

Birth Control Pill Use

Headline

Among sexually active high school students, non-Hispanic whites are far more likely than non-Hispanic black or Hispanic students to use birth control pills (21 percent versus 9 percent, for both non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics in 2007). ([Figure 2](#))

Importance

Consistent and effective contraceptive use helps reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy among sexually active teens. Although a similar percentage of teens are sexually active in the United States as in western European countries, the U.S. has a much higher teen pregnancy rate.¹ This is due to lower consistency and effectiveness of contraceptive use.² The birth control pill is a highly effective contraceptive method that has been available for several decades. Depo Provera and Norplant are two other long-lasting hormonal methods that provide reliable contraceptive consistency.

It is important to note that, although taking birth control pills can be an effective contraceptive method in protecting against an unwanted pregnancy, they will not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).³ Sexually active teenagers, if choosing to use the birth control pill, must also use an additional method, such as a condom, to protect themselves against acquiring an STI.

Trends

In 2007, 16 percent of sexually active high school students reported using birth control pills at their most recent sexual intercourse. Estimates since 1993 have ranged between 16 percent and 18 percent. ([Figure 1](#))

Differences by Gender

The percentage of males who report that their partners used birth control pills at most recent sexual intercourse is lower than the percentage of females who report using birth control pills at most recent intercourse. In 2007, 13 percent of sexually active male high school students reported birth control pill use by their partners, compared with 19 percent of females. ([Table 1](#)) This may reflect a real difference or it may reflect a lack of awareness among males regarding their partners' use of birth control pills.

Differences by Race and Ethnicity⁴

In 2007, sexually active non-Hispanic white youth were more than twice as likely as Hispanic and non-Hispanic black youth to report using birth control pills at most recent sexual intercourse (21 percent compared with 9 percent and 9 percent, respectively). ([Figure 2](#))

Differences by Grade

Birth control pill use at most recent sexual intercourse is higher among older youth. In 2007, 9 percent of all sexually active ninth graders reported using birth control pills, compared with 24 percent of twelfth graders. ([Table 1](#)) Among females in 2007, the proportions are 9 percent of ninth graders compared with 26 percent of twelfth graders. ([Figure 3](#))

State and Local Estimates

2005 estimates of birth control pill use at most recent sexual intercourse among high school students (Grades 9-12) are available for select states and cities by gender from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/yrbss/>

International Estimates

1997/1998 estimates of birth control pill use among sexually active males and females in eight select countries can be found in a WHO policy report, *Health and Health Behavior Among Young People*, found at http://www.hbsc.org/downloads/Int_Report_00.pdf

National Goals

Through its *Healthy People 2010* initiative, the federal government has set a national goal to “increase the proportion of sexually active, unmarried adolescents aged 15 to 17 years who use contraception that both effectively prevents pregnancy and provides barrier protection against diseases.”⁵ The baseline percentages among males and females who used a condom in combination with a hormonal method (birth control pill, Norplant, or Depo-Provera) were 8 and 7 percent, respectively, in 1995. The goal for 2010 is 11 percent among males and 9 percent among females.

For more information, see:

<http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/document/html/objectives/09-10.htm>

Goal 9-10:

[http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/HTML/tracking/THP_PartA.htm#Variability of Estimates](http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/HTML/tracking/THP_PartA.htm#Variability_of_Estimates)

Definition

Among sexually active students (students who reported they had sex in the three months preceding the survey), respondents who reported “Birth control pills” to the question: “The last time you had sexual intercourse, what one method did you or your partner use to prevent pregnancy (Select only one response)?” Note that students may (also) use other methods of contraception or protection such as condoms, whether or not they use birth control pills.

Data Source

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*:

Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 20.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4401.htm#00001034.htm>

Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 28.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4504.htm#00001946.htm>

Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR; 47(No. SS-3): Table 28.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/MMWRFile/ss4703.htm#00003369.htm>

Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 32.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss4905a1.htm#tab32>

Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 32.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5104a1.htm#tab32>

Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004; 53(No. SS-2): Table 44.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5302a1.htm#tab44>

Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5): Table 46.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5505a1.htm#tab46>

Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007:57(No. SS-4) Table 65.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5704a1.htm#tab65>

Raw Data Source

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm>

Approximate Date of Next Update

Summer 2010

¹ Singh, Darroch, Frost & the Study Team (2001). "Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Adolescent Women's Sexual and Reproductive Behavior: The Case of Five Developed Countries." *Family Planning Perspectives*, 33(6):251-258 & 289. <http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/journals/3325101.pdf> ; Singh, S. &

