

## Survey finds that AIDS remains an unspeakable subject for African immigrants

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As World AIDS Day approaches on Dec. 1, University of Cincinnati research is shedding light on a culture affected by the world's highest rates of AIDS and HIV infections. An Ohio survey conducted by Matthew Asare, a native of Ghana, finds that among African immigrants, AIDS remains a public health concern.

Asare surveyed just over 400 African immigrants in Ohio to examine [attitudes](#) about [AIDS](#)/HIV and sex – all subjects that are considered taboo for discussion in many parts of Africa, a continent where HIV/AIDS infection and the death rate from AIDS is the highest in the world.

Asare's 64-question survey examined attitudes about condom use, monogamous behavior and sexual communication. He says 51 percent of the participants reported they had been sexually active in the past month, but had not used a condom.

Out of the 412 people who answered a question about number of sexual partners in the month that the survey was conducted, 87 percent reported having sex with a single partner; 12 percent reported multiple sexual partners.

"Polygamy is acceptable behavior in some parts of Africa, so I also wanted to examine attitudes about polygamy as this population adapted to a new culture in the United States," Asare says. "The survey found that out of the 12 percent reporting multiple sexual partners, the

majority of those respondents reported that they had not used condoms, nor had they discussed their sexual history with their partners.

"They also did not feel that they were susceptible to [HIV](#) or AIDS," Asare says.

Asare added that men were more likely than women to initiate communication about sexual history, in part because African women felt that this communication, as well as initiating condom use, would cause mistrust in a stable relationship.

The [survey](#) found that some of the respondents – when they were younger – had open communication with their parents about sex, which made them more likely to open those channels of communication with their partner. Asare also says that those who were more integrated into the American culture were also more likely to be open about sexual [communication](#) and safe-sex practices.

The respondents were aged between 21 and 61 with the average age being 36. Sixty percent of the respondents were male; 40 percent were female.

Asare says he is interested in future research into promoting health education to African immigrants and designing intervention programs specifically geared toward different African cultures.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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