

» Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration

Sexuality Education at School

The Federal Centre for Health Education's (BZgA) representative study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration is a representative repeat survey. A large-scale survey of young people, their parents and young adults was launched for the ninth time in the summer of 2019. It follows on from predecessor studies conducted between 1980 and 2014. The goal of the study is to acquire reliable data about the attitudes and behaviours of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany with regards to sexuality and contraception.

Sexuality education is mandatory for all schools in Germany. The inclusion of sexuality education in the curriculum makes schools a central place for learning about sexuality and contraception for young people (Hilgers, Krenzer & Mundhenke, 2004). The Youth Sexuality Study examined what role school plays as a source of information for topics around sexuality and what significance it has in providing sexuality education for young people in 2019. This fact sheet presents the core results about sexuality education in school for adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17.

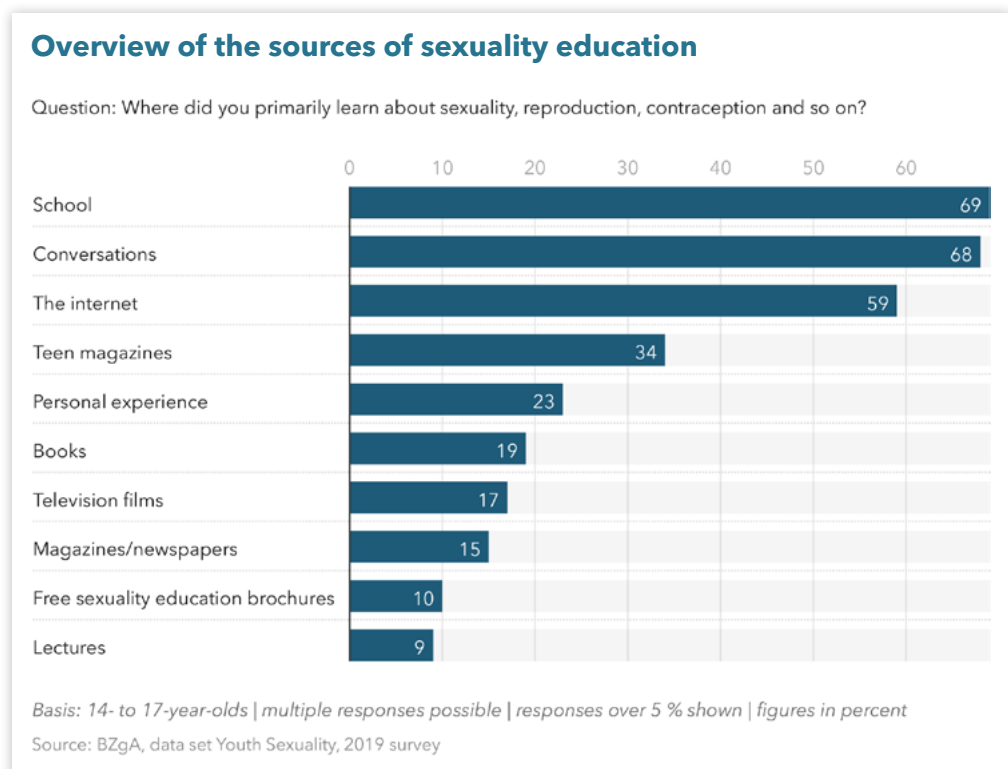
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Result 1

School lessons continues to be the most important source of sexuality education, although a slight downward trend can be observed.

Sexuality education is mandatory in Germany in a number of different year groups. For that reason adolescents and young adults in Germany possess a broad level of knowledge of the physiological foundations of sexuality and reproduction and exhibit a high level of contraception competency. In 2019 lessons at school still play a significant role as a professional source of information: 69 percent of young people say that they primarily obtained their knowledge about sexuality and contraception from school (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



[See Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration - Fact Sheet 'Media of Sexuality Education'](#)



