

El acceso a educación sexual integral en escuelas secundarias de Argentina según las Pruebas Aprender 2022 - Versión en inglés.

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Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Argentina's Secondary Schools According to the 2022 Aprender Assessment

El acceso a educación sexual integral en escuelas secundarias de Argentina según las Pruebas Aprender 2022

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Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Argentina's Secondary Schools According to the 2022 Aprender Assessment

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Abstract:

This article examines the access to Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) among secondary school students in Argentina, based on data from a national survey conducted with students and school principals. Drawing on responses to the CSE module of the 2022 Aprender Assessment (195.804 participants), the study characterizes the students' exposure to CSE. The evaluation considers four analytical dimensions: the relevance, the universality, the comprehensiveness, and the cross-curricular integration of the contents received. The results reveal a gap between students' widespread acknowledgment of the importance of CSE and its effective implementation, with disparities observed by sex, educational background of the household, and region. Moreover, there is a predominance of approaches focused on biology and health, to the detriment of dimensions related to affectivity, diversity, and rights.

Keywords: comprehensive sexual education, Argentina, secondary school, cross-curricular approach, comprehensiveness.

Resumen:

Este artículo analiza el acceso a la Educación Sexual Integral (ESI) por parte de estudiantes de escuelas secundarias de Argentina, basándose en datos de un relevamiento nacional. A partir de las respuestas al módulo sobre ESI de las Pruebas Aprender del año 2022 (195.804 participantes), se realizó un análisis descriptivo que caracteriza el contacto que los estudiantes de secundaria han tenido con la ESI. La evaluación se realizó utilizando como dimensiones de análisis la pertinencia, la universalidad, la integralidad y la transversalidad con que los contenidos fueron recibidos por los estudiantes. Los resultados encontraron una distancia entre el reconocimiento generalizado de la relevancia de la ESI por parte de los estudiantes y su efectiva implementación, existiendo disparidades por sexo, capital educativo de origen y región, así como una prevalencia de abordajes centrados en la biología y la salud, en detrimento de los ejes vinculados con la afectividad, la diversidad y los derechos.

Palabras clave: educación sexual integral, Argentina, escuela secundaria, transversalidad, integralidad.

1. Introduction

Comprehensive sexuality education is a curriculum-based process that addresses the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality in an integrated manner (UNESCO, 2018). It consists of an approach within the field of sexuality education policies, specifically school-based policies. In Western countries, these policies acknowledge significant changes beginning in the 1960s and 1970s (Weaver et al., 2005), decades during which Argentina experienced transformations in perceptions and values regarding the family, gender, and sexuality (Cosse, 2006; Cosse, 2009). According to Zemaitis (2021), starting in the 1960s, expert knowledge and discussions emerged in Argentina that gradually formed a field capable of demanding that the State, by the late 1980s, develop sex education programs for the formal education system.

Internationally, the response to the global AIDS epidemic in the 1980s marked a turning point that spurred a revision of school-based sex education programs, reorienting them toward prevention and health. Following this precedent, it was at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) that a new consensus was established regarding the criteria by which numerous countries would henceforth address the relationship between sexuality and education (Greene et al., 2002). The 179 signatory countries recognized sexuality as a right and assumed the responsibility of promoting adolescents' access to sex education, related information, and reproductive health services. While the objectives of its program of action were numerous, a priority was the reduction of teenage pregnancy. The ICPD placed adolescents at the center of new policies on sexuality and incorporated into the concept of reproductive health a component linked to the ability to experience a satisfying and safe sex life, the possibility of procreating, and the freedom to decide whether or not to do so, when, and how often (United Nations [UN], 1995).

In Argentina, Law 26,150 on Comprehensive Sex Education, enacted in 2006, adopted many of these guidelines and adapted them to the national context. As noted by Carnero et al. (2013), the law was a key milestone in the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action in Argentina. This legislation established the National Comprehensive Sexuality Education Program, designed to ensure the teaching of comprehensive sexuality education content in educational institutions—both public and private—from early childhood through teacher training (SEIE, 2022).

In 2018, the Federal Council of Education supplemented the guidelines of Law 26,150 through Resolution 340/18, establishing, among other things, the commitment of all jurisdictions in the country to address the content of this policy based on five conceptual pillars: caring for the body and health; valuing emotional well-being; ensuring gender equity; respecting diversity; and exercising rights (Mariani & Messina, 2025).

The implementation of ESI in Argentina falls within the framework of a federal education system, in which the 24 jurisdictions (23 provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires) are responsible for their respective education systems. As Ruiz (2023) notes, the National Constitution establishes that the jurisdictions administer their own education systems, while the national government defines the general regulatory frameworks and sets educational policy guidelines. Coordination between the two levels is channeled through the Federal Council of Education, a body that brings together provincial ministers and whose resolutions require jurisdictional endorsement to take full effect (Romualdo, 2024). This institutional structure generates dynamics of educational federalism in which national guidelines are implemented in heterogeneous ways across territories, conditioned by the management capacities, cultural traditions, and political priorities of each jurisdiction (Ruiz, 2023).

This heterogeneity is also evident in ESI's regulatory framework. Law 26,150 itself delegated to each jurisdiction the design of teaching proposals, the selection of materials, and the organization of teacher training programs, thereby establishing a decentralized implementation scheme within a common national framework. In this context, several provinces moved forward with the enactment of their own regulations. The National Ministry of Education, for its part, supported the process by providing teaching materials and organizing teacher training sessions. However, the effective scope of these actions depended in each case on jurisdictional adoption (Mariani & Messina, 2025). This multi-level regulatory and management framework constitutes the institutional context within which the territorial inequalities in access to ESI revealed by the analyzed data must be interpreted.

