

# HOT PROSPECTS

*Cold Facts*

talk about it

love  
**Life**

This survey of South African youth was commissioned by the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation and is published by **love Life** as part of a series of research reports to help inform public understanding of the HIV epidemic and the associated issues.

The Kaiser Family Foundation is a private U.S.-based philanthropy which has operated in South Africa since 1987 in support of South African efforts to establish a more equitable national health system. For more information on the Foundation go to [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org).

**love Life** is the largest effort ever launched in South Africa to positively influence adolescent sexual behaviour with the aim of reducing teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Organised under the auspices of a national advisory board of leading South Africans chaired by Mrs. Zanele Mbeki, **love Life** combines a high powered media campaign with a nationwide drive to develop adolescent sexual health services, outreach and support programs. **love Life** is implemented through a consortium of four non-governmental organisations: Advocacy Initiatives, Health Systems Trust, Planned Parenthood of South Africa, and the Reproductive Health Research Unit.

Major funding for **love Life** is provided by the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID and UNICEF.

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Additional copies of the report may be requested from **love Life** c/o Box 45 Parklands 2121, fax (011) 771 6801 or e-mail [talk@loveLife.org.za](mailto:talk@loveLife.org.za)

Insertion and distribution costs provided as a public service by

**Sunday Times**

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**Photographs:**  and courtesy of the Beyond Awareness Campaign

**Production:**  
DGR Writing & Research

**Design and Reproduction:**  
Remata Bureau & Printers (Pty) Ltd

**Printing:**  
Colorpress (Pty) Ltd



# SUMMARY

**This report summarises the key findings from the largest ever national survey of South African teenagers.**

Young South Africans are overwhelmingly optimistic about the future of South Africa and filled with the usual aspirations and ambitions of youth. But most young South Africans fear they might not live to realise their dreams and that South Africa's future prospects may be overwhelmed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The personal risk of HIV/AIDS, as well as its impact on friends, families and the country's future are a major preoccupation for young people. And HIV is not the only thing worrying young South Africans: crime, violence and abuse are major concerns with many reporting personal experience with these problems.

This is the picture that emerges from the key findings of a nationally representative random sample of 2,000 South Africans aged 12-17 years interviewed late last year as part of the biggest ever survey of South African teenagers. More than 40% of South Africans are under 15 years of age. These young South Africans are at great risk of HIV infection. At the current rate of infection more than 50% of South Africans under 15 today could die of AIDS-related causes in the next five to ten years.

On the one hand, most young South Africans say they are happy with their lives, but at the same time they are also struggling with very serious issues. The AIDS epidemic is a particular source of fear and concern. While almost all young people say they accept responsibility for protecting themselves from the virus, many still do not know important facts about the disease and how it is prevented or treated. Moreover, many sexually active teens are making unsafe choices and hold attitudes that put them at risk for HIV infection.

