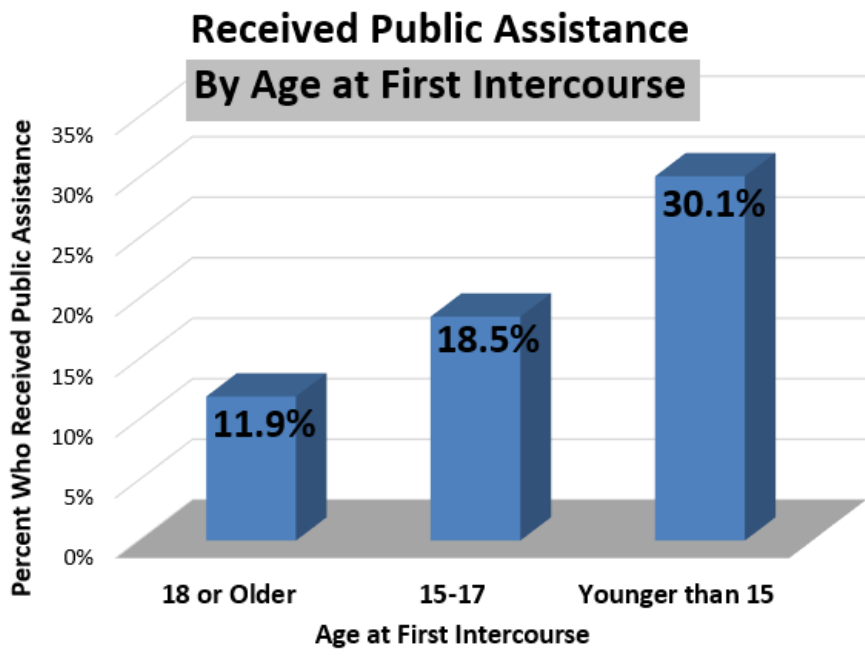


Received Public Assistance By Age at First Intercourse



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

The *National Survey of Family Growth* showed that women who had been sexually active as younger teens were more likely to be on public assistance decades later.

Age at First Intercourse: Among women aged 38 to 44,¹ those who had postponed sexual activity until adulthood, defined as age 18 or older, were least likely to have recently received public assistance. 11.9 percent of those aged 38 to 44 who had their first intercourse at age 18 or older received public assistance in the year 2001. By

contrast, 18.5 percent of those who had their first intercourse between ages 15 and 17 received aid, and 30.1 percent of those who had their first intercourse before age 15 received aid.

Related Insights from Other Studies: Age of sexual debut (first intercourse) is correlated with and likely modifies a number of outcomes later in life ranging from educational achievement, to income, to marital stability.² One study found that beginning sexual activity at an older age is linked to greater happiness, lower rates of maternal and child poverty, and higher relationship stability.³ Moreover, postponing sexual intercourse until marriage tends to produce the best outcomes: relationship quality is higher and sexual satisfaction stronger.

Patrick Fagan, Ph.D. and Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

¹ NSFG only surveys women up to age 44. The oldest group of women was selected in order to capture the most complete range of outcomes for sexual experience.

² Paige Harden, "True love waits? A sibling-comparison study of age at first sexual intercourse and romantic relationships in young adulthood," *Psychological science* (2012): 0956797612442550.

³ Robert Rector, Kirk Johnson, Shannan Martin, and Lauren Noyes, "Harmful Effects of Early Sexual Activity and Multiple Sexual Partners Among Women: A Book of Charts," *The Heritage Foundation*, June 2003. Available at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2003/06/harmful-effects-of-early-sexual-activity-and-multiple-sexual-partners-among-women-a-book-of-charts>