From the very beginning, research on the implementation of ESI in Argentina has highlighted a gap between policy objectives and their classroom implementation. The study conducted by Faur et al. (2015), which combined questionnaires for teachers and administrators with observations in schools across several provinces, found that a significant portion of the teaching staff was ill-prepared to address the law's content, struggled to incorporate it into the institutional educational project, and tended to reduce the content to the biological and reproductive dimensions, to the detriment of the themes of affectivity, diversity, and rights. Similarly, Kornblit et al. (2013) found that public school teachers' conceptions of sexuality and gender frequently reproduced biologicistic and heteronormative frameworks that hindered the implementation of a comprehensive approach.

Subsequent studies delved deeper into institutional conditions. Romero (2021) analyzed competing interpretations of the cross-cutting nature of ESI in schools in La Plata, identifying two modes of implementation (curricular and institutional) whose prevalence varied across schools according to each school's cultural context. Dellacasa et al. (2025) point to the inadequate institutionalization of support teams in the province of Buenos Aires as an unresolved

issue, while Russo Sierra and Lovey (2023) identified insufficient professional development, the weak integration of ESI into educational projects, and the persistence of fragmented approaches as obstacles in secondary schools in Rosario. In terms of best practices, Faur and Lavari (2018) described institutional conditions that favor more comprehensive implementations, but noted that these constitute specific cases rather than the norm within the system. A recent review of the academic literature (Cuello et al., 2025) indicates that research on ESI in Argentine secondary schools has tended to focus on the teacher's role, without giving equal consideration to students' perspectives.

This study aims to expand knowledge about students' reception of and access to comprehensive sexuality education by analyzing data from the 2022 Aprender Tests. Examining this source allows us not only to position students as key informants but also to underpin and complement the extensive body of qualitative research on ESI with information from a nationwide, probability-based survey.

To advance these objectives, a descriptive analysis is presented that focuses on four dimensions of the policy's implementation: relevance, universality, comprehensiveness, and cross-cutting nature. These dimensions of the ESI design in Argentina were intended to guide implementation actions. Relevance implies that the information and materials made available to students must be relevant to those who receive them and tailored to their cultural, social, and personal characteristics. Universality stems from the fact that this policy is designed to cover all levels of education that children in the country undergo (early childhood, primary, and secondary), through both privately and publicly (State) managed institutions. Comprehensiveness refers to how the regulations and the subsequent resolutions that accompanied their implementation view sex education as something that goes beyond the merely biological or reproductive, broadening its scope to include education about body care, emotional well-being, gender equity, diversity, and the exercise of rights. Finally, mainstreaming refers to the pedagogical approach, which establishes that sex education cannot be restricted to a specific subject or

activity in students' education, but must instead be a set of content present throughout the entire curriculum, and that can be addressed both during regular class time and through supplementary talks, special workshops, projects, etc.

Although the education system incorporated these dimensions during the implementation of this policy, this research posits that the implementation process may have involved nuances, leading to gender, institutional, territorial, and regional inequalities.

Through this research, we seek to partially answer questions such as: To what extent have students been exposed to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) throughout their education? How relevant is this content to them

in schools? Are there differences in the reception of ESI among adolescents from different regions, from public and private schools, or with other distinctive characteristics? What was the scope of the dimensions—universality, comprehensiveness, and cross-cutting nature—with which the policy was designed?

In the context of this article, access to ESI constitutes the object of study. It refers to the degree and manner in which the policy's content effectively reached its intended audience. Students' reception of the content is the primary empirical dimension used to measure this access. Finally, information from school administrators helps to understand the institutional implementation conditions that frame this reception.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sources

This study employs a quantitative, descriptive, and cross-sectional approach, based on data from the national "Pruebas Aprender 2022" survey. This survey assesses student learning and systematizes information regarding living conditions and the school environment. Its objective is to produce diagnostic evidence for decision-making aimed at guaranteeing the right to education. The supplementary questionnaires from 2019 and 2022 included a module of ESI questions at the secondary level for both students and school administrators.

The target population comprised students enrolled in their final year of secondary school (5th or 6th year, depending on the jurisdiction) during 2022. The survey reached 403,539 students and 11,719 schools. This study used a probability sample comprising 50% of students who responded to the specific Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) module, yielding 195,804 valid responses. This module included information on the ESI topics students reported covering, how these topics were addressed (e.g., in classes, through workshops), and the sources adolescents use when they have questions or concerns about sex

education topics. The survey covers secondary-level educational institutions, including both public and private schools, across urban and rural areas

2.2. Dimensions of Analysis

This research focuses its analysis on the four dimensions mentioned above, which are part of the current school sex education policy in Argentina:

- **Relevance:** measured by the degree of student interest in exploring ESI content in greater depth and the identification of the main sources of information (the Internet, family, peers, or school).
- **Universality:** assessed based on students' reports of exposure to at least one of the thirteen topics surveyed and the administrative directive regarding the inclusion of ESI in the Institutional Curriculum Project (PCI).
- **Comprehensiveness:** assessed based on access to content covering the five conceptual pillars of the Federal Council of Education: body care, emotional well-being, gender equity, diversity, and the exercise of rights. The study relates these pillars to the surveyed items as indicated in Table 1.

