

Texas Voter Views on Sex Ed in Schools

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June 17, 2020



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About the Texas Campaign

The Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization founded in 2009 to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy in Texas through:

Research & Data



We **analyze and disseminate data** on teen pregnancy and teen births, including prevention strategies proven effective globally, nationally and here in the Lone Star State.

Advocacy & Public Policy



We **advocate for public policies** that increase young Texans' access to knowledge and healthcare to prevent unintended pregnancy.

Strategic Collaboration



We **partner with others across the state** on programs designed to leverage local and regional resources with statewide systems change.

Training & Events



We ensure our partners have the **opportunity to learn from one another and access the resources** they need to advance the work in their home communities.

Today's Agenda

- Background: Sex Education in Texas
- State Board of Education (SBOE)
- Health TEKS: What are they?
- **Polling results on Texas voter views on sex ed**
- Sex education policy priorities
- Next steps

Background

For the first time in more than two decades, the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) is revising the minimum curriculum standards that guide sexual health education for 5.4 million K-12 students across Texas.

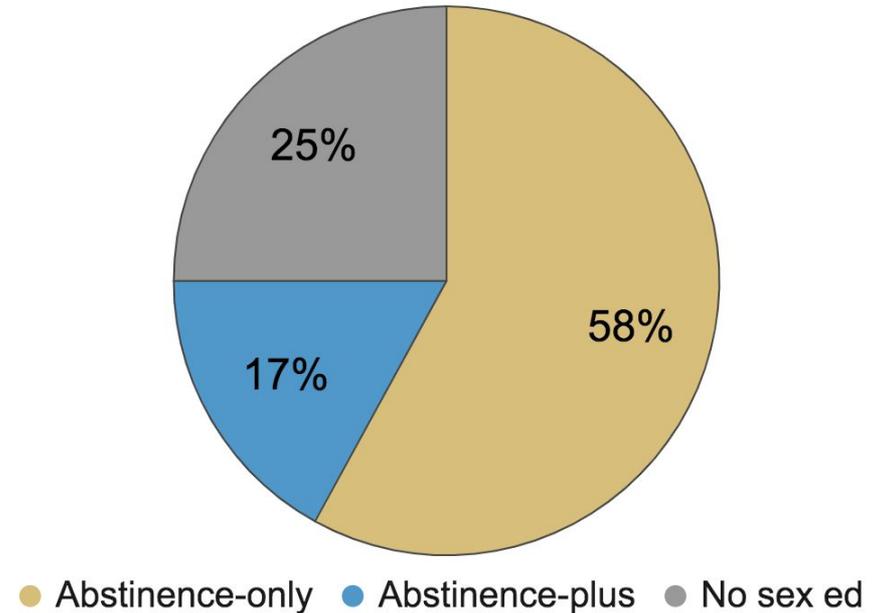


Background: Sex Education in Texas

State law on sex education in schools:

