

# **Asian Gay Men in Sydney**

**December 1999 — January 2000**

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**National Centre in HIV Social Research**

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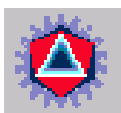
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The Multicultural HIV/AIDS Service

## Monograph 3/2000



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## DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The Sydney Asian Gay Men's Survey is a cross-sectional survey of gay and homosexually active men of Asian background recruited through a range of gay community sites in Sydney. It provides a snapshot of sexual and HIV-related practices among gay and homosexually active men of Asian background.

The major aim of the Asian Gay Men's Survey was to provide data on levels of safe and unsafe sexual practice in a broad cross-sectional sample of gay and homosexually active men of Asian background. To this end, men were recruited from a number of gay community social venues and sex-on-premises venues frequented by men of Asian background.

This study, based on the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey (Prestage et al, 1996a), was conducted between December 1999 and January 2000. Four sites were chosen for the study: one gay commercial social venue, two gay sex-on-premises venues and one gay Asian social event. Recruitment in these venues was conducted by trained recruiters over a two-month period.

The questionnaire (appended to this report) is a short, self-administered instrument that typically takes about ten minutes to complete. Questions focus on anal intercourse and oral sex, the use of condoms, the nature of sexual relationships, HIV testing practice and serostatus, aspects of gay community involvement, recreational drug use, and a range of demographic items including sexual identity, age, education, occupation and ethnicity. Questions were designed to maximise comparability with the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey.

Throughout this report we have endeavoured to make some comment on the differences between the various ethno-cultural groups contained within the broad category of 'Asian', and have also compared the sample with the most recent sample from the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey. It would not be appropriate to describe this sample without referring to any variations across the cultural groups; nor would it be meaningful to describe this sample without reference to other samples of gay men. We have not, however, reported any statistical significances from any of these comparisons. The numbers involved in most of these analyses are insufficient to permit statistically reliable interpretations. This report is, therefore, entirely descriptive.

Individuals can be described as part of a particular cultural group based on a variety of factors: language, country of birth, self-identified cultural background. As the men in this study included those born in Australia and those born elsewhere, as well as those who spoke English

when they were growing up and those who spoke an Asian language, we have used self-identified cultural background to distinguish the respondents.

More detailed analysis of the data will continue and will be disseminated as it is completed. As with any data analysis, further examination may necessitate minor reinterpretation of the findings.

## **BACKGROUND**

Before 1992, little research had been conducted in Australia among homosexually active men of Asian background, or indeed of non-English-speaking background in general. Furthermore, in more broadly-based studies of homosexually active men, men of non-English-speaking background, including Asian men, had been noticeably under-represented.

Several attempts have been made to adequately survey homosexually active men of Asian background in Sydney as part of the overall research response to the HIV epidemic. Though these attempts have had some successes, they have been considerably limited. These limitations have, for the most part, been caused by a lack of adequate funding and other resources.

## **BANGAR**

During 1993 and 1994 the Bisexual Activity and Non Gay Community Attachment Research (BANGAR) Project sought to investigate methods of targeting homosexually active men who were neither gay identified nor closely associated with the gay community (Hood et al, 1994). In this study, men were either approached in settings where they sought to make sexual contact with other men, or they responded to advertisements placed in publications that facilitated sexual contact between men. They were then invited to complete an anonymous survey, usually by telephone. Men were excluded from the study if they indicated that they were either gay identified or regularly associated with gay men.

The project team particularly sought to include men of non-English-speaking background, and specifically developed strategies to target men of Chinese and of Arabic background. In all, 698 men were interviewed for BANGAR, including 58 men of Chinese background (as well as an additional 19 men of other Asian backgrounds) and 45 men of Arabic background. BANGAR was far more successful in obtaining a sample of Asian men than previous studies of homosexually active men had been.

The Chinese men in BANGAR were selected on the basis of their language, and were mainly interviewed in either Cantonese or Mandarin. For this reason the findings from BANGAR tended to focus on language as a primary issue among these men. Other factors were considered but in less detail.

The majority of ethnic Chinese respondents were recruited through advertising in Chinese language newspapers and most interviews were conducted in Cantonese or Mandarin. Ken Wong, the interviewer for this aspect of the BANGAR project and one of the authors of this report, is of southern Chinese background with Cantonese his primary language. Many of the relevant findings about Chinese men in BANGAR were necessarily interpreted from this perspective: there may have been other issues apparent to other Chinese speakers that were overlooked in the BANGAR material.

BANGAR was, however, limited in its capacity to address issues specific to the Asian men it had successfully recruited. To begin with, it was a study of non-gay men, so it provided little information about the broader range of homosexually active Asian men, particularly those who participate in the gay community. Furthermore, this was a small survey that collected very limited information. Issues specific to Asian men were not addressed directly.

The Chinese respondents were more highly educated than the Anglo-Celtic respondents. On the other hand, two-thirds of the Chinese men who were working, were in blue-collar positions, whereas fewer than half the Anglo-Celtic respondents were in blue collar occupations. These somewhat contradictory findings probably reflect the fact that many Asian immigrants to Australia have overseas qualifications that are not recognised here and they therefore have to settle for jobs requiring fewer qualifications. Others in the sample were foreign students who had taken blue-collar jobs to support themselves during their university studies.

BANGAR was a study of non-gay men and, unusual for studies of homosexually active men, the majority of respondents (who were predominantly Anglo-Celtic) indicated a preference for sex with women and rarely had more than incidental social contact with gay men. Unlike the Anglo-Celtic respondents, however, the Chinese men tended to express a strong preference for male sexual partners and tended to classify themselves as homosexual, even though they were just as unlikely to be identified with or socially involved in the organised gay community. Overall, the Chinese men were less likely to have had any partners in the previous 12 months and very few had any female partners. Only about one in seven was currently in a relationship with a woman, compared with over half of the Anglo-Celtic respondents.

Nearly half the Chinese men labelled themselves as homosexual, compared to only about one in seven of the Anglo-Celtic men. These statistics need to be considered with caution, however. Descriptions of sexuality and expressions of preference do not always translate easily and the Chinese language lacks the terminology adequately to describe the particularities of sexuality. This was reflected in the ways the respondents described their sexual behaviour: whereas most Anglo-Celtic respondents described their sexual contacts with men in ways other than as homosexual, fewer than half of the Chinese-speakers did so. Chinese men were also much less likely to explain their sexual attraction to men in terms other than as a preference for particular sex practices.

Chinese respondents had a narrower range of sexual practices with men than did the Anglo-Celtic men: far more cited mutual masturbation as their sexual activity with men and fewer engaged in anal sex or in receptive oral sex, although many more mentioned affectionate practices, such as kissing and cuddling.

Condom use amongst the Chinese respondents differed little from that of the Anglo-Celtic respondents. In exploring issues around knowledge of HIV transmission in discussion, the interviewer found that, in most cases, the Chinese respondents appeared to adopt a safe sex strategy that essentially meant avoiding anal intercourse. However, the Chinese men had a fairly strong disinclination to engage in anal intercourse in any case.

Although the Chinese men alluded to many instances that could only be described as 'situational homosexuality'—e.g. having sex with a relative or friend with whom they shared a bed—the Chinese respondents tended to be more homosexually oriented in their sexual preference than the non-Chinese-speakers.

*Lee, aged 26, labourer living in Sydney's West* had infrequent sexual contact through friends he had known since he was 18. These encounters occurred while he was sleeping in the same bed as one of these friends. They touched each other in the middle of the night, nothing was said and nothing was mentioned the next day. He described himself as straight, but was not comfortable with the description. He said he liked sex with men better than sex with women, although he had never had sex with a woman. He did not relate to the labels homosexual, 'bisexual or gay.

These men were as unlikely as the Anglo-Celtic respondents to have contact with the gay community and were just as unlikely to identify with that community; indeed, they were less likely to identify with that community.

Language appears to be an important factor in understanding why such relatively homosexually identified Chinese men did not participate in the organised gay community. The complexity of the Chinese language increases the difficulty for any discussion of homosexuality in Chinese society, where the issue has never really been acknowledged directly. As well, in recent times, homosexuality has been regarded simply as 'perversion'. Homosexual behaviour has rarely been discussed in modern Chinese writings, and if so, usually with disgust, contempt and sarcasm, possibly even more so than in Western societies.

*Jason, aged 28 living on Sydney's North Shore*, met a guy in a local bar. Beginning with subtle physical contact and later through more direct conversation,

he found himself agreeing to a sexual encounter with this man. They had sex in the man's car. He described himself as straight, said he enjoyed sex with women better than with men and said he had been in a relationship with a woman for around three years. He had no-one to talk to about the encounter and regarded sex with men as 'abnormal'.

*Kim, aged 24, a tradesman from Singapore, living in Sydney's Inner West,* described himself as straight but was uncomfortable with the label and added that he was 'not sure'. He had sex with men he had known long enough to call friends and it was they who made the approaches. He enjoyed receptive anal intercourse, oral sex and used condoms. He had never had sex with a woman.

There are formal terms for different sexual behaviours in Cantonese and Mandarin, but heterosexuality is the norm. Discussion of other forms of sexual expression is rare and considered pointless. Descriptions of sexual labels do not translate easily. The concept of 'gay' is not generally found within the Chinese languages other than as a direct appropriation from English. Concepts such as 'gay' have no proper translation. Instead, a word with equivalent pronunciation to the English word is usually used. This word carries a meaning as close as possible to the English word given the differing conceptualisations within the Chinese cultural context. Often characters with identical or similar pronunciation are combined with other characters to constitute the meanings of exotic words. This suggests that there is little concept of a gay identity except in so far as it reflects the adoption of Western lifestyles. Within many Chinese communities there is a general belief that homosexuality is a product of 'Western culture', not a behaviour which can be found in traditional Chinese culture, regardless of what is known from Chinese history.

The term 'gay man' can be directly translated into something meaning 'homosexual'—although this conveys more of a description of behaviour than category of person—but more often the term 'gay lao' is used verbally as well as in print. In this example, a character which means 'foundation' or 'base' and which has the same pronunciation as 'gay' is combined with 'lao' (meaning 'fellow'). When used in this way a gay man is not being referred to in the relatively positive way that is implied by the term 'gay man' in English. Generally, it is not clear how the concept 'gay' is perceived or conveyed. The Chinese-speaking co-author of this report has never heard anything in either Cantonese or Mandarin with the English term 'gay' apart from the use of that word among gay-identified men of Chinese background living within a Western-style gay community. This does not mean that homosexuality has no place in Chinese literature, language or history; quite the contrary, for homosexuality appears to have a considerable presence, though, as Hirsch (1990: 6-7) explains, references to homosexuality were usually in the form of 'poetic metaphors'. Hirsch describes an entire male homosexual tradition in Chinese literature and history, but points out that this tradition 'is dead and virtually unknown' today (ibid, 163). In the past, Chinese terms usually referred to activities and desires rather than types

of people or ways of being. Nowadays, the little acknowledgement of homosexuality that exists usually refers to it in terms of 'perverted' behaviour.

