

Filipino youths have low awareness of STIs, HIV, EC

By Patricia B. Mirasol
Reporter

ONLY a third of Filipino youth aged 15-24 years have an awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and emergency contraceptive (EC) pills, according to the fifth iteration of the 2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS5) study of the University of the Philippines Population Institution (UPPI). The percentage of those with a comprehensive knowledge of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was also below 20%, the study also found.

Awareness of STIs was at 35% among males and 34% among females in 2021. Awareness of HIV and/or AIDS, meanwhile, was 74% among males and 78% females for the same year, a decrease from 82% and 85% in 2013, respectively, or when the fourth YAFS was conducted.

This is a growing trend, said Christian Joy P. Cruz, UPPI associate professor, in an Oct. 14 dissemination forum of the study. She noted that in 1994, awareness of HIV and/or AIDS was 95% for both sexes.

The study further reported that more than half (52%) of Filipino youths believed that a person can get HIV by sharing food with someone who is infected. About a quarter (24%) likewise believed a person can get HIV from mosquito bites.

“Sex is still apparently a taboo topic at home,” said UPPI associate professor Maria Paz N. Marquez, who presented at the same event. Only 12% among males, and 13% among females, had discussions at home about sex in 2021.

“What is increasing is those consulting no one,” Ms. Marquez added. Thirty-three percent of males and 23% of females did not consult anyone about sex, up from 24% and 20%, respectively.

For males that did consult others, however, friends are the top choice



CRISTINA PONCIANO-UNSPASH

(40% in 2021, down from 50% in 2013). Females, on the other hand, preferred both their mother (39% in 2021, down from 43% in 2013) and friends (22% in 2021 from, down from 26% in 2013).

A majority (68% of males and 58% of females) used protection during sexual initiation.

“Condoms and the withdrawal method were more commonly used, given that a [majority] of the sexual initiation was not planned but happened anyway,” Ms. Marquez told the event audience. Over a quarter (28%) of males and a third (32%) of females did not plan their sexual initiation when it happened. Moreover, 17% of males and 18% of females did not want it to happen, but went along with it.

A new inclusion in the fifth YAFS was the question on EC pills. The study found that — although awareness of this contraception option is low — 31% of males and 24% of females would consider using it if it was made available.

A majority got their male condoms at drugstores (77%). Only 3% bought them at online shopping platforms. Nearly one-tenth (11% among males; 3% among females) said they always carried a condom with them.

YAFS5 commenced in August 2021 and was completed in January 2022. Covering 17 regions, the study approached 10,949 youth from 974

sample barangays. It contains 14 major topics, including those about puberty, dating, sex, lifestyle, health, and media.

The study proponents took measures to ensure the respondents’ forthrightness, Ms. Marquez said.

“One of these measures was for the female respondents to be interviewed with female interviewers — same with the males — *para ma-minimize ‘yung hiyaan* [so embarrassment is minimized],” she said. Sealed questionnaires were also provided for 10 questions pertaining to sensitive subjects such as abortion and illegal drug use.

“We compared the answers from the sealed questionnaires [versus] the answers they gave in the face-to-face interviews, and *hindi nagkakaalayo ang* answers [the answers are consistent],” she said.

The hope is that there will be a convergence among policy makers and those in congress, said Grace T. Cruz, UPPI professor.

“The whole idea of why we’re in the business of data gathering,” she said at the Oct. 14 forum, is so the data could be “used as a scientific basis for the formulation of appropriate policies for the welfare of young people.”

The YAFS5 report will be available in 2023. The UPPI said it is “targeting to release the raw data by the middle of 2023.”

Obesity as a growing concern among Filipinos

OPINION

AROUND 27 million Filipinos are overweight and obese, based on the latest survey of the Department of Science and Technology (DoST) Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI).

If no action is taken, overall rates of overweight and obesity will continue to rise, with more than 30% of Filipino adolescents projected to be overweight and obese by 2030, warned the Department of Health (DoH), the National Nutrition Council (NNC), the Philippine Association for the Study of Overweight and Obesity (PASOO), the Nutrition Center of the Philippines (NCP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on the occasion of World Obesity Day.

Overweight and obese Filipino adults increased to 36.6% of the population in 2019 from 20.2% in 1998. Meanwhile, the prevalence rates of overweight and obesity among Filipino adolescents more than doubled to 11.6% in 2018 from 4.9% in 2003.

