



We are excited and pleased to introduce you to 4Girls Health {www.4girls.gov}, one way the Federal Government is addressing girls' health today. As you'll note from the media kit and the enclosed materials, 4Girls Health is a part of the Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health. The 4Girls.gov web site is commercial free; offering accurate and current health information on numerous topics for girls ages ten to sixteen.

American girls use the Internet to find information about everything from relationships to fitness and nutrition. Statistics show that today's media-savvy youth rely more heavily on the Internet as a reliable source of information than they do their parents, teachers or friends. It is critical to help them get the most reliable and up-to-date information. That is why it is so important to us for you to help get the word out about 4Girls Health. All the articles, interviews, and links we refer to on 4Girls.gov are reviewed by a medical review panel and cleared through representatives of the Office on Women's Health.

Please help us make 4Girls.gov the nation's premiere health resource for American girls today. Thank you again for your support and we hope that you find the enclosed materials helpful and informative. We have provided a statistics sheet with facts about girls' health for use in any editorial pieces in the future. If you have any questions or would like more information about 4Girls Health, you may contact Jin In at (202) 401-9546 or Suzanne Albisu at (703) 560-6618 x 206.

Regards,

4Girls Health



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health



www.4girls.gov

You are the Rhythm of the Universe... connect: mind-body-spirit



A project of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health

GIRLS' HEALTH MATTERS

Place
Stamp
Here

US Department of Health and Human Services
Office on Women's Health
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 712E
Washington, DC 20201





www.4girls.gov

As they get older and move into their teens, girls face challenging social pressures and health issues. We have created the 4Girls Health web site to help girls (ages 10-16) learn more about the issues they may face in the upcoming years. The web site has information about these topics:



BODY

FITNESS



SAFETY



LOOKING AHEAD

RELATIONSHIPS

BUILDING CHARACTER

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

ILLNESS & DISABILITY



NUTRITION



4PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

MIND

NEWS & MORE



SPEAK UP!

Be a helpful parent.

The Parent/Caregiver section provides web site links so you can get information to help girls cope with social pressures and health issues.

Learn more about disability and illness in girls.

Some girls not only deal with the stresses of growing up, but also the pressures of living with an illness or disability. This special section gives girls tips on talking to friends, going to the doctor, dealing with school, talking to family, and a lot more great information. It also has a section for families, which offers parents, brothers, and sisters helpful ways to cope and offer support.

Check out who's in the spotlight.

The web site features a "Spotlight" section featuring people who have made valuable contributions to girls' health and well-being. Look for words of advice and inspiration from outstanding women and men.

A word about our resources.

The 4Girls Health web site only links to reliable sources of information. When you leave our site and click on one of the pre-screened links, you will be told that you are leaving a federal web site. While we have carefully chosen these resources, please keep in mind that we have no control over the material (or changes to material) on other web sites.

When asked about one health issue she feels is important to teen girls today, Dr. Wanda Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health (Women's Health) replied, "Having respect for your body. Everything from how you treat your body, how you care for it, how you work for it, not poisoning it...all come from having respect for your body."



FACT SHEET

Department of Health & Human Services Office on Women's Health
200 Independence Avenue, SW
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4Girls.gov

HISTORY & BACKGROUND

The www.4girls.gov website was developed in 2002 by the Office on Women's Health (OWH) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to fulfill the need for reliable, current health information on the Internet for adolescent girls, and to help improve the health of women across their life span from childhood to adolescence and into adulthood. The purpose of the site is to motivate girls to choose healthy behaviors using positive, supportive and non-threatening messages.

MISSION & PURPOSE

The mission of the www.4girls.gov web site is to promote healthy, positive behaviors in girls between the ages of ten and sixteen. The site gives girls reliable, useful information on various health issues and advice on handling relationships with family and friends, at school and at home.

SLOGAN

Our slogan, "You are the Rhythm of the Universe. Connect Mind ~ Body ~ Spirit" focus's on the whole of the girl not just her body. Our vision is to show that a girl is more than the sum of her parts and that her spirit is universal.

