PLEASURE AT LAST SEXUAL ENCOUNTER AMONG A SAMPLE OF YOUNG WOMEN IN ESWATINI

METHODS

The DYnamics of Contraception in Eswatini (DYCE) study is a high-frequency longitudinal survey that contacts young women (ages 18-24) in Eswatini on their cell phones – every two weeks – to understand the changes taking place related to a young woman's sexual and reproductive health.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Institute and Columbia University, the DYCE protocol was reviewed and approved by the Eswatini National Health Research Review Board in 2024 and Columbia University Medical Center Institutional Review Board in 2023. DYCE is implemented by ICAP at Columbia University in collaboration with Eswatini Ministry of Health.

The Eswatini Population-based HIV Impact Assessment survey, (SHIMS3) provided the sample for DYCE. SHIMS3 is a nationally representative, population-based cross-sectional survey conducted between May and November 2021. Overall, 12,029 individuals participated in SHIMS3, of whom 1,448 were AGYW 18-24 who completed the survey and participated in the HIV test. The DYCE sample frame includes all women ages 18-24 that completed the SHIMS3 interview, consented to follow-up for potential future research and provided a phone number. Fifty-six percent (818 of 1,448) consented to be re-contacted and 97% (794) provided a phone number. All 794 AGYW who were sampled were called at least once. Between March 16, 2024 – April 8, 2024, 326 participants consented and completed the baseline survey, and 321 consented to bi-weekly participation.

Beginning April 10, 2024, participants have been called bi-weekly to answer questions about socio-demographics, pregnancy and contraception, relationships, sexual activity and HIV. To-date, eight participants have withdrawn from the study and 23 participants were removed from the study in April 2025 due to low participation. Periodically, participants are asked additional questions that were selected by the DYCE Technical Working Group, consisting of Ministry of Health (Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit and Research Unit), ICAP-New York and ICAP-Eswatini staff. This technical brief shares the results from the "Sexual Pleasure" Module. Across one biweekly survey period from March 12 to March 17, 2026, 202 participants completed this module.

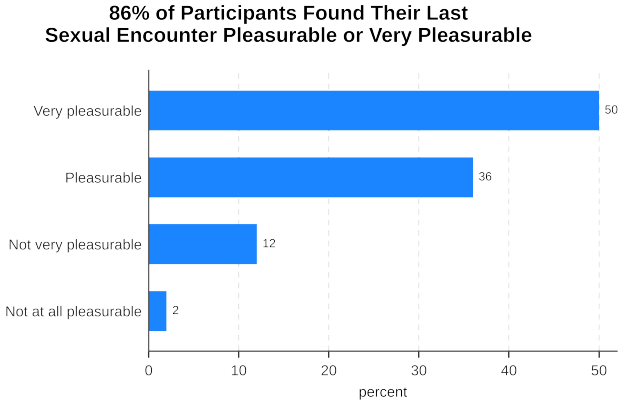
RESULTS

RESPONSE RATES ACROSS STUDY

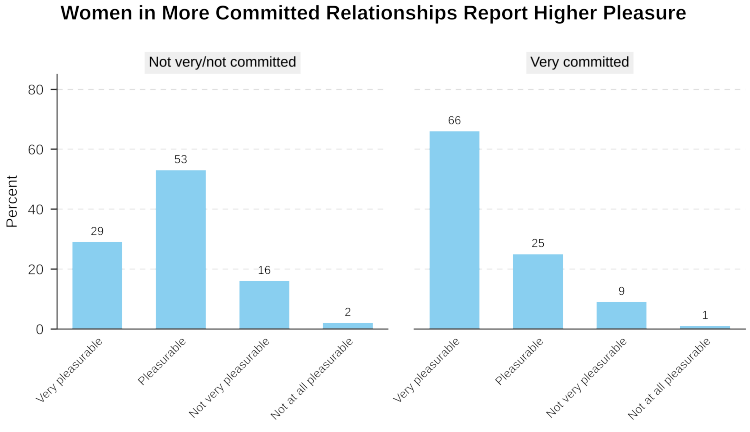
- April 2024 - Sept 2024: 81.9%
- Oct 2024 - March 2025: 76.2%
- April 2025 - Sept 2025: 78.2%
- Oct 2025 - March 2026: 82.4%

PLEASURE AT LAST SEXUAL ENCOUNTER

- Most participants (86%) reported a pleasurable or very pleasurable last sexual encounter (N=202)



- Among participants who were in a relationship (N=159), 66% of those in a "very committed" relationship reported their last sexual encounter as "very pleasurable", whereas 29% of those in less committed relationships reported their last sexual encounter as "very pleasurable".