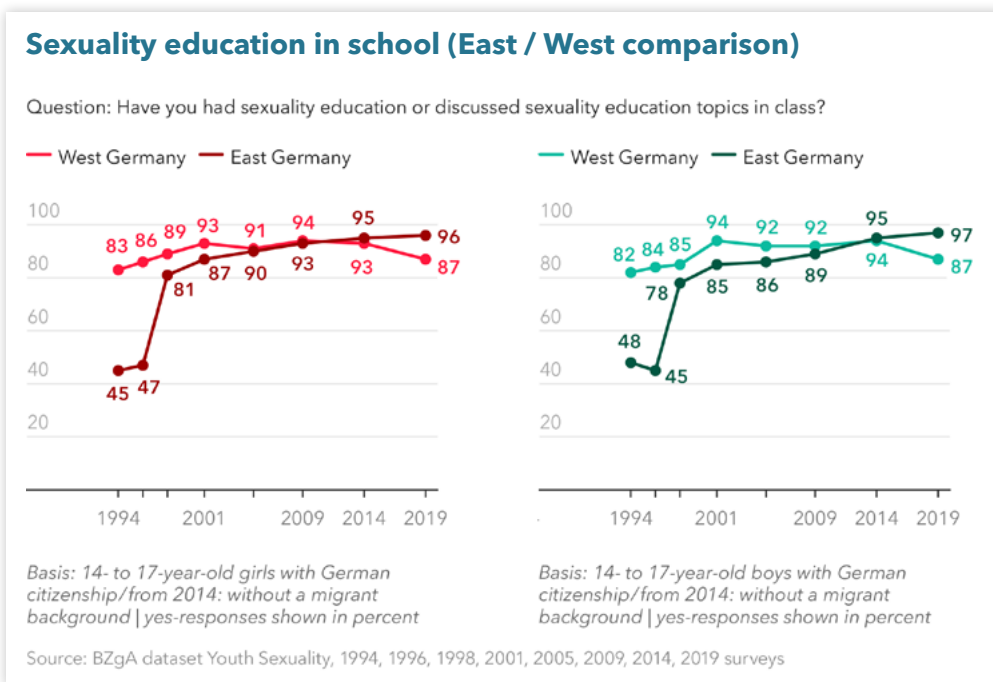
Figure 1 clearly illustrates the major role school plays in delivering sexuality education. And yet schools have declined in significance in recent years: in 2009 and 2014 more than 80 percent of respondents cited school as the primary source of their knowledge. At the same time the internet has substantially increased in significance as a source of information (see Figure 1).

Result 2

The vast majority of young people receive sexuality education lessons, but this too is on the slight decline in West Germany.

The vast majority of young people can be reached via school to provide them with sexuality education content. A total of 87 percent of the boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 17 said in this survey that sexuality education topics were discussed in class. However, here too there has been a drop compared to the survey five years earlier. In 2014 93 percent of both the girls and the boys reported having discussed such topics in class (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



This trend does not affect all regions in Germany to the same extent. While 96 percent of all boys and girls in the East German federal states currently say they have received sexuality education at school, this figure is only 87 percent in the other federal states (see Figure 2).

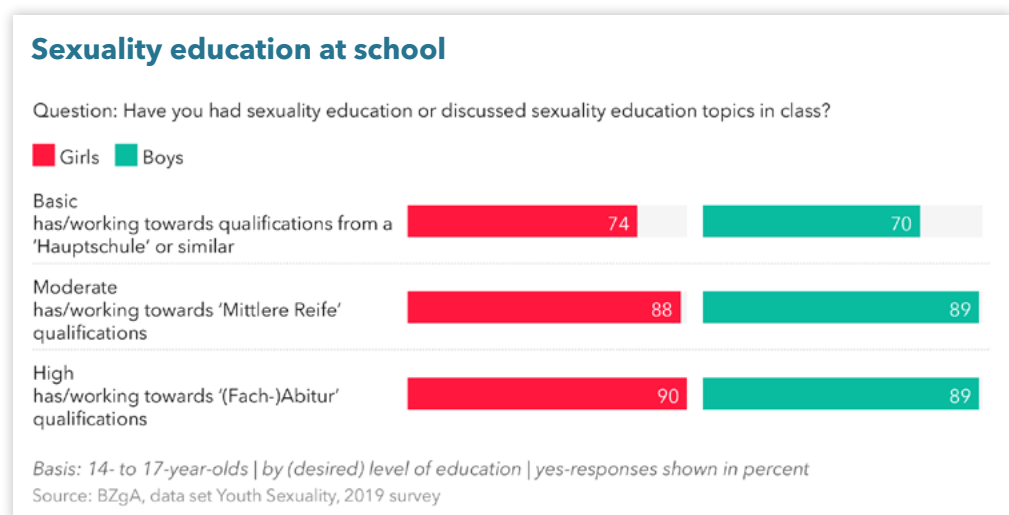
Result 3

Young people with a basic (desired) level of education and those from Muslim homes are more likely to say they have not had access to sexuality education in school.

