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Sexual Behavior, Sexual Attraction, and Sexual Orientation Among Adults Aged 18–44 in the United States: Data From the 2011–2013 National Survey of Family Growth

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Abstract

Objective—This report provides national estimates of sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation among women and men aged 18–44 in the United States, based on the 2011–2013 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).

Methods—Data for the 2011–2013 NSFG were collected through in-person interviews with 10,416 women and men aged 15–44 in the household population in the United States. In this report, data are shown only for 9,175 adults aged 18–44. The data presented in this report were primarily collected using audio computer-assisted self-interviewing, in which the respondent enters his or her answers into the computer without telling them to an interviewer. The overall response rate for the 2011–2013 NSFG was 72.8%.

Results—Regarding opposite-sex sexual behavior, 94.2% of women and 92.0% of men aged 18–44 had ever had vaginal intercourse; 86.2% of women and 87.4% of men had ever had oral sex; and 35.9% of women and 42.3% of men had ever had anal sex. Almost three times as many women (17.4%) reported any same-sex contact in their lifetime compared with men (6.2%) aged 18–44. Feelings of attraction “only to the opposite sex” were more common for men (92.1%) compared with women (81.0%) aged 18–44. Among those aged 18–44, 92.3% of women and 95.1% of men said they were “heterosexual or straight”; 1.3% of women and 1.9% of men said they were “homosexual, gay, or lesbian”; 5.5% of women and 2.0% of men said they were bisexual; and 0.9% of women and 1.0% of men said “don’t know” or “refused” (i.e., “did not report”) on sexual orientation. Sexual attraction and sexual orientation correlate closely but not completely with reports of sexual behavior. Sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation vary by age, marital or cohabiting status, education, and race and Hispanic origin.

Keywords: oral sex • anal sex • sexual identity

Introduction

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), have a significant impact on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and adults in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about 19 million new cases of STIs occur in the United States each year (1). Approximately 50,000 Americans are diagnosed with HIV each year (2), and more than 1 million Americans are currently living with HIV (3).

Studies on STIs or HIV often use different measures to identify U.S. populations at risk, including measures of sexual behavior, sexual attraction (e.g., desires), and sexual orientation (i.e., whether one self-identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual). These different measures can lead to variation in the estimates of STI or HIV risk in a specific population. One explanation for this variation is that individuals’ sexual behavior is not always consistent with whom they are attracted to or whom they form sexual relationships with—persons of one’s same sex, the opposite sex, or both sexes. For example, some research



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suggests that within the subgroup of individuals that identify as bisexual, there is considerable variation in both sexual attraction and sexual behavior with opposite-sex and same-sex partners (4). Further information on the relationships among sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation may help to identify populations at risk of STIs or HIV in the U.S. and to better target health-related programs and interventions aimed at reducing these risks. In addition, nationally representative data on sexual behavior, attraction, and orientation can be helpful in understanding patterns of fertility and family formation in the U.S. household population.

Using data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), this report presents national estimates of sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation among women and men aged 18–44 in the United States in 2011–2013. In addition, attention is given to patterns of association, or concordance, between sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation to identify the level of consistency among these three measures.

Methods

Data source

This report is based on the 2011–2013 NSFG. NSFG is a nationally representative survey of the U.S. household population, with face-to-face interviews conducted with women and men aged 15–44. NSFG is jointly planned and funded by CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and several other programs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The fieldwork plan, interview content, and other procedures of the survey are similar to what was done in previous surveys (5). The final sample for 2011–2013 consisted of 10,416 respondents aged 15–44—5,601 women and 4,815 men. The response rate for the 2011–2013 NSFG was 72.8% overall, 73.4% for women, and 72.1% for men.

This report includes measures of sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation for 9,175 adults aged 18–44 interviewed for the 2011–2013 NSFG—5,010 women and 4,165 men.

The age range 18–44 was chosen to allow comparisons with past NSFG reports and other national surveys (6–8), and also because some of these characteristics, such as sexual orientation, may not yet be known or accurately reported among teenagers aged 15–17 (9). Similarly, this age range most accurately reflects the percentage of U.S. adults who have ever had opposite-sex sexual contact, since less than one-half of teens aged 15–19 in 2011–2013 had ever had sexual intercourse with an opposite-sex partner (10).

Use of audio computer-assisted self-interviewing

Much of the data in the survey were collected by computer-assisted personal interviewing or CAPI, in which the questionnaire was stored on a laptop computer and administered by an interviewer, but many of the variables described in this report were collected using audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI). In ACASI, the respondent listens to the questions through headphones, reads them on the screen, or both, and enters the response directly into the computer. This method avoids asking the respondent to give his or her answers to the interviewer, and it has been found to yield more complete reporting of sensitive behaviors (11). All data on sexual behavior shown in this report were collected using ACASI.

Measurement of sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation in ACASI

In ACASI, all respondents were asked questions about oral sex and anal sex with opposite-sex partners, sexual behaviors with same-sex partners, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation. The question on vaginal intercourse with an opposite-sex partner was only asked for those respondents who did not provide clear evidence of intercourse in the interviewer-administered portion of the interview. Specifically, if the respondent had ever been married or cohabited with an opposite-sex partner or if the respondent had ever been pregnant or had

ever fathered a pregnancy, the respondent was not asked again about vaginal intercourse in ACASI.

Measures of sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation were similar for women and men aged 18–44, with the exception of the reporting of any same-sex sexual contact. For women, the measure of any same-sex sexual contact included responses to questions on ever giving to or receiving oral sex from another female. If the woman responded “no” to both of these questions, she was asked if she had ever had any sexual experience of any kind with another female. For men, questions on same-sex sexual contact were asked on ever giving to or receiving oral sex from another male or ever giving to or receiving anal sex from another male; a more general question on having had any sexual experience of any kind with another male was not asked during this survey period. The specific wording of the NSFG questions on sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation can be found in the [Technical Notes](#).

