

## *Coping with COVID-19: How Young People Use Digital Media to Manage Their Mental Health*

### **Fact sheet: Mental health, digital health practices, and social media use among Black U.S. teens and young adults (age 14–22)**

This fact sheet presents data from a nationally representative survey of more than 1,500 14- to 22-year-olds in the U.S., conducted in September–November 2020 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, on behalf of Common Sense, the California Health Care Foundation, and Hopelab. The complete survey findings, methodology, quotes from participants, and text of the questionnaire are available [here](#).

#### **Many U.S. Black youth (age 14 to 22) face serious health concerns:**

- As of September–November 2020, 1 in 5 Black youth (20%) had a coronavirus infection themselves or in the family, twice as high as White youth (9%).
- 37% of Black youth report symptoms of moderate to severe depression.
- 9% of Black youth are at risk for alcohol or drug abuse; however, 80% of Black youth abstain from drugs and alcohol.

#### **Nine in 10 Black youth (90%) have used digital tools for health purposes, such as seeking health information online, using a health-related app, connecting to a provider, or finding others online with similar health concerns.**

- 77% of Black youth have looked for health information online; top topics include COVID-19 (49% searched for this) and fitness and exercise (41% searched for this).
- 70% of Black youth have used a health app; the top topic was fitness (39% used an app for this).
- 39% of Black youth have looked for others with similar health concerns online.

#### **Four in 10 Black youth (44%) have used telehealth services to connect with providers online.**

- 88% of Black youth who have connected with a provider online say they found it "very" (42%) or "somewhat" (46%) helpful.
- 50% of Black youth who have not yet connected with a provider online are "very" (14%) or "somewhat" (36%) interested in doing so.

#### **The majority of Black youth encounter negative content online and on social media.**

- 69% of Black youth "often" (34%) or "sometimes" (35%) encounter racist content online.
- More Black than White youth say they encounter racist content online "often" (34% vs. 23%).
- 45% of Black youth "strongly" (14%) or "somewhat" (32%) agree that they see so much bad news on social media that it makes them feel stressed and anxious.

#### **However, many Black youth have positive opinions about social media, especially during the era of COVID-19:**

- During the coronavirus pandemic, the majority say social media has been "very" or "somewhat" important for keeping informed about current events (84%), staying connected to friends and family (83%), and helping learn how to protect themselves and others from the virus (74%).
- The majority of Black youth say social media is "very" or "somewhat" important for expressing themselves creatively (71%), getting inspiration from others (70%), feeling less alone (55%), and getting support or advice when needed (50%).
- 45% of Black youth say social media helps them feel better when they are depressed, stressed, or anxious (42% say it makes no difference, and 14% say it makes them feel worse). This is a significantly more positive opinion than Black youth had in 2018, when 27% said it helped them feel better.

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