

The Sydney Gay Community Periodic Surveys: 1996-1999 Changes over time

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1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

The Sydney Gay Community Periodic Surveys are cross-sectional surveys of homosexually active men recruited through a range of sites in the Sydney metropolitan area. The project has been funded by New South Wales Health, AIDS & Infectious Diseases Unit. The Periodic Surveys provide a snapshot of sexual practices and access to HIV information among homosexually active men.

The major aim of the Periodic Surveys is to provide data on safe and unsafe sexual practice of homosexually active men recruited from a number of gay community venues and sexual health clinics at six-monthly intervals. These data complement the longitudinal data from The Sydney Men and Sexual Health Study (SMASH). The surveys also provide a measure of the reach of HIV education campaigns.

The surveys are conducted in February and August each year. Several sites have been chosen for the study: these include sexual health clinics and gay community venues in both inner and outer Sydney. In February each year, men are also recruited from the annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day.

The questionnaire is a short self-administered instrument that takes approximately ten minutes to complete. Questions focus on anal intercourse and oral-genital sex, the use of condoms, the nature of sexual relationships, HIV testing practice and serostatus, aspects of gay community social attachment, and a range of demographic items including sexual identity, age, education, occupation and ethnicity. Questions were designed to maximise comparability with the SMASH questionnaire.

This report describes the findings from the seven periodic surveys conducted between February 1996 and February 1999. The descriptions of the data presented here are not final and further analyses may necessitate some reinterpretation of the findings.

2 PARTICIPANTS

Between February 1996 and February 1999, the survey has been conducted on seven occasions at six-monthly intervals. A total of thirteen different locations have been utilised, although not all these sites were used on every occasion. Some sites were added to the survey to broaden its representation, while some sites were discontinued or replaced for a variety of reasons. Also one particular site, the Mardi Gras Fair Day, was only available in February of each year.

Table 1: Total number of participants 1996–1999

1	20	4					
2	221	100	196	229	226	233	188
3	64	91	66	70	56	70	31
4	128	146	100	182	195	180	179
5	67	71	38				
6	77	215	121	204	177	138	172
7	1034		1088		1156		1436
8				155	135	84	113
9				28	11		
10				153	84	70	48
11					160	61	118
12							82
13							20
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

The thirteen recruitment sites can be grouped in several ways. To begin with, there are four sites (one clinic, one social venue, and two sex on premises venues) which have been included at every survey. In this report we refer to these venues as the ‘repeated sites’. There are also four distinct categories of sites: clinics, social venues (including gay bars, gay sporting venues, and regular gay dances), sex on premises venues, and an annual large public gay community event. Not all of these venues were included at every survey and may therefore not always be comparable over time. However, as they are able to be distinguished in this way we have presented them in this way for the purposes of this report. The final grouping of sites is a

geographic one: whereas most of these sites were concentrated in the inner urban areas of Sydney, at least one or two sites in each survey were located in the outer western suburban areas. Although these sites were not always the same ones for each survey, usually they were social venues and have been included within both the category of social venues and that of suburban venues, as appropriate. However, as there may be different trends over time within the inner-city areas (which broadly correspond to the heart of the visible gay community in Sydney) compared to those among men using gay venues outside this area, we have presented this additional grouping of sites, which we have called ‘suburban venues’ in this report.

Table 2: Participants 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
Repeated sites ¹	490	552	483	685	654	621	570
Clinics ²	241	104	196	384	361	317	302
Social venues ³	131	162	104	251	311	201	299
Sex venues ⁴	205	361	221	386	372	318	351
Fair Day ⁵	1034		1088		1156		1436
Suburban venues ⁶	67	71	38	181	95	70	68
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: These items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Refers to those men recruited through sites which have been included at every survey (1 clinic, 2 sex venues, and 1 social venue).
2. Refers to those men recruited through clinic sites only.
3. Refers to those men recruited through gay social venues only.
4. Refers to those men recruited through gay sex on premises venues only.
5. Refers to those men recruited at Mardi Gras Fair Day only.
6. Refers to those men recruited through outer suburban gay social venues only.

Throughout this report we have presented the data over time in two ways. Firstly we present the total findings for each occasion. Secondly, we present the major findings for each of the groupings of recruitment sites: repeated sites, clinics, social venues, sex venues, Fair Day, and suburban venues. In most cases, the various items in each table are not mutually exclusive.

It should be noted that between February and August 1997 several changes were made in the recruitment sites used for the surveys. A number of different sites which had not been included previously were included in the surveys from August 1997, and some other sites which had been included up to that time ceased to function as gay venues after the February 1997

survey. These changes mainly affected the social venues and the suburban venues. Where changes in trends over time appeared to be largely due to these changes in the recruitment sites used it has been noted in the report.