In this report, the term “intercourse” refers to vaginal intercourse between a male and a female. The terms “sex” or “sexual contact” refer to all types of sexual activity, including vaginal intercourse, oral sex, and anal sex, either with opposite-sex or same-sex partners.

Demographic variables

The data presented in this report are shown with respect to several key background or demographic characteristics, including age, marital or cohabiting status, educational attainment, and Hispanic origin and race. Age of respondent and educational attainment reflect status at the time of interview. Educational attainment is shown based only on respondents aged 22–44 because large percentages of those aged 18–21 are still attending school. The definition of marital or cohabiting status used in this report also reflects status at the time of the interview and includes only those relationships with opposite-sex spouses or partners, in keeping with the recoded variables that have been defined across all NSFG surveys to date. While it is theoretically possible to construct a measure of same-sex partners who are

married or cohabiting using the NSFG household roster information, the small sample sizes reporting these relationships do not permit analyses for these population subgroups. The definitions of Hispanic origin and race used in this report take into account the reporting of more than one race, in accordance with 1997 guidelines from the Office of Management and Budget (12); however, sample sizes of multiple-race individuals or single-race groups other than black or white in NSFG are too small to permit separate analysis.

Statistical analysis

All estimates in this report are based on sampling weights that are designed to produce unbiased estimates representative of the approximately 110 million women and men aged 18–44 in the United States. Statistics for this report, including sampling errors, were produced using the survey analysis procedures in SAS software version 9.3. Significance of differences among subgroups was determined by standard two-tailed *t* tests. No adjustments were made for multiple comparisons. Terms such as “greater than” and “less than” indicate a statistically significant difference. Terms such as “similar” or “no difference” indicate that the statistics being compared were not significantly different.

Close attention should be paid to the sampling errors for small groups, such as those who reported their sexual orientation as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or those who reported “don’t know” or “refused” on sexual orientation (i.e., “did not report”). In this report, percentages are not shown if the denominator is fewer than 100 cases, or if the numerator is fewer than 5 cases. When a percentage or other statistic is not shown for this reason, the table contains an asterisk signifying that the “statistic does not meet standards of reliability or precision.” Given limited statistical power resulting from small sample sizes, some subgroups shown in the tables are not discussed in the report.

Results

Types of sexual behavior with opposite-sex and same-sex partners

Table 1 shows percentages of women and men aged 18–44 who had ever had the specified types of sexual contact with opposite-sex and same-sex partners. Regarding opposite-sex sexual behavior, 95.3% of women and 93.5% of men aged 18–44 had ever had any opposite-sex sexual contact. Specifically, 94.2% of women and 92.0% of men had ever had vaginal intercourse, 86.2% of women and 87.4% of men had ever had oral sex, and 35.9% of women and 42.3% of men had ever had anal sex. Comparable percentages of women and men have had any opposite-sex sexual contact, vaginal intercourse, and oral sex with opposite-sex partners. Higher percentages of men (42.3%) than women (35.9%) had ever had anal sex. Regarding same-sex sexual behavior, almost three times as many women aged 18–44 (17.4%) had ever had same-sex contact in their lifetime compared with men aged 18–44 (6.2%).

The percentages of women and men reporting specific types of sexual experience with opposite-sex partners generally increased with age. Compared with persons aged 18–24, higher percentages of women and men aged 25–44 had ever had vaginal intercourse (98.5% for women and 96.5% for men), had ever had oral sex (89.3% and 91.0%), and had ever had anal sex (38.5% and 47.0%). In contrast, women and men aged 25–44 had lower percentages reporting any same-sex sexual contact (16.7% and 6.0%) compared with women and men aged 18–24 (19.4% and 6.6%), but the percentages were not significantly different.

Looking at oral and anal sex with opposite-sex partners, some differences by education and Hispanic origin and race were seen. Among both women and men aged 22–44, oral sex was reported more often among those with a bachelor’s degree or higher (91.5% of women and 91.7% of men) than among those with no high school diploma or General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma (GED) (72.6% of women and 80.2% of men).

Non-Hispanic white women were more likely to have ever had oral sex (91.9%) than women in other Hispanic origin and race groups. Similar percentages of non-Hispanic white men (91.0%) and non-Hispanic black men (90.4%) had ever had oral sex, both of which were higher than Hispanic men (78.6%). Anal sex was reported by a lower percentage of women aged 22–44 with no high school diploma or GED (24.4%) compared with other education groups; however, this same pattern by education was not seen for men.

Regarding same-sex sexual experience, a higher percentage of never-married, noncohabiting men had same-sex sexual contact (8.9%) compared with men in other marital or cohabiting status groups. Among women aged 18–44, no such pattern by marital status was seen. No clear-cut pattern by education was seen in the percentage having had same-sex sexual contact for women or men aged 22–44. Hispanic women (11.2%) were less likely than either non-Hispanic white women (19.6%) or non-Hispanic black women (19.4%) to have had same-sex sexual contact. For men, the percentage having had same-sex sexual contact did not differ significantly across Hispanic origin and race groups.