Darroch, J.E. (2000). "Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing: Levels and Trends in Developed Countries." *Family Planning Perspectives*, 32(1):14-23. <http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/journals/3201400.pdf>;

Panchaud, Singh, Feivelson & Darroch (2000). "Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among Adolescents in Developed Countries." *Family Planning Perspectives*, 32(1):24-32 & 45. [http://www.agi-](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/journals/3202400.pdf)

[usa.org/pubs/journals/3202400.pdf](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/journals/3202400.pdf)

² The Alan Guttmacher Institute, "Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Behavior in Developed Countries: Can More Progress Be Made?" at http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/eurosynth_rpt.pdf

³ Hatcher, Trussell, Stewart, Cates Jr., Stewart, Guest & Kowal (1998). *Contraceptive Technology* (Seventeenth Revised Edition). New York: Ardent Media, Inc.

⁴ Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented here only include respondents who selected one category when choosing their race.

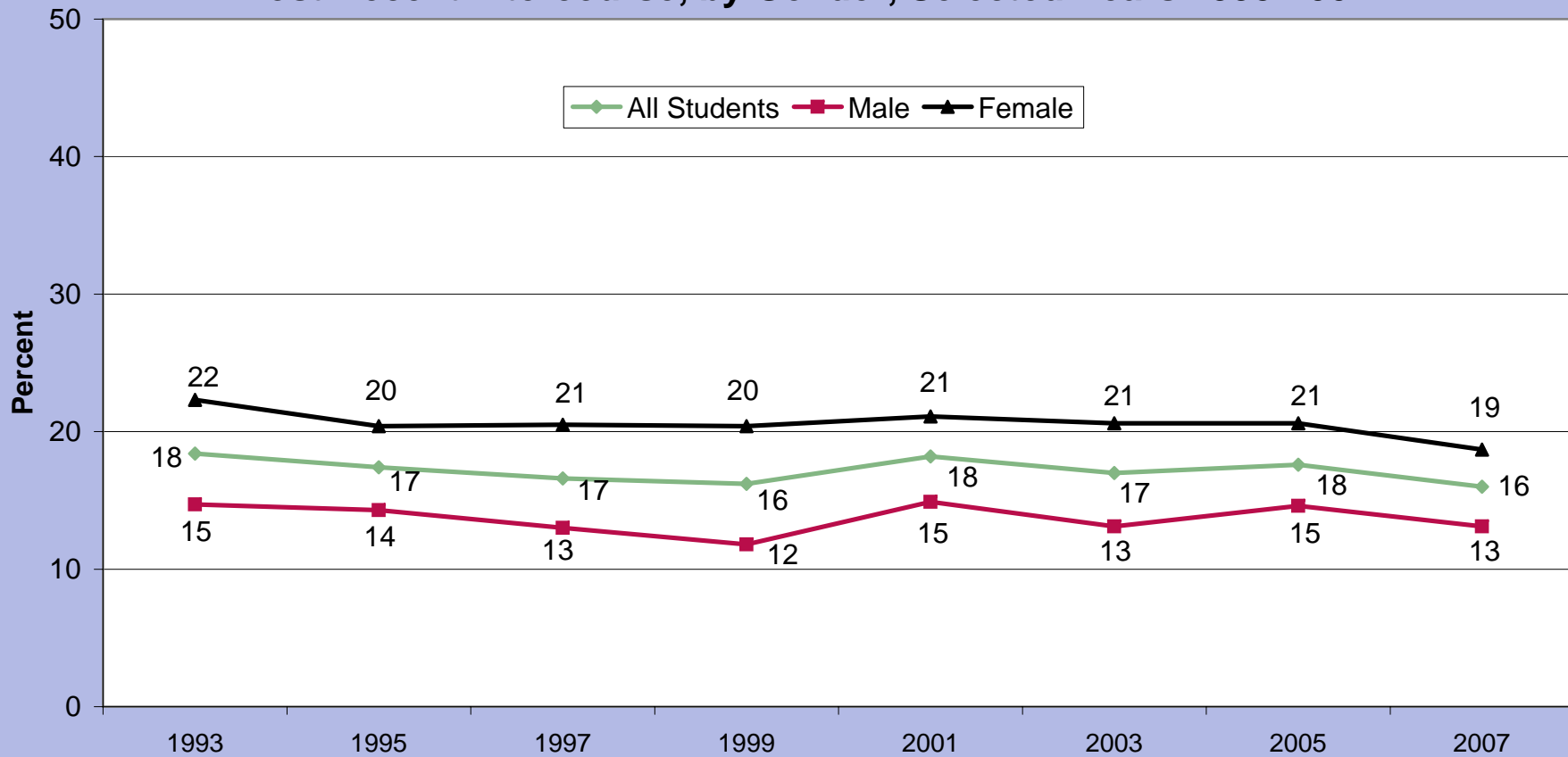
⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010. 2nd ed. With Understanding and Improving Health and Objectives for Improving Health. 2 vols.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government

