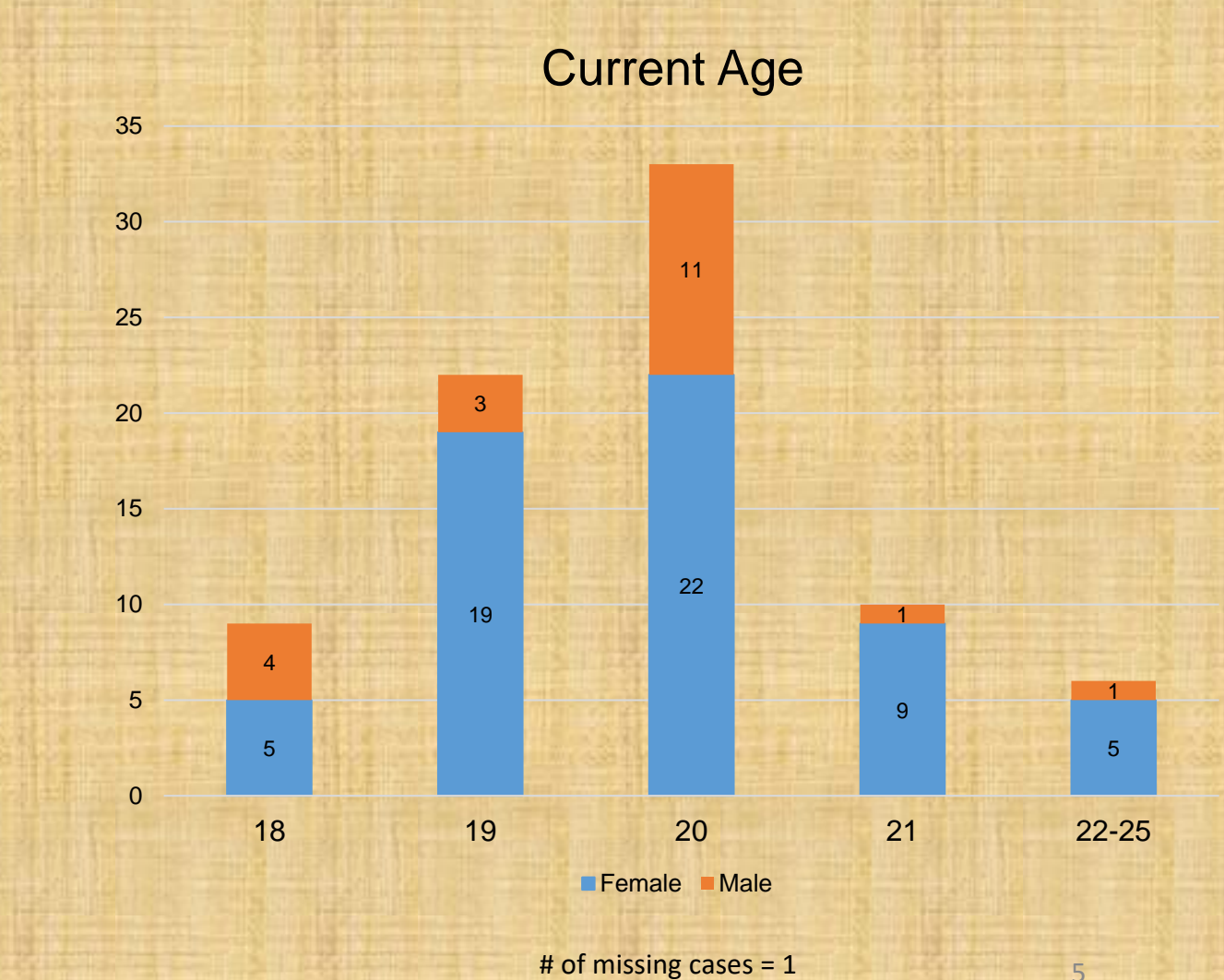
Had teen parent: 70.4%

Currently pregnant: 32.0%

Parenting status: 71.6%

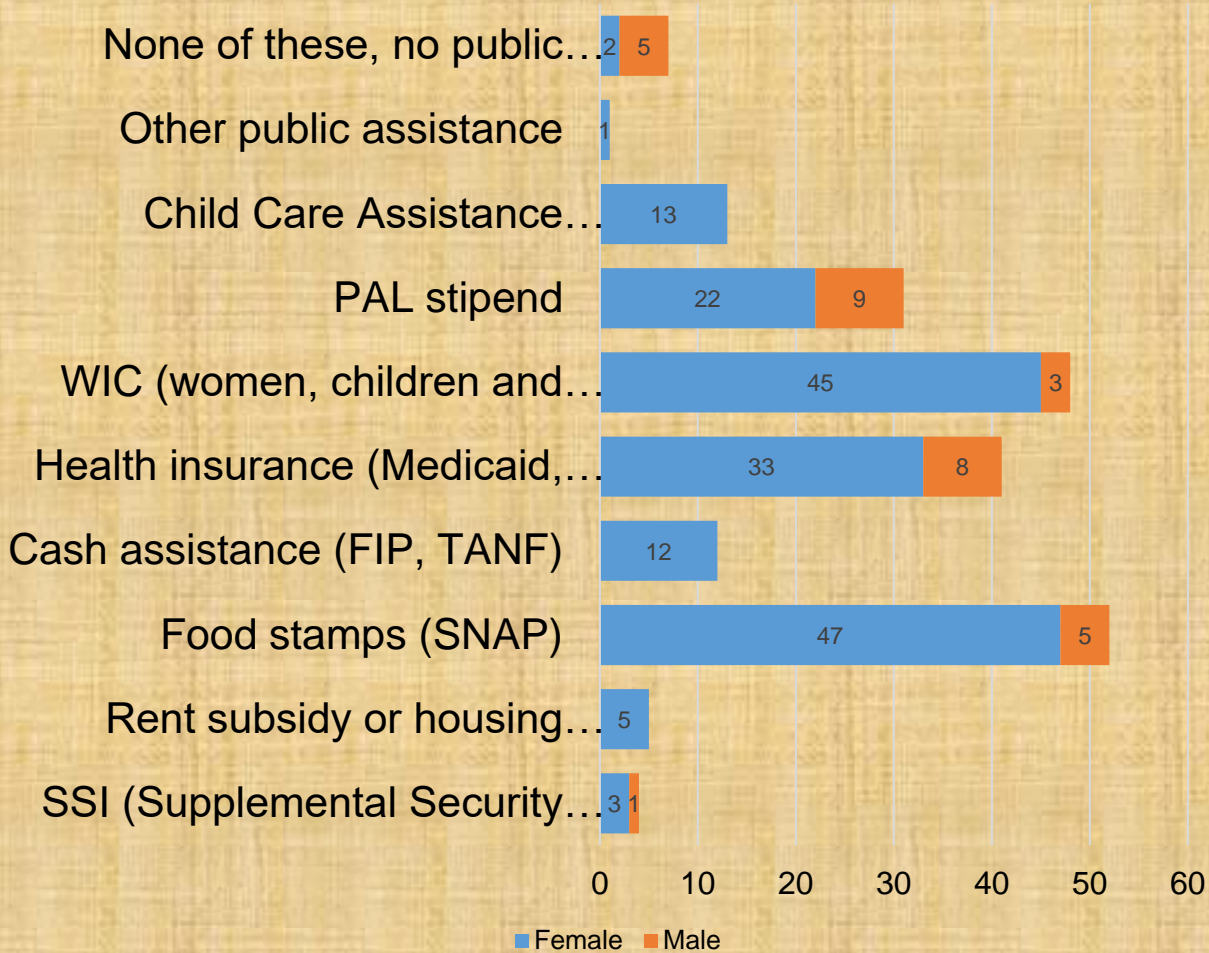
Number of children: 94.8% had 1-2 children

