



2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study

The Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS) is the Philippines' largest series of nationally and regionally representative cross-sectional surveys on young people aged 15 to 24. Since 1982, the YAFS series has provided comprehensive and timely information on Filipino adolescents and youth. It covers a wide range of topics including sexuality, fertility, reproductive health, education and employment, health and lifestyle, media use, mental health, and attitudes toward marriage, family, and social norms.

The fifth round of YAFS continues to generate updated and relevant indicators on the situation of Filipino youth. Conducted by UPPI with funding from the Department of Health (DOH), YAFS5 specifically supports the DOH's Adolescent Health and Development Program Strategic Plan.

YAFS5 adopted a two-stage stratified sampling design covering all 17 regions of the country, 80 provinces, 653 cities and municipalities, 955 barangays, 14,296 households, and 10,949 youth respondents. Data collection took place from August 2021 to January 2022, during the peak of COVID-19 infections.

The full results are detailed in the book, with key findings summarized in the following pages.



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Key Findings



Socio-demographic profile

- **Share of youth to total population.** The 15-24 age group represents about 19% of the total Philippine population, down from 20% in 2000 and 2010.
- **Marital profile.** 85% of the youth have not entered into a marital union. The percentage of cohabiting youth remained higher than that of formally married youth: 12% vs. 3% in 2021 from 14% vs 8% in 2013. The median age at marriage is 19 among male youth and 18 among female youth.
- **Education.** Females have better education: 28% of females and 21% of males attained college level or higher.
- **Main activity.** 65% of the youth are studying—almost double the figure in 2013. In contrast, a lower percentage of youth reported doing nothing (3%) in 2021 compared to 2013 (9%).
- **Religious affiliation.** The dominant religion among the youth is Roman Catholic (75%), although this percentage has been declining over time.



Family and Friends

- **Persons who raised the youth.** 7 out of 10 Filipino youth were raised by both parents, with this being more common in rural than in urban areas.
- **Parenting style.** As reported by the youth, having a boyfriend/girlfriend before age 18 is the most disapproved behavior by parents. When male youth misbehave, parents commonly react by withholding personal items. For female youth, mothers usually react by taking away privileges.
- **Siblings.** 67% of the youth have 3 or more siblings. 87% get along well with all of their siblings.
- **Close friends and activities with friends.** 88% of the youth have close friends. Male youth mostly play video or online games (61%) or play sports or games (60%), whereas female youth usually chat and tell stories (40%), stroll or go to the mall (38%), and eat out (37%) with friends.
- **Online friends.** 35% of the youth have online friends whom they have not met, more common among those aged 15–19 (40%) than 20–24 (28%), and among urban (37%) than rural youth (34%).



School, Work, and Civic Engagement

- **Schooling status.** In SY 2020–2021, 69% of the youth were enrolled and completed the school year, while 25% of the previous year's enrollees did not enroll.
- **K-12 enrollment.** Since its 2016–2017 launch, 48% of youth have enrolled in or completed senior high school. Most chose the academic track (68%), mainly humanities and social sciences (21%) and general academic strand (19%).
- **Youth employment.** Between 2013 and 2021, youth not in school or employment decreased (35% to 15%), while working students more than tripled (5% to 17%). Most youth workers were in elementary occupations (36%) or service and sales roles (21%).
- **Employment of K-12 graduates.** 66% of currently employed HS graduates took the old curriculum, while 56% of those w/o work experience were K-12 graduates, who are younger and less likely to be actively seeking work.



ICT and Media Use of the Filipino Youth

- **Access to ICT gadgets and Internet use.** 92% of the Filipino youth own smartphones. Almost 9 in 10 youth access the Internet—a 30 percentage point increase since 2013.
- **General media use of the youth with Internet access.** Among youth with Internet access, top activities include listening to music (98%), communicating with family or friends using a gadget (94%), and watching movies or films (89%). Over 80% also use it for school- or work-related research (86%) and staying updated on news (82%).
- **Online presence.** Two-thirds of the youth have email accounts. 89% are on social media, mostly Facebook (89%), then YouTube (58%), TikTok (53%), and Instagram (48%). 87% also used Facebook Messenger for communication.
- **Experience of cyber harassment.** 1 in 5 young people know someone who has experienced harassment online. 12% reported that they have been harassed online, and 5% said the harassment was sexual in nature.
- **Exposure to pornographic or sexually explicit content in media.** Half of the youth were incidentally exposed to pornographic or sexually explicit content in the 3 months prior to the survey, while 20% intentionally accessed the said materials within the same period.
- **Use of ICT for sex-related activities.** 31% said they have received sex photos or videos through online means.