The use of terms like 'homosexual' to describe sexual activity was particularly problematic during the BANGAR interviews. The words used were far more descriptive of sexual practice than categories of sexual behaviour and sexual identities. This means that when the Chinese respondents said that they saw themselves as 'homosexual' they were really describing their sexual behaviour rather than how they perceived themselves, and when they described their sexual activity with men as 'homosexual' they were actually responding more to the way in which such activity had to be described in the translation. These were issues throughout the

BANGAR project, exacerbated by the particular difficulties of translation, and point even more clearly to the inadequacy of language in describing individuals' real experiences of their own sexuality.

Terms such as 'homosexual' and 'bisexual', whether they refer to sexual types and identities or to categories of sexual behaviour, rely heavily on prevailing attitudes and commonly held beliefs. These are rooted in culture, and the language of that culture, especially in the area of sexuality. Individuals from cultural backgrounds other than the dominant culture, and especially those with a different language, cannot easily relate to those attitudes and beliefs. They must necessarily interpret them from within their own particular linguistic and cultural perspective.

Within the context of Chinese cultures, concepts of sexuality are very narrowly conceived. As in Western cultures, heterosexuality is the presumed norm, but this appears to be even more entrenched within Chinese cultures and even more narrowly based on rigid concepts of gender and role. Unlike in Western cultures, notions of sexuality other than heterosexuality are poorly defined and there is little differentiation between the various sexual types identified within Anglo-Celtic cultures. Although there is some vague notion of different types of sexual behaviour in Chinese cultures, those that do not correspond to the generally accepted notion of heterosexuality are broadly categorised as 'abnormal' and little distinction is drawn between them. Of particular relevance to the use of language is the popular belief that these sexual 'abnormalities' (especially homosexuality) are the product of Westernisation within Chinese culture.

Given these factors, the relevance of the gay community may not be immediately apparent to Chinese men who have sex with other men. Perhaps even more importantly, the difficulties in relating Anglo-Celtic concepts of sexuality and sexual types to Chinese language and experience tend to make even greater the dependence on the English language for understanding the activities and nature of the gay community. Those whose English language abilities or experiences of sexuality within Anglo-Celtic culture are limited would probably find participation in the gay community difficult and may even have difficulty recognising the gay community as relevant to their own situation. These language and attitudinal problems may help explain the greater dependence on personal networks and friendships for finding male sex partners amongst the Chinese respondents in BANGAR.

Because of the gay community's reliance on the English language and Anglo-Celtic concepts of sexuality, participation in the organised gay community is clearly restricted for any men of non-English-speaking background. Communication is a practical and obvious barrier. There are also issues of discrimination both from within the gay community—whether that be overt prejudice or presumptions based on Anglo-Celtic values that may make non-Anglo-Celtic individuals uncomfortable—and from within the various non-Anglo-Celtic communities, many



of which, the Chinese community included, have widely-held highly negative attitudes toward homosexuality.

When describing themselves as 'homosexual' the Chinese men in the BANGAR sample were often just acknowledging that they have sexual contact with other men. Yet they also commonly said that they did not have sex with other men. This was usually because they interpreted 'sex' as being equivalent to 'intercourse'. Inadequate terminology and the problems of interpretation based on the limitations of translation between languages are part of the reason for this. The choice of the label 'homosexual' was actually more circumstantial than a description of an understanding of self. Certainly, in most cases, the use of the term 'homosexual' did not carry with it the same set of assumptions and associations that would be the case with an Anglo-Celtic sample.

*Mark, aged 25, an accountant from Hong Kong who had been living in Sydney for seven years started 'playing' with men about eight years before. He maintained that he had never had sex with another man, meaning he had never had anal intercourse with a man. He visited gay saunas occasionally and reported that he engaged in oral sex there. He did not describe this, or kissing, fondling or caressing, as sex—were 'just playing'. He usually met men through advertisements in gay publications. He had sexual contact with both Asian and Caucasian men, but said he found it difficult to relate to Caucasian men emotionally. He felt uncomfortable socially with Caucasians, as he felt that to be seen out with one 'looks suspicious'. He did not, however, mind 'playing' with Caucasians.*

*John, aged 26, a labourer, living in Sydney's West was not sure of his sexuality—he had been in a relationship with a woman for two years—but said he preferred sex with men. He particularly enjoyed receptive oral sex. Two months beforehand, he had both insertive and receptive anal intercourse with a male friend. He wore a condom as the insertive partner, but his friend did not wear one when he screwed John. He referred to having sex with men as 'doing things' and, in the interviewer's assessment, John did not relate to the terms 'homosexual', 'bisexual' or 'gay'.*

The sexual behaviour of the Chinese men was different from the rest of the sample: they were less likely to engage in anal or oral (particularly receptive) intercourse and were much more likely to describe their sexual encounters with men as involving sensual activities such as kissing, embracing and mutual masturbation. This was often reflected in their comments about encounters with Anglo-Celtic men. They often felt that Anglo-Celtic men were only interested in 'sex' (i.e. anal intercourse) and felt that Chinese men had a more sensual approach to sexuality.

Among Chinese men who have sex with men, issues of sexuality must be considered with regard to both language and culture, and with regard to issues of discrimination and prejudice. Each question and each term used needs to be considered in the context both of its translation between languages (and the particular linguistic problems this involves) and of the cultural values and assumptions that are associated with those terms (both in the culture of origin and in the predominant local culture). This is likewise true for any group of men who have sex with men from a minority cultural or ethnic background.

Cultural differences interact with both language and expressions of sexuality in particularly complex ways. Chinese men who have sex with men were no more or less at risk for HIV infection than others in BANGAR. However, the reasons for this related to the very different ways in which the Chinese men behaved sexually with their partners and the ways in which they viewed themselves in relation to their own culture and other men who have sex with men, including the gay community. Language is the representation of a whole set of attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and values, based on a particular history, and these need careful consideration in the establishment of any HIV-related project which seeks either to include or to specifically target men from any minority subcultural or ethnic background.

## **NESB Isolated Gay Men Project**

During 1995 the Multicultural HIV/AIDS Service NESB set up the Isolated Gay Men Project to investigate the HIV/AIDS service needs among homosexually active men of Indonesian, Vietnamese, Polish and Italian background (McMahon, 1995). This study adapted the methodologies developed fairly successfully in the BANGAR project. The men responded by telephone to advertisements and were then invited to complete an anonymous survey.

This project sought homosexually active men of non-English-speaking background, regardless of their relationship to the gay community or other homosexually active men. In all, only nine Indonesian and 21 Vietnamese men were interviewed. Sixteen Indonesian men and two Vietnamese men also spoke to the interviewers but did not participate in the survey.

The Indonesian men were recruited through advertising in gay and local newspapers, while most Vietnamese men were recruited through the ethnic press. Interviews were conducted in either English or the respondent's own language as they preferred. With such small sample sizes, it was difficult to draw many conclusions from the data collected. Some of the men in these samples were not at all involved socially with either the gay community or with other homosexually active men, and appeared to be quite isolated. They tended to be 'in the closet' about their homosexual behaviour and were unable to discuss their sexuality or issues such as HIV with others. Other men, however, were relatively open about their sexuality and generally

self-identified as gay. Such men were fairly well connected to supportive networks and sources of information about HIV.

With regard to the Vietnamese men specifically, the study team indicated that language and cultural issues made the administration of the survey problematic; as a consequence, considerable data were missing. The Vietnamese men, as a group, tended to have little contact with the gay community or with gay men in general, and were unlikely to be open about their homosexuality.

## **Southern Sydney Area Health Service Beats Outreach Project**

Between 1993 and 1994, the Southern Sydney Area Health Service Beats Outreach Project collected data on its client population. Having noted the relatively large proportion of men from non-English-speaking backgrounds within this sample, the project prepared a report on this group of men (Poetschka et al, 1995).

The project targeted homosexually active men who used beats in the southern suburbs of Sydney, regardless of their relationship to the gay community or other homosexually active men. The research team compared the men of non-English-speaking background with the Anglo-Celtic men. In all, 149 non-Anglo-Celtic men were included in the research. However, as this was not primarily a research project, data were not recorded systematically. Consequently, it was possible to identify only 20 men of Asian background. In general, this study did not distinguish between the various cultural groups, not even in such broad terms as 'Asian'.

The small number of Asian men in the sample and the lack of distinction between any of the non-Anglo-Celtic cultural groups restrict the capacity to draw any inferences relevant to this report. Nonetheless, it is worth noting a few of the general findings. The non-Anglo-Celtic men were younger, largely due to a greater reluctance on the part of older non-Anglo-Celtic men to engage in verbal interactions with the project staff. Project staff referred a higher proportion of non-Anglo-Celtic men to other agencies, particularly to social and support groups. Often this was in response to the difficulties these men experienced regarding coming out and relationships. The non-Anglo-Celtic men generally seemed to be less closely involved with the gay community than the Anglo-Celtic men, and they were less likely to self-identify as homosexual. Non-Anglo-Celtic men also tended to have poorer knowledge about HIV.

## **The Men and Sexual Health studies**

Three large samples of men were interviewed in Sydney (SMASH), Melbourne (MMASH) and Brisbane (BRASH) between 1993 and 1996, using compatible survey instruments. Having established that there were few significant differences between the three samples, the project teams combined them in order to obtain a single sample with enough men of non-English-speaking background to permit analysis of ethno-cultural differences (Prestage et al, 1996b).

These studies primarily targeted homosexually active men who participated in the gay communities of each of the three cities. In all, 102 Asian men were included in the samples. There were, however, too few men in each ethno-cultural group, except possibly the Chinese men (of whom there were 27) to enable a more detailed breakdown than 'East Asian' (78 men) and 'South Asian' (24 men).

The East Asian respondents were relatively well educated and likely to be religious. They were unlikely to have had sex with a woman. They were less likely to have disclosed their homosexuality to others or to regularly read the gay press. They had fewer gay friends. They were less likely to have been tested for HIV or to have tested positive, and they were less likely to have personal contact with people with HIV or AIDS. They generally had fewer sex partners and were less likely to have casual sex, but they were more likely to go to saunas. They were less likely to have used any recreational drugs. In terms of sexual behaviour, however, there were few differences between these men and the other men in the sample. Though they were less likely to engage in sadomasochistic practices and were somewhat less likely to take the insertive role during anal intercourse, their sexual behaviour otherwise was much like that of the Anglo-Celtic men in the sample. They were also no less likely to use condoms with either their regular or casual partners.

## **Cultural Diversity and Men who Have Sex with Men Project**

This was a review of the literature and resources available to homosexually active men of non-English-speaking background (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1998). Relevant agencies were invited to comment on the issues. The study did not focus specifically on any single cultural group, nor did it comment on cultural differences.

The problematic relationships between familial responsibility, cultural identity and sexuality were seen as central to the notion of community attachment and identification. Many homosexually active men of non-English-speaking background felt it was not possible to 'become' a homosexual (come out) and still maintain a relationship within their family or their

ethno-cultural community. This being the case, many found they had to conceal their sexual desires and practices in 'a sort of sexual underground', often leaving them fairly isolated, both socially and in terms of access to services and information. Others felt they were forced to choose between their familial/cultural identity and a gay identity, which can also isolate them.

