

RESEARCH BASED TEMPLATE

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Title

Experience of non-consensual sex in young people attending general practice clinics.

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Background:

Australian research has shown that a substantial proportion of adolescents report non-consensual sex. Primary care health professionals can identify these experiences and offer early intervention. The aim of this study was to examine the experiences of, and factors associated with, non-consensual sex among adolescents attending Victorian general practices.

Methods:

Adolescents aged 16–24 years attending practices in the RAd Health trial completed online surveys. Among those ever sexually active, participants reported i) ever having unwanted sex/sex without permission ("non-consensual sex" yes/no) and ii) ever being forced, threatened, or pressured into sex ("forced sex" yes/no). Demographic and behavioural factors (alcohol use, smoking, age at sexual debut, sexuality, number of sexual partners, healthcare-use) associated with the outcomes were investigated using logistic regression. Estimates of associations were reported.

Results:

Between May 2024-January 2025, 1,049 adolescents from 42 practices participated. Among 605 (58%) sexually active participants, 176 (29.1%; 95%CI:25.6-32.8) reported non-consensual sex. Odds were higher for females and non-binary individuals compared with males (OR=3.6, 95%CI:2.3–5.9; OR=15.0, 95%CI:6.4–35.1). After adjusting for age and gender, increased odds were associated with frequent GP attendance (2+ vs 0/1 in last 12mths (OR=2.6, 95%CI:1.2-5.4), current smoking (OR=2.0, 95%CI:1.2–3.4), frequent (more than monthly) alcohol use (OR=1.5, 95%CI:1.0–2.1), non-heterosexual identity (OR=2.9, 95%CI:2.0–4.2), and 4+ sex partners in last 12 months vs 0/1 (OR=3.2, 95%CI:2.1–5.1). Sexual debut at 16+years was inversely associated (OR=0.2, 95%CI: 0.2–0.3). No associations were found with country of birth, language at home or residence. Forced sex was reported by 145 participants (23.9%; 95%CI 20.6-27.6); most disclosed the incident primarily to friends (77%), with 22.7% reporting to police.

Conclusions

Nearly one-third of sexually active adolescents reported non-consensual sex and about one fifth reported forced sex. Such high frequencies affirm that general practitioners have a key role in identifying and supporting adolescents.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None

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