*Significant gender differences

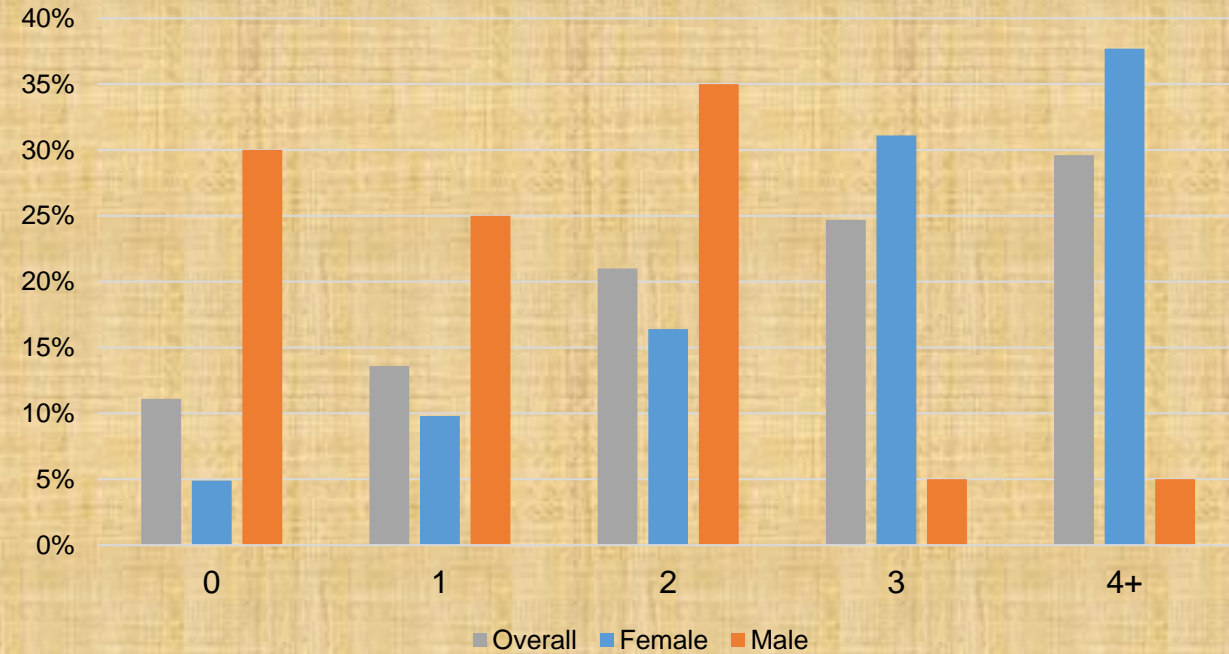


30% Utilize 4 or More Forms of Public Assistance

Forms of Public Assistance*



Public Assistance Use*



*Significant gender differences

Topics Covered by the Survey

- Reproductive Health, Attitudes, and Behaviors
- Sexual Experiences
- Pregnancy Experiences
- Parenting Experiences

Reproductive Health, Attitudes, and Behaviors

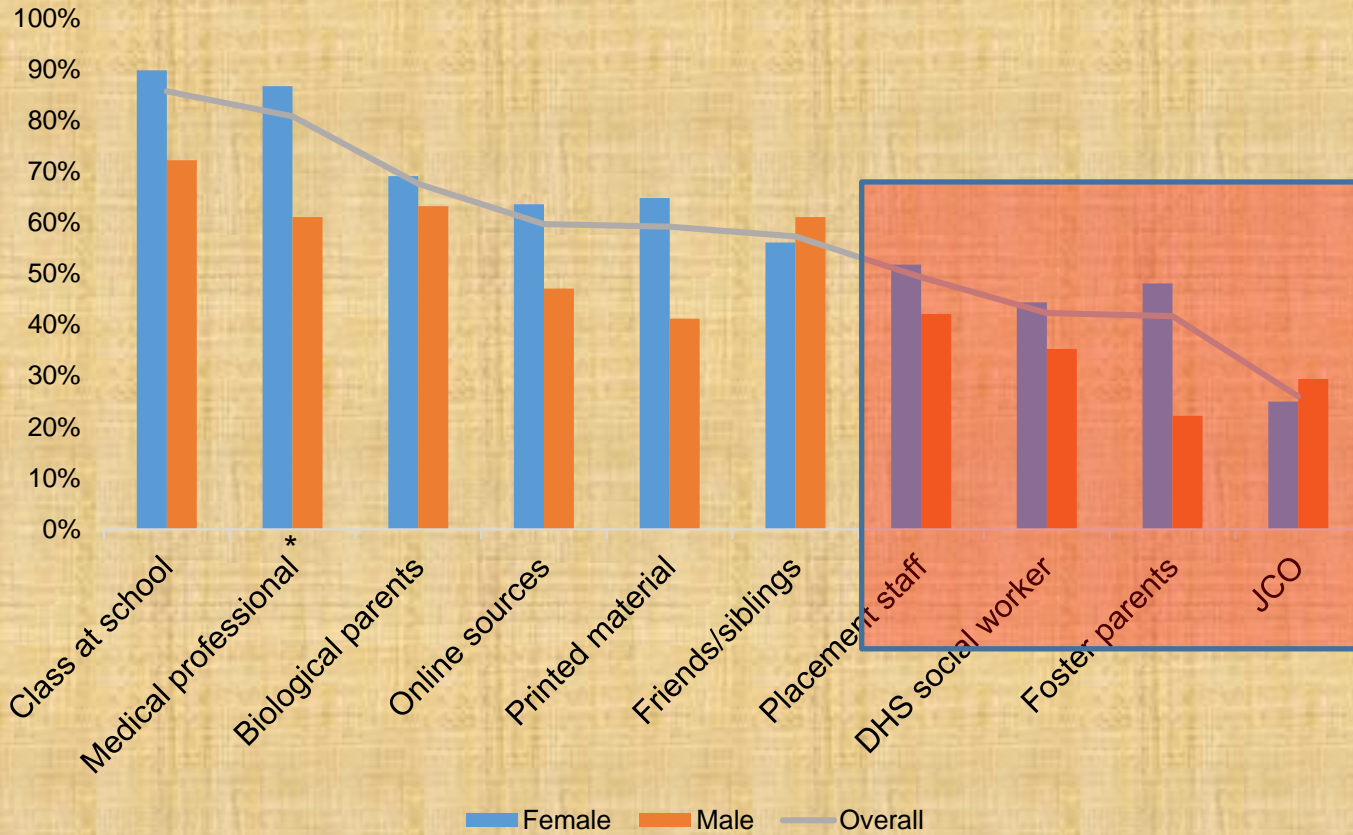
- Youth felt relatively well informed about reproductive health.
- Youth receive most information about RH from school, medical professionals & parents.
- Almost one-third of youth “rarely” or “never” spoke with their Aftercare Advocate.

