

# Findings From an Evaluation of the El Camino Sexual Health Program

El Camino is an adolescent sexual health program that employs a [positive youth development](#) approach to encourage youth to define their personal goals and think about how they will attain them. Interactive lessons explore links between goal setting and sexual health decisions and provide information about sex, pregnancy, and healthy relationships. Designed by Child Trends, this culturally relevant program helps students in high schools with large Latino populations develop the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships that support their ability to make informed decisions about sex and pregnancy and achieve their goals.

To evaluate El Camino, Child Trends partnered with Identity, Inc. to implement El Camino during lunch, elective classes, or after school at 11 high schools in Maryland with large Latino populations. Researchers at the University of Maryland evaluated El Camino's effectiveness: classrooms at each school were randomly selected to receive either El Camino or an alternative life skills program. This resource summarizes the demographic characteristics of student participants, their perceptions of the program, and pre- and post-test findings that highlight the need for sexual health education and the positive impacts of El Camino.

## El Camino Program Reach

- ▶ **El Camino**—396 students across 34 classes:
  - 25 in Spanish
  - 9 in English
- ▶ **Alternative life skills program**—350 students across 34 classes:
  - 27 in Spanish
  - 7 in English

## Demographics and background of students participating in the evaluation



### Age

**Average age:** 16.3



### Time in the United States

**Born outside U.S.:** 75%

**Age came to U.S. (average):** 14.1



### Language spoken at home

**Mostly Spanish:** 68%

**Mostly English:** 11%

**Spanish and English:** 19%

**Other:** 2%



### Race/ethnicity

**Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish-origin:** 84%

**Black or African American:** 9%

**American Indian or Alaska Native:** 2%

**Asian:** 2%

**White:** 2%

**Other:** 4%



### Grade in school

**9th:** 34%

**10th:** 39%

**11th:** 17%

**12th:** 8%



### Gender identity

**Male:** 43%

**Female:** 54%

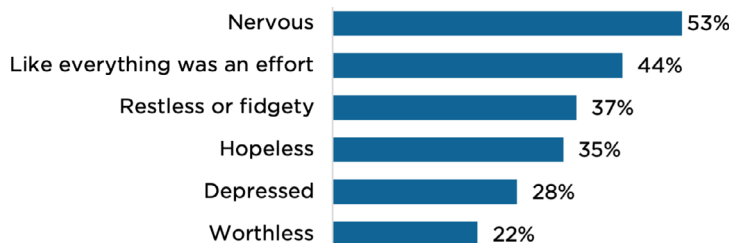
**Other/missing:** 3%

## Students' pre-program survey responses highlight the need for sexual health and positive youth development curricula.

Many students reported mental health struggles in the past 30 days.

### Mental health at baseline

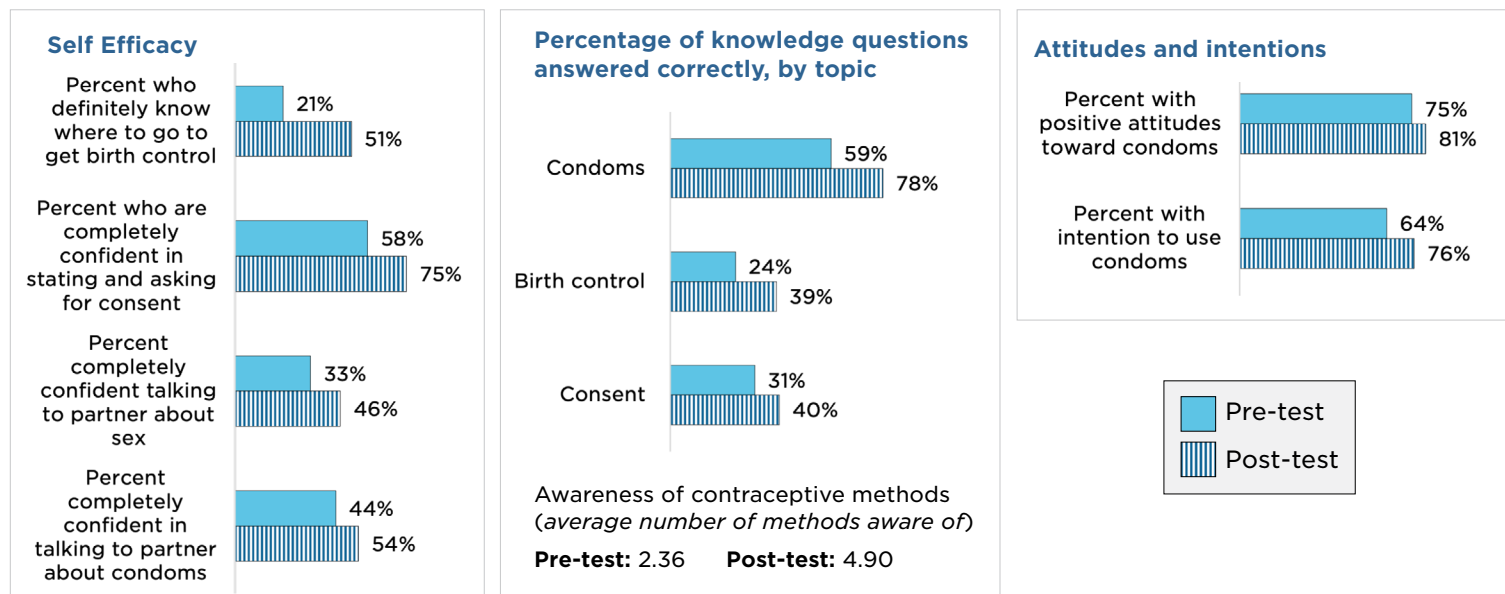
Percent of students who reported feeling each emotion some of the time, most of the time, or all of the time in the past 30 days



A quarter of students had had penis-vagina sex by the start of the program, and more than half of sexually active students reported having unprotected sex.

- ▶ **26 percent** of students reported in the pre-program survey that they had had penis-vagina sex.
- ▶ **53 percent** of sexually active students had sex without any contraceptive method (including condoms) in the 3 months before the pre-program survey.

## Students who participated in El Camino had greater improvements in knowledge, self-efficacy, intentions, and attitudes from pre-test to post-test than students in the control group.



**Note:** Findings based on 289 students who received El Camino and completed both the baseline and post-test surveys. For all findings shown here, improvements from pre-test to post-test were significantly higher for the El Camino group than the control group based on multivariate impact analyses.

### Students rated El Camino highly at post-test.



**Suggested citation:** Finocharo, J., Manlove, J., & McConnell, K. (2024). Findings from an evaluation of the El Camino sexual health program. *Child Trends*. DOI:10.56417/519r1481b