Choosing to participate in the gay community is not necessarily a solution to issues of social isolation. Some men of non-English-speaking background find many aspects of the 'gay scene' problematic because they break cultural taboos or conflict with aspects of their familial lifestyle.

Apart from the obvious language barriers, the gay community is perceived as Anglo-centric, making it difficult for men of non-English-speaking background to comfortably situate themselves within it.

## **Homosexually Active Male International Students Project**

Late in 1997 the Homosexually Active Male International Students Project was established to investigate the HIV/AIDS service needs of this population (Pallotta-Chiarolli et al, 1999). This study used an anonymous self-complete questionnaire, and also invited some men to participate in focus groups. Twelve hundred survey forms were distributed nationally, through university-based organisations and services, as well as through the gay community.

This project sought homosexually active male international students of all non-English-speaking backgrounds, regardless of their relationship to the gay community or other homosexually active men. In all, only 42 survey forms were completed and returned, and only three focus groups, comprising 17 participants, were organised. Most of the participants in both aspects of the project were of Asian background, reflecting the predominance of Asian students in this population.

The men in this study were largely gay-identified and most appeared to have a reasonably strong association with the gay community in Australia. The sexual behaviour data were restricted to anal intercourse. Most men engaged in anal intercourse with their regular male partners, and with their casual male partners. They always used a condom with casual partners, but of the 29 men who had a regular male partner, seven reported not always using a condom for anal intercourse. The men mainly used gay networks to obtain information about HIV.

The reports on the focus group discussions centred on issues of identity and enculturation. The problematic relationships between culture and sexuality, and between ethno-cultural and sexual identity, were explored in some detail. Incorporating notions of gay identity and lifestyle into their sense of self seemed to be central to their process of learning how to situate themselves. The men's primary means of accessing support and information about HIV were specific services for non-English-speaking background gay men, the gay press and the Internet.

## SAMPLE AND RECRUITMENT

Participants in the current survey were recruited from four sites in Sydney. Over half the men were recruited at a gay social venue, one-third at gay sex venues and the remaining 12 per cent at a gay Asian social group event.\*

**Table 1 Source of recruitment\***

Sex venues	102 (32.0%)
Commercial gay social venue	180 (56.4%)
Gay Asian group event	37 (11.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>319 (100%)</b>

Central Station Records donated sufficient CDs to enable the project to offer a free CD to every man who completed a survey form. In all, 453 men were asked to respond to the survey and 351 agreed to do so, representing a response rate of 77 per cent. Of these 351 completed surveys, 32 were found to be unusable, mainly due to extensive missing data. Even if these 32 are counted as refusals, the response rate is a satisfactory 70 per cent. (Throughout this report, totals that do not sum to 319 are attributable to small amounts of missing data.) It should be noted that comments from staff employed to recruit the men for this study indicate that much of the missing data may be attributable to difficulties with the English language and the interpretation of particular questions.

Previous studies such as SMASH (Prestage et al, 1995b) have demonstrated that HIV serostatus is an important distinguishing feature among gay men, particularly with regard to sexual behaviour. For this reason some of the data on sexual practices have been reported separately for men who are HIV positive, those who are HIV negative, and those who have not been tested or do not know their serostatus.

Also, as indicated in the Gay Community Periodic Surveys, men recruited from community events and from gay venues are different in some respects from each other. Nonetheless, most of the data reported here are for the sample as a whole, giving an account of practices drawn from a broad cross-sectional sample of Asian gay men in Sydney. However, simple comparisons with

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\* The tables in this report present frequencies and (percentages in parentheses). Where the categories are mutually exclusive, the percentages have been rounded to sum to 100 per cent down the column. Cells (marked '-') indicate that data were not relevant or not collected.

data collected in other surveys can only be made with due consideration to the nature of the samples and how they were obtained. Where appropriate and where possible, we have compared these data with the Anglo-Celtic men recruited specifically through gay venues during the February 2000 Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey. We have also commented, where appropriate, on either the differences or similarities between the men in this sample and the Asian men recruited through other, more broad-based, gay community studies, particularly the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey.



## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

In terms of demographic variables, other than those relating directly to ethno-cultural background, the participants in this study were fairly similar to those recruited in other gay-community-based studies, including the February 2000 Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey.

### Ethnicity

Nearly half the men in this sample identified themselves as being of Chinese background. Nearly as many were of South-East Asian background, with one in nine of Vietnamese background.

**Table 2 Ethnic or cultural background**

Chinese	145 (47.7)
Vietnamese	34 (11.2%)
Thai	26 (8.6%)
Filipino	26 (8.6%)
Indonesian	19 (6.3%)
Korean	15 (4.9%)
Malay	11 (3.6%)
Japanese	11 (3.6%)
Indian	5 (1.6%)
Singaporean	4 (1.3%)
Cambodian/Lao	3 (1.0%)
Taiwanese	1 (0.3%)
Other	3 (1.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>304 (100%)</b>

The ethnic background of the Asian men who responded to the Periodic Survey differed in some ways from that found in this sample: While a similar proportion were of Chinese background (45.0 per cent), and the proportions of men of South-East Asian (33.1 per cent) or Japanese and Korean (6.6 per cent) background were also similar, a larger number (13.9 per cent) were of Indian or other South Asian background. This may reflect the fact that the field workers on this project were of East Asian background themselves, or that South Asian men may

not have automatically realised that a survey of Asian gay men included them or was relevant to them.

Only one in ten of these men was born in Australia or New Zealand. Of those born elsewhere, about one in six was born in China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan) and nearly two-thirds were born in South-East Asia.

**Table 3 Country of birth**

Vietnam	38 (12.7%)
Malaysia	37 (12.3%)
Indonesia	35 (11.7%)
Philippines	30 (10.0%)
Australia	26 (8.7%)
Thailand	23 (7.7%)
Hong Kong	22 (7.3%)
China	19 (6.3%)
Singapore	18 (6.0%)
Korea	13 (4.3%)
Japan	12 (4.0%)
Taiwan	10 (3.3%)
New Zealand/Europe	4 (1.4%)
Cambodia	3 (1.0%)
India	3 (1.0%)
Laos	2 (0.7%)
Brunei	1 (0.3%)
Burma	1 (0.3%)
Sri Lanka	1 (0.3%)
Other	2 (0.7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>300 (100%)</b>

Somewhat more of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were born in Australia (14.0 per cent) or in other predominantly European countries (6.7 per cent). Also, somewhat smaller proportions of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were born in North East Asia (18.7 per cent) and South-East Asia (50.0 per cent), and 5.3 per cent were born in South Asia.

Although relatively few of these men were born in Australia or New Zealand, about a quarter spoke only English at home when they were growing up. Nearly a third spoke a Chinese language at home and about a third spoke a South-East Asian language.

**Table 4 Languages spoken at home**

Spoke English only	83 (26.5%)
'Chinese'	44 (14.1%)
Cantonese	30 (9.6%)
Indonesian	26 (8.3%)
Vietnamese	25 (8.0%)
Tagalog	20 (6.4%)
Thai	19 (6.1%)
Mandarin	18 (5.8%)
Korean	13 (4.2%)
Japanese	11 (3.5%)
Malaysian	9 (2.9%)
Hindi	3 (1.0%)
Hokkien (Chinese)	3 (1.0%)
Cambodian	2 (0.6%)
Hakka (Chinese)	2 (0.6%)
Burmese	1 (0.3%)
Other	4 (1.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>230 (100%)</b>

It would, perhaps, be expected that cultural and ethnic differences in the sample would be reflected in differences in behaviour and attitude. For the most part we did not find this on the items included in this survey, regardless of whether these cultural differences were measured by country of birth, ethnic identity or primary language. There are several reasons why this might be the case. To begin with, apart from those men who were ethnically Chinese, there were not enough men in each group to enable detailed analysis with sufficient statistical power. It may be that the cultural differences in the sample have simply not been revealed through statistical analysis. There are also particular issues regarding the Chinese men because they include a variety of groups—those from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong Chinese, Malay Chinese, Singaporean Chinese, Indonesian Chinese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese Chinese, among others. Men in each of these groups may or may not identify as Chinese, and each group may be different from the others in various ways. Such detailed analysis was neither possible nor desirable with this sample, mainly because the number in many of the groups was too small. However, it is worth remembering that the Chinese men in this sample may not be as homogeneous as they appear.

Another issue is that the short survey form required in this survey cannot reveal cultural differences: an in-depth study might be necessary to explore these. Another possibility is that the cultural differences among the men in this sample are relatively minor, at least with regard to the issues addressed in this survey.

Where the data indicate that cultural differences may be of some importance, we have noted this in the report. Such differences are, nonetheless, based on quite different, and often small, numbers for each cultural group. The actual numbers being discussed need to be borne in mind when considering these apparent differences, and, indeed, where there are no apparent differences. This report should primarily be viewed as a general description of the target population. It is the first large sample of Asian gay men in Australia and provides a unique opportunity to ascertain whether these men are at heightened risk of HIV infection.

## Australian residential status

The majority of the participants in the survey had been living in Australia for at least five years and only one in seven had lived here for less than twelve months.

**Table 5 Length of time in Australia**

Born in Australia	25 (7.9%)
More than five years	144 (45.6%)
3-5 years	47 (14.9%)
1-2 years	51 (16.1%)
Less than a year	49 (15.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>316 (100%)</b>

Nearly half the men were Australian citizens and another one in five was a permanent resident. Only one in seven was a temporary visitor.

**Table 6 Australian residential status**

Australian citizen	154 (48.7)
Permanent resident	60 (19.0%)
Tourist/Visitor	49 (15.5%)
Applying for residency	25 (7.9%)
Other	28 (18.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>316 (100%)</b>

It might also be expected that, as with cultural and ethnic differences, differences in the length of time spent living in Australia or in residential status would be reflected in differences in behaviour and attitude. Yet, as with the cultural differences, for the most part we did not find this. The reasons for such are likely to be the same: insufficient numbers in some categories (particularly the recently arrived); limited items in the questionnaire; the need for more in-depth studies to explore these issues in detail; and the possibility that length of residence is relatively

unimportant with regard to the issues addressed in this survey. Nonetheless, as with cultural differences, where the data indicate that differences in residency may be of some importance, we have noted this in the report.

## Geographic distribution

As with most surveys of gay men in Sydney, this was a predominantly inner-city sample. Only a quarter of the men lived in outer suburban areas of Sydney, and one in nine did not live in Sydney at all.

**Table 7**      **Place of residence**

Gay Sydney	58 (18.2%)
Eastern Suburbs	31 (9.7%)
Inner West	110 (34.5%)
Northern Suburbs	34 (10.7%)
Southern Suburbs	17 (5.3%)
Western Suburbs	32 (10.0%)
Elsewhere	37 (11.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>319 (100%)</b>

The geographic distribution was somewhat different from that found among Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey, who were more likely to live in 'Gay Sydney' (29.3 per cent) and less likely to live in the Inner West (22.9 per cent). The geographic distribution of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey was fairly similar to this sample except for a somewhat larger proportion living in the Eastern Suburbs (19.2 per cent).