Another noteworthy aspect of the recruitment for these surveys is that the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day is an annual event held each February. There is no equivalent during the August survey period. Typically, about two-thirds of the February samples were recruited at Fair Day, making the February samples largely reflective of trends in the Fair Day samples. It should be expected, therefore, that any peculiarities among the Fair Day samples would make the February surveys different to the August surveys in total. This would appear as a see-saw effect in the findings over time.

3 SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL PREFERENCE

Most men in these surveys identify as gay or homosexual and prefer sex only with men. This has not changed over time.

In general, the sample identified as homosexual. Only about ten percent did not clearly identify as homosexual at each survey. This proportion changed little over time. Only on one occasion—August 1998—was the category of ‘queer’ specified separately in the question and on that occasion only 1.0% of the men used that label to identify themselves sexually; 88.6% used the term ‘gay’ to describe themselves and 7.5% used the term ‘bisexual’.

There was also little evidence of change over time in the various groupings of sites, and little difference between them (although those men recruited through Mardi Gras Fair Day did tend to be slightly more homosexually-identified, while those recruited through sex venues were somewhat less likely to be so identified).

Table 3: Homosexual identity 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	87.7	88.0	87.7	88.5	86.8	89.6	87.4
Clinics	88.0	90.3	90.8	94.8	92.5	94.6	93.0
Social venues	89.3	83.2	83.5	88.7	91.9	92.0	91.6
Sex venues	85.7	86.9	85.4	85.3	84.1	84.9	85.6
Fair Day	93.3		94.8		94.0		93.0
Suburban venues	88.1	78.9	78.4	89.3	86.0	89.9	94.0
All sites	91.2	86.5	92.3	89.7	92.1	90.2	91.7
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, identifying as homosexual at each interview.

An additional question about sexual preference was asked for the first six surveys, between 1996 and 1998. Most men preferred sex only with other men. This proportion did not change over time.

There was also no evidence of change over time in the various groupings of sites, and there was little difference between them (although those men recruited through clinics and Mardi Gras Fair Day did tend to be slightly more likely to prefer sex only with other men).

Table 4: Preference for men only 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	82.6	79.0	80.7	80.4	79.8	80.3
Clinics	84.7	83.3	86.7	88.0	85.9	89.5
Social venues	77.9	72.5	73.8	77.6	84.1	80.8
Sex venues	80.3	77.8	77.4	76.6	77.0	73.6
Fair Day	85.5		86.8		88.1	
Suburban venues	77.6	68.6	73.0	77.1	83.0	78.3
All sites	84.1	77.3	84.7	81.1	85.3	81.3
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, indicating a preference for sex only with men at each interview.

4 SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Few of the men in these surveys had sex with women. Their patterns of sexual relationships with men were similar to what has been found in other gay community studies. While a majority of the men were in a regular relationship, most also had sex with casual male partners. These patterns of sexual relationships remained relatively stable over time.

4.1 Sex with women

Only a small proportion of gay men (usually less than ten percent at each survey) had had sex with a woman 'in the previous six months'. This changed very little over time.

The proportion of gay men who had sex with a woman in the previous six months also varied little over time according to the various recruitment sites. There was some indication of change in the proportion of men reporting sexual contact with women in the social and suburban venues samples between February and August 1997, the period previously noted as corresponding to a change in the particular recruitment sites used for those two categories.

Table 5: Sex with women in previous six months 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	9.2	10.8	10.7	10.0	9.5	10.2	8.1
Clinics	7.5	7.9	8.1	5.0	4.2	4.0	3.4
Social venues	14.2	14.6	19.8	9.9	9.1	11.4	6.4
Sex venues	12.3	12.9	10.9	13.6	12.3	15.5	10.9
Fair Day	5.9		5.1		6.3		4.9
Suburban venues	18.7	20.0	23.7	11.4	13.0	13.6	4.4
All sites	7.6	12.5	7.2	9.4	7.4	10.2	5.8
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, reporting any sex with women during the six months prior to each interview.

4.2 Number of male sex partners

In general, most men have fewer than ten male partners in a six-month period and this does not appear to have changed substantially over time. However, there is a see-saw effect in that the

men in the February surveys consistently reported having fewer partners than did men in the August surveys. As was previously noted, such see-saw effects in the data are largely due to differences in the Fair Day samples compared to other recruitment sites.