- Cross-curricularity: determined by the approach used, with cross-curricular implementation considered when activities spanning multiple subjects or the use of at least two planned institutional strategies were reported.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis based on open-access microdata. We calculated relative frequencies (percentages) to characterize the reception of ESI according to:

- Student gender: the “gender” category is used as asked in the Aprender Tests item. Its categories are: female, male, and X.
- Household educational capital: operationalized based on the mother’s educational level, a variable available in the Aprender Tests’ supplementary questionnaire. Three levels are distinguished: low (incomplete or complete primary education), medium (incomplete or complete secondary education), and high (incomplete or complete tertiary or university education).
- Student socioeconomic status: a variable available in the source, constructed by the Ministry of Education based on a principal component analysis that synthesizes the variables of the father’s and mother’s

educational levels, household overcrowding, perception of subsidies, and ownership of technological devices. The levels are classified as low, medium, and high.

- Region: the regional classification used in the Aprender Tests is employed, with the following regions: Central, Northwest (NOA), Northeast (NEA), Cuyo, and South.
- Type of school management: distinguishes between state-run and privately run schools, in accordance with the survey’s classification.
- Principal characteristics: includes age, grouped into three broad categories, and the principal’s gender in the categories: male, female, and X.
- School supervision: a variable reported by school administrators, indicating whether the school received external supervision visits during the reference year.
- Presence of an institutional ESI representative: a variable reported by school administrators, indicating whether the school had a person or team designated as ESI representatives at the time of the survey.

For data processing, we excluded blank, multiple-choice, or “not applicable” responses from the analysis and treated them as missing data.

Table 1: Correspondence between topics assessed in the Aprender Tests and the five conceptual pillars defined by the Federal Council of Education.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025) based on Resolution 340/18 and Aprender Test questionnaires.

Axes CFE	Topics in Aprender Tests (question 35)
Caring for the body and health	Reproduction, pregnancy, childbirth, motherhood, and fatherhood
	Teenage pregnancy
	Contraceptive methods
	Prevention of sexually transmitted infections
	Taking care of your body and health and striving for independence
Valuing emotional connection	Partnerships, love, and mutual care in romantic relationships
Ensuring gender equality	Gender-based violence in dating relationships
	Responsible use of social media and prevention of cyberbullying
	Beauty standards and their relationship to consumption
Respecting diversity	Diversity: gender identity, sexual orientation, or physical appearance. Recognition and respect for the different ways of being a woman and a man
Exercising our rights	The rights of adolescents and young people to access sexual and reproductive health services
	Legal frameworks for voluntary termination of pregnancy
	Discrimination, violence, harassment, abuse, mistreatment, sexual exploitation, and trafficking

3. Results

The results are organized around the research questions posed in the introduction, addressing the relevance of ESI for students, the degree of exposure to this content, inequalities in its reception, and the extent of its universality, comprehensiveness, and cross-curricular dimensions. The data source enables us to examine these dimensions from the students' perspective, supplemented by information from school administrators.

3.1. Relevance of ESI for Students

To determine how relevant ESI is to students, we analyze the degree of importance they assign to different topics in the school setting. In this

regard, in the ranking of content that students consider important to explore in greater depth or incorporate into secondary school, ESI ranks second (84%), behind Physical and Emotional Health (87%) and ahead of bullying (83%) (Figure 1). It also ranks above topics such as technology, programming, and robotics, as well as those related to labor market demands.

It is important to note that the three most requested topics (physical and emotional health, ESI, and bullying) are included in the ESI curriculum, reflecting a selection of content closely aligned with students' preferences based on the topics offered.

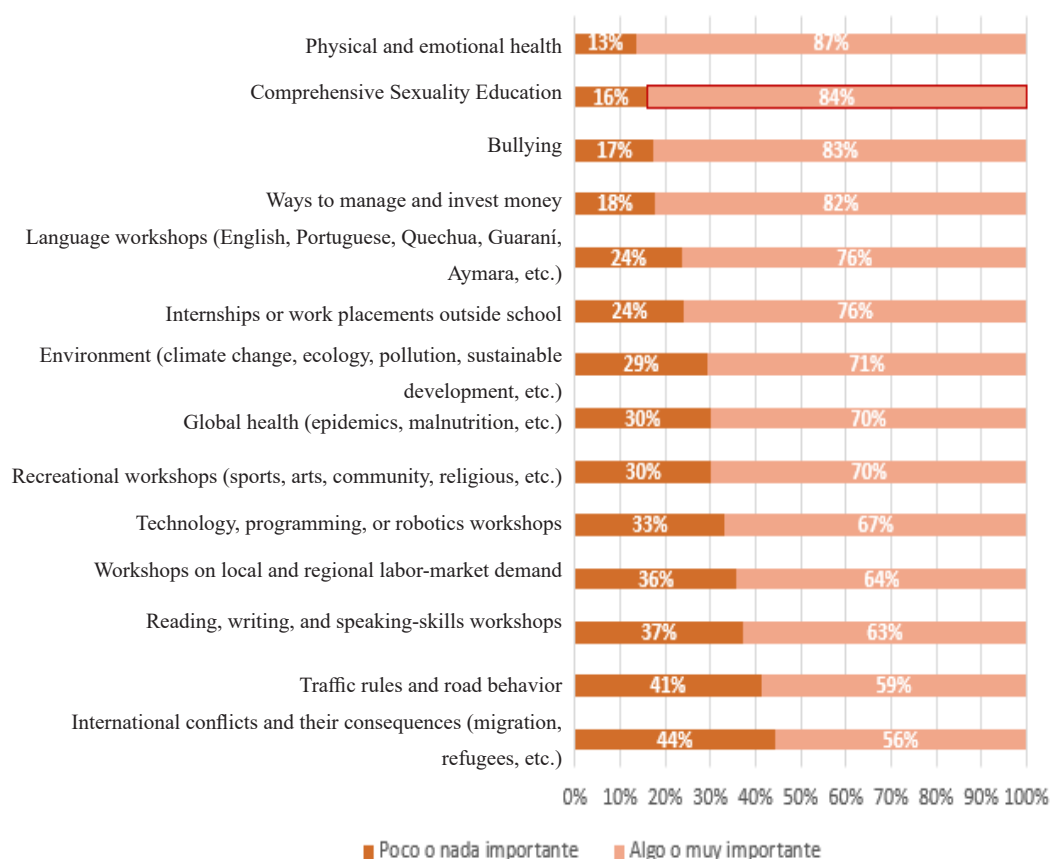


Figure 1: Percentage of 5th- and 6th-grade students by degree of importance for exploring or incorporating specific topics in their assigned school. Argentina, 2022.

Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

Notes: Ratings of 1 and 2 on a scale of 1 to 4 are considered not very important or not important at all, where 1 is not important at all and 4 is very important; ratings of 3 and 4 on that same scale are considered somewhat important or very important. Blank responses (-9), multiple-choice responses (-6), or responses categorized as "not applicable" (-1) were considered missing data.

However, the demand for these topics to be included in school curricula coexists with students' weak perception of a connection between them and school. In this regard, adolescents reported that their main source of information on sexuality is the Internet and social media (69.5%) (Figure 2). In second place is consulting a family member (50.1%), and another significant group turns to peers and classmates (46.6%) or a partner (23.6%). School staff (teachers, homeroom teachers, or the guidance team) are not the people students most often turn to for questions about sexuality or for information on the topic. Only 22.4% of students reported turning to school teachers, and 7.6% to homeroom teachers, school administrators, or the school counseling team.

With certain caveats, it can be stated that the majority of young people in the country believe that Comprehensive Sexuality Education should be introduced and expanded in secondary school. Even so, we will see that not all of them have addressed CSE-related topics.

3.2. Universality of Comprehensive Sex Education in Argentina

Regarding the question posed about the extent to which students are exposed to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) throughout their school career, the coverage of the topics addressed is examined. The Aprender tests cover 13 topics related to CSE, including teenage pregnancy, contraceptive methods, and beauty standards, and their relationship to consumption. Considering only the girls and boys who provided valid responses (195,804 in total), it is observed that, at the national level, 10.1% of adolescents in the 5th and 6th years of secondary school did not address any of the thirteen topics surveyed (Figure 3). Analysis of the question regarding differences in ESI delivery across student groups shows low variability. However, greater deficits are identified among female students and males, among those with children—particularly males—among those from low socioeconomic

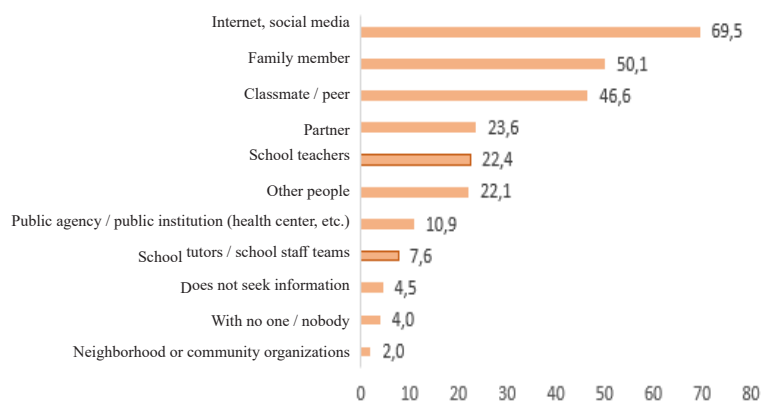


Figure 2: Percentage of 5th- and 6th-year students by whom they turn to for information on sexuality. Argentina, 2022.

Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

Note: Blank responses (-9) and "not applicable" (-1) were considered missing data.

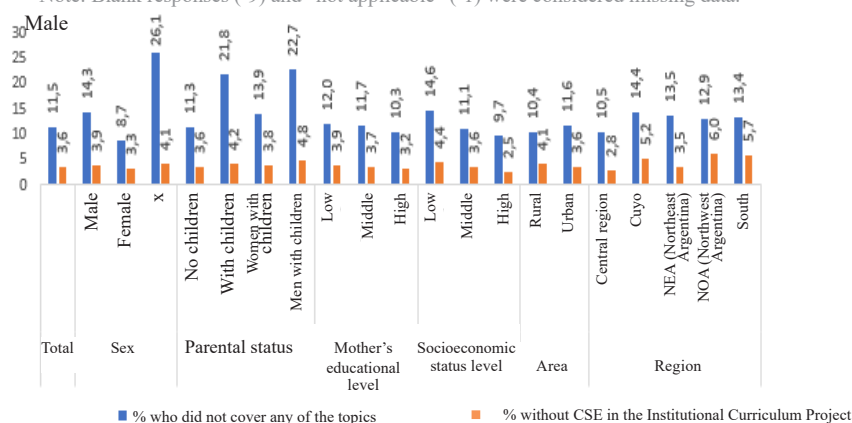


Figure 3: Percentage of students who reported not having covered any of the ESI topics surveyed, and percentage of students whose school principal reported that the Institutional Curriculum includes ESI, by individual and household characteristics. Argentina, 2022.

Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

Note: Blank responses (-9), multiple-choice responses (-6), or responses categorized as "not applicable" (-1) were considered missing data.

backgrounds, and among residents of the Cuyo region.

To complement the analysis of the universal dimension of ESI, we examine the information collected from school administrators. The percentage of principals who stated that Comprehensive Sex Education is not included in their schools' Institutional Curriculum Project is 3.6%. This percentage is relatively lower than that indicated by the information provided by students. Under this definition of universality (that all students have Comprehensive Sexuality Education in their schools' curriculum plans), the groups mentioned above also appear as those with lower coverage, and those from the NOA and Southern regions are added (Figure 3).

