

# Urban Trends

## COLLECTION



### A Look Inside Urban Youth Culture

In 2008, MEE Productions conducted a survey with more than 1,500 primarily African American urban youth ages 15 to 20 year olds from: New York City; Los Angeles/Long Beach; Chicago; Philadelphia; Atlanta and Washington, DC/Baltimore. The survey examined the entertainment preferences and highlighted key media consumption, lifestyle, behavioral and attitudinal patterns of this group. The group of surveyed youth represents a snapshot of current urban youth culture. This article provides a look at the demographics and psychographics of this survey sample.

#### Education

Nearly 9 out of 10 youth surveyed (88%) were enrolled in school. More than 8 out of 10 (84%) were either currently in

high school or had completed the 12th grade. Seven percent had attended some college, 4% had a GED and another 4% were in vocational school.

#### Employment/Sources of Cash

More than 6 out of 10 youth surveyed (64%) were not employed. The majority of youth claimed to get their money from family members, while others cited part-time jobs and "hustling."

More than a fifth of males (21%) claimed to "hustle" for their money compared to only 8% of females. Females were more likely than males to receive money from family members (35% to 23%) and as expected, females were more likely to make money baby-sitting (13% to 3%).

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## FromThePresident

In 2002, MEE conducted a national lifestyle survey with urban youth as part of our groundbreaking research study, *This Is My Reality: The Price of Sex*. The *Inner City Truth* survey provided an intriguing snapshot into the preferences and consumption patterns of an audience whose opinions are rarely explored.

In order to stay on the cutting edge of today's youth and young adult lifestyle and consumption trends, MEE partnered with Black Entertainment Television (BET) and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (NCPTP) to conduct the second edition of the *Inner City Truth*. To conduct this survey, MEE worked with members of our Community Network and went into low-income communities in Los Angeles/Long Beach, Atlanta, Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, DC/Baltimore to meet with over 1,500 youth ages 15 – 20 years old.

The information contained in *Inner City Truth II* is intended to enable public and private sector service providers to understand how to communicate with urban youth and to create messages and outreach strategies that resonate and reflect their ideals and cultural and environmental realities.

This *UrbanTrends* provides an overview into the information we gathered during this project; particularly in the areas of technology and entertainment consumption, eating habits, exposure to violence, recreational drug use and where youth spend their time.

Our hope is that this information will be useful to you as you continue to work diligently in underserved communities around the country.

Ivan Juzang, President  
Pamela Weddington, Editor

## The State of Urban Youth Eating Habits: Junk Food is a Staple of Youth's Diets

Youth obesity is a critical issue in America and of particular consequence in low-income, communities of color. A lack of access to healthy foods in the home and in school coupled with an overwhelming amount of fast food options in their communities are all contributors to this epidemic.

Over the course of a week, youth eat the majority of their meals during the day either at home (52% of the time) or school (22%). The frequency of times youth eat at home increases in the evening to 64%. Breakfast is widely considered the most important meal of the day, yet according to our survey, only a quarter of youth are eating breakfast every day. Another 18% of youth stated that they never ate breakfast.

Water is the most popular beverage for youth with 30% of the youth surveyed stating it was the beverage they drank

the most. Fruit juice (26%) and soda (22%) were also popular beverages. Interestingly, milk was not a popular beverage for youth, with only 5% of survey

participants saying they drank it the most. In fact, youth claimed to drink sports drinks, such as Gatorade and Powerade, more frequently than milk (8% to 5%).

Junk food (i.e., chips, candy, etc.) seems to be a staple

of youth's diets. More than a quarter of youth (27%) stated they ate junk food twice daily, while 23% claimed to eat it an astonishing 4 or more times per day. Junk food is so prevalent in the diets of urban youth that only 6% stated that they never ate junk food.

In contrast to the consumption of junk food, fruits and vegetables are consumed at a much lesser rate. Whereas 94% of youth surveyed ate junk food at least once a day, only 20% of youth

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*Breakfast is widely considered the most important meal of the day, yet according to our survey, only a quarter of youth are eating breakfast every day.*

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## Urban Youth continued...

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### Religion

Less than half of youth surveyed (46%) had attended religious services in the past month.

### Sexuality

More than half of youth surveyed (54%) reported being sexually active within the past three months. Only 12% of youth reported being sexually active with someone of the same sex, with females at a higher rate than males (14% to 9%).

