

A Honest Survey About...Love, Sex, and Dating

Analysis & Observations [February 2010]

Origin of Our Journey: Honestly, I'm not sure how we decided to teach on the subject about sexuality. I think we were just going through verses of scripture and in the middle of studying it talked about sex and marriage. And then we realized something quite terrifying – it's been a year and a half and we haven't addressed this topic. Our first thought – "Dear God, please no!" But with every Lady Gaga song and episodes of Jersey Shore being pumped into society...we had to make a decision. It was either we'll hope that someone else will address this topic or we unashamedly attack this from the front end.

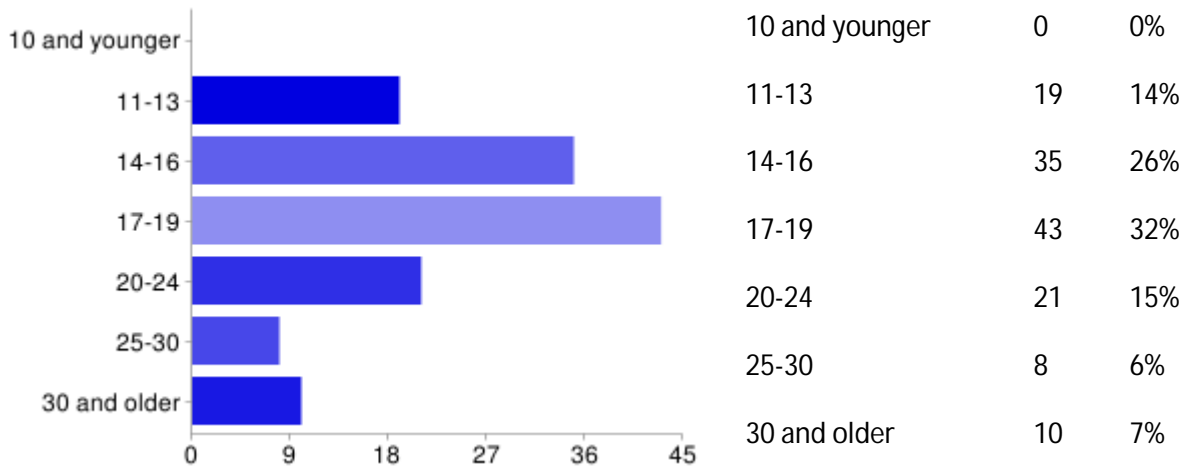
There were several things that we were thinking about though – is it too early to expose the youth to certain topics (i.e. masturbation, pornography, etc.)? Because we were afraid that if we brought it up and they had no clue they'd start investigating. Nor do we want parents to be mad at us for cutting them off from talking to their youth first. Plus, the church historically had a weird position about this subject. I mean, personally...I felt like the message I heard growing up was very similar to Coach Carr in the movie mean girls, "Don't have sex, because you will get pregnant and die!" So yeah...now what? Well, we started to do more research and dig through scripture. We found out that the average age of first-time viewers of pornography is around the age of 8-10. The average age of those who have sexual intercourse ranges between 12-15. And I think honestly...we knew that our youth were dealing with the exact same things but we didn't know to what degree.

So we couldn't just sit back and pretend that sexuality didn't affect our students and we knew that we had to address this & perhaps redeem this subject from a biblical perspective. But first, we wanted to have something to work off of. So we put out a survey on our youth webpage about sexuality, love, dating, and the like. It was 4 pages that asked very frank questions ranging from oral sex to sexual intercourse. We first sent it to the youth within our church and then had them send it to their friends. Later on we emailed our friends all over the world asking them to fill out the survey and that's where the results from this analysis are coming from.

Warning: Before I present to you the following data...I need to warn of you several things. The following material is not intended for anything other than equipping parents, pastors, teachers, and leadership in the church. The advice will be strictly coming from a biblical worldview and a particular ministry. I think you need to go through this data in a humble manner. All we're doing is presenting data that we received and we admit outright that we are no professionals or anything. We want to give you material so that you might minister better so that your students will live the best possible life. That's our ultimate goal...not to shame you or to lecture you. Also, I do not think you can afford to be naïve about this. The moment you start thinking, "Oh no, not my kids" is when you begin to refuse the truth of the matter. Because "yes, these are your kids". And even if you kid is "perfect" I'm pretty sure they live in a culture that isn't. So we need to be aware of what is going on.