Among the school-related factors that could affect the implementation of ESI, the lack of supervision stands out as a decisive factor in the exclusion of ESI from the Institutional Curriculum Project: schools that reported not having received supervisory visits during the year had 13.6% of institutional projects without ESI, a rate higher than the 2.2% observed in schools where supervision did occur (Figure 4). Regarding the other characteristics evaluated, student responses remained stable (within the

range of 4% to 5%), regardless of whether an ESI coordinator was present in the schools. This role was found to influence the inclusion of ESI in the institutional curriculum, but not the proportion of students who did not receive any ESI content in their coursework.

3.3. Comprehensiveness of ESI in Argentina

The results presented so far refer to the limitations in coverage that ESI might have as a nationwide public policy, defining "lack of coverage" (in its full sense) as the failure to address any of the topics examined, or their omission from the school's Institutional Curriculum Framework. As mentioned earlier, one of the principles of ESI is comprehensiveness. That is, addressing sexuality not only from a biological or epidemiological perspective, but also incorporating its emotional and relational dimensions, and recognizing its link to personal well-being and access to rights. To answer the question regarding the scope of ESI's comprehensiveness, we analyze the extent to which the various pillars comprising this policy have been effectively addressed. The level of comprehensiveness demonstrated in the implementation of ESI will be considered a comprehensive approach, in which the student

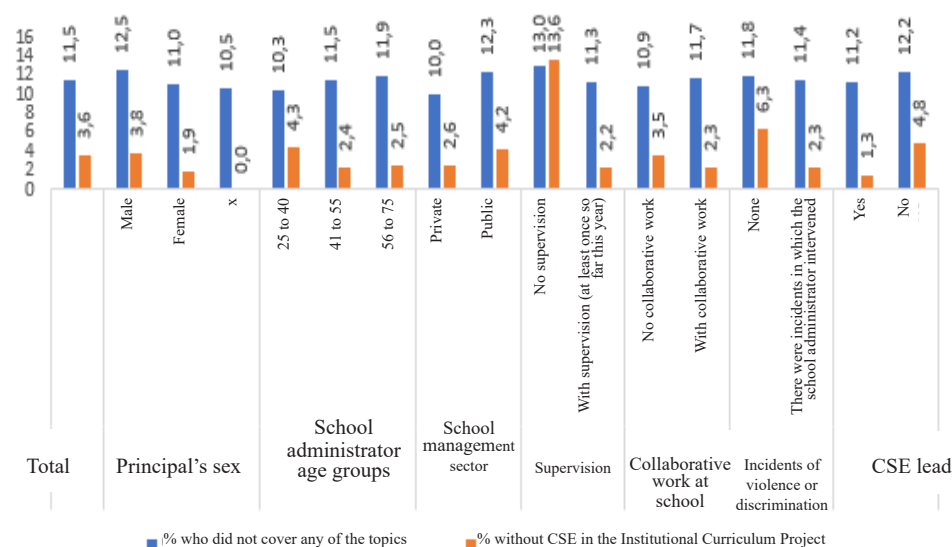


Figura 4: Percentage of students who reported not having covered any of the ESI topics surveyed; and percentage of students whose school administrator reported that the Institutional Curriculum includes ESI, by school characteristics, Argentina, 2022.

Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

Note: Blank responses (-9), multiple-choice responses (-6), or responses categorized as "not applicable" (-1) were considered missing data.

has been exposed to topics from the five pillars defined by the CFE. As shown in Figure 5, only 42.5% of students have been exposed to content from all five pillars. Of the girls and boys who were exposed to topics on sexuality, 15.6% received content on one or two of the pillars, and a significant group, 41.9%, reported having covered between three and four pillars.

Unlike what was observed regarding the universal nature of ESI, where boys had less access than girls, in the case of comprehensiveness, more

boys report having received education in all five areas (46.9%) than girls (39%) and students of gender X (39.9%). A difference is also observed based on the mother's educational capital, inferred from the mother's educational level and, more directly, from the SES (socioeconomic status) indicator; students whose mothers have a low educational level are those who demonstrate greater comprehensiveness in receiving ESI, compared to the rest. The same is true for students from rural areas and the Central (43.2%) and NOA (44.3%) regions.

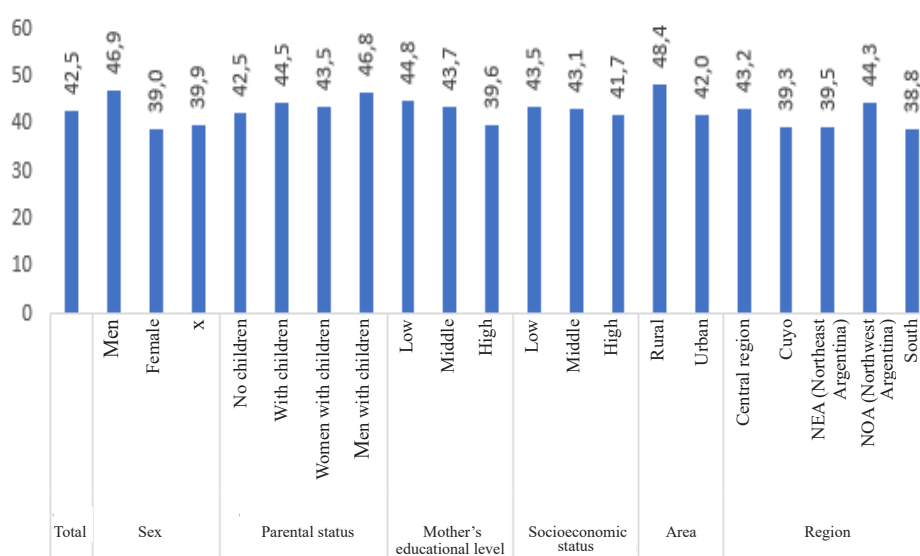


Figure 5: Percentage of students who received instruction on the five areas defined by the CFE, by individual and household characteristics. Argentina, 2022.

Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

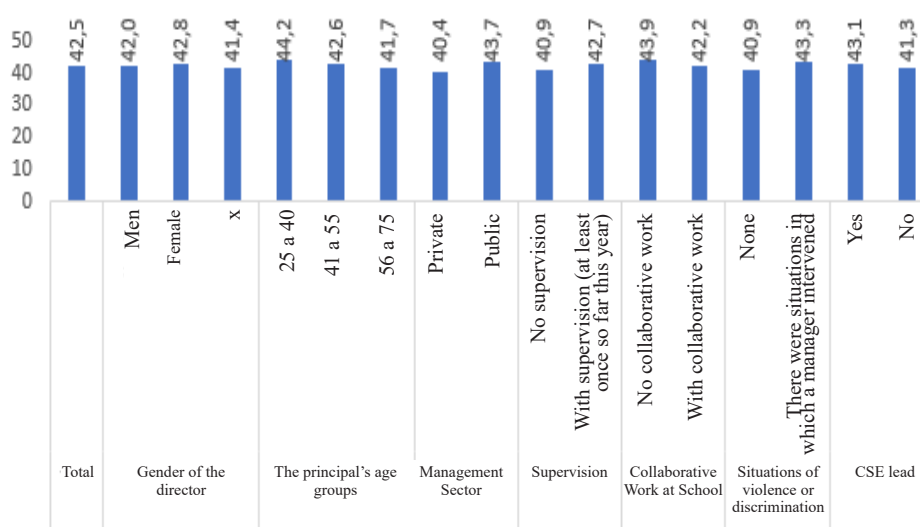


Figure 6: Percentage of students who received instruction on the five core areas defined by the CFE, by school characteristics. Argentina, 2022.

Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

No notable differences are observed based on the characteristics of the educational institution. The percentage of students who received comprehensive ESI ranges from 40.4% to 44.2%, with the latter being the highest, corresponding to students with young administrators aged 25 to 40. Greater comprehensiveness is observed in public schools compared to private ones (43.7% versus 40.4%), in schools with supervision (42.7% versus 40.9%), and in schools with an ESI liaison (43.1% versus 41.3% without one).

3.4. Mainstreaming of ESI in Argentina

Finally, in response to the question about the cross-curricular nature of ESI, the diversity of curricular spaces in which these topics are addressed is examined. That is, the cross-curricular dimension seeks to assess the extent to which ESI is integrated into the curriculum without being limited to a specific subject or to isolated activities potentially disconnected from daily learning.

Based on the question of how topics related to ESI¹ are addressed in school, the most common approaches were “activities in one of the

1 The term “planned” excludes the following options from the survey: g) “we discuss it when the topic comes up,” and h) “my school does not address topics related to ESI.”

subjects” and “special classes or workshops with specialists”: 39.8% correspond to the first option and 45.7% to the second.

The composite indicator used to quantify whether the principle of cross-curricular integration was met is based on two conditions: whether the option “With activities across multiple subjects” was selected, or whether at least two planned methods of delivering ESI were selected. Based on these indicators, the results on the extent of cross-curricular integration are presented by analysis category.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the approach to ESI is relatively uniform across the observed groups, though there are some differences. For example, in the public sector, the cross-curricular reach is greater than in the private sector: 18.2% versus 14.7%. There are also differences between regions: Cuyo has the lowest cross-cutting reach of ESI compared to the NOA, which has the highest (12.3% and 18.3%, respectively).

Regarding institutional or leadership characteristics, practices of greater or lesser cross-curricular integration show striking stability, with values ranging from 14.7% to 18.8% across the gender and age of the administrator, management sector, presence of ESI liaisons, and other variables (Figure 8). This interpretation is consistent with the assessment information that,

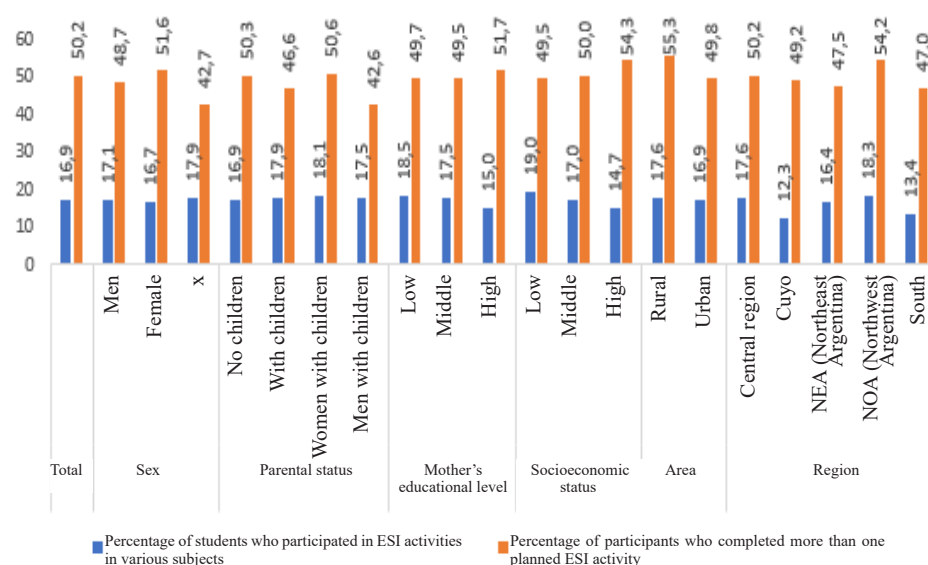


Figura 7: Porcentaje de estudiantes que recibieron ESI de manera transversal, por características individuales y del hogar. Argentina, 2022.

