

Youth Survey on Sexual Consent

25 July 2020



Overview



What is sexual consent? (1)

- I. Consent in the law
 - a. Negative definition

Consent given under fear or misconception, by person of unsound mind, etc., and by child

90. A consent is not such a consent as is intended by any section of this Code —

- (a) if the consent is given by a person —
 - (i) under fear of injury or wrongful restraint to the person or to some other person; or
 - (ii) under a misconception of fact,
and the person doing the act knows, or has reason to believe, that the consent was given in consequence of such fear or misconception;
- (b) if the consent is given by a person who, from unsoundness of mind, mental incapacity, intoxication, or the influence of any drug or other substance, is unable to understand the nature and consequence of that to which he gives his consent; or
- (c) unless the contrary appears from the context, if the consent is given by a person who is under 12 years of age.

[Indian PC 1860, s. 90]

What is sexual consent? (2)

2. Why does it matter?
 - a. Service providers, police, survivors themselves sometimes have unclear understanding of sexual consent.
 - b. Affects criminal justice process, help-seeking and reporting behaviour.
3. Affirmative consent
 - a. “Consent is the **free, informed and voluntary participation** in the **sexual activity in question**. Lack of resistance and submission to sexual activity, in itself, is not consent as a matter of law.” (AWARE’s proposed definition)

Survey development

- ✓ Collaboration with Ngee Ann Polytechnic's Diploma in Psychology Studies programme.
- ✓ Questionnaire development, data collection and analysis (2019 - 2020)



Demographics



Sample size: 539



Gender: 346 (64.2%) female participants, and 189 (35.1%) male participants.



Age: 17-25 years old (57% were 17 years old)



Ethnicity:

- ✓ 389 (72.2%) Chinese
- ✓ 50 (9.3%) Malay
- ✓ 61 (11.3%) Indian
- ✓ 1 (0.2%) Eurasian
- ✓ 38 (7.1%) belonged to other ethnic groups



Survey sections

1. Understanding of consent
2. Attitudes towards consent and rape myths
3. Personal experiences with communicating consent
4. Learning about consent



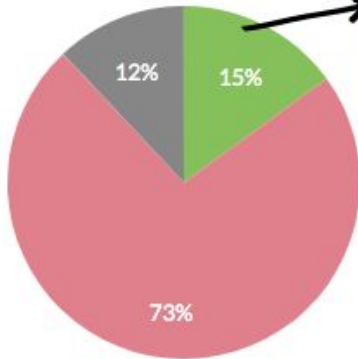
Understanding of consent



Scenario 1: Withdrawn consent

A is up for sex. Halfway through the act, A changes their mind about having sex and tells their partner, B. B ignores A and carries on with the act.

% of youths who agree or disagree
that there was consent



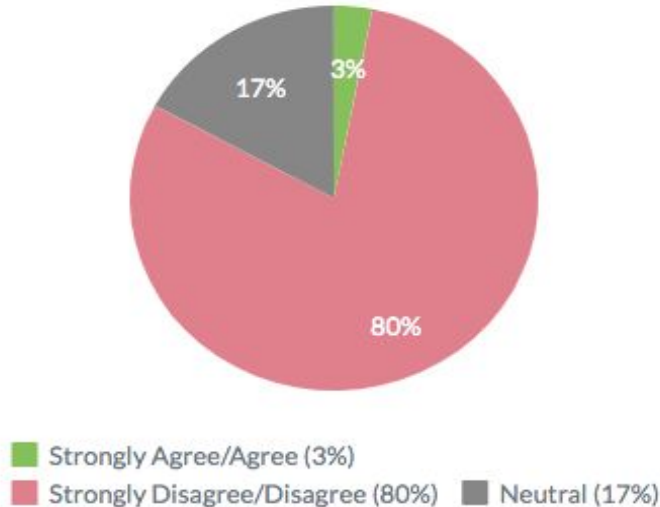
Males were more likely than females to agree that there was consent

Strongly Agree/Agree (15%)
Strongly Disagree/Disagree (73%) Neutral (12%)

Scenario 2: Consent while intoxicated

A and B go to a bar. After a few drinks, A begins to slur and stumble about. B asks A if they want to have sex and A mumbles incoherently. They have sex.