The Vietnamese men were more likely to live in the Western Suburbs, where large Vietnamese communities are situated, and the Chinese men were a little more likely to live in the Inner West. Otherwise there was little variation according to cultural background or length of residence in Australia.

## Age

Respondents ranged between 19 and 65 years of age, with a mean of 29.8 years.

**Table 8 Age**

Under 25	56 (17.9%)
25–29	104 (33.1%)
30–39	135 (43.0%)
40–49	17 (5.4%)
50 and over	2 (0.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>314 (100%)</b>

The men in this sample were younger than the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey (mean age = 36.8 years), but their age profile was similar to that found among Asian men in the Periodic Survey (mean age = 30.5 years). There was little variation in age according to cultural background or length of residence in Australia within the sample.

## Employment and occupation

Over half the men were in full-time employment and one in five was employed part-time. One in six was a student.

**Table 9 Employment status**

Full-time	171 (54.3%)
Part-time	68 (21.6%)
Student	53 (16.8%)
Unemployed/Other	23 (7.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>315 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were more likely to be in full-time employment (75.2 per cent) and less likely to be students (1.2 per cent). The Asian men in the Periodic Survey were also more likely to be in full-time employment (65.8 per cent), and were just as likely to be students (18.1 per cent): they were less likely to be in part-time employment (10.1 per cent).

Those who had been living in Australia the longest were more likely to be in full-time employment, whereas more recent arrivals were more likely to be students or to be employed part-time. The Japanese, Korean and Indonesian men tended to be students or to work part-time. The Filipino men were the most likely to be in full-time employment. The Thai men were more likely to be unemployed. One-third of the employed men in this sample were in professional or managerial occupations and over half were in white collar positions. As in other gay community studies, few had blue-collar jobs.

**Table 10 Occupation**

<b>Professional/Managerial</b>	
Professional/ Managerial	73 (32.9%)
Paraprofessional	22 (9.9%)
<b>White collar</b>	
Clerical/ Sales	119 (53.6%)
<b>Blue collar</b>	
Trades	5 (2.3%)
Plant operator/Labourer	3 (1.4%)
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>222 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes all men who specified their occupation, whether currently employed or not.

Nonetheless, the men in this sample were less likely to be in professional or managerial occupations than were the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey, 43.2 per cent of whom were in such positions. This was also true of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey, with 52.6 per cent in such occupations. ( $p < .01$ ). There was little variation in occupation according to length of residence in Australia. The Chinese and Filipino men were the most likely to be in professional or managerial occupations and the Vietnamese, Thai and Indonesian men the least likely.

## Education

As in previous gay-community-based studies, men in this sample were relatively well educated; most of them having received some post-secondary education and two-thirds having had some university education.

**Table 11 Education**

Up to 4 years of high school	20 (6.3%)
Higher School Certificate	31 (9.8%)
Trade certificate or diploma	67 (21.3%)
University	197 (62.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>315 (100%)</b>

The men in this sample were even better educated than the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey, 44.5 per cent of whom had some university education. However, the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were similar to this sample, with 70.0 per cent having received some university education. ( $p < .001$ ). There was little variation in education according to length of residence in Australia. Those born in Australia were, however, less likely to have proceeded to university level. The Vietnamese men were less likely to have university education.

## Religion

As in previous gay-community-based studies, many of the men in this sample did not hold a religious belief. Nonetheless, two-thirds did have such a belief, with almost half of them Christians. Most of the remainder were Buddhists.

**Table 12 Religion**

None	104 (33.3%)
Christian	99 (31.7%)
Buddhist	88 (28.2%)
Muslim	14 (4.5%)
Hindu	4 (1.3%)
Other	3 (1.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>312 (100%)</b>



Men in the Periodic Survey were not asked about religion; however, in the SMASH study about two-thirds of the men did not hold a religious belief. Compared with the men in SMASH, the men in this sample were much more religious. The longer the men had lived in Australia, the less likely they were to hold a religious belief, and the less likely they were to be Christian. The Chinese men were the least likely to hold a religious belief—only half did and were roughly equally likely to be either Buddhist or Christian—whereas over three-quarters of the Thai men were Buddhists and nearly all the Filipino men were Christian. Over half the Vietnamese men were Buddhists. Two-thirds of the men born in Indonesia were Christian but the majority of these were ethnically Chinese; the few men who were Muslim were likely to have been either Indonesian or Malaysian.

## Living circumstances

One-quarter of the men lived alone, and a similar proportion lived with their regular male partner or 'boyfriend'. Only slightly fewer lived with their parents or other relatives. Very few lived with a female partner or 'girlfriend'.

**Table 13 Living circumstances**

Regular male partner	81 (25.4%)
Regular female partner	5 (1.6%)
Gay friends	59 (18.5%)
Straight friends	36 (11.3%)
Parents/relatives	75 (23.5%)
Alone	87 (27.3%)

**Note:** These items are not mutually exclusive. The percentages do not sum to 100% as some men lived with more than one of these categories and some with none of them.

Living arrangements were not included in the Periodic Survey. In the baseline SMASH data (Prestage et al, 1995a), however, the Anglo-Celtic men reported living in similar situations to those found in this sample: 27.5 per cent lived alone; 19.6 per cent lived with their regular male partner and 1.9 per cent with their regular female partner. However, relatively few Anglo-Celtic men in SMASH lived with their parents or other relatives.

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on whom the respondents lived with. The Vietnamese men were unlikely to live with a boyfriend or with gay friends, with over half living with their parents or other relatives. A third of the Filipino men lived with their

parents or other relatives. A third of the Thai men lived with gay friends. The Japanese men were also somewhat more likely to live with gay friends and less likely to live with parents or other

relatives. The Malaysian men were also unlikely to live with parents or relatives but were more likely to live alone. The Indonesian men were less likely to live alone but more likely to live with straight friends.

## Sexual relationships with women

As with other samples of gay men, few of these men had had sex with women in the previous six months.

**Table 14 Sex with women in previous six months**

No female partners	277 (87.1%)
One female partner	19 (6.0%)
More than one female partner	22 (6.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>318 (100%)</b>

Nonetheless, they were more likely to have done so than were either the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey, 95.1 per cent of whom had no female partners in the previous six months, or the Asian men in the Periodic Survey, 96.0 per cent of whom had no female partners ( $p < .001$ ). Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on whether the respondents had sex with women. One Thai man had sex with women in the previous six months, but otherwise there was little cultural difference.

## Sexual relationships with men

Nearly two-thirds of these men reported that they had sex with casual male partners and slightly fewer reported having a regular male partner. One in ten gave no indication that they were currently having sex with men, which may have been intentional or situational.

**Table 15 Current sexual relationships with men**

No sex with men	29 (9.9%)
Casual partners only	97 (33.0%)
Regular partner only	83 (28.2%)
Both casual and regular partners	85 (28.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>294 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were less likely to report being monogamous (16.0 per cent); the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were less likely to have casual sex (18.4 per cent), and 13.6 per cent claimed they were currently not having sex with men at all ( $p < .001$ ).

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on the nature of the respondents' sexual contacts, except that those who had recently arrived in Australia were somewhat less likely to be currently having sex with men: this which may have had as much to do with lack of opportunity as anything else. Almost half the Thai men were having sex with both casual and regular partners. Nearly half the Japanese and Korean men had a regular partner only, whereas a similar proportion of the Filipino men had casual partners only.

When those who had a regular partner or boyfriend were specifically asked to describe the type of relationship they had, over a third said they were in a monogamous relationship; another third claimed to be in a fully open relationship where both partners also had casual sex. One in five was in a relationship where only one partner (usually the respondent) had casual sex.

**Table 16 Types of regular relationships with men**

Monogamous	57 (36.8%)
Partner has casual sex but I do not	12 (7.7%)
I have casual sex but my partner does not	21 (13.5%)
Both have casual sex	52 (33.5%)
I have several regular partners	13 (8.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>155 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey who had a regular partner or boyfriend were slightly less likely to report being in a monogamous relationship (29.1 per cent) but more likely to indicate that they had casual sex but their partner did not (33.1 per cent). On the other hand, the Asian men in the Periodic Survey with a regular partner were more likely to be in a monogamous relationship (51.0 per cent): only 18.0 per cent were in a fully open relationship ( $p < .01$ ).

Those who had lived in Australia the longest were less likely to be in a monogamous relationship—half these men were in a fully open relationship where both partners also had casual sex. Half the Chinese men and almost half the Japanese and Korean men were in a monogamous relationship, but few Thai or Filipino men were.

Among those men who were in a regular relationship, over half of the relationships had lasted for more than a year.

**Table 17 Length of relationships with men**

Less than one year	82 (42.5%)
At least one year	111 (57.5%)
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>193 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes only those men who 'currently' had a regular partner and answered Question 8.

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey who were in a relationship tended to have been in those relationships longer than the men in this sample, with 68.2 per cent in the relationship for a year or longer. This was also the case among the Asian men in the Periodic Survey, 71.1 per cent of whom had been in the relationship for at least one year. Two-thirds of the Chinese men and three-quarters of the Thai men, but only a third of the Filipino men, had been in a relationship for longer than a year. Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on how long the respondents had been in a relationship.

## CONTACT WITH COMMUNITIES

In several respects, this was a rather gay-identified and gay-community-attached sample, although their degree of contact with the HIV epidemic was somewhat restricted.

### Identification with ethnic community

A third of the men in the sample felt very much that they were part of their ethnic community in Australia, but one in five felt not at all part of that community.

**Table 18 Ethnic community identification**

Very much a part of ethnic community in Australia	97 (31.2%)
Only feel slightly a part of ethnic community	147 (47.3%)
Do not feel part of ethnic community at all	67 (21.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>311 (100%)</b>

Not surprisingly, those who had only recently arrived in Australia were less likely to feel they were part of their ethnic community here. Neither did nearly half the men born in Australia or another predominantly Anglo-Celtic English-speaking country feel part of their ethnic community. Nearly half the Filipino and the Thai men felt they were very much a part of their ethnic community.

### Sexual identity

The men in the sample were mostly homosexually identified. Homosexual identification included 'gay/homosexual'. Non-homosexual identification included 'bisexual' and 'heterosexual'.

**Table 19 Sexual identity**

Homosexually identified	257 (82.9%)
Not homosexually identified	53 (17.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>310 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were somewhat more likely to be homosexually identified (90.8 per cent), as were the Asian men in that survey (94.7 per cent). Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on sexual identity. A quarter of the Vietnamese men, and nearly as many Filipino men, did not identify as gay or homosexual, but nearly all the Japanese and Korean men did. Very few of the men born in Australia or another Anglophone country did not identify as gay.

## Identification with the gay community

Nearly half the men in the sample felt very much that they were part of the gay community, but one in six felt not at all part of that community.