The Data & Thoughts:

Age:



The survey has been going on for about a week and we have received 136 responses – the majority is from the United States (with a few from overseas). The bulk of the surveyors were between the ages of 11-24yrs old. Some people asked if we could figure out who was from church and who were from a particular city...but unfortunately we couldn't do so and it wasn't the purpose of the survey. We just wanted to get a general idea of what people thought, what they were taught, and their honest responses. There was a good balance of male/female responses – 64 males (47%) and 72 females (53%) answered the survey.

Current Status:



I personally liked the fact that the 8 married people took the survey because it gave us their personal background and what advice they received. In terms of discipleship, I think you teach everything about yourself – what you struggled with, what advice that you received growing up (good or bad), and how that affects you now. Parents, please build that bond of honesty with your youth...because I think they need to hear your personal journey of how you came to your understanding of love, sex, and marriage.

Of the 136 people who took the survey, 88% claimed to be Christian; 4% Nonreligious; 3% Agnostic. But the bulk of the people claimed Christianity. I need you to remember this fact as we talk more.

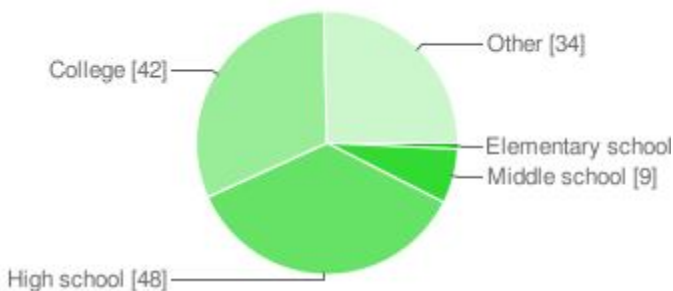
Thoughts: "How Would You Define 'Love'?"

This was an interesting study because we pretty much gave them an open box to explain what they believed "love" to be. Those who were from the ages 11-13 typically defined it as some kind of emotional response or feeling for another person. One person said "love" is "Having affection for someone in a strong way." For most young middle school students, love is a stronger form of "like" or even some kind of "passion". Though when you ask a 14-16 year old what "love" is...they'll typically add a commitment piece to it. There's a sense of exclusivity that comes with love and is shared between two people. One girl defined it as, "Being committed to someone, even through hardships, because you truly care for them and trust them." As you break into the 17 year olds and on the definition of love becomes somewhat standard. It's interesting to note that most of the answers now contain an element of sacrifice and God. A lot of answers quote the famous 1 Corinthians 13 passage (probably because it's often quoted in weddings or on t-shirts). Love becomes something universally wonderful and deeply sacred. A 25-30 year old male says that it is a "selfless sacrifice for another". Most of the responses from married individuals talked about "sacrifice". What was interesting about this section was that the answers all flowed along a similar theme (whether they were Christian or not). I suppose in one way or another God is truly the definition of love and so it remains constant regardless of age, status, or "religion".

I think that as the older you get, certain things begin to influence your understanding of love. In middle school...you're just trying to figure out what is the difference between love, like, lust, and lemons. And although you hear that word being thrown around, you really have no clue what it means. The older you get (and the more relationships you're in) the more love becomes something bigger. You understand that it's not as flowery as sappy movies make it out to be. There's an element of work to it – and I think that's where you get a lot of people defining it as "sacrifice". But it becomes something that is fought for and worked at...and eventually it becomes "beyond expression".

I think as pastors, teachers, and parents...this is where we need to be very aware. Why? Because the definition of love sets the standard of relationships. If love becomes a hijacked idea of Hollywood or this cheap thing...then of course we're not going to respect it. This is where we need to sit down and explain what the biblical definition of "love" really means. Is love "just a feeling"? Is it always pretty? Explain it in light of the cross of Christ – that in his love, He willing goes to the cross to take a punishment meant for us without bitterness or complaint. This is a word that the church must redeem.

When Should a Person Start Dating?



Elementary school	1	1%
Middle school	9	7%
High school	48	36%
College	42	31%
Other	34	25%

What are Some “Deal Breakers”¹?