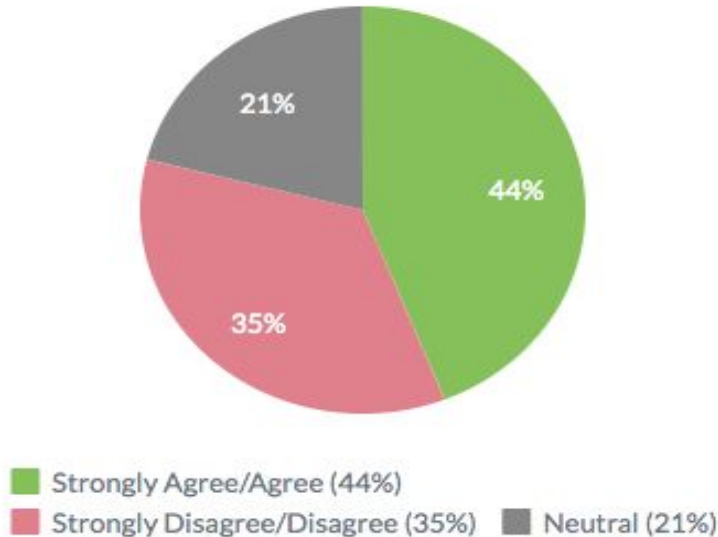
% of youths who agree or disagree
that there was consent



Scenario 3: Underage sex

A is 15 years old. Their teacher is 24 years old. They agree to and proceed to have sex

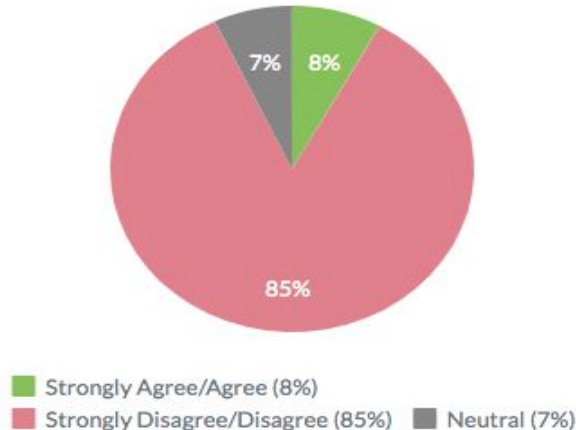
% of youths who agree or disagree
that there was consent



Scenario 4: Stealthing

A and B agree to have sex: A requests that B uses a condom. B agrees to the request. Halfway through the act, B removes the condom without A's knowledge and continues to have sex with A.

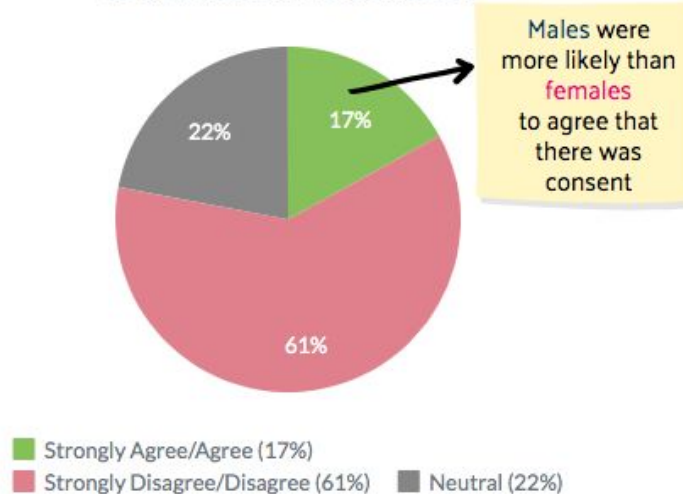
% of youths who agree or disagree
that there was consent



Scenario 5: Coercion

A and B both agree to have sex. After getting undressed, A has second thoughts about proceeding. B tells A that they are overthinking things and they both end up having sex. A feels uncomfortable throughout and does not say anything for fear of disappointing B.

