

Attitudinal and Behavioral Differences between Youth Who Have Had Anal Sex and Those Who Have Not in Cape Town, South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa has the 4th highest prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS globally, with 1 in 5 people including 7% of 15- to 24-year-old youth, HIV positive. Research examining



behavioral determinants of HIV has largely focused on early sexual debut, age differences between sexual partners, multiple sexual partners, condom use, and substance use. Heretofore, anal sex, a high

METHODS

risk behavior for HIV transmission, has largely been ignored. In 2012, a pencil-and-paper survey was completed by 937 youth 16 years of age and older who were attending low-income secondary schools in

Cape Town. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by UWC and Chesapeake Institutional Review Boards. 93% of eligible students present on the day of the survey participated.

RESULTS

Eleven and 31% of female and male youth, respectively, reported ever having anal sex.

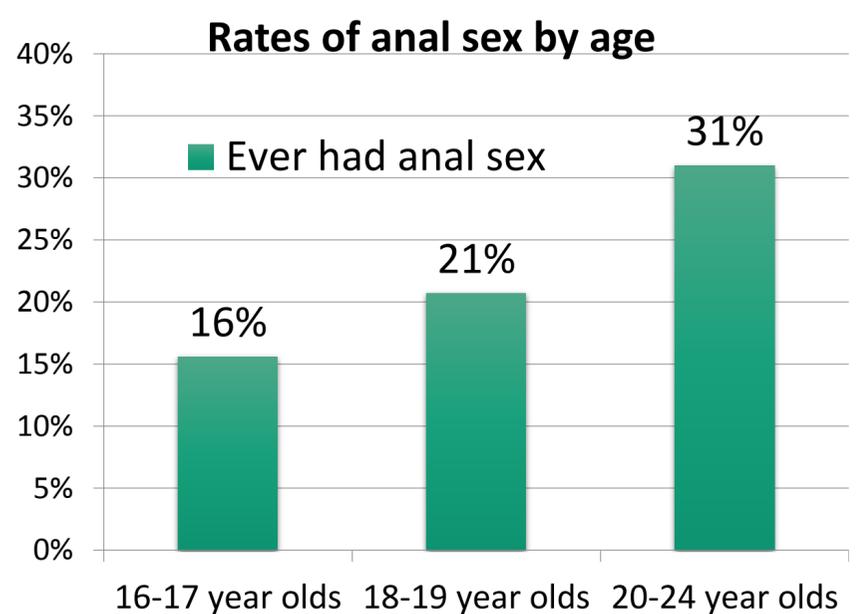
Rates increased significantly by age (see Figure to the right).

Compared to youth who had not had anal sex, youth with a history of anal sex had:

- More negative views towards abstinence
- Higher rates of inconsistent condom use
- Higher rates of dating violence perpetration, and
- Higher rates of victimization and perpetration of sexually coercive behavior.

Females who had ever had anal sex had significantly lower levels of HIV information compared to sexually active youth who had not had anal sex.

Although rates of anal sex were significantly different for adolescent males and females, the associated risk factors were strikingly similar: anal sex was universally associated with HIV-risk behaviors (i.e., inconsistent condom use) and having unhealthy dating relationships (e.g., sexual coercion).



CONCLUSION

Rates of anal sex are higher for boys than girls in the survey, yet the associated risk factors were strikingly similar. Not only are harm reduction programs designed for youth engaging in anal sex warranted, but so too should sexual scenarios that discuss anal sex be integrated into healthy relationships curriculum.

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