Sexual attraction and sexual orientation

Table 2 shows the percent distribution of sexual attraction for women and men aged 18–44. Men in 2011–2013 were more likely to say they were attracted “only to the opposite sex” (92.1%) compared with women (81.0%). However, when the “only to opposite sex” and “mostly to opposite sex” categories were summed, no difference was seen between women and men. Similar patterns of sexual attraction by age were seen for both women and men. Both women (75.9%) and men (88.6%) aged 18–24 were less likely to say they were attracted “only to the opposite sex” than women (82.8%) and men (93.4%) aged 25–44. Never-married, noncohabiting men were less likely to say they were attracted “only to the opposite sex” (86.4%) compared with men in other marital or cohabiting status groups, although this same pattern by marital

status was not seen for women. Among men, no significant differences in sexual attraction by education or Hispanic origin and race were seen, but for women some differences were observed. Women aged 22–44 with no high school diploma or GED (85.9%) and women with a bachelor's degree or higher (84.7%) had higher percentages who said they were attracted “only to the opposite sex” compared with women with a high school diploma or GED (79.1%) and those with some college and no bachelor's degree (78.5%). Non-Hispanic white women (79.6%) were less likely than Hispanic women (84.7%) and black women (84.2%) to say they were attracted “only to the opposite sex.”

Table 3 shows the percent distribution of sexual orientation for women and men aged 18–44. Among adults aged 18–44, 92.3% of women and 95.1% of men said they were “heterosexual or straight,” while 7.7% of women and 4.9% of men reported a sexual orientation other than “heterosexual or straight,” including 1.3% of women and 1.9% of men who said they were “homosexual, gay, or lesbian,” 5.5% of women and 2.0% of men who said they were bisexual, and 0.9% of women and 1.0% of men who said “don't know” or “refused” (i.e., “did not report”) on sexual orientation. Age appeared to be more closely associated with sexual orientation for women than for men. Women aged 25–44 were more likely to say they were heterosexual or straight and less likely to say they were bisexual compared with women aged 18–24. Among men aged 18–44, no such pattern by age was seen. Looking at marital or cohabiting status, 3.2% of currently married women and 1.7% of currently married men said they were bisexual. Among current cohabitators, 5.9% of women and 1.8% of men said they were bisexual. Among women and men aged 18–44 who had never married and were not cohabiting, 3.4% of women and 4.5% of men said they were gay or lesbian and 7.2% of women and 2.4% of men said they were bisexual. Among those formerly married and not cohabiting, 9.1% of women and 1.4% of men said they were bisexual.

The distribution of sexual orientation varied by education for women but not

for men. Women aged 22–44 with a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to say they were heterosexual (95.6%) and less likely to say they were bisexual (2.9%) compared with other education groups. Women with less than a high school diploma or GED (3.3%) were more likely to report “don't know” or “refused” (i.e., “did not report”) on sexual orientation than women with some college, no bachelor's degree (0.6%) and women with a bachelor's degree or higher (0.5%). For men aged 22–44, a similar pattern by education of “don't know” and “refused” responses on sexual orientation was evident, but was not statistically significant. Regarding Hispanic origin and race, Hispanic women were more likely not to report sexual orientation (1.9%) than non-Hispanic white women (0.2%) but were similar to non-Hispanic black women (0.9%). This same pattern by Hispanic origin and race was evident for men but did not reach statistical significance.

Association of sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation

Table 4 shows the percent distribution of sexual orientation for women and men aged 18–44 by sexual attraction. Nearly all women (98.9%) and men (99.3%) who reported being attracted “only to the opposite sex” said they were heterosexual or straight. Among those attracted “mostly to the opposite sex,” 84.7% of women and 78.5% of men said they were heterosexual or straight. Due to small sample sizes, all other categories of sexual attraction were collapsed to include those who were equally attracted to both sexes, mostly attracted to the same sex, only attracted to the same sex, or were not sure of their sexual attraction. The attraction group labeled “all other” showed a different distribution by sexual orientation for women and men. For women in the “all other” attraction group, the most commonly reported sexual orientation was bisexual (49.6%), followed by heterosexual or straight (25.9%), gay or lesbian (18.7%), and 5.8% who did not report sexual orientation. For men in the “all other” attraction group,

the most commonly reported sexual orientation was gay (41.0%), followed by heterosexual or straight (25.2%), bisexual (20.2%), and 13.6% who did not report sexual orientation. Men in the “all other” attraction group (13.6%) were more likely not to report their sexual orientation than women (5.8%) but the difference was not statistically significant.

Table 5 shows percentages of women and men aged 18–44 who ever had the specified types of sexual contact with opposite-sex and same-sex partners, by sexual attraction and sexual orientation. In the “all other” attraction group, a higher percentage of women (86.3%) had ever had any type of opposite-sex sexual contact compared with men (67.9%). More than one-half of women (53.9%) who were attracted “mostly to the opposite sex” had ever had same-sex sexual contact, compared with 7.5% of women who were attracted “only to the opposite sex.” Similarly, men who were attracted “mostly to the opposite sex” were more likely to have ever had same-sex sexual contact (26.8%) compared with men who were attracted “only to the opposite sex” (2.3%).

Among women and men who reported themselves as heterosexual or straight, 95.8% of women and 94.7% of men had ever had opposite-sex sexual contact, and 12.6% of women and 2.8% of men had ever had same-sex sexual contact. Similar to the collapsing of sexual attraction categories, women and men who self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual were shown together in a category called “homosexual or bisexual.” In the “homosexual or bisexual” group, a higher percentage of women had ever had opposite-sex sexual contact (89.7%) compared with men (67.9%). Having ever had same-sex sexual contact was common for both women (83.6%) and men (88.6%) in the “homosexual or bisexual” group; however, 16.4% of women (100% minus 83.6%) and 11.4% of men in this group had never had same-sex sexual contact. The percentage of women who reported ever having had same-sex sexual contact was higher for heterosexual women (12.6%) compared with women who said they were attracted “only to the opposite sex” (7.5%). In contrast, no difference

was observed in the percentages who reported ever having had any same-sex sexual contact among heterosexual men (2.8%) and men who said they were attracted “only to the opposite sex” (2.3%).

