



2012 ESRC Festival of Social Sciences

Making Sense of Young People's Sexuality

Dirk Schubotz

Programme

- 10.35 Sexual attitudes and experiences of young people in Northern Ireland. Latest research evidence
(Dirk Schubotz, ARK)
- 11.30 Comfort break
- 11.45 Workshop sessions 1 (Workshops A-E)
- 12.45 Lunch
- 13.30 Relationship and Sexuality Education in Northern Ireland – Developing a Teacher Training Programme
(Joanna Gregg, Sexual Health Team, Eastern Area)
- 14.30 Comfort break
- 14.45 Workshop sessions 2 (Workshops A-E, see above)
- 15.45 Q&A and way forward
- 16.00 Close

Workshops

Boardroom

- A. *'If I were Jack'* (young men and unintended pregnancies),
Aine Aventin
- B. *'Choices'* (Sex Education for young women), **Tracy Crowe**

Conference Room

- A. *'OUTstanding Youthwork'* (Working with LGBT young people), **Amanda Stephens**
- B. Working with vulnerable young people, **Mary Crawford**
- C. Talking about STIs with young people, **Carmel Kelly** (GUM nurse)

About ARK

- Joined initiative between the two NI universities; established in 2000
- Mission: *Making social and political information on Northern Ireland available to the widest possible audience*
- Reaching out to schools through ARK in Schools (www.ark.ac.uk/schools)

Why this event?

- Sexuality research in NI for many years
- Messages and debates on sex and sex education have changed little:
 1. Sexuality remains a contested subject area
 2. Young people remain unhappy with the standard
 3. Teachers and sex education providers (rightly?) bemoan lack of appropriate training opportunities
 4. However, availability of really innovative young person-centred sex education resources and practices
- ESRC Festival of Social Science as a match-making opportunity

Sexual attitudes and experiences of young people in Northern Ireland

Recent research evidence

Young Person's Behaviour and Attitude Survey

- YPBAS run by NI government (NISRA) every other year
- School-based survey (11-16; Years 8-12)
- Around 7,500 respondents
- However: Many schools (about half) opt out of sexuality questions

2010 YPBS Results

- 67% have a boy/girlfriend
- 8% had sexual intercourse
 - 80% had first sex between 13 and 15 years
 - 79% used contraception ('something to prevent pregnancy')
 - 73% used condom
 - 21% condom+pill
- 53% said it was easy to get contraception
- 54% would get them from shops/chemist

2010 YPBS Results

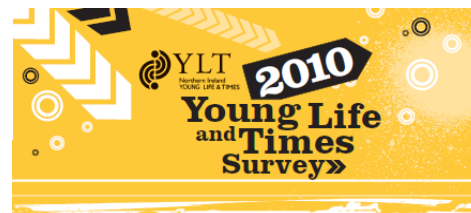
Table 1: How much, if any, sexual experience have you had?

	%
None	41
Small amount	34
Some experience, but no sexual intercourse	16
Experience, including sexual intercourse	8

Source: NISRA (2011). YPBS Survey Bulletin

Young Life and Times

- Annual postal survey of 16-year olds in Northern Ireland undertaken by ARK in its current format since 2003
- Sampling frame: Child Benefit Register (all Feb and Mar birthdays)
- Letters to the home address (online and phone completion possible)
- Time series questions and one-off subjects
- Questions on sexual behaviour attitudes and exploitation