The WHO defines overweight and obesity as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health. Overweight and obesity in adults are commonly classified using body mass index (BMI) defined as a person’s weight in kilograms divided by the square of their height in meters (kg/m²).

Overweight is a BMI greater than or equal to 25. Obesity is a BMI greater than or equal to 30. In children, overweight and obesity are classified based on the number of weight-for-height standard deviations above the WHO Child Growth Standards median.

The fundamental cause of obesity and overweight is an energy imbalance between calories consumed and calories expended — too much drinking and eating but not enough physical activity.

Globally, there has been an increased intake of energy-dense foods that are high in fat and sugars. Moreover, there has also been an increase in physical inactivity due to the increasingly sedentary nature of many forms of work, changing modes of transportation, and increasing urbanization, the WHO explained.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which limited mobility for health and safety reasons, has compounded the growing obesity concern.

According to the WHO, overweight and obesity are linked to more deaths worldwide than underweight. There are more people who are obese than underweight in every region of the world, except parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

Raised BMI is a major risk factor for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, mainly heart disease and stroke; diabetes; musculo-

skeletal disorders, especially osteoarthritis, a highly disabling degenerative disease of the joints; some cancers including endometrial, breast, ovarian, prostate, liver, gallbladder, kidney, and colon. As a person’s BMI increases, so does the risk for these NCDs.

Childhood obesity is associated with a higher chance of obesity, premature death and disability in adulthood. On top of increased future risks, obese children experience breathing difficulties, increased risk of fractures, hypertension, early markers of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and psychological effects, the WHO stated.

MEDICINE CABINET TEODORO B. PADILLA

To address the growing problem of obesity in the Philippines, the DoH, NNC, and national partners recommend specific actions:

- Implement policies, legislation, and interventions to promote physical activity including active transport and promotion of green, blue, and open spaces in communities and workplaces. As in other health priorities, strengthen and sustain appropriate social and behavior change communication on healthy diet and physical activity.

- Implement policies and interventions to promote, protect, and support infant and young child nutrition, especially in the first 1000 days of life to prevent stunting and reduce risk for children to become obese in their later lives.

- Develop a strategy with corresponding funds, human resources, and accountability mechanisms, including empowering the health system with dedicated programs on obesity across the life stage.

- Improve data, monitoring, and enforcement of laws relating to food products.

- Provide subsidies to farmers and fisherfolk and increase access to nutritious food.

- Use social protection programs such as 4Ps to improve access to healthy food, especially in times of disasters.

- Promote healthy school food environments for children.

- In the case of obesity, it has once again been proven that prevention is better than cure.

TEODORO B. PADILLA is the executive director of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP), which represents the biopharmaceutical medicines and vaccines industry in the country. Its members are at the forefront of research and development efforts for COVID-19 and other diseases that affect Filipinos.



SPOT PRICES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2022

METAL

PALLADIUM free \$/troy oz	2,030.01
PALLADIUM JMI base, \$/troy oz	2,042.00
PLATINUM free \$/troy oz	921.45
PLATINUM JMI base \$/troy oz	922.00
KRUGGERAND, fob \$/troy oz	1,661.00
IRIDIUM, whs rot, \$/troy oz	3,940.00
RHODIUM, whs rot, \$/troy oz	13,690.00

GRAINS (October 13, 2022)
(FOB Bangkok basis at every Thursday)

FRAGRANT (100%) 1 st Class, \$/ton	922.00
FRAGRANT (100%) 2 nd Class, \$/ton	895.00
RICE (5%) White Thai-\$/ton	439.00
RICE (10%) White Thai-\$/ton	438.00
RICE (15%) White Thai-\$/ton	434.00
RICE (25%) White Thai-\$/ton (Super)	434.00
BROKER RICE A-1 Super \$/ton	391.00

FOOD

COCOA ICCO Dly (SDR/mt)	1,776.04
COCOA ICCO \$/mt	2,273.60
COFFEE ICA comp '2001 cts/lb	178.83
SUGAR ISA FOB Daily Price, Carib, port cts/lb	18.00
SUGAR ISA 15-day ave.	17.67

LIFFE COFFEE

New Robusta 10 MT -\$/ton

	High	Low	Sett	Psett
Nov.	2,075	2,046	2,064	2,061
Jan.	2,062	2,035	2,045	2,051
Mar.	2,043	2,017	2,022	2,032
May	2,030	2,005	2,010	2,019

