

Adolescents in Malawi

HOME AND LIFE

- Nearly 8 in 10 Malawian adolescents aged 12–19* live in rural areas.
- More than one-quarter of adolescents have lost one or both parents.
- 99% of adolescents have a religious affiliation; of these, almost all feel that religion is very important to them and attend a religious service at least once a week.
- Half or more of adolescents report that their parents or guardians always know where they go out at night, what they do with their free time or who their friends are.
- More than 9 in 10 of all adolescents are unmarried; however 13% of 15–19-year-old women are married.
- Of the 16% of 15–19-year-old women who have given birth, one-third did not want their last birth at all, and more than one-quarter wanted the birth at a later time.

SCHOOL

- 7 in 10 young women and 8 in 10 young men are currently in school, and similar proportions expect to complete secondary or higher education.
- Of those who stop schooling, 43% of young women and 56% of young men cite financial difficulty—inability to pay school fees and lack of school materials—as the main reason

for leaving; 11% of females cite pregnancy.

- 14% of young women and 26% of young men have attended sex education classes or talks; of these, the majority did so before they first had sex.
- At least two-thirds of adolescents who have attended school believe it is important for sex education to be taught in schools.

WORRIES

- About half of all adolescents are worried about getting HIV/AIDS.
- About half of adolescents are worried about getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant.
- One-third of adolescents are worried about their health, and more than 4 in 10 are worried about getting enough to eat.

SEX

- 85% of 12–14-year-old females and 67% of males the same age have never had sex, never had a boyfriend or girlfriend, and never experienced

kissing or fondling, but about half or more have heard of each of these activities.

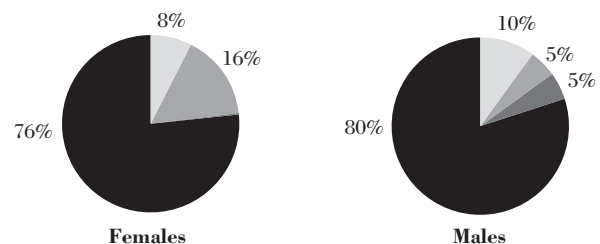
- 37% of 15–19-year-old females and 60% of such males have had sex.
- At least three-quarters of all adolescents think that both young women and young men should remain virgins until they marry.
- Nearly 1 in 5 of all adolescents have been touched, kissed, grabbed or fondled in an unwanted sexual way.

FIRST SEX†

- More than 9 in 10 female adolescents and 8 in 10 males had sex for the first time with a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse.
- More than 7 in 10 adolescents did not use any contraceptive method the first time they had sex.
- Nearly 40% of females and 7% of males report that they were not willing at all at the time of their first sexual intercourse.

chart a
Parental Communication

Most adolescents say that neither parent has talked to them about sex.



% of 12–19-year-olds whose parents have ever talked to them about sex-related matters

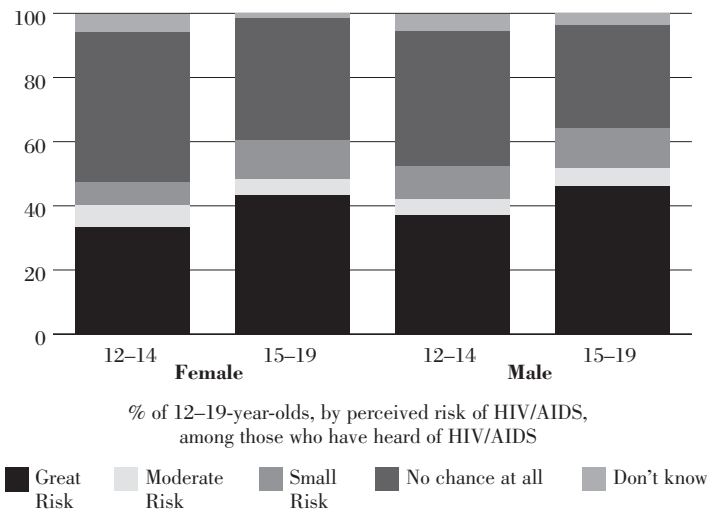
Legend: Both parents (light grey), Mother only (medium grey), Father only (dark grey), Neither parent (black)

* “Adolescents” refers to 12–19-year-olds unless otherwise specified.

† Among sexually experienced adolescents (those who have ever had sexual intercourse).

chart b
Risk Perception

Many adolescents do not believe they are at risk of getting HIV/AIDS.



CONTRACEPTION

- The condom is the most commonly used method among sexually active[‡] adolescents who are using a contraceptive method.
- 61% of unmarried sexually active young women and 66% of all sexually active young men currently use no contraceptive method; one-third of each of these groups uses the male condom.
- The main reasons adolescents did not use a condom the last time they had sex[§] were that they “felt safe” and that they did not have one.
- Only 8% of married 15-19-year-old women use the condom; 79% use no contraceptive method.

HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

- 95% of all adolescents have heard of AIDS. Of these, —at least 7 in 10 are familiar with ways to avoid transmission of the AIDS virus,

such as not having sex at all, being monogamous with an uninfected partner, or using a condom consistently and correctly;

—more than two-thirds have personally known someone who has died of AIDS; and

—at least three-quarters would be willing to care for a family member infected with HIV, but about half would want the infection kept secret.

- About one-third of adolescents have never heard of any STIs apart from HIV/AIDS.
- 8% of sexually experienced 15-19-year-old women and 14% of such men have had an STI.

INFORMATION AND SERVICES

- More than 6 in 10 adolescents who know of HIV/AIDS have received HIV information from teachers, health providers or the mass media; these are also the sources adolescents prefer.
- Among those who know of any source, adolescents

overwhelmingly prefer to obtain contraceptives and STI treatment from government clinics and hospitals.

- About two-thirds of those who have had an STI did not seek treatment—mostly because they were embarrassed, did not want other people to know, did not know where to go or thought it cost too much.
- 7 in 10 adolescents know about HIV, know about testing and know a place where testing is done; 3% have ever been tested.
- Among adolescents who know about testing and have never been tested, 7 in 10 young women and 8 in 10 young men want to be tested.
- The most common reasons given by those who want to be tested but have not been are that they are not sexually active or they do not believe they are at risk for other reasons; about 1 in 10 do not want to know their status and a small proportion do not know where to go or think it costs too much.

MISPERCEPTIONS

- A little more than half of all adolescents do not know whether or do not think that a woman can get pregnant the first time she has sexual intercourse or if she has sex standing up.
- About half do not know or do not think that a woman can get pregnant if she washes herself thoroughly immediately after sex.
- Fewer than 1 in 4 adolescents who have heard of AIDS believe that the AIDS

virus can be transmitted by sharing food or through witchcraft or supernatural means, but more than one-third think the virus can be transmitted by mosquito bites.

SOURCES OF DATA

These data are from a nationally representative, household-based survey of 4,031 youth aged 12-19. The survey was conducted in March-August 2004 and had an overall response rate of 89%. This survey was conducted as part of the project Protecting the Next Generation: Understanding HIV Risk Among Youth, undertaken in Malawi by the Guttmacher Institute and the Centre for Social Research in conjunction with ORC Macro, the National Statistical Office of the Government of Malawi and Youth Net and Counselling. The full set of results are published in the report Munthali, A et al., “Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Malawi: Results from the 2004 National Survey of Adolescents.”

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[‡] Those who have had sexual intercourse in the previous 3 months.

[§] Among those who have had sexual intercourse in the previous 12 months.