



New York City Alliance
Against Sexual Assault

Definitions of Sexual Violence

In our work, the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault regularly utilizes the following definitions of Sexual Violence:

Center for Disease Control (CDC): *Sexual violence* is dividing into three categories: (1) Use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether or not the act is completed. (2) An attempted or completed sex act involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, to decline participation, or to communicate unwillingness to engage in the sexual act, e.g., because of illness, disability or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or due to intimidation or pressure. (3) Abusive sexual contact. (CDC, 2002)

World Health Organization (WHO): Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or [acts] otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home or work (WHO, 2002).

In this study, we utilized the following *data* definitions for sexual violence:

For **Non-partner sexual violence**, students read the following definition:

Many people experience sexual violence outside of dating relationships, both by people they know and by strangers. This section asks what types of sexual violence you may have experienced in your life. When we ask about "sexual abuse," we mean any sexual fondling, touching, oral sex or intercourse (penetration of the vagina or anus with a penis, fingers or object)

Students were then asked: **How often in your life has:**

- Your parent sexually abuse you or forced you to have sex?
- A family member other than a parent sexually abused you or forced you to have sex?
- An older acquaintance (such as a family friend, teacher, minister, neighbor, etc) sexually abused you or forced you to have sex?
- Someone else your age who you knew but was not your partner sexually abused you or forced you to have sex?
- A stranger sexually abused you or forced you to have sex?

We utilized two validated scales to measure **Partner Sexual Violence:**

- Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI) to assess the frequency of current or recent dating violence behaviors that happened during a conflict or argument with a dating partner at some point in the last year.

For current partner sexual violence we asked three questions:

During a conflict or argument with my partner in the past year:

1. S/he touched me sexually when I didn't want him/her to.
2. S/he forced me to have sex when I didn't want to.
3. S/he threatened me in an attempt to have sex with me.

For ‘ever’ partner sexual violence, we utilized the Dating Violence Inventory (DVI) which asked the following questions:

How often in your life has ANY (current or previous) partner EVER:

1. Tried to force you into sexual activity?
2. Raped you?

Partners and Peers: Sexual and Dating Violence Among NYC Youth

Methodology

This study employed a multi-site, cross-sectional, population-based survey design to examine sexual and dating violence among youth. The study was conducted in four public high schools in New York City. All students were invited to participate in the study.

This study was carried out by the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault (the Alliance) and the Columbia University Center for Youth Violence Prevention (CCYVP) at the Mailman School of Public Health. The New York City Department of Education granted researchers permission to enroll New York City high school students anonymously with their parents’ consent and their own permission with the agreement of school principals and district superintendents. Students from four schools, reflecting a range of those in New York’s cultural groups, were asked to participate. Schools were selected through convenience sampling, three in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn. In all, 1,454 high school students ranging in age from 13-21 participated in the study. This data collection took place during the 2006-2007 school year.

This study was approved by three Institutional Review Boards: St. Luke’s-Roosevelt (the NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault’s home IRB at the time of the study), Columbia University and the Department of Education.