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No. 182, 2003

Hewett, Paul C., Barbara S. Mensch, and Annabel S. Erulkar. "Consistency in the reporting of sexual behavior among adolescent girls in Kenya: A comparison of interviewing methods," Policy Research Division Working Paper no. 182. New York: Population Council. ([PDF](#))

Abstract

This paper explores the consistency in reporting of sexual behavior in a household survey of adolescents aged 15–21 in the Kisumu district of Kenya. Respondents were randomly assigned to different interviewing modes: face-to-face interviews, paper-and-pencil self-administered interviews, and audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI). The analysis focuses on the reporting of sexual behavior by adolescent girls in the face-to-face and ACASI modes and compares responses to a variety of questions about sexual activity, including sexual initiation, risky sexual behavior, and coerced sex. All sexual behavior questions were asked of each adolescent girl even if she answered “no” to the initial question about ever having had sex. The paper also compares the consistency of reporting for questions that were asked twice during the survey—once in the main interview and again in a face-to-face exit interview. By comparison with ACASI, the interviewer-administered mode produces highly consistent reporting of sexual activity both within the main interview and between the main and exit interviews. On the other hand, ACASI produces higher reporting of sex with a relative, stranger, or older man, and higher reporting of coerced sex. We argue that the level of consistency and the high response rates in the interviewer-administered mode are suspect and suggest reasons why one might expect inconsistent responses to survey questions about sexual behavior.

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