OPERATIONS

- ❖ 4Girls is entirely directed and sponsored by the Federal Government. It is a project of the Office on Women's Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is 100% commercial-free.
- ❖ **Jonelle Rowe**, Medical Advisor for Adolescent Women's Health, and **Jin In**, Service Fellow for Adolescent Women's Health, are the project directors for the 4Girls.gov project.



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- ❖ The Office on Women's Health (OWH) has received feedback on the website from young girls all over the United States. In a focus group setting, they shared their thoughts about the 4girls web site and additional health issues they'd like to see addressed. The group, known as the "**Sounding Board**" will provide OWH with feedback on an ongoing basis.

HEALTH CATEGORIES

Body--- Covers everything from growth and body hair to acne and hair care.

Fitness-- Stresses that being fit means more than only how you look.

Nutrition--- Addresses a healthy diet for a teenage girl and what to do to improve nutrition.

Mind--- Talks about relieving stress in healthy ways, depression, and teen suicide prevention.

Drugs & Alcohol--- Describes different forms of substance abuse and what it does to a girl's body.

Safety--- Addresses safety issues about the Internet, within relationships, and provides general safety tips.

Illness & Disability--- Talks about ways to cope with a chronic illness, how to face fears when dealing with a long-term disease, and ways to combat fears regarding health issues.

Relationships--- Talks about the importance of healthy relationships and open communication.

Parents & Caregivers Section--- Provides resources and helpful links about talking to girls about their health and fitness concerns.



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Media Advisory

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HHS Girl's Health Website Launches New Look

4Girls.gov Uses Teen Input to Redesign Appearance of Web Site

Washington, DC – www.4girls.gov launched a new look and feel to its website in response to current trends in health, fitness and Internet appeal. Additions to the site include new links to free health information, updated interviews with celebrities and sports stars, new topic areas and an overall new look with each webpage.

WHAT: **4Girls.gov**, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health site, was developed to give girls ages 10 and 16 reliable, useful information about various health issues they may want to learn about as they become young women and valuable tips on handling relationships with family and friends. Only positive, supportive, non-commercial messages are used.

A diverse group of nine young women throughout the United States who have demonstrated leadership and enthusiasm in young women's health form the 4Girls "**Sounding Board**". The group's main goal is to provide feedback to OWH regarding the 4Girls Health website and other adolescent women's health initiatives. They share their thoughts about 4Girls and health issues they think are important to teen girls.

WHO: The program is run by Dr. Jonelle Rowe, Medical Advisor for Adolescent Women's Health, and Jin In, Service Fellow for Adolescent Women's Health.

A diverse group of nine young women throughout the United States who have demonstrated leadership and enthusiasm in young women's health form the 4Girls "**Sounding Board**". The group's main goal is to provide feedback to OWH regarding the 4Girls Health website and other adolescent women's health initiatives. They share their thoughts about 4Girls and health issues they think are important to teen girls.



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WHEN: Young women, ages thirteen to sixteen, will be selected by the Office on Women's Health on an ongoing basis based on various criteria. The input of this "Sounding Board" will be applied to the website throughout the year.

WHY: The mission of 4Girls.gov is to promote healthy, positive behaviors in girls between the ages of ten to sixteen. Young women rely on the Internet to gather health information.

WHERE? For more in-depth health information and to learn more about 4Girls visit us online:

<http://www.4girls.gov/>



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A HEALTHY MAKEOVER IN 2004—4GIRLS.gov Emphasizes the Importance of Girls' Health

Washington D.C. – U.S. teens are more likely to consume soda and fried foods, and exercise less than their global teen counterparts. Chronic diseases associated with obesity such as diabetes are now seen in young people. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services', Office on Women's Health (OWH) is committed to increasing overall health and fitness awareness as well as the development of healthy lifestyles among girls. To meet these goals, OWH has created a new and improved web site for girls, www.4girls.gov.