We wanted to ask this question because we wanted to see the correlation between what people are taught and how they respond to it. Does religion really matter that much? There were 5 main categories that were generated from this question:

1. Differing Religious Views (Not a Christian; unwilling to become a Christian; stagnant Christian)
2. Unmatched Morals (Selfishness; cheating; hypocritical; uncompromising; lazy)
3. Conflicting Personalities (Rude; ignorant; jealous; controlling; lack of intelligence)
4. Physicality/Past Relationships (Wanting sex before marriage; previously married; sexual orientation)
5. Habits (Smoking; drinking; physical abuse; hygiene)

We broke down the answers further and tallied how guys and girls viewed each other. For most girls, the common denominator that qualified as a “deal breaker” was if the guy was tempted by other girls (i.e. “checking them out”). For the guys, the deal breaker was if the girl “needed” to date (i.e. must have a guy) and girls that assumed the role of the man (i.e. alpha women). Some interesting responses includes, “First impressions are very important. The person’s physical attributes and personality are the first 2 things that I look for. I have to be physically attracted to them and our personalities have to match. From there, I see if she meets my requirements on my marriage checklist” and “Chubby in the stomach, ugliness, facial hair, and hairiness; if they’re gross, nerds, geeks and losers”

All in all, the responses all stemmed from external, symptomatic issues. Most of them had to do with what was wrong with the other person, their past, etc. You start getting into some problems because if you continue down this path, you start building this gigantic list of qualities that isn’t even biblical. Romans 3:10 says that “none is righteous, no, not one.” It is why the gospel is so huge when you consider dating and marriage. And I’m not saying, “don’t be wise about it and just date anybody that has eyeballs...” I’m just saying view it through Gospel lenses. Has the person reconciled their past by the blood of Jesus? Do you afford them mercy and grace just as you were shown? Because I’m worried for you if you expect and demand perfection from someone else...why? Because you are as much a sinner as that person. It is why the Gospel message is so beautiful. Jesus loves those as they are right now. He does not condemn them, but loves them and presses on them to sin no more. He wants all to go in peace, without regrets and confident in His healing and grace. Jesus died for sinners so that they may be reconciled.

We also see that the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble, is a door of hope. What He’s saying is that this is not your home. It won’t be like this forever. So He says, “I am here; I have not cast you out. There will come a day when we will celebrate again. This valley of trouble serves a purpose so don’t lose hope. There is a tomorrow and I have given you all the grace and all the strength you need to survive today. My mercies are new and I will give you enough to survive tomorrow when it comes.” So God is saying, “I am walking with you and listen to my voice while we are out here. You are going to be tempted to lose heart, but don’t because I am here with you. I love you! You are not alone; I have not abandoned you. I know it is bad right now, but there is coming a time when the wine is going to flow again. We are going to dance and sing. The valley of trouble has a purpose, it is not random—I am doing something. I brought you out here. I allured you. Walk with me and don’t lose heart.” – Matt Chandler

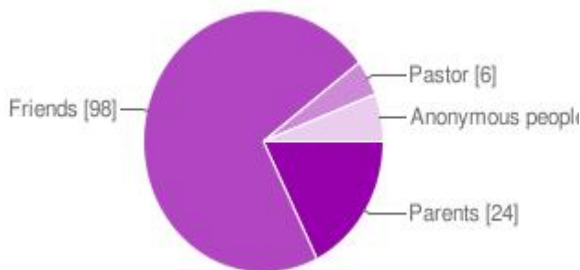
¹ “Deal Breaker” - something about the other person that would deter you from pursuing a relationship

When was first time you had a discussion about sex?

Most of the responses said that the first time they had a discussion about sex were around 4th/5th grade and middle school. There were a few that said they “never talked about it” and some didn’t start talking about sex until they were in college. We went another step further and asked **“With whom did you have that discussion with?”** and half of them responded “with a parent” (however, if the response was a certain parent, it was generally the mother) and the other half were “friends or school”. One response told us, “Ummm..... my parents haven’t really touched the subject and whenever we get near it, they like to change the subject to something a little more comfortable like ‘how was school?’”

