

Determining the fertility knowledge of Australia's adolescents

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Background:

Fertility information is a critical component of comprehensive sexuality education, but the extent that adolescents are taught or informed about fertility is unknown in Australia.

Methods:

We examined knowledge of fertility using an anonymous, online survey of >2,600 adolescents aged 15-18 in Australia. All respondents provided information regarding sociodemographic factors aligned to ABS standards for country of birth, language spoken at home other than English, gender, and sexuality. Respondents were asked to report their age, and future parenting intentions. Finally, respondents were asked a question whether their sexual health educational experiences were sufficient. Respondents also completed thirteen knowledge based multiple-choice items about sexual and reproductive health.

Results:

Our respondents represented diverse backgrounds, including sexuality and gender diversity (>60% identifying other than heterosexual, 17% gender identity other than man/woman). We also identified that average knowledge of fertility was significantly poorer compared to average knowledge of sexual health content linked to the current national curriculum ($p < .001$). Importantly, when asked directly, ~80% of respondents considered their sexual health education insufficient, which was associated with poorer knowledge in all outcomes measured in linear regression models.

Conclusion:

Taken together, these findings provide evidence that including fertility content explicitly within Australia's national curriculum can increase adolescent understanding of fertility. With inclusivity, particularly of sexuality and gender, an essential consideration for the delivery of sexual health education in Australia.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.