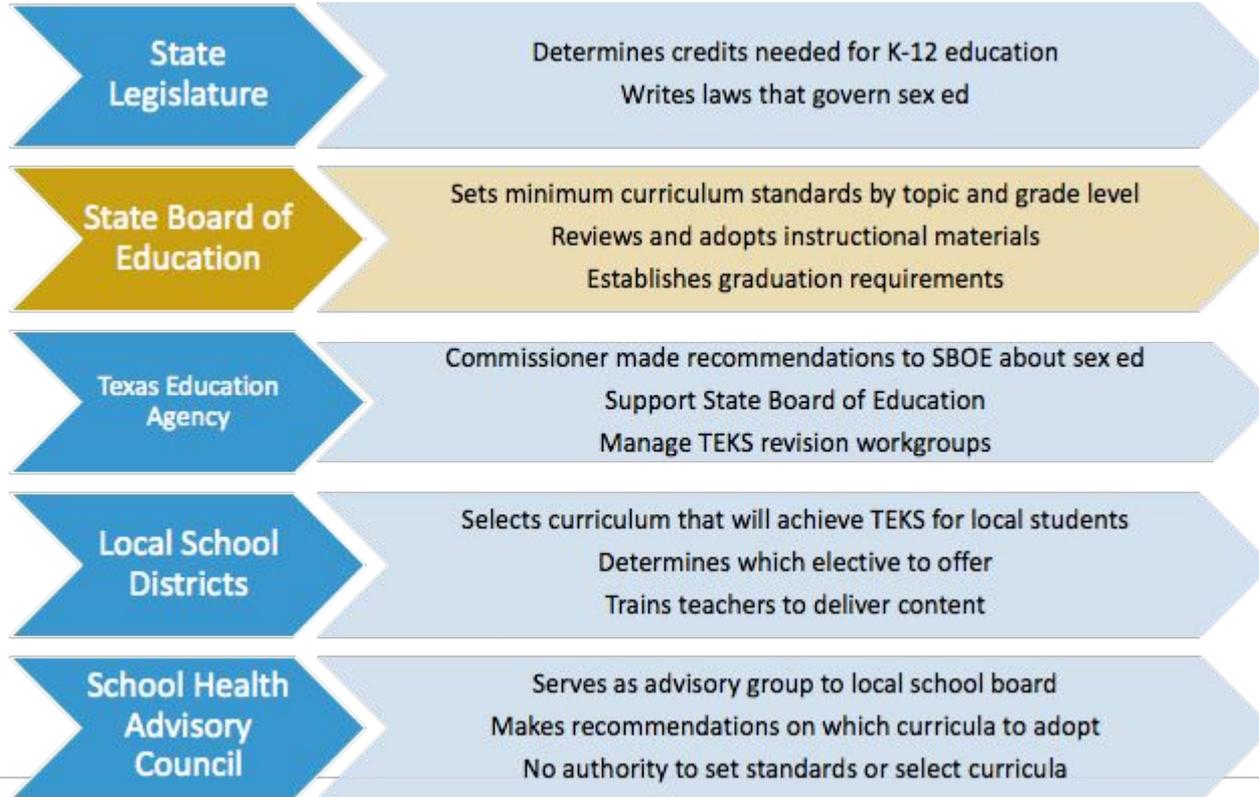
- Health class is required at the elementary and middle school level, but is **not required for high school graduation**.
- Texas Education Code requires schools to present abstinence as “the preferred choice of behavior” for “unmarried persons of school age” and the safest option for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. (TEC §28.004).
- However, **school districts have the option of offering information on topics like contraception, STI prevention, and healthy relationships** in addition to abstinence.

What do Texas School Districts Offer?



Source: Conspiracy of Silence: Sexuality Education in Texas Public Schools (2017)

State and Local Control



Texas State Board of Education (SBOE)



- 15 members represent large districts
- Each member represents nearly 2 million constituents
- 10 Republicans, 5 Democrats
- Educators, medical professionals, ranchers, etc.
- Ideologically diverse
- Chair appointed by the Governor

Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS)

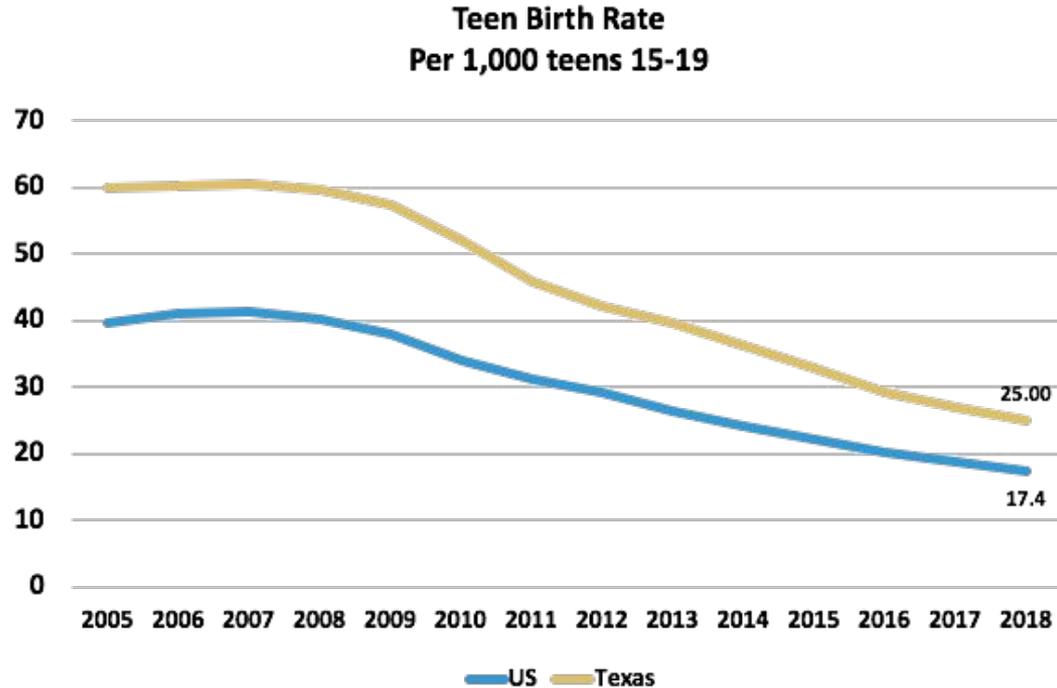
- SBOE is tasked with setting Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS) -- the **MINIMUM** curriculum standards for each course.
- SBOE is now updating Health TEKS for the first time in 22 years.
- Health Education TEKS are made up of six strands, including sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and others.
- A series of workgroups have drafted proposed language. Workgroup E draft will be discussed at the June SBOE meeting.