The 4GIRLS Health site features interactive tools, such as a 'Speak Up' forum for girls, in order to engage young women to take proactive steps towards a healthy lifestyle early on in life. It is vital to instill health promoting behaviors in girls during teen years as they grow into adulthood. The 4GIRLS site provides valuable information about preventative measures teen girls can take against the onset of various diseases as they grow older.

When asked about one health issues she feels is important to teen girls today, Dr. Wanda Jones, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health {Women's Health} said, "Having respect for your body. Everything from how you treat your body, how you care for it, how you work for it, not poisoning it.... all come from having respect for your body."

The site makeover was based on the opinions of a newly developed *Sounding Board*, a diverse group of nine young women throughout the United States who have demonstrated leadership and enthusiasm in young women's health. The group's main goal is to provide feedback to OWH regarding the 4GIRLS Health web site and other adolescent women's health initiatives. They share their thoughts about 4GIRLS and health issues they think are important to teen girls.

The mission of 4GIRLS.gov is to promote healthy, positive behaviors in girls between the ages of 10 and 16. The site, originally launched in 2002, gives girls current, reliable, and useful information on various health issues they will face as they become young women, and tips on handling relationships with family and friends, at school, and at home.

4Girls.gov is sponsored by DHHS, Office on Women's Health. For information about *Girls' Health*, visit www.4girls.gov or call the National Women's Health Information Center at 1-800-994-9662.

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Who runs the 4Girls program?



Jonelle Rowe

Medical Advisor for Adolescent Women's Health

I am a pediatrician. I have three children, Bradley, Whitney and Hawley; all grown: I graduated from Vassar College and University of Vermont Medical School. For many years I took care of very small and very sick premature babies at the University of Connecticut. Six years ago I came to Washington to work for the government to develop health programs for girls. I started work on www.4girls.gov several years ago because I knew that young women get a lot of their health information on the Internet and I wanted to make sure that there was a place where they could get accurate and useful information. I love my work and believe that health and behavior choices that a young women makes will determine her health and well being for the rest of her life.



Jin In

Service Fellow for Adolescent Women's Health

I was born in Seoul, Korea, raised in Houston, Texas, and have lived and studied in England, Mexico, and Berkeley, California. Living in all these different places has taught me many things, most importantly that "diversity is truly the spice of life" and that "love sees no barrier." My passion is to inspire adolescent girls and for that, I moved to Washington, DC to work on 4Girls Health. My hobbies include salsa dancing, listening to jazz music, and baking. I believe all of us have the capacity to make a difference in this world. How we do it depends on each one of us.





Facts & Figures: Girls Health Statistics Across the Nation

A staggering amount of statistics pertaining to girls health have been released by top federal agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI), among others. Below is a sample of girls' health statistics in our country.

Girls and...

Alcohol...

- ❖ Ten percent of girls ages 12-17 admit to binge drinking (having five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the month prior to survey).
- ❖ Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is a cause of lung cancer and coronary heart disease among women who are lifetime nonsmokers.

Body Image...

- ❖ 81% of 10 year olds are afraid of being fat. 51% of 9 and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves if they are on a diet. (Mellin et. al, 1992)
- ❖ In girls, the mortality rate for anorexia is higher than any other psychological disorder. In fact, it's the number one cause of death among young women. Five to 10% of girls with anorexia die within ten years of onset, 18-20% die within twenty years of onset, and only 50% report ever being cured. (ANAD)
- ❖ In 2001, 62.1% of ninth-grade girls reported attempting to lose weight compared with 31.8% of ninth-grade boys.
- ❖ High school girls (12.6%) were significantly more likely than boys (5.5%) to have taken diet pills, powders, or liquids during the previous month to lose weight. In addition, high school girls were significantly more likely (7.8%) than boys (2.9%) to have taken laxatives or vomited to lose weight or avoid gaining weight.
- ❖ High school girls (34.9%) were significantly more likely than boys (23.3%) to think that they were overweight. (that doesn't look like a significant difference) But they were more than twice as likely (62.3%) as boys (28.8%) to be currently trying to lose weight.



