



Social Research Laboratory, PO Box 15301, Flagstaff, AZ 86011 (520) 523-1515

(NAU012.2) Fall 1997

December 9, 1997

For Immediate Release

For More Information:  
Woody Carter (520) 523-1192

**“JUST SAY NO” SEX ED: ARIZONANS SAY “NO”**

Eighty percent of Arizona residents surveyed disagree with state funded abstinence-only sex education, recently mandated by the Arizona Legislature. “The results of this survey present very strong evidence that the State Legislature did not represent the population when it appropriated funds for sex education that teaches only abstinence,” stated Dr. Karen Pugliesi, professor of Sociology at Northern Arizona University, where the poll was conducted.

The Legislature created a program providing federal and state money for sex education programs for children, teens, and young adults – but these programs must focus *exclusively* on abstinence from sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Less than twenty percent of those surveyed knew of this program or its restrictive policy.

The telephone survey was conducted between October 27 and November 14, 1997, by the Social Research Laboratory at Northern Arizona University. Four hundred randomly selected

Arizonans participated in the survey, and the results are accurate at a +/-5 percent margin of error with a 95 percent confidence level.

### **ARIZONANS WANT FULL “FACTS OF LIFE”**

Over eighty percent of residents surveyed feel that the topics of reproduction, puberty, communication about sex, birth control, date rape, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) should *always* be included in sex education classes in high school – and even in junior high. More controversial sex education topics for both high school and junior high are abortion and homosexuality. Of those surveyed, 59 percent feel that the topic of homosexuality should always be included in sex education classes in high schools, while 58 percent feel that abortion should always be included.

For junior high sex ed classes, 50 percent of the respondents feel that homosexuality should always be included in sex education classes, while 45 percent of the respondents feel that abortion should always be included. Among those surveyed, younger Arizonans want more sex education topics taught in schools compared to older Arizonans. Also, younger residents tend to disagree more with the new abstinence-only legislation than older residents.

### **CONDOMS IN SCHOOLS?**

Arizonans tend to disagree on whether condoms should be made available to students in high school and junior high. Sixty-five percent of the respondents said that condoms should be made available in high schools, while 45 percent of the respondents said that condoms should be made available in junior highs. As might be expected, respondents who said that teenage sex was

always wrong tend to feel that condoms should not be made available in junior high and high school. Those respondents who said that teenage sex was not wrong tend to favor condoms being made available in high school and junior high.

### **ABSTINENCE IS BEST, BUT DON'T FORGET THE REST**

Most residents feel that abstinence should be emphasized over other sex education topics in high schools and junior highs, but feel that topics such as birth control, STDs, and date rape are essential to sex education courses. Dr. Karen Pugliesi states, “These findings suggest that Arizonans think that young people should be encouraged to abstain, but should also be provided with practical information that would enable them to prevent disease, unwanted pregnancies, and to otherwise cope with their emerging sexuality.”

However, the new legislation does not allow any other topic outside of abstinence to be discussed in classrooms even if students ask about them. Programs that teach other sex education topics in addition to abstinence will not receive any of the \$3.5 million federal funding allocated to Arizona for abstinence only programs. This restriction may run the risk of program failure for those programs that accept the funding. The American Public Welfare Association states that “only programs that include both abstinence education and information about birth control have been reliably shown to work.”



Social Research Laboratory, PO Box 15301, Flagstaff, AZ 86011 (520) 523-1515

**December 9, 1997**

## **STATEWIDE TELEPHONE POLL**

**Social Research Laboratory  
Northern Arizona University**

### **BACKGROUND MEMO**

2-NAU012/Fall

The statewide telephone poll was conducted between October 27 and November 14, 1997. A random sample of 400 Arizonans was interviewed by telephone. Figures of this sampling size are subject to a sampling error of about +/- 5 percent at a 95 percent confidence interval. Sampling error is the probable difference in results between interviewing everyone in the population versus a scientific sample taken from the population. Sampling error does not take into account additional sources of error inherent in any study of public opinion. The data referred to in this release are presented below.

I am going to read a list of topics that are sometimes proposed for inclusion in sex education programs. For each tell me whether you think that topic should always be included, should only be included in response to student questions, or never be included in sex education programs taught in high schools?

	Always be included	Only in response to questions	Never be included	It depends	Don't know/ Unsure	Total
<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Human reproduction	91	4	3	.9	.7	100
Puberty	88	6	5	.2	.9	100
Abstinence	90	4	3	1	2	100
Abortion	58	24	14	2	2	100
Birth control	83	8	7	.5	1	100
Sexually transmitted diseases	94	2	3	.4	.7	100
Homosexuality	59	23	14	.8	3.2	100
Communication about sex	83	8	5	.9	4	100
Date rape	87	6	5	.9	2	100

(N=400)

Should condoms be made available, made available only upon student request, or not made available at all in high schools?

	Available	Only upon student request	Not made available	It depends	Don't know/ Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	
Arizonans	27	38	32	1	2	100

(N=400)

I am going to read the same list of topics that are sometimes proposed for inclusion in sex education programs in junior high

	Always be included	Only in response to questions	Never be included	It depends	Don't know/ Unsure	Total
<b>JUNIOR HIGH/ MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Human reproduction	85	6	7	.4	2	100
Puberty	88	5	5	.3	2	100
Abstinence	87	5	6	.3	2	100
Abortion	45	29	23	.9	3	100
Birth control	67	16	15	0	2	100
Sexually transmitted diseases	88	5	5	0	2	100
Homosexuality	50	26	21	.9	3	100
Communication about sex	75	13	8	.5	4	100
Date rape	76	12	10	.2	2	100

(N=400)

Should condoms be made available, made available only upon student request, or not made available at all in junior high or middle schools?

	Available	Only upon student request	Not made available	It depends	Don't know/ Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	
Arizonans	18	27	52	1.2	2	100

(N=400)

Now I'm going to ask you a few questions that relate to recent legislation in the state of Arizona. The Arizona Legislature has created a program using federal and state money to provide funds to public institutions or private organizations for sex education programs for children, teens and young adults which focus exclusively on abstinence from sexual intercourse outside of marriage. No other information, such as birth control methods or sexually transmitted disease prevention, may be provided even in response to student questions.

Are you very familiar, somewhat familiar, or not at all familiar with this new law?

	Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Not at all Familiar	Don't know/ Unsure	Refused	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	
Arizonans	3	16	80	1	.2	100

(N=400)

Do you agree or disagree that abstinence-only should be the only sex education topic taught in high schools?

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%
Arizonans	15	82	3	100

(N=400)

Do you agree or disagree that abstinence-only should be the only sex education topic taught in junior high or middle schools?

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%
Arizonans	22	74	4	100

(N=400)

Do you agree or disagree that abstinence-only should be the only sex education topic taught to unmarried young adults?

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%
Arizonans	17	80	3	100

(N=400)

Do you agree or disagree that abstinence-only should be emphasized over other topics in sex education programs for high school?

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%
Arizonans	56	41	3	100

(N=400)

Do you agree or disagree that abstinence-only should be emphasized over other topics in sex education programs for junior high or middle school?

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%
Arizonans	61	36	4	100

(N=400)

Do you agree or disagree that abstinence-only should be emphasized over other topics in sex education programs for unmarried young adults?

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Total
	%	%	%	%
Arizonans	47	50	4	100

(N=400)