Previous YLT surveys

	%	
	Never had intercourse	Pressure to have sex*
2004	78	6
2007	77	11
2008	78	11

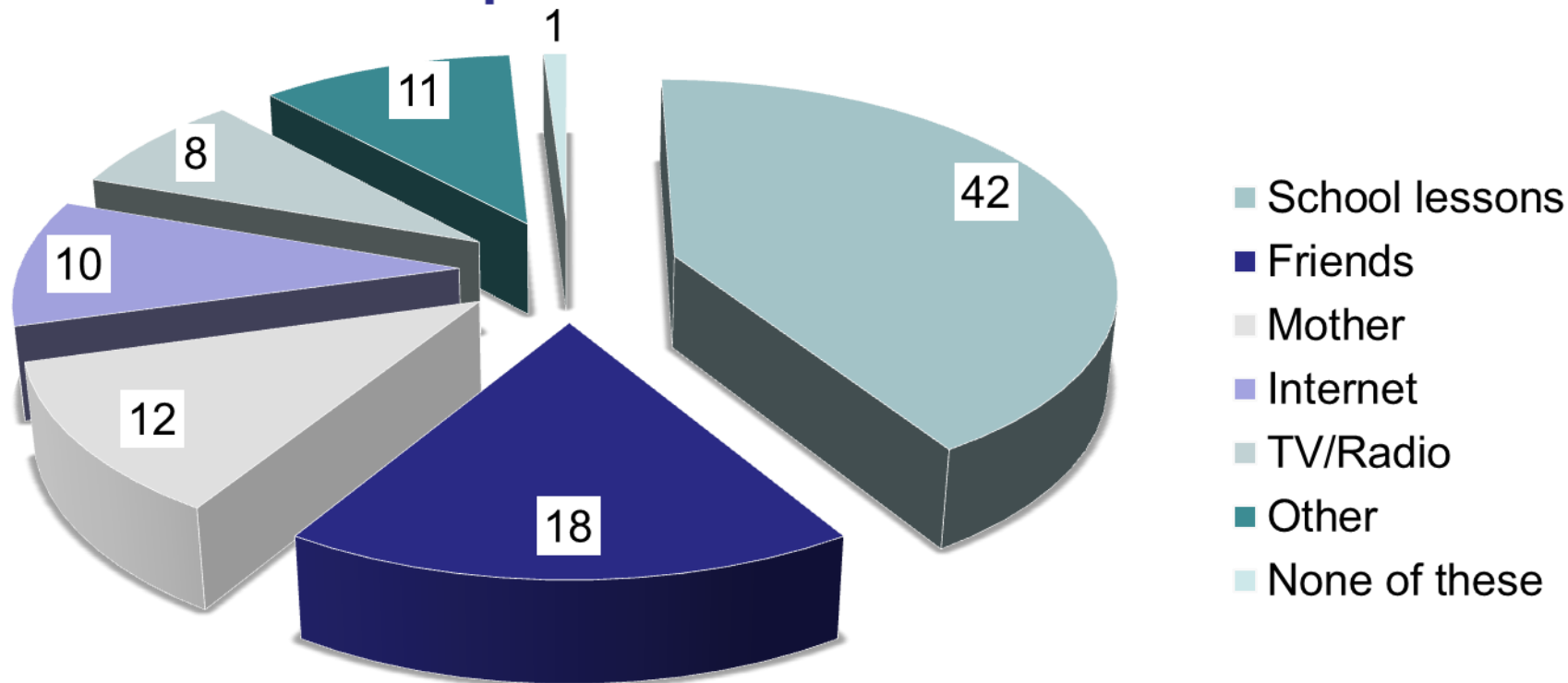
*** 8 out of 10 16-year olds say that pressure comes from friends and peers**

Talking about sexual matters

	%			
	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Don't know
Boy- or girlfriend	66	20	6	8
Close friends	65	25	6	5
Mother	28	28	35	9
Sister	26	26	34	15
Brother	16	18	52	15
Father	12	19	57	12
Teacher	4	15	59	23