**Table 20 Gay community identity**

Very much a part of the gay community	136 (43.2%)
Only feel slightly a part of the gay community	126 (40.0%)
Do not feel part of the gay community at all	53 (16.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>315 (100%)</b>

This item was not included in the Periodic Survey. In the baseline SMASH data, however, 84.1 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men indicated that they felt part of the gay community. Not surprisingly, those who had recently arrived in Australia were less likely to view themselves as being part of the gay community. Cultural background appears to have had little effect on whether the respondents felt they were part of the gay community.

## Gay community involvement

The men in this sample were quite socially involved with gay men, with a third saying most or all of their friends were gay men.

**Table 21 Gay friends**

None	5 (1.6%)
Few	100 (31.3%)
Some	102 (32.0%)
Most or all	112 (35.1%)

<b>Total</b>	<b>319 (100%)</b>
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The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey had more gay friends, with over half (56.0 per cent) reporting that most of their friends were gay men. This was just as true of the Asian men in that survey, 61.6 per cent of whom had mostly gay friends. Those who had recently arrived in Australia had slightly fewer gay friends. While half the Thai men had mainly gay friends, this was true for only a quarter of the Filipino men. Correspondingly, a third of the men in this sample said they spent a lot of their free time with gay men.

**Table 22 Proportion of free time spent with gay men**

None	4 (1.3%)
A little	81 (25.6%)
Some	129 (40.7%)
A lot	103 (32.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>317 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey spent more time with their gay friends (54.1 per cent spent 'a lot' of time with their gay friends, as did the Asian men in that survey, 62.3 per cent of whom spent 'a lot' of time with their gay friends. Those who had recently arrived in Australia spent a little less time with their gay friends. There was little difference across the cultural groups in how much time they spent with their gay friends. Most of the men in this sample said they spent at least some time with Asian gay men, and about a quarter spent a lot of their free time with Asian gay men.

**Table 23 Proportion of free time spent with Asian gay men**

None	23 (7.3%)
A little	100 (31.5%)
Some	120 (37.9%)
A lot	74 (23.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>317 (100%)</b>

It is noteworthy that those men who spent more time with gay friends in general were also more likely to spend more time with Asian gay friends in particular ( $p < .001$ ). Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little relationship with how much time the respondents spent with Asian gay men. Those born in Australia or another Anglophone country, as well as those born in China (though not necessarily all those who were ethnically Chinese) spent less time with Asian gay men.



## Use of gay venues

The majority of the men in this sample attended gay social venues and gay sex-on-premises venues to meet partners. About one in five used beats to meet partners and a quarter used personal advertisements. One-third met male partners through the Internet.

**Table 24 Methods of meeting sex partners**

Sauna	206 (64.6%)
Gay bar	189 (59.2%)
Internet	109 (34.2%)
Adult bookshops/Video shops	104 (32.6%)
Gay dance parties	101 (31.7%)
Sex club	98 (30.7%)
Personal advertisements	77 (24.1%)
Beats	72 (22.6%)
Shopping malls	52 (16.3%)
Gay Asian events	40 (12.5%)
Phone sex lines	28 (8.7%)
Sex parties	24 (7.6%)
Leather events	15 (4.7%)
<b>Other</b>	<b>13 (4.1%)</b>

**Note:** These items are not mutually exclusive. The percentages do not sum to 100% as some men used more than one of these categories of persons and some used none of them.

These items were not included in the Periodic Survey. In the 1997-1998 SMASH data, however, similar proportions met male sex partners through gay bars, personal advertisements, phone sex lines and sex clubs. The SMASH men were, however, more likely to meet sex partners through dance parties (46.7 per cent), at leather events (20.9 per cent), sex parties (13.6 per cent) and beats (30.8 per cent), and less likely to use saunas (53.0 per cent) or adult bookshops (21.0 per cent).

It is worth noting that the majority of the men in this study who were recruited in gay bars also used gay sex-on-premises venues to meet partners, though they were less frequent users of such venues than the men recruited in sex-on-premises venues ( $p < .05$ ). Similarly, the majority of the men recruited in sex venues also used gay bars to meet partners—indeed they used these venues almost as often as did the men recruited in such venues.

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on how the respondents found male sex partners. Contrary to some expectations, those whose primary language was not

English were no less likely to use either personal advertisements or the Internet. The Thai men were a little less likely to use personal advertisements, but nearly a third used shopping malls as a place to meet partners. The Japanese and Korean men were somewhat less likely to use adult bookshops and video parlours. Few Japanese, Korean or Filipino men used gay Asian events to meet partners. A third of the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese men often used gay bars. The Korean men were slightly more likely to use leather events to meet sex partners. Half the Chinese, Japanese and Korean men, but only a few Vietnamese men, used the Internet to meet partners, compared to half the respondents born in a predominantly Anglo-Celtic English-speaking country. The Chinese men were slightly more likely to use personal advertisements and gay Asian events. The Malaysian men were more likely to use gay Asian events to meet partners. Only a few Vietnamese, Japanese and Korean men used sex clubs or sex parties. Just one Vietnamese man used telephone sex lines. Over half those born in Australia used sex clubs. There was little difference across the various cultural groups in the use of beats, saunas or gay dance parties.

## Contact with HIV epidemic

Over half the men in this sample knew nobody with HIV and few knew more than five HIV-positive individuals.

**Table 25** Number of people known with HIV

None	176 (56.4%)
One	48 (15.4%)
Two	43 (13.8%)
3-5	29 (9.3%)
More than five	16 (5.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>312 (100%)</b>

These items were not included in the Periodic Survey. We know from SMASH, however, that Anglo-Celtic men are far more likely to know someone, and to know more people with HIV. In the 1997-1998 SMASH data, for example, just 8.2 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men knew of nobody with HIV and 61.6 per cent knew more than five HIV-positive individuals.

Although length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on whether the respondents knew anyone with HIV, those who had lived in Australia the longest were likely to know more people with HIV. Nonetheless, over half of those born in Australia knew someone with HIV. There was little difference across the various cultural groups in how many people with

HIV were known to the respondents. Three-quarters of the men in this sample knew of no-one who had died from AIDS and very few knew more than two.

**Table 26 Number of people known to have died from AIDS**

None	233 (74.2%)
One	34 (10.8%)
Two	31 (9.9%)
3-5	6 (1.9%)
More than five	10 (3.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>314 (100%)</b>

These items, also, were not included in the Periodic Survey. We know from SMASH, however, that Anglo-Celtic men are far more likely to know someone, and to know more people who had died from AIDS. In the baseline SMASH data, for example, 80.2 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men knew someone who had died and 45.6 per cent knew more than five. In the 1997-1998 SMASH data, 57.9 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men knew of someone who had died from AIDS in the previous year. The data reported on here are some two years later than the most recently available SMASH data. Given the widening impact of newly available treatments, it is likely that, in the intervening period, fewer of these men would know someone who had recently died from AIDS.

Those who had lived in Australia the longest were more likely to know someone who had died of AIDS. Only a few Japanese and Korean men knew someone who had died of AIDS, and the Chinese men were also somewhat less likely to know someone who had died. On the other hand, the Thai and Filipino men were a little more likely to know someone who had died of AIDS.

## HIV TESTING AND TREATMENTS

Although most of the men had already been tested for antibodies to HIV, one quarter had not. Only a small number of the men were HIV-positive.

**Table 27 HIV test results**

Not tested/No results	81 (25.8%)
HIV-negative	223 (71.0%)
HIV-positive	10 (3.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>314 (100%)</b>

Fewer Anglo-Celtic men (10.8 per cent) and only 15.4 per cent of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey had not been tested ( $p < .001$ ). A larger proportion of the Anglo-Celtic men had tested HIV-positive (17.2 per cent), but the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were almost as unlikely to be HIV-positive (4.7 per cent) as were these men. About a third of those who had arrived in Australia within the previous two years had not been tested for HIV. Nearly half the Vietnamese men had not been tested. The Thai men were also the most likely group to have been tested for HIV, and three of the 26 were HIV-positive.

### Time since most recent HIV-antibody test

Among those men who had had tests for HIV, the majority had done so within the previous year. Relatively few men reported infrequent testing.

**Table 28 Time since most recent HIV test**

Less than 6 months ago	112 (45.7%)
7-12 months ago	48 (19.6%)
1-2 years ago	53 (21.6%)
Over 2 years ago	32 (13.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>245 (100%)</b>

**Note:** This table includes only those men who had been tested for HIV.

Considering only men who were tested, both Anglo-Celtic men & Asian men in the Periodic survey had their last test about as long ago as the men in this survey. Neither length of residence in Australia nor cultural background appeared to have much relationship to the time those who had been tested last had such a test.

## Combination therapies

Of the few men who indicated that they were HIV-positive, two-thirds (66.7 per cent) were taking combination therapy. This was similar to the rate found among both the Anglo-Celtic and the Asian men who were HIV-positive in the Periodic Survey.

## Regular partner's HIV-status

Participants were asked about the serostatus of their current regular partners. As the question referred to their current partner, fewer men responded to this item than indicated sex with a regular partner during the previous six months. Nearly two-thirds had an HIV-negative regular partner, while approximately one in 20 had an HIV-positive regular partner and one in three men had a regular partner whose serostatus they did not know.

**Table 29 HIV status of regular partners**

HIV-positive	9 (4.9%)
HIV-negative	110 (60.4%)
HIV status unknown	63 (34.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>182 (100%)</b>

**Note:** Includes only those men who 'currently' had a regular partner.

Among the Periodic Survey Anglo-Celtic men with a regular partner, only one in six (16.9 per cent) did not know their partner's HIV status, although among the Asian men in that survey the proportion was similar to that found in this sample (33.3 per cent). Far more men in the Periodic Survey reported having a regular partner who was HIV-positive: this was true for both the Anglo-Celtic men (15.4 per cent) and the Asian men (11.9 per cent) ( $p < .05$ ).

Of those in regular relationships, nearly half the respondents who had lived in Australia for less than two years and half the men born in Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia did not know the HIV status of their partners. Five of the eight HIV-positive men had an HIV-positive regular partner. Men who did not know their own serostatus tended not to know the serostatus of their regular partners.

**Table 30 Match of HIV status in regular relationships**

<b>Serostatus of regular partner</b>	<b>HIV positive</b>	<b>HIV negative</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
HIV positive	5 (62.5%)	3 (2.3%)	1 (2.6%)
HIV negative	1 (12.5%)	94 (70.7%)	12 (31.6%)
HIV status unknown	2 (25.0%)	36 (27.1%)	25 (65.8%)
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>8 (100%)</b>	<b>133 (100%)</b>	<b>38 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes only those men who 'currently' had a regular partner.

Although the number of men in several of these categories was much smaller than was the case in the Periodic Survey, these trends were broadly similar among both the Anglo-Celtic men and the Asian men in the Periodic Survey.

# SEXUAL PRACTICE AND 'SAFE SEX'

## Sexual behaviour between men

Participants were asked to report separately for regular and casual partners on only a limited range of sexual practices, namely anal intercourse with and without ejaculation and oral intercourse. The anal intercourse practices were selected for their possible association with HIV transmission. Based on the responses to these sexual behaviour items and the sort of sexual relationships with men indicated by the participants, two-thirds of the men were classified as having had sex with a regular male partner and three-quarters with a casual male partner 'in the previous six months'.