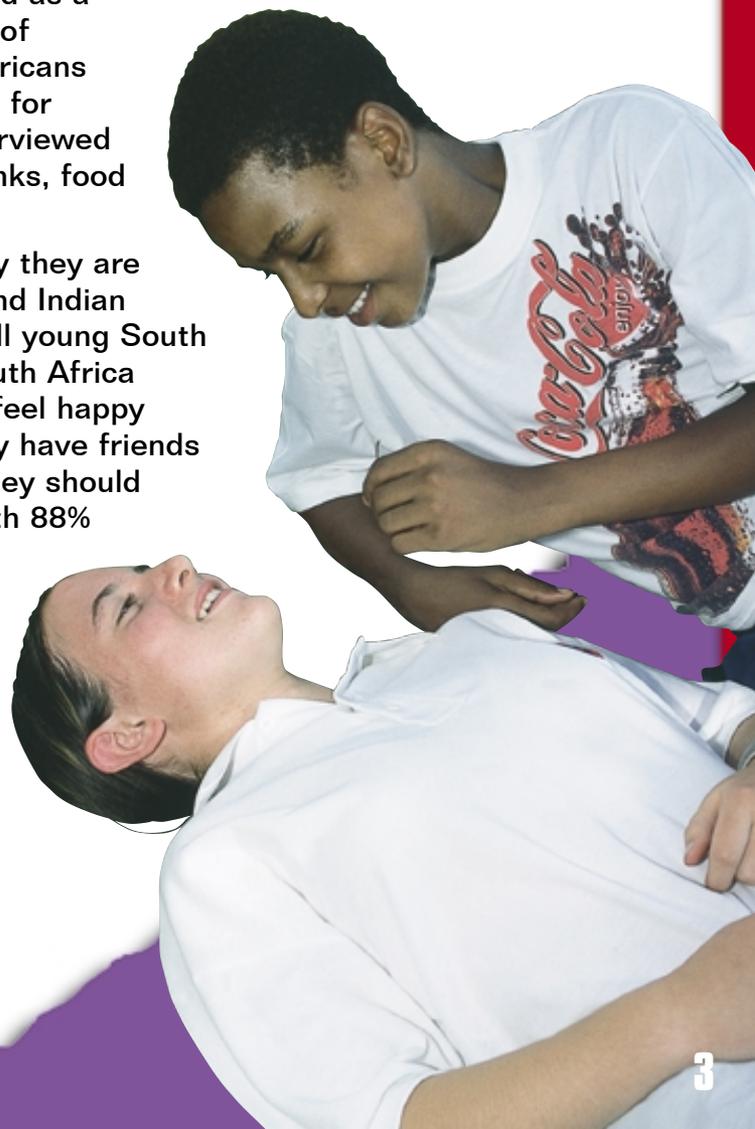


While young South Africans generally spend large parts of their time doing the things young people do everywhere – watching television, listening to the radio or “hanging out” with friends – poverty is a major factor in the lives of a large proportion of young South Africans. About one third of young South Africans are living in households with less than R1,000 income per month. Approximately one third of African respondents reported going hungry and many are living in homes that are overcrowded (65% of young South Africans do not have their own bedroom), and lack basic amenities such as electricity and sewerage. Most respondents said that if they had money they would spend it on food.

Although the risk of HIV/AIDS looms large in the lives of young South Africans, 65% indicate that they are worried about their personal safety. Crime is the greatest concern (72%), but 62% of respondents cited the fear of sexual or physical abuse as a concern.

Many young South Africans are sexually active. About one third of boys and girls aged 12-17 have had sexual intercourse. One in five (18%) of this group reported having their first sexual experience at the age of 12 or younger. Most teenagers say they first learned about sex from their friends and peer pressure and coercion play a significant role in adolescent sexual behaviour. Sex is also often used as a commodity in exchange for money or other forms of payment. Twenty-eight percent of young South Africans indicate they know people their age who have sex for money, and 16% of sexually experienced girls interviewed said they themselves have had sex for money, drinks, food or other gifts.

Although nearly three quarters of respondents say they are positive about the future of South Africa, white and Indian youth in particular are less positive, and 39% of all young South Africans indicate that they will probably leave South Africa someday. Although 8 in 10 respondents say they feel happy mixing with people of all races, 71% said they only have friends of their own race. But the vast majority believe they should participate in determining the country's future with 88% of respondents saying they think it important to vote in an election.