Talking about sexual matters

Most helpful sources of sex education



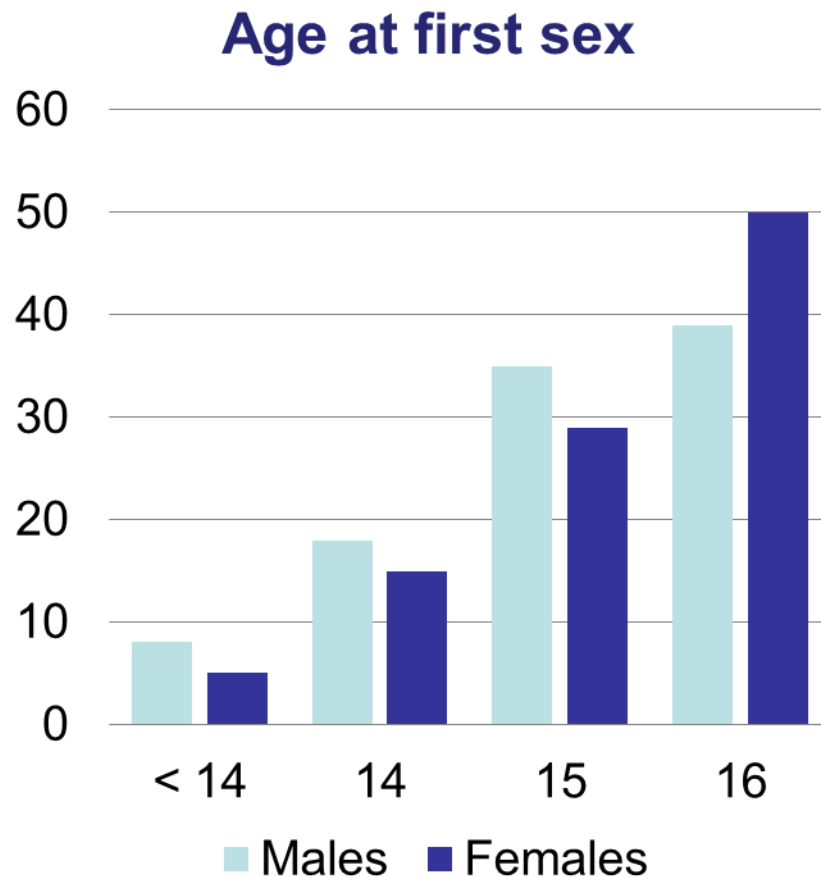
Talking about sexual matters

'It's good to get sexual information from school because with your friends and the internet and radio there can be rumours and what they are saying isn't factual, whereas the majority of the time school is very factual and it's an important part of life.'

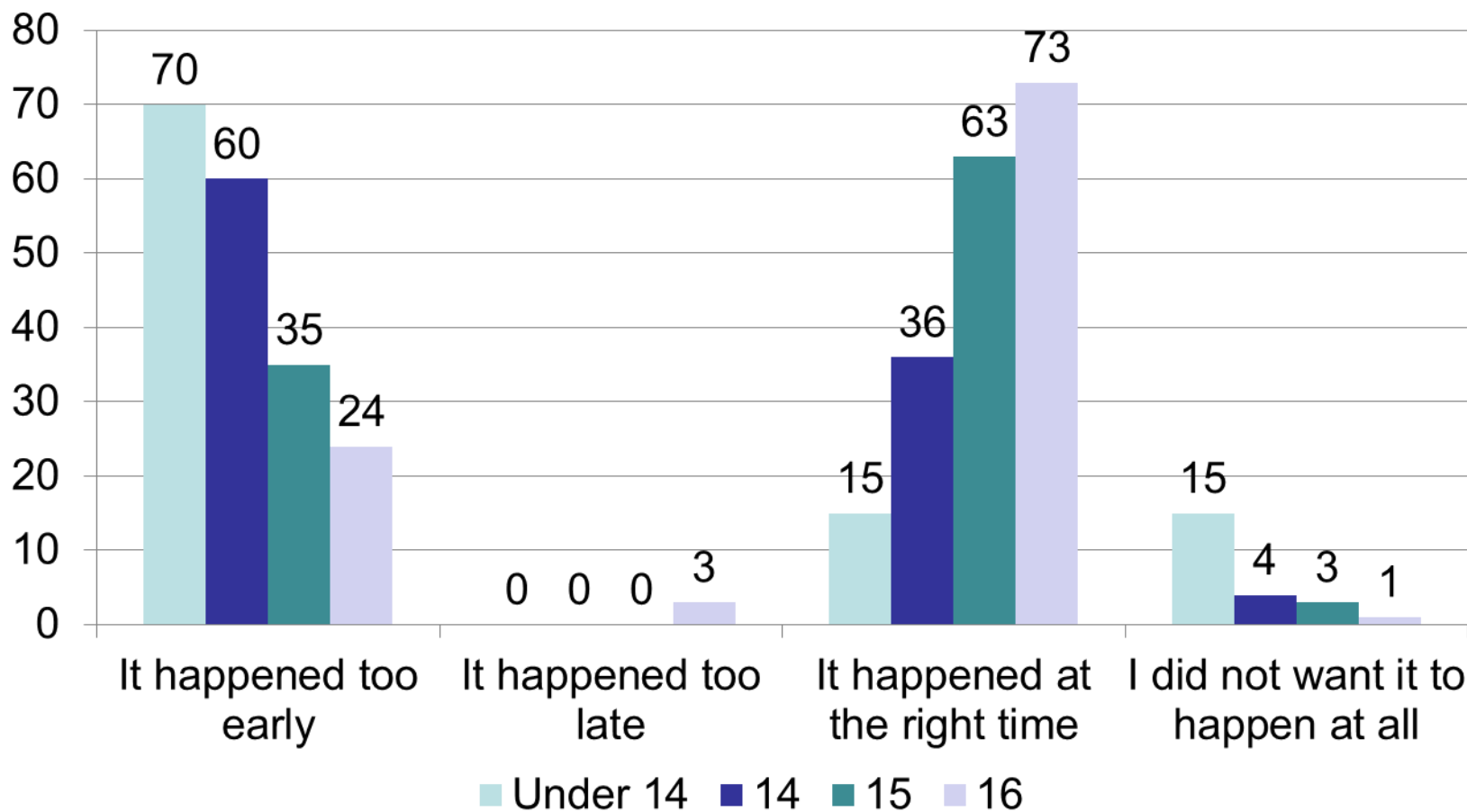
'Less stuff on the dangers of sex (pregnancies STI's) but more on the time when you should have it (in a loving relationship) and explain what happens physically. Don't lecture it and show it in a negative way, it should be positive.'