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*More than 6 out of 10 youth surveyed (64%) were not employed.*

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### Violence

The survey reinforces the fact that many low-income youth are exposed to violence in their lives at early ages. Nearly half of the youth surveyed stated that they had been a victim of a violent act (i.e. fighting, robbery, etc.). Males were more apt to be victims of violence than their female counterparts (51% to 40%). Youth were not simply victims of violence in the streets, but 36% stated that the act of violence they experienced occurred in their home.

In addition to being victims of violence, the survey revealed that a number of these youth (46%) had committed an act of violence. Males (52%) were more likely than females (41%) to have com-

mitted an act of violence. About 3 out of 10 youth surveyed (28%) stated that they had been arrested; with males being more likely to have been arrested than females (35% to 22%).

### Recreational Drug Use

Marijuana (26%) and alcohol (21%) were the most popular recreation drugs used to “get high” by youth in the three months leading up to the survey. The next most popular drug was ecstasy (4%). Fifty-eight percent of youth stated that they hadn’t used recreational drugs during that time period. Males were more likely to consume both marijuana (30% to 23%) and alcohol (23% to 19%) than females. Drugs like heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and crack or prescription medication were not drugs of choice by these youth.

### Respect

MEE has continued to stress that parents and guardians have the most power over youth and the survey supports that contention. Youth stated overwhelmingly that they respected their parents/guardians the most (79%), compared to friends (7%), religious leader (5%), mentor (3%), teacher/guidance counselor (2%) and favorite celebrity (0%).

### Where Youth Spend Their Time

When trying to understand the various influencers that youth face in life, it can often help to have an understanding of where youth are spending their time during critical times of the day. During the week, Monday through Thursday, most youth (37%) are spending their evenings at home while another 14% are either at a friend’s house or the house of a sig-



nificant other. During this time period, males were more likely than females to be at neighborhood hangouts/street corners (10% to 4%) and recreation centers (14% to 7%) than females. Females were more likely to be at home than their male counterparts (43 to 30%).

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*Youth stated overwhelmingly that they respected their parents/guardians the most.*

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On Friday nights after 5 pm, 21% of youth spend their time at home, but 25% are either at a friend’s house or the house of a significant other. The percentage of males that spend their time at neighborhood hangouts/street corners is

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## Eating Habits continued...

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said that they eat fruits and vegetables every day. About half (48%) state they ate vegetables 2 to 5 days a week while 19% ate them at least one day per week.

Fast food is at the fingertips of urban youth on a daily basis. Whether at the

corner store or the chain restaurant, affordable fast food is usually a stone’s throw away. Fifty-two percent of youth stated that they ate fast food 2 to 5 days per week, while 8% claimed to eat fast food every day. Only 7% of youth claimed to never eat fast food. Youth eat fast food for three primary reasons: 1) it tastes good; 2) it’s fast/convenient

to get; and 3) it’s cheap.

McDonald’s is far and away the most popular fast food restaurant with 55% of youth stating it was one of their top two fast food restaurants. The next most popular fast food restaurants were Subway (20%), Wendy’s (16%) and Burger King (15%). **UT**

# Hip-Hop Generation Continues to Embrace Internet Technology and New Media

Despite previous assertions, low-income urban teens are frequently accessing the Internet, buying the latest cell phones and engaging in online social networking. In MEE's national survey of more than 1,500 primarily African American teens and young adults, it was revealed that this group of power users is highly-connected, tech savvy and brand loyal.

## Cell Phone

The popularity of cell phones continues to rise as people live more mobile lifestyles and want access to information at the tips of their fingers. MEE's survey revealed that more than 92% of urban youth own a cell phone. Urban youth are using cell phones for more than simply talking to friends, the survey shows that urban youth take advantage of the many extra features available on cell phones. When asked what cell phone features they used the most, youth cited text messaging (73%), taking pictures (58%), downloading ringtones (42%), playing/recording videos (37%), accessing the Internet (36%), downloading music (31%) and downloading games (23%).

Not only do urban youth use cell phones to the fullest, they also tend to stay on top of the latest models by upgrading frequently. The survey shows that 61% of youth surveyed purchase a new phone at least once a year, with 30% of them purchasing new cell phones at least twice per year.