In the ninth iteration of the Youth Sexuality Study the respondents with a more basic (desired) level of education are much less likely to confirm that they have had access to sexuality education at school (see Figure 3). 30 percent of the boys and 26 percent of the girls with a more basic (desired) level of education report not having received any sexuality education at school yet. Among the young people with a moderate or higher (desired) level of education, this applies to maximally 12 percent. That means that the impact of education level and thus the type of school attended is even stronger in 2019 than it was five years earlier (2014: 14% with a more basic level of education without sexuality education at school).

Muslim girls and boys are also among the young people who are comparatively less likely to say they have received sexuality education at school – particularly when there are close ties to the Muslim faith. 25 percent say they have not received sexuality education at school.

Figure 3

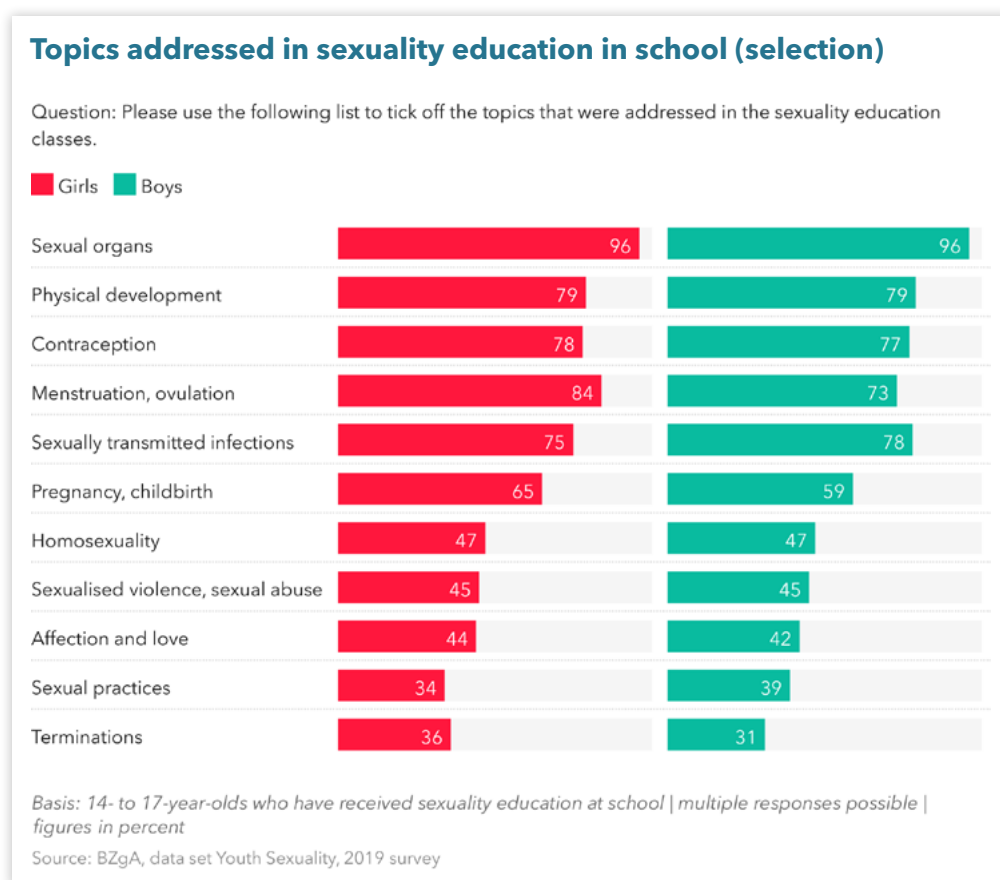


The most common topics covered by sexuality education lessons are anatomy, sexual development, menstruation, contraception and sexually transmitted infections.

Generally speaking, there continue to be clear priorities among the 18 sexuality education subject areas this survey asked about - and it is these that the majority of the respondents learn about in school. These subject areas include the sexual organs, physical and sexual development, the menstrual cycle, contraception and sexually transmitted infections - these topics are affirmed by at least three quarters of the respondents who have had access to sexuality education at school. Information about male and female anatomy takes first place: almost all the respondents say that topic was addressed if they received sexuality education at school (96 %) (see Figure 4).

Topics to do with pregnancy and childbirth are another area within sexuality education at school that play an important role (62 %). All other areas, including topics such as homosexuality and sexualised violence - are cited by fewer than 50 percent of the girls and boys (see Figure 4).