Sexual experiences

- 26% said they had had sex (28% females and 23% males)
- 12% of active males and 2% of females had sex at least once with someone of the same sex
- 54% had had 1 sexual partner only, 4 in 5 had no more than 3 partners



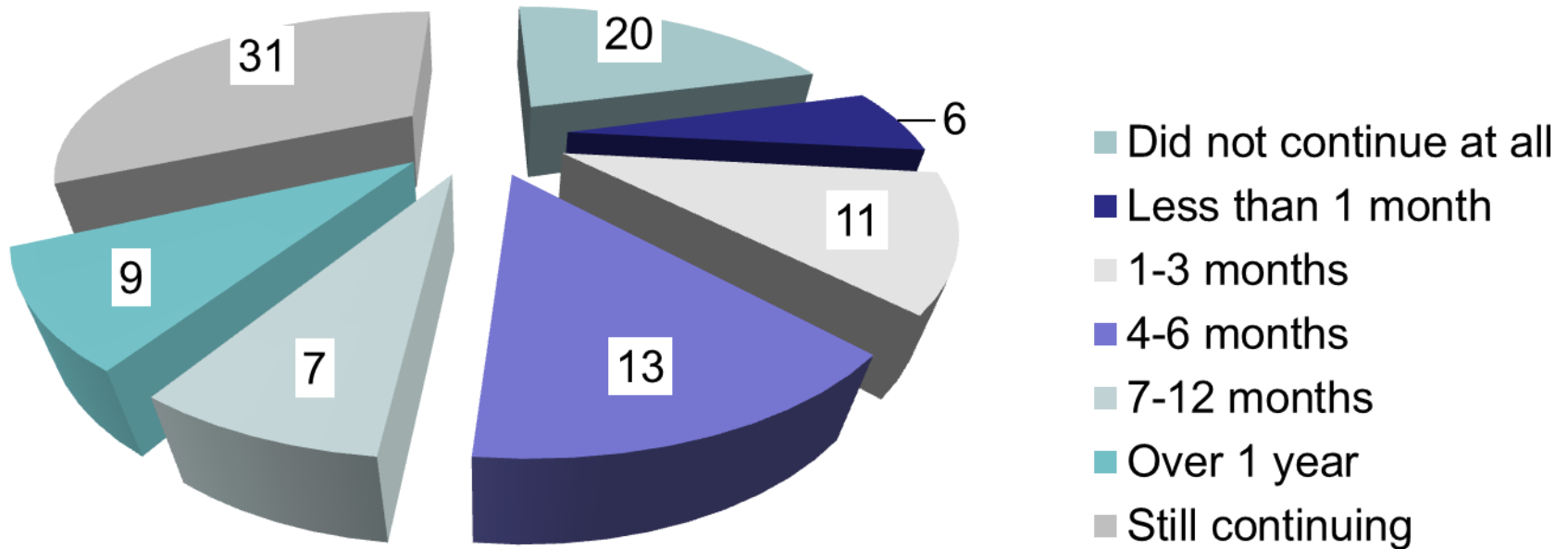
Looking back...