Of the 68% of youth that said they would be purchasing a new phone within six months of taking the survey, 59% stated that they would purchase a "smartphone;" either an iPhone (28%), Blackberry (28%) or Treo (3%) T-Mobile was the most popular cell phone carrier (36%), while AT&T (22%) and Sprint/Nextel (18%) had smaller shares. Current popular cell phone brands included Motorola (22%), Sidekick (20%) and Samsung (19%). This is sure to change as new models and features are made available.

## Internet

MEE's survey shows that there is extremely high Internet access by urban youth, with 96% stating they had access; however, only about half (51%) of those with access indicated it was through a home computer. Nearly 7 out of 10 urban youth (68%) are accessing the Internet through high-speed connections, like cable, DSL or wireless.

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*Six years ago, the most popular uses of the Internet by Black youth were e-mail [22%], searching the Web [13%], school work [12%] and games [11%]. In 2008, the most popular uses of the Internet by Black youth were e-mail [51%], downloading music [30%], social networking [30%], watching videos [28%] and instant messaging [27%].*

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Six out of ten survey participants (61%) reported accessing the Internet at least 4 times per week with 42% accessing it daily. Of those youth spending time on the Internet, 68% are spending at least two hours a day online.

With the proliferation of Websites like YouTube, Facebook and My Space, personal communication and entertainment tend to be the most prevalent reasons why urban youth access the Internet. Youth mentioned using the Internet the most for e-mail (50%), social networking (31%), downloading music (30%), instant messaging (29%) and watching videos (26%). Chat rooms, which were one of the more popular ways for youth to communicate online in 2002, are now a rarely used form of online communica-

tion with only 8% of urban youth claiming to use them.

The 2008 survey found that males used the Internet to access sports information (18% to 1%) and games (20% to 15%), at a significantly higher rate than females. Female participants used the Internet for schoolwork (23% to 11%), social networking (37% to 24%) and e-mail (55% to 44%), at a significantly higher rate than males.

## Video Gaming

Video games are a popular pastime for urban youth. More than 8 out of 10 (84%) of youth had at least one gaming system in their house. The PlayStation 2 (44%) was the most popular system followed by Xbox 360 (32%), PlayStation 3 (25%) and the PSP Handheld (23%).

When asked what video game system they planned on purchasing in the next twelve months, 33% stated "none" while 24% cited the PlayStation 3, 19% cited the Nintendo Wii and 18% cited the Xbox 360. **UT**



# Media and Entertainment Consumption

## *What a Difference 6 Years Makes: Changes in Urban Youth Culture from 2002 to 2008*

### Communication

As technology innovations have grown, so has the mobility of urban youth and their ability to communicate “on the go.” In 2002, urban youth stated that their favorite way of communicating with friends was via home phone at a rate of 60% to 27% when compared to cell phones. In 2008, that trend dramatically changed with 67% of youth stating that their favorite way to communicate with friends was by cell phone to only 15% by home phone.

In addition, this 6-year span saw pagers go by the way of the dinosaur with only 1% percent of youth still citing pagers as their favorite form of communication compared to 4% in 2002. In contrast, Instant Messaging has become more popular as 7% of youth cite it as their favorite way to communicate with friends in 2008 compared with 1 % in 2002.

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*2002: Home Phone Rules*  
*2008: Cell Phone Rules*

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### Television

Youth in general have become more and more sedentary and television continues to be a catalyst for that. One of the reasons is that youth have more television channels than ever at their fingertips. In 2002, 80% of youth stated they had access to cable television in their home.

That number jumped to 85% in 2008.

A favorite pastime of urban youth continues to be watching television, and youth are watching television for extended periods of times at a higher rate than ever. Although the percentage of youth watching 2 or more hours of television has gone down from 81% to 74% from 2002 to 2008, the percentage of youth watching 4 or more hours of television has actually risen from 34% to 40%.

### Movies

As the country navigates through this economic crisis, the percentage of urban youth that go to movies in the theater at least once a month has dropped from 89% in 2002 to 78% in 2008; however, the rising costs of movie-

going has caused youth to spend more money during those trips to the theater, with 69% spending at least \$16 per trip in 2008 compared to 48% in 2002.

Movie-going tendencies have stayed relatively consistent with the majority of youth going to the theater within the first two weeks of a film’s release. Although television and trailers continue to be the most popular ways youth hear about upcoming movies, the Internet has become increasingly popular with 10% of youth claiming they hear about movies through the internet in 2008 compared to 2% in 2002.