We realized that many parents are not willing or feel uncomfortable speaking with their children about love, sex, or marriage. And if we can encourage you to take a hold of the mandate of Deuteronomy 6 – that it is your responsibility and nobody else to train up your child. And that includes sitting down with them at an early age and really defining biblically what sex, love, and marriage looks like. We see in this survey that the older the student becomes, the less likely they are willing to speak with their parents about this topic. And what you’ll see very soon is that your students are being inundated with sexual stimuli at a very early age. There is another shocking find in this section – those that have their first discussion about sex with other than parents are more likely to engage in pornography, manual stimulation, oral stimulation, and sexual intercourse. Here’s the hard thing about this...we asked them who would you feel most comfortable talking about sex with...and the majority would not go to their parents. So we know that you’ll be fighting an uphill battle...but we encourage you to fight nonetheless.

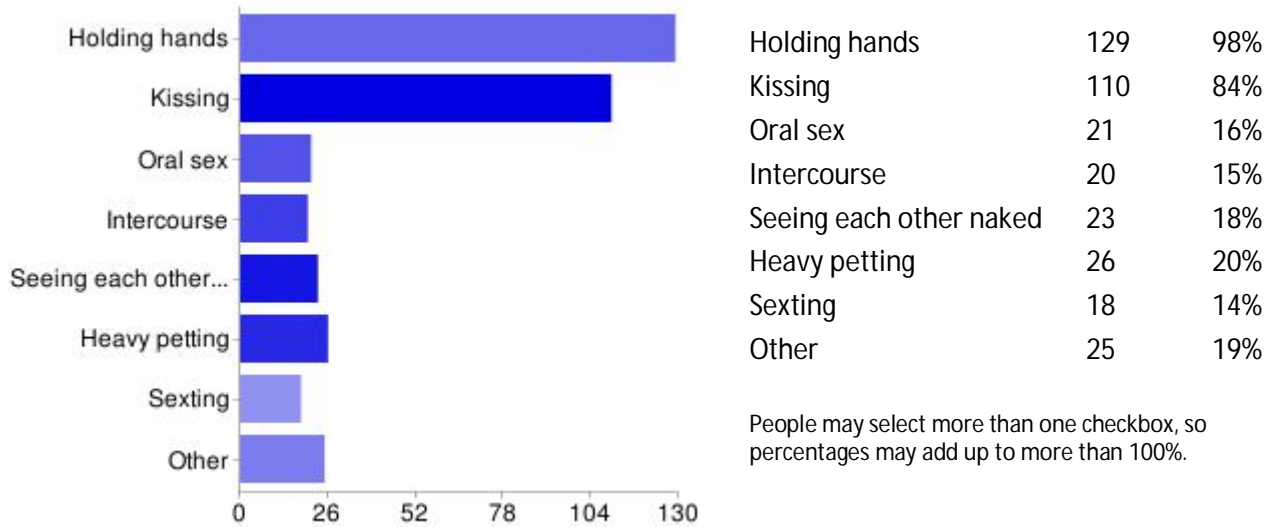
Who would you feel most comfortable talking about sex with?



Parents	24	18%
Friends	98	72%
Pastor	6	4%
Anonymous people	8	6%

We wanted to follow up on this stat but we think we know the reason behind these answers. When you look back at the question on “love”...one of the main answers had to do with “trust” and “security”. And it makes sense...you wouldn’t talk about something (esp. a tough topic like sex) with someone you didn’t trust. I suppose we inherently want to protect our image and it is tough for us to be open and honest with people. We don’t want to feel judged...because I think we ultimately know that if we were really honest, people would point fingers. And so that’s why we have 72% turning to friends first...

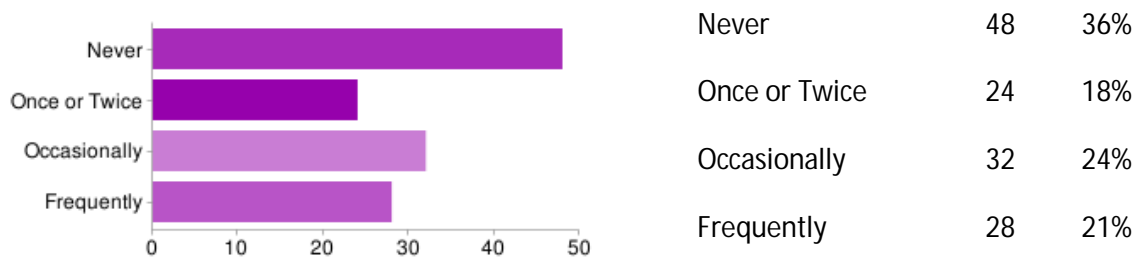
What is appropriate in dating?



