

Sexual consent, pleasure and communication among young people: findings from the 2021 Secondary Schools and Sexual Health Survey

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Background:

An important aspect of relationships and sexuality education (RSE) involves working with young people to build confidence to discuss sexual practices, safe sex and consent with prospective partners. In this presentation we look at whether discussing sex and sexual health with a partner supports positive sexual experiences.

Methods:

We analyzed data from an Australian online survey of sexual health among 14-18-year-olds conducted in 2021 (n=6,841). This analysis focused on young people who reported being sexually active with respect to: willingness to have sex, discussion with partner and feelings about most recent sexual experience. Chi-square analyses were used to identify differences according to age, gender and sexuality. Correlation analysis was used to explore relationships between discussing sex and feelings about sex.

Results:

4,148 (61%) reported being sexually active. When asked about their most recent sexual experience, 85% reported they wanted sex 'very much' or 'moderately', 4.8% did not want sex but agreed anyway, and 1.8% were forced/ coerced. Prior to their most recent sexual experience, 63% discussed having sex with their partner, while 50% discussed what they would like to do and 47% discussed pleasure. Those who reported discussing sex, wants or pleasure were more likely to report positive emotions associated with that encounter (i.e., excited, happy, and fantastic) (p<.001).

Conclusion:

RSE should support young people to develop skills and confidence to have open conversations with sexual partners about sexual wants and pleasures as a means to build sexual agency and encourage conversations that support consent and positive sexual experiences.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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