

# Negative Attitudes About Sexual Consent and Sexual Consent Engagement Differences by Gender

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## Introduction

- Consent is communication of the internal desire for a sexual experience.<sup>1</sup>
- Men rely more on nonverbal communication or rely on their partner for explicit consent while women are much more affirmative and less assumptive.<sup>6</sup>
- Men tend to struggle more than women when asking for and establishing consent, as asking for consent can seem too vulnerable.<sup>8</sup>
- Negative attitudes on sexual consent are associated with more traditional sexual norms and less overall engagement with sexual consent practices.<sup>10</sup>
- A shift in sexual norms towards more comfort with consent communication rooted in more positive attitudes regarding consent could increase consent engagement among men and decrease sexual coercion.
- Reaffirming the relationship between gender, negative attitudes towards consent, and how those attitudes affect consent engagement will highlight the gaps and areas of opportunity for improving consent education efforts while also contributing to the continued proactive efforts to reduce sexual stigma around consent.

## Purpose & Hypotheses

- The present study is intended to examine the relationship among negative consent attitudes, gender, and consent practices.
- We hypothesize consent attitudes will differ by gender, and negative attitudes towards consent will predict percent consent engagement.

## Methodology & Analyses

**Participants:** 196 undergraduate students, 126 women and 70 men, aged 18–25 years in Canada, were recruited by the university’s recruitment system. 83% of participants identified as caucasian and 87% as heterosexual.<sup>5</sup>

**Method:** Data was collected via a survey administered on a research laboratories computer.<sup>5</sup>

**Measures<sup>5</sup>:**

*Demographic and Dating History Questionnaire*

Surveys gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, relationship status, and life-time number of sexual partners.

*Attitudes Towards Sexuality Scale (ATSS)*

Assesses sexual attitudes of topics like nudity, abortion, and premarital sex.

*Perceptions of Friends Sexual Consent Attitudes Scale*

Assesses descriptive social norms measured by peer attitudes towards sexual consent.

*School/Parent Sexual Health Education Scales*

Assesses familiarity with puberty/physical development, birth control, communications, and caregiver sexual health education in middle school, with additional questions to assess exposure to sexual consent education.

*Attitudes Towards Media and University Coverage of Sexual Consent Scale*

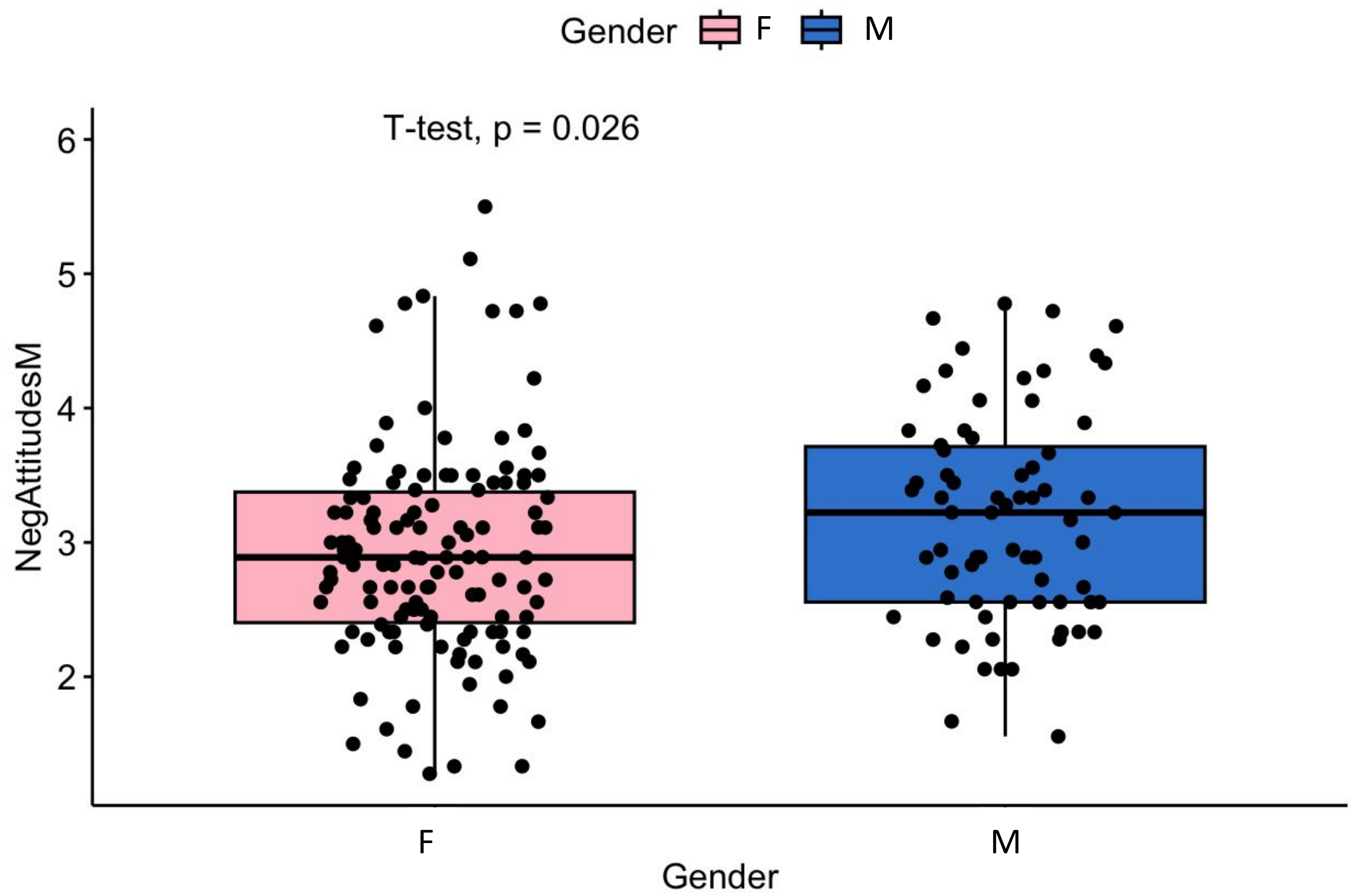
Assesses the perception of sexual consent coverage in media.