Youth felt relatively informed about reproductive health



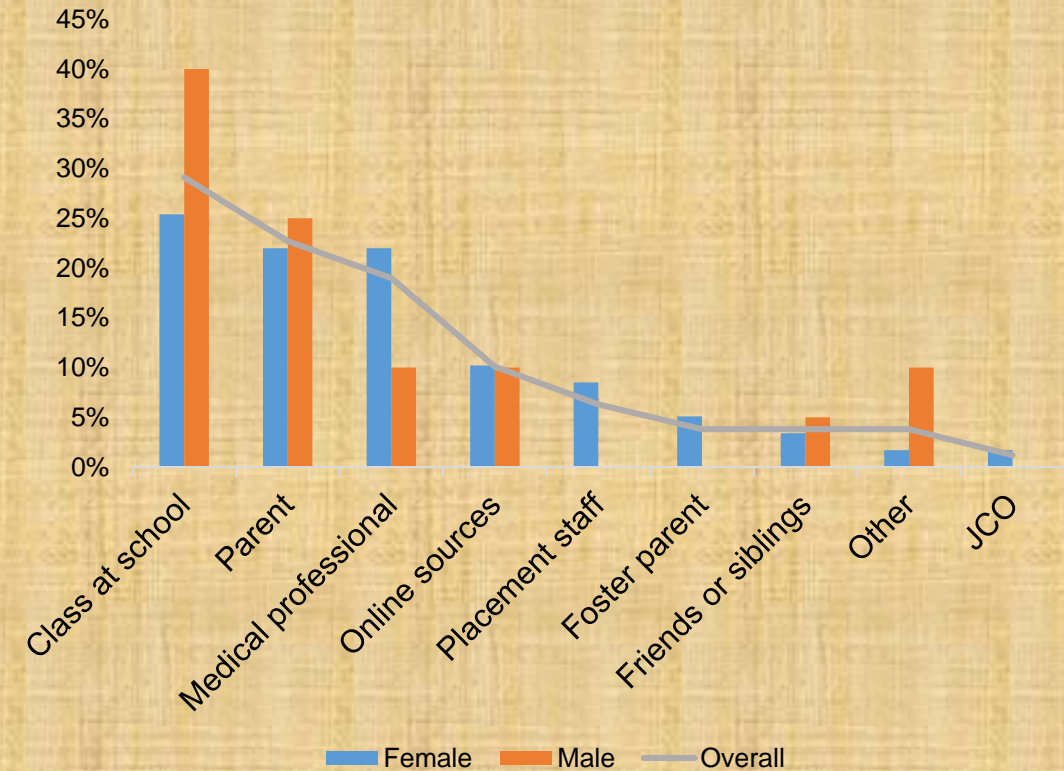
Receive Information from Classes, Parents, & Medical Professionals

