

Sex Ed For All and Youth of Color

Reproductive justice cannot be achieved without empowering young people to make positive, informed decisions about their sexual lives. Sex education policies and programs must promote, improve, and destigmatize the sexual and reproductive health of young people.

Young people are primarily youth of color

Queer Youth of Color

- Nearly half of young people identify as people of color¹ and disproportionately identify as LGBTQ.²
- Students who receive LGBTQ-inclusive sex education report less bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.³
 - Queer young people of color often experience high rates of harassment due to both their race/ethnicity and their sexuality, with 45% of Black, 49% of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), 54% of Latinx, and 65% of Indigenous LGBTQ youth reporting feeling unsafe at school based on their sexual orientation.⁴
 - Bullying and harassment in school has social, academic, psychological, and physical consequences for students. Studies show that harassment in schools has a negative impact on academic performance for LGBTQ students.⁵
- The inconsistent patchwork of state sex education allows some states to intentionally discriminate against LGBTQ youth, creating an unsafe environment sanctioned by the school.⁶ This is compounded for LGBTQ youth of color, particularly Black students, who disproportionately experience harsher discipline in schools.⁷
- The lack of comprehensive sex education forces Queer and Trans young people to learn in settings that fail to acknowledge and center their identities, behaviors, and experiences.⁸

Black youth

- In 2017, Black youth (ages 0-17) comprised 15.1% of the total youth population in the United States and 13.7% of non-Hispanic youth in the United States⁹
- Nearly one-third of all HIV infections occur among Black youth between the ages of 14-24.¹⁰
 - Black youth are twenty times more likely to be infected with HIV than white youth
- A 2011 survey by *Essence Magazine* and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that 90% of Black youth said they did not want to get pregnant at this point in their lives, but over 67% have had sex without using contraception.¹¹
 - Over 1 in 3 Black females said they had unprotected sex because their partner didn't want them to use contraception.
 - Of the teens who have had sex, almost half (45%) said they were pressured to have sex.
- In a study looking at sexual victimization of Black girls, 60% reported being sexually assaulted by the age of 18.¹²

Latina and Latino Youth

- In 2016, Latinos counted for 25% of U.S. K-12 students, up from 16% in 2000, and account for about half or more of all K-12 students in New Mexico, California, and Texas.¹³
- Latinos comprise the youngest major racial or ethnic group and fastest growing population.¹⁴
- More than three-fifths of Latino youth (62%) lived in families living with low-incomes (below 200% of the poverty line), which is twice the proportion for white children (31%).¹⁵
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AAPI Youth

- In 2017, Asian youth (ages 0-17) comprised 5.3% of the total youth population in the United States and 5.0% of non-Hispanic youth in the United States¹⁷
- In 2017, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth (ages 0-17) comprised 0.3% of the total youth population in the United States and 0.2% of non-Hispanic youth in the United States¹⁸
- Sex and reproductive health are often considered extremely taboo topics within AAPI communities, and frank discussions about sex do not usually occur in AAPI households.¹⁹
- One study found that more than half of the young AAPI women surveyed felt uncomfortable talking to their mothers about reproductive health, and more than one-third never discussed pregnancy, STIs, birth control, and sexuality in their households.²⁰
- Another study documenting South Asian American attitudes toward family planning showed that South Asian American teenagers were significantly less likely to learn about contraception from their parents than other racial and ethnic groups--5% compared to 18%.²¹
- As a result, many AAPI teens do not learn about sexual health or reproduction from their families, leaving them to rely instead on information from friends, media, and abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in schools.

Destigmatizing Young People and Providing Comprehensive Sex Ed

- Youth of color confront barriers such as lack of access to comprehensive sex education.
 - Comprehensive sex education is medically accurate and complete, age- and developmentally appropriate, LGBTQ-inclusive, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and reflective of the real needs of young people.
 - Many states that have abstinence-only-until-marriage programs are also states with high density populations of Latinos.
 - For the small number of states that mandate sex education, only ten of those states has curricula guidelines or standards that mentions healthy relationships, sexual assault, or consent.²²
- Because of these obstacles, youth of color are not getting the information they need to make positive and empowered decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.
- Unplanned pregnancy
 - Latinas have the highest incidence of unintended pregnancy due to economic barriers and lack of health insurance, and limited access to birth control pills, condoms, and emergency contraception.
 - Black teens have unintended pregnancy rates more than double that of white teens²³
 - As a group, the rate of teen pregnancies among AAPI adolescents is relatively low.²⁴ Birth rates for AAPI women ages 15 to 19 decreased by 5% from 2011 to 2012.²⁵
 - However, studies that breakdown data by ethnic subpopulation show variations. For example, one study found that 50% of Hmong girls between the ages 15 and 19 in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota had children or became pregnant before graduating from high school.²⁶
- The sex education programs in many states lack the linguistic and cultural competence needed for immigrants and youth of color to fully engage and learn from such programs; truly comprehensive programs address the linguistic and cultural needs of students.
- Black parents and students overwhelmingly (90%) support comprehensive sex education²⁷
- A poll conducted by *In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda* found that 78% of Black women and men believe that sexual development is normal, and the best approach is to provide all the information about sex and contraception.²⁸
 - In the same poll, when it comes to sex education in high school, Black parents and students said sex education programs should cover many topics, including: (1) examples of what healthy romantic relationships look like; (2) different sexual orientations; (3) preventing violence in intimate relationships; (4) preventing HIV & other STDs; and (5) preventing unintended pregnancy by using birth control.