What does the research say about sex education?

- **Sex education does not make youth more likely to have sex** (Guttmacher Institute, 2019)
- Current sexuality education programs vary widely in the accuracy of content, emphasis, and effectiveness, but they can “**reduce the rates of sexual activity, sexual risk behaviors, sexually transmitted infections, and teen pregnancy.**” (ACOG, 2016)
- Abstinence-only sex education leaves youth unprepared and is often **not effective** in delaying sex or changing risk behaviors. (Guttmacher Institute, 2017)
- Providing young people with equal access to sex education “**respects their right to the highest attainable standard of health**, including safe, responsible and respectful sexual choices free of coercion and violence, as well as their right to access the information that young people need for effective self-care.” (UNESCO (United Nations), 2018)
- Youth will get information **online** if they don’t get it from reputable sources. (Mitchell et al, 2014)

What do the data say about adolescent sexual health in Texas?

- Texas has the **9th highest rate of teen birth** and the **highest rate of repeat teen birth** in the nation.
- Texas teen birth rate declined by about half between 2009 - 2018, **mirroring nationwide trends**. However, STIs are on the rise.
- There are **strong disparities** in reproductive health outcomes.

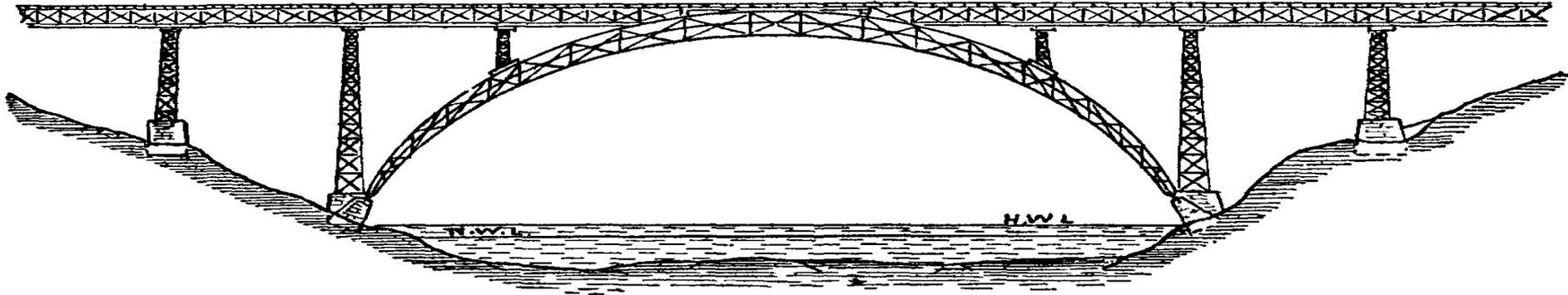


Sources: Texas Campaign analysis of CDC natality data; Texas Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Why did we conduct this research?

To learn how Texans feel about sex education in schools.

The dialogue around sex education can be divisive on the fringe, but poll results show that sex education is **not** a highly partisan issue.