### Music

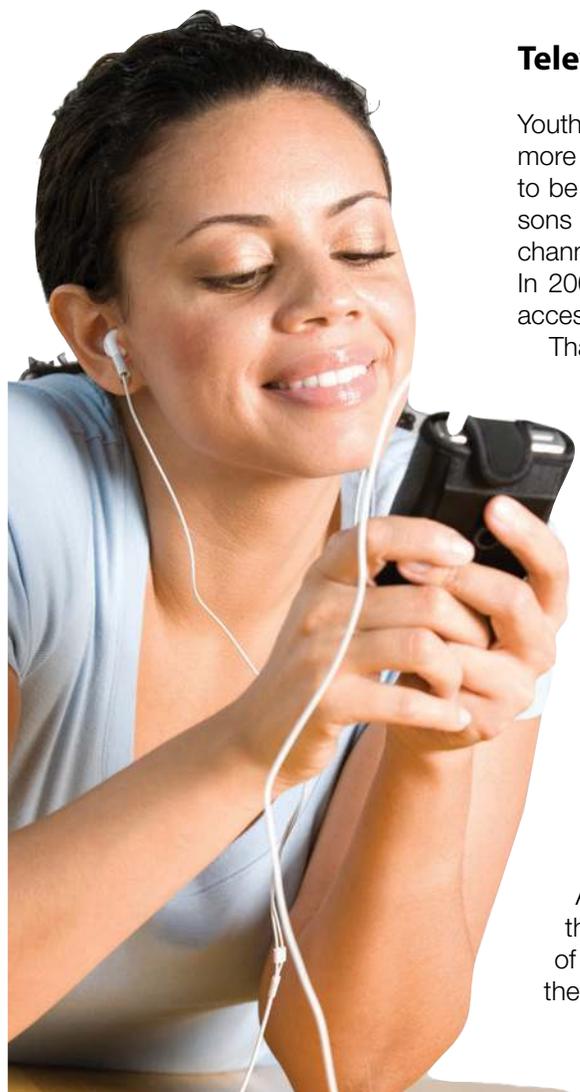
Hip-Hop/Rap and R&B music still reign supreme among urban youth as their favorite types of music. In 2002, 83% of youth stated that one of those types was their favorite compared to 74% in 2008.

In 2002, 84% of urban youth listened to their music on portable CD players with MP3 players only being used by 1% of youth. Over six years, that trend changed drastically as iPods and other MP3 players and phones with MP3 capability became increasingly popular. In 2008, 61% of urban youth listened to their music on MP3 players compared to only 17% on CD players.

As one would expect, with CD players becoming less popular, the purchasing of CDs has dropped as well. In 2002, 82% of urban youth stated they purchased at least one CD per month. In 2008, that number had decreased to 58%.

### Internet

The so-called digital divide continues to close as urban youth have more and



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## Urban Youth continued...

	Monday - Thursday (after 5pm)	Friday (after 5pm)	Saturday (before 5pm)	Saturday (after 5pm)
<b>Home</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Work	9%	5%	7%	5%
School	9%	4%	3%	3%
<b>Park/Recreation Center</b>	<b>10%</b>	5%	8%	6%
Neighborhood Hangout/Street Corner	7%	9%	8%	9%
Shopping Mall	1%	4%	10%	5%
<b>Friend's House</b>	7%	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Boyfriend/Girlfriend's House	7%	13%	11%	11%
Library	*%	1%	1%	1%
Movie Theater	1%	7%	4%	8%
Community Organization	3%	1%	2%	1%
Church	1%	1%	2%	1%
Barbershop/Hair & Nail Salon	*%	1%	1%	*%
Night Club/Bar	1%	7%	3%	8%
No Answer	6%	7%	6%	5%

12%. Movie theaters and night clubs are also popular places for youth to spend their time during this time period.

During the day on Saturdays, 23% of youth are spending time at home. Another 23% are either at a friend's house or the house of a significant

other. Seven percent of youth go to work during this time period, while 10% made their way to the shopping malls. Males (11%) continued to spend a large amount of time at the neighborhood hangouts/street corners.

During the evening on Saturdays, 22%

of youth are spending time at home, while another 24% are either at a friend's house or the house of a significant other. Neighborhood hangouts/street corners, movie theaters and night clubs are also popular places for youth to spend their time during this time period. **UT**

## Entertainment continued...

more access to the Internet. In 2002, 91% of urban youth stated they had access to the Internet while in 2008 it rose to 96%.