Why did you have sex?

	%		
	Males	Females	All
I was curious about what it would be like	58	51	54
I got carried away by my feelings	19	17	18
Most people in my age group seemed to be doing it	29	28	28
It seemed like a natural follow-on in the relationship	43	48	46
I was a bit drunk at the time	23	19	21
I had taken some drugs at the time	3	1	2
I wanted to lose my virginity	32	16	22
I was in love	29	43	37
I didn't feel ready to have sex, but went along with what the other person wanted	7	12	10
It happened against my wishes	0	2	1
Something else	1	3	2

How long did relationship last?

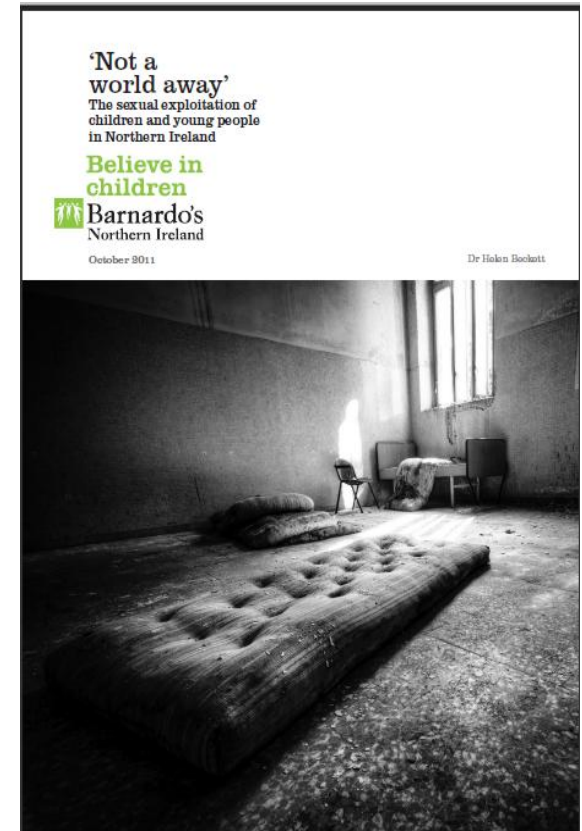


Contraception

- 81% used condom at 1st sex – some in combination with other contraception
- 9% had used no contraception at all or said they could not remember
- 26% had used after-sex contraception (or EC) – 16% once, 8% 2-3 times, 2% more than three times

Sexual risks faced by 16-year olds in Northern Ireland

- ARK commissioned by Barnardo's to ask questions on sexual exploitation in 2010 YLT survey
- Part of Barnardo's larger 'Safe Choices' project
- **Beckett, H. (2011)** *'Not a World Away'. The sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: Barnardo's NI.



When someone tries to build a relationship or gain the trust of a young person with the aim of getting them to take part in some kind of sexual activity....

Key Results

- **1 in 9** groomed by an adult
- **1 in 15** taken advantage of sexually when they were under the influence of alcohol, solvents or drugs
- **1 in 20** been offered something in exchange for taking part in sexual activity
- **62%** of those did not tell a parent or anyone in a position of authority that this had happened
- **2%** took part in a sexual activity because they were threatened that they or someone they cared about would be harmed if they didn't