Subjective Well-being, Self-assessed Health, and Lifestyle

- **Life satisfaction.** The mean life satisfaction rating of the Filipino youth is 7.7 out of 10, with a median of 8. The mean self-rated happiness score is at 8.2 out of 10, with a median of 9.
- **Self-assessed health.** 47% the youth perceive themselves to be very healthy or healthier than average. Compared to their pre-pandemic health, 25% felt healthier, 58% felt the same, and 17% felt less healthy during the pandemic.
- **Body mass index (BMI).** 6 in 10 youth have a normal BMI, 3 in 10 are underweight, and 1 in 10 are overweight/obese. Almost 4 in 10 youth gained weight during the pandemic.
- **Exercise and sleep.** About one-third of youth reported not exercising, with more females (41%) than males (27%). The mean duration of sleep is 8.1 hours, which is within the recommended range.
- **Diet.** About 6 in 10 youth consume healthy food at least 2x a week; 96% drink water at least 2x a week. Unhealthy foods consumed 2x or more weekly include canned fish, sweet and salty snacks, and soda.
- **Leisure activities.** Before the pandemic, 3 of the 5 top leisure activities were sedentary: texting and chatting on social media, gaming, and watching TV/movies. During the pandemic, all top leisure activities were sedentary: surfing the Internet, texting/chatting on social media, gaming, watching TV/movies, and sleeping outside of night sleep.



Mental Health

- **Depressive symptoms.** Between 2013 and 2021, the percentage of Filipino youth who experienced depressive symptoms increased. The largest increases were in feelings of loneliness, rising from 7% to 12%, and restless sleep, from 9% to 14%.
- **Suicide ideation.** The percentage of youth who considered ending their lives more than doubled, from 8% in 2013 to 17% in 2021. Those who attempted to act on these thoughts also rose, from 3% to 8% over the same period.
- **Depressive symptoms and suicide.** Female youth have more severe depressive symptoms and a higher prevalence of suicide ideation and attempts than male youth.
- **Suicide prevention programs.** Only 1 in 10 of the youth is aware of any suicide prevention program or service.



Health Risk Behaviors and Physical Violence

- **Cigarette smoking.** Cigarette smoking among youth has been continuously declining. The biggest drop was between 2013 (20%) and 2021 (12%), with more smokers from lower wealth quintiles.
- **Vaping.** 16% of the youth have ever tried vaping; 3% are currently vaping. Vaping is more popular among youth from wealthier households.
- **Drinking alcohol.** The prevalence of drinking decreased from 41% in 2002 to 29% in 2021.
- **Drug use.** Drug use among the youth declined from 2.4% in 2002 to almost nil (0.1%) in 2021.
- **Physical violence.** 39% of the youth have ever experienced being hurt by someone, and 12% experienced this in the past 12 months. Another 12% indicated they have hurt someone in the past 12 months.



Sexual Behavior

- **Sexual experience.** 32% of male and 27% of female youth had sexual experience. Most first sexual experiences occurred before marriage—87% for males and 60% for females.
- **Premarital sexual initiation.** Premarital first sex increased from 1994 to 2013 but shifted downward by 2021. Among males, the percentage increased from 26% to 36% before dropping to 28%. For females, it rose from 10% to 29% and then fell to 16% over the same periods.
- **Age at sexual initiation.** The median age at first sex for youth is 18 years. The percentage of youth who engaged in sex before age 18 declined from 24% in 2013 to 18% in 2021.
- **Wantedness of premarital sexual initiation.** Half of the Filipino youth said their first premarital sex was consensual, 17% said it was not wanted but they went along with it, 30% said it was not planned, and 3% said it happened against their will.
- **Contraceptive use.** 64% of youth who had premarital sex used protection during their first premarital sexual activity, mainly withdrawal and condoms, to prevent unintended pregnancies and STIs.
- **High-risk sexual activities.** The prevalence of various forms of high-risk sexual activity is minimal and has declined over the years. But, majority of these activities involved the non-use of male condoms.



Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation

- **Gender identity.** 2% of young Filipinos belong to minority groups based on their gender identity.
- **Sexual orientation.** A substantial percentage also belong to minority groups based on the three dimensions of sexual orientation – sexual identity (7% among male youth and 11% among female youth), attraction (8% among male youth and 17% among female youth), and behavior, specifically sexual engagement (4% among male youth and 2% among female youth).
- **Experience of confusion about the youth's GIESO.** 1 in 10 youth experienced confusion because of their gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
- **Nonheteronormative contacts.** More youth reported having close friends than family members who identify as part of the gender and sexual minority groups, with female youth reporting more connections than male youth.



Fertility and Fertility Preferences

- **Pregnancy.** 19% of female youth 15-24 already had a live birth, 3% were currently pregnant, and 2% were pregnant with their first child.
- **Teenage pregnancy and motherhood.** 7% of female youth aged 15–19 have begun childbearing, a decline from the 14% in 2013.
- **Male teen fertility.** 2% of males aged 15–19 reported having gotten someone pregnant.
- **Fertility preferences.** Male youth want more children than female youth (mean of 2.6 vs. 2.2).
- **Unintended pregnancy and attempt to terminate pregnancy.** 33% of births to female youth aged 15–24 are unintended —18% are mistimed and 15% are not wanted. 6% of ever-pregnant female youth aged 15–24 have done something to terminate any of their pregnancies early.



