



The National Campaign
to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

ESSENCE

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For immediate release

Almost Half of Black Youth Report Pressure to Have Sex New ESSENCE Magazine/National Campaign Survey Released

(Washington, DC) — Black youth report considerable pressure to have sex, according to a new survey of 1,500 black youth ages 13-21 released by ESSENCE Magazine and The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Of those who have had sex, 47% of those ages 13-21 (including 21% of those 13-15) say they have been pressured to go further sexually than they wanted to. The groundbreaking results are featured in the October issue of ESSENCE magazine, on newsstands September 12th. In the article, *Our Teens' Secret Sex Lives*, ESSENCE senior writer Jeannine Amber interviewed dozens of young people to uncover the truth about teens and sex.

Almost half of black young people ages 13-21 report they have lied to get out of a sexual situation and 54% of black males of the same age group said they feel pressure from their friends to have sex.

When it comes to sex, pregnancy, and contraception, the survey reveals that the intentions of black youth don't always match their actions. Even though more than 90% of black youth say it is important to avoid a pregnancy at this point in their lives, 67% have had sex without contraception, 45% report using birth control inconsistently, and 20% say they will likely have unprotected sex with someone in the next three months.

The reasons for not using contraception vary: 38% of black females who have had unprotected sex have done so because their partner doesn't want them to use contraception, 29% of sexually active black females say they don't worry about contraception because they "haven't gotten pregnant so far," and 18% say it doesn't matter whether you use protection or not, when it's "your time" to get pregnant, you will.

Respondents overwhelmingly believe that the TV shows and movies they watch paint a negative picture of black youth:

- 72% believe that the media sends the message that black females' most important quality is their sex appeal.
- 64% agree that the media sends the message that it is okay for black males to cheat in relationships.
- 73% say the media portrays black youth as sexually aggressive compared to 39% who believe the media portrays whites as sexually aggressive.
- Just 18% say they see themselves in the TV shows and movies they watch.

Black youth, particularly younger teens, say there is much their parents can do to help:

- 31% of those ages 13-21 say their parents are most influential about deciding whether or not to have sex (compared to 27% who cited partners and 5% who cited friends).
- Parental influence seems to wane as youth age—47% of those ages 13-15 say their parents' opinions matter most compared to 28% of those ages 16-18 and 17% of those ages 19-21.

Other findings from the survey include:

- 66% of black males say that sex is a “big deal” and 73% would rather be in a relationship with no sex than have sex with no relationship
- 91% say they feel valued by their parents, 92% expect to be very successful in life, and 94% say the quality that most makes them feel good about themselves is “how smart I am.”
- 46% of black youth ages 13-21 (including 34% of those ages 13-15) say they have seen pornography online when they were not looking for it.

“We are proud to work in partnership with the experts at the National Campaign on this survey, and to bring its eye-opening results to our readers in our October issue” said Constance C.R. White, ESSENCE editor-in-chief. “I am so grateful to the young people who opened up to us in the survey and told us what is really going on in their lives today. What they feel—and decide to do—about sex, love and relationships today can affect the rest of their lives. Parents know this but often don't know where to begin. This story gives parents and other caring adults a reason and a way to talk with their teens about this important topic.”

The teen pregnancy rate among African-American youth has plummeted 44% since 1990 and the teen birth rate has dropped 47% since 1991. While teen pregnancy and birth rates dropped overall over the past two decades, rates among African-Americans declined more than those of any other racial or ethnic group. “The truly extraordinary declines in too-early pregnancy and parenthood among African-American youth should be recognized and celebrated as one of the nation's great success stories of the past two decades,” said Sarah Brown, CEO of The National Campaign. “Still, the rate of teen pregnancy remains disproportionately high among African-American youth suggesting that the nation needs to explore more targeted and innovative approaches that will help.”

The [National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy](#) is a private, non-profit organization that seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults.

Essence Communications Inc. (ECI) is the number one media company dedicated to African-American women, with a multi-platform presence in publishing, live events, and online. The company's flagship publication, ESSENCE magazine, is the preeminent lifestyle magazine for African-American women; generating brand extensions such as the *Essence Music Festival*, *ESSENCE Black Women in Hollywood* and *Black Women in Music*, *Window on Our Women* and *Smart Beauty* consumer insights series, the *Essence Book Club*, *Essence.com*, and ventures in digital media (mobile, television and VOD). For 41 years, ESSENCE, which has a brand reach of over 8 million, has been the leading source of cutting-edge information and specific solutions relating to every area of African-American women's lives. Additional information about ECI and ESSENCE is available at www.essence.com.

For the full survey report, questionnaire, and tips for parents, visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org/UnderPressure.

For the ESSENCE article on the report and related content, visit www.ESSENCE.com/love.