



Integrating Youth Dating Violence Prevention in Relationship and Sexual Health Education: Youth Experiences

Research shows that young people **want** their sexual health education to include learning about healthy relationships and ways to prevent gender-based violence. Working with the Centre for Sexuality (C4S), CPHA developed a project called “**Preventing Youth Dating Violence: Building Capacity for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Canada.**”

This included adapting C4S’s *Relationship and Sexual Health Education (RSE)* program as an intervention for youth dating violence prevention and training organizations across Canada to deliver and assess the program with young people in their communities.

Partner Selection

CPHA and C4S launched calls for organizations across Canada (see figure 1 for program sites) to deliver the RSE program to youth in school or community-based settings. Partner Organizations were trained in the delivery and evaluation of the program. The online training helped build facilitator’s knowledge and skills to deliver sexual health and healthy relationships education to youth.

To support adaptation of the RSE program as an intervention for youth dating violence, CPHA conducted 12 focus groups and an online survey of 1202 youth across Canada. To read more about this engagement, read the [research summary](#).

Program Delivery

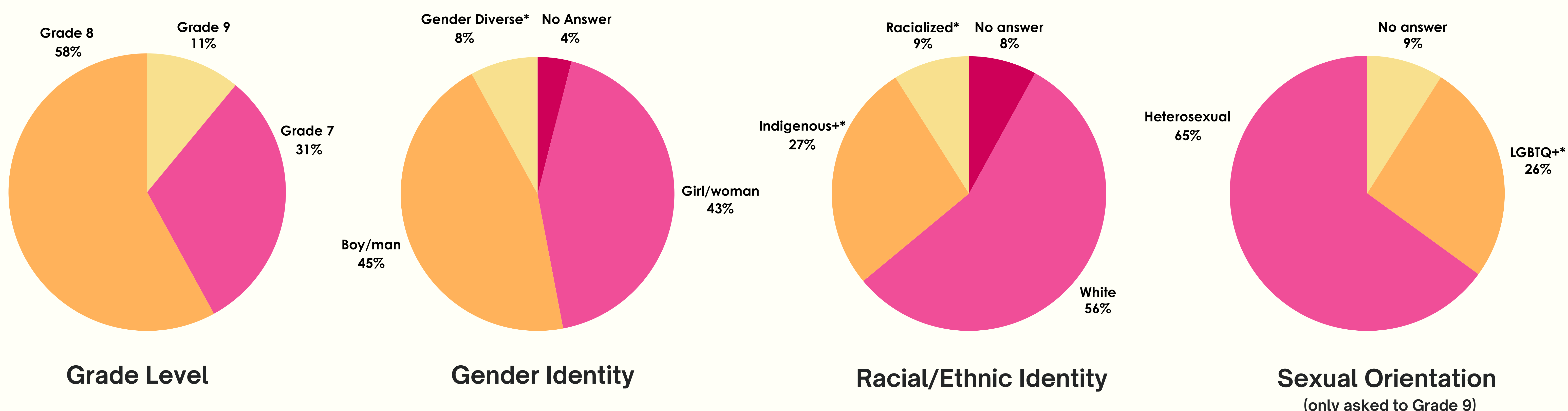
The RSE program focuses on providing youth with an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy and informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, and to participate in healthy relationships.

- ◆ **Content:** Four distinct programs geared towards students in grade 7-9 and 10-12.
- ◆ **Format:** Four 1-hour sessions
- ◆ **Reach:** 411 students in 10 middle and high schools



Figure 1. Program Sites Across Canada

Demographics



* **Gender Diverse:** Identifying as one or more of the following: Indigenous or other cultural gender identity (e.g., Two-Spirit); Non-binary, genderqueer, agender, gender non-conforming, neither exclusively male nor female; Transgender; Trans Man/Transgender

** **Indigenous+:** Identifying as exclusively Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit) or Indigenous and another racial/ethnic identity

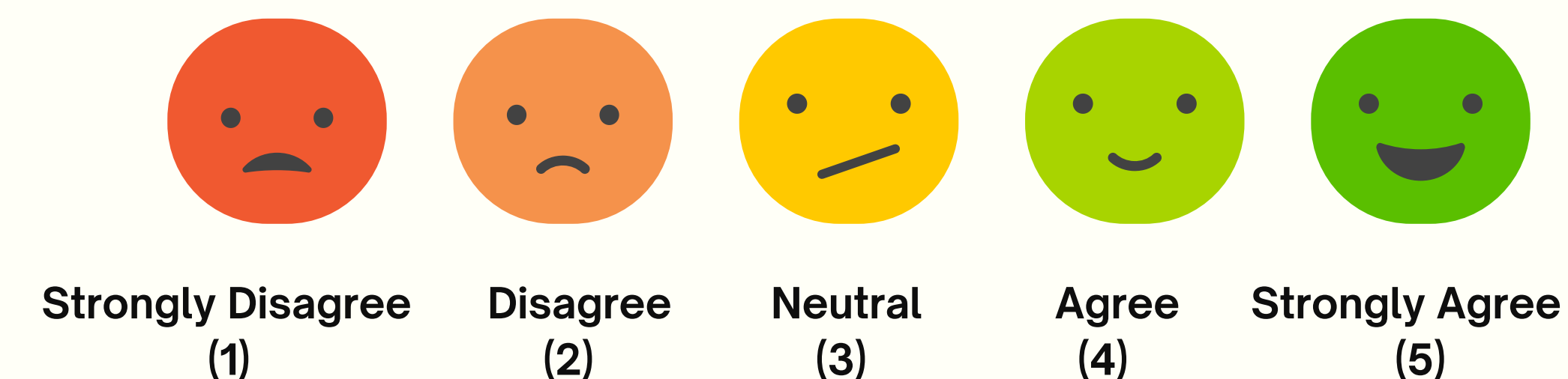
* **Racialized:** Identifying as not exclusively White or as Indigenous