The proportions of men having more than ten partners in the previous six months actually varied little over time according to the various recruitment sites. There was some indication of change in the proportion of men reporting multiple partners in the suburban venues samples between February and August 1997, the period previously noted as corresponding to a change in the particular recruitment sites used for that category. However, the Fair Day samples did tend to have fewer partners than did most other samples, which goes some way to explaining the see-saw effect noted above.

Table 6: More than ten male partners in previous six months 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	38.4	42.4	40.5	44.5	45.2	45.0	42.8
Clinics	20.7	30.8	25.5	26.6	32.2	33.9	24.3
Social venues	23.1	14.8	18.8	18.5	30.1	23.4	28.4
Sex venues	57.8	52.3	59.1	59.1	54.8	58.0	55.1
Fair Day	21.9		24.0		23.2		20.9
Suburban venues	10.6	14.1	13.5	18.4	23.4	21.4	17.6
All sites	26.4	39.0	28.7	36.9	31.0	81.3	27.3
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, reporting sex with more than ten male partners during previous six months at each interview.

4.3 Sexual relationships with men

About 60% of each sample were currently in a regular sexual relationship with a man at the time of each survey; a similar proportion reported having sex with casual partners (whether they had a regular partner or not); and about one in ten reported being celibate with men at the time of each survey. There was, however, a discernible see-saw effect: typically men in the February surveys were less likely to report casual sex in general and were more likely to report being in a monogamous relationship in particular. This is very likely related to the inclusion of the Fair Day samples during the February surveys. Otherwise there was no suggestion of any trends over time.

The proportion of men in regular relationships varied little over time according to the various recruitment sites but men recruited at Fair Day were generally more likely to report being in a regular relationship than were men recruited through other sites. This makes sense: the Mardi Gras Fair Day is the sort of event that couples are likely to attend, so that if one man in a relationship were recruited into the survey it is likely that his partner would also be recruited, thereby inflating the proportion of men in regular relationships.

Table 7: Regular relationships 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	59.6	58.0	55.1	58.2	56.5	56.4	56.6
Clinics	65.7	64.1	65.8	66.7	64.6	62.3	64.1
Social venues	50.8	58.0	49.5	54.8	64.1	60.6	58.4
Sex venues	55.3	57.0	49.8	54.2	51.1	50.3	50.0
Fair Day	66.0		69.2		69.7		72.3
Suburban venues	49.2	60.9	54.1	55.9	56.8	60.9	56.7
All sites	63.0	57.8	63.4	59.0	65.0	56.5	66.3
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, reporting that they were currently in a relationship with a regular male partner at each interview.

The proportion of men in monogamous relationships is even more indicative of the particular effect of the Mardi Gras recruitment site on the differences between the February and August surveys. In general, there is little evidence of a change over time in the proportion of men reporting that they are in a monogamous relationship. The men recruited at Fair Day, however, were generally more likely to report being in a monogamous relationship than were

men recruited through other sites. This may simply be a consequence of the larger proportion of men in relationships recruited at Fair Day in general. It may also suggest that men in open relationships are more likely to be recruited through some of the other sorts of sites included in the surveys.

Table 8: Monogamous relationships 1996–1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	16.7	12.4	15.4	12.9	12.3	13.8	14.9
Clinics	27.6	25.2	28.3	27.5	23.0	21.0	27.9
Social venues	19.8	29.9	23.8	28.5	31.9	33.2	28.4
Sex venues	4.0	4.4	2.3	4.0	4.2	3.4	3.2
Fair Day	32.3		34.3		34.6		40.9
Suburban venues	20.3	31.9	27.0	31.8	33.0	33.8	32.8
All sites	27.0	14.6	28.4	18.9	27.3	17.4	32.0
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, reporting that they were currently in a monogamous relationship with a regular male partner at each interview.

Given these potential discrepancies in the proportions of men with regular partners, and of men with casual partners, due to differences in the recruitment sites, we note below the actual frequencies of men at each survey and in each category of recruitment site who report sex with a regular male partner, and who report sex with a casual male partner, in the six months prior to each survey. In referring to the sexual behaviour of the men in these surveys, the proportions referred to in this report are based on these frequencies and not the total samples.

Table 9: Types of male partners 1996–1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
Regular	1158 71.9%	398 63.5%	1012 62.9%	619 60.6%	1381 62.7%	482 57.7%	1598 66.6%
Casual	1315 81.6%	533 85.0%	1139 70.8%	793 77.7%	1607 73.0%	680 81.3%	1600 66.6%
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: These items are not mutually exclusive.

The proportion of men reporting sex with a regular male partner in the previous six months differed little over time. As noted above, men recruited at Fair Day were generally more likely to have had a regular partner.