Sources of Information



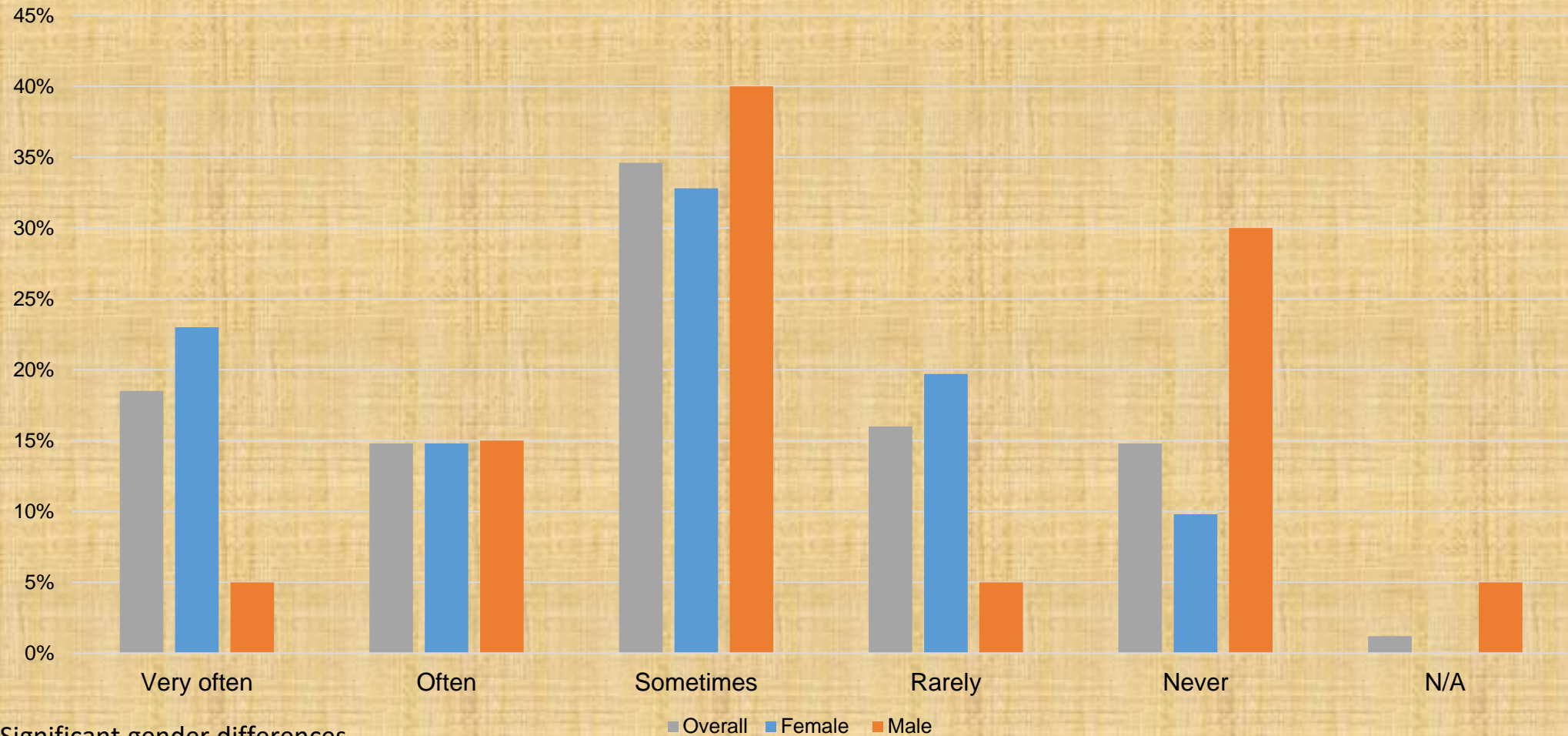
*Significant gender differences

Primary Source of Information



30.8% “rarely” or “never” spoke with Aftercare Advocate

Discussing Reproductive Health
with an Aftercare Advocate: Frequency*



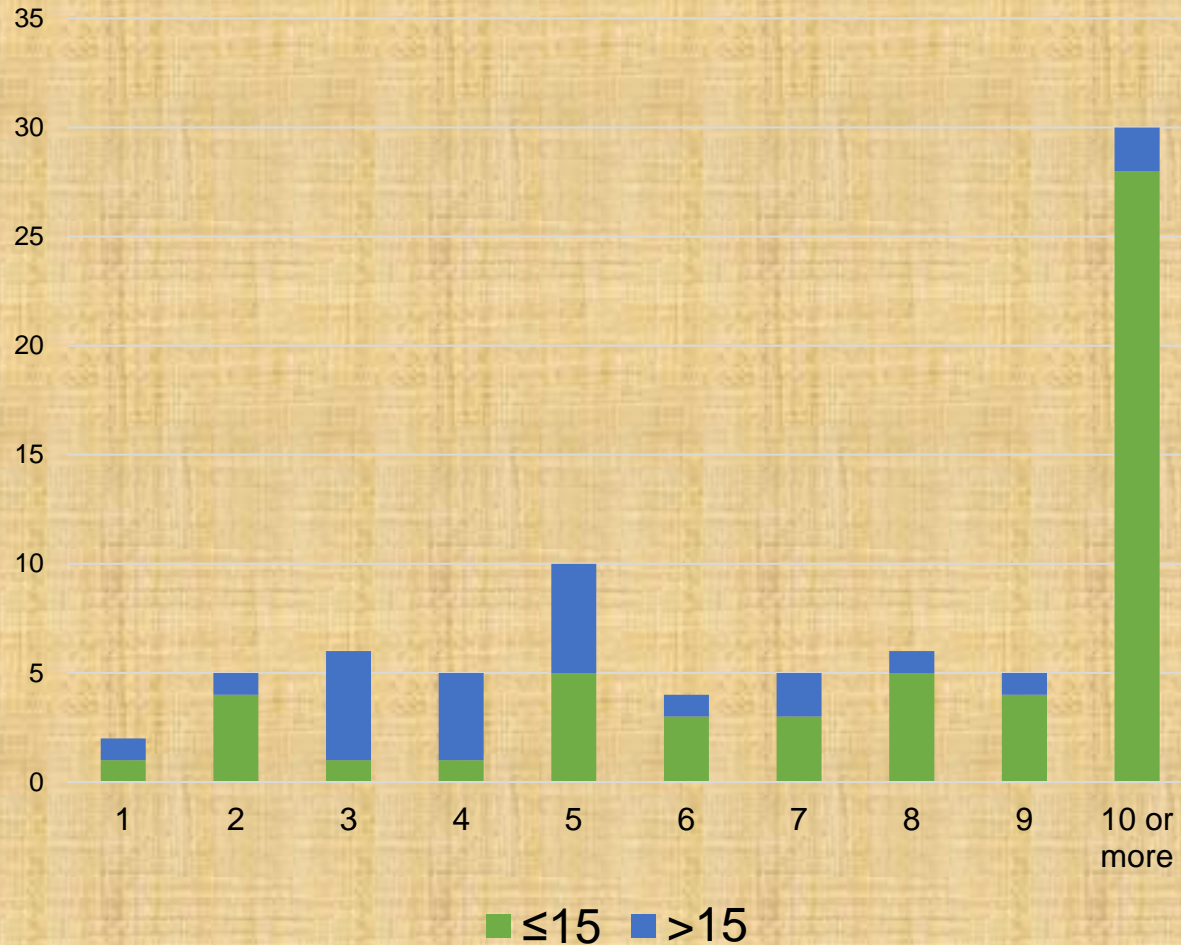
*Significant gender differences

Sexual Experiences

- Mean age of first sex is 14.5
- < 25% “always” use birth control
- Curiosity and “it just happened” were most common reasons for becoming sexually active

The mean age of first sex is 14.5 years old

Age of first sexual intercourse
by Number of partners*



Earlier sexual experiences were NOT associated with more sexual partners for white youth, but they were for underrepresented groups.

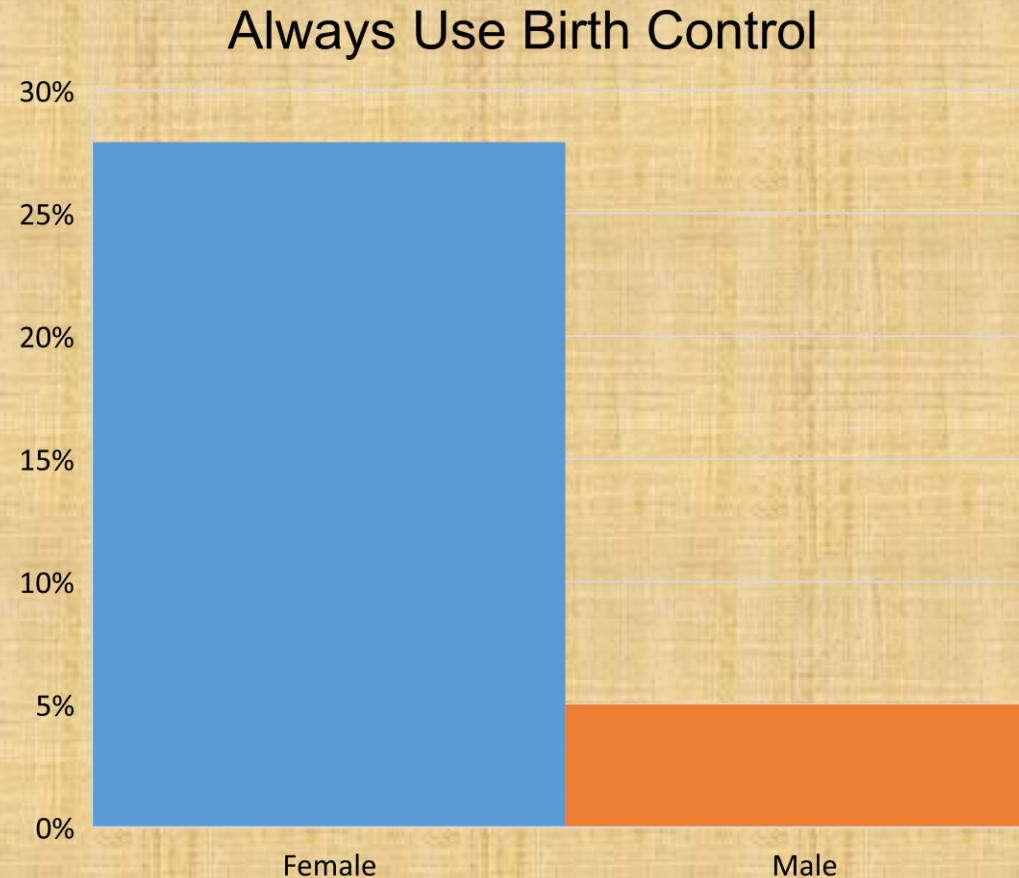
*Significant race differences

Only 22.2% of youth “always” use birth control

Of those that did use birth control, the most common types:

