

**2015-6 Sydney Gay Asian Men
Survey: HIV&STI related
behavioural changes**

**Led and sponsored by the Sydney-based CALD
Gay Men Action Group**

Preamble

In Sydney, similar HIV&STI-focused behavioural surveillance has been conducted in 1999 and 2002. This third round was conducted between September 2015 and June 2016 (completion of the community-focused recruitment). This report presents some major findings from the 2015/16 survey.

Characteristics of participants

Compared to the previous two round, the latest one added an online component (19% participants recruited) and clinical recruitment from a number of key Sydney metro-based Sexual Health Clinics and ACON a[Test] (25% participants recruited). Consistent with the previous two rounds, the latest survey consisted men largely recruited from gay social venues, events and sex-on-premises venues.

Majority (97%) of the participants identified themselves as male, 3% identified as transgender. Three main ethnic groups have been consistently presents in the surveys over time: Chinese (about one-third of all participants); Filipino (about 10%) and Thai (about 10%). (Table 1) In the latest round, apart from these three priority groups, men self-identified as of Indian background was also been targeted (7% participants recruited). Over half of the survey respondents were either born in Australia or had been living in Australia for more than five years.

Table 1. Self-identified ethnicity of participants (N=468)

	N	%
Chinese ^a	167	35.7
Thai	58	12.4
Filipino	57	12.2
Vietnamese	40	8.5
Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	33	7.1
Indonesian	25	5.3
Malaysian	16	3.4
Japanese	16	3.4
Korean	8	1.7
Singaporean	4	0.9
Nepalese	4	0.9
Laotian	4	0.9
Sri Lankan	4	0.9
Cambodian, Myanmarese	4	0.9
Mixed-ethnic	21	4.5
Others	7	1.5

^a Including people from China, HK, Macau and Taiwan

As expected, just over half of the respondents were living in areas with a high clientele of gay residents or other parts of Eastern Suburbs and Inner Sydney area. With the average participants in their 30s, in the most recent round, more than one in five men were in their 40s or older. (Table 2) Compared with more locally recruited gay men (i.e., participants in 2016 February round Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey), these Asian-identified men are substantially younger.

Table 2. Age group of participants (N=468)

	N	%
<25	75	16.0
25-29	133	28.4
30-39	153	32.7
40-49	80	17.1
50+	25	5.3

In the last 6 months, nearly one fifth (18%) of the participants were in a monogamous same sex relationship, while about one-third only had casual partners (35%) or had both regular and casual partners (32%). (Table 3)

Table 3. Sexual relationship status in the last 6 months (N=468)

	N	%
Monogamy	84	17.9
Casual partners only	164	35.0
Regular and casual partners	148	31.6
No sex partner	72	15.4

HIV testing and self-reported HIV-status

Compared with the previous two rounds, over 90% of the men in the latest round reported their HIV status to be negative (87%) or positive (5%) with less than 10% being unknown (over 20% in the previous two rounds). Among non-HIV-positive men, 86% reported having been tested for HIV in the past 12 months, similar to locally-recruited gay men. Of those non-HIV-positive men who had been tested for HIV in the past 12 months, the pattern of HIV testing numbers (1, 2, 3-4 or 5 or more) were very similar to locally-recruited gay men. There is a clear sign of Asian gay men catching up in terms of HIV testing with local gay men. Of the self-identified HIV-negative gay Asian men who had ever been tested, over 40% reported their latest HIV testing sites being at sexual health clinics, followed by 20% at a[Test] sites instead of general practices (18%) as shown in the 2002 round (43%). (Table 4)

Table 4. Venue of last HIV test among HIV-negative men

	2015/16 (N=403)		2002 (N=326)	
	N	%	N	%
SHC	177	43.9	97	29.8
Community-based service aTest	81	20.1	^a	
GP	74	18.4	140	42.9
Hospital	52	12.9	53	16.3
Others ^b	19	4.7	36	11.0

^a aTest service was not available in 2002

^b Including testing done at home, overseas or as a requirement for immigration

STI testing

A similar pattern also applied to the increasing trend of STI testing uptake. In the latest round, about 70% of Asian gay men had been tested for any STIs (71.6 % including blood tests; 70.3% excluding blood tests for STI) in the past 12 months (Table 5), on par with that of locally-recruited gay men. More importantly, rates of comprehensive STI testing (at least four anatomical sites) in the past 12 months were similar between gay Asian men and locally-recruited gay men (over 45%). About one fifth (22%) among those reported a STI diagnosis in the last 12 months.

