



Romy Listo

Young Women's Advisory Group to the Equality Rights Alliance

First, a question...

Overview

1. About YWAG
2. 'Let's Talk' survey
3. Key findings
4. Qualitative results on violence prevention

Who is YWAG?

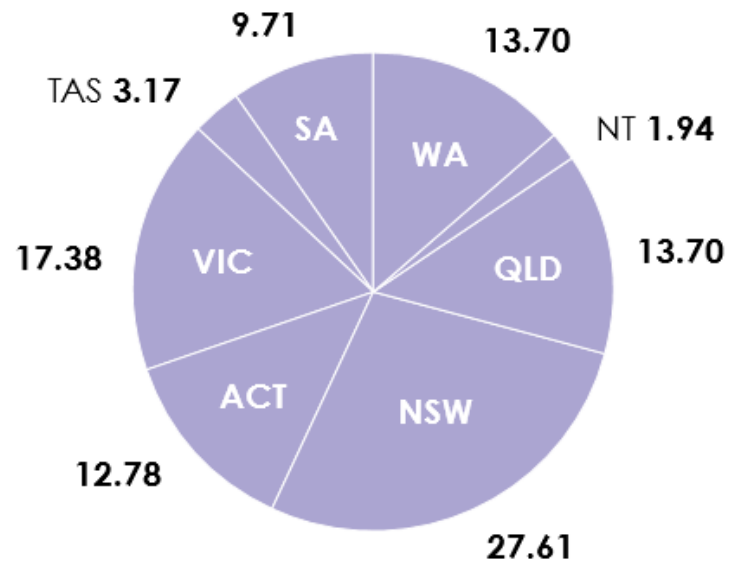
- Young Women's Advisory Group to the Equality Rights Alliance
- A group of ten young women aged 18-30 across Australia bringing young women's voices and perspectives to the federal policy space

We believe that sex education is in need of reform!

'Let's Talk' national survey

- Australian national survey of young women, aged 16-21, about their school sex education experience
- 1162 respondents
- 1011 fit the criteria

STATE AND TERRITORY (%)



KEY FINDINGS

Most young people receive some type of sex education at school

Young women want more from their sex and respectful relationships education

Sex education is outdated – topics covered are very limited and do not meet the needs of young women

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

“[We should be] discussing consent in terms of respect – generally just a big focus on respect.”

Less than half of respondents had been educated about relationships (40.4%). Only 37% of respondents agreed that sex education had made them feel confident in their understanding of relationships, with 48% disagreeing to some extent.

YWAG welcomes the recent impetus on respectful relationships and expects that data in years to come will reflect the evolution of this area of education.

“Provide education/ examples on a range of healthy relationships and subsequently discuss when and why one is unhealthy.”

CONSENT

“Consent was taught by a guest speaker briefly, I feel we should have had far more on it”

Forty eight per cent of respondents disagreed to some extent that after doing sex education in school they felt confident in their understanding of consent, while only 40% agreed to some extent that they felt confident.

“I recall learning ‘no means no’, but I don’t recall hearing about affirmative consent until university”

PLEASURE

Seeking to educate that sex is about pleasure helps to challenge negative ideas that sex and relationships are about power and control.

“The first time I had sex I didn't even know what an orgasm was”

Young women told us that pleasure was rarely included in their sex education classes. Nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) told us that after participating in sex and relationships education in school they did not feel confident in their understanding of pleasure.

Many respondents reported classes discussing male masturbation, but not female masturbation.

“I didn't even know sex was pleasurable for women until I was 16”

Qualitative results on violence prevention

Did sex education help young women in dealing with sex and relationships?

In some cases...

“... the rape/consent education helped me and my friends to understand that we could, and SHOULD, say "no" to a boy/man if we were not interested...”

“My teachers always advised us to do our research before participating in sexual activities, and to think about the consequences. This, I feel, helped me because before I began to have sex, I thoroughly researched contraception methods, male and female pleasure etc... I also thought seriously about my decision to have sex before doing it, taking into account my own feelings, consequences, etc.”

But not for others....

For many respondents, sex education was either harmful or too little too late

“The school education was quite clear that sex was a thing that happened to women... We learnt words like slut, whore, and how the actions of promiscuous women lead to their being called these names... I would say my high school education was actually harmful to me and a lot of other young women.”

And it can be contradictory...

*“[We learnt about] consent... But it didn't really help I still felt pressured. **But I said yes so I guess that's consent.**”*

“There was a big focus on gender and consent but not on the pleasure, sexual identities or condoms.”

*“**Primary school was a lot more open, 11 and 12 year olds were being taught about relationship dynamics and what is ok and what is not. My highschool seemed to skim quickly over the topic by teaching us predominantly about STIs and Contraception, whilst pushing that abstinence was the best policy.**”*

What needs to be improved?

*“Define **consent** for heavens sakes. Tell everyone what rape technically is.”*

*“Info on **consent, gender stereotypes**, teaching young boys not to rape instead of teaching young girls how to avoid being raped...”*

*“... make it a non-shameful issue... The teachers need to be open minded and consider multiple facets of one issue. Women's sexuality needs to stop being related to pure, virginal, 'sticky tape'. **Girls need to be empowered to take control of their sexuality for when they become legal adults.** [And more on] LBG**T** relationships.”*

“... Actually talking about sex with girls would be a good start, rather than just talking about periods. Periods aren't sex. Talking about consent... in front of girls and boys in the same room so both sexes/genders understand... and also talking about what [constitutes] a healthy relationship and what doesn't because dating violence is really prevalent and translates to domestic violence when older.”

*“A positive focus on LGBTI+ relationships and sex has to be increased dramatically. **Pleasure and consent need to be given increased consideration for students to have respectful, fulfilling and truthful relationships into the future.**”*

Key takeaways

Young women are saying...

- Sex education is failing them in helping them to negotiate sex and healthy relationships
- But that if it is done, it can have an impact!
- Sex education needs to be comprehensive and consistent
- They want and expect to be taught about consent, relationships and violence prevention as part of school sex education

Thankyou!

Contact me at romy.listo@gmail.com

To read the full report, visit

[http://equalityrightsalliance.org.au/sites/equalityrightsalliance.org.au/files/images/lets talk final report 2016.pdf](http://equalityrightsalliance.org.au/sites/equalityrightsalliance.org.au/files/images/lets_talk_final_report_2016.pdf)