LIFFE COCOA

(Ldn)-10 MT-\$/ton

	High	Low	Sett	Psett
Dec.	1,987	1,930	1,931	1,981
Mar.	1,935	1,877	1,881	1,929
May	1,890	1,837	1,840	1,884
July	1,870	1,826	1,828	1,862

COCONUT

MANILA COPRA (based on 6% moisture)
Peso/100kg

Buyer/Seller	
Lag/Qzn/Luc	22 3,450.00/3,500.00
Philippine Coconut Oil - Crude	
CIF NY/NOLA	55.00
PALM OIL RAIL/NOLA	58.00
COCONUT OIL (PHIL/IDN), \$/per ton, CIF Europe	
Oct./Nov.'22	0.00/1,100.00
Nov./Dec.'22	0.00/1,088.75
Dec./Jan.'23	1,040.00/1,090.00
Jan./Feb.'23	1,050.00/1,110.00

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE

LME FINAL CLOSING PRICES, US\$/MT

	3 MOS
ALUMINUM H.G.	2,229.00
ALUMINUM Alloy	1,760.00
COPPER	7,562.50
LEAD	2,026.00
NICKEL	21,541.00
TIN	19,645.00
ZINC	2,866.50

Oil firms as inflation fears drag global economy

HOUSTON — Oil prices held steady on Monday in choppy trading as fears that high inflation and energy costs could drag the global economy into recession offset China’s continuation of loose monetary policy.

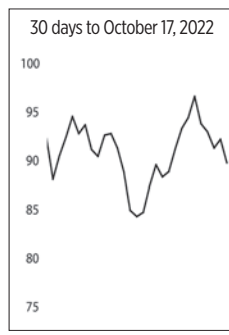
Brent crude futures were down 1 cent or 0.01% to \$91.62 a barrel, recovering from a 6.4% fall last week.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was down 15 cents or 0.2% at \$85.46 after a 7.6% decline last week.

“US inflation remains a front topic and with the Fed set to raise rates at least into next year, there are fears that demand destruction will escalate,” said Dennis Kissler, senior vice-president of trading at BOK Financial.

China’s central bank rolled over maturing medium-term policy loans on Monday while keeping its key interest rate unchanged for a second month, in a signal that loose monetary policy would be maintained.

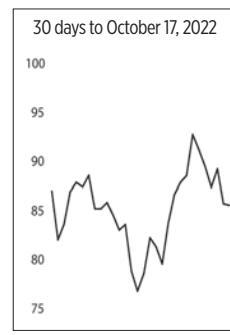
ASIA-DUBAI (OCTOBER CONTRACT)



DOLLARS PER BBL

Oct. 11	93.70
Oct. 12	92.90
Oct. 13	92.10
Oct. 14	92.10
Oct. 15	92.10
Oct. 16	92.10
Oct. 17	92.00
Average (Oct. 3-17)	\$92.00
Average (Sept. 1-30)	\$90.92

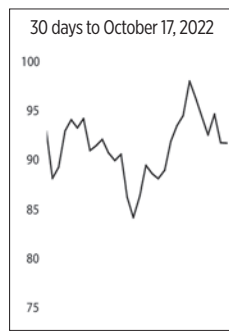
NEW YORK-WTI (NOVEMBER CONTRACT)



DOLLARS PER BBL

Oct. 11	89.35
Oct. 12	87.27
Oct. 13	89.11
Oct. 14	85.61
Oct. 15	85.46
Oct. 16	85.46
Oct. 17	85.46
Average (Oct. 3-17)	\$87.90
Average (Sept. 1-30)	\$83.80

LONDON-BRENT (DECEMBER CONTRACT)



DOLLARS PER BBL

Oct. 11	94.29
Oct. 12	92.45
Oct. 13	94.57
Oct. 14	91.63
Oct. 15	91.62
Oct. 16	91.62
Oct. 17	91.62
Average (Oct. 3-17)	\$93.37
Average (Sept. 1-30)	\$90.57

St. Louis Fed President James Bullard on Friday said inflation had become “pernicious” and difficult to arrest, warranting continued “frontloading” through larger rate increases of three-quarters of a percentage point.

Inflation in the United States remains stubborn and growth in European Union countries is expected to weaken to 0.5%, International Monetary Fund official Gita Gopinath said on Monday.

Oil supply is likely to remain tight after OPEC and allies including Russia pledged on Oct. 5 to cut output by two million barrels per day (bpd) while a war of words between OPEC’s de facto leader Saudi Arabia and the United States could foreshadow more volatility.