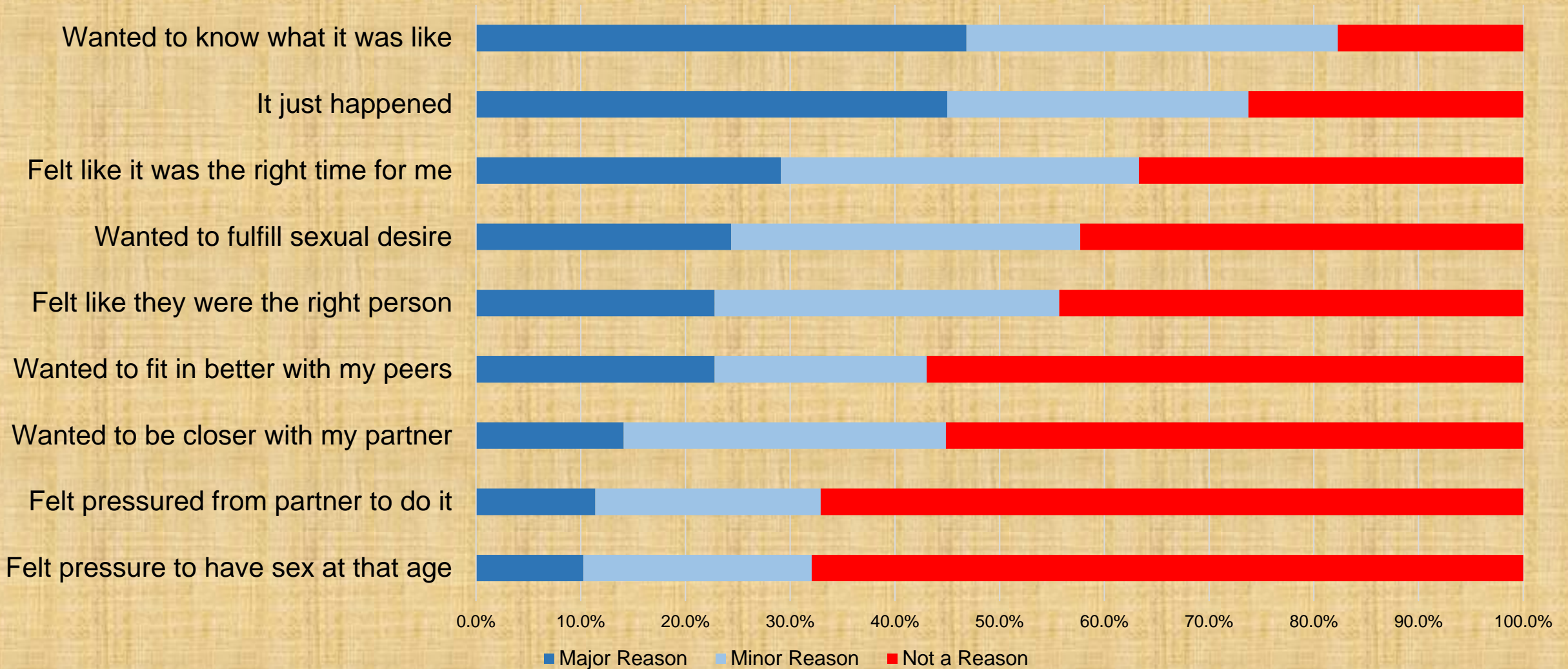
Overall – condoms

Females – the pill



Note: Almost all (92.5%) believed that it was equal responsibility of both partners for preventing pregnancy.

Reasons for Becoming Sexually Active



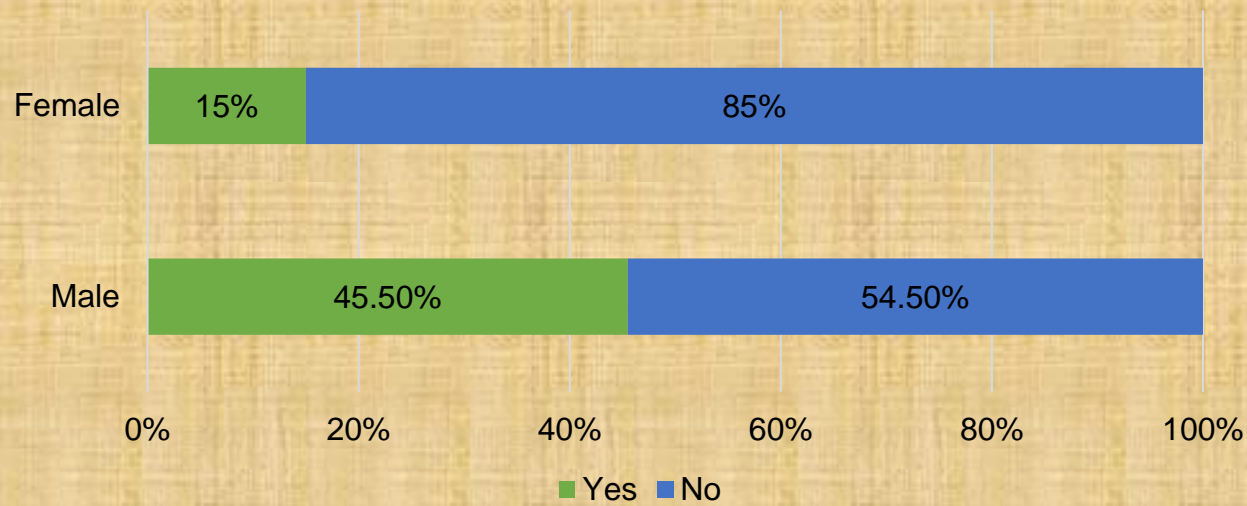
Note: Over half (54.5%) wished they had waited longer to have sex and 78.8% believed it is normal for teens to have sex.

Pregnancy Experiences

- The mean age at first pregnancy was 17.9 years old, and most had 1-2 pregnancies.
- Males were more likely to report wanting to become pregnant within the next year.
- Females were more likely to report feeling unprepared for parenthood at first pregnancy.
- Youth identified partners and spouses as the primary supports during most recent pregnancy.

Gender Differences in Parenthood Desire & Preparedness

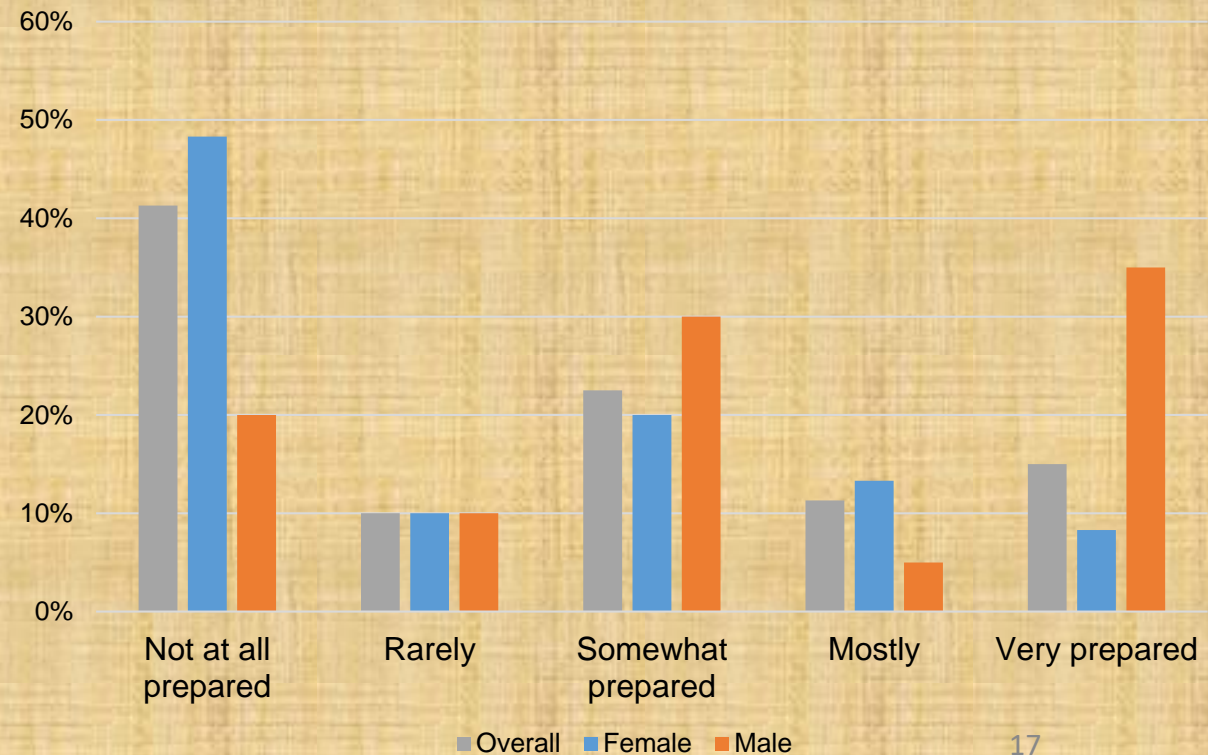
Desire to become pregnant or expect a child in the next year*