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- ❖ Girls who are involved in sports are less likely to consider themselves overweight. In 2000, 27% of female athletes thought they were overweight, compared with 40% of non-athletic girls.

Drug Use...

- ❖ 20.5% of girls ages 12-17 reported using illicit drugs over the past year (these drugs could have included Marijuana/Hash, Cocaine/Crack, Inhalants, Hallucinogens, Heroin and/or any prescription-type psychotherapeutic used for non-medical purposes).
- ❖ Marijuana has been tried by more than one-fifth of adolescent females.
- ❖ The largest reported use of both cocaine and crack was among Hispanic females.
- ❖ Among teens with more than \$50.00 a week in spending money, girls are more likely than boys to smoke, drink, get drunk and use marijuana.
- ❖ Half of teens that had not tried marijuana credited their parents with their decision. Parent power is the most underutilized tool in battling teen substance abuse.
- ❖ Girls' ages 13 to 15 are at a higher risk of substance abuse.
- ❖ Girls with \$50.00 or more in weekly spending money are more likely than boys to have used marijuana (43% vs. 25%), tobacco (38% vs. 31%) and alcohol (63% vs. 58%) and to get drunk in a typical month (32% vs. 22%).
- ❖ More than one quarter (27.7 %) of high school girls currently smoke cigarettes, 45% drink alcohol, more than a quarter (26.4%) binge drink and 20% use marijuana. Younger girls are smoking and drinking like boys.
- ❖ High school girls are almost as likely as boys to use cocaine and inhalants.
- ❖ Substance use can sink into abuse and addiction more quickly for girls and young women than for boys and young men, even when using the same amount or less of a particular substance.
- ❖ Girls using alcohol and drugs are more likely to attempt suicide.
- ❖ Girls are more likely than boys to abuse prescription painkillers, stimulants and tranquilizers.





Learning Disabilities & Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)...

- ❖ An estimated 4.6 million children 3-17 years of age had a learning disability and an estimated 3.3 million children had ADHD. Girls were half as likely to have a learning disability as boys and 3 times less likely to have ADHD than boys.

Media...

- ❖ By the time a teenage girl graduates high school, she will have spent 15,000 hours watching television, compared to 12,000 hours in the classroom.
- ❖ Average time per week that the American child ages 2-17 spends watching television: 19 hours, 40 minutes.
- ❖ Teenage boys spend nearly twice as much time watching MTV as reading for pleasure. Girls ages 11-19 watch MTV more than any other network.
- ❖ Nearly 30 percent of young people (ages 10-17) say they watch shows their parents would not approve of.
- ❖ 34% of women and 30% of men on TV are shown using their intelligence. Furthermore, 24% of women use their intelligence to achieve their goals, compared to 14% of men. In movies, 69% of women and 71% of men are seen as behaving with intelligence.
- ❖ Across the media, women are seen in context of romantic relationships more frequently than men and in the context of work less frequently than men. In television, 23% of women were shown dating as compared to only 17% of men. On TV, 28% of women were shown on the job while 41% of men were depicted this way.
- ❖ 46% of women in the media are depicted as “thin” or “very thin”.
- ❖ 37% of articles in teen magazines included a focus on appearance.
- ❖ 56% of girls ages 10-17 think there are enough good role models on television.
- ❖ Both girls (62%) and boys (58%) say the female characters they see on television usually rely on someone else to solve their problems, whereas male characters tend to solve their own problems (53% of girls and 50% of boys agree).
- ❖ 7 out of 10 (69%) girls - and 40% of boys - say they have wanted to look like, dress, or fix their hair like a character on television.





- ❖ Girls between 10 and 17 spend most of their time listening to CDs and tapes (50% very often), listening to the radio (46% very often), and watching television programs (32% very often).

Nutrition...

