



# THE PREPARATION PROBLEM: HOW THE SYSTEM IGNORES YOUNG MEN'S SEX EDUCATION NEEDS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**It's On Us' research program aims to better understand the impact of college-level sexual assault prevention programming, considering differences in students' previous access to education about sexual health.**

**We focused on two overarching research questions:**

**1.** Does participation in sexuality education prior to college increase the likelihood that college men will be susceptible to the intended outcomes of campus prevention strategies?

**2.** What existing college sexual assault prevention education strategies are more or less effective in supporting men who have had no formal sexual health education prior to college?

The present report lays the groundwork for answering these questions by exploring three key features of college men's experiences with sexual health education prior to college: the settings (both formal and informal) where they received sexuality education; the content and values communicated in each of these settings; and how these values influence them today.

## Key Findings

<b>Setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most college men first learned about sex through some form of media.</li><li>• Less than one of three college men learned about sex for the first time in a formal educational setting.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LGBTQQA college men were more likely to learn about sex for the first time earlier in childhood. Cisgender straight college men were most likely to learn about sex as a teenager.</li></ul></li><li>• Most college men received sexuality education in a community setting, like conversations with family members or trusted adults.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Black college men were more likely to receive sexuality education in a community setting than non-Black college men.</li><li>• LGBTQQA college men who also received sexuality education in school turned to online sources more than cisgender straight college men.</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less than half of school-based education and less than one-third of community-based education covered healthy conflict and communication.</li><li>• More than half of college men (58% of the entire sample) had not been taught about consent/sexual communication in a formal sexual educational setting prior to college.</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College men's current beliefs align less with what they were taught in school than what they learned in conversations with parents, trusted adults, or in other community settings.</li><li>• Fear-based sexuality education teaches rigid gender norms, leading to acceptance of beliefs that put college men at risk for committing sexual assault. Teaching affirmative and positive attitudes about sex do not necessarily buffer against acceptance of such beliefs.</li></ul>

In addition to emphasizing the need for more research to be done to more fully understand the impact of early sexuality education – particularly for specific populations – this report also makes three main recommendations for how to move forward:

- Developmentally appropriate sexuality education must start earlier and be more comprehensive and less moralistic;
- As primary educators of young boys, parents and other sexuality educators in boys' communities need support to successfully prepare boys for healthy future relationships; and
- It is crucial to consider the broader landscape in which sexuality education exists and advocate for systems change that supports comprehensive and accessible education.