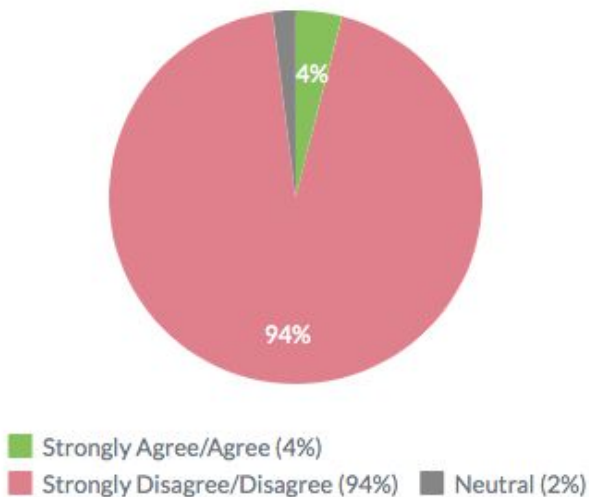
% of youths who agree or disagree
that there was consent



Scenario 6: Consent obtained under threat

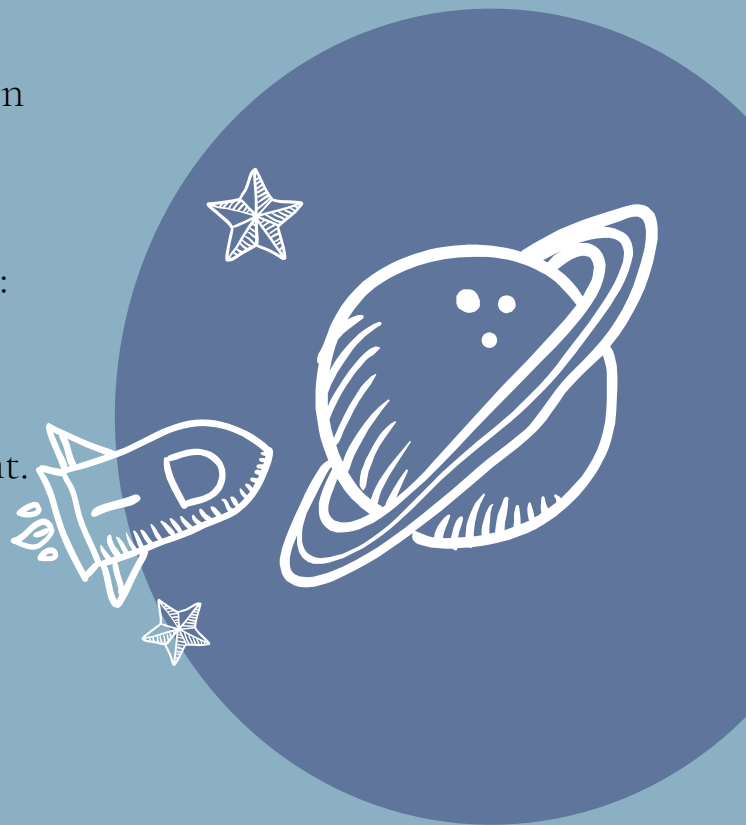
B wants to have sex, A does not. B threatens to publish a nude photo of A if they refuse to have sex. A agrees to have sex. They have sex.

% of youths who agree or disagree
that there was consent



Key Takeaways

1. Young people generally understand when consent is given or not given across a variety of scenarios.
2. However, their opinions are more split on two scenarios: **underage sex**, and **coercion**.
3. There are **gender differences** in understanding of consent. Males are more likely than females to feel entitled to sex in the following scenarios.
 - Withdrawn consent
 - Consent when intoxicated
 - Coercion