Printing Office, November 2000: Goal 9-10.

<http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/document/html/objectives/09-10.htm>

Figure 1

Percentage of Sexually Active¹ High School Students Who Reported Using Birth Control Pills at Most Recent Intercourse, by Gender, Selected Years 1993-2007

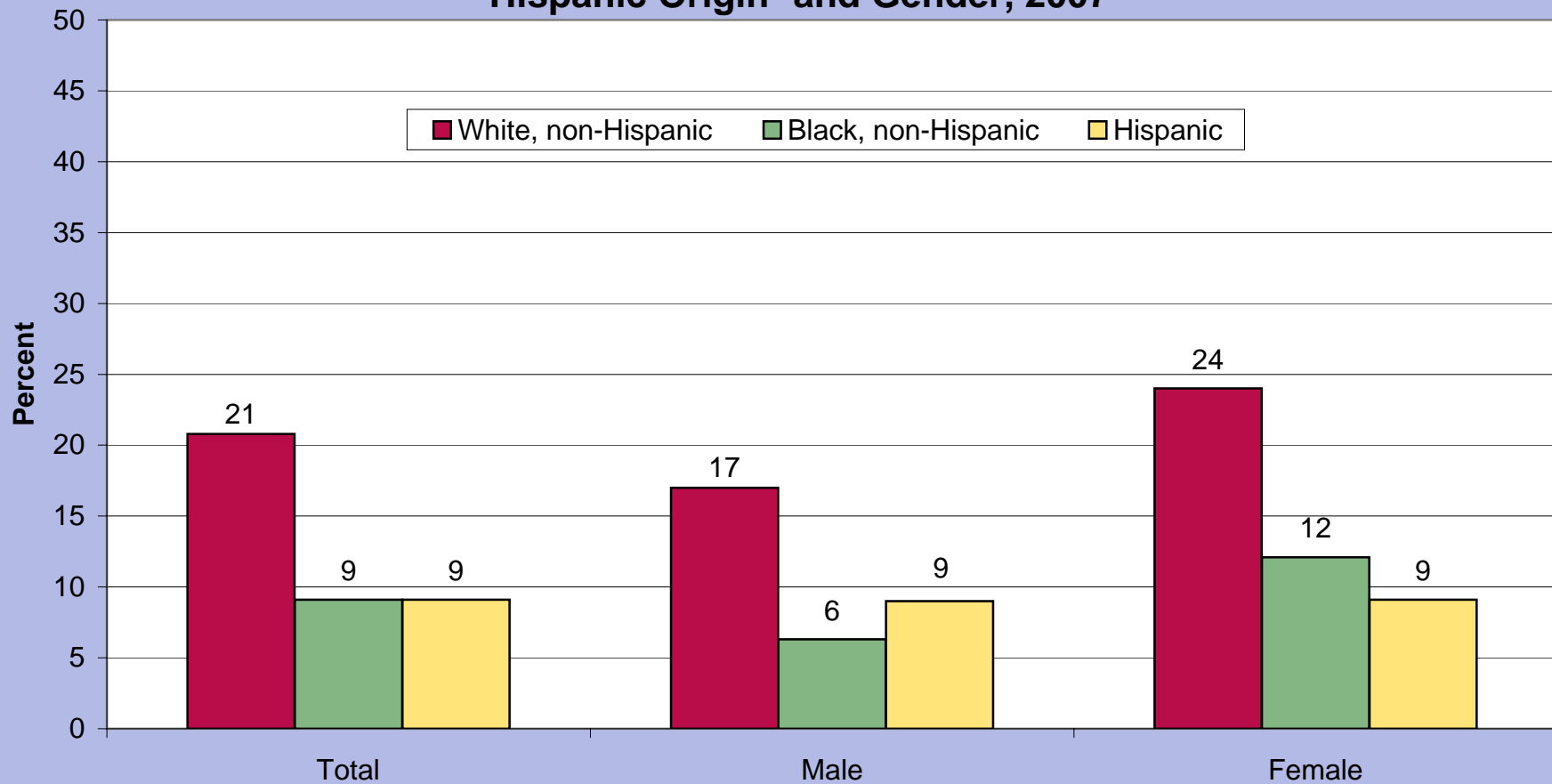


¹ Students who have had sexual intercourse in the three months preceding this survey.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, Data for 1993: March 24 1995. MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 20; Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 28; Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR; 