



# Press Release



Inspire Engage Create

16 July 2009

For immediate release

Editorial contact: TNS Research Surveys  
Neil Higgs, Director: Innovation and Development  
Telephone: 011-778-7500 or 082-376-6312  
e-mail: [Neil.Higgs@tns-global.co.za](mailto:Neil.Higgs@tns-global.co.za)  
Tessa Nowosenetz, Research Executive  
Telephone: 011-778-7757 or 072-606-8803  
e-mail: [tessa.nowosenetz@tns-global.co.za](mailto:tessa.nowosenetz@tns-global.co.za)

## Dating and relationships - a quarter of teens feel they don't fit in and one in six have problems at home

TNS Research Surveys, South Africa's leading marketing and social insights company, has recently conducted a survey of South African teenagers. The study was conducted amongst a sample of 1 000 South African teenagers, aged 13 to 19 years of age, from the seven major metropolitan areas of South Africa, interviewing them face-to-face in their homes, and has a margin of error of under 3.5%.

The teenage years are often synonymous with the beginning of dating and relationships, changing peer relations and peer pressure as well as teens and parents trying to avoid disagreement and just get along - parents are often seen in new ways. The study conducted by TNS looked at these issues, amongst others.

### Profiling the status of teenagers' dating patterns

Looking at the status of South African teenagers' dating patterns, 59% say that they do not currently date, 22% say that they date but are not in a serious relationship and 19% say that they are in a serious relationship.

Amongst teens who say they are **not currently dating**, the incidence per age is as follows:

Age 13:	93%
Age 14:	93%
Ages 15-16:	66%
Ages 17-18:	37%
Age 19:	28%

Amongst teens who say they are **dating but are not in a serious relationship**, the incidence per age is as follows:

Age 13:	6%
Age 14:	4%
Ages 15-16:	22%
Ages 17-18:	35%
Age 19:	29%

**MORE...**



Amongst teens who say they are in a **serious relationship**, the incidence per age is as follows:

Age 13:	1%
Age 14:	3%
Ages 15-16:	12%
Ages 17-18:	29%
Age 19:	43%

Teenagers who are 13 and 14 years old are not yet very involved in dating or serious relationships - but for 7%, dating has already started. However, dating activities increase once they reach 15 and 16 years old. More than one in ten 15 to 16 year old teenagers is in a serious relationship and a third overall are dating. Seventeen to 18 year olds have the highest incidence of engaging in dating but not being in a serious relationship.

It is interesting to see that 29% of 17 to 18 year olds and 43% of 19 year olds are in serious relationships, indicating that the incidence of being in a serious relationship increases rapidly with age. In addition, the incidence of dating increases with grade, with 22% of grade 11s, 28% of grade 12s and 48% of teens attending tertiary education mention they are in a serious relationship. Being in a serious relationship certainly comes with an increase in maturity and life experience. But bear in mind that just under 30% of 19 year olds are not dating at all. So it seems that dating patterns are very varied.

Amongst the teens who say they are in a **serious relationship**, the incidence per area is as follows:

- Gauteng 18%
  - Johannesburg and environs 18%
    - Johannesburg 22%
    - East Rand 17%
    - West Rand 12%
    - Soweto 15%
    - Vaal Triangle and South Rand 17%
  - Pretoria 19%
- Cape Town 23%
- Durban 16%
- Eastern Cape 25%
  - Port Elizabeth 22%
  - East London 30% (Highest)
- Bloemfontein 3% (Lowest)

Amongst the teens who say they are **dating but not in a serious relationship**, the incidence per area is as follows:

- Gauteng 24%
  - Johannesburg and environs 23%
    - Johannesburg 28%
    - East Rand 18%
    - West Rand 22%
    - Soweto 39% (Highest)
    - Vaal Triangle and South Rand 11% (Lowest)
  - Pretoria 27%

**MORE...**



- Cape Town 17%
- Durban 21%
- Eastern Cape 22%
  - Port Elizabeth 25%
  - East London 16%
- Bloemfontein 35%

Looking at dating status per area, areas such as Soweto and Bloemfontein that had low incidences for teens reporting that they were in serious relationships have much higher incidences for teens mentioning that that are dating but not in a serious relationship. This may indicate that teens in these areas are not keen on having serious relationships but are still keen to date without making a commitment to one person.

It is interesting to see that there are changes in internet usage amongst those teens who date and those who do not. Amongst teens who use the internet for social network sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Myspace, 50% are not currently dating. In addition, amongst those teens who use the internet to play games, 58% do not currently date. However, it is interesting to note than amongst the teens who say they spend more than three hours a week on the internet, 35% are in serious relationships compared with only 12% for those who spend under an hour a week. This may indicate that teens are using the internet as a communication method to chat with their sweethearts on internet chatting tools such as MSN and Skype.