* **LGBTQ+:** Identifying as one or more of the following: Asexual, Bisexual, Queer, Questioning, Lesbian, Pansexual, or Other

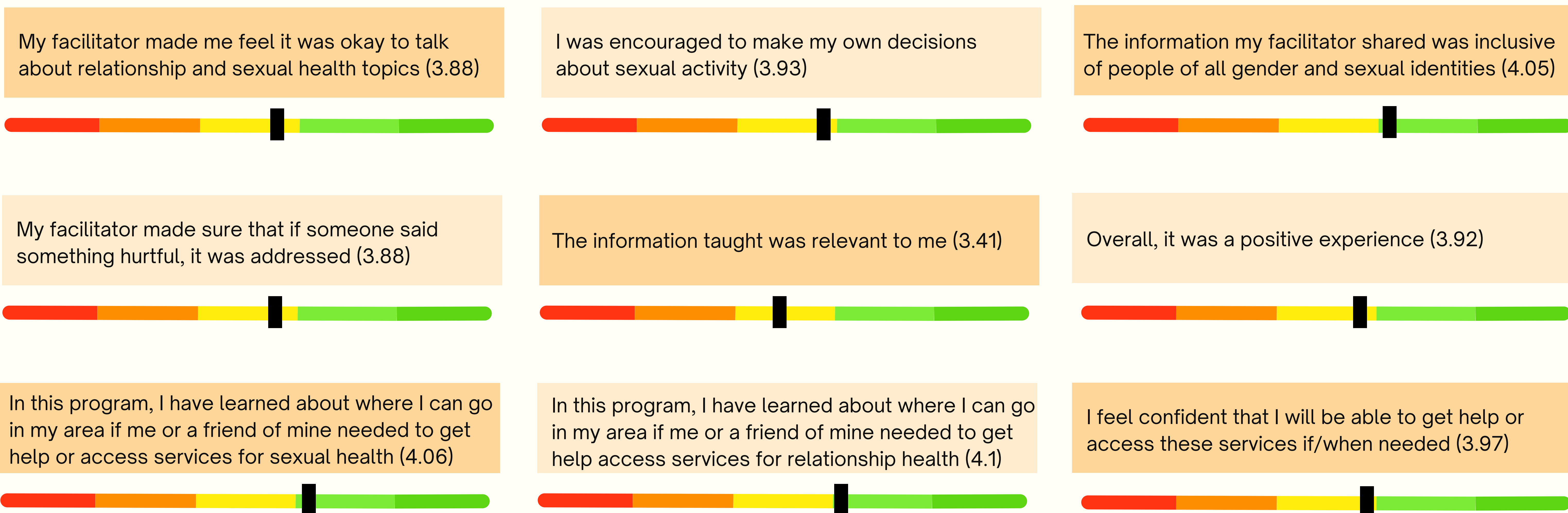


Outcomes: Youth Experiences

CPHA developed a scale to better understand youth experiences in the RSE program. The indicators in CPHA's scale focus on various characteristics that youth identified as most important to them for their sexual health and relationships education.



This is how 411 youth who participated in the RSE program rated the following statements, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):



Some statements received more ambivalent responses. Qualitative findings indicate that some youth found the information taught to be unclear, the program and facilitator feeling formal and serious, their facilitator focusing on what they did NOT want youth to do and activities to avoid and hearing about their facilitator's personal beliefs rather than informational content.

Outcomes: At Grade Level (7 & 8)

Students in the Grade 7 and 8 programs answered several questions assessing social emotional learning before and after the program.

Significant growth¹ was found in 2 of 5 measures:

“I know how to set personal boundaries”
 “I understand health relationships”

These results are promising as **both of these are key learning objectives for the RSE program.**

Lastly, youth were asked to share the most important/useful thing they learned during the RSE program. **The key themes that emerged include:**



Outcomes: At Grade Level (9)

Students in the Grade 9 program were asked to reflect on their confidence related to sexual health and healthy relationships before and after the program.

Significant growth¹ was found in 8 of 10 measures:

- Using a condom
- Using another form of birth control other than a condom
- Talking with a sexual partner about a relationship issue
- Eliminating sexual double standards (based on gender) in your life
- Negotiating with a sexual partner to practice safer sex
- Talking with a sexual partner about a sexual health issue, like an STI
- Eliminating gender stereotyping from your life
- Accepting diversity in sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual)

These results show **improved self-efficacy and confidence with important skills and practices to navigate sexual health and cultivate healthy relationships.**

These themes are critical because they **empower youth with the skills and confidence** needed to navigate their sexual health and relationships safely and respectfully, demonstrating the program's success in **fostering meaningful personal growth and resilience.**



1. Statistically significant as P < 0.05

Questions? Contact: info@cpha.ca

*This infographic has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

*This infographic was created with support from students in the Fall 2024 Health Communications course at the University of Toronto: Jolly Noor, Sumeya Ahmed Hassan, Nasma Ashraf, Asma Adam.