

TABLE 1. Selected characteristics of participants in focus groups on parents' perspectives on talking to preteenage children about sex, 2007

Characteristic	All (N=131)	Mothers (N=67)	Fathers (N=64)
Mean age (yrs.)	42.4	41.4	43.4
Mean no. of children	2.8	2.9	2.6
Yrs. of education (%)			
<12	8.7	11.1	6.3
12	28.4	27.0	29.7
13-15	21.3	17.5	25.0
≥16	41.7	44.4	39.1
Living arrangement of child (%)			
Lives with both parents in same household	70.1	58.7	81.3
Lives with both parents in separate households	6.3	3.2	9.4
Lives with mother only	16.5	30.2	3.1
Lives with father only	2.4	0.0	4.7
Other	2.4	3.2	1.6
Missing	2.4	4.8	0.0

Topics emerging in focus group discussions on parents' perspectives on talking to preteenage children about sex, by main theme

Perceived threat of sex-related issues

- Sexual messages in the media and other sources
- Increasing teenage sexual behavior, peer pressure to have sex
- HIV and AIDS
- New technologies (e.g., text messaging, the Internet)

Perceived benefits of talking about sex

Motivations

- To protect children from potential harmful consequences of sex
- To counteract misinformation from other sources
- To communicate parents' values regarding sex

Perceived efficacy of talking

- Talking to children about delaying sex can make a difference
- The quality of the parent-child relationship affects the efficacy of any communication
- Forbidding children to have sex will only make them more curious
- Other strategies, such as monitoring children, may be more effective than talking

Perceived barriers to talking about sex

- Perception that children are not ready to hear about sex
- Not knowing how to talk about sex
- Parents' lack of time or energy
- Children's lack of receptivity
- Parents' embarrassment or discomfort
- Not having thought about the need to talk about sex
- Dysfunction in some families
- Language and cultural barriers between parents and children

Factors facilitating talking about sex

- Having a good relationship and open communication with children
- Creating opportunities to talk about sex
- Talking to children about sex when they are young
- Using books
- Talking about what is happening in children's sex education classes
- Using religious teachings and the church community as supports