Looking at specific types of sexual contact with opposite-sex partners, women who said they were attracted “mostly to the opposite sex” (59.5%) were more likely to have had anal sex with an opposite-sex partner than women who were attracted “only to the opposite sex” (32.3%). Among men, no such difference by sexual attraction was seen for anal sex with opposite-sex partners. Women who said they were “homosexual or bisexual” were also more likely to have had anal sex with an opposite-sex partner (44.2%) compared with 35.4% of heterosexual women. In contrast, anal sex with an opposite-sex partner was more common among heterosexual men (42.7%) compared with “homosexual or bisexual” men (33.9%). For oral sex with an opposite-sex partner, no difference was seen by sexual orientation for women. In contrast, men who said they were “homosexual or bisexual” (62.5%) were less likely than heterosexual men (88.8%) to have ever had oral sex with an opposite-sex partner.

Discussion

This report provides updated national estimates of some basic statistics related to sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation, followed by a description of the association or concordance among these measures for women and men aged 18–44 in the household population of the United States. Estimates of sexual behaviors, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation among women and men aged 18–44 were generally similar between the 2011–2013 and 2006–2010 NSFG. However, significantly higher percentages of women in the 2011–2013 NSFG reported ever having had same-sex sexual contact (17.4%) compared with women in the 2006–2010 NSFG (14.2%), and higher percentages of women (5.5%) and men (2.0%) in the 2011–2013 NSFG said they were bisexual compared with women (3.9%) and men (1.2%) in the 2006–2010 NSFG (6).

As shown in this report, these three dimensions of sexuality—behavior, attraction, and orientation—have shown varying patterns of association in NSFG. There are challenges in the collection of data about sexuality in household surveys, including how to define and operationalize these concepts. A comparison of estimates of sexual orientation between the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) and 2006–2010 NSFG showed higher percentages of women and men aged 18–44 who identified as bisexual and a lower percentage of women who identified as gay or lesbian in NSFG compared with NHIS, although estimates of men who identified as gay and women and men who did not report sexual orientation (i.e., “don’t know” or “refused”) were similar across the two surveys (8). Variation in estimates of sexual behavior and sexual orientation across surveys may be due to differences in question wording and survey design (e.g., mode of administration, survey content, and question context).

This report includes data from NSFG from 2 years of data collection, resulting in relatively small sample sizes that may yield unreliable estimates for key demographic subgroups. Readers should exercise caution when drawing conclusions for sexual minority populations. More detailed subgroup analysis will be possible when the next data files, covering 4 years of data collection for 2011–2015, are released.

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Table 1. Sexual behavior with opposite-sex and same-sex partners among women and men aged 18–44, by selected characteristics: United States, 2011–2013

Characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Percent reporting				
		Any opposite-sex sexual contact ¹	Any vaginal intercourse with opposite-sex partner	Any oral sex with opposite- sex partner	Any anal sex with opposite- sex partner	Any same-sex sexual contact ²
All women aged 18–44 ³	55,271	95.3 (0.5)	94.2 (0.5)	86.2 (1.1)	35.9 (1.1)	17.4 (0.9)
Age						
18–24	14,269	85.6 (1.4)	81.7 (1.6)	77.3 (2.0)	28.4 (1.7)	19.4 (1.5)
25–44	41,002	98.7 (0.3)	98.5 (0.3)	89.3 (1.1)	38.5 (1.2)	16.7 (1.1)
25–34	20,790	98.3 (0.5)	98.0 (0.5)	89.8 (1.2)	39.0 (1.6)	20.0 (1.6)
35–44	20,212	99.1 (0.3)	99.1 (0.3)	88.7 (1.4)	38.0 (1.7)	13.1 (1.4)
Marital or cohabiting status						
Currently married	23,191	100.0	100.0	91.2 (1.2)	37.5 (1.6)	10.9 (1.2)
Currently cohabiting	9,032	100.0	100.0	90.3 (1.4)	42.2 (3.1)	23.9 (2.8)
Never married, not cohabiting	17,499	85.2 (1.2)	81.5 (1.4)	76.4 (1.9)	27.8 (1.9)	20.1 (1.4)
Formerly married, not cohabiting	5,549	100.0	100.0	89.0 (2.9)	44.4 (3.3)	25.0 (3.3)
Education ⁴						
No high school diploma or GED	4,904	99.2 (0.8)	99.1 (0.8)	72.6 (3.1)	24.4 (3.0)	15.2 (2.9)
High school diploma or GED	11,891	98.6 (0.4)	97.6 (0.7)	87.3 (1.8)	40.8 (2.3)	20.6 (1.7)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	14,851	97.7 (0.6)	97.5 (0.6)	92.2 (1.2)	42.9 (2.3)	22.2 (1.8)
Bachelor's degree or higher	15,446	96.8 (1.0)	96.1 (1.1)	91.5 (1.4)	36.2 (2.0)	12.2 (1.6)
Hispanic origin and race						
Hispanic or Latina	10,811	95.8 (0.8)	95.5 (0.9)	77.7 (2.2)	32.3 (2.4)	11.2 (1.4)
Not Hispanic or Latina:						
White, single race	31,880	95.4 (0.7)	93.9 (0.8)	91.9 (1.1)	40.5 (1.3)	19.6 (1.5)
Black or African American, single race	7,581	96.3 (0.9)	95.6 (0.9)	82.7 (1.5)	27.5 (2.9)	19.4 (2.1)
All men aged 18–44 ³	54,685	93.5 (0.7)	92.0 (0.7)	87.4 (1.0)	42.3 (1.6)	6.2 (0.5)
Age						
18–24	14,718	83.5 (1.7)	79.9 (1.7)	77.6 (2.0)	29.3 (2.1)	6.6 (1.0)
25–44	39,967	97.2 (0.5)	96.5 (0.5)	91.0 (0.9)	47.0 (1.9)	6.0 (0.6)
25–34	20,453	95.6 (1.0)	94.6 (1.0)	90.1 (1.6)	49.3 (2.3)	6.0 (0.9)
35–44	19,514	98.9 (0.5)	98.5 (0.5)	92.0 (0.9)	44.8 (2.3)	6.0 (0.8)
Marital or cohabiting status						
Currently married	21,298	100.0	100.0	93.4 (0.9)	45.4 (3.0)	3.9 (0.7)
Currently cohabiting	8,157	100.0	100.0	94.7 (1.3)	57.0 (3.0)	5.4 (1.3)
Never married, not cohabiting	21,793	83.7 (1.5)	79.9 (1.5)	77.4 (1.8)	30.8 (1.7)	8.9 (1.0)
Formerly married, not cohabiting	3,438	100.0	100.0	97.3 (1.0)	60.4 (3.6)	5.2 (1.4)
Education ⁴						
No high school diploma or GED	5,890	97.0 (0.9)	97.0 (1.0)	80.2 (3.6)	45.0 (3.3)	3.7 (1.1)
High school diploma or GED	13,473	96.9 (0.8)	96.9 (0.8)	90.9 (1.4)	50.4 (2.6)	5.4 (0.9)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	14,002	96.6 (1.0)	94.2 (1.1)	92.7 (1.1)	47.1 (2.1)	7.5 (1.4)
Bachelor's degree or higher	13,007	95.2 (1.2)	94.8 (1.2)	91.7 (1.4)	38.5 (2.5)	6.6 (1.0)
Hispanic origin and race						
Hispanic or Latino	11,292	93.3 (1.1)	92.4 (1.1)	78.6 (2.4)	40.4 (2.2)	6.2 (1.2)
Not Hispanic or Latino:						
White, single race	31,423	93.7 (0.9)	92.0 (0.9)	91.0 (1.1)	44.1 (2.2)	6.9 (0.6)
Black or African American, single race	6,304	96.3 (1.0)	95.4 (1.0)	90.4 (1.5)	35.4 (2.6)	5.3 (1.4)