31.1% of females did not want to become pregnant at the time of their most recent pregnancy compared to 5.0% of males.

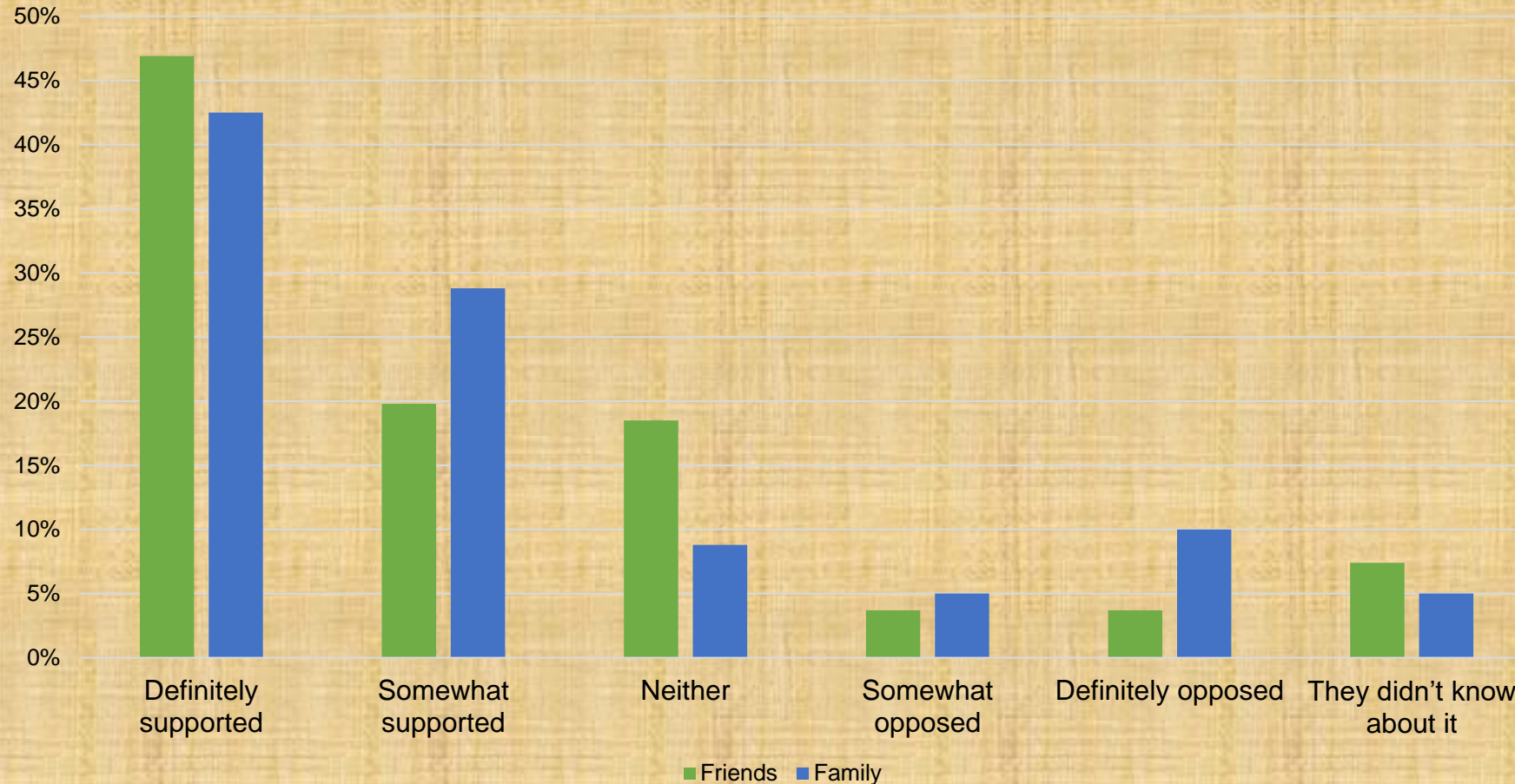
*Significant gender differences

Preparedness to Become a Parent*



Over two-thirds felt supported by family and friends during their first pregnancy.