Figure 4



Looking at the changes compared to the 2014 survey, there are some significant changes in the responses:

- In 2019 more young people said the topic of 'marriage and forms of cohabitation' were discussed than in 2014 (49 % versus 39 %).
- The figures relating to pregnancy have gone down somewhat, however. For the topic 'foetal development, pregnancy and childbirth' there is a drop for both sexes of 9 percentage points and a drop of 6 percentage points for the subject of terminations.
- There has been no change in the frequency with which homosexuality is addressed in school. It remains the case that roughly half of the young people say this topic was addressed in their sexuality education classes (47 %; 2014: 46 %).

Since sexuality education at school takes place in a number of different year groups, it is likely that the 17-year-olds will affirm a wider selection of the topics listed than the 14-year-olds. And that is true to some extent. On average, the number of topics addressed goes up from 8.4 to 9.4 for those ages. Subjects of assumed priority are already cited by the majority of the 14-year-olds, such as physical anatomy and development. Sexualised violence is an area that is most likely addressed by the older respondents (14-year-olds: 39 %; 17-year-olds: 51 %). It is a similar picture for the topic of pregnancy (pregnancy and childbirth: a difference of 8 percentage points between the 14- and 17-year-olds; terminations: 10 percentage points).

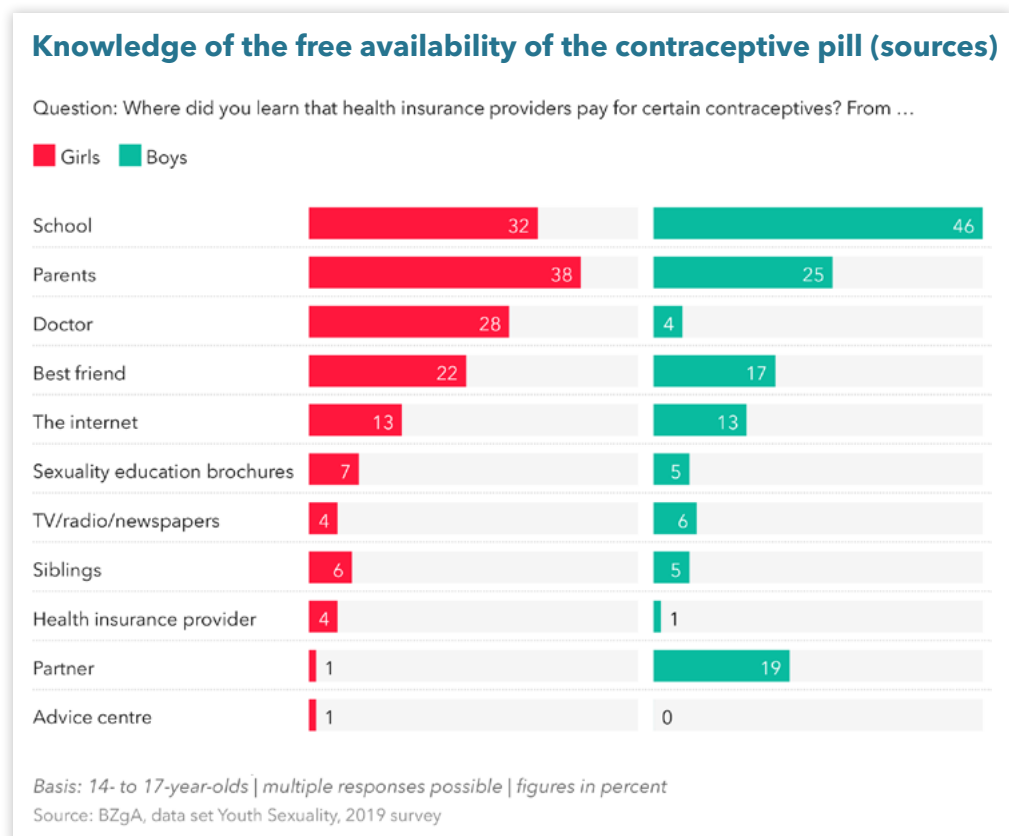
The topic of sexualised violence at school as part of students' sexuality education appears more widespread in East Germany than in the other federal states (54 % versus 43 %).

Result 5

Schools inform their students about the free availability of the contraceptive pill and the 'morning-after pill', something that is particularly important for boys, young girls, and girls with a migrant background.