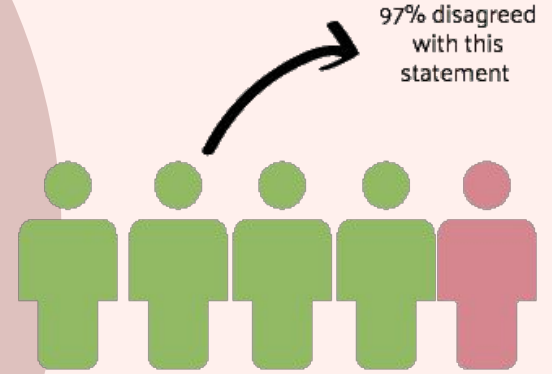


Attitudes towards consent and rape myths

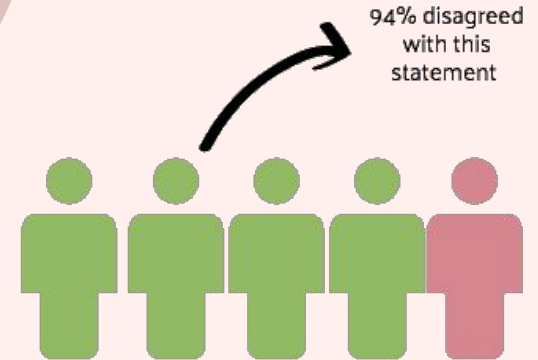


Top three statements with most progressive responses

1. “Only women can be raped or sexually assaulted.”

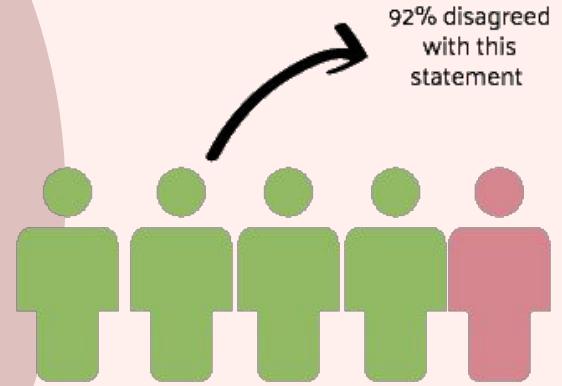


2. “Once intimate photos have been exchanged, both partners can do what they wish with them, including posting them on social media.”



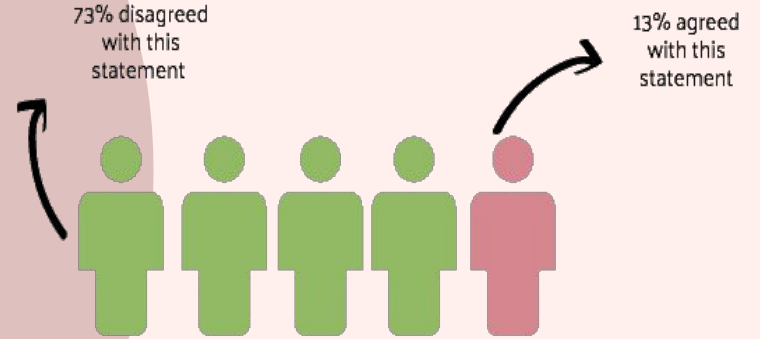
Top three statements with most progressive responses

3. “Women who are raped often ask for it”

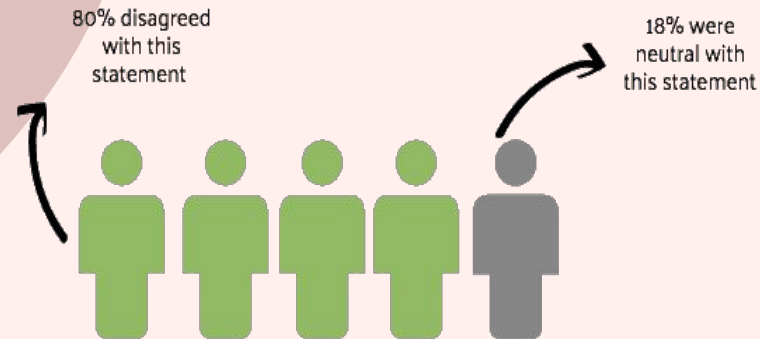


Bottom three statements (statements with least progressive responses)

1. "Victims of sexual assault/ rape must take some responsibility for what happened to them."

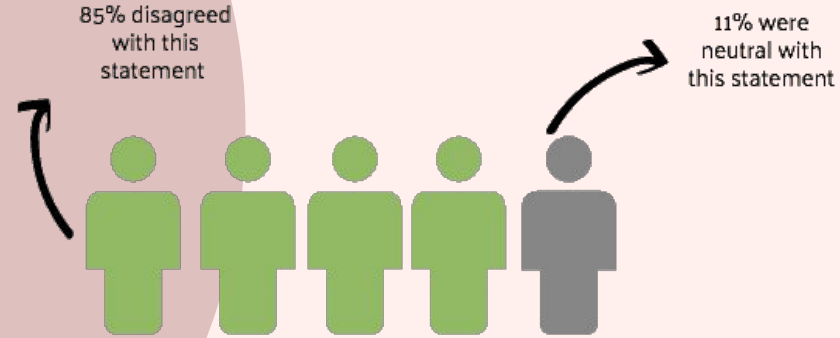


2. "Most claims of rape are false."



