

Child Sexual Abuse Reported by Young Australian Women



the women's
the royal women's hospital
victoria

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on behalf of the YFHI and Safe-D study groups

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INTRODUCTION

- Young women are under-represented in health research despite their transitioning a life stage critical for future health outcomes.
- Sexual abuse has become a critical issue, globally, leading to significant long term morbidity.

AIM

- To investigate the prevalence of unwanted sexual experiences (USEs) in young women, residing in Victoria, Australia.

METHODS

- The Young Female Health Initiative (YFHI) and Safe-D are comprehensive studies of physical, sexual, reproductive, and mental health of young females.
- Women aged 16-25 living in Victoria were randomly recruited via targeted advertising on Facebook from May 2010. They were then directed to a secure website.

It's all about you



Are you 16-25 years and live in Victoria? We want to know what you think about health.

Tell us what you think



Tell us what health issues are important to you, fill in a survey and help improve the health and wellbeing of young Victorian women

Examples of Facebook advertisements

- A web-based questionnaire was used to collect information on participant demographics, USEs, knowledge of STIs and HPV vaccination status

YFHI website <http://www.yfhi.org>

Health Questions? Ask the Expert

If you're female, aged between 16 and 25 years and living in Victoria, we want to hear from you!

The University of Melbourne and the Royal Women's Hospital are looking for ways to improve the health of young women in Australia through a new study called the Young Female Health Initiative that will explore lifestyle, behaviour, nutrition, physical health and emotional wellbeing.

You are invited to complete a survey about health. It's quick, easy, confidential and you could win great prizes just for taking part.

So what are you waiting for? Find out more and Contact Us to get involved.

- Health behaviour and nutrition
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Heart health & diabetes
- Bone & joint health

Safe-D website <http://www.safedstudy.org>

Home

Join us today!

About the study

About Us

Links

Contact Us

Are you 16 to 25 years of age?
If you're female, aged between 16 and 25 years and living in Victoria, we want to hear from you!

The University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Hospital are looking for ways to improve vitamin D status and related health in young women. This new study, known as Safe-D, will explore relationships between vitamin D status, sun exposure, muscle and bone health, allergies, physical activity and mental health.

You are invited to participate in this important study. It's quick, easy and confidential – and your contribution will make a huge difference!

Click here to find out more about the study and contact us to get involved now!

Algorithm for addressing reports of sexual abuse

A protocol for the protection of participants, who report USE, was developed to ensure their safety (Figure 1).

