

Predictors and confounders of unprotected sex: A UK web-based study

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Objectives: To evaluate the effects of gender, sex orientation, age, relationship status, age at first sex education, age at first sex, frequency of sex and number of sexual partners on the likelihood of unprotected sex in the United Kingdom (UK).

Methods: A web-based survey was conducted in the UK in 2004 with 10,138 respondents. Eight variables were chosen as potential predictors of unprotected sex. Responses from sexually active participants were combined and crude/adjusted odds ratios (AORs) were calculated for binary/categorical variables.

Results: No differences were found in AOR for gender, sex orientation, relationship status and frequency of sex. Differences were found in AOR for age, sex education, age at first sex and number of sexual partners, e.g. AOR 21-24 years of age *versus* under 16 (1.92, CI 1.38-2.68; p -value < 0.001); AOR sex education never received *versus* first sex education under 10 years of age (1.45, CI 1.12-1.87; p -value < 0.01); AOR first sex at 20 years *versus* at 14 years (0.56, CI 0.40-0.79; p -value < 0.01); and AOR 11-20 partners *versus* one partner (24.91, CI 20.02-30.98; p -value < 0.001). The association of sex orientation and relationship status with unprotected sex is confounded by the number of sexual partners.

Conclusions: UK health and education authorities should develop strategies to provide sex education starting in primary school and continuing throughout secondary school. Prevention programs and policies should focus on particular sexual behaviours. Furthermore, an understanding of sexual diversity and reducing stigmatisation of sexual orientation is necessary.