Interestingly, dating patterns show no statistically significant variability by race, language or gender except for coloured females where 71% say they do not date (compared with 59% overall). Dating rises amongst those who have more money or who are working but this also correlates with the age data.

## Friends and socialising

An integral part of a teenager's life is socialising with friends. Seventy-two percent of teens say that they spend a lot of time socialising with their friends, 76% say that they are popular in their circle of friends and 88% say that they find it easy to make friends. But 24% do not feel popular and 10% battle to make friends.

However, although most teens enjoy the frequent company of friends, peer pressure certainly plays a role in their friendships, especially when it comes to fashion, brands and keeping up with what is in. Fifty-five percent of teens say that their friends have a great influence on what clothes and music they buy, 63% say that brand names are very important when it comes to buying clothes and shoes and 76% say that is important to wear clothing that is fashionable and stylish. Teens are really fashion and brand focused and this can be driven by their peers. Peer pressure can also play out in teens experimenting and 61% say it is okay to experiment with new things - even if others tell you not to.

Although most teens have friends with which to enjoy life and socialise, some teens are not as happy. Thirty-five percent of teens say that they don't know very many people, 11% say that their relations with their friends are quite poor, 22% say that they don't feel that they really belong and that they wish to be more accepted and 13% say they feel lonely. **MORE...**



These feelings apply across gender and race and all age groups.

It is this lack of acceptance that can lead to issues of self-esteem, as well as the desire to conform to a group in order to gain acceptance. Given, too, that a quarter do not feel popular, this suggests that one in four teens are likely to have problems integrating with their peers and may suffer some personal problems as a result. It may also be that these are the ones most likely to be the victims of bullying, a topic very much in the news at present.

### **Family life and support structures**

Friends, and more specifically family members, often serve as a central source of support for teens. In fact, 93% of teens mentioned that they have friends and family members to turn to if they need them and 93% say that they get on well with their parents or guardians.

However, the family and the home can also be a source of stress and unhappiness, ultimately causing disruption to a teenager's potentially already volatile life. Thirteen percent of teens mentioned that their home lives are not happy and 13% say there is a lot of conflict in their households. These figures also cut across age, gender and race (though they are a little higher for black males and those in Bloemfontein), indicating the universality of in-home problems. Forty-three percent of teenagers say that they spend a lot of their time looking after members of their family (particularly amongst black teenagers), a responsibility that should come with adulthood and not be part of being a teenager. Amongst whites, this figure is 25% for females and only 7% amongst males - a gender difference not apparent in other race groups.

### **Conclusion**

Although teenagers enjoy a lot of socialising, many have responsibilities at home, looking after family members. In addition, sociable teens are potentially very influenced by peer pressure and the pressures to wear brand names and fit in with their friends in this way.

Of concern is that a quarter of teens feel they do not fit in and one in six have an unhappy or conflict-filled home life. This adds to the already-significant strains of growing up.

Serious relationships play a bigger role in teens' lives as they get older but already, 7% of teens have started dating at 13 and 14. But just under a third of 19-year-olds are and over a third of those aged 17 and 18 are not dating, showing that it is by no means a universal practice. It may be that these "singles" also feel some pressure to date or to go out - another potential stress point in their lives.

**MORE...**



## About TNS

TNS, who recently merged with Research International, is the world's largest custom research agency delivering actionable insights and research-based business advice to its clients so they can make more effective business decisions. TNS offers comprehensive industry knowledge within the Consumer, Technology, Finance, Automotive and Political & Social sectors, supported by a unique product offering that stretches across the entire range of marketing and business issues, specialising in product development & innovation, brand & communication, stakeholder management, retail & shopper, and qualitative research. Delivering best-in-class service across more than 70 countries, TNS is part of Kantar, the world's largest research, insight and consultancy network. Please visit [www.tnsglobal.com](http://www.tnsglobal.com) for more information.

## The Kantar Group

The Kantar Group is one of the world's largest research, insight and consultancy networks. By uniting the diverse talents of more than 20 specialist companies - including the recently-acquired TNS - the group aims to become the pre-eminent provider of compelling and actionable insights for the global business community. Its 26,500 employees work across 80 countries and across the whole spectrum of research and consultancy disciplines, enabling the group to offer clients business insights at each and every point of the consumer cycle. The group's services are employed by over half of the Fortune Top 500 companies. The Kantar Group is a wholly-owned subsidiary of WPP Group plc. For further information, please visit [www.kantargrouptns.com](http://www.kantargrouptns.com)

**ENDS**