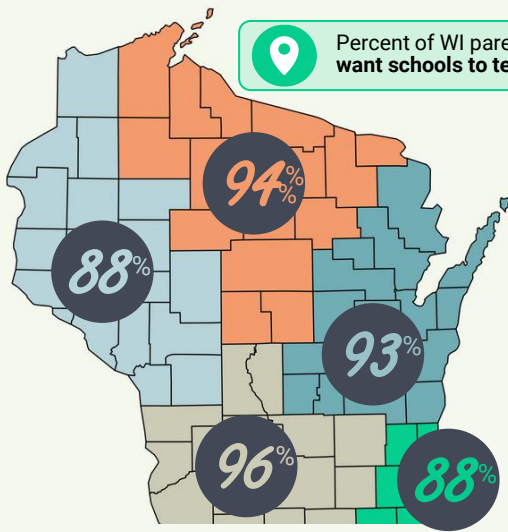


Parental Support for Comprehensive Sexual Education in Wisconsin

We asked Wisconsin parents their thoughts on teaching comprehensive sexual education in K-12 schools.

In 2023, the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) partnered with the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin (SHOW) to survey **435 parents, guardians, and caretakers** across Wisconsin from all religious, political, and geographical backgrounds. Overall, parents think schools should teach **age-appropriate** and **medically accurate** information regarding sexual development and health. Seventy-seven percent of parents believe **comprehensive education may result in students delaying sexual intercourse**.

92%
of parents surveyed think both abstinence and comprehensive sex education should be taught to their children.



In every region of Wisconsin, the vast majority of parents and guardians want schools to teach comprehensive sexual education.

Parents want schools to teach how to **prevent pregnancy** and **sexually transmitted infections (STIs)** — as well as the **benefits of abstinence**.

Parents who participated in this study geographically represent **all five public health regions** and 53 out of 72 counties.



Parents want medically accurate information taught to their children.

88% of parents believe it is important for teens to learn the **right way to use condoms** to help stop the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

79% of parents think high school lessons should include a **demo with a real condom**.

70% of parents believe that teens in high school should have **free access to condoms**.

Parents want standardization and communication.



96% of parents think young people should be encouraged by educators to **talk with their parents** about sex and sexuality.



82% of parents think all districts in Wisconsin should **follow the same basic content standard** (by grade) for sex education.



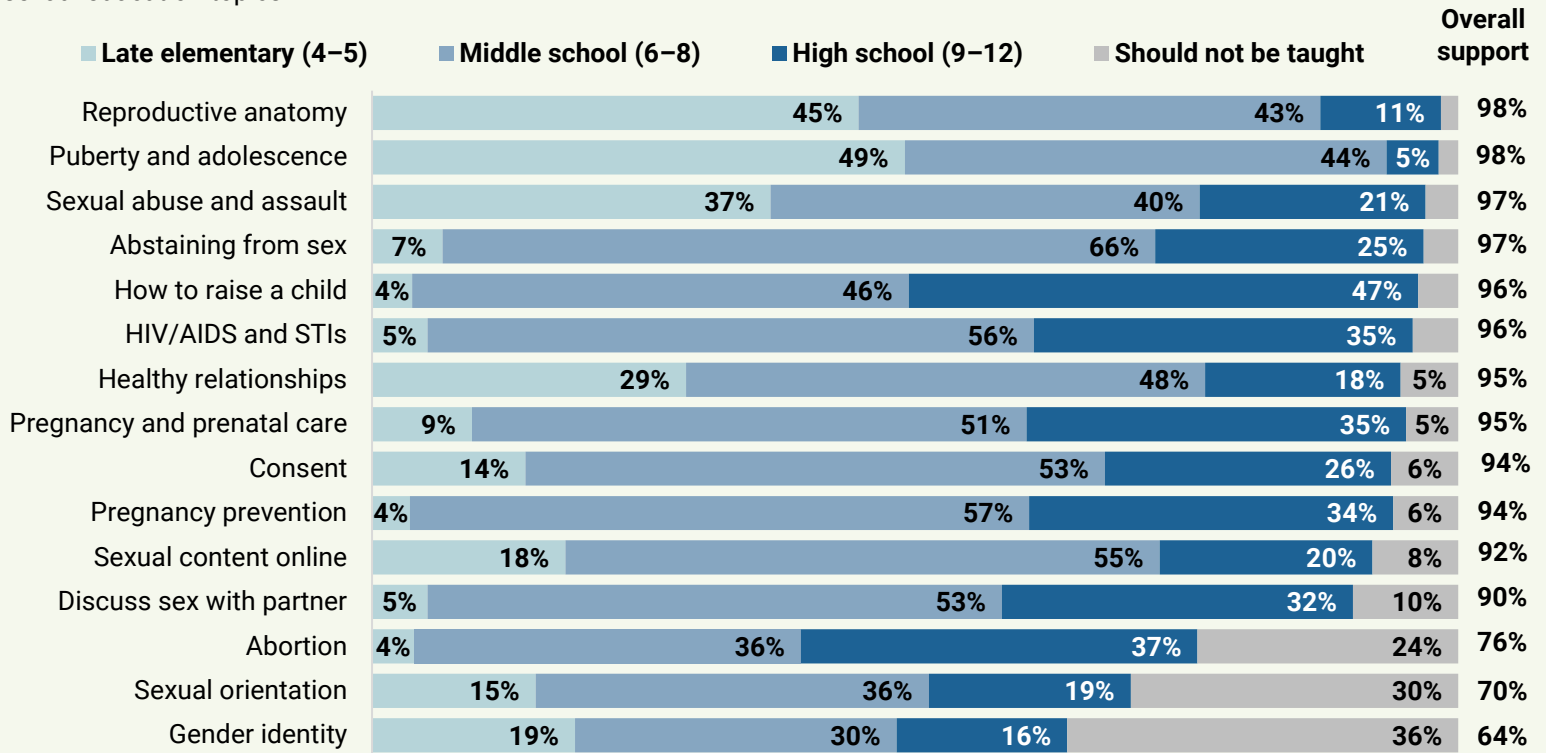
70% of parents think they should be able to **opt out of sex education** for their children.