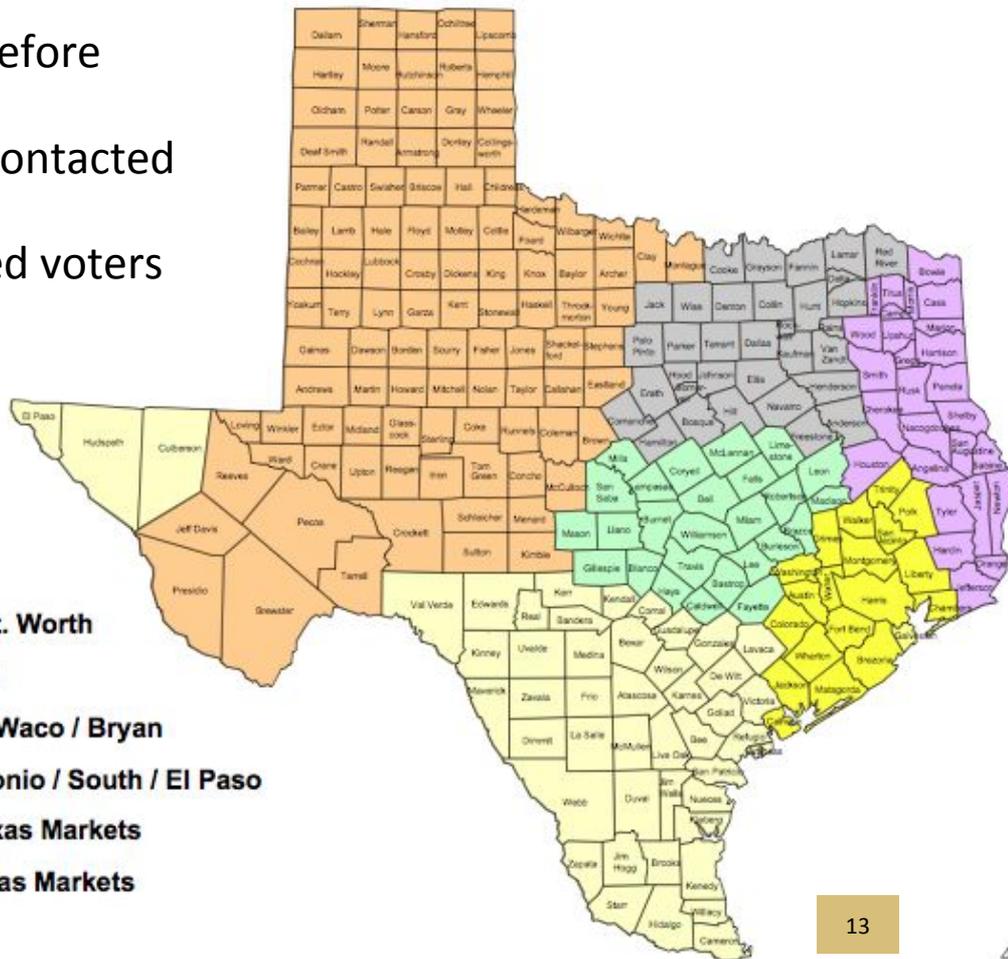
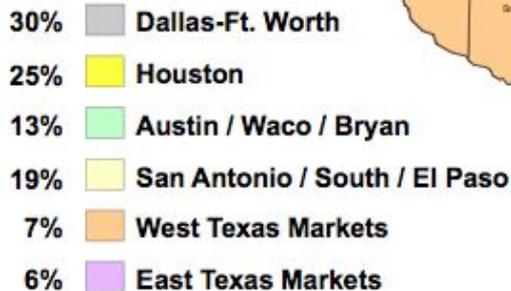


Polling methodology

Poll Methodology

- Conducted in early March, 2020 (before COVID-19 closures)
- 601 registered Texas voters were contacted over the phone and online
- Representative sample of registered voters
- Margin of error +/- 4%