**Table 31** Reported sex with male partners in previous six months

Any sexual contact with regular partners	210 (65.8%)
Any sexual contact with casual partners	240 (75.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>

**Note:** These categories are not mutually exclusive.

In the Periodic Survey, somewhat more of the Anglo-Celtic men reported sexual contact with a casual partner (85.4 per cent) and fewer with a regular partner (58.2 per cent). On the other hand, slightly fewer of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey had casual sex (66.9 per cent) and about the same proportion as in this sample had sex with a regular partner (67.5 per cent). This lower proportion of casual sex and greater number of men with regular partners among the Asian men than was found among the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey is partially explained by the fact that the Asian men were mainly recruited at Mardi Gras Fair Day. Both Anglo-Celtic and Asian men recruited at Fair Day generally had less casual sex and were more likely to have a regular partner.

Neither length of residence in Australia nor cultural background appeared to have much impact on whether the respondents had sex with casual or regular partners in the previous six months. Those men who had been born in Australia were, however, a little less likely to have had a regular partner. Men recruited at sex venues were less likely to have had sexual contact

with regular partners than men recruited in social venues ( $p < .05$ ). However, the men recruited at sex venues were more likely to have casual partners ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 31** Reported sex with male partners in previous six months by recruitment site

	Sex venues	Social venues
Any sexual contact with regular partners	60 (58.8%)	150 (69.1%)
Any sexual contact with casual partners	89 (87.3%)	151 (69.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>217</b>

**Note:** These categories are not mutually exclusive.

These same trends were generally true of both the Anglo-Celtic and the Asian men in the Periodic Survey. The majority of the men had engaged in sex with between one and 10 partners 'in the previous six months', although almost a quarter of the men had more than 10 partners. One in five men had just one partner.

**Table 33** Number of male partners in previous six months

None	12 (3.8%)
One	63 (19.9%)
2-5	125 (39.4%)
6-10	45 (14.2%)
11-50	58 (18.3%)
More than 50	14 (4.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>317 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey tended to have a greater number of partners: One-third (34.9 per cent) had between 11 and 50 partner in the previous six months, and 13.9 per cent had more than 50 ( $p < .001$ ). Among the Asian men in that survey, however, the number of partners was similar to that found in this sample. Those who had arrived in Australia within the previous two years tended to have had fewer partners in the previous six months. Cultural background, however, appeared to have little association with the number of partners the respondents had. Over half the men had at least some Asian male partners 'in the previous six months', and one in five had mainly or exclusively Asian male partners.

**Table 34** Asian men as proportion of male partners

None	135 (42.6%)
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Some	119 (37.5%)
Most	39 (12.3%)
All	24 (7.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>317 (100%)</b>

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on whether the respondents had sex with other Asian men. One-third of both the Vietnamese and the Thai men had mainly Asian male partners, but two-thirds of the Filipino men had no Asian male partners.

## Sexual practices with regular and casual partners

Most participants engaged in oral intercourse with their regular male partners, and those who did were equally likely to do so in the insertive as in the receptive role. Only slightly fewer participants engaged in anal intercourse with their regular male partners. Nearly three-quarters of those with regular partners engaged in insertive anal intercourse; and a little less than two-thirds engaged in receptive anal intercourse. A few men restricted themselves to either the insertive (23.3 per cent) or the receptive role (13.3 per cent), but most engaged in both roles (48.6 per cent).

**Table 35 Sexual behaviour with regular male partners**

Sex practices	Total sample (n = 319)	With regular partners (n = 210)
Any oral intercourse	204 (63.9%)	204 (97.1%)
Insertive oral intercourse	200 (62.7%)	200 (95.2%)
Receptive oral intercourse	192 (60.2%)	192 (91.4%)
Any anal intercourse	179 (56.2%)	179 (85.2%)
Insertive anal intercourse	151 (47.4%)	151 (71.9%)
Receptive anal intercourse	130 (40.8%)	130 (61.9%)

**Note:** These items are not mutually exclusive. The percentages do not sum to 100% as some men engaged in more than one of these practices and some in none of these practices.

Both the Anglo-Celtic and the Asian men in the Periodic Survey engaged in oral intercourse with their regular partners at rates similar to those found in this sample. Anglo-Celtic men tended to be more likely to engage in anal intercourse with their regular partners, particularly in the receptive role, than was found to be the case with this sample: that is, 91.6 per cent of those with regular partners engaged in anal intercourse with them, 73.8 per cent in the receptive role.

The Asian men in the Periodic Survey were more like the men in this sample in their practice of anal intercourse with their regular partners.

Among the respondents in this survey, length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on the practice of anal intercourse with regular partners, but those who had only recently arrived were slightly less likely to engage in receptive oral intercourse with their regular

partners. Cultural differences appeared not to affect the practice of oral intercourse with regular partners. Slightly less than half the Japanese and Korean men restricted themselves to the insertive role only during anal intercourse.

Somewhat fewer respondents engaged in either oral or anal intercourse with casual male partners than with regular male partners. Nonetheless, well over three-quarters of the men with casual partners engaged in oral intercourse, more commonly in the insertive role. Approximately three-quarters of those who had sex with casual male partners engaged in anal intercourse with them, again more usually in the insertive role. A few men restricted themselves to either the insertive (18.8 per cent) or the receptive role (10.8 per cent) during anal intercourse, but most engaged in both roles (39.2 per cent).

**Table 36 Sexual behaviour with casual male partners**

Sex practices	Total sample (n = 319)	With casual partners (n = 240)
Any oral intercourse	200 (62.7%)	200 (83.3%)
Insertive oral intercourse	199 (62.4%)	199 (82.9%)
Receptive oral intercourse	181 (56.7%)	181 (75.4%)
Any anal intercourse	165 (51.7%)	165 (76.5%)
Insertive anal intercourse	139 (43.6%)	139 (58.0%)
Receptive anal intercourse	120 (37.7%)	120 (50.0%)

**Note:** These items are not mutually exclusive. The percentages do not sum to 100% as some men engaged in more than one of these practices and some in none of these practices.

Both the Anglo-Celtic and the Asian men in the Periodic Survey engaged in oral intercourse with casual partners at rates similar to those found in this sample, although the Anglo-Celtic men were a little more likely to engage in receptive oral intercourse (83.0 per cent). Regarding anal intercourse, the Anglo-Celtic men tended to be more likely to engage in this practice with casual partners than was found to be the case with this sample: 83.9 per cent of those who had casual partners engaged in anal intercourse with those partners, 77.9 per cent in the insertive role and 68.0 per cent in the receptive role. In their practice of anal intercourse with casual partners the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were more like the men in this sample

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on the practice of anal intercourse with casual partners among the respondents, but those who had only recently arrived were slightly less likely to engage in receptive oral intercourse with their casual partners. The Thai and Filipino men were slightly more likely to engage in receptive oral intercourse with casual partners. All the Filipino men engaged in insertive oral intercourse. One-third of the

Filipino men restricted themselves to the insertive role only during anal intercourse with casual partners.

## Other sex practices

Participants were asked to report on some other sex practices with male partners, either regular or casual, 'in the previous six months'. One in five had engaged in group sex with male partners, a little less than half had engaged in rimming. One in ten respondents had engaged in sadomasochistic practices and one in eight in fisting. Insertive and receptive roles were not specified in these questions.

**Table 37 Other sexual activity with male partners in previous six months**

Group sex	65 (20.4%)
Rimming	136 (42.6%)
S/M	32 (10.1%)
Fisting	39 (12.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>

**Note:** These categories are not mutually exclusive.

These items were not included in the Periodic Survey. In the SMASH data, however, the Anglo-Celtic men were more likely to have engaged in these practices with either their regular or casual partners, though with regard to fisting, this was only very slightly so: 14.2 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men in SMASH engaged in fisting with either their regular or casual male partners; 71.2 per cent engaged in rimming, 40.6 per cent in group sex, and 23.4 per cent in sadomasochistic practices.

Those who had only recently arrived in Australia were a little less likely to have engaged in fisting with any male partners, whereas those who had lived in Australia for more than five years were somewhat more likely to engage in group sex and rimming. A quarter of the Thai men had engaged in fisting. Only a few Japanese and Korean men engaged in group sex or in sadomasochistic practices. Only a quarter of the Japanese, Korean and Filipino men engaged in rimming with male partners. Over half those born in Australia engaged in rimming and a quarter in sadomasochistic practices.

## Use of condoms in regular relationships

### Condom Use

Based on the entire sample, about a quarter of the men who participated in the survey engaged in any unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partners 'in the previous six months'.

**Table 38 Condom use with regular partners**

	Total sample	Regular partners
No regular partner	109 (34.2%)	—
No anal intercourse	31 (9.7%)	31 (14.8%)
Always uses condom	90 (28.2%)	90 (42.9%)
Sometimes does not use condom <sup>1</sup>	89 (27.9%)	89 (42.4%)
Base	319 (100%)	210 (100%)

<sup>1</sup> Of the 89 men who engaged in unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners 'in the previous six months', 70 (21.9% of the total sample) practised both withdrawal prior to ejaculation and ejaculation inside, 19 (6.0%) practised only ejaculation inside, and none engaged in withdrawal only.

Both the Anglo-Celtic and the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were slightly more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) with their regular partners than were the men in this sample: in that survey 53.9 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men with a regular partner engaged in UAI with that partner, as did 49.0 per cent of the Asian men with a regular partner. Neither length of residence in Australia nor cultural background appeared to have much impact on the use of condoms with regular partners among the respondents. Although HIV-positive men tended to be more likely to engage in UAI with their regular partner, this was not a significant correlation. There were insufficient respondents in each category to permit detailed analysis.

**Table 39 Serostatus and condom use among regular partners**

	HIV positive	HIV negative	Serostatus unknown
No Anal	—	20 (12.6%)	11 (26.2%)
Always uses condom	3 (42.9%)	68 (42.8%)	19 (45.2%)
Sometimes does not use condom	4 (57.1%)	71 (44.7%)	12 (28.6%)
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>7 (100%)</b>	<b>159 (100%)</b>	<b>42 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes only those men who had a regular partner 'in the previous six months'.

The same trend could be found among the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey, but not among the Asian men in that survey. However, numbers did not permit detailed analysis in that limited sample either.

In the following table, the serostatus of each of the participants has been compared with that of his regular partner. For each of the nine serostatus combinations, sexual practice has been divided into 'no unprotected anal intercourse' versus 'some unprotected anal intercourse'. The numbers are too small for detailed analysis, but there is nothing in these data which would suggest that the findings from either SMASH or the Periodic Survey do not also apply to these Asian gay men. In these other studies, HIV-positive men were much more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners who were also HIV positive than they were with regular partners who were HIV negative or of unknown serostatus. Also, most of the unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners involving participants who were HIV negative in those studies occurred in relationships where both partners were known to be HIV negative or where the other partner's status was unknown.