Maternal Health

- **Antenatal care.** 9 in 10 live births among women aged 15-24 received antenatal care (ANC) from a skilled provider, 61% of ANC visits occurred in the first trimester of pregnancy, and 81% of young mothers had at least four ANC visits.
- **Complications during pregnancy.** 1 in 10 live births had complications requiring treatment during pregnancy, 96% of which were brought to a health professional for consultation.
- **Childbirth.** Live births delivered in a health facility increased from 64% in 2013 to 86% in 2021. Skilled birth attendance rose from 75% to 88% over the same period.
- **Postnatal care.** 7 in 10 young mothers had postnatal checkups (PNCs), averaging 2.7 visits. 52% met the DOH's prescription of at least two PNCs, and 29% had their first checkup on the day of delivery.
- **Breastfeeding.** 89% of children born to women aged 15-24 have ever been breastfed.
- **Challenges in accessing antenatal or postnatal care services.** 4 in 10 young females who had a live birth faced at least one barrier to postnatal care, with distance (23%), transportation (14%), and cost (13%) as the most common challenges.



Reproductive Health

- **Biological maturation.** Among male youth, most cited physical changes are body growth (79%) and voice change (67%). Among female youth, most cited are the development of breasts (71%) and menstruation (70%).
- **Markers of pubertal development.** 98% of male youth are circumcised, and 78% of these were done by medical professionals. The mean age at male circumcision is 11 years. First nocturnal emission among males occurs at 14, while menarche among females occurs at 13.
- **Reproductive health problems.** 64% of female youth and 42% of male youth experienced RH problems; among them, 19% and 28%, respectively, sought medical attention. Common issues include changes in the urine color (males 30%, females 28%), pain during urination (males 22%, females 25%), and menstrual cramps (females 37%).
- **STIs and HIV and AIDS.** 35% of youth are aware of STIs, and 76% are aware of HIV and AIDS. AIDS awareness declined from 95% in 1994 and 2002 to 83% in 2013 and 76% in 2021. 35% think that AIDS is curable, 70% think they have no chance of getting HIV, and 15% know a place for HIV testing. 19% of the Filipino youth have comprehensive knowledge of HIV and AIDS transmission and prevention.
- **Condom use as protection against STIs.** 4 in 10 youth said that they or their partner use condoms during sex to protect themselves against STIs.



Family Planning

- **Contraceptive use.** 40% of sexually experienced male youth have ever used a family planning (FP) method, and 21% are current users. Among sexually experienced female youth, 48% have ever used an FP method, and 34% are current users. The contraceptive prevalence rate is 27% among sexually experienced youth (23% modern and 4% traditional). Widely used FP methods are pills (9%) and male condoms (8%).
- **Trends in current contraceptive use.** The currently married male youth using an FP method increased from 19% in 2002 to 28% in 2021, while the percentage decreased from 41% to 38% among currently married female youth.
- **Sources of modern FP methods.** The most common source of modern FP methods among the youth is the pharmacy (50%), followed by local government unit health stations (23%).
- **Reasons for non-use of FP methods.** Fear of contraceptive side effects (40%) is the leading reason for non-use of contraceptives.
- **Emergency contraceptive (EC) pills.** 18% of Filipino youth are aware of EC pills. Half of the youth believe emergency contraception pills should be available, but only 27% would consider using them or letting their partner use them.



Beliefs and Attitudes

- **Timing of marriage, first sex, and first birth.** The mean ideal age at marriage is 25.2 years for a man and 24.6 years for a woman. For first sex, it is 23.0 years for a man and 22.9 years for a woman. For having a first child, it is 25.5 years for a man and 24.9 years for a woman.
- **Approval of divorce.** 4 in 10 young Filipinos in 2021 approved of legalizing divorce among non-Muslims, compared to 37% in 2002 and 41% in 2013.
- **Same-sex relationships.** Filipino youth find romantic relationships between two men acceptable (26%) and between two women (38%); 35% also approve of same-sex cohabitation.
- **Virginity of a woman.** The share of Filipino youth who believe it is not important for a woman to be a virgin at marriage rose from 9% in 1994 to 29% in 2021.
- **Approval of abortion.** 5% of Filipino youth approve of abortion. Approval of abortion under specific circumstances, such as when the mother's life is in danger, declined from 51% in 1994 to 28% in 2021.
- **Parental consent on access to reproductive health services.** 60% of Filipino youth agree that government health centers should provide contraceptive services to minors, 67% if there is parental consent. In addition, 13% would consider accessing contraceptives even without parental consent.



Knowledge and Information about Sex and Reproduction

- **Knowledge about sex and pregnancy.** The percentage of Filipino youth who think they have enough knowledge about sex increased from 27% in 2013 to 35% in 2021. 10% of females and 5% of males correctly know when a woman can get pregnant.
- **Sources of information about puberty and sex.** The mother is the major source of information on puberty for female youth (70%), while male youth get information from their mother (20%), friends (17%), and father (16%). The top material sources of information about puberty are educational materials (22%) and social media (19%). More females access educational materials (23%), whereas more males get information on sex from social media (31%).
- **Persons they would most likely consult for questions about sex.** For questions about sex, female youth consult their mother (39%) and their friends (22%), while male youth consult their friends (40%), their father (12%), and their mother (11%).
- **Ever discussed "sex" at home.** 1 in 8 youth stated that they had ever discussed "sex" at home.