We have to define some things before moving on. Most people know what oral sex and intercourse are, and holding hands, kissing, and seeing each other naked are pretty self explanatory. Heavy petting is considered *Non-penetrative sex* (sexual activity without vaginal, anal, or oral penetration, as opposed to penetrative aspects of intercourse, anal sex, or oral sex)². Sexting is (a portmanteau of sex and texting) is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between mobile phones. In a 2008 survey of 1,280 teenagers and young adults of both sexes on Cosmogirl.com sponsored by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 20% of teens (13-19) and 33% of young adults (20-26) had sent nude or semi-nude photographs of themselves electronically. Additionally, 39% of teens and 59% of young adults had sent sexually explicit text messages.³

We also need to remind you, as you observe this data, 88% of the people taking this survey consider themselves Christians and 78 out of 136 responses are between the ages of 14-19. The question has always been “How far is too far?” and “When is the exact moment I am no longer a virgin?” Because we think that if we get as close to the line as possible but not stepping over it...then we’re OK and maybe God won’t hate me as much. But before we give you a response, we want to show you the compare/contrast between what people think and what they do:

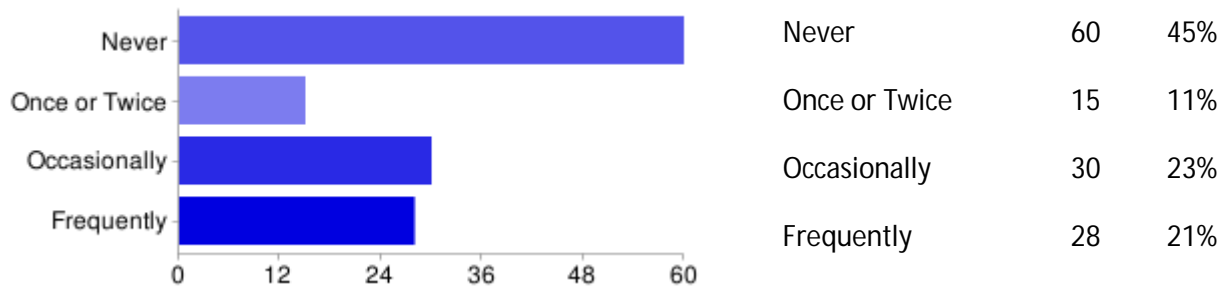
How often have you engaged in... – Cuddling



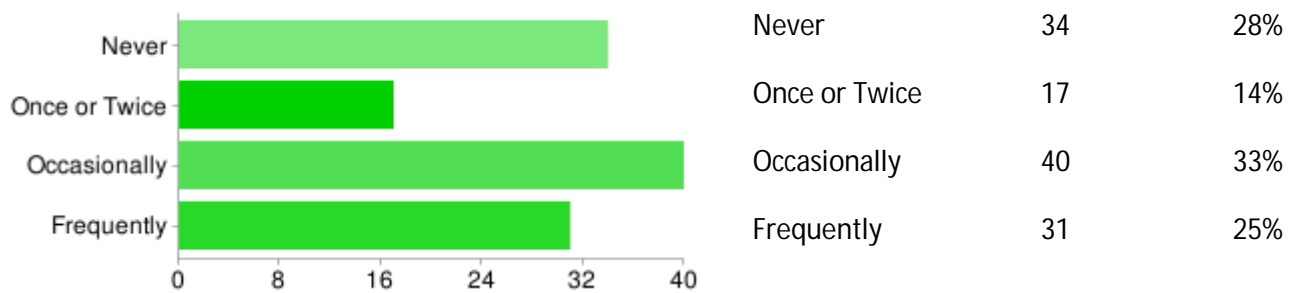
² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heavy_petting

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexting> (http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf)

How often have you engaged in... – Kissing

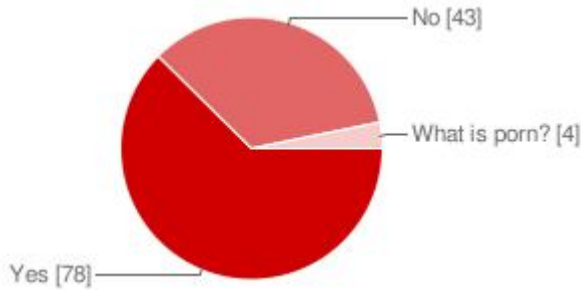


Furthermore, 20% occasionally and 14% frequently engage in manual stimulation. 13% occasionally and 6% frequently engage in oral stimulation. 13 people responded that they occasionally engage in intercourse and 12 people have responded that they frequently engage in intercourse. However, the most interesting piece of data was when we asked whether they had any *interest* in any of the above (cuddling, kissing, manual/oral stimulation, and/or intercourse).