*Sexual Consent Scale-Revised (SCS-R)*

Assesses sexual consent attitudes towards establishing consent with subscales assessing positive/negative attitudes of establishing sexual consent and peer perception and its effects on consent.

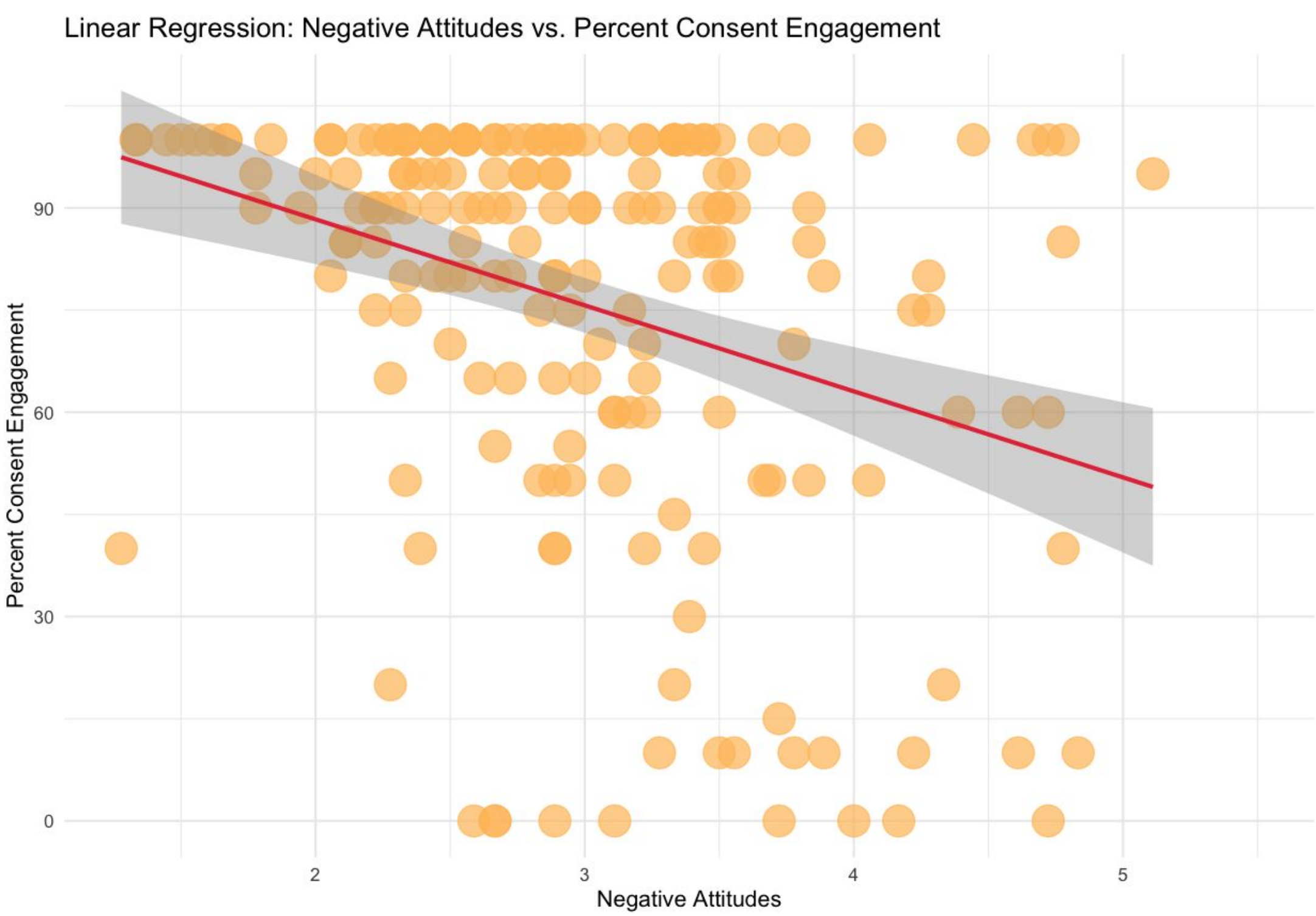
## Results

**Model 1:** Independent Samples T-test for Gender and Negative Consent Attitudes



- Results showed a significant difference in negative attitudes towards consent according to gender,  $t(143.75) = -2.25, p = .0262$ , equal variances not assumed due to group number differences
- The higher average in men ( $M = 3.19$ ) than women ( $M = 2.92$ ) indicates men have more negative attitudes toward consent

**Model 2:** Linear Regression of Negative Attitudes Towards Consent and Percent Consent Engagement



- The following assumptions were evaluated and met: model fit, linearity, homogeneity of variance, outliers, and normality of residuals.
- The overall regression model was statistically significant,  $F(1, 188) = 23.35, p < 0.001$ , and explained 10.58% of the variance in consent engagement ( $R^2 = 0.1058$ )
- The Negative Attitudes coefficient was also significant ( $\beta = -12.63, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that for every additional unit of negative attitudes towards consent, engagement with consent decreased by 12.63 units
- Negative attitudes towards consent predicted consent engagement

## Discussion & Clinical Implications

- The significant association between negative attitudes about sexual consent and sexual consent engagement indicates that the higher the negative attitude toward consent, the less sexual consent engagement will occur.
- The statistically significant difference in negative attitudes between men and women regarding consent suggests that men are likely to have less sexual consent engagement than women, as they have higher negative attitudes toward consent.
- Gender and sexual norms based on gender influence attitudes about sexual consent, which in turn affects sexual consent engagement outcomes.
- Interventions geared towards increasing positive attitudes toward sexual consent in the population of heterosexual cisgender men ages 18-25 could destigmatize effective consent communication and increase sexual consent engagement, thereby decreasing sexual coercion and sexual violence.

## Limitations and Future Research

- The data was collected through self-report methods, which may increase social desirability bias; Longitudinal research is needed to more accurately capture data.<sup>5</sup>
- The sample population consisted of Canadian undergraduate students with a majority female (126:70 F:M), heterosexual, white, unmarried participants; future research should examine differences across geographic regions, age, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and relationship types (single, dating, polyamorous, partnered etc.) to increase generalizability.<sup>5</sup>
- The data was collected in 2019, producing older figures which may not capture post-pandemic changes in behavior and social norms such as “Me Too,” “Red Pill,” “Manosphere,” and “Trad Wife” trends, or reflect current realities of sexual consent.<sup>5</sup>

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