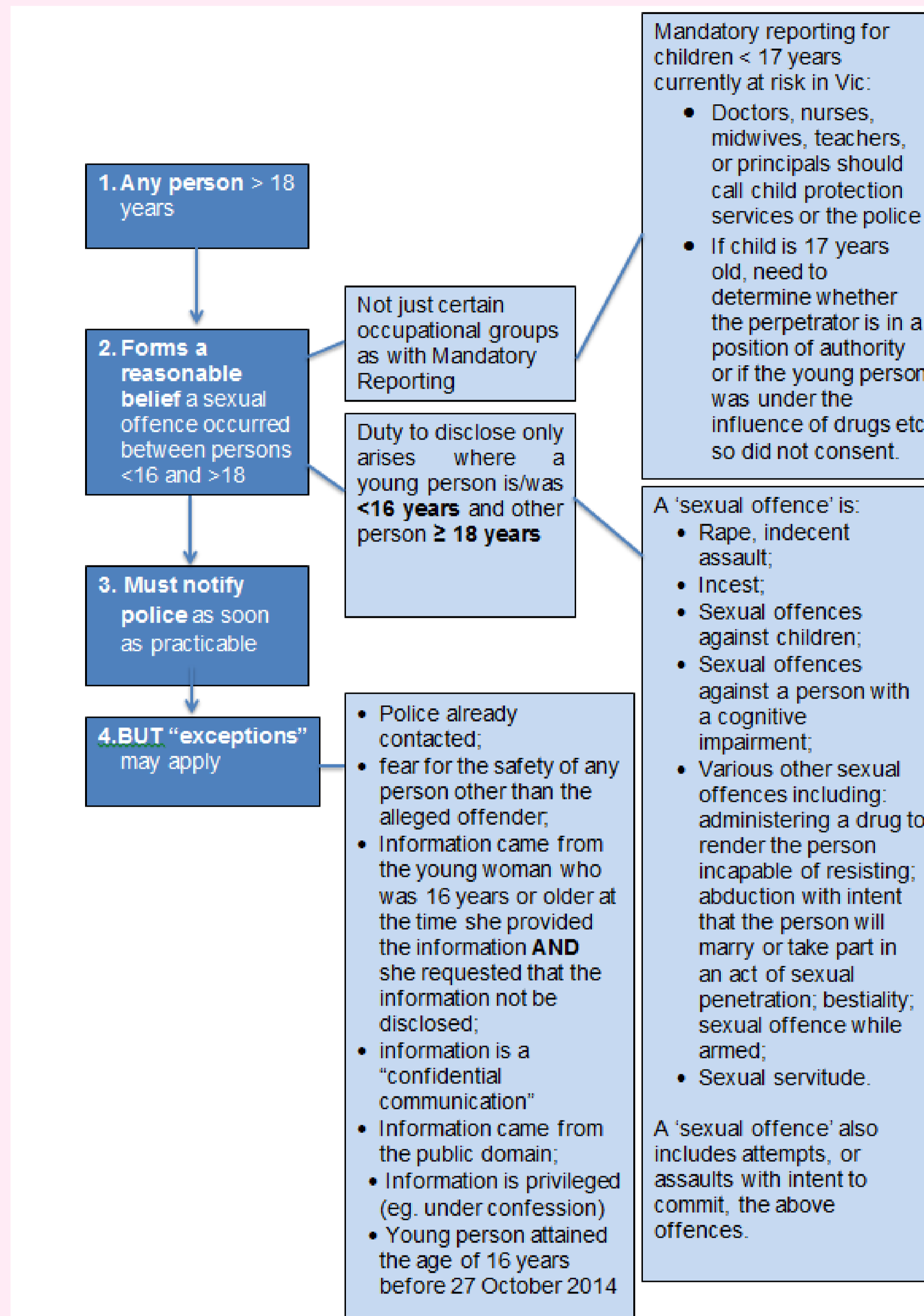


Figure 1. Algorithm for responding to reports of sexual abuse. Source: Crimes Act of Australia, section 327 Duty to disclose*.

*This algorithm was adapted from information provided by Dr. Anne Smith and Karen Cusack, corporate counsel for The Royal Women's Hospital, after changes to the Crimes Act 1958 introduced new provisions obliging any person to disclose certain circumstances to police.

RESULTS

- Of 398 participants (YFHI: N=178; Safe-D: N=220) – 14% recalled an USE when they were < 16 years.
- Of those with USE < 16 years from both studies:
 - 64% suffered from depression
 - 23% were diagnosed by a clinician with a sexually transmitted infection (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic and lifestyle factors for YFHI & Safe-D participants reporting USE < 16 (n = 56)

Variable	N (%)
Age, Mean (SD)	21 (3)
Depression (self-reported)*	
Yes	35 (64)
No	20 (36)
Sexual debut†	
6–13 years	4 (9)
14–16	28 (60)
≥17	15 (31)
Number of partners to date, median (Q1–Q3)	6 (2–11)
Ever been paid for sex?‡	
Yes	4 (8)
No	42 (92)
Told by a health professional that you had an STI?§	
Yes	11 (23)
No	37 (77)

*Missing data for one participant. † Missing data for nine participants. ‡ Missing data for ten participants. § Missing data for eight participants.

- Of those reporting an USE < 16 years 32% reported penile-genital contact and 89% reported having their breasts or genitals touched (Figure 2).