At 37 percent school is an important source of knowledge of the fact that the contraceptive pill is made available to young people for free, and more so for the 14- to 17-year-old boys than the girls (46 % versus 32 %) (see Figure 5). 36 percent of the girls found out about the 'morning-after pill' at school, making this source of information more important than their mother (31 %) and their best friend (27 %).

Figure 5



For younger girls in particular – those aged 14 – school is an important source of information: almost half of the respondents (47 %) said that they received their knowledge of the free availability of the contraceptive pill and of the ‘morning-after pill’ from school. The significance of school decreases with the increasing age of the respondents and the gynaecologist becomes more important.

The girls between the ages 14 and 17 with a migrant background are most likely to learn about the free availability of the contraceptive pill (35 %) and the ‘morning-after pill’ (40 %) at school. That means that school, with regard to concrete advice about contraception, is particularly significant for girls with migrant background.

[See Youth Sexuality
9th Iteration – Fact Sheet
'Sexuality Education and
Contraceptive Advice at
Home'](#)



Result 6

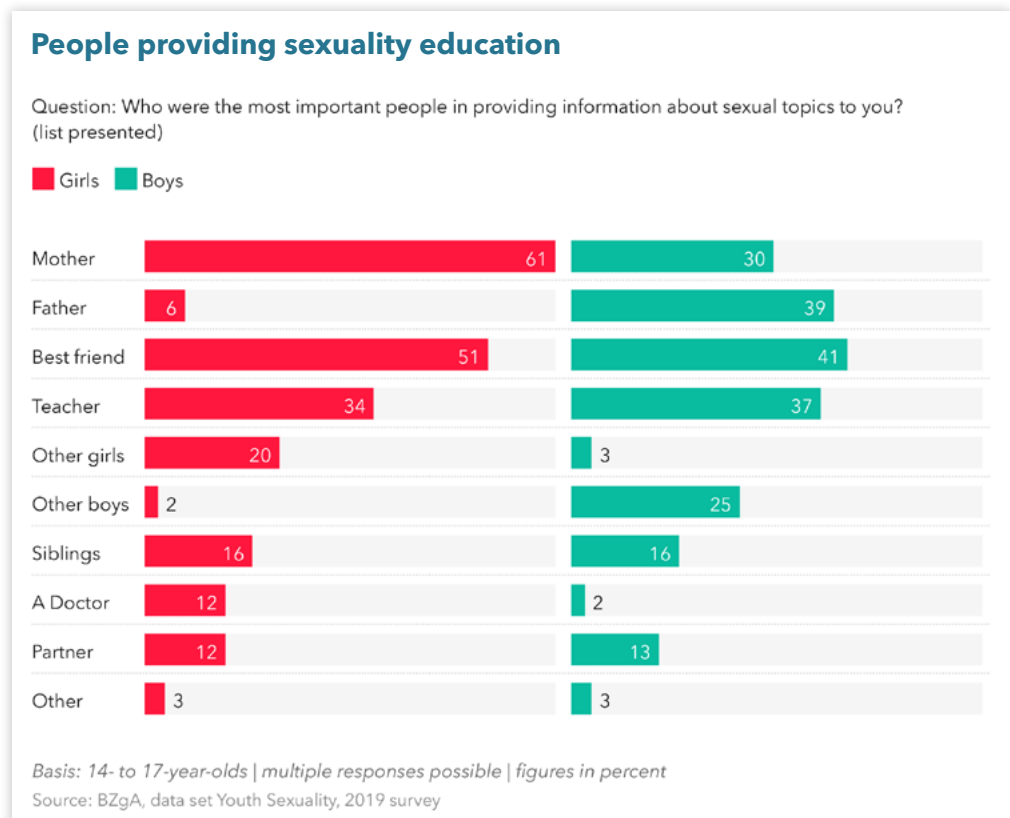
Whether teachers are important to a young person with regards to their sexuality education depends on the young person's (desired) level of education.

[See Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration - Fact Sheet 'Media of Sexuality Education'](#)



Despite the continuously increasing relevance of online media, sexuality education still takes place primarily via communicative means - meaning personal conversations. Among the most important people for adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 with regards to sexuality education are peers (65 %) and their own parents (56 %) (see Figure 6). However, teachers are also highly relevant in this context: both among the girls (34 %) and the boys (37 %) they take third place. The role of teachers has been quite stable here for years.