Percent of Interviews



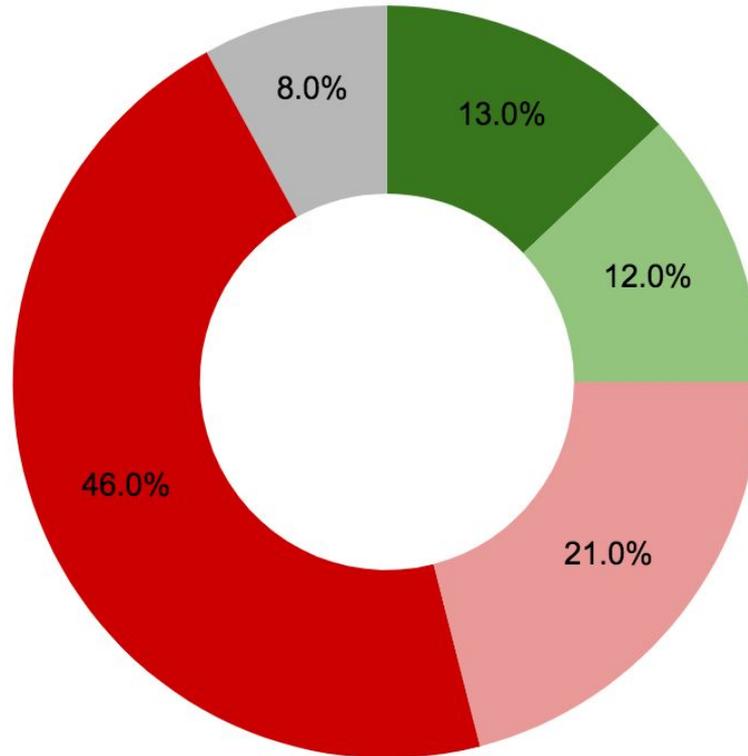
Polling results

Sex Education in Schools Supports Parents

Survey respondents **disagree** that “Students don't need sex education in school since their parents can teach them what they need to know.”

67% of respondents **disagree**, including:

- 63% of Republicans
- 60% of parents
- 67% of grandparents

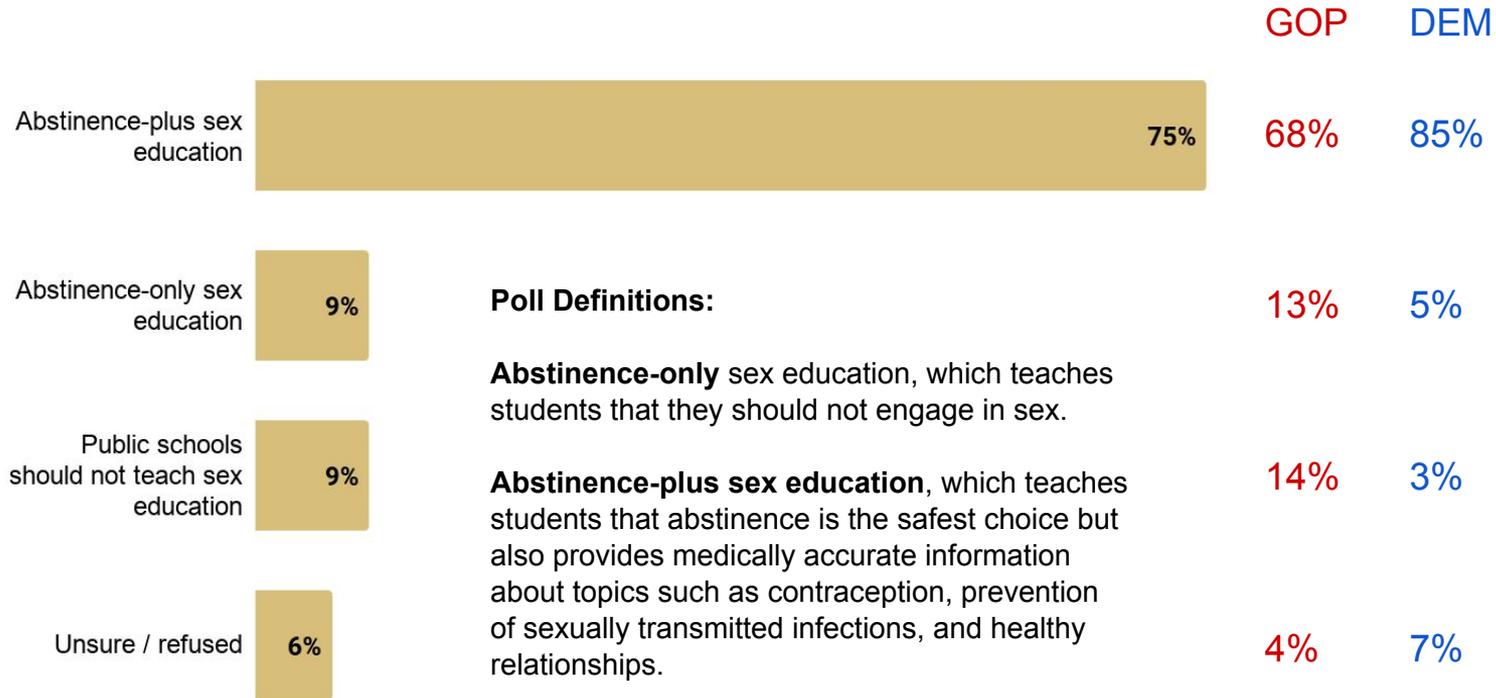


- Agree strongly
- Agree somewhat
- Disagree somewhat
- Disagree strongly
- Depends/Unsure

Results showed strong support for abstinence-plus sex education across all political affiliations, ages, ethnicities, genders and regions.