Fuente: Elaboración propia (2025) en base a microdatos de las Pruebas Aprender.

according to students, more than one strategy for implementing ESI was deployed at the school. In this second way of operationalizing the cross-curricular nature of implementation, the values range from 48.2% to 52%, with slight differences across each of the observed variables.

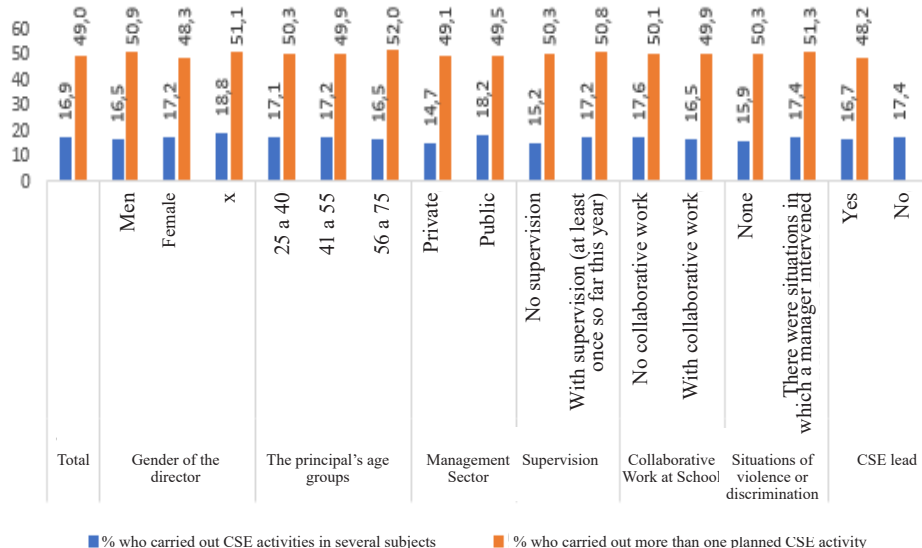


Figura 8: Percentage of students who did not receive ESI in a cross-curricular manner, by individual and household characteristics. Argentina, 2022.
Source: Author's own analysis (2025) based on microdata from the Aprender Tests.

4. Discussion

In 2006, Argentina enacted a law to provide comprehensive sexuality education to students from early childhood through higher education (SEIE, 2022). At the regional level, while nearly half of the countries in Latin America have specific programs on comprehensive sexuality education in their educational systems, the existence of a specific law is quite exceptional (Cimmino et al., 2024). In turn, each country exhibits strengths and weaknesses in these policies linked to its educational and cultural traditions, among other factors. In the case of the program in Argentina, the implementation design proposes a cross-cutting and comprehensive approach within educational curricula, with universal coverage. Despite this, there is evidence that the Argentine education system only partially achieved these objectives.

To contextualize our results, it should be noted that research on ESI in Argentina is both very extensive and extremely fragmented in its territorial coverage. The most influential studies, such as that by Faur et al. (2015), are based on purposive samples and date back to the first decade of the law's implementation. In many cases, ethnographic research and studies of pedagogical experiences predominate, which allow for an understanding of concrete and valuable aspects of the implementation of this policy, but do not allow for the systematic identification of conditioning factors or the frequency of the phenomena described. Taking this body of work into account, this section engages with surveys of both national and jurisdictional scope, even though the latter do not permit generalizations across the entire territory. With this caveat, the

results of the present study are compared with subnational studies that provide comparable evidence on specific dimensions of the policy.

Previous studies document a variety of obstacles encountered in the implementation of this policy, such as the not always met needs for staff training, the honorary nature of school ESI coordinators in many jurisdictions, resistance from families and teaching staff, and the lack of dedicated time for planning, among others (Faur, 2020; Dellacasa et al., 2025; Fundación Huésped, 2021).

In our analysis, we found a gap between the importance students attribute to Comprehensive Sexuality Education and its actual implementation. While the vast majority consider incorporating this content into schools to be relevant, many reported not having received any CSE topics (10.1% of the sample) or having received them only partially. This gap between demand and actual delivery indicates that the policy succeeded in creating a social expectation among its target audience but has not yet been able to meet it universally. This suggests that the obstacles do not lie in the legitimacy of Comprehensive Sex Education in students' eyes (who generally endorse it), but rather in the institutional and pedagogical conditions of its implementation.

Regarding universality, local and national surveys highlighted the limitations in achieving it. A 2018 survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and Innovation of the City of Buenos Aires reveals that 13% of participating students (out of a total of 44,123 cases, equivalent to 8% of the total student body) reported not having covered comprehensive sexuality education content. This proportion rose to 22% among teaching staff (out of 850 cases, or 62% of the teaching staff) who reported not having addressed these topics in the previous year (GCBA, 2018). For its part, the National Ministry of Education, in the 2019 edition of the Aprender tests, found that 8% of students reported not having received any comprehensive sexuality education (ESI) content. This figure is lower in the private sector (5.7%) and higher in the public sector (9.4%) (SEIE, 2020). The fact that the 2022 national data

presented here places that percentage at 10.1% indicates that the universality gap did not change significantly during a unique historical period marked by more than a year of remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, we observed inequalities in access to comprehensive sex education based on student characteristics such as gender, parental status, educational background, and region. This creates tension regarding compliance with the principle of universality established in the regulations. Female students who do not have children and live in urban areas report higher levels of exposure. In contrast, non-binary individuals, males with children, and students from rural areas appear to be the most underserved groups. Similarly, school is not the primary place where students obtain information about sexuality or turn to for guidance.