Table 10: Regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
Repeated sites	317 64.7%	343 62.1%	263 54.5%	401 58.5%	347 53.1%	354 57.0%	330 57.9%
Clinics	172 71.4%	70 67.3%	121 61.7%	253 65.9%	211 58.4%	190 59.9%	184 60.9%
Social venues	90 68.7%	116 71.6%	56 53.8%	160 63.7%	193 62.1%	125 62.2%	190 64.2%
Sex venues	118 57.6%	212 58.7%	107 48.4%	206 53.4%	179 48.1%	167 52.5%	187 53.3%
Fair Day	778 75.2%		728 66.9%		797 68.9%		1027 71.5%
Suburban venues	50 74.6%	52 73.2%	21 55.3%	116 64.1%	48 50.5%	40 57.1%	45 66.2%
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, reporting sex with regular male partners during previous six months at each interview.

Likewise, the proportion of men reporting sex with casual male partners in the previous six months differed little over time. Not surprisingly, men recruited at sex venues were more likely to have had casual partners.

Table 11: Casual male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
Repeated sites	425 86.7%	482 87.3%	413 85.5%	588 85.8%	563 86.1%	531 85.5%	465 81.6%
Clinics	187 77.6%	79 76.0%	146 74.5%	270 70.3%	266 73.7%	244 77.0%	210 69.5%
Social venues	108 82.4%	110 67.9%	76 73.1%	159 63.3%	209 67.2%	130 64.7%	191 63.9%
Sex venues	198 96.6%	344 95.3%	214 96.8%	364 94.3%	352 94.6%	306 96.2%	327 93.2%
Fair Day	822 79.5%		703 64.6%		780 67.5%		863 60.1%
Suburban venues	54 80.6%	47 66.2%	23 60.5%	107 59.1%	59 62.1%	49 70.0%	32 47.1%
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, reporting sex with casual male partners during previous six months at each interview.

5 SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

The proportion of men engaging in anal intercourse, and particularly receptive anal intercourse, both with regular and with casual male partners appears to have increased over time. Mostly, this increase occurred between 1996 and 1997.

5.1 Sexual behaviour with regular male partners

Considering first just those men who reported having a regular male partner in the six months prior to each survey, there was little evidence of any changes in sexual behaviour with those partners over time. About half the men with a regular partner engaged in oral sex with ejaculation with those partners. Between 85% and 90% engaged in anal intercourse with their regular partners, about three quarters in the insertive role and slightly fewer in the receptive role. There is a slight suggestion of an increase in the proportion of men engaging in the receptive role over time.

The proportions of men with regular partners who engaged in oral intercourse with ejaculation with those partners appears to have changed little since February 1996 among the various categories of recruitment sites as well.

Table 12: Oral Intercourse with ejaculation with regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	50.5	53.4	55.1	54.6	58.5	58.5	46.7
Clinics	48.8	58.6	50.4	54.2	54.5	62.1	50.5
Social venues	53.3	71.6	62.5	64.4	69.4	69.6	52.1
Sex venues	54.2	49.5	58.9	51.5	58.7	53.3	43.3
Fair Day	58.9		65.9		65.4		54.0
Suburban venues	60.0	82.7	66.7	61.2	60.4	75.0	53.3
All sites	56.5	57.5	63.1	55.9	63.4	61.0	52.2
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting oral intercourse with ejaculation with regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

There is, however, a slight suggestion in the data that anal intercourse with regular male partners may have increased somewhat since 1996, particularly among men recruited through the repeated sites and through sex venues. However, looked at another way, it might equally be argued that the 1996 data indicated an unusually small proportion of men engaging in this sex practice with their regular partners.

Table 13: Anal Intercourse with regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	82.6	85.1	87.8	87.3	91.9	90.4	88.2
Clinics	81.4	90.0	86.6	86.6	90.0	89.5	82.6
Social venues	87.8	92.2	89.3	87.5	91.2	85.6	90.0
Sex venues	83.1	82.1	90.7	87.4	93.9	93.4	91.4
Fair Day	86.2		88.0		89.6		85.2
Suburban venues	88.0	94.2	100.0	89.7	87.5	87.5	88.9
All sites	85.3	86.4	88.2	87.0	90.4	89.8	86.2
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting anal intercourse with regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

These trends were perhaps more evident with regard to receptive anal intercourse with regular male partners. The proportion of men with regular partners who engaged in receptive anal intercourse has clearly increased since February 1996, and particularly among men recruited through the repeated sites and through the sex venues. As with anal intercourse in general, however, it might equally be argued that the 1996 data indicated an unusually small proportion of men engaging in this sex practice with their regular partners.