¹Includes vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

²For women, any sexual contact with same-sex (female) partners includes oral sex or any sexual experience. For men, it includes oral or anal sex with male partners.

³Includes those of other or multiple race and origin groups, not shown separately.

⁴Limited to persons aged 22–44 at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTE: See Technical Notes for descriptions of all questions on sexual behavior used in this report.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2011–2013.

Table 2. Sexual attraction among women and men aged 18–44, by selected characteristics: United States, 2011–2013

Characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Sexual attraction						
		Total	Only opposite sex	Mostly opposite sex	Equally to both	Mostly same sex	Only same sex	Not sure
Percent distribution (standard error)								
All women aged 18–44 ¹	55,271	100.0	81.0 (0.9)	12.9 (0.8)	3.2 (0.3)	0.8 (0.1)	0.8 (0.2)	1.2 (0.2)
Age								
18–24	14,269	100.0	75.9 (1.4)	14.4 (1.2)	5.3 (0.9)	1.7 (0.4)	1.0 (0.3)	1.6 (0.5)
25–44	41,002	100.0	82.8 (1.0)	12.4 (0.9)	2.5 (0.3)	0.5 (0.1)	0.8 (0.3)	1.1 (0.2)
25–34	20,790	100.0	79.1 (1.7)	15.4 (1.4)	3.3 (0.5)	0.3 (0.1)	0.9 (0.4)	0.9 (0.2)
35–44	20,212	100.0	86.6 (1.2)	9.2 (1.1)	1.7 (0.3)	0.7 (0.3)	0.6 (0.2)	1.3 (0.4)
Marital or cohabiting status								
Currently married	23,191	100.0	86.5 (1.0)	10.9 (1.0)	1.7 (0.4)	*	—	0.8 (0.2)
Currently cohabiting	9,032	100.0	74.9 (2.7)	18.8 (2.3)	4.9 (1.1)	*	*	1.3 (0.5)
Never married, not cohabiting	17,499	100.0	77.3 (1.3)	12.8 (1.1)	3.9 (0.5)	2.0 (0.4)	2.2 (0.6)	1.8 (0.5)
Formerly married, not cohabiting	5,549	100.0	79.6 (2.4)	11.9 (2.0)	4.8 (1.0)	1.4 (0.6)	1.1 (0.5)	1.2 (0.7)
Education ²								
No high school diploma or GED	4,904	100.0	85.9 (2.4)	5.8 (1.2)	4.4 (1.3)	1.6 (1.0)	1.1 (0.6)	1.1 (0.5)
High school diploma or GED	11,891	100.0	79.1 (2.0)	14.8 (2.2)	3.2 (0.4)	0.9 (0.4)	0.5 (0.2)	1.4 (0.4)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	14,851	100.0	78.5 (1.7)	15.6 (1.6)	3.5 (0.6)	0.6 (0.2)	1.1 (0.3)	0.7 (0.3)
Bachelor's degree or higher	15,446	100.0	84.9 (1.4)	11.2 (1.2)	1.9 (0.5)	0.3 (0.1)	*	1.1 (0.5)
Hispanic origin and race								
Hispanic or Latina	10,811	100.0	84.7 (1.3)	9.3 (1.1)	3.5 (0.8)	1.1 (0.4)	0.8 (0.3)	0.5 (0.2)
Not Hispanic or Latina:								
White, single race	31,880	100.0	79.6 (1.3)	15.2 (1.1)	2.9 (0.4)	0.8 (0.2)	0.9 (0.4)	0.7 (0.2)
Black or African American, single race	7,581	100.0	84.2 (1.8)	9.1 (1.3)	3.7 (0.8)	0.6 (0.2)	0.8 (0.2)	1.7 (0.6)
All men aged 18–44 ¹	54,685	100.0	92.1 (0.6)	4.1 (0.4)	0.9 (0.2)	0.8 (0.2)	1.5 (0.3)	0.7 (0.2)
Age								
18–24	14,718	100.0	88.6 (1.1)	5.9 (0.9)	1.0 (0.4)	0.7 (0.2)	2.5 (0.7)	1.3 (0.6)
25–44	39,967	100.0	93.4 (0.6)	3.4 (0.5)	0.7 (0.2)	0.8 (0.2)	1.2 (0.3)	0.5 (0.1)
25–34	20,453	100.0	92.7 (0.9)	3.4 (0.6)	0.9 (0.4)	1.2 (0.4)	1.0 (0.2)	0.8 (0.2)
35–44	19,514	100.0	94.1 (0.8)	3.5 (0.7)	0.6 (0.2)	0.3 (0.1)	1.4 (0.4)	*
Marital or cohabiting status								
Currently married	21,298	100.0	96.4 (0.8)	2.8 (0.6)	0.5 (0.3)	*	—	0.3 (0.1)
Currently cohabiting	8,157	100.0	95.2 (1.0)	2.9 (0.7)	*	*	*	*
Never married, not cohabiting	21,793	100.0	86.4 (1.1)	6.0 (0.7)	0.9 (0.3)	1.5 (0.3)	3.8 (0.7)	1.3 (0.4)
Formerly married, not cohabiting	3,438	100.0	94.3 (1.5)	2.8 (0.9)	1.9 (1.0)	*	*	—
Education ²								
No high school diploma or GED	5,890	100.0	92.5 (2.0)	3.9 (1.3)	*	—	*	1.6 (0.6)
High school diploma or GED	13,473	100.0	94.5 (0.8)	3.3 (0.6)	*	0.5 (0.2)	0.9 (0.2)	0.6 (0.2)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	14,002	100.0	92.1 (1.2)	3.9 (0.8)	0.9 (0.4)	1.1 (0.4)	1.7 (0.6)	0.2 (0.1)
Bachelor's degree or higher	13,007	100.0	91.9 (1.3)	3.9 (0.9)	0.7 (0.4)	1.0 (0.4)	2.1 (0.7)	*
Hispanic origin and race								
Hispanic or Latino	11,292	100.0	91.5 (1.4)	3.9 (0.8)	1.1 (0.6)	0.8 (0.5)	1.8 (0.6)	0.8 (0.4)
Not Hispanic or Latino:								
White, single race	31,423	100.0	92.5 (0.7)	3.9 (0.5)	0.9 (0.3)	0.6 (0.2)	1.7 (0.4)	0.3 (0.1)
Black or African American, single race	6,304	100.0	93.5 (1.1)	2.8 (0.8)	0.4 (0.2)	1.1 (0.4)	0.9 (0.4)	1.3 (1.0)

* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

– Quantity zero.

¹Includes those of other or multiple race and origin groups, not shown separately.

²Limited to persons aged 22–44 at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTES: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. See Technical Notes for descriptions of all questions on sexual behavior used in this report.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2011–2013.

Table 3. Sexual orientation among women and men aged 18–44, by selected characteristics: United States, 2011–2013

Characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Sexual orientation				
		Total	Heterosexual or straight	Homosexual, gay, or lesbian	Bisexual	Did not report [†]
Percent distribution (standard error)						
All women aged 18–44 ²	55,271	100.0	92.3 (0.6)	1.3 (0.2)	5.5 (0.4)	0.9 (0.2)
Age						
18–24	14,269	100.0	89.5 (1.2)	1.8 (0.4)	7.8 (0.9)	0.9 (0.4)
25–44	41,002	100.0	93.3 (0.7)	1.1 (0.3)	4.7 (0.5)	0.9 (0.2)
25–34	20,790	100.0	92.5 (1.0)	1.2 (0.4)	5.4 (0.8)	1.0 (0.2)
35–44	20,212	100.0	94.2 (0.8)	0.9 (0.3)	4.0 (0.7)	0.9 (0.3)
Marital or cohabiting status						
Currently married	23,191	100.0	95.7 (0.7)	—	3.2 (0.6)	1.1 (0.3)
Currently cohabiting	9,032	100.0	93.7 (1.0)	*	5.9 (0.9)	*
Never married, not cohabiting	17,499	100.0	88.3 (1.2)	3.4 (0.7)	7.2 (0.7)	1.1 (0.4)
Formerly married, not cohabiting	5,549	100.0	88.7 (2.2)	1.8 (0.6)	9.1 (2.2)	*
Education ³						
No high school diploma or GED	4,904	100.0	87.8 (2.1)	2.0 (1.0)	6.9 (1.5)	3.3 (1.0)
High school diploma or GED	11,891	100.0	91.7 (1.2)	0.8 (0.2)	6.2 (1.1)	1.2 (0.6)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	14,851	100.0	91.9 (1.2)	1.5 (0.4)	6.0 (1.0)	0.6 (0.3)
Bachelor's degree or higher	15,446	100.0	95.6 (0.9)	0.9 (0.6)	2.9 (0.6)	0.5 (0.3)
Hispanic origin and race						
Hispanic or Latina	10,811	100.0	92.6 (0.8)	1.2 (0.4)	4.2 (0.6)	1.9 (0.5)
Not Hispanic or Latina:						
White, single race	31,880	100.0	93.1 (0.9)	1.3 (0.4)	5.4 (0.7)	0.2 (0.1)
Black or African American, single race	7,581	100.0	93.1 (1.0)	1.1 (0.3)	4.9 (1.0)	0.9 (0.3)
All men aged 18–44 ²	54,685	100.0	95.1 (0.5)	1.9 (0.3)	2.0 (0.3)	1.0 (0.3)
Age						
18–24	14,718	100.0	94.0 (1.1)	2.6 (0.7)	2.5 (0.5)	0.9 (0.6)
25–44	39,967	100.0	95.4 (0.6)	1.7 (0.3)	1.8 (0.3)	1.1 (0.4)
25–34	20,453	100.0	95.4 (0.8)	1.6 (0.3)	2.2 (0.5)	0.8 (0.3)
35–44	19,514	100.0	95.5 (0.9)	1.7 (0.5)	1.3 (0.4)	1.4 (0.7)
Marital or cohabiting status						
Currently married	21,298	100.0	97.5 (0.6)	*	1.7 (0.5)	0.8 (0.4)
Currently cohabiting	8,157	100.0	95.8 (1.4)	—	1.8 (0.7)	2.4 (1.3)
Never married, not cohabiting	21,793	100.0	92.1 (0.8)	4.5 (0.7)	2.4 (0.4)	0.9 (0.3)
Formerly married, not cohabiting	3,438	100.0	96.8 (1.2)	*	1.4 (0.7)	*
Education ³						
No high school diploma or GED	5,890	100.0	94.9 (1.8)	*	1.2 (0.7)	3.8 (1.7)
High school diploma or GED	13,473	100.0	95.3 (1.0)	1.5 (0.4)	1.5 (0.4)	1.7 (0.8)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	14,002	100.0	94.7 (1.1)	1.9 (0.6)	2.8 (0.8)	0.6 (0.3)
Bachelor's degree or higher	13,007	100.0	95.3 (0.9)	2.9 (0.7)	1.7 (0.6)	*
Hispanic origin and race						
Hispanic or Latino	11,292	100.0	93.2 (1.6)	2.1 (0.7)	2.0 (0.6)	2.7 (1.3)
Not Hispanic or Latino:						
White, single race	31,423	100.0	95.4 (0.6)	2.0 (0.4)	2.2 (0.4)	0.4 (0.1)
Black or African American, single race	6,304	100.0	96.5 (0.9)	1.5 (0.5)	1.6 (0.7)	0.4 (0.2)

— Quantity zero.

* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

¹Includes "don't know" and "refused" responses.

²Includes persons of other or multiple race and origin groups, not shown separately.