Voters Support Abstinence-Plus Sex Education in Schools

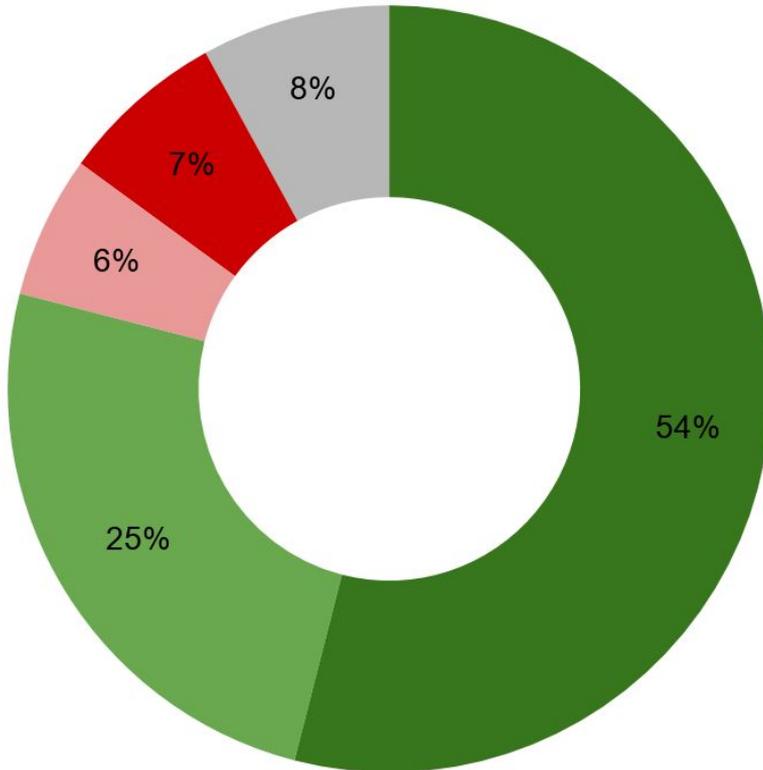


Nearly 80% of Texas voters support education about condoms and contraception

79% of respondents, including...

- *72% of Republicans,*
- *77% of rural voters, and*
- *79% of parents and grandparents,*

support sex education in public schools that “teaches students about condoms and contraception, along with abstinence.”



- Agree Strongly
- Agree Somewhat
- Disagree Somewhat
- Disagree Strongly
- Depends/Unsure

Large majority of Republicans support abstinence-plus sex ed

We found majority support for abstinence-plus sex education in every subpopulation of respondents, including groups we expect to be the most conservative.

	Percent of respondents who think that schools should teach abstinence-plus sex education	Percent of respondents who agree that, "Along with abstinence, sex education in public schools should teach students about condoms and contraception."
Republican	68%	72%
Republican, age 55 and older	68%	71%
Rural Republican	71%	73%
Republican, weekly church-goer	59%	63%