47(No. SS-3): Table 28; Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 32; Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51 (No. SS-4): Table 32. Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004;53(No. SS-2): Table 44. Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5): Table 46. Data for June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007;57(No. SS-4) Table 65.

Figure 2

Percentage of Sexually Active¹ High School Students Who Reported Using Birth Control Pills at Most Recent Intercourse, by Race and Hispanic Origin² and Gender, 2007



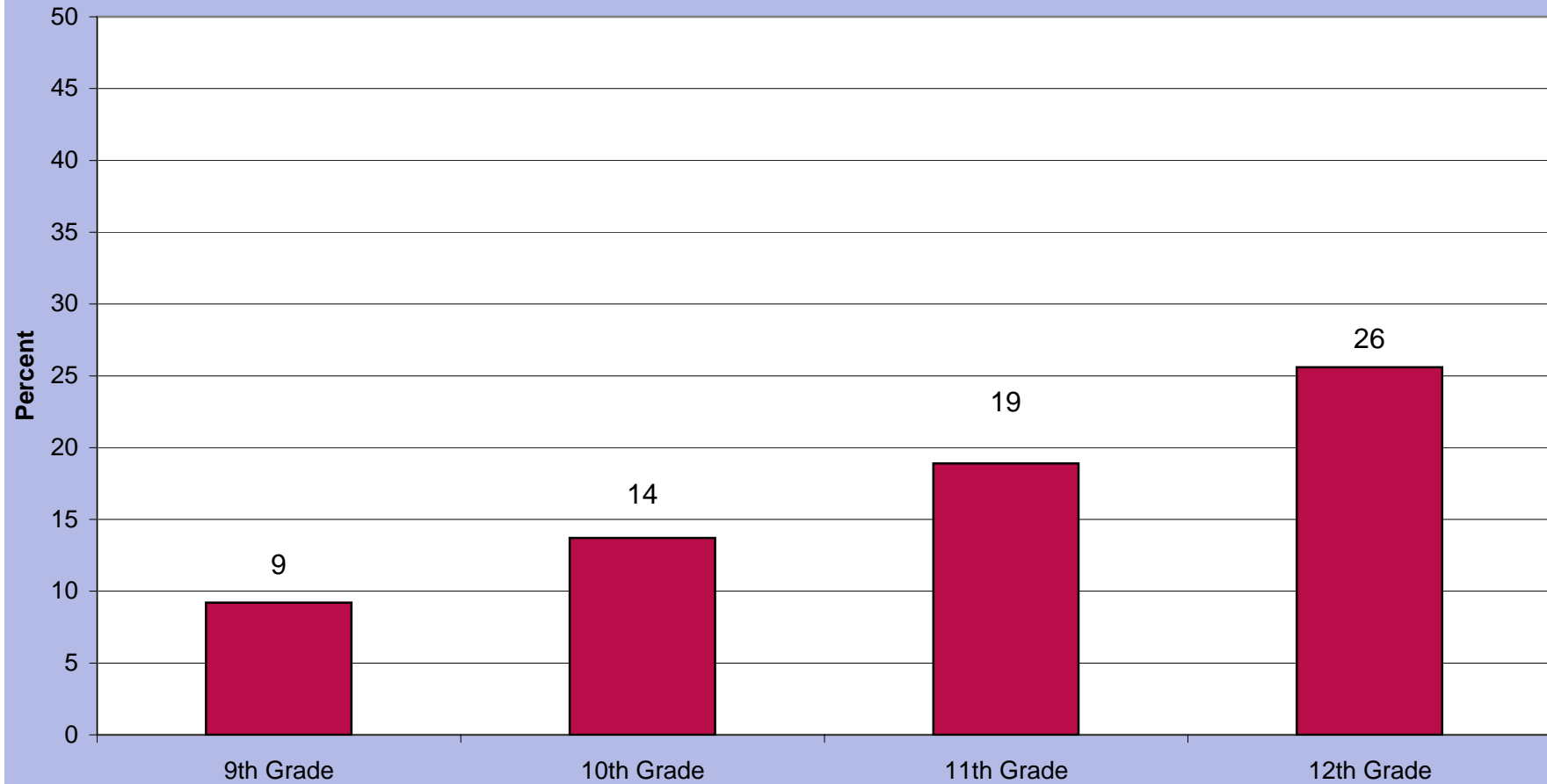
¹ Students who have sexual intercourse in the three months preceding this survey.