³Limited to those aged 22–44 at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTES: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. See Technical Notes for descriptions of all questions on sexual behavior used in this report.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2011–2013.

Table 4. Sexual orientation and sexual attraction among women and men aged 18–44: United States, 2011–2013

Characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Sexual orientation				
		Total	Heterosexual or straight	Homosexual, gay, or lesbian	Bisexual	Did not report ¹
Percent distribution (standard error)						
Women						
Sexual attraction:						
Only to opposite sex	44,522	100.0	98.9 (0.3)	*	0.4 (0.1)	0.7 (0.2)
Mostly to opposite sex.	7,084	100.0	84.7 (2.2)	*	15.0 (2.2)	*
All other ² .	3,598	100.0	25.9 (2.9)	18.7 (2.8)	49.6 (2.8)	5.8 (1.5)
Men						
Sexual attraction:						
Only to opposite sex	49,893	100.0	99.3 (0.2)	*	0.3 (0.1)	0.4 (0.1)
Mostly to opposite sex.	2,214	100.0	78.5 (3.7)	—	19.7 (3.8)	*
All other ² .	2,527	100.0	25.2 (5.0)	41.0 (5.0)	20.2 (4.5)	13.6 (4.5)

* Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

— Quantity zero.

¹Includes "don't know" and "refused" responses.

²Includes those responding: "equally attracted to both sexes," "mostly to same sex," "only to same sex," "not sure," "don't know," and "refused."

NOTES: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. See Technical Notes for descriptions of all questions on sexual behavior used in this report.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2011–2013.

Table 5. Sexual behavior with opposite-sex and same-sex partners among women and men aged 18–44, by sexual attraction and sexual orientation: United States, 2011–2013

Characteristic	Number (in thousands)	Percent reporting				
		Any opposite-sex sexual contact ¹	Any vaginal intercourse with opposite-sex partner	Any oral sex with opposite-sex partner	Any anal sex with opposite-sex partner	Any same-sex sexual contact ²
Percent (standard error)						
Women						
Sexual attraction:						
Only to opposite sex	44,522	95.7 (0.5)	94.5 (0.6)	85.5 (1.2)	32.3 (1.2)	7.5 (0.6)
Mostly to opposite sex.	7,084	97.6 (0.7)	96.4 (0.9)	96.4 (0.9)	59.5 (2.7)	53.9 (3.7)
All other ³	3,598	86.3 (3.3)	86.0 (3.4)	73.2 (3.9)	33.8 (3.6)	69.0 (3.6)
Sexual orientation:						
Heterosexual	50,978	95.8 (0.5)	94.7 (0.5)	86.7 (1.1)	35.4 (1.1)	12.6 (0.8)
Homosexual or bisexual	3,720	89.7 (2.9)	88.6 (3.2)	83.0 (3.1)	44.2 (3.8)	83.6 (3.0)
Men						
Sexual attraction:						
Only to opposite sex	49,893	95.2 (0.5)	93.8 (0.5)	89.6 (0.8)	42.8 (1.7)	2.3 (0.3)
Mostly to opposite sex.	2,214	84.8 (4.6)	83.8 (4.6)	77.5 (5.0)	53.3 (5.4)	26.8 (4.1)
All other ³	2,527	67.9 (5.7)	64.5 (6.0)	50.4 (6.0)	19.0 (4.6)	68.3 (5.8)
Sexual orientation:						
Heterosexual	51,936	94.7 (0.6)	93.3 (0.6)	88.8 (0.9)	42.7 (1.6)	2.8 (0.5)
Homosexual or bisexual	2,127	67.9 (5.7)	63.7 (6.1)	62.5 (5.6)	33.9 (5.3)	88.6 (2.7)

¹Includes vaginal, oral, or anal sex.