Democrats strongly support abstinence-plus sex ed

All subgroups of Democrats support abstinence-plus sex ed at very high levels

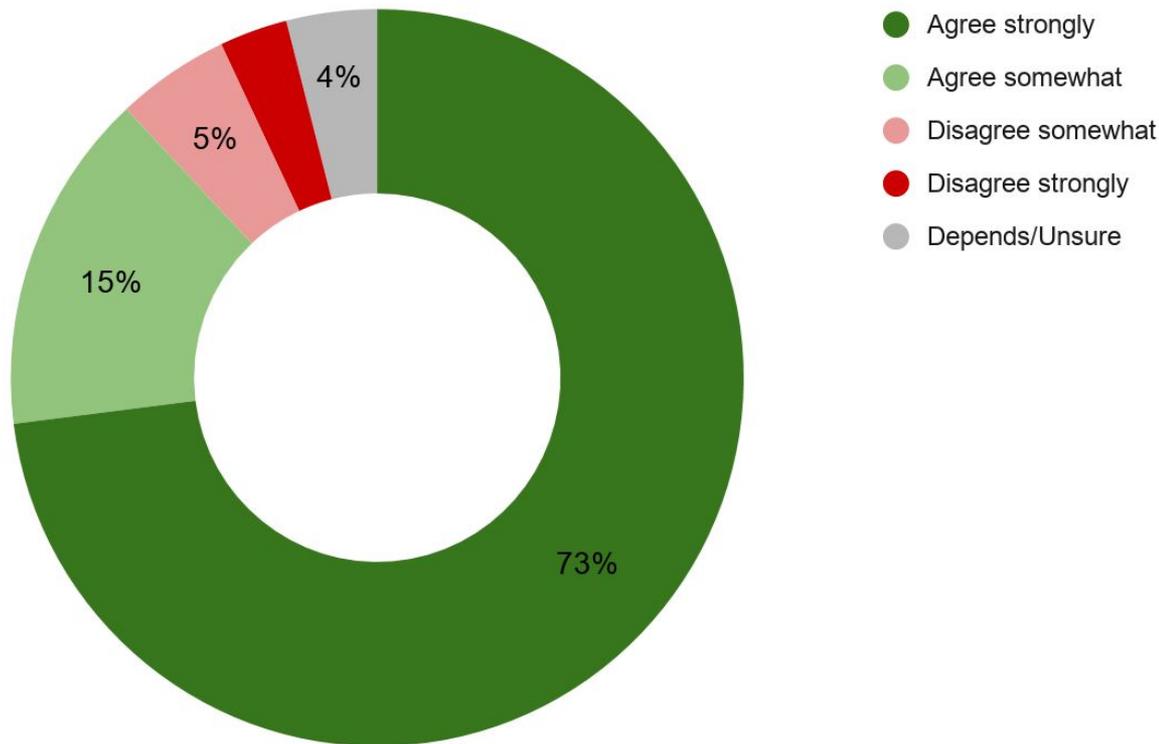
	Percent of respondents who think that schools should teach abstinence-plus sex education	Percent of respondents who agree that, "Along with abstinence, sex education in public schools should teach students about condoms and contraception."
Democrats	85%	88%
Rural Democrats	93%	93%
Non-Anglo Democrats	85%	88%
Democrat, weekly church-goer	79%	89%

Large majority of other sub-populations support abstinence-plus sex ed

	Support teaching abstinence-plus sex education	Support teaching about condoms and contraception.
Urban / Suburban	75%	81%
Rural	76%	77%
Anglo	74%	77%
African-American	76%	82%
Hispanic	78%	83%
No college	63%	83%
College graduate	78%	81%
Post graduate	76%	77%
Parent to children under 18	71%	79%
Grandparent to children under 18	73%	79%

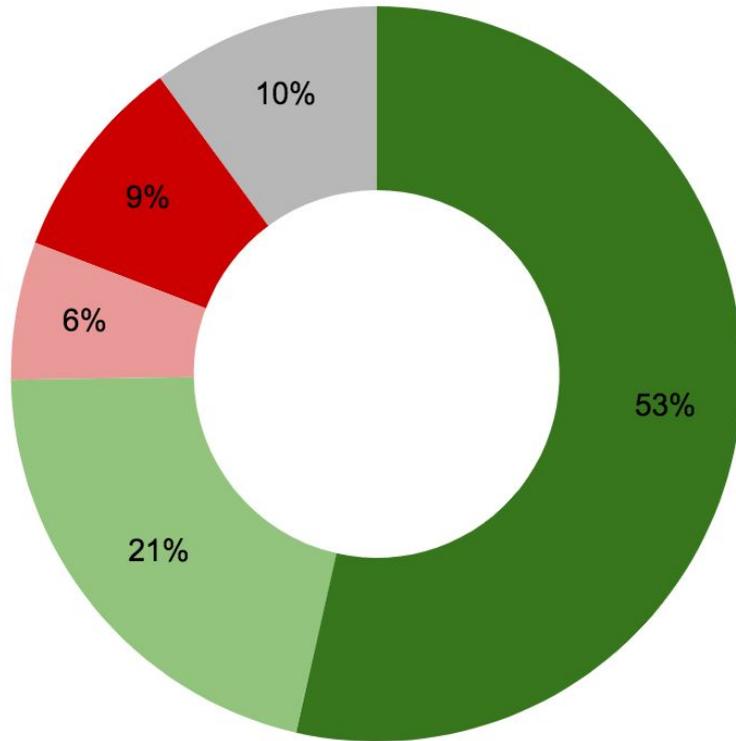
Texas voters support education about consent and boundaries

In the poll, **88%** of respondents, including **86%** of Republicans, agreed it is critical to teach students about **consent, including respecting boundaries** set by other people about their bodies.