Table 14: Receptive anal intercourse with regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	63.7	65.0	71.5	73.6	74.9	76.0	75.1
Clinics	63.9	77.1	76.2	70.3	71.6	74.8	68.5
Social venues	71.1	77.6	69.6	71.2	78.7	76.0	76.9
Sex venues	60.2	59.4	69.2	72.8	77.1	77.3	77.0
Fair Day	69.4		72.5		75.5		73.7
Suburban venues	70.0	84.6	85.8	70.7	66.7	77.5	82.2

All sites	67.8	67.8	72.5	71.4	75.6	75.9	73.9
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting anal intercourse with regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

In general, then, there is some suggestion that some gay men have been more likely to have engaged in some sex practices with their regular male partners since February 1996, particularly receptive anal intercourse. However, looked at another way, it might equally be argued that the 1996 data, and particularly the February 1996 data, indicated an unusually small proportion of men engaging in these sex practices with their regular male partners.

5.2 Sexual behaviour with casual male partners

Considering those men who reported sex with casual male partners next, respondents were generally more conservative in their sexual behaviour with casual male partners than they were with regular partners. Nonetheless, those same trends over time which were suggested in the findings on sexual behaviour with regular partners were a little more evident with regard to sexual behaviour with casual partners. In general, the men surveyed in 1996, particularly in February of that year, were less likely to engage in the various sex practices with their casual partners than were men surveyed on subsequent occasions.

With regard to oral intercourse with ejaculation with casual partners the data are less clear when considering the behaviour among men recruited through each of the various categories of recruitment sites over time. The data do not clearly indicate an increase in this practice with casual partners, although there is a slight trend in this direction among men recruited through the repeated sites and through the sex venues.

Table 15: Oral intercourse with ejaculation with casual male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	39.1	46.1	46.2	46.9	46.9	48.6	40.2
Clinics	38.0	53.2	40.4	39.6	43.2	48.4	31.4
Social venues	37.0	41.8	38.2	41.5	48.8	33.1	40.8
Sex venues	43.4	46.8	52.8	51.1	47.4	51.3	43.1
Fair Day	35.3		43.2		44.7		34.0
Suburban venues	42.6	46.8	43.5	42.1	45.8	32.7	37.5

All sites	37.0	46.7	44.3	45.3	45.6	46.8	36.3
Total	1315	537	1109	793	1607	680	1600

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting oral intercourse with ejaculation with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

With regard to anal intercourse with casual partners the data are somewhat more suggestive of an increase in this sex practice over time. There is a slight trend in this direction among men recruited through the repeated sites and through Fair Day.

Table 16: Anal intercourse with casual male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	76.0	79.7	74.8	77.9	78.5	78.0	80.0
Clinics	70.6	82.3	68.5	74.1	77.4	74.2	71.0
Social venues	69.4	65.5	71.1	73.0	74.6	72.3	79.6
Sex venues	81.3	82.3	82.2	80.2	78.7	80.4	82.3
Fair Day	64.8		72.5		70.9		72.4
Suburban venues	64.8	68.1	91.3	74.8	74.6	63.3	68.7
All sites	68.5	78.8	73.7	76.7	74.2	76.6	75.1
Total	1315	537	1109	793	1607	836	1600

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

What is suggested as a trend with regard to anal intercourse in general, is indicated a little more strongly with regard to receptive anal intercourse with casual partners in particular. There is a trend in this direction among men recruited through the repeated sites and through Fair Day.

Table 17: Receptive anal intercourse with casual male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	54.6	57.1	62.0	58.5	60.7	60.1	60.2
Clinics	52.5	65.8	57.5	58.9	60.2	61.0	53.3
Social venues	55.6	48.2	64.5	53.4	52.1	57.7	58.2
Sex venues	56.1	58.4	65.9	59.6	60.0	59.5	62.1
Fair Day	47.2		53.8		54.7		56.9
Suburban venues	55.5	57.4	78.3	56.1	47.5	51.0	46.9
All sites	50.0	57.4	57.2	58.1	56.5	59.8	57.7
Total	1315	537	1109	793	1607	836	1600

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

6 GAY COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The men in these surveys were largely drawn from Sydney gay community events and venues, and demonstrated a high degree of social attachment with that community. This has remained relatively stable over time.

6.1 Social involvement with other gay men

Well over half the respondents at each survey had mainly gay friends. There was no evidence of change over time, although there was some suggestion of a see-saw effect which may have been due to the presence of the Fair Day samples during the February surveys.