Easing the supply crunch, oil output in the Permian in Texas and New Mexico, the biggest US shale oil basin, is due to rise by about 50,000 bpd to a record 5.453 million bpd in November, the US Energy Information Administration said on Monday. — **Reuters**

Wall Street rallies after BofA results, UK reversal

NEW YORK — US stocks kicked off the trading week on Monday with a rally after Britain reversed course on an economic plan, while Bank of America (BoFA) was the latest financial company to post solid quarterly results, which lifted optimism about the corporate earnings season.

Britain named Jeremy Hunt finance minister, and he immediately dispelled many of Prime Minister Liz Truss’ fiscal measures, which had unnerved markets in recent weeks.

BoFA Corp. shares surged 6.06% as the lender’s net interest income was buoyed by rising interest rates in the quarter, even though it added \$378 million to its loan-loss reserves to buttress against a softening economy.

Fellow financial Bank of NY Mellon Corp. also benefited from higher interest rates, and its shares climbed 5.08%.

Higher rates boosted interest incomes for lenders in the third quarter, giving investors hope the current earnings season will be able to hurdle a lowered bar of expectations. The earnings growth estimate for the quarter is 3%, according to Refinitiv data, down from 4.5% at the start of the month and 11.1% on July 1.

The S&P 500 banks index was up 3.48%, while each of the 11 major S&P 500 sector were higher.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 550.99 points or 1.86% to 30,185.82 the S&P 500 gained 94.88 points or 2.65% to 3,677.95 and the Nasdaq Composite added 354.41 points or 3.43% to 10,675.80.

US equities remain mired in a bear market, after struggling through September, historically a tough month. Analysts said to better stock valuations entering what is traditionally a stronger period for stocks were also supporting Monday’s rally. Aggressive Federal Reserve interest rate hikes could be a stumbling block though.

Data on manufacturing in the New York region was weaker than expected, adding fuel to expectations a pivot by the Fed may be on the horizon.

Shares of Goldman Sachs, which will post results on Tuesday, advanced 2.24% following reports of a plan to combine its investment banking and trading businesses.

Major megacap growth stocks like Apple, Inc., Meta Platforms,

Inc., Amazon.com and Tesla, Inc. all rallied, helping to lift the S&P 500 growth index by 3.42% its biggest daily percentage jump since July 27.

Tesla, Inc., Netflix and Johnson & Johnson are among companies expected to report results later in the week.

Volume on US exchanges was 10.65 billion shares, compared with the 11.52 billion average for the full session over the last 20 trading days.

Advancing issues outnumbered declining ones on the NYSE by a 4.79-to-one ratio; on Nasdaq, a 2.98-to-1 ratio favored advancers.

The S&P 500 posted no new 52-week highs and two new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 83 new highs and 146 new lows. — **Reuters**

Gold up about 1% as US dollar, yields pull back

GOLD PRICES rose more than 1% on Monday after declines in the previous two sessions, as the US dollar and Treasury yields faltered, although risks from looming US Federal Reserve interest rate hikes persisted.

Spot gold was up 0.9% at \$1,656.25 per ounce by 1:41 p.m. ET (1741 GMT), having risen more than 1% earlier in the session and moving away from the more than two-week low touched in the last session.

US gold futures settled 0.9% higher at \$1,664.

“The dollar’s significantly lower ... yields are ticking lower,” said Bob Haberkorn, senior market strategist at RJO Futures, who also noted some “safe-haven demand with heightened geopolitical risks.”

Making bullion less expensive for overseas buyers, the dollar slipped 1.1%, while Treasury yields also retreated.

Gold faces headwinds as the Fed is expected to continue on its rate-hiking trajectory and increase its benchmark overnight interest rate by at least 75 basis points at its next policy meeting in November to curb stubbornly high inflation.

Gold prices have fallen 20% since scaling above the key \$2,000 per-ounce level in March.

Even though gold is seen as a hedge against inflation, rising interest rates dim the appeal of the non-yielding asset.

“In the near term, however, the recovery in risk assets bolstered by signs of stabilizing gilts is raising pressure on precious metal shorts, but gold prices need to break above \$1,750/oz to extend the short squeeze,” TD Securities said in a note.

Elsewhere, spot silver climbed 2.5% to \$18.72 per ounce after posting eight consecutive daily losses. Platinum rose 1.7% to \$913.77 and palladium added 0.6% to \$1,998.82. — **Reuters**