Table 5. Uptake of STI tests (excluding blood tests) among participants (N=468)

	N	%
Any STI test	329	70.2
- Anal swab	273	58.3
- Throat swab	274	58.5
- Penile swab	105	22.4
- Urine sample	290	62.0

Places or approaches to usually seek and/or find male sex partners

According to the latest round of the survey, mobile apps (69% sought, 59% found), followed by gay sauna (around 45% sought and found) were the two most common ways to approach male sex partners in the past six months. (Table 6)

Table 6. Six most common places or approaches for seeking and/or finding sex partners (N=468)

	Sought		Found	
	N	%	N	%
Mobile apps	324	69.2	276	59.0
Saunas	223	47.6	212	45.3
Websites and/or social media	187	40.0	105	22.4
Bars and/or dance parties	107	22.9	68	14.5
Beats	357	76.3	35	7.5
Gym	39	8.3	24	5.1

Condom use with regular and casual male partners

Rates of condomless anal intercourse with regular partners remained stable at just over 40%, which remained much lower than that of locally-recruited gay men (over 50%).

For men with casual male partners, however, consistent condom use has been largely replaced by condomless anal intercourse (22% in 1999 to 37% in 2015-6), which was similar to that of locally-recruited gay men (about 40%). (Table 7)

Table 7. Condom use with regular and casual partners

	2015/16 (N=468)		2002 (N=457)		1999 (N=319)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Had a casual partner	362	77.4	351	76.8	240	75.2
- UAI with casual partner(s)	135	37.3	66	18.8	52	21.6
Had a regular partner	286	61.1	258	56.5	210	65.8
- UAI with regular partner(s)	125	43.7	111	43.0	89	42.4

Knowledge of PEP and PrEP

For non-HIV-positive Asian men, the latest round shows that their knowledge of the existing availability of PEP (over 60%) and prep (about 50%) were very similar to that of locally-recruited gay men. About one-fifth of them had never heard of PEP and/or PrEP. (Table 8) About 10% had taken PEP and 8% PrEP in the past 6 months.

Table 8. Knowledge of PEP and PrEP among non-HIV-positive men (N=445)

	PEP		PrEP	
	N	%	N	%
Readily available now	268	60.2	214	48.1
Will be available in the future	37	8.3	96	21.6
Never heard of it	107	24.0	117	24.0
Have used the drug in the past 6 months a	30	9.8	19	6.1

^a Among those who had heard of PEP (N=305) and PrEP (N=310)

Main source of HIV&STI information

As shown in the latest round of the survey, the three major information sources were gay website or social media; general website or social media and sexual health clinics. (Table 9)

Table 9. Main source of HIV&STI information (N=468)

	N	%
Gay websites or social media	296	63.2
Non-gay specific websites or social media	272	58.1
SHC	187	40.0
Gay magazines or printed media	139	29.7
Gay NGO or services	122	26.1
Posters at gay venues	121	25.9
Gay friends	109	23.3
English speaking doctor	107	22.9
Sex partners	91	19.4
Posters at non-gay specific venues	74	15.8
non-English speaking doctor	38	8.1
Other	9	1.9

Alcohol and other recreational drug use

As shown in the latest round of the survey, alcohol was the most commonly used of all recreational substances with about half used it at least monthly in the previous six months. Amyl (poppers) was the second most popular drugs with close to 20% consumed it at least monthly in the six-month period. (Table 10)

Table 10. Common substances used in the past 6 months (N=468).

	N	%
Alcohol	335	71.6
Poppers	180	38.5
Marijuana	69	14.7
Viagra	67	14.3
Ecstasy	47	10.0
Crystal meth	37	7.9
GHB	27	5.8
Steroids	6	1.3

Stigma

As shown in the latest round of the survey, about half reported having negative experiences (e.g., shame, avoidance, exclusion, rejection) in the past 12 months, the most prominent being racial background/ethnicity (37%) followed by sexual attraction to men (25%). (Table 11)

Table 11. Source of negative experiences in the past 12 months (N=468)

	N	%
Racial background/ ethnicity	174	37.2
Sexual attraction to men	119	25.4
English language proficiency	67	14.3
Own religion/spiritual beliefs	32	6.8
Other	10	2.1