**Table 40 Condom use and match of HIV status in regular relationships**

Regular partner's serostatus		Participant's serostatus		
		Positive	Negative	Don't know
Positive	No UAI	1 (25.0)	2 (66.7)	- (0.0)
	Some UAI	3 (75.0)	1 (33.3)	1 (100.0)
Negative	No UAI	- (0.0)	41 (47.7)	7 (77.7)
	Some UAI	1 (100.0)	45 (52.3)	2 (22.2)
Don't Know	No UAI	2 (100.0)	16 (59.2)	13 (68.5)
	Some UAI	- (0.0)	11 (40.7)	6 (31.6)
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>29</b>

**Note:** UAI = unprotected anal intercourse. Includes only those men who had anal intercourse with their 'current' regular partner 'in the previous six months'.

Whereas much of the unprotected anal intercourse was between seroconcordant (positive-positive or negative-negative) couples, 22 men in the above table had unprotected anal intercourse in a relationship where seroconcordance was in doubt.

## Agreements

Most participants with regular male partners had agreements with their partners about sex within the relationship.

**Table 41 Agreements with regular male partners about sex *within* relationships**

No spoken agreement about anal intercourse	49 (32.9%)
No anal intercourse between regular partners is permitted	10 (6.7%)
Anal intercourse permitted only with condom	67 (45.0%)
Anal intercourse without condom is permitted	23 (15.4%)
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>149 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup>Based on the responses of men who 'currently' had a regular partner.

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were more likely to have a spoken agreement with their regular partner about sex within the relationship, and they were also more likely to have an agreement which permitted anal intercourse without a condom, than were the men in this sample: 81.4 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men with a regular partner had an agreement about sex within the relationship and 35.3 per cent had agreed to allow anal intercourse without a condom. However, the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were more similar to the men in this sample: only 69.0 per cent had an agreement about sex within the relationship, and 22.6 per cent had agreed to permit anal intercourse without a condom.

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on the whether the respondents had agreements with their regular partners about sex and condom use within their relationship. Although the Japanese, Korean and Filipino men were slightly more likely to have such agreements, their agreements were mainly to always use condoms within the relationship.

About two-thirds of the participants with a regular partner had made an agreement with that partner about sexual interactions outside the relationship. Where men did make such an agreement, very few permitted unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners.

**Table 42 Agreements with regular male partners about sex *outside* relationship**

No spoken agreement about anal intercourse	50 (38.8%)
No sexual contact with casual partners is permitted	18 (14.0%)
No anal intercourse with casual partners is permitted	10 (7.8%)
Anal intercourse permitted only with condom	46 (35.7%)
Anal intercourse without condom is permitted	5 (3.9%)

<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>129 (100%)</b>
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<sup>1</sup> Based on the responses of men who 'currently' had a regular partner.

Both the Anglo-Celtic and the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were similar to this sample in the extent of their spoken agreements with their regular partner about sex outside the relationship. Those who had lived in Australia for over five years were somewhat more likely to have agreements with their regular partners about sex and condom use during casual sex. The Japanese and Korean men were unlikely to have such agreements.

## Sex with casual male partners

### Condom use

Based on the entire sample, 16.3 per cent of the men who participated in the survey engaged in any unprotected anal intercourse with their casual male partners 'in the previous six months'. A separate analysis revealed that of these 52 men, 25 also had unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners.

**Table 43 Condom use with casual partners**

	<b>Total sample</b>	<b>Those with casual partners</b>
No casual partner	79 (24.8%)	—
No anal intercourse	75 (23.5%)	75 (31.3%)
Always uses condom	113 (35.4%)	113 (47.1%)
Sometimes does not use condom <sup>1</sup>	52 (16.3%)	52 (21.7%)
<b>Base</b>	<b>319 (100%)</b>	<b>240 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Of the 52 men who engaged in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners 'in the previous six months', 42 (13.2% of the total sample) practised both withdrawal prior to ejaculation and ejaculation inside, 10 (3.1%) practised only ejaculation inside, and none engaged in only withdrawal.

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners than were the men in this sample: 37.9 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men who had sexual contact with casual partners engaged in UAI with any of those partners. The Asian men in the Periodic Survey, however, were more like the men in this sample in this regard: 21.8 per cent of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey who had sexual contact



with casual partners had UAI with any of those partners. Neither length of residence in Australia nor cultural background appeared to have much impact on the use of condoms with casual partners among the respondents.

A comparison of the data in Tables 38 and 43 confirms that more men had unprotected anal intercourse with regular than with casual partners. Furthermore, unprotected anal intercourse with ejaculation inside was more common between regular than between casual partners. Although HIV-positive men tended to be more likely to engage in UAI with casual partners, this was not a significant correlation. There were insufficient respondents in each category to permit detailed analysis.

**Table 44 Serostatus and condom use with casual partners**

	HIV positive	HIV negative	Serostatus unknown
No anal	3 (42.9%)	51 (29.5%)	20 (36.4%)
Always uses condom	2 (28.6%)	88 (50.9%)	22 (40.0%)
Sometimes does not use condom	2 (28.6%)	34 (19.7%)	13 (23.6%)
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>7 (100%)</b>	<b>173 (100%)</b>	<b>55 (100%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes only those men who had casual partners.

Among the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey, HIV-positive men were more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners than were either HIV-negative men or men whose HIV status was unknown ( $p < .005$ ). With regard to the Asian men in the Periodic Survey, however, there were insufficient respondents in each category to permit detailed analysis.

## Serostatus

Questions 27 and 28 addressed disclosure of serostatus among casual partners. These questions were included in the questionnaire to obtain a sense of disclosure and sex between casual partners. Many more questions—beyond the scope of the brief questionnaire used here—would need to be asked to fully understand the issue. Furthermore, the inclusion of the two questions was not intended to endorse sexual negotiation between casual partners. Over two-thirds of the participants with casual partners did not disclose their serostatus to any of their casual partners. Relatively few men disclosed to all casual partners.

**Table 45 Participants' disclosure of serostatus to casual partners**

Told none	138 (70.1%)
Told some	45 (22.8%)
Told all	14 (7.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>197 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were more likely to disclose their HIV status to casual partners than were the men in this sample: 45.3 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men disclosed their HIV status to any of their casual partners. The Asian men in the Periodic Survey were also somewhat more likely to have disclosed their HIV status to any casual partners than were the men in this sample: 38.5 per cent of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey who had sexual contact with casual partners had disclosed their HIV status to any of those partners.

Likewise, over two-thirds of the participants with casual partners were not told the serostatus of their casual partners. Relatively few men were routinely disclosed to by casual partners.

**Table 46 Casual partners' disclosure of serostatus to participants**

Told by none	142 (72.1%)
Told by some	47 (23.9%)
Told by all	8 (4.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>197 (100%)</b>

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were also more likely to have had casual partners who had disclosed their HIV status to them than were the men in this sample: 48.1 per cent of the Anglo-Celtic men had any casual partners who had disclosed their HIV status to them. In this regard, however, the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were similar to the men in this sample: 32.3 per cent of the Asian men in the Periodic Survey had any casual partners who had disclosed their HIV status to them.

Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on the whether the respondents disclosed their HIV status to casual partners or, indeed, on whether those partners had disclosed their HIV status to them. While it was unlikely that the Chinese, Malaysian and Filipino men had disclosed their HIV status to any casual partners, nearly half the Thai men had done so. The Thai men's casual partners were also slightly more likely to have disclosed their HIV status to them.

## DRUG USE

Among the types of drugs listed (Question 54), use of amyl and ecstasy were the most common. In all, 58 men (18.2 per cent) used the so-called 'party drugs' such as speed, cocaine, ecstasy or LSD.

**Table 47 Drug use in previous six months**

Marijuana	39 (12.2%)
Amyl	52 (16.3%)
Ecstasy	51 (16.0%)
Speed	28 (8.8%)
Cocaine	12 (3.8%)
LSD	5 (1.6%)
Steroids	4 (1.3%)
Heroin	2 (0.6%)
Any other drug	4 (1.3%)

**Note:** Percentages are based on the total sample, although not all men responded to these items. Items are not mutually exclusive.

Apart from two men who reported injecting steroids in the previous six months, none of the other men in this sample injected recreational drugs.

The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were much more likely to use any of these drugs than were the men in this sample: 7.0 per cent reported injecting any drugs in the previous six months ( $p < .001$ ). Although the Asian men in the Periodic Survey were also less likely to use any of these drugs than were the Anglo-Celtic men (and, similar to the men in this sample, none of them reported injecting drugs), they were, nonetheless, considerably more likely to use these drugs than were the men in this sample.

Those who had only recently arrived in Australia were unlikely to have used amyl, marijuana or any of the 'party drugs'. The Vietnamese men were unlikely to have used amyl; however, they were somewhat more likely to have used speed, and one of the two heroin users was Vietnamese. The Malaysian men were more likely to use speed. A quarter of the Filipino men used marijuana and ecstasy. The Thai men were more likely to use party drugs in general; a third of them used ecstasy. The men born in Australia were a little more likely to have used ecstasy and speed.

## HIV INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Respondents were asked to indicate how they learned about HIV. Half learned about HIV in their home country; nearly as many learned about it through the gay community in Australia, and a third indicated that they learned about it in school. Relatively few learned about HIV through their ethnic community in Australia.

**Table 48** How participants learned about HIV

In home country	161 (51.6%)
At school	105 (32.9%)
Through ethnic community in Australia	49 (15.4%)
Through gay community in Australia	153 (48.0%)
Through gay community overseas	85 (26.6%)
Other	32 (10.0%)

**Note:** Items are not mutually exclusive.

The Thai men were more likely to have learnt about HIV through a variety of sources, including in Thailand, at school, through a gay community, whether in Australia or overseas, and through the Thai community in Australia. Learning about HIV through their ethnic communities in Australia or through a gay community, whether in Australia or overseas, was unlikely among the Japanese, Korean and Filipino men, most of whom had, however, learnt about HIV in their home countries. Only a quarter of the Japanese and Korean men learned about HIV at school. Only a third of the Vietnamese men had learnt about HIV in their home countries and were also unlikely to have learnt about HIV through the Vietnamese community in Australia, or at school; two-thirds had, however, learned about HIV through the gay community in Australia. Although less than half the Chinese men had learnt about HIV in their home country, they were somewhat more likely to have learnt about HIV through a gay community overseas. The Malaysian men were also somewhat more likely to have learnt about HIV through a gay community overseas. Length of residence in Australia appeared to have little impact on whether the respondents learned about HIV at school or through their ethnic community in Australia, but the longer the respondents had been in Australia, including those born in Australia, the more likely they were to have learnt about HIV through the Australian gay community. As would be expected, those who had arrived in Australia more recently were more likely to have learnt about HIV in their home country.

Participants were also asked to indicate how they now obtain information about HIV. Media sources (particularly the gay media) and friends were the most common sources of information, but the ethnic media and the Internet were uncommon sources.