There was little evidence of change over time in the various groupings of sites, but it should be noted that those men recruited through Mardi Gras Fair Day did tend to have slightly more gay friends. This would certainly explain the slight see-saw effect referred to above.

Table 18: Mostly gay friends 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	61.1	54.5	58.5	61.1	57.0	56.5	51.3
Clinics	62.7	60.6	65.6	68.8	68.1	64.4	63.0
Social venues	55.0	60.5	52.9	60.6	63.6	57.2	60.1
Sex venues	55.9	50.7	54.8	56.3	48.9	52.5	46.6
Fair Day	66.7		70.8		64.0		61.6
Suburban venues	46.3	60.6	57.9	60.3	44.7	50.0	52.9
All sites	63.8	54.9	66.8	62.0	62.0	58.1	59.5
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, having mostly gay friends at each interview.

Correspondingly, the majority of respondents at each survey spent a lot of their spare time with gay friends. There was also no evidence of change over time with regard to this, but, as with the proportion of friends who were gay, there was some indication of a see-saw effect which was also likely due to the presence of the Fair Day samples during the February surveys.

There was also little evidence of change over time in the various groupings of sites, but those men recruited through Mardi Gras Fair Day did tend to spend slightly more time with gay friends. This would explain the slight see-saw effect observed here.

Table 19: Lot of time with gay friends 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	53.9	46.6	54.4	52.4	45.8	45.1	44.8
Clinics	54.0	51.9	58.5	62.0	54.7	55.2	52.2
Social venues	48.9	53.5	57.7	49.2	58.8	51.2	52.8
Sex venues	51.0	41.9	47.0	46.9	38.0	38.4	41.5
Fair Day	61.2		66.7		60.3		58.6
Suburban venues	40.3	48.5	42.1	44.4	48.9	42.9	45.6
All sites	57.8	46.5	62.4	53.2	55.4	47.8	54.6
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, spending 'a lot' of time with gay friends at each interview.

6.2 Use of venues to meet other gay men

Questions about use of venues to meet male partners were only asked at the first two surveys, in 1996. Most men used social venues such as gay bars and dance parties, and a majority used gyms to meet partners. A majority of men also used saunas and about a third used backrooms and beats respectively.

The men recruited through clinics and sex venues were a little less likely to use gay bars to meet male partners.

Table 20: Use of gay bars to meet men 1996

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996
	%	%
Repeated sites	89.4	92.4
Clinics	86.7	91.2
Social venues	96.7	98.6
Sex venues	87.7	91.3
Fair Day	92.3	
Suburban venues	96.8	100.0
All sites	91.2	93.1
Total	1611	627

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using gay bars at each interview.

There was little difference across the various categories of recruitment sites in the use of dance parties to meet male partners, although men recruited through social venues were slightly more likely to use them.

Table 21: Use of dance parties to meet men 1996

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996
	%	%
Repeated sites	56.1	59.0
Clinics	54.6	59.8
Social venues	64.9	65.7
Sex venues	48.0	55.9
Fair Day	64.0	
Suburban venues	53.6	61.4
All sites	60.7	59.0
Total	1611	627

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using dance parties at each interview.

There was little difference across the various categories of recruitment sites in the use of gyms to meet male partners.

Table 22: Use of gyms to meet men 1996

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996
	%	%
Repeated sites	53.4	55.8
Clinics	52.8	58.8
Social venues	51.9	52.2
Sex venues	50.6	55.6
Fair Day	54.1	
Suburban venues	45.5	50.0
All sites	53.3	55.3
Total	1611	627

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using gyms at each interview.

Unsurprisingly, the men recruited through sex venues were the most likely to use saunas to meet male partners.

Table 23: Use of saunas to meet men 1996

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996
	%	%
Repeated sites	69.9	64.1
Clinics	53.7	49.0
Social venues	45.4	29.7
Sex venues	87.6	78.0
Fair Day	44.8	
Suburban venues	28.3	37.5
All sites	51.9	61.6
Total	1611	627

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using saunas at each interview.

The men recruited through sex venues were also most likely to use backrooms to meet male partners and the men recruited through social venues were less likely than other men to use backrooms. Men recruited through Fair Day were also less likely to use backrooms but this is partly due to the larger proportion of men in monogamous relationships who are recruited through Fair Day.

Table 24: Use of backrooms to meet men 1996

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996
	%	%
Repeated sites	51.5	61.2
Clinics	39.7	42.4
Social venues	27.5	15.6
Sex venues	65.9	77.8
Fair Day	29.0	
Suburban venues	17.3	17.9
All sites	35.2	56.7
Total	1611	627

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using backrooms at each interview.