The cross-curricular dimension, according to which students should receive comprehensive sexuality education across various subjects and in different types of activities, has not been fully established: slightly less than half of students receive it in this manner. This issue was also observed in the Chilean case, where the integration of sex education content into subject-specific curricula is generally limited and varies widely by subject (Vargas et al., 2024). Regarding the situation in Argentina, qualitative studies suggest the value of having a teacher available in a private, trustworthy setting to address questions students do not voice in class (Díaz, 2011).

An analysis of the results on cross-curricular integration suggests that, overall, ESI tends to focus on specific, isolated activities (such as talks, workshops with external specialists, and events during ESI Week) rather than on content integrated across subjects. This is consistent with the findings of Romero (2021), who identified two modes of implementing cross-curricular integration in schools in La Plata: a curricular approach, which is difficult to implement, and an institutional approach, based on events or special days. The national data presented here suggest that this pattern is not unique to a single jurisdiction but characterizes this policy as a whole.

Nor do those who received the five content areas reflecting the comprehensiveness of the current official school sex education policy constitute a majority. The curricular approach places greater emphasis on biological and health aspects, relegating affectivity, sexual diversity, and the exercise of rights. This bias not only runs counter to the comprehensive perspective of the law but also disregards the interests of students, who, in interviews conducted as part of a study in middle schools in the city of Buenos Aires, expressed their interest in addressing content beyond that associated with the risks of sexuality (Díaz, 2011).

The 2019 edition of the Aprender tests already highlighted this imbalance: the two most frequently discussed topics, according to secondary school students that year, were the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (75%) and unintended teenage pregnancy: contraceptive methods (68%) (SEIE, 2020).

The persistence of this biologicistic bias warrants reflection that goes beyond mere note-taking. Two decades after the enactment of Law 26,150, and eight years after the formalization in CFE Resolution 340/18 of the five comprehensive pillars of ESI, the preeminence of body care and health over affectivity, diversity, and rights cannot be attributed solely to individual resistance among teachers. The data suggest that this is a systemic inertia: initial teacher training, available curriculum materials, and institutional assessments continue to operate within a logic closer to the biomedical model than to a comprehensive approach. Kornblit et al. (2013) documented how biologicistic and heteronormative frameworks shaped teachers' conceptions of sexuality; the fact that, more than a decade later, students continue to report a biased reception of

this pillar indicates that training interventions and policy changes have not been sufficient to modify classroom practices.

Finally, discrepancies are noted between student perceptions and those of school administrators regarding the incorporation of ESI into the curriculum. In the 2022 Aprender Tests, nearly 4% of school administrators reported that their schools' curriculum plans did not include ESI content. This figure differs from that reported by Faur et al. (2015) in a self-administered survey conducted in 2014 among 634 administrators and 1,213 teachers in Argentina, in which only 11% acknowledged that ESI content was part of their Institutional Educational Projects (PEI). Although the comparison between the two studies should be viewed with caution due to methodological differences, the presence of ESI in institutional plans appears to have increased significantly. However, the persistent gap between what administrators report about their plans and what students report having received suggests that formal incorporation does not guarantee effective implementation.

Regarding institutional plans, the survey found that more frequent external monitoring and supervision of schools are associated with greater inclusion of ESI in Institutional Educational Plans. This result contrasts with the more moderate effect of the presence of reference teams, a mechanism designed specifically to support the policy within each school. Despite this specific nature, the role of the reference team had a lesser impact on universality than external supervision. This may be explained by the characteristics that Dellacasa et al. (2025) documented regarding the role of the institutional reference point: in the province of Buenos Aires, and in other jurisdictions as well, it was honorary, largely informal, and lacked effective institutional support.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the relevance, universality, comprehensiveness, and cross-curricular nature of the sex education content adolescents receive, while accounting for potential gaps in access.

Through a descriptive quantitative analysis of data from the 2022 Aprender Tests, we addressed questions such as: To what extent have students been exposed to Comprehensive Sex Education

(ESI)? How relevant is it to them? Are there differences in the reception of ESI among adolescents with distinct characteristics? What was the scope of the dimensions on which the policy of universality, comprehensiveness, and cross-cutting nature was designed?

The results confirm that, despite regulatory advances and institutional consolidation, ESI coverage in Argentina remains incomplete. Even though the vast majority of students consider the inclusion of this content in schools to be relevant, many reported not receiving it or receiving it only partially. Its implementation varies, with boys, adolescents with children, and students outside the city of Buenos Aires having less access.

Nor have the dimensions of cross-curricular and comprehensive ESI been fully established: slightly less than half of students receive it in a cross-curricular manner, and a similar proportion receive comprehensive ESI content. The prevalence of “biomedical approaches” (Romero, 2018) and preventive approaches limits the development of comprehensive sexuality education in the full sense, one that addresses

emotional, social, and rights-based dimensions. It is worth noting that the survey results indicate that more frequent monitoring and external supervision of schools is associated with better integration of ESI into institutional educational projects, which constitutes a relevant finding for the design and implementation of public policies in the educational sphere.

This study suggests several lines of research to further explore the findings. First, it is important to investigate the differences observed between the level of ESI coverage reported by students and by school administrators. In this regard, questions arise regarding how students recognize and identify the content, as well as potential biases in the responses of institutional actors.

Second, considering that a significant proportion of students (22.4%) turn to teachers for consultations on sexuality, it would be interesting to conduct a more in-depth analysis of these interactions, identifying practices, institutional conditions, and pedagogical strategies that foster their development, and to assess the potential for scaling up such practices.

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