- ❖ Unfortunately, most girls do not meet calcium recommendations. National nutrition surveys show that only 19% of teen girls get the recommended amounts of calcium. In fact, teenage girls only average about 740 mg of calcium per day, well below the amount needed for their normal growth and development.
- ❖ Of daily soda drinkers, 25% of 13- to 18-year-old girls drink 3.5 cans and 10% drink five cans or more, and. By contrast, 20 years ago, the typical boy or girl consumer of soft drinks (at the 50th percentile) drank only two-thirds of a can per day. That is nearly a 400% increase!
- ❖ Girls average 1 1/2 cup of soft drinks and less than 1 cup of milk daily. Heavy consumption of soft drinks is associated with low intake of calcium, magnesium, ascorbic acid, riboflavin, and vitamin A and with high intake of calories, fat, and carbohydrate. It is a likely factor in the increase in obesity for both children and adults.
- ❖ 70.6% of female high school students report eating a low-fat diet. Black, non-Hispanic students (54.9%) were less likely to eat a low-fat diet than their White, non-Hispanic (62.9%) and Hispanic (63.8%) peers.
- ❖ In 2001, only one fifth (21.4%) of students, reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables in the previous day, an increase from 15.4% in 1993.
- ❖ Blood pressure levels were higher for Black girls ages 6-24 than for their White and Mexican-American peers due to higher levels of dietary fat intake as well as a higher Body Mass Index rating.
- ❖ Nutrition Trends: In America there are fewer family meals and less time is spent eating food together; Less than 10% of household budget spent on food kept in the home; Increase in size and availability of all-you-can-eat and super-size servings at restaurants; Over half of fast food goes out drive-thru windows; More food sold in single-serve packs means not sharing meals; Liter of Coke costs less than half-gallon of milk.



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Obesity...

- ❖ African American, non-Hispanic girls are at particularly high risk of being overweight. In 1999-2000, 24-27% of African American, non-Hispanic girls were overweight.
- ❖ Overweight or obese children have been being reported more heavily since the mid-1970s. It is estimated that over 13% of children ages 6-11 and 14% of adolescents' ages 12-19 are overweight.

Physical Activity/Sports...

- ❖ 38% of female high school students reported a level of physical activity that did not meet the criteria of the recommended amount of either moderate or vigorous physical activity.
- ❖ Young females are more likely than males to be more inactive.
- ❖ After the tenth grade, girls are significantly more likely than boys to report not engaging in vigorous or moderate physical activity (14.4% of eleventh-grade girls versus 7.8% of boys, and 15.2% of twelfth-grade girls versus 8.7% of boys). Among high school girls, African Americans (16.9%) are significantly more likely than whites (10.2%) to report inactivity.
- ❖ A girl's involvement in sports can reduce her chances of contemplating suicide or developing a suicide plan. When asked about suicide plans, 23% of non-athletes, 18% of athletes, and 14% of highly involved athletes had made a suicide plan.

Pregnancy...

- ❖ In the United States each year, nearly 4 in 10 young women—nearly 1 million a year—become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20. Eighty percent of these pregnancies are unintended, and 79% are to unmarried teens.
- ❖ In 2001, the adolescent birth rate was 25 per 1,000 young women ages 15 to 17. There were 145,324 births to these young women in 2001.
- ❖ There are substantial racial and ethnic disparities in birth rates among adolescents ages 15 to 17. In 2001, the birth rate for this age group was 10 per 1,000 for Asians/Pacific Islanders; 14 for White, non-Hispanics; 31 for American Indians/Alaska Natives; 45 for African American, non-Hispanics; and 53 for Hispanics.
- ❖ The birth rate for African American, non-Hispanic females ages 15 to 17 dropped by nearly half between 1991 and 2001, completely reversing the increase between 1986



- ❖ and 1991. The birth rate for White, non-Hispanic teens declined by two-fifths between 1991-2001.
- ❖ In 2001, 88% of births to females ages 15 to 17 were to unmarried mothers, compared with 62% in 1980.
- ❖ Hispanic females ages 15-17 reported 61% of births among females in that age group. That figure is 3 times the rate of non-Hispanic white girls.