There was little difference across the various categories of recruitment sites in the use of beats to meet male partners, although men recruited through sex venues were slightly more likely to use them.

Table 25: Use of beats to meet men 1996

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996
	%	%
Repeated sites	40.6	37.1
Clinics	31.7	40.6
Social venues	32.7	30.9
Sex venues	51.1	38.3
Fair Day	29.5	
Suburban venues	24.5	30.9
All sites	32.8	36.9
Total	1611	627

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using beats at each interview.

7 RECREATIONAL DRUG USE

Drug use patterns, including injecting drug use, were high among men in these surveys. The most commonly injected drug was speed.

7.1 Use of recreational drugs

Questions about drug use were only included on the two most recent surveys, in August 1998 and February 1999. A majority of men reported using recreational drugs in the previous six months on both occasions. Over half used marijuana and just under half used ecstasy, while about a quarter used cocaine. Only a very small number used heroin.

In general, there was little difference in the use of ecstasy in the various groupings of sites. Those men recruited through suburban venues were a little less likely to use ecstasy.

Table 26: Use of ecstasy 1998—1999

	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%
Repeated sites	45.5	46.1
Clinics	53.4	49.1
Social venues	44.2	54.3
Sex venues	41.9	43.9
Fair Day		44.3
Suburban venues	30.9	30.2
All sites	46.7	46.2
Total	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using ecstasy at each interview.

Similarly, there were some differences in the use of cocaine in the various groupings of sites. Those men recruited through suburban venues and, to a lesser extent, at Fair Day were somewhat less likely to use ecstasy.

Table 27: Use of cocaine 1998—1999

	Aug 1998	Feb1999
	%	%
Repeated sites	23.3	25.2
Clinics	28.7	22.2
Social venues	19.7	29.1
Sex venues	20.2	28.1
Fair Day		19.3
Suburban venues	9.1	4.8
All sites	23.3	22.3
Total	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, using cocaine at each interview.

7.2 Injecting Drug Use

Only a small proportion reported injecting drugs during the six months prior to each survey, and the most commonly injected drug was speed. Those men recruited through sex venues and, to a lesser extent, clinics were more likely to have injected drugs.

Table 28: Injecting drug use 1998—1999

	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%
Repeated sites	13.2	10.9
Clinics	15.5	10.9
Social venues	7.5	5.0
Sex venues	12.6	11.4
Fair Day		4.8
Suburban venues	4.3	1.5
All sites	12.4	6.7
Total	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, injecting drugs in the previous six months at each interview.

8 HIV TESTING AND TREATMENTS

Most men in these surveys were regularly tested for HIV with about one in six being HIV-positive. These testing patterns and the relative seroprevalence across the various recruitment sites have not altered over time. About three-quarters of the HIV-positive men are using combination anti-retroviral treatments; this proportion has remained fairly stable since August 1997. There was a degree of optimism among the men in these surveys about the effectiveness of these treatments in treating HIV but few men appear to be optimistic about the possible impact of these treatments on HIV transmission. This has not altered over time.

8.1 HIV testing

Most men had been tested for HIV at each survey, with about one in six testing HIV-positive at most surveys. There was little evidence of change either in testing or in seroprevalence over time.

Table 29: HIV serostatus 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
HIV-positive	17.5	19.4	17.9	29.1	18.8	26.1	16.1
HIV-negative	71.0	70.0	73.0	63.9	71.1	64.0	73.6
Never tested	11.5	10.6	9.1	7.0	10.1	9.9	10.3
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

In general, there was also little evidence of change over time in the various groupings of sites. Those men recruited through clinics were more likely to have been tested, and men recruited through suburban venues were less likely to have been tested.

Table 30: Proportion not tested 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated Sites	9.6	10.7	5.9	9.0	9.4	8.5	8.7
Clinics	3.4	4.9	1.0	1.1	2.6	0.7	1.3
Social venues	22.2	10.7	15.8	14.0	15.4	17.8	13.2
Sex venues	14.0	12.1	6.5	10.7	10.7	10.3	12.4
Fair Day	11.5		10.6		10.7		10.2
Suburban venues	26.2	9.1	11.1	9.7	18.7	21.0	20.6
All Sites	11.5	10.6	9.1	7.8	10.0	8.4	9.7
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, who had not been tested for HIV at each interview.

Separate analysis also indicated little evidence of change over time in the proportion of younger men (under 25 years of age) being tested. In general about a quarter of the younger men in the Fair Day samples had not been tested at each survey. However, the proportion of younger men in the repeated sites who had not been tested at each survey was higher between August 1997 and August 1998.

