

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

Emma Pliskin, Elizabeth Cook, Kate Welti, Jennifer Manlove

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## What is Sexual Agency?

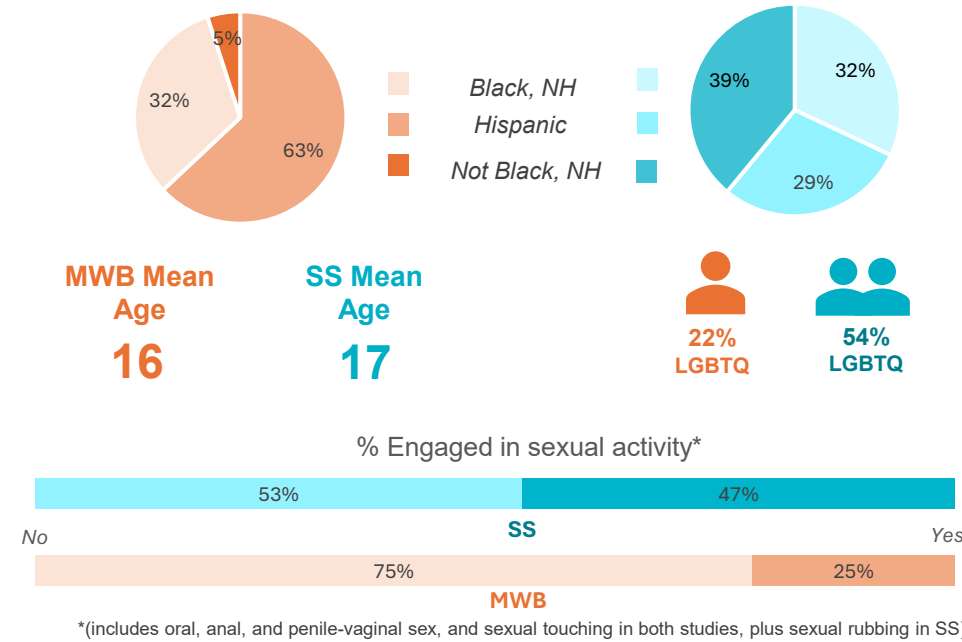
“Sexual agency is the ability to **communicate** and **negotiate** about one’s sexuality, while having **empathy** for a partner’s **wants and needs**. To have sexual agency means making **informed and ethical** choices for themselves and **accepting the responsibility** of those choices.” (Lim et al,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

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

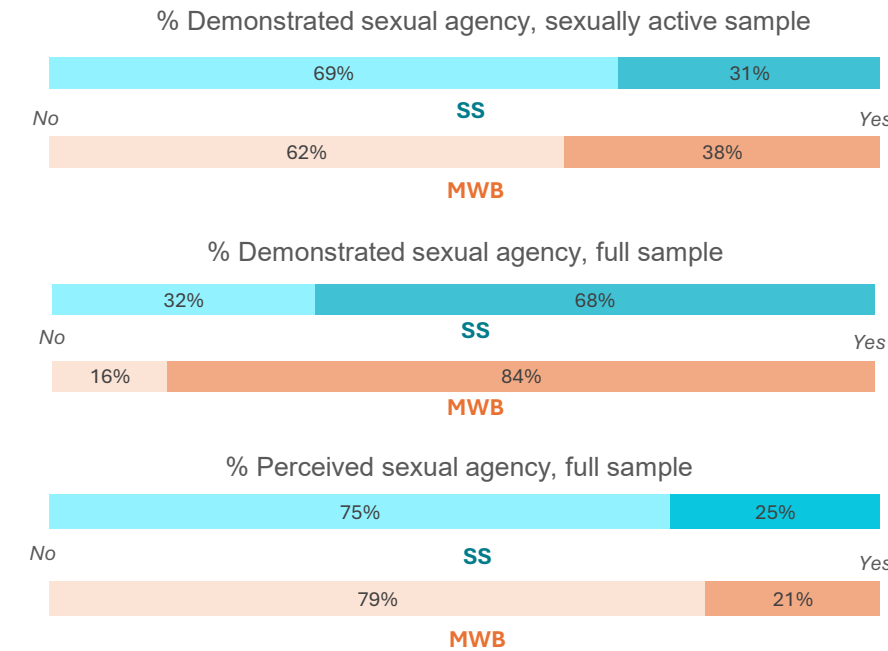
To develop our measures of sexual agency, we:

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

## Demographics



## Demonstrated and Perceived Sexual Agency



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

## About our Programs

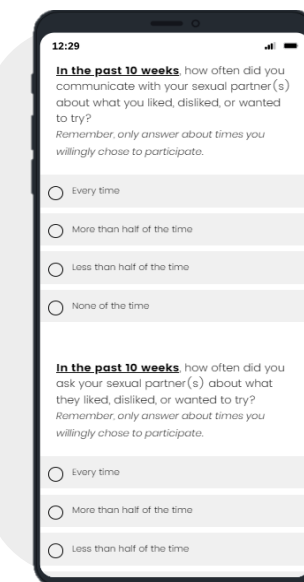


**Many Ways of Being (MWB)** is a gender-transformative, gender-inclusive program for young people aged 15-19 implemented in afterschool settings with primarily Black and Latino youth in the Washington, DC area.

**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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