Support Systems

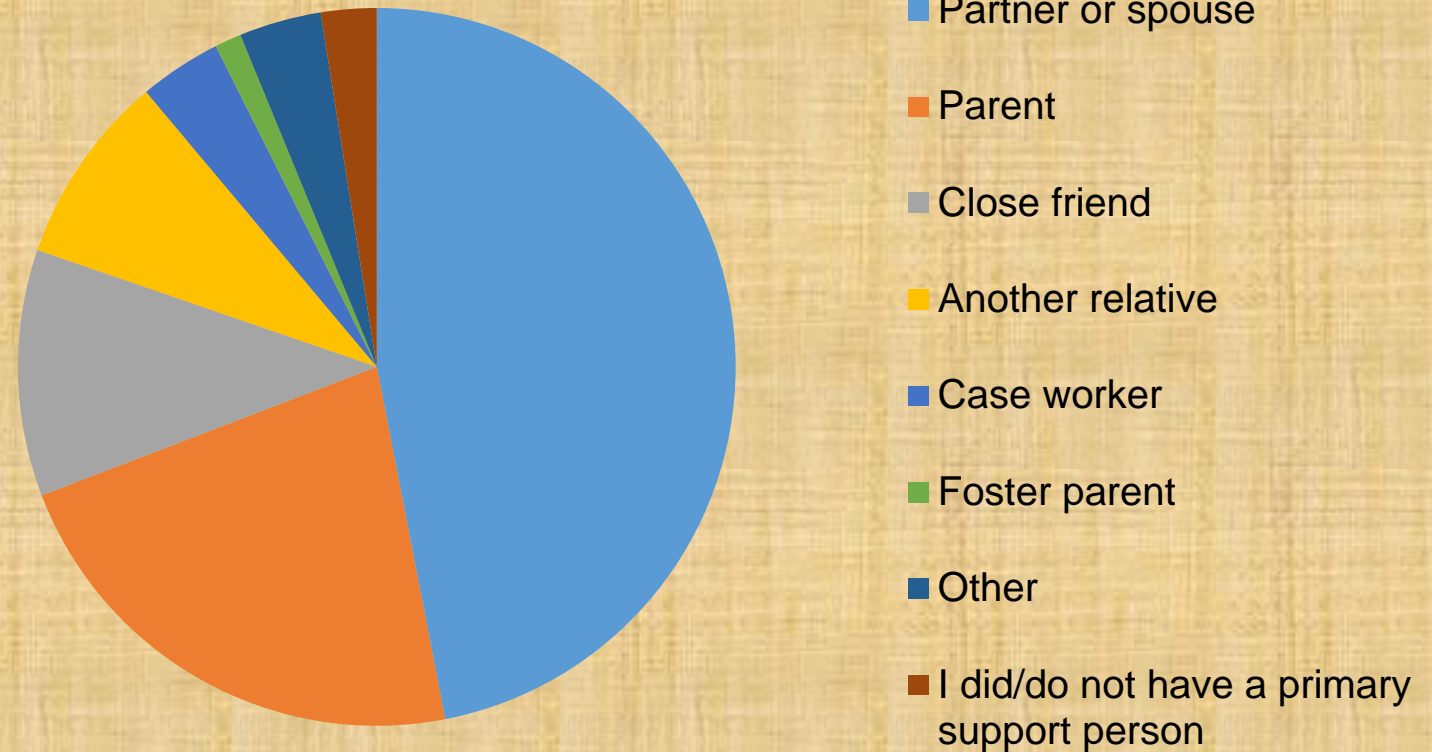


Partner Relationship:

- 64.2% of youth were romantically involved with their partners in steady relationship during their most recent pregnancy
- 27.2% were in romantic on-off again relationships.

Partners and spouses were primary supports

Primary Support Person
During Most Recent Pregnancy



Prenatal Care:

98.4% of women visited a doctor for prenatal care during their first trimester, though 10.2% reported 3 or fewer visits overall.

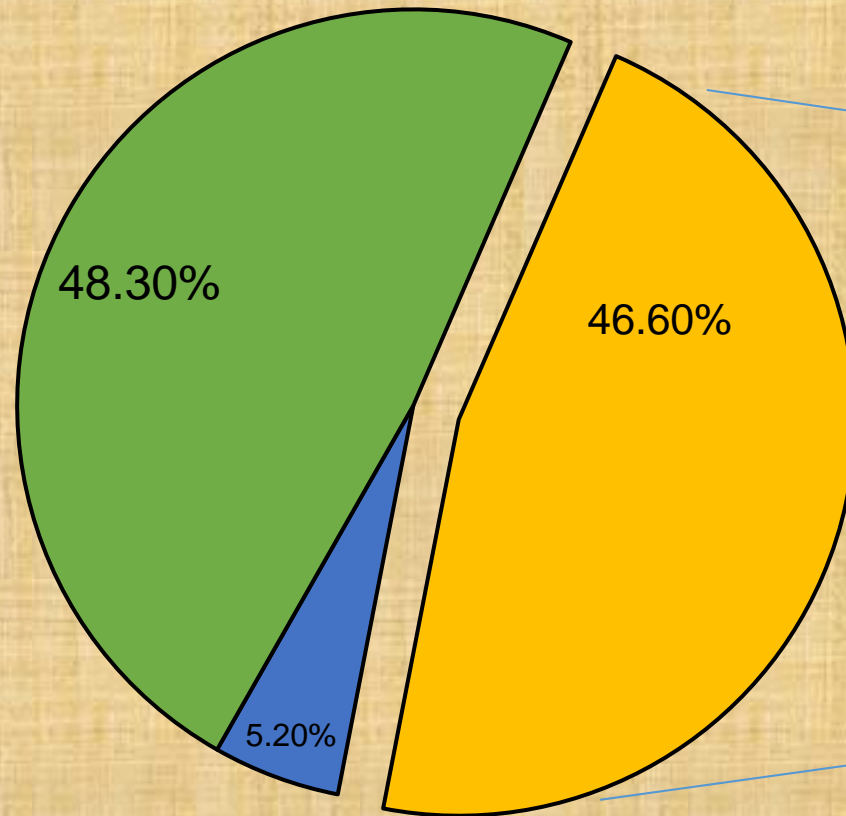
25% of youth reported attending a baby or birthing class during their most recent pregnancy.

Parenting Experiences

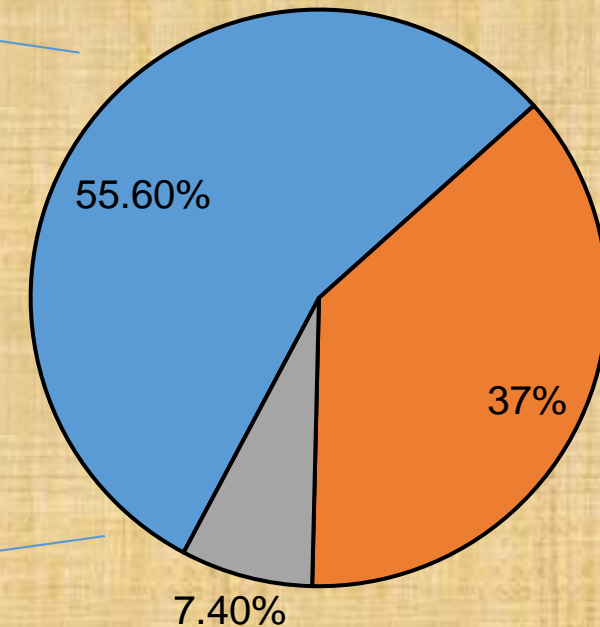
- For those not married or cohabiting, 55.6% formally established paternity of youngest child.
- 75% of youth felt “very confident” in their parenting.
- Females were more likely to “strongly agree” that parenting is rewarding.

55.6% of unmarried/not cohabitating had formally established paternity of youngest child.

Marital/cohabiting status



Established paternity (n=26)