Suicide/Depression...

- ❖ The most recent statistics report that 23.6% of female students in grades 9-12 have seriously considered suicide, 11.2% have attempted suicide, and 3.1% have suffered injuries due to a suicide attempt.
- ❖ Ethnically, the largest groups of female high school students who think about suicide are Hispanic (26%). The most common reasons for attempted suicide or suicidal thoughts were knowledge of suicide attempt by friend or family member; a history of mental and behavioral problems requiring professional help; and extreme alienation from family and community.
- ❖ Stress and depression are related to smoking and drinking for girls. In the most recent survey measuring stress and smoking among girls, when asked why they smoked or drank, 66% of girls who reported smoking said they did so to relieve stress, and 36% who reported drinking said they did so because it helped them to forget problems. Girls with depressive symptoms or who reported abuse were even more likely to turn to drinking or smoking for relief.
- ❖ Girls in ninth through twelfth grade (34.5%) are significantly more likely than boys in the same grades (21.6%) to have felt sad or hopeless almost every day for at least 2 weeks.

Sexual Behavior...

- ❖ Among female high school students, 67% of African American adolescent females reported having ever had sexual intercourse—with 11% reporting their first sexual experience before age 13. 70% of all Asian and Pacific Islander high school students reported being virgins.
- ❖ In the United States each year, nearly 4 in 10 young women—nearly 1 million a year—become pregnant at least once before they reach the age of 20. Eighty percent of these pregnancies are unintended, and 79% are to unmarried teens.





- ❖ Teen girls were, on average, 1.7 years younger than their partners. 51% of teen girls had a first sexual partner who was 2 or more years older, and 23% had a partner who was one year older. About 1/5 of all teenage girls surveyed had a partner who was older by 4 or more years.
- ❖ Among teen girls who first had sex before age 14, 65% had a partner at least two years older while only 17% boys of the same age had partners that age.
- ❖ 17% of Hispanic teens encountered physical violence in their first sexual relationships compared to 6% non-Hispanic whites and 12% non-Hispanic African Americans.
- ❖ 62% of teen girls were more likely to say they had had a conversation with their partner about contraception prior to the first sexual experience—white teen girls being the most likely race to say they had this conversation.
- ❖ Hispanic teens were less vigilant users of contraceptives. More than 1/3 never used contraception during their first sexual relationship (23% of non-Hispanic blacks and 19% of non-Hispanic whites claimed this statistic).

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS...

- ❖ Currently there are over 143,000 people infected with AIDS in the United States. Over 1,800 of those infected are girls ages 13-19. African American females are the largest group.
- ❖ Chlamydia is the most frequently reported bacterial sexually transmitted disease in the United States. It causes an estimated 3 million infections annually.
- ❖ Chlamydia is known as a "silent" disease because three quarters of infected girls have no symptoms.

Smoking...

- ❖ Among female students who reported smoking daily in 2002, 5% were 8th-graders, 11% were 10th-graders, and 16% were 12th-graders.
- ❖ On average, more girls (13.6%) between the ages of 12-17 years old smoke than do boys (12.4%) of the same age. This is the only age group where the female smoker population is higher than the male population.
- ❖ Smoking prevalence for high school senior girls is highest among American Indians or Alaska Natives (39.4%) and whites (33.1%) and lowest among Hispanics (19.2%), Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders (13.8%), and African Americans (8.6%).



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- ❖ Large majorities of both white and Hispanic (71% each) and African American (69%) of adolescent females reported that they had tried cigarette smoking even if only one or two puffs.

Violence...

- ❖ Each year, there are nearly 3.5 million violent crimes committed against females aged 12 and older. Females are most likely to be victimized by people they know.
- ❖ 1.3% of all violent crimes committed against women were committed against girls ages 12-15.
- ❖ Hispanic girls reported the largest incidents of forceful sexual intercourse compared to African American and white females.
- ❖ Female high school students were more than twice as likely than male students to report forced sexual intercourse.

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