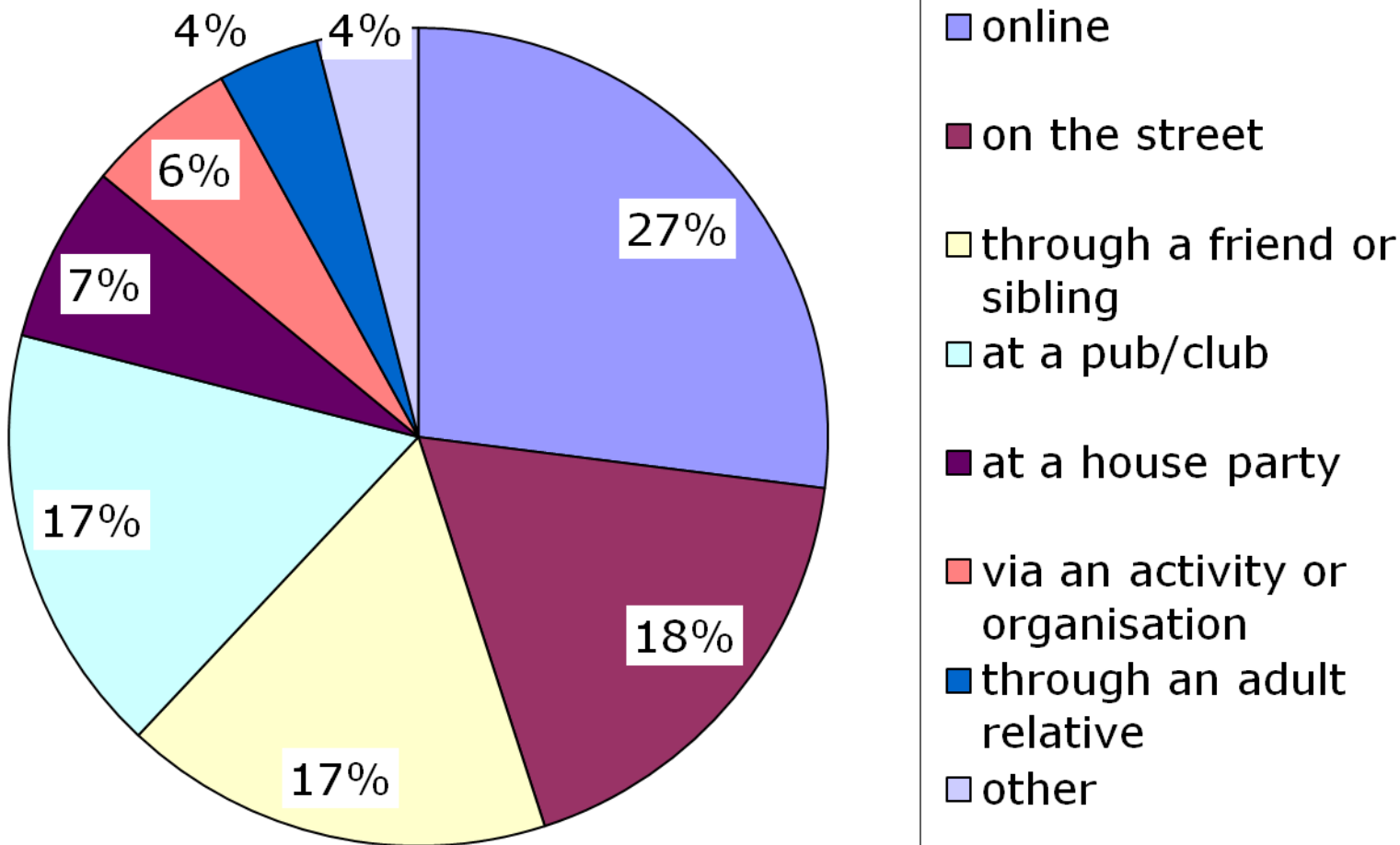
Further findings: Age

- **75%** first **groomed** when under the age of consent (16 years)
- **54%** said the person was at least 5 years older than they were at the time
- **80%** first **offered something** (e.g. alcohol drugs, a place to stay) **in return for sexual activity**, when under the age of consent
- **40%** were offered this by someone 5 or more years older than them

Further Findings: Background

%		
	Been sexually groomed	NEVER offered anything for sex
Males	8	94
Females	13	91
Opposite-sex attracted	11	93
Same-sex attracted	18	84
Never attracted to anyone	4	98
Not well-off	14	91
Average	11	92
Well-off	9	93

