

SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIORS

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) can cause a variety of health problems among women if left untreated. Health outcomes that have been associated with untreated STIs include cervical cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and even death in the case of HIV/AIDS (see pages on *Sexually Transmitted Infections* and *HIV/AIDS*).^{11,12} Women can lower their risk of contracting HIV and other STIs by avoiding sexual risk-taking behaviors.

In 2006–2010, 3.9 percent of women aged 15–44 reported engaging in at least one sexual risk behavior during the past 12 months (data not shown). Among women aged 15–44, the most commonly reported sexual risk behaviors

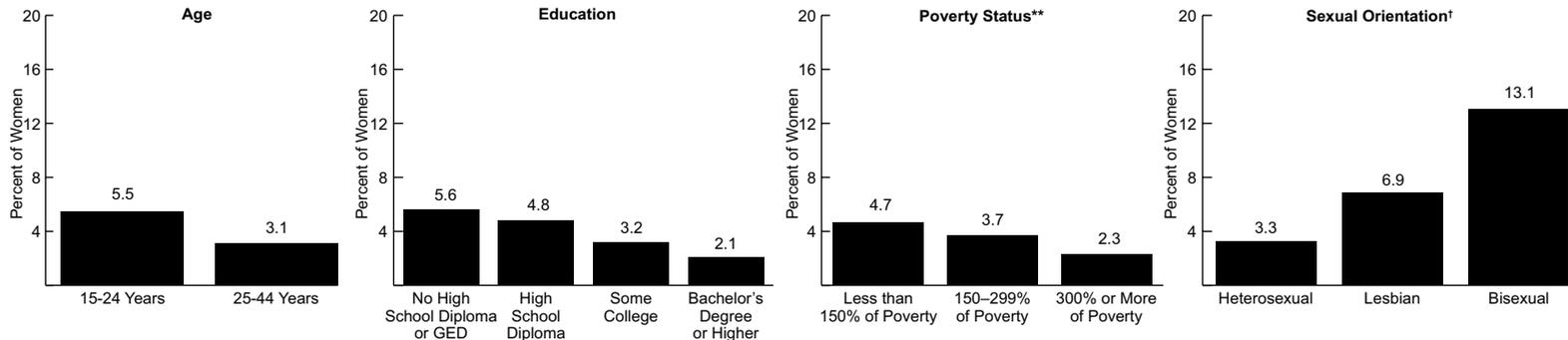
were having five or more male sex partners in the past 12 months (1.8 percent) and having had at least one male sex partner who had had sex with other males (1.4 percent). Less than 1 percent of women reported having had sex in exchange for money or drugs (0.7 percent), having had a sex partner that injects illicit drugs (0.8 percent), or having had an HIV-positive sex partner (0.1 percent; data not shown).

The prevalence of engaging in sexual risk behaviors among women varied by sociodemographic characteristics. Younger women, aged 15–24 years, were more likely to report engaging in at least one sexual risk behavior during the past 12 months (5.5 percent), compared to

women aged 25–44 years (3.1 percent). Women with a high school education or less were also more likely to report any sexual risk behavior compared to those with at least some college, as were women living with household incomes below 150 percent of poverty (4.7 percent) compared to women living with incomes of 150–299 and 300 percent or more of poverty (3.7 and 2.3 percent, respectively). Bisexual women were more likely than heterosexual women to report having engaged in at least one sexual risk behavior during the past 12 months (13.1 versus 3.3 percent, respectively), while no statistically significant difference was observed for lesbian women, compared to heterosexual women.

Any Sexual Risk Taking Behavior* Among Women Aged 15–44 Years, by Selected Characteristics, 2006–2010

Source II.4: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Survey of Family Growth



*Includes having had more than five opposite-sex sex partners, having sex in exchange for money or drugs, having a male sex partner who has had sex with other males, having a sex partner who injects illicit drugs, or having an HIV-positive sex partner. **Estimates by poverty status are limited to women aged 20–44 years of age at the time of the interview. †Estimates by sexual orientation are limited to women aged 18–44 years of age at the time of the interview.