55%
of parents surveyed did not know if sexual health education is the same for all students in Wisconsin.

- Sex education is **not** mandated.
- If school districts decide to teach sexual health education, then:
 - Teaching about **sexually transmitted infections (STIs)** is required.
 - Curricula are required to **stress abstinence**.
 - Curricula are *not* required to include lessons on **sexual orientation** or **gender identity**.
 - Curricula are *not* required to provide lessons on **consent**.
- See [Wisc. Stat. § 115.35](#) and [Wisc. Stat. § 118.019](#).

Parents think most sexual health topics should be introduced in middle school.

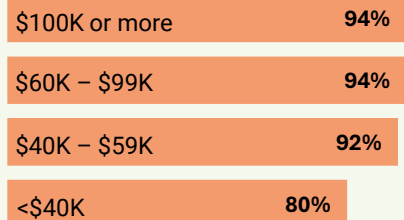
Parents' opinions vary regarding at which grade level they think specific sexual health topics should be introduced in school. However, a common consensus emerges that **middle school is an appropriate time** to begin teaching *most* comprehensive sexual education topics.



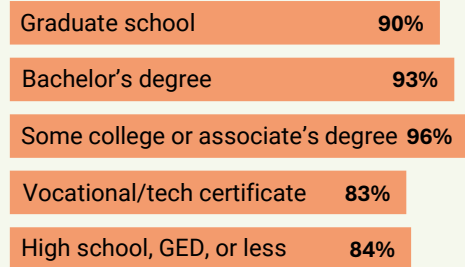
Overall, 92% of parents preferred comprehensive sexual education in school, versus abstinence-only or no sexual education in school.

A vast majority of parents from **all** identities preferred comprehensive sexual education as shown in the breakdown below:

Annual Income



Education



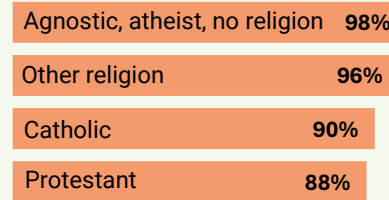
Gender



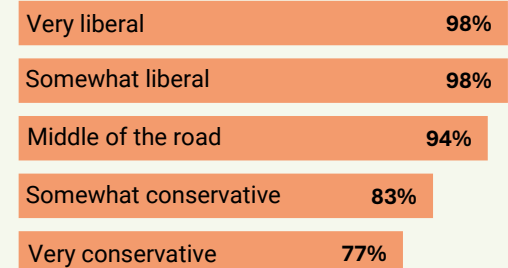
Age



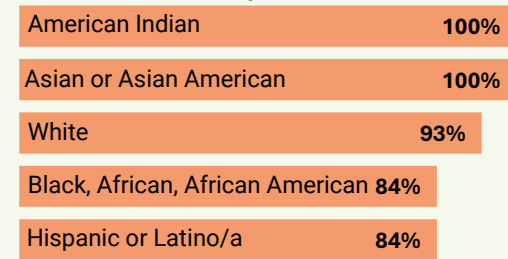
Religion



Political Leaning



Race and Ethnicity



Who was surveyed? Participants were sent an invitation via mail or email that included a secure, personalized link to an online survey (August – September 2023).

Gender	Race	Religion	Public Health Region	Education	Political leaning	Income	Registered voter
Female: 64%	White: 80%	Protestant: 50%	Southeast: 40%	HS or less: 15%	Very conservative: 10%	<\$40,000: 13%	Yes: 93%
Male: 32%	Parents of color: 18%	Other/no religion: 27%	South: 16%	Vocational/tech: 7%	Somewhat conservative: 22%	\$40K-\$59K: 11%	No: 5%
Other: 1%	No answer: 4%	Catholic: 21%	West: 21%	Some college/AA degree: 19%	Middle-of-the-road: 34%	\$60K-\$99K: 24%	No answer: 2%
No answer: 3%		No answer: 2%	North: 8%	Bachelor's: 36%	Somewhat liberal: 21%	\$100K or more: 38%	
			Northeast: 15%	Graduate school: 20%	Very liberal: 11%	No answer: 14%	
				No answer: 3%	No answer: 2%		

Sample size: 435 parents, guardians, and caregivers.

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