to be important risk factors for early, non-voluntary intercourse.

Before presenting the scale and the dichotomous measures of wantedness, interviewers determined whether each respondent had had intercourse, as well as the date of and her age at first intercourse. Interviewers were instructed not to count anything other than vaginal heterosexual intercourse.

Respondents were then asked to rate the wantedness of their first intercourse. The interviewer directed the respondent to look at a card depicting a numbered scale and asked, “Which number would you say comes closest to describing how much you wanted that first sexual intercourse to happen? On this scale, a one means that you really didn’t want it to happen at the time, and a 10 means that you really wanted it to happen.” If a woman volunteered that it was “rape,” all subsequent questions about first intercourse were skipped.

All remaining respondents were next asked: “Would you say then that this first sexual intercourse was voluntary or not voluntary?” Respondents who chose “voluntary” were asked subsequent questions concerning first sexual partners and contraception at first intercourse. As in the case of those who identified the first intercourse as “rape,” those who chose “not voluntary” (or “don’t know” or “refused”) were not asked subsequent questions about their first intercourse.

Because we sought to study these issues among a contemporary cohort, we restricted our analysis to the 2,933 women aged 15–24 at the time of the survey. To maintain consistency of the analysis subsample, we limit the presentation of findings involving the scale to those whose first intercourse was voluntary. In addition, all analyses are limited to the 2,042 women who experienced premarital first intercourse, due to potential differences between married and unmarried respondents in the voluntariness of first sex and other outcomes, such as contraceptive use.

Because this configuration of measures has not been used in any prior survey, intersurvey comparisons may be difficult. Virtually no respondents who assigned scale values at or above the two middle scores (five and six) chose the response “not voluntary” to describe their first premarital intercourse (Table 1). In addition, the proportion who reported voluntary first intercourse increased linearly with rising scale value, with 100% of the young women who chose seven, eight, nine, or 10 also choosing “voluntary.”

In contrast, a substantial percentage who chose low scale values (three and lower) also reported first intercourse as “voluntary.” For example, 45% of the young women who chose the lowest scale value reported their experience had been “voluntary.” While hardly any respondents who reported that intercourse was not voluntary chose high scale values, about 27% who reported voluntary first intercourse also chose a scale value of four or lower (not shown).

### Results

#### Correlation of Responses

Virtually no respondents who assigned scale values at or above the two middle scores (five and six) chose the response “not voluntary” to describe their first premarital intercourse (Table 1). In addition, the proportion who reported voluntary first intercourse increased linearly with rising scale value, with 100% of the young women who chose seven, eight, nine, or 10 also choosing “voluntary.”

### Table 2. Among women aged 15–24 who had premarital first intercourse, percentage whose first intercourse was nonvoluntary, and among those who had voluntary first intercourse, percent distribution by wantedness of first intercourse, all according to selected characteristics

| Characteristic | % non-voluntary† | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                | (N=2,042)       | 1| 2| 3–4| 5–6| 7–8| 9| 10| Total |
| All            | 9.1             | 6.9| 4.1| 15.4| 28.0| 23.6| 6.9| 15.1| 100.0 |
| Age at first intercourse | | | | | | | | | |
| <14            | 23.6            | 12.5| 6.3| 25.4| 32.3| 12.1| 1.0| 10.4| 100.0 |
| 14             | 9.3             | 10.3| 7.4| 15.0| 28.7| 20.9| 6.0| 11.7| 100.0 |
| 15             | 9.5             | 7.5| 3.2| 16.6| 31.2| 24.7| 6.0| 10.8| 100.0 |
| 16             | 4.7             | 6.8| 4.0| 15.1| 27.5| 25.1| 7.0| 14.5| 100.0 |
| 17             | 5.0             | 4.0| 3.8| 14.2| 24.7| 25.5| 9.5| 18.4| 100.0 |
| 18             | 4.8             | 2.3| 1.5| 13.1| 28.7| 26.4| 8.4| 19.7| 100.0 |
| 19–24          | 9.7             | 4.5| 1.5| 7.6| 22.5| 28.2| 10.8| 24.9| 100.0 |
| Race/ethnicity | | | | | | | | | |
| White non-Hispanic | 7.9    | 6.0| 3.5| 14.9| 27.2| 25.8| 8.4| 14.2| 100.0 |
| Black non-Hispanic | 10.8  | 12.9| 5.8| 20.9| 28.8| 14.8| 4.5| 12.3| 100.0 |
| Hispanic | 10.8           | 4.3| 5.6| 11.9| 29.5| 23.8| 4.0| 20.8| 100.0 |
| Childhood living arrangement | | | | | | | | | |
| Both biological/adoptive parents from birth | 7.9 | 5.5| 3.7| 14.7| 26.8| 25.6| 8.6| 15.1| 100.0 |
| Single parent from birth | 11.8 | 11.9| 3.0| 17.2| 30.1| 16.3| 0.7| 20.9| 100.0 |
| Both biological/adoptive parents, then one parent | 9.4 | 5.6| 3.1| 16.2| 28.9| 23.6| 6.9| 15.6| 100.0 |
| Stepparent (ever) | 8.9 | 8.5| 3.7| 15.2| 32.1| 23.0| 5.7| 11.9| 100.0 |

#### Notes:

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. See note to Table 1.

†Includes 25 women who reported first intercourse to have been “rape.”

Young black women were more likely to rate the wantedness of their first intercourse as “one” (13%) than were white women (6%) or Hispanic women (4%). At the same time, Hispanic women were more likely to rate the wantedness of their first experience as “10” (21%) than were white women (14%) or black women (12%).