Figure 6



However, if young people are working towards or have achieved a more basic level of education - such as 'Hauptschule' qualifications or something similar - then teachers are less likely than average to be among the significant individuals with regards to sexuality education (11 percentage points lower). And it is for these girls and boys that sexuality education at school is particularly significant, because for young people with a more basic educational background their parents are substantially less likely to be important sources of information about sexuality: 42 percent of them cite their own mother or father in this context. To compare: among those young people with a moderate or higher (desired) level of education these figures rises to 55 percent and even 61 percent respectively.

[See Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration - Fact Sheet 'Sexuality Education and Contraceptive Advice at Home'](#)



Result 7

Teachers are important sources of sexuality education for young people with a migrant background.

Among girls with a migrant background the mother (43 %) is an important source of sexuality education significantly less often than for their peers without a migrant background (70 %). However, teachers are equally important to both groups: girls with a migrant background cite them 35 percent of the time; girls without migrant background 33 percent of the time.

Among the boys with a migrant background a similar trend can be observed. Teachers are similarly important to the male respondents with and without migrant background (38 % versus 36 %). At the same time the mothers (17 %) and fathers (27 %) of boys with a migrant history are significantly less likely to be important sources of sexuality education than they are for their peers without a migrant background (for boys without migrant background: father 45 %; mother 37 %).

School as a place to learn about sexuality is therefore an important compensator for girls and boys with a migrant background for the fact that their parents are less likely to discuss matters relating to sexuality and contraception with them compared to young people without migrant background.

[See Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration - Fact Sheet 'Sexuality Education and Contraceptive Advice at Home'](#)



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Notes on the data

- As the percentages shown has been rounded to whole numbers, it is possible that they may not add up to 100 percent.
- For the same reason the combined categories (e.g. 'very satisfied' and 'mostly satisfied') can deviate from the sum of the individual categories depicted.
- For questions where the respondents were able to pick several answers, the total figure can exceed 100 percent.
- Where data is available from previous surveys, the survey results are shown in a trend comparison. Because of how the samples were done it is possible to see the long-term trend covering almost 40 years for boys and girls between 14 and 17 without a migrant background.
- Participants are deemed to have a migrant background if they themselves or at least one parent was born without German citizenship; this definition is also used by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2021).
- The level of education is determined by the (desired) qualifications the study participants were/are seeking at school based on the education system in Germany. Low: 9 years of school, most are around 15 years old when they leave (e.g. Hauptschule) Moderate: 10 years of school, most are around 16 years old when they leave (e.g. mittlere Reife). High: 12 to 13 years of school, most are 18 to 19 years old when they leave (e.g. Abitur).
- Because of the methodological design of the Youth Sexuality Study a further non-binary differentiation of gender has had to be left out. For this same reason, the term 'sex' (biological aspects, assigned by birth) continues to be used (in contrast to 'gender' in the sense of social construction, gender identity as personal internal perception of oneself) to enable statements on long-term trends (see also Census UK, 2019). This decision is purely a methodological necessity and not based on a lack of awareness of diversity here.

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The Research Project: Background, Research Team, Methodology

The Federal Centre for Health Education's (BZgA) representative study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration is a repeat survey. In the summer of 2019 the ninth large-scale survey of young people, their parents and young adults began. A total of 6,032 interviews were conducted nationwide. Since 1980, the BZgA has been investigating the attitudes and behaviour of young people in the Federal Republic of Germany with regard to sexuality education, sexuality and contraception. This current study follows on from the previous years' studies with the explicit aim of illustrating trends.

Project profile

Client	Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA)
Project lead	Angelika Hessling, BZgA
Survey institute	Kantar GmbH
Survey population	Adolescents and young adults between the ages of 14 and 25
Survey method	Computer-supported combined oral-written survey; for the more intimate questions the questionnaire was to be filled out by the respondents without the interviewers being able to see.
Selection method	A disproportionately selected quota sample with regards to sex, age and migrant background
Sample of young people	6,032 interviews of which 3,556 were with adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 and 2,476 with young adults between 18 and 25
Sample: parents	In the households of the 14- to 17-year-old adolescents without a migrant background one parent was also surveyed (2,422 interviews)
Weighting	All the data shown underwent a representative weighting in order to remove the sample's disproportionalities caused by the design.
Survey period	May to October 2019



More information about the study Youth Sexuality 9th Iteration Central results and further fact sheets

<https://www.sexualaufklaerung.de/en/english/projects/detail/youth-sexuality-9th-iteration/>