We say this is interesting because although only 10% are engaging in manual/oral stimulation and intercourse...75% want to engage in it. It's the idea that even though you may think your kid is not involved in anything, they are still surrounded with it and there is the desire churning within them. So that brings us back to the initial question of "how far is too far?" If you are going about it that way...then I think you're setting yourself up for failure. Because even if you come up with a list of "do's" and "don'ts" that is still missing one important aspect...the heart. So we're begging you not to teach morality on this one (or ever). We have a complementary article entitled "Love, Sex, and Theology: Redeeming Culture Through the Lenses of the Gospel" that address the heart issues. When you consider men & women of our faith who passionately wanted to follow after Jesus, they never asked "how much is too much?" or "when can I stop?" For them...it was a matter of the heart. So anything that drew them closer to Jesus, they chased it. And anything that pulled them away from Jesus, they ran from it. This applies especially to the area of sex. 1) Are you serious about your personal walk with Jesus? 2) What draws you closer to him? And how are you going to pursue those things? 3) What pulls you away from Jesus? What steps are you taking to get out of it?

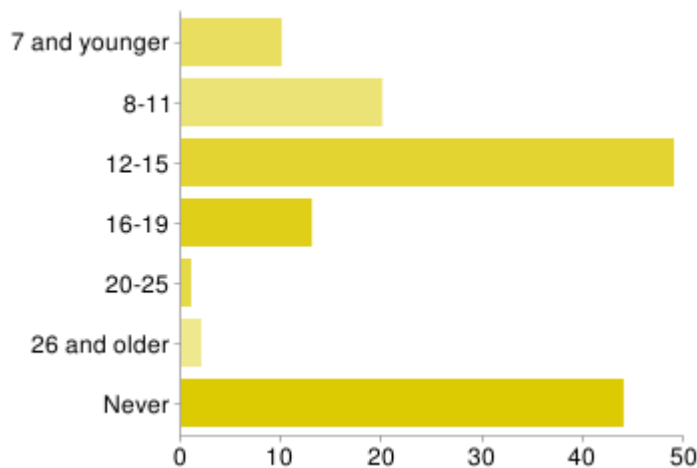
Have You Ever Looked at Pornographic Material?



Yes	78	62%
No	43	34%
What is porn?	4	3%

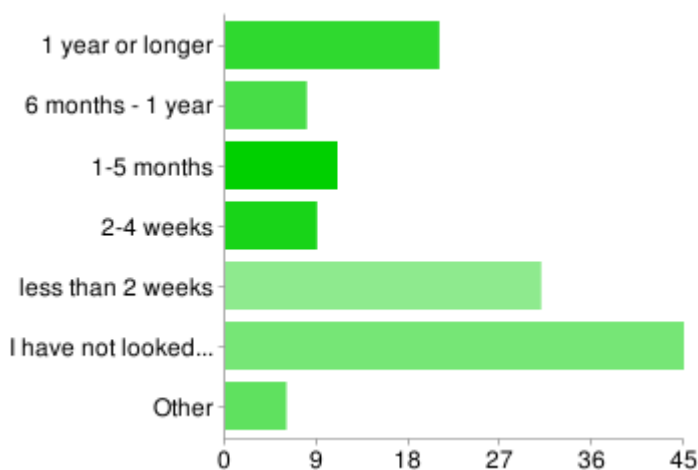
For the majority of our people, they know what pornography are...only 4 people have no clue (and I'm assuming they're in the 11-13 year old category). But we took the "yes" column and broke them down male and female. 94% of guys have looked at porn at least once. 57% of girls have looked at porn at least once.

At what age did you first look at pornographic material?