**Table 49 Where participants obtain information about HIV**

Gay media	219 (68.7%)
Television	194 (60.8%)
Friends	189 (59.2%)
Posters & leaflets	179 (56.1%)
Sex partners	136 (42.6%)
AIDS Council	126 (39.5%)
Gay Asian groups	105 (32.9%)
Sexual health clinic	105 (32.9%)
Doctor	104 (32.6%)
Ethnic media	84 (26.3%)
The Internet	79 (24.8%)
Other	8 (2.5%)

**Note:** Items are not mutually exclusive.

Those who have lived in Australia longer were more likely to use the AIDS Council to obtain information about HIV but otherwise, length of residence appeared to have little impact on how the respondents obtained such information. The Thai men generally used a broad range of sources of information, while the Vietnamese men appeared to have few options available to them. The Thai men were a little more likely to use the AIDS Council. Half the Thai and Filipino men used sexual health centres for HIV information but relatively few Japanese and Korean men did so. Two-thirds of the Thai men used their doctor for information about HIV, and just as many obtained HIV information from their sex partners. Over a third of the Thai and Filipino men claimed to use the ethnic media as a source of HIV information. Whereas over three-quarters of the Thai and Filipino men obtained information about HIV from their friends, this was true for less than half the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese men. Also, fewer than half the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese men used posters and fliers to obtain HIV information, and fewer than a third received HIV information from their sex partners. Only a third of the Vietnamese men used the gay media as a source of HIV information, and few used the Internet.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from the Asian Gay Men's Survey provide a snapshot of the social and sexual lives of gay men of Asian background in Sydney. In the main, the findings are quite similar to (and thereby corroborate) those found among gay men of Asian background in the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey; Furthermore, the findings point to some key similarities with Anglo-Celtic men in other surveys.

The 319 participants were recruited at four gay venues and events. Most of these men lived in the inner-city areas of Sydney. They were predominantly in professional/managerial or white-collar occupations, and well educated. On these items they were not unlike the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey. They were, however, more likely to hold a religious belief. Almost all of the men were born overseas but about a quarter spoke only English at home when they were growing up. Half were Australian citizens and another one in five was a permanent resident. Nearly half were of Chinese background and over a third were South-East Asian. In general there was little demographic variation across the cultural groups, although the Vietnamese men were somewhat less likely to be in professional or managerial employment or to have been university-educated. They were also a little more likely to live in Sydney's Western suburbs, and more often lived with their parents or other relatives than did other respondents.

Most of the participants identified as gay or homosexual, though they were less likely to do so than Anglo-Celtic respondents in similar surveys of men in the Sydney gay community. Vietnamese and Filipino men were a little less likely to self-identify as gay or homosexual. Correspondingly, most men in this sample felt they had some relationship with the gay community and this seemed to be equally true across the various cultural groups. Most had not had sex with any women 'in the previous six months', though this was more common than was the case among the Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey. As a whole, the sample was quite involved socially in the gay community with high levels of gay friendships and much free time spent with gay men. Nonetheless, they had less association with other gay men than has been found in other samples of gay men in Sydney. The Thai men tended to have mainly gay friends, while the Filipino men tended to have fewer gay friends. Those men who had recently arrived in Australia had fewer social contacts with other gay men and were less likely to view themselves as being part of the gay community in general. Most of the men in the sample also spent time with other gay Asian men, though those who were born in Australia and China were less likely to do so.

Although the majority also had some relationship with their ethnic community in Australia, such communities were not usually their source of information about HIV. This is not

necessarily surprising, given that these communities are not directly funded to provide such services. For the most part, they obtained HIV information through personal contacts and within the gay community. Most of the men felt they were part of their ethnic community in Australia, though this was less true of those who had recently arrived in Australia and those who were born in Australia (clearly, though, for different reasons).

Approximately a quarter of the men had not been tested for HIV, about twice the proportion of that usually found among Sydney gay men. Nonetheless, the majority of those who had been tested for HIV had done so 'within the past year'. Overall, 4.9 per cent of the men were HIV positive, a much lower percentage than that usually found among Sydney gay men. The Vietnamese men were less likely to have been tested for HIV, while the Thai men were the most likely to have been tested. The Thai men were also the most likely to have tested HIV-positive (based on small numbers).

Most of the men used a variety of methods and venues to meet their sex partners. A majority used gay social venues and gay sex-on-premises venues to meet partners. A third used the Internet and a quarter used personal advertisements. Other studies of gay men in Sydney have generally found similar patterns in the use of venues to meet sex partners, though the men in this sample appeared to be a little less likely to use dance parties, beats, sex parties and leather events, and more likely to use saunas and video parlours. In this sample, the Japanese and Korean men appeared to be somewhat less likely to use sex-on-premises venues but more likely to use gay bars. They were also more likely to use the Internet, as were the Chinese men, but the Vietnamese were unlikely to do so. The Vietnamese men were also relatively unlikely to use telephone sex lines, but they were likely to use gay bars to meet sex partners.

Most men reported 'current' sexual contact with at least one other man: about a quarter of the men had only a regular partner; another quarter had a regular partner and either or both partners also had casual partners; and approximately a third of the men had only casual partners. In the six months prior to the survey, approximately two-thirds of the men had sex with regular partners and approximately three-quarters had sex with casual partners. The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were somewhat more likely to have casual sex and less likely to have a regular partner. In this sample there was little variation between the various cultural groups. However, those who had recently arrived in Australia were likely to have had fewer partners and were less likely to have a regular partner. The majority of the men in this sample had at least some sexual contact with other Asian men, and about one in five had mainly Asian male partners. The Vietnamese and Thai men were somewhat more likely to have Asian male partners, while the Filipino men were somewhat less likely to have such partners.

As has been found among Anglo-Celtic samples of gay men in Sydney, most of these men engaged in oral sex with their regular, and with their casual, partners. There was little evidence

of cultural differences in this practice within this sample, although both the Thai and Filipino men were somewhat more likely to engage in oral intercourse with casual partners. Most men engaged in anal intercourse as well, though this was less common than oral intercourse, and they were less likely to engage in anal intercourse with casual partners than with regular partners. The Anglo-Celtic men in the Periodic Survey were somewhat more likely to engage in anal intercourse, particularly in the receptive role, than were the men in this sample. In general, however, there was little variation across the cultural groups in this sample: Japanese and Korean men were somewhat more likely to restrict themselves to the insertive role during anal intercourse with regular partners, and the Filipino men were a little more likely to restrict themselves to the insertive role with casual partners.

The men were also asked about a few other sexual practices: rimming, group sex, fisting and sadomasochistic practices. Although a significant minority engaged in each of these, it was a smaller percentage than that found in other studies of gay men in Sydney. There were also some cultural variations within this sample—e.g. the Thai men were somewhat more likely to have engaged in fisting; the Japanese and Korean men were unlikely to have engaged in rimming, group sex or sadomasochistic practices, and the Filipino men were unlikely to have engaged in rimming. Those born in Australia were somewhat more likely to have engaged in rimming and sadomasochistic practices. Those who had only recently arrived in Australia were a little less likely to have engaged in fisting, while those who had lived in Australia for more than five years were somewhat more likely to have engaged in group sex and rimming.

Of the total sample and 'in the previous six months', 89 men (27.9 per cent) had any unprotected anal intercourse with a regular partner (representing 42.4 per cent of those who had sexual contact with a regular partner); and 52 men (16.3 per cent) had any unprotected anal intercourse with a casual partner (representing 21.7 per cent of those who had sexual contact with casual partners). Some of these men (25 all told) had unprotected anal intercourse with both regular and casual partners. The remainder of the men in the overall sample—far and away the majority—indicated no unprotected anal intercourse with either regular or casual partners. In terms of condom use, there was little difference between these men and those in other studies among gay men in Sydney. Also, within this sample there was little variation across the cultural groups in condom use with either regular or casual male partners.

Not unexpectedly, more men had unprotected anal intercourse with regular than with casual partners. Of those who had anal intercourse with their 'current' regular partner, 22 had unprotected anal intercourse in a relationship that was not understood to be seroconcordant.

Although this was less common than among Anglo-Celtic gay men in Sydney, most of the men with regular partners had agreements about sex within and outside of their relationship. Whereas approximately one in five of these agreements permitted unprotected anal intercourse within the relationship, unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners was rarely allowed.



The Asian men in this survey did not routinely disclose their serostatus to casual partners; in fact they did so less frequently than Anglo-Celtic gay men surveyed. Similarly, most did not know the serostatus of their casual partners. About 70 per cent of men never disclosed their serostatus to casual partners and 72 per cent were never disclosed to by casual partners. The Chinese and Filipino men were the least likely in this sample to have disclosed their HIV status to casual partners, and the Thai men were the most likely.

Unlike the findings among Anglo-Celtic gay men in Sydney, most of the Asian men in this survey indicated no recreational drug use. Only two men reported injecting any drugs and in both cases those drugs were steroids. There was some slight variation in patterns of drug use across the cultural groups, with Vietnamese men more likely to use speed and cocaine, and Thai and Filipino men more likely to use ecstasy. Those who had recently arrived in Australia were generally less likely to use recreational drugs.

Contact with the HIV epidemic was not extensive among these men and much less so than among other samples of gay men in Sydney. Although cultural differences did not affect the number of people known with HIV, the Chinese, Japanese and Korean men tended to know fewer people who had died of AIDS, while the Thai and Filipino men knew somewhat more. Those who had been in Australia the longest tended to know more people with HIV and were more likely to know someone who had died of AIDS.

Half the men in this sample learned about HIV in their home countries, and just as many learned about it through the gay community in Australia. A third learned about HIV at school but considerably fewer learned about HIV through their ethnic community in Australia. The Thai men were more likely to have learnt about HIV through a variety of sources. The Japanese, Korean and Filipino men, however, relied on a much more restricted range of possibilities to learn about HIV. The Vietnamese men relied primarily on the gay community in Australia. The longer the respondents had been in Australia, including those born in Australia, the more likely they were to have learnt about HIV through the Australian gay community.

Media sources, particularly the gay media, and friends were the most common sources of information about HIV among these men. The Thai men generally used a broad range of sources of information, while the Vietnamese men appeared to have few options available to them. The Japanese and Korean men also seemed to be less likely to obtain information about HIV through personal contacts, such as friends or sex partners.

In conclusion, the Asian Gay Men's Survey was conducted very successfully. Recruitment strategies consistent with those employed in the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey and at similar sites attracted a large sample of Asian gay men from the Sydney metropolitan area. An important lesson here is that direct recruitment strategies using anonymous short questionnaires

are an effective way of recruiting from minority populations, particularly if due consideration is given to the particular concerns of those populations.

The resulting data are robust and comparisons with the findings of the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey are suggestive of sound reliability. The data also confirm many of the findings from earlier, much smaller and more restricted studies of homosexually active Asian men in Sydney. On the other hand, there are some differences between the men in this sample and the Asian men recruited through the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey. The Asian men in that study are generally more closely involved with other gay men, although there was little difference between them and this sample in terms of condom use. This suggests that, in the absence of specific targeting, more broad-based studies of gay men are likely to primarily recruit Asian gay men who are closely involved in the gay community.

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