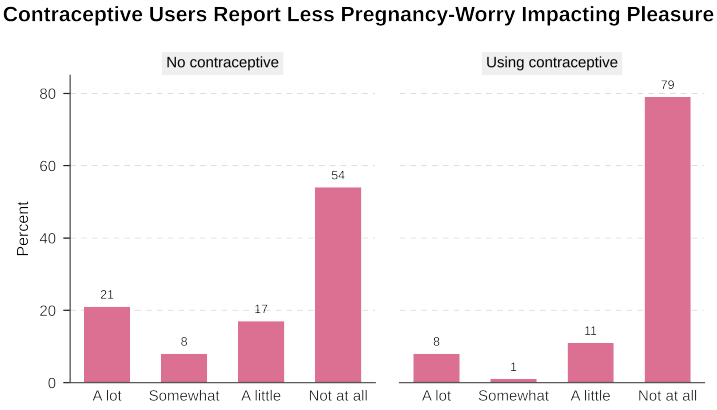


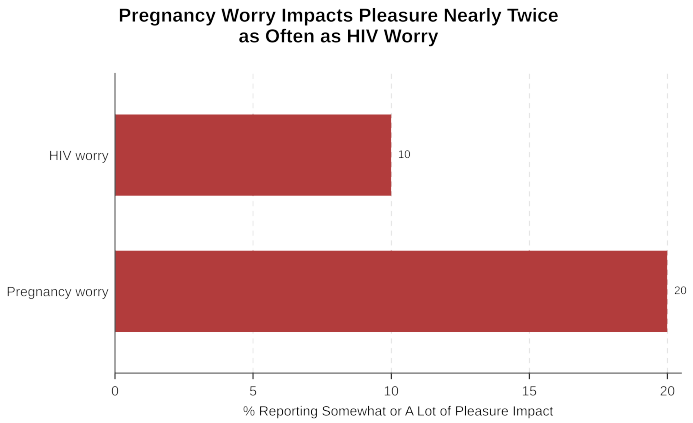
IMPACT OF PREGNANCY WORRY ON PLEASURE

- Among participants (N=191), two-thirds (65%) reported that worry about pregnancy did not impact their sexual pleasure at all, while 15% reported "a little," 5% "somewhat," and 15% reported "a lot"
- Among women using a contraceptive method (N=87), 79% said pregnancy worry impacted their pleasure "not at all," and 8% said "a lot"
- Among non-users (N=104), 54% said pregnancy worry impacted their pleasure "not at all," and 21% said "a lot"

IMPACT OF HIV WORRY ON PLEASURE

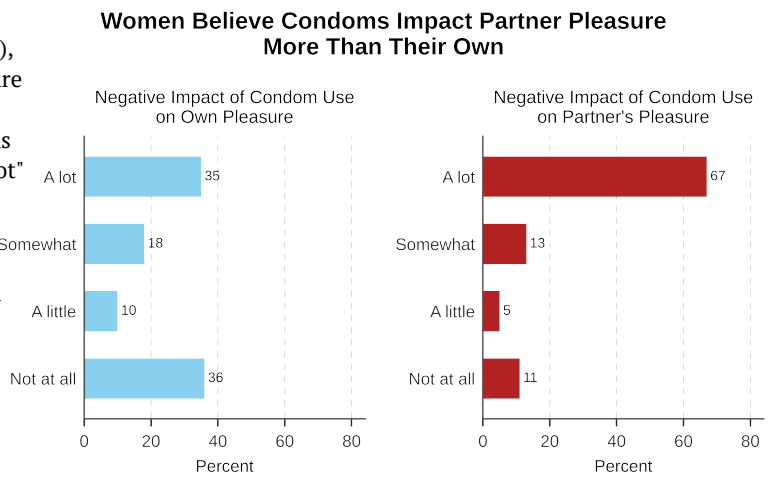
- Among HIV-negative participants (N=167), 76% reported that HIV worry did not impact their sexual pleasure at all; only 10% reported "somewhat" or "a lot"





CONDOM USE

- Among those who ever had sex and currently have a partner (N=163), 67% reported that condoms negatively impact their partner's pleasure "a lot"
- Among women who reported condomless sex in the past two months (N=101), 48% reported that condoms impact their own pleasure "a lot"
- Among women who said condoms impact their own pleasure "a lot" (N=48), 98% also said wanting sex to feel good strongly influenced their decision not to use one.
- Among women who said condoms impact their partner's pleasure "a lot" (N=74), 72% said wanting sex to feel good strongly influenced their decision not to use one
- Among women who had condomless sex but said condoms don't impact their own pleasure "at all" (N=28), 54% had a recorded contraceptive method, mostly implants and injections (40% each), with the remainder (20%) on the pill



CONCLUSION

- Pleasure was an important factor in all the sexual health beahviors we examined
- Relationship commitment appeared to play a meaningful role in shaping sexual pleasure, with women in more committed relationships considerably more likely to describe their last sexual encounter as highly pleasurable
- Even among the group reporting the highest pregnancy worry, most still described their last sexual experience as pleasurable, suggesting that for many, worry about pregnancy did not fully override the experience of pleasure. However, non-users of contraception reported pregnancy worry impacting their pleasure "a lot" at roughly two and a half times the rate seen among contraceptive users
- Unlike pregnancy worry, HIV worry showed minimal effect on pleasure. This suggests that, in this sample, HIV worry, was not a meaningful driver of reduced sexual pleasure, in contrast to pregnancy worry
- Pleasure-seeking was a common reason for forgoing a condom among women concerned about either their own or their partner's pleasure

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