Legislation to Support

Real Education for Healthy Youth Act (REHYA)

- Would allow LGBTQ youth and youth of color to obtain the information and services needed to ensure their ability to make decisions about their health, family, and future with dignity and self-determination, not stigma and shame.

Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act (YASHS Act)

- Would provide grants to increase and improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for LGBTQ youth, youth of color, immigrant youth, and youth in juvenile detention.

Fund the Title X Federal Family Planning Program at \$400 million

- Youth of color rely on Title X centers as a confidential and affordable place to access the contraception they need.
- For youth seeking family planning services, Title X providers provide services to uninsured and underinsured youth and provides them the opportunity to make decisions about their bodies, sexuality, health, and families with dignity.

¹William H. Frey, Diversity Defines The Millennial Generations, Brookings, June 28, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/>

²GLAAD Accelerating Acceptance 2017, http://www.glaad.org/files/aa/2017_GLAAD_Accelerating_Acceptance.Pdf

³Blake Et Al., "Preventing Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Gay, Lesbian, And Bisexual Adolescents: The Benefits Of Gay-Sensitive HIV Instruction In Schools." *AJPH* June 2001, Vol. 91, No. 6.

⁴Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, And Queer Youth In Our Nation's Schools. New York: GLSEN.

⁵Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G., Villenas, C. & Giga, N.M. (2016). From Teasing To Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey Of U.S. Secondary School Students And Teachers. New York: GLSEN.

⁶GLSEN. (2018). Laws Prohibiting "Promotion Of Homosexuality" In Schools: Impacts And Implications (Research Brief). New York: GLSEN.

⁷Nadra Kareem Nittle, Thoughtco, How Racism Affects Minority Students In Public Schools, Jan. 15, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/how-racism-affects-public-school-minorities-4025361>.

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⁹America's Children In Brief: Key National Indicators Of Well-Being, 2018, Table Pop3. Federal Interagency Forum On Child And Family Statistics. Online: <https://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>

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¹³Mark Hugo Lopez Et Al. "Key Facts About Young Latinos, One Of The Nation's Fastest-Growing Populations." SEPTEMBER 13, 2018. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/13/key-facts-about-young-latinos/>

¹⁴Mark Hugo Lopez Et Al. "Key Facts About Young Latinos, One Of The Nation's Fastest-Growing Populations." SEPTEMBER 13, 2018. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/13/key-facts-about-young-latinos/>

¹⁵Yang Jiang Et At. "Basic Facts About Low-Income Children." National Center For Children In Poverty. February 2016. http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1145.html

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¹⁷America's Children In Brief: Key National Indicators Of Well-Being, 2018, Table POP3. Federal Interagency Forum On Child And Family Statistics. Online: <https://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>

¹⁸America's Children In Brief: Key National Indicators Of Well-Being, 2018, Table POP3. Federal Interagency Forum On Child And Family Statistics. Online: <https://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/tables.asp>

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²⁰Asian Communities For Reproductive Justice, "Building Strong Families: Talking About Sex And Our Bodies." Forward Together (2010). <http://forwardtogether.org/assets/docs/ACRJ-Talking-About-Sex-And-Our-Bodies-English.Pdf>.

²¹Huma Farid Et Al., "Practice Of And Attitudes Towards Family Planning Among South Asian American Immigrants." *Contraception* 88 (October 2013).

²²Center For American Progress (2018). Sex Education Standards Across The States. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/05/09/450158/sex-education-standards-across-states/>

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²⁸In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda. Results From A National Survey Of Black Adults: The Lives And Voices Of Black America On The Intersections Of Politics, Race, And Public Policy, April 2018.