² Estimates reported here only include respondents who selected one race category.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007:57(No. SS-4) Table 65.

Figure 3

Percentage of Sexually Active¹ Females in Grades 9 through 12 Who Reported Using Birth Control Pills at Most Recent Intercourse, by Grade, 2007

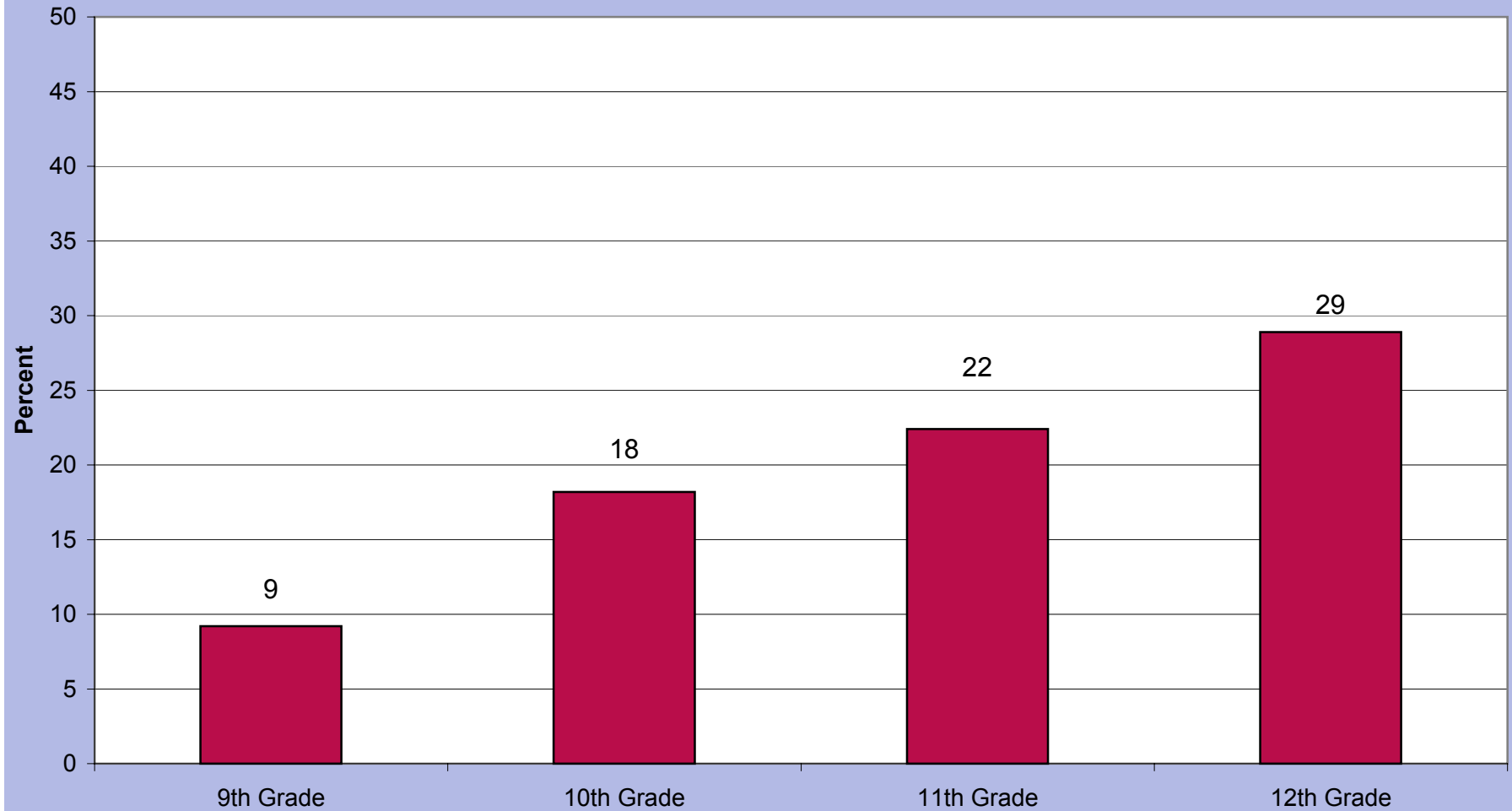


¹ Students who have had sexual intercourse in the three months preceding this survey.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007:57(No. SS-4) Table 65.

