

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

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UA Food Day Fair on the UA Mall: Wed., Oct. 24th, 10am-2pm.
Join us for free food, food demos, live music, and exhibits.

Q How many partners does the average person have before they get married?

A. What's your number? When it comes to sexual partners, it's an age-old question. But what does that number really mean, and what's "normal" anyway?

According to long-term research, 95% of individuals report having sex before marriage, defined in the study as vaginal intercourse. Interestingly, this trend has held true as far back as the 1940s, challenging some commonly held beliefs about past sexual norms. In terms of partners before marriage, those numbers are somewhat harder to track down. According to another study that used computer-based methods to ensure privacy, the median number of *lifetime* sexual partners was seven for men and four for women. While the researchers didn't explore the number of partners that individuals had before marriage, we can assume that those numbers would be slightly lower, given the potential for infidelity and divorce.

Although studies show that while almost everyone is having sex before marriage, many UA students may be years away from tying the knot, if ever. In fact, the average

age for first marriages continues to climb, increasing from age 22.1 to 25.8 for women and from 24.4 to 27.4 for men, over the past 25 years.

As a result, you may be surprised to learn that "not everyone is doing it" here at the UA. According to the 2,406 UA students who responded to the 2012 Health & Wellness Survey in randomly selected classrooms across campus, 32% reported never having vaginal intercourse. Among freshmen that number is even higher, at 44%.

How many partners do students have in the past school year, you ask? For vaginal or anal intercourse among undergraduates, 45% reported having one partner, 12% two, 9% 3-5, and 4% 6 or more. The remaining 30% said they did not have sex in the past school year. Any way you look at it, there are people represented at all points along the sexual health spectrum here at the UA.

For more answers to your questions on sex and relationships, check out the SexTalk archive online at www.health.arizona.edu.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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