

Sexual Agency: A strengths-based approach to measuring sexuality education outcomes

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What is Sexual Agency?

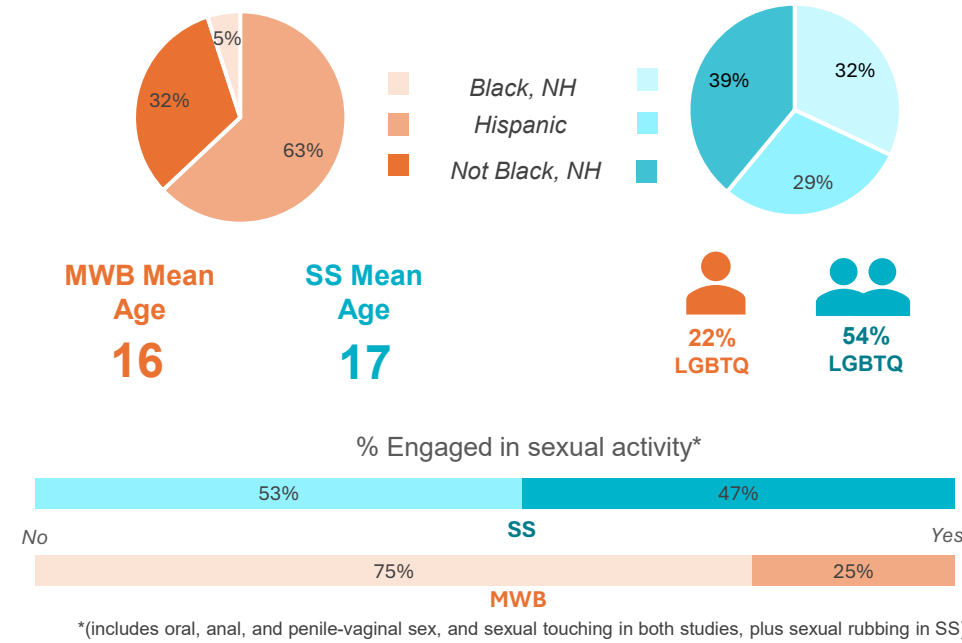
"Sexual agency is the ability to **communicate** and **negotiate** about one's sexuality, while having **empathy** for a partner's **wants and needs**. To have sexual agency means making **informed and ethical** choices for themselves and **accepting the responsibility** of those choices." (Lim et al, 2019)

Including positively framed outcomes, such as sexual agency, in program evaluations supports a strengths-based approach to sex education.

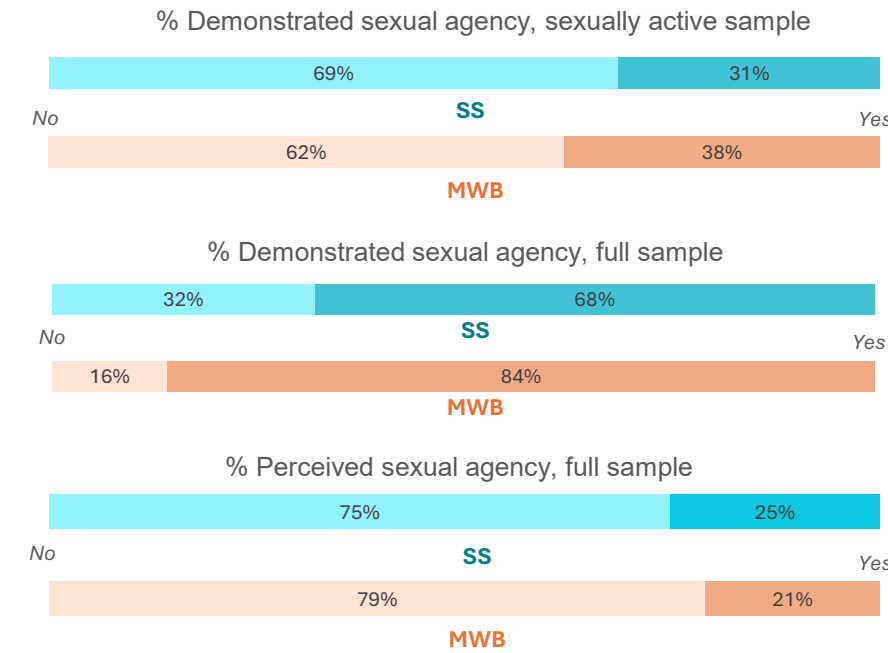
To develop our measures of sexual agency, we:

- Reviewed scientific literature.
- Held conversations with experts.
- Conducted twelve cognitive interviews with youth, ages 14-18.

Demographics



Demonstrated and Perceived Sexual Agency



	MWB (%)	SS (%)
Sexually active sample		
Tell your partner what you like, dislike, or want to try		
None of the time	7%	7%
Less than half the time	8%	21%
Most of the time	36%	34%
Always	49%	39%
Ask your partner what you like, dislike, or want to try		
None of the time	4%	8%
Less than half the time	4%	17%
Most of the time	46%	34%
Always	46%	41%
Full sample		
Comfort asking for what you want		
Not at all true	8%	10%
A little true	15%	13%
Moderately true	22%	26%
Very true	32%	25%
Extremely true	23%	27%
Comfort asking your partner what they want		
Not at all true	6%	10%
A little true	12%	10%
Moderately true	18%	18%
Very true	36%	24%
Extremely true	28%	38%

About our Programs

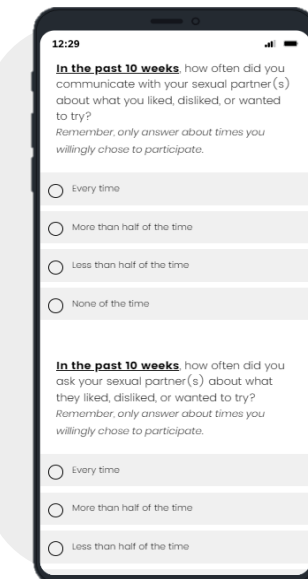


Many Ways of Being (MWB) is a gender-transformative, gender-inclusive program for young people aged 15-19 implemented in afterschool settings with primarily Black and Latino youth in the Washington, DC area.

SafeSpace (SS) is an app-based program for adolescents assigned female at birth, tailored to youth of color, LGBTQ youth, and youth living in the southeast who are aged 14-18.



Measures



Demonstrated sexual agency

Told their partner what they liked, disliked or wanted to try every time they had sex, **and asked** their partner what they liked, disliked or wanted to try every time they had sex.

Those who didn't have sex are coded as demonstrating sexual agency.

Perceived sexual agency

Comfortable asking for what they want sexually **and** asking their partner what their partner wants sexually (statements = "extremely true").



Discussion

- Demonstrated and perceived sexual agency are salient concepts for youth that evaluators can measure.
- About 25% of all participants perceived themselves to have sexual agency.
- Between 31-38% of sexually active participants demonstrated sexual agency every time they engaged in sexual activity.
- Most youth across the full sample demonstrated sexual agency (68-86%).
- Rates of demonstrated sexual agency are driven by overall rates of sexual activity – researchers should consider developing measures of demonstrated sexual agency for those who have not had sex.

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