# YOUNG PEOPLE in South Africa today

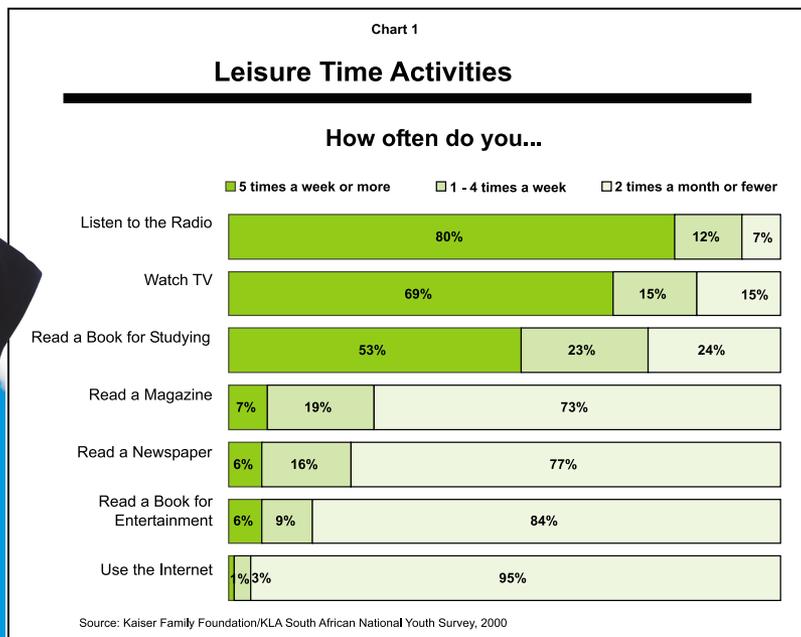
## Leisure Time and Activities

The majority of youth in South Africa are spending time every day watching television, listening to the radio, and studying. Sixty-nine percent of young people watch TV five or more days a week, though television viewing habits do vary a bit by race as fewer young Africans (55%) watch television every day than Indians (89%), coloureds (82%), and whites (84%).

Soap operas and sports top the list of favourite programs to watch. Among the most popular shows are “Generations,” “Days of Our Lives,” “Emzini Wezinsizwa,” and “YOtv.” Soccer or football is the favourite sport to watch followed by cricket.

Along with television viewing, young South Africans are spending a lot of time listening to the radio. Eighty percent of young people listen to the radio five or more times per week. Since the large majority (94%) of youth are in school, many have school-work that they must also do in their leisure time, and the majority (53%) of respondents say that they read a book for studying five or more times a week.

Only 9% of South African youth have ever used the Internet. Whites are much more likely to have access to the Internet (60%) than Africans (3%), coloureds (15%) or Indians (27%).

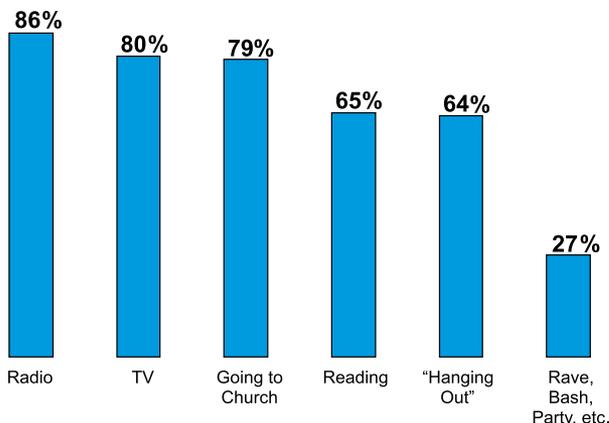


HOT TOPICS COLD FACTS

Chart 2

### Preferred Weekend Activities

Percent saying each is a "very important" or "important" activity to do over weekends . . .



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/KLA South African National Youth Survey, 2000

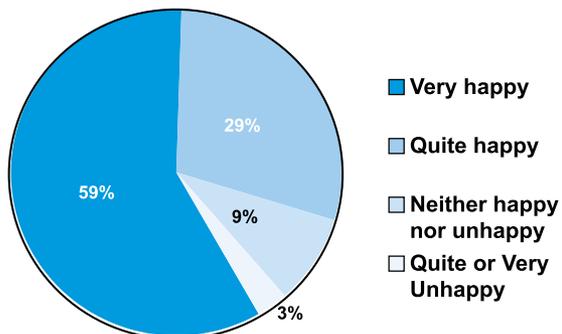
When asked about activities they do over the weekends, young people rank television, radio, and going to church at the top. In addition, almost two-thirds say that reading books and spending time with friends are valuable weekend activities.

## Happiness

The majority (59%) of youth in South Africa say that they are very happy with their life personally, and 29% say that they are quite happy. While about one out of ten (9%) say they are neither happy nor unhappy, a very small number (3%) say they are quite or very unhappy.

Chart 3

### How happy are you with your life?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation/KLA South African National Youth Survey, 2000