In addition to more general access, urban youth have more direct access to the Internet than six years ago. In 2002, the top three places that youth accessed the Internet were: home (43%), school (27%) and the library (14%). In contrast, in 2008 the top three places that youth accessed the Internet were: home (51%), school (17%) and their friend or relative's house (6%).

The way urban youth use the Internet has radically changed over the course of six years. In 2002, the top three

things youth primarily used the Internet for were email (22%), searching information (13%) and playing games (11%). In 2008, urban youth use the Internet for more interactive and entertainment driven applications. Email (50%) still is the top use of the Internet, but social networking (31%), downloading music (30%), instant messaging (29%) and watching videos (26%) are all popular activities for urban youth.

### Video Gaming

Video games became increasingly popular with urban youth. In 2008, 84% of youth stated that they had a video game system in their home compared to 80% in 2002. In 2002, the most popular system was the PlayStation 2 (38%), followed by PlayStation (21%) and

Xbox (10%). In 2008, the PlayStation 2 remained the most popular system (44%); however, the next generation of gaming systems were finding their way into the homes of youth with Xbox 360 (32%), PlayStation 3 (25%) and the PSP Handheld (23%) all being popular models. **UT**



# Peer Comparison Chart from ICT Survey 2008

## Same Neighborhood ...Different Choices

	Jahlil and Myesha	Tamika and Kevin
<b>Gender</b>	64% Male	66% Female
<b>Sexuality</b>	Have had sex in the last 3 months.	Have not had sex in the last 3 months.
<b>Literacy</b>	Don't like to read.	Like to read.
<b>Spirituality</b>	Has not attended church in the past month.	Has attended church in the past month.
<b>Making Money</b>	Get money from family members, part-time jobs and hustling. Much more likely to get money from hustling.	Get money from family members, part-time and full-time jobs. Much more likely to get money from family members.
<b>Where They Spend Leisure Time</b>	Mainly at the house of a significant other or at the neighborhood hangout/corner.	Mainly at home or at a friend's house.
<b>HS Education</b>	More likely to rank their HS experience as "Fair" or "Poor."	More likely to rank their HS experience as "Excellent" or "Very Good."
<b>Secondary Education</b>	Less likely to go to college, more likely to work.	More likely to go to college.
<b>Favorite Beverage</b>	More likely to consume soda the most.	More likely to consume water the most.
<b>Healthy Eating</b>	More likely to eat fruits and vegetables less than 3 times a week.	More likely to eat fruits and vegetables more than 3 times a week.
<b>Sexual Decisions</b>	Influenced primarily by significant other and peers.	Influenced primarily by parent/guardian and peers.
<b>Music Preference</b>	Like Hip-Hop/Rap almost exclusively.	Like Hip-Hop/Rap and R&B evenly.
<b>Movie Preference</b>	Like Action/Violent and Comedy equally.	Likes primarily Comedy.
<b>Television Preferences</b>	Prefer shows with Sexual/Adult Content and Sports.	Prefer Comedies and Dramas.
<b>Victim of Violence</b>	Half had been victims of violence.	Half had been victims of violence.
<b>Committed Act of Violence</b>	Almost 6 out of 10 had committed an act of violence.	Almost 4 out of 10 had committed an act of violence.
<b>Arrested</b>	Almost 5 out of 10 had been arrested.	Almost 2 out of 10 had been arrested.
<b>Drug Use</b>	More likely to use marijuana and alcohol.	More likely to not use drugs.
<b>Who They Respect</b>	Respect parents the most. More likely to respect a celebrity.	Respect parents the most. More likely to respect a spiritual/religious leader.

# Television and Films Attract Urban Youth in Large Numbers

## Television/Cable

A favorite pastime of many youth is to relax by watching television. Television serves as an easily accessible escape for youth and the shows on television often have a lasting impact. It's so easy to sit on the couch and be consumed by the shows on television to the point where time passes you by. MEE's survey shows that urban youth tend to watch television at practically every available opportunity and substantially more than the physical activity guideline of one hour of screen time per day.

Cable/satellite television has significant penetration in urban youth households, with 85% of youth stating they had one or the other. Recording features such as TiVo and DV-R, are also penetrating the homes of urban youth with 42% claiming to have one of those components in their household.

