

Sexual-Related Behaviors and Academic Achievement



Montana Office of Public Instruction • Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent • www.opi.mt.gov

What is the relationship between sexual-related behaviors and academic achievement?

Data presented below from the 2023 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show a negative association between sexual-related behaviors and academic achievement. This means that students with higher grades are less likely to engage in sexual-related behaviors than their classmates with lower grades, and students who do not engage in sexual-related behaviors receive higher grades than their classmates who do engage in sexual-related behaviors. These associations do not prove causation. Further research is needed to determine whether low grades lead to sexual-related behaviors, sexual-related behaviors lead to low grades, or some other factors lead to both of these problems.

Percentage of high school students who engaged in sexual-related behaviors, by type of grades earned – Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2023.

Sexual-Related Behaviors	Percentage of Montana high school students who engaged in each risk behavior, by type of grades mostly earned				Significant Association*
	A's	B's	C's	D's/F's	
Sexual activity					
Had sexual intercourse during their lifetime	33	42	47	59	Yes
Had sexual intercourse before age 13 years	2	3	6	8	Yes
Had sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their lifetime	6	11	11	20	Yes
Had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months (“currently sexually active”)	24	30	31	37	Yes
Drank alcohol or used drugs before last sexual intercourse, among currently sexually active	10	14	16	30	Yes
Teen Pregnancy and STD Prevention					
Used a condom during last sexual intercourse, among currently sexually active	52	53	45	45	No
Used birth control pills before last sexual intercourse to prevent pregnancy, among currently sexually active	34	25	19	20	Yes
Used an IUD (e.g., Mirena or ParaGard) or implant (e.g., Implanon or Nexplanon) before last sexual intercourse, among currently sexually active	15	14	20	17	No
Used birth control pills; an IUD or implant; or a shot (e.g., Depo-Provera), patch (e.g., OrthoEvra), or birth control ring (e.g., NuvaRing) during last sexual intercourse, among currently sexually active	52	44	44	45	No
Used both a condom during and birth control pills; an IUD or implant; or a shot, patch, or birth control ring before last sexual intercourse to prevent STD and pregnancy, among currently sexually active	17	17	14	14	No
Did not use any method to prevent pregnancy, among currently sexually active	7	10	19	16	Yes

*Based on logistic regression analysis controlling for sex, race/ethnicity, and grade in school, $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Percentage of high school students, by sexual-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2023.

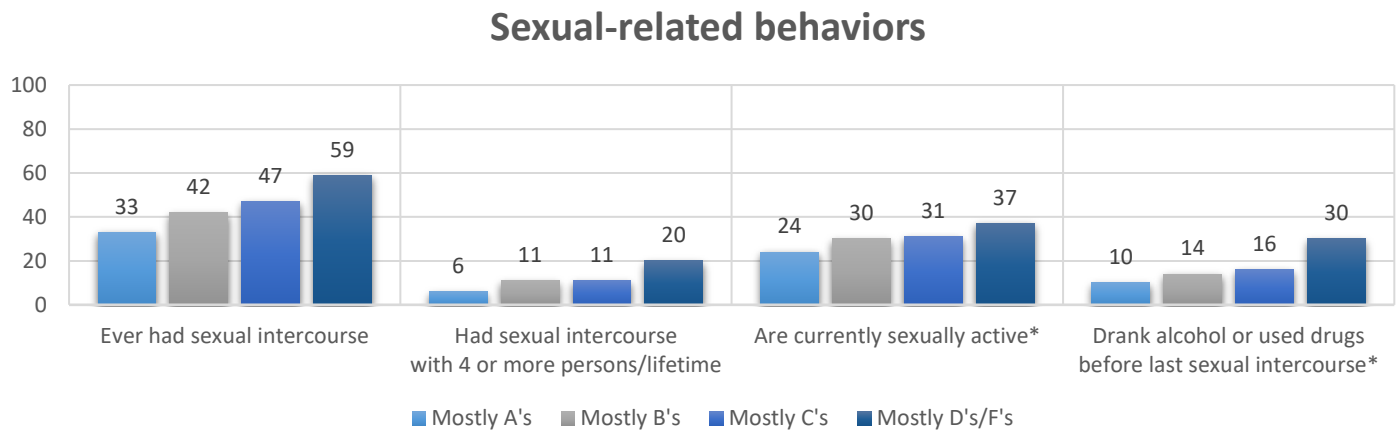
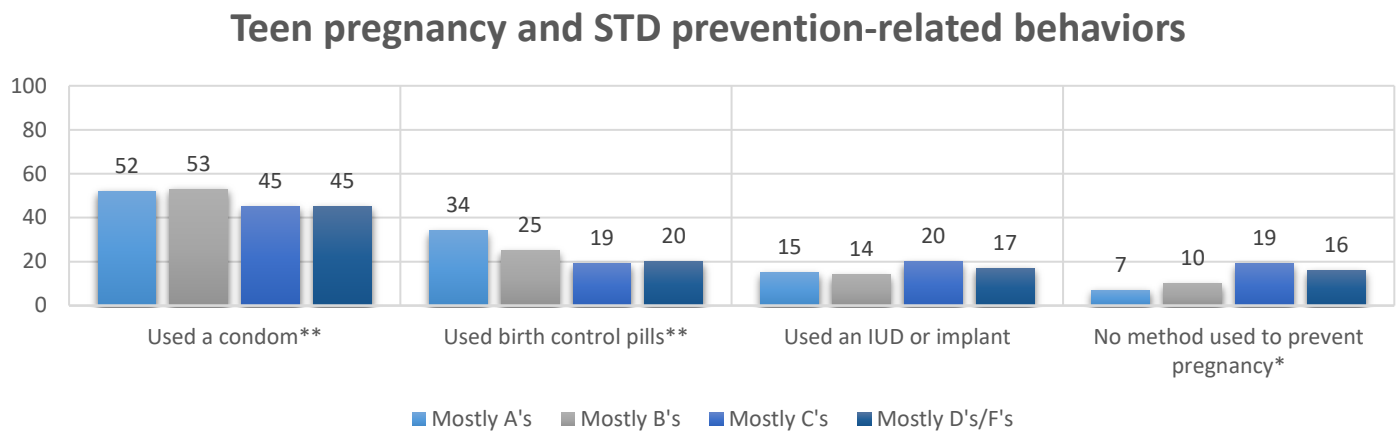


Figure 2. Percentage of high school students, by teen pregnancy and STD prevention-related behavior, by grades earned. Montana YRBS, 2023.



* During the past 3 months.

** During or before last sexual intercourse, among currently sexually active.

The Montana YRBS monitors priority health-risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. It is conducted every 2 years during late winter and provides data representative of high school students in Montana. In 2023, students completing the YRBS were asked, “During the past 12 months, how would you describe your grades in school?” and given seven response options (Mostly A’s, Mostly B’s, Mostly C’s, Mostly D’s, Mostly F’s, None of these grades, and Not sure). In 2023, 46% of students received mostly A’s, 27% received mostly B’s, 15% received mostly C’s, 7% received mostly D’s or F’s, and 5% reported receiving none of these grades or not sure. The YRBS has been administered by the Office of Public Instruction in collaboration with Montana schools since 1991. For more information on the YRBS please visit www.opi.mt.gov/yrbs.

Montana High School Students - Grades Earned