7 and younger	10	7%
8-11	20	14%
12-15	49	35%
16-19	13	9%
20-25	1	1%
26 and older	2	1%
Never	44	32%

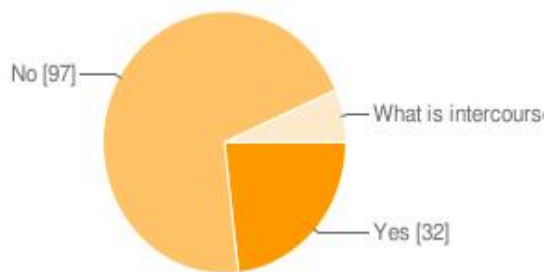
When was the last time you looked at pornographic material?



1 year or longer	21	16%
6 months - 1 year	8	6%
1-5 months	11	8%
2-4 weeks	9	7%
Less than 2 weeks	31	24%
I have not looked at pornographic material	45	34%
Other	6	5%

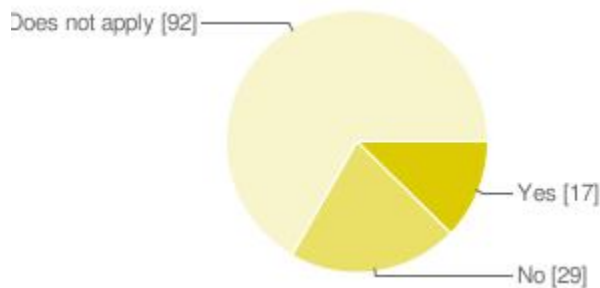
We could go on and on with this one but we just wanted to highlight some things and we'll move on. The first time that people are looking at porn is around the ages of 11-15 (Almost 50%). This is quite alarming but sadly not surprising that it lines up with the national statistic. Stats show late elementary school to middle school. Why? I suppose it is because in middle school, you interact with a wide-range of people coming from all types of backgrounds. It's cool to be different and try new things. Sex becomes more of a sport that is to be mastered and upon winning, you get the bragging rights. I think it's that plus just a bombardment of sexually charged multimedia (from TV shows, magazines, music, billboards, etc.) We address the issue of porn in our other document and we ask that you go through it. Other resources include: "Porn Again Christian" by Mark Driscoll; "Battling Unbelief" by John Piper and "Addictions" by Edward T. Welch.

Have you ever had sexual intercourse?



Yes	32	23%
No	97	70%
What is intercourse?	9	7%

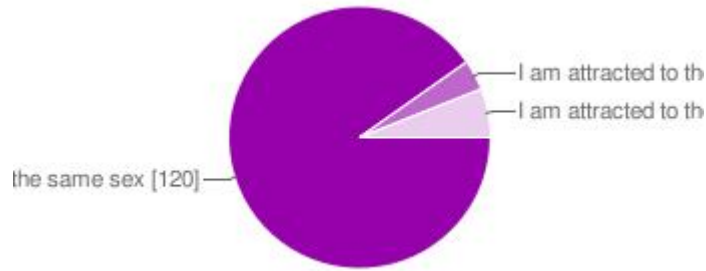
Was your first sexual encounter planned?



Yes	17	12%
No	29	21%
Does not apply	92	67%

Again, we just wanted to give you some raw data were processed. May I remind you that 88% claimed to be Christian and 8 claimed to be married. We're not making any judgment calls by any means...but we're just telling you to be aware of the facts. There are those in our midst that have dealt with these issues and they're mindsets vary – from apathetic, regret, joy, pain, etc. So I don't think you can go around saying, "Just don't have sex". Because that's really not going to do anything. 12% of first sexual encounters were planned and according to the survey 10% said that "they would not have changed anything" and 3% said that, "they would have done it sooner". So how we address this topic is of utmost important...especially when we teach. Our remarks do have an effect on our students (esp. of the ones in the next graph). When we make subtle jokes it *does* affect the ones in the room that have participated in it – and usually it turns them off to anything else that we teach because there's this stigma against them.