More than seven out of ten urban youth (74%) stated they watched at least two hours of television per day. More than a quarter of youth (26%) watched an astonishing five hours of television per day. Only 8% of youth surveyed stated that they didn't watch television. Fox (65%) was overwhelmingly the favorite network television station followed by the CW in a distant second at 29%.

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*In a trend analysis specific to Black youth, MEE found that access to cable/satellite television rose from 80% in 2002 to 86% in 2008.*

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When it comes to cable programming, urban youth enjoy a variety of channels although music channels were particularly popular. BET rated the highest with

36% followed by HBO with 28%. MTV was third with 16%, while Lifetime with its female-oriented programming was fourth with 13%. Males and females varied in their preferences. Males rated HBO and BET (31% each) as their favorite cable channels followed by ESPN (24%) and the Cartoon Network (15%). On the other hand, females rated BET as their favorite cable channel (40%), followed by HBO (26%), Lifetime (22%) and MTV (19%).

The survey also shows that males and females concentrate on different types of programming. Males rated Comedy/Sitcoms (23%) as their favorite type of show, followed by Sports (19%), Action/Violent (17%) and Sexual/Adult Content (11%). On the other hand, females rated Comedy/Sitcoms (29%) as their favorite type of show, followed by Action/Violent (10%), Drama/Police programs (9%) and Reality shows (8%).

**Continued on page 9**





*In a trend analysis specific to Black youth, MEE found that the percentage of urban youth that go to movies in the theater at least once a month has dropped from 89% in 2002 to 78% in 2008; however, the rising costs of movie going has caused youth to spend more money during those trips to the theater, with 67% spending at least \$16 per trip in 2008 compared to 48% in 2002.*

## Movies

Movies are a “great escape” from the day-to-day realities of life. Youth can go into a theater and laugh away their problems or they can choose to be captivated by an action packed movie that depicts their lifestyle to film.

Whatever the reason, urban youth flock to the theaters in droves. The survey shows that 78% of urban youth go to the movies at least once a month. When urban youth go see a movie, 72% visit the theater within the first two weeks of a film’s release. And not only are urban youth going to the movies in high numbers, they are spending a “pretty penny” as well with nearly half of the youth surveyed (47%) spending on average more

than \$21 per trip to the movies; including 13% that spend more than \$36 per trip to the theater.

There are many drivers that motivate urban youth to see a movie in the theater. Youth are primarily driven to movies that feature their favorite actors, with 35% stating that was the primary reason for going to a movie. Commercials (24%), subject matter (18%) and the opportunity to socialize with friends or go on a date (17%) are other reasons youth cite for going to see movies in the theater.

For those looking to develop movies targeting urban youth, they would be best served to focus on comedies, action films and horrors. When asked about

the types of movies they like most, Comedy received the most votes (28%) from the surveyed youth, followed by Action/Violent (21%) and Horror (13%). However, the survey shows that males prefer Action/Violent films at a higher rate than females, while females prefer Comedies.

For those marketing movies to urban youth, television ads (68%) and trailers (15%) remain the most effective ways to reach the audience. It is important however, that the ads and trailers are effective enough to generate discussion amongst peers because as the survey shows, word-of-mouth (14%) was the third most popular way youth typically heard about upcoming movies. **UT**

## Article Note:

These findings are based on a survey of 1,512 primarily Black youth ages 15 - 20 from key urban markets: New York City; Los Angeles/Long Beach; Chicago; Philadelphia; Atlanta; and Washington, DC/Baltimore. Fifteen year olds represented the largest portion at 23%, 16-year olds and 17-year olds represented the next highest portion at 19%, 18-year olds were 16% of the sample, with 20-year olds (13%) and 19-year olds (8%) as the smallest sample. Females represented the larger portion of the sample at 55% with males representing 45%.

The survey was designed to provide a better understanding of the lifestyles, media consumption habits and behaviors of urban youth in order to be able to reach and influence them with culturally relevant, pro-social messages. It cap-

tured information about youth preferences and consumption patterns related to entertainment media, the Internet and other communication technologies, along with demographic and psychographic data. The survey also explores where urban youth spend their time, their eating habits, their fashion preferences and who they think are the “hottest” celebrities.

This information is intended to enable public and private sector service providers to understand how to better communicate with urban youth and to create messages and outreach that reflect the ideals, culture and environmental realities of urban youth. The study was co-sponsored by Black Entertainment Television (BET), the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (NCPTP) and MEE Productions.

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# UrbanTrends

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