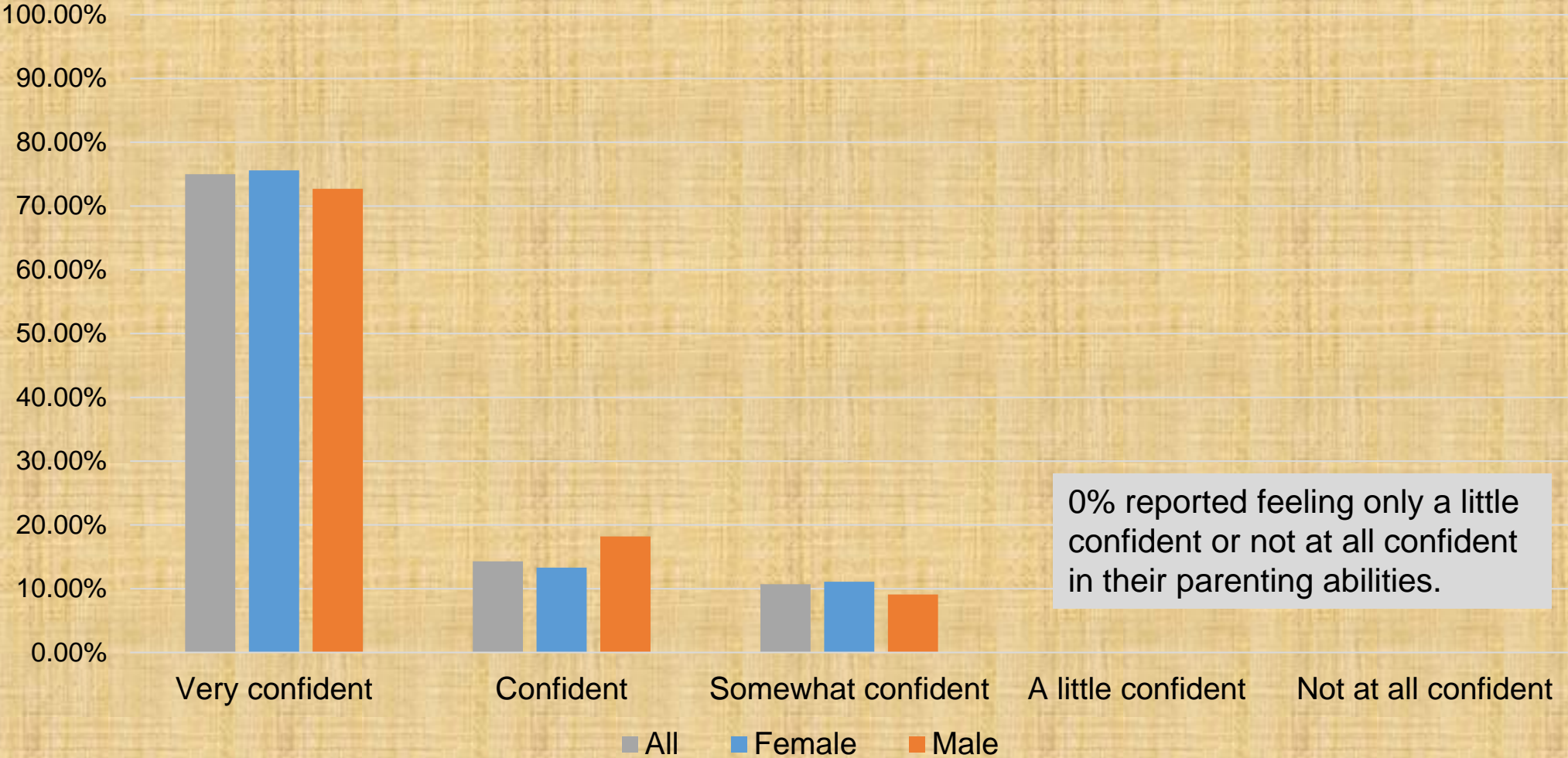


■ Married ■ Not married but living with ■ Not married or living with

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

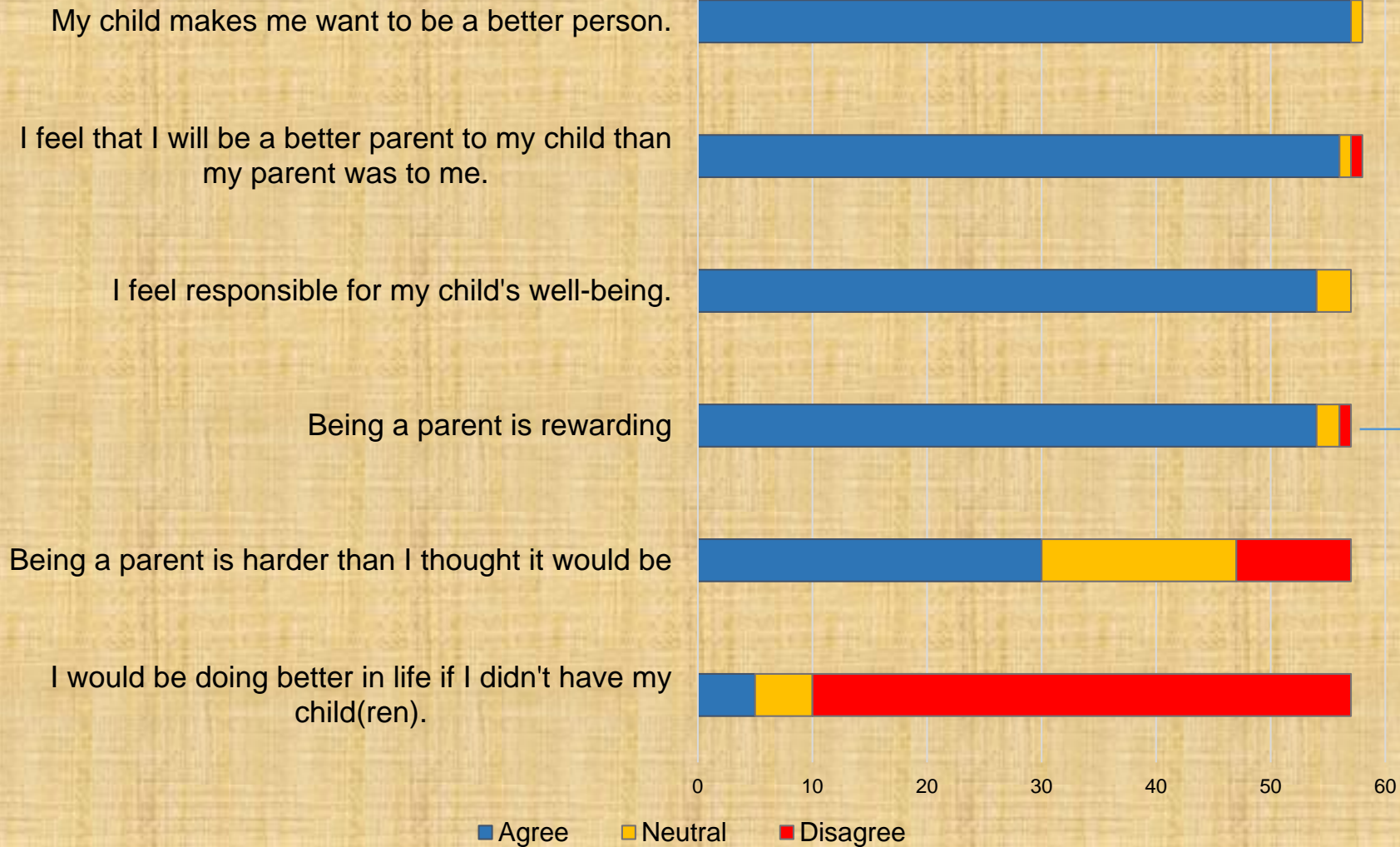
75% felt very confident in their parenting

Feelings of confidence in ability to parent children



Overall positive attitudes about parenting

Parenthood Statements



Females (89.1%) significantly more likely to “strongly agree” than males (63.6%).

Key Findings Summary

- Youth are using birth control inconsistently, with only 22.2% “always” using birth control.
- The mean age of first sexual intercourse is 14.5 years.
- The majority of females (68%) wish they had waited to have sexual intercourse.
- The primary sources of information related to sexual and reproductive health are schools and parents.

Limitations

- Small sample size limits subgroup analyses
- Need more male participants
- Do not have comparison group of non-pregnancy / parenting youth
- Causality cannot be inferred



Discussion & Questions