Figure 4

Percentage of Sexually Active Females in Grades 9-12 Who Reported Using Birth Control Pills at Most Recent Intercourse, by Grade, 2001



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51(No. SS-4): Table 32.



Table 1

Percentage of Sexually Active¹ Students in Grades 9-12 Who Reported Using Birth Control Pills at Last Intercourse, Selected Years 1993-2007

	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
All Students	18.4	17.4	16.6	16.2	18.2	17.0	17.6	16.0
Race/Ethnicity²								
White, non-Hispanic	20.4	21.4	20.6	21.0	23.4	22.3	22.3	20.8
Black, non-Hispanic	15.1	10.2	11.9	7.7	7.9	7.9	10.0	9.1
Hispanic	12.4	11.4	9.5	7.8	9.6	11.2	9.8	9.1
Grade								
9	9.0	10.9	7.8	12.0	7.6	8.7	7.5	8.7
10	13.7	12.2	12.0	9.3	15.8	12.7	14.3	11.6
11	16.8	15.4	15.6	15.3	18.6	19.6	18.5	15.0
12	25.8	25.0	24.0	24.9	26.3	22.6	25.6	23.5
Male	14.7	14.3	13.0	11.8	14.9	13.1	14.6	13.1
Race/Ethnicity²								
White, non-Hispanic	17.1	17.0	16.7	15.7	19.3	17.3	17.2	17.0
Black, non-Hispanic	10.5	8.3	9.4	3.4	7.8	4.4	9.4	6.3
Hispanic	9.8	13.5	6.9	5.4	8.7	10.3	10.3	9.0
Grade								
9	7.5	9.7	7.6	11.3	5.6	6.6	6.4	8.3
10	10.0	8.5	7.6	5.9	12.8	11.8	10.3	9.5
11	11.7	13.3	12.4	11.6	14.8	14.8	16.6	11.0
12	22.7	21.0	19.0	17.3	23.1	17.5	21.9	20.8
Female	22.3	20.4	20.5	20.4	21.1	20.6	20.6	18.7
Race/Ethnicity²								
White, non-Hispanic	24.0	25.4	24.7	25.9	26.7	26.5	27.1	24.0
Black, non-Hispanic	20.6	12.2	14.7	11.9	7.8	11.7	10.7	12.1
Hispanic	15.3	9.4	12.9	10.5	10.4	12.1	9.4	9.1
Grade								
9	11.1	12.6	8.0	12.8	9.2	11.6	8.8	9.2
10	17.4	15.7	16.6	12.8	18.2	13.5	18.0	13.7
11	22.2	17.2	18.7	18.4	22.4	24.1	20.2	18.9
12	29.0	28.6	29.7	31.4	28.9	27.2	28.9	25.6

Note: Estimates do not include youth who dropped out of school and therefore may not reflect total national values.

¹ Students who have sexual intercourse in the three months preceding this survey

² Race/ethnicity estimates from 1999 and later are not directly comparable to earlier years due to federal changes in race definitions. In surveys conducted in 1999 and later, respondents were allowed to select more than one race when selecting their racial category. Estimates presented only include respondents who selected one category when choosing their race.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Surveillance Summaries*, Data for 1993: March 24 1995; MMWR 1995; 44(No. SS-1): Table 20; Data for 1995: September 27, 1996. MMWR 1996; 45 (No. SS-4): Table 28; Data for 1997: August 14, 1998. MMWR; 47(No. SS-3): Table 28; Data for 1999: June 9, 2000. MMWR 2000; 49(No. SS-5): Table 32; Data for 2001: June 28, 2002. MMWR 2002; 51 (No. SS-4): Table 32. Data for 2003: May 21, 2004. MMWR 2004;53(No. SS-2): Table 44. Data for 2005: June 9, 2006. MMWR 2006; 55 (No. SS-5): Table 46. Data for 2007: June 6, 2008. MMWR 2007;57(No. SS-4) Table 65.