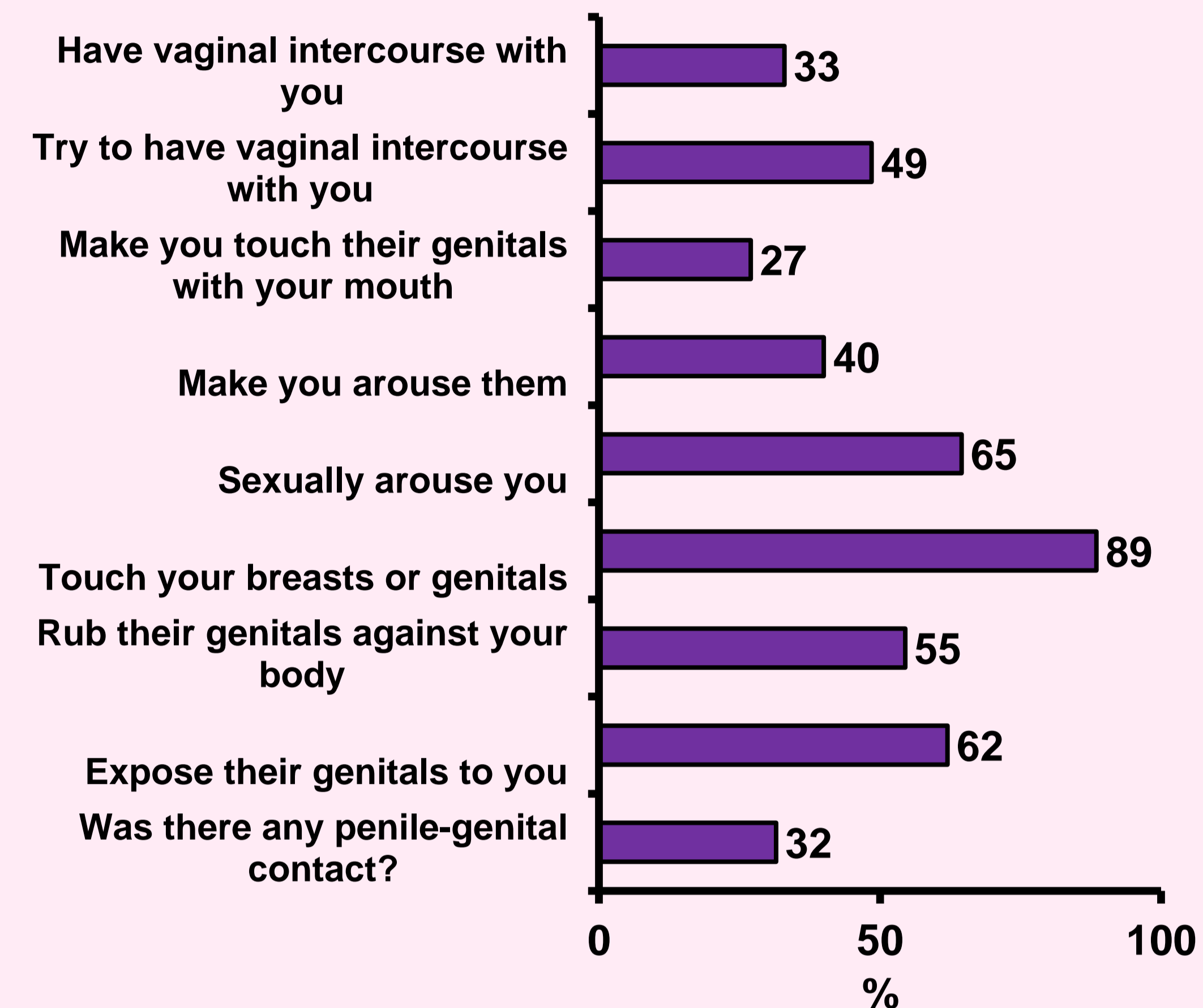


Figure 2. Responses to questions on unwanted sexual experiences faced < 16 years (YFHI n= 34; Safe-D n = 22)

- In women who recalled a USE between 16-18 years of age (60/398, 15%), 42% stated they felt pressured into sexual intercourse with a man, and 28% reported having been raped (Table 2).

Table 2. Responses to questions on unwanted sexual experiences faced < 18 years (YFHI & Safe-D combined n = 60)

In relation to the unwanted sexual experience between 16 and 18 years of age:	N (%)
Was there any penile-genital contact? *	32 (53)
Had a man misinterpreted the level of sexual intimacy you desired? †	40 (67)
Did you feel like it was useless to stop a man's sexual intentions because he was so aroused? †	28 (47)
Had sexual intercourse because you felt pressured in to it? †	25 (42)
Have you ever been raped? *	17 (28)
Have you disclosed information about your experience(s) to anyone else before? †	45 (75)

*Missing data for six participants. † Missing data for two participants. ‡ Missing data for four participants.

CONCLUSIONS

- To our knowledge this is the first Australian study in which USE in women as young as 16 years has been assessed.
- Prevalence of childhood USE was lesser in other Australian community studies (25–30%).
- This may be related to age or reluctance to disclose.
- USEs should be researched further in this population, to develop appropriate intervention strategies to assist young women through these traumas.
- The HPV vaccination should also be offered, when USE is reported, at an age prior to the school-based program of 12–13 years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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