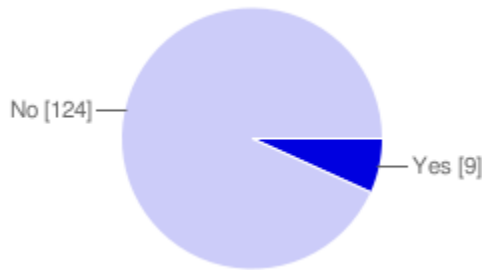
Same sex attraction



I am not attracted to the same sex	120	90%
I am attracted to the same sex and have not acted on it	5	4%
I am attracted to the same sex and have acted on it	8	6%

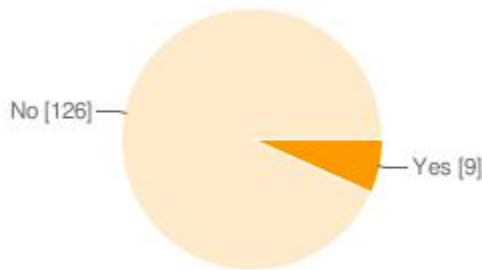
We wanted to be very frank and honest about our survey so we included this question. And we asked in a very intentional manner. I believe the church needs to be a place where it's safe to wrestle and struggle with any type of sexual issue. The church has had a horrendous reputation of standing for everything we're against. You see here that though 6% have actually acted upon their same-sex tendencies, 4% are attracted to the same sex and have not acted on it.

Have you ever been a victim of rape⁴?



Yes	9	7%
No	124	93%

Have you ever been involved in sexual abuse⁵?



Yes	9	7%
No	126	93%

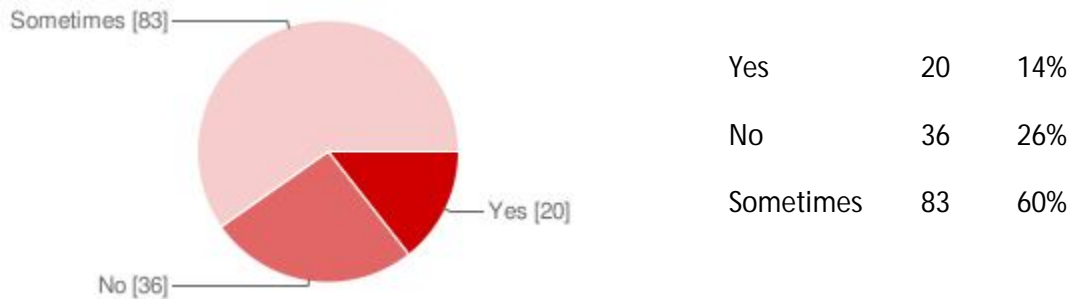
*For those who have answered in the positive, please know that Jesus is a God that has a heart for the broken, the abused and He loves you more than you know. Please take time to heal, but you're going to

⁴ **Rape** is an assault by a person involving sexual intercourse with another person without that person's consent.

⁵ **Sexual Abuse** is the forcing of undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another

need a community around you to walk with you through this. If you haven't sought counseling or reconciliation, it's going to be harder to live life to its fullest. So please find healing somewhere if it's not with us.

Do you feel like the church is a safe place to talk about sexuality?



Final Thoughts

To the pastor: We pray that you walk away with a sense of urgency. We hope you see the reality of the world around us and though we live and minister within the walls of the church...it is our calling to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people. We pray that you're bold in preaching the word and allow the Holy Spirit to heal their hearts. We pray that you do your part in studying as much as you can so that you might equip the saints for the work of ministry. Teach your parents how to teach this subject. Teach a biblical understanding of love, sex, and marriage. Redeem what the world has hijacked from the church.

To the parent: We also pray that you walk away with a sense of urgency. Please do not neglect your role as the primary teacher in the life of your children. Please don't ever think "not my child" because even if it's not your child...there are those around them that will influence and if not people...media for sure. Please do not think that because you have done everything right your child will come out perfectly. God's sovereignty still reigns over your child's life and sexuality. We have thousands of testimonies to send your way if you don't believe us. So please...do all you can to position them under the direction of the Holy Spirit and then pray and beg that the Lord will move in their hearts. Please find help and guidance on this subject. Please intentionally plan to talk with your teen about this subject soon.

To the youth: We understand that temptation abounds and it doesn't seem like it's going away any time soon. But we encourage you believers in Jesus to never settle for anything less than the best. We want to remind you that Jesus really does know what He's talking about and if we would just follow him...love, sex, dating, and marriage becomes this beautiful thing. He has designed it so that you might enjoy it in His context. So don't settle. We pray that you won't judge those around you...but that you love them with the love that Christ has for them. We ask that you take on the role of ministering to their needs and you become their counselor. For those who haven't experienced Jesus, we ask that you sit down and really think about what's going in your life. Ask the question "are you truly satisfied? Do you find the fulfillment that your lifestyle promises?"

***If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us www.cbc-youth.com**