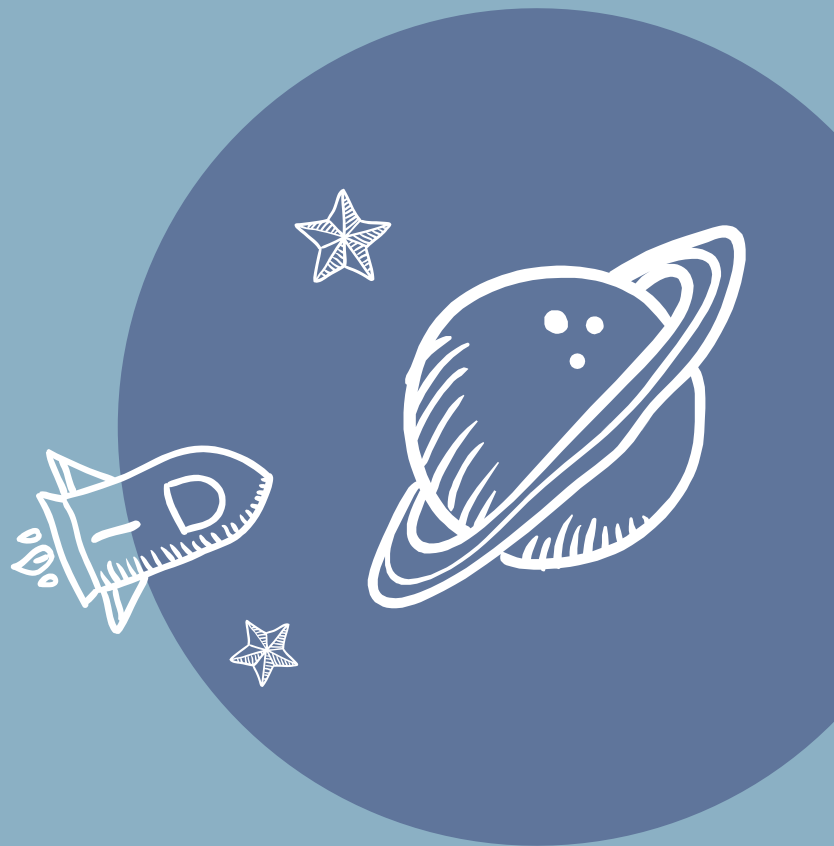
Bottom three statements (statements with least progressive responses)

3. “Consent to foreplay e.g. kissing, hugging, touching, is consent to sex.”



Key Takeaways

1. Young people generally have progressive attitudes towards consent.
 - However, **more than one in ten young people** agreed that victims of sexual assault must take some responsibility for what happened to them.
2. There are **gender differences** again, with males having less progressive views.





Personal Experiences with communicating consent

Personal experiences with communicating consent

- A **minority (16%)** of respondents have engaged in some form of sexual activity before.
- **Most young people** ask for consent before initiating sexual encounters (85%), but around **one in three feel awkward** about asking for consent.
- Only **slightly more than half** discussed sexual consent with their (most recent) partner before engaging in sexual activities.



Learning about Consent

Learning about consent

- ✓ Less than half (47%) of young people said they were taught about consent in school
- ✓ Almost all (97%) want consent to be taught in schools; 84% think that parents should teach their children about consent.



Summary

1. Young people understand when consent is given or not given across a variety of scenarios, **except in two scenarios**.
2. Young people have **progressive attitudes** towards consent.
3. Male youths have **relatively less progressive attitudes** and poorer understanding of consent.
4. Young people **find it awkward** to ask for consent, and many **do not discuss consent** with their partners prior to engaging in sexual activities.
5. Consent is **not taught widely** in schools.

