

Teen Sex Linked To Regret and Abortions in Later Adult Life

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DUBLIN, April 11, 2008 (LifeSiteNews.com) - Girls who become sexually active before age 17 are almost 70 percent more likely to experience a crisis pregnancy in later life and three times more likely to procure abortion in their lifetime than those who wait until they are older, according to a study released by the Irish Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships, the largest nationally representative study on sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviour ever undertaken in Ireland, was published by the Department of Health and the Crisis Pregnancy Agency (CPA) today.

The research found that 14.9 per cent of men and 7.9 per cent of women first engaged in sex when they were less than 16 years old. A majority of the women in that group (59 percent) and more than a third of the men (37 percent) regretted it.

The study states, "Lower age of first sex is strongly associated with regret at the timing of first sex, among both men and women."

"According to research, the majority of young people wait until they are 17 or older to have sex for the first time," said the CPA's chairperson Katharine Bulbulia.

"However, for those who have had sex before 17, the research shows the impact of early first sex on the individual's later sexual health, and suggests that some young people...are having first sex at a time that is not right for them.

"We need to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to delay their first sexual experience."

The report explained that the average age of first sexual encounter for both men and women has steadily declined over the last half century. "Most people now in their 20s will have had their first sexual experience before they were 18." The study found that the current median age of first sexual intercourse is 18 for men and 19 for women. The median age for men currently aged 60 to 64 is 22; for women, 23. For men and women currently under 25, it is 17.

The survey of more than 7,400 men and women, found early school dropouts were more likely to lose their virginity as young teenagers than those who stayed in school and completed their education.

The study also found that, for people under 30, 38 percent of men and around 20 percent of women said they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they lost their virginity.

The study recommended, "Parents need to be acknowledged as the primary relationships and sexuality educators of their children, and to be supported in that role. They need supports provided through a range of initiatives. These supports should particularly address the needs of parents who most need assistance, such as those in lower socio-economic groups."

The study also stated, "Health promotion strategies need to foster more responsible public behaviour concerning the use of alcohol and illicit drugs, given their role in sexual encounters."