

Black Youth Project

FACTSHEET: SEX

Black Youth Project researchers surveyed 1,590 Black, White and Hispanic young people between the ages of 15 and 25 about their sexual behaviors and attitudes about sex. Responses were broken down by race/ethnicity, sex, and age.

Key findings include the following:

- The overwhelming majority of young adults 18 and older have had sexual intercourse. About one-third of young people ages 15-17 report having had sexual intercourse.
- Approximately one-third of young people 15-17 report having given or received oral sex. Hispanic and Black females reported lower rates of engaging in oral sex than Hispanic and Black males.
- The majority of youth disagree that it is always wrong to have sex before you are married.
- The majority of youth report that they or their partner uses some form of contraception to prevent pregnancy every time or almost every time they have vaginal intercourse with someone of the opposite sex.
- Black youth are most likely to report that they or their partner use protection such as condoms every time or almost every time they have sexual intercourse and protection such as condoms or dental dams every time or almost every time when giving or receiving oral sex.
- The majority of all young people agree that the government should actively promote marriage by offering married couples special benefits.

Sexual Patterns

Oral Sex

- The majority of young adults 18 and over and about one-third of young people ages 15-17 report having engaged in oral sex. White youth report the highest rates of sexual behavior.

Percentage of youth ages 15-17 that report having engaged in oral sex are:

- 30% of Black youth
- 25% of Hispanic youth
- 35% of White youth

Percentage of young adults ages 18-21 that report having engaged in oral sex are:

- 67% of Black young adults
- 62% of Hispanic young adults
- 75% of White young adults

Percentage of young adults ages 22-25 that report having engaged in oral sex are:

- 75% of Black young adults
- 79% of Hispanic young adults
- 85% of White young adults

Percentage of males and females that report having engaged in oral sex are:

- 70% of Hispanic males
- 62% of Black males
- 64% of White males
- 45% of Hispanic females
- 52% of Black females
- 69% of White females

- While most youth report that they or their partner use protection such as condoms only sporadically when engaging in oral sex, Black youth are most likely to report that they or their partner use protection such as condoms or dental dams every time or almost every time during oral sex. The percentage of youth who report using protection are:
 - 50% of Black youth
 - 37% of Hispanic youth
 - 35% of White youth

There were no significant differences between females and males in reported use of protection during oral sex.

Intercourse

- The overwhelming majority of young adults ages 18-21 and 22-25 have had sexual intercourse. About one-third of young people ages 15-17 report having had sexual intercourse. White youth display the only significant difference between females and males in reported rates of having sexual intercourse.

Percentage of youth *ages 15-17* that report having had sexual intercourse are:

- 42% of Black Youth
- 27% of Hispanic Youth
- 32% of White Youth

Percentage of young adults *ages 18-21* that report having had sexual intercourse are:

- 80% of Black young adults
- 72% of Hispanic young adults
- 69% of White young adults

Percentage of young adults *ages 22-25* that report having had sexual intercourse are:

- 89% of Black young adults
- 85% of Hispanic young adults
- 92% of White young adults

Percentage of males and females that report having had sexual intercourse are:

- 60% of White males
 - 70% of Black males
 - 66% of Hispanic males
 - 71% of White females
 - 70% of Black females
 - 62% of Hispanic females
- Again, Black youth are most likely to report that they or their partner use protection such as condoms every time or almost every time they have sexual intercourse. The percentage of youth who report this are:
 - 77% of Black youth
 - 64% of Hispanic youth
 - 66% of White youth
 - The majority of all youth report that every time or almost every time they have vaginal intercourse with someone of the opposite sex they or their partner use some form of contraception to prevent pregnancy. The percentage of youth who report this are:
 - 77% of Black youth
 - 66% of Hispanic youth
 - 82% of White youth

Attitudes about Pre-marital Sex and Marriage

- Given their sexual patterns, it is not surprising that the majority of all youth disagree with the statement “It is always wrong to have sex before you are married.” The percentage of youth who disagree with this statement are:
 - 52% of Black youth
 - 61% of Hispanic youth
 - 63% of White youth

Attitudes about Sex among Teenagers

- Young people split evenly on the statement “It is okay for teenagers to have sex if they are in a serious relationship.” Males are more likely than females to agree with this statement. The percentage of youth who agree versus disagree are:
 - 43% of Black youth agree versus 48% of Black youth disagree
 - 42% of Hispanic youth agree versus 48% of Hispanic youth disagree
 - 43% of White youth agree versus 46% of White youth disagree