Grooming: First Contact



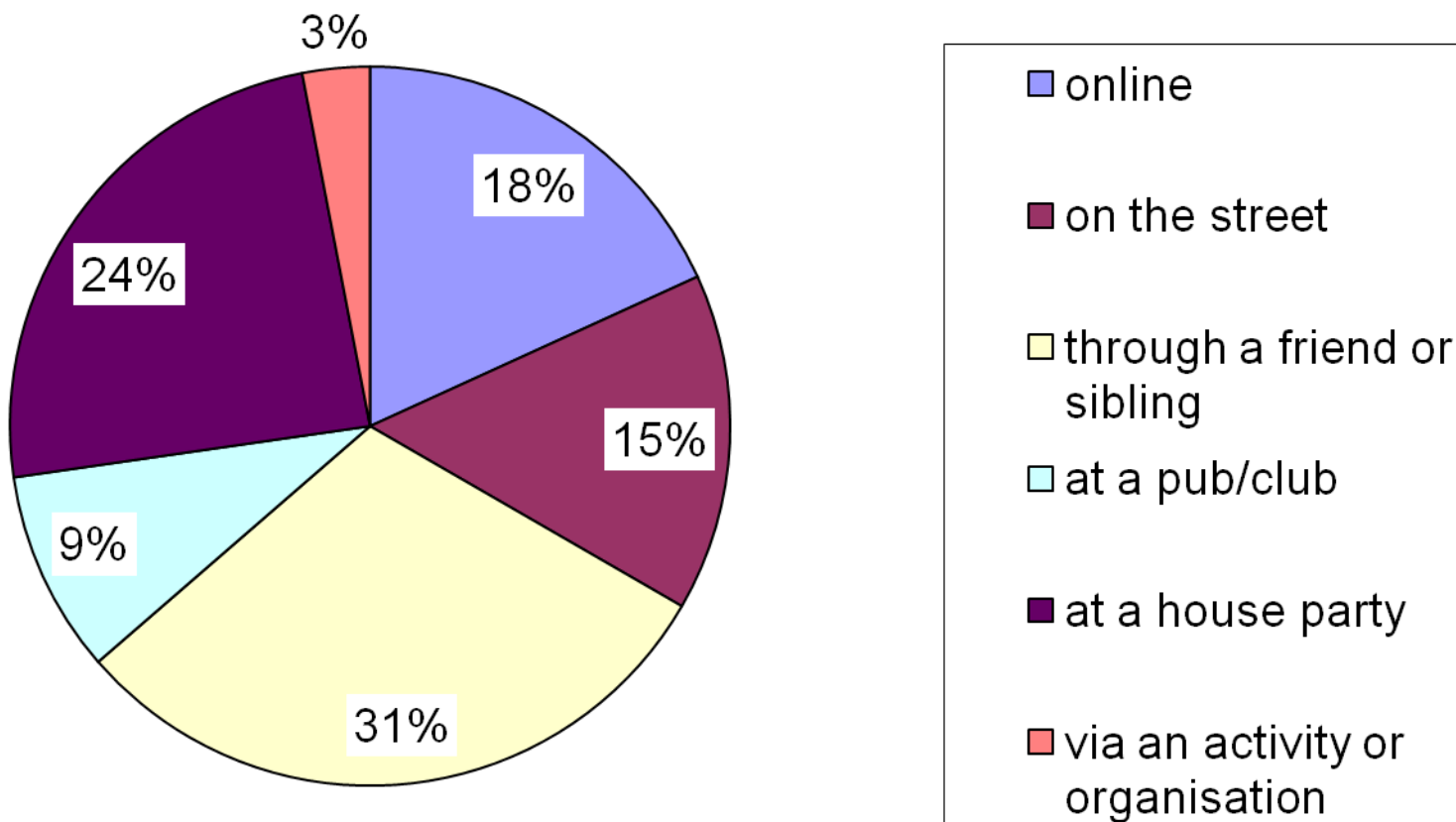
Grooming: Outcome

- **1 in 8** engaged in sexual texts, emails or conversations
- **1 in 12** sent or received sexual images
- **At least 6%** had some form of face to face sexual contact

- **2/3** of those who said they had been given substances then been taken advantage of, were under the age of consent (16 years) when this happened
- **2/3** said it was someone of a similar age who did this to them

‘Sex’ in Exchange for...

Initial Contact - Sex in Exchange



Comments on Grooming

Themes:

1. Young people's own fault (alcohol, drugs, partying/clubbing, under-dressing of girls)
2. Risks of Social Network sites
3. Lack of awareness and education
4. Embarrassment
5. Sense that perpetrators often in circle of friends
6. Peer pressure to engage in sexual activity
7. Gender issue: Females as victims; older males as perpetrators

Conclusions

Young people are:

- Sexual beings and largely act responsibly with regard to their sexuality
- However, also vulnerable with regard to sexual grooming and exploitation
- looking for reliable young-person centred information on sex

With a non-judgemental approach we can help them to build the confidence to make positive decisions on their sexual relationships.