²For women, any sexual contact with same-sex (female) partners includes oral sex or any sexual experience. For men, it includes oral or anal sex with male partners.

³Includes those responding: "equally attracted to both sexes," "mostly to same sex," "only to same sex," "not sure," "don't know," and "refused."

NOTE: See Technical Notes for descriptions of all questions on sexual behavior used in this report.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2011–2013.

Technical Notes

Measurement of sexual behavior in National Survey of Family Growth audio computer-assisted self-interviewing

This section defines the sexual behaviors and related variables presented in this report, in part by showing the wording of the questions asking about them. Below is the question wording related to types of sexual behavior in the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) section for 2011–2013. These questions were not asked in the order shown. To see the questions in their full context, with intervening questions, please see the full questionnaires on the NSFG webpage, available from: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/nsfg_2011_2013_questionnaires.htm.

Types of sexual behavior for female respondents

For female respondents, the question wording for vaginal intercourse with a male partner was as follows:

- *Has a male ever put his penis in your vagina (also known as vaginal intercourse)?*

All female respondents answered two questions on oral sex with a male partner and one question on anal sex with a male partner. The two questions on oral sex with a male partner are shown below, following a preface:

The next few questions are about oral sex. By oral sex, we mean stimulating the genitals with the mouth.

- *Has a male ever performed oral sex on you?*
- *Have you ever performed oral sex on a male? That is, have you ever stimulated his penis with your mouth?*

Below is the question female respondents were asked about anal sex with a male:

- *Has a male ever put his penis in your rectum or butt (also known as anal sex)?*

With regard to same-sex sexual partners, female respondents were asked up to three questions on sexual contact with female partners, following a preface:

The next questions ask about sexual experiences you may have had with another female.

- *Have you ever performed oral sex on another female?*
- *Has another female ever performed oral sex on you?*

If the respondent answered “no” to both of the questions on oral sex with a female partner, then she was asked the more general question:

- *Have you ever had any sexual experience of any kind with another female?*

A “yes” answer to any of these three questions was classified as “same-sex sexual behavior” for women.

Types of sexual behavior for male respondents

For male respondents, the question wording for vaginal intercourse with a female partner was as follows:

- *Have you ever put your penis in a female’s vagina (also known as vaginal intercourse)?*

All male respondents answered two questions on oral sex with a female partner and one question on anal sex with a female partner. The two questions on oral sex with a female partner are shown below, following a preface:

The next few questions are about oral sex. By oral sex, we mean stimulating the genitals with the mouth.

- *Has a female ever performed oral sex on you, that is, stimulated your penis with her mouth?*
- *Have you ever performed oral sex on a female?*

Below is the question male respondents were asked about anal sex with a female:

- *Have you ever put your penis in a female’s anus or butt (also known as anal sex)?*

With regard to same-sex sexual partners, male respondents were asked four questions on same-sex sexual contact with male partners, following a preface:

The next questions ask about sexual experiences you may have had with another male. Have you ever done any of the following with another male?

- *Have you ever performed oral sex on another male, that is, stimulated his penis with your mouth?*
- *Has another male ever performed oral sex on you, that is, stimulated your penis with his mouth?*
- *Has another male ever put his penis in your anus or butt (insertive anal sex)?*
- *Have you ever put your penis in his anus or butt (receptive anal sex)?*

A “yes” answer to any of these four questions was classified as “same-sex sexual behavior.” A “yes” answer to either of the oral sex questions was classified as “any oral sex with a male,” and a “yes” answer to either of the anal sex questions was classified as “any anal sex with a male.” Unlike the question series for female respondents in the NSFG’s ACASI, male respondents who answered “no” to all four of the specific behavioral questions were not asked a more general question about “any sexual experience of any kind with a male partner,” although such a question is currently being fielded in the 2015–2019 NSFG.

Measurement of sexual attraction and sexual orientation

In ACASI, all respondents aged 15–44, regardless of reported sexual behavior, were asked questions on sexual attraction and sexual orientation. However, as noted, this report presents estimates only for adults aged 18–44. For sexual attraction, the question worded below is for women. A similar question asking about sexual attraction for opposite-sex and same-sex partners was asked of men.

People are different in their sexual attraction to other people. Which best describes your feelings? Are you...

- *Only attracted to men*
- *Mostly attracted to men*
- *Equally attracted to women and men*
- *Mostly attracted to women*
- *Only attracted to women*
- *Not sure*

For sexual orientation, the question for women was:

Do you think of yourself as...

- *Heterosexual or straight*
- *Homosexual, gay, or lesbian*
- *Bisexual*

For sexual orientation, the question for men was:

Do you think of yourself as...

- *Heterosexual or straight*
- *Homosexual or gay*
- *Bisexual*

NSFG respondents interviewed chose one of the three response categories provided or chose “don’t know” or “refused,” as is allowed on any question in the survey. In this report, all respondents who chose “don’t know” or “refused” are grouped as “did not report.” The category of “something else” was an available option for the sexual orientation question for women and men in the 2002 and 2006–2008 NSFG, until it was dropped beginning in July 2008. Detailed information on the changes to the sexual orientation question is available in a previous report (7).

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