 - 50% of males agree that it is okay for teenagers to have sex if they are in a serious relationship
 - 36% of females agree that it is okay for teenagers to have sex if they are in a serious relationship

- The majority of Black and Hispanic young people agree that it is okay for teenagers to have sex if they use protection. Males are more likely than females to agree. The percentage of youth who agree versus disagree are:
 - 55% of Black youth agree versus 38% of Black youth disagree
 - 58% of Hispanic youth agree versus 36% of Hispanic youth disagree
 - 48% of White youth versus 41% of White youth disagree
 - 60% of males believe it is okay for teenagers to have sex if they use protection
 - 42% of females believe it is okay for teenagers to have sex if they use protection

Attitudes about Having a Baby before Marriage

- Fewer than half of all youth, and only one in four Black youth, believe that if they fathered or gave birth to a baby before they were married, it would be embarrassing to their family. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 26% of Black youth
 - 35% of Hispanic youth
 - 42% of White youth
- Fewer than half of all youth believe that if they fathered or gave birth to a baby before they were married, it would be embarrassing to them. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 28% of Black youth
 - 28% of Hispanic youth
 - 39% of White youth
- Fewer than half of all youth, and little more than one in four Black youth, believe that having a baby before they are married requires them to stay with the baby's father or mother. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 27% of Black youth
 - 36% of Hispanic youth
 - 41% of White youth
- Still, an overwhelming majority of all youth believe that if they fathered or gave birth to baby while a teenager and before they were married, it would be difficult to fulfill their goals. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 69% of Black youth
 - 78% of Hispanic youth
 - 88% of White youth

Promoting Marriage

- A majority of all youth believe that the government should actively promote marriage by offering special benefits to married couples such as lowering their taxes or paying for childcare with more males agreeing with this position. The percentage of youth who believe this are:
 - 66% of Black youth
 - 57% of Hispanic youth
 - 56% of White youth

Sexual Efficacy and Empowerment

- Black youth are more likely to be very sure that they could tell a partner what they felt comfortable doing sexually. The percentage of youth who report that they could do this are:
 - 76% of Black youth
 - 66% of Hispanic youth
 - 68% of White youth
- All young people, especially Black and White youth, were very sure that if they had been seeing someone for a while they could tell their partner they were not ready to have sex. Women were more likely to be *very sure* they could tell a partner they were not ready to have sex. The percentage of youth who were very sure they could do this are:
 - 82% of Black youth
 - 68% of Hispanic youth
 - 84% of White youth

 - 74% of males
 - 88% of females
- Nearly 90% of all young people were very sure that they could persuade a sex partner to use a condom or another form of protection before starting to have sex. The percentage of youth who report that they could do this are:
 - 91% of Black youth
 - 82% of Hispanic youth
 - 87% of White youth
- While the majority of all youth agreed with the statement “When I have sex I feel in control,” Black youth were more likely to *strongly agree*. The percentage of youth who strongly agree with this statement are:
 - 23% of Black youth
 - 18% of Hispanic youth
 - 14% of White youth

- Nearly 80% of all young people agree with the statement “When I have sex I feel good about myself.” The percentage of youth who agree with this statement are:
 - 82% of Black youth
 - 82 of Hispanic youth
 - 76% of White youth

Abortion

- Nearly half of Black and Hispanic youth agree that abortion is always wrong. A little more than one-third of White youth agree with that statement. The percentage of youth who agree with that statement are:
 - 47% of Black youth
 - 46% of Hispanic youth
 - 34% of White youth
- Yet, Black youth are more likely to report that they or someone they have gotten pregnant has aborted a pregnancy. The percentage of youth who report this are:
 - 37% of Black youth
 - 16% of Hispanic youth
 - 18% of White youth
- The majority of all youth disagree that “the government should make it illegal to get an abortion under any circumstances.” The percentage of youth who disagree are:
 - 58% of Black youth
 - 57% of Hispanic youth
 - 67% of White youth
- At the same time, about two-thirds of all youth disagree that “abortion should be available to teenagers without the permission of their parents.” The percentage of youth who disagree are:
 - 68% of Black youth
 - 64% of Hispanic youth
 - 65% of White youth