Texas voters support teaching respect for all

75% of Texans, including 65% of Republicans, agree that “to help prevent bullying of LGBTQ youth, Texas public schools should include standards around **cultivating respect** for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or identity.”



- Agree strongly
- Agree somewhat
- Disagree somewhat
- Disagree strongly
- Depends/Unsure

Policy Recommendation: Age-appropriate, medically accurate, abstinence-plus sex education should be taught in Texas public schools.

- Cover the basics: age-appropriate and **timely** information on key topics like **puberty, biology, reproduction, and menstruation**.
- Add information on **contraception at the 8th grade level in addition to high school**, to ensure all students have access to this education. Information on contraception should be offered in a medically accurate and tone-neutral way, covering both risks and benefits. Should include information on long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) which is more than 99% effective.
- **Update information on STIs and HIV, including prevention, screening, and treatment.** The importance of barrier methods (condoms) for STI prevention should be included along with more effective forms of contraception.

Policy Recommendation: Boundary-setting and consent should be taught in an age-appropriate manner

- This includes **setting and communicating your own personal boundaries** and respecting the boundaries of others.
- Healthy relationship education should be offered starting with healthy friendships in early grade levels. This can be as simple as agreeing to a fist-bump on the playground or declining a hug from a friend.
- Current TEKS focus only on refusal, but it's important to teach students to set and communicate their own boundaries and respect the boundaries of others.
- This is critical information for youth to have as they graduate high school and head to college, the military or the workforce.
- Alcohol and substance use can affect ability to give, withhold or perceive consent accurately.

Policy Recommendation: Teach Inclusivity and respect

Respect is a Texas value. TEKS should include language teaching respect for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Bullying and discrimination harm LGBTQ youth:

- **Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 24**, and LGBTQ youth are more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. (Source: Youth.gov, LGBTQ Youth Behavioral Health)
- Each episode of LGBT victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment or abuse, **increases the likelihood of self-harming behavior** by 2.5 times on average.
 - Source: IMPACT. (2010). Mental health disorders, psychological distress, and suicidality in a diverse sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths. *American Journal of Public Health*. 100(12), 2426-32.
- Studies consistently find that LGBTQ youth have **higher rates of teen pregnancy**.
 - Source: Hodson K, Meads C, Bewley S. Lesbian and bisexual women's likelihood of becoming pregnant: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BJOG*. 2017;124(3):393-402. doi:10.1111/1471-0528.14449

Be an Advocate

1. **Download advocacy toolkit** and sign up for action alerts at www.texasisready.org.
2. **Contact your SBOE member via email.**
3. **Submit testimony** during the next SBOE meeting June 29.
4. **Share our materials on social media, e-news, etc.**



TEXAS IS READY TOOLKIT

It's been two decades since Texas last revised curriculum standards for sex education - but now we're ready for a change.

In 2020, the State Board of Education (SBOE) will update the basics of sex education in Texas. **We need your help** to make sure students in Texas get access to the information they need.

The Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the North Texas Alliance to Reduce Unintended Pregnancy in Teens (Ntarupt), and Healthy Futures of Texas are collaborating on advocacy to improve sex education curriculum standards for Texas youth.

Keep reading to learn how you can get involved!

WHY

Should you get involved?

Medically accurate, abstinence-plus, inclusive sex education can help young people access the skills they need for healthy relationships and healthy futures.

Current sex education standards, set in the 1990s, don't cover critical topics like consent and inclusivity, and provide minimal information on topics like contraception and STI prevention. With your help, we can create positive change.

What's Inside?

Page 2: The Basics of Sex Ed Advocacy
Page 3: Texas Adolescent Health Fact Sheet
Page 4: Advocacy Guide
Page 5: Key Recommendations
Page 6: Messaging guide
Page 7 - 11: Topic Guides
Page 12: Member bios

THANK YOU

To Gary and Sara Ahr for their generous support of this advocacy toolkit and their work on behalf of Texas youth.

What's next?

- **June 29-July 2:** Public SBOE hearing; testimony and discussion of draft Health Education TEKS
- **September 8-11:** 1st reading of proposed Health Education TEKS and testimony; amendments debated
- **November 17-20:** 2nd reading and final vote on Health Education TEKS



Questions?



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