Table 31: Proportion of men under 25 years of age not tested 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated Sites	21.6	14.5	27.0	35.3	30.6	29.4	21.2
Social venues	33.3	18.2	21.1	26.2	47.6	46.7	17.4
Fair Day	22.9		25.6		25.2		24.7
All Sites	23.8	15.1	23.9	24.0	27.3	26.1	22.2
Total	203	92	177	100	232	85	257

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of young men in sample, from respective groupings of sites, who had not been tested for HIV at each interview.

Similarly, there was little evidence of a change over time in seroprevalence across the various groupings of sites. Men recruited through clinics were more likely to be HIV-positive, and men recruited through suburban venues were less likely to be HIV-positive.

Table 32: Proportion HIV-positive 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	33.8	21.3	31.0	30.9	27.2	27.4	26.0
Clinics	51.3	50.0	54.2	48.4	46.9	44.9	44.1
Social venues	6.5	4.1	4.9	7.9	14.9	10.5	7.8
Sex venues	22.1	16.9	18.3	22.8	17.7	17.2	18.1
Fair Day	10.0		12.6		11.5		11.5
Suburban venues	1.6	4.6	2.7	9.4	6.5	3.3	1.5
All Sites	17.5	19.4	17.9	29.1	18.8	26.1	16.1
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of sample, from respective groupings of sites, who were HIV-positive at each interview.

Among those who were HIV-negative, about half had been tested in the previous six months at each survey. There was some fluctuation in testing frequency over time which may have been due to the see-saw effect of the inclusion of the Fair Day samples during the February surveys.

Similarly, the only evidence of a change over time in testing frequency across the various groupings of sites was the fluctuating see-saw effect. Respondents recruited through Fair Day tested a little less frequently than did men recruited through other categories of recruitment sites, thereby explaining the see-saw effect in the data.

Table 33: Proportion of HIV-negative men tested during previous year 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	75.1	77.4	72.7	76.3	69.8	72.2	72.0
Clinics	78.6	86.9	75.0	83.2	76.8	80.0	74.0
Social venues	85.4	82.4	81.5	79.6	71.8	77.5	68.1
Sex venues	71.1	74.4	69.1	75.0	67.5	67.1	69.9
Fair Day	68.7		64.0		68.8		66.6
Suburban venues	91.1	85.7	83.3	84.5	68.9	80.8	74.1
All sites	71.2	78.1	66.7	78.7	69.9	73.7	68.1
Total	1109	422	1156	621	1528	513	1746

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of HIV-negative men in the sample, from respective groupings of sites, who had been tested for HIV within the previous year at each interview.

Among those men who reported having a regular male partner in the previous six months at each survey, there was no evidence of a change in seroconcordance over time. About half the men with regular partners at each survey were in an HIV-negative seroconcordant relationship and about one in seven were in a serodiscordant relationship. Although there were some fluctuations over time with regard to HIV-positive seroconcordant relationships and relationships where either or both partners were of unknown serostatus, there was no trend. In broad terms, about one in five relationships were of unknown serostatus and about one in ten were HIV-positive seroconcordant.

Table 34: HIV seroconcordance in regular relationships 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unknown serostatus	23.9	28.9	21.2	19.3	23.5	21.7	21.8
Both positive	9.8	5.7	10.0	15.1	7.5	12.1	5.1
Both negative	51.9	48.4	56.0	46.1	52.9	46.6	57.5
Serodiscordant	14.4	17.1	12.8	19.5	16.1	19.6	15.6
Total	846	246	812	436	1056	322	1214

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

8.2 HIV treatments

About three-quarters of the HIV-positive men were using HIV anti-retrovirals in combination at each survey since August 1997, when this question was first asked. There is no evidence of a change in the proportion using combination therapy over time.

Similarly, there was no evidence of a change over time in the use of treatments across the various groupings of sites. HIV-positive men recruited through sex venues tended to be a little less likely to use combination anti-retroviral treatments.

Table 35: Use of combination antiretroviral treatments among HIV-positive men 1996—1999

	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	70.8	64.5	73.5	68.5
Clinics	79.2	71.3	78.5	73.8
Social venues	73.3	71.1	78.9	63.6

Sex venues	64.9	59.7	67.3	69.8
Fair Day		75.2		73.0
All sites	74.7	70.8	75.7	72.3
Total	265	400	206	379

NB: Percentages refer to proportion of HIV-positive men in the sample, from respective groupings of sites, using combination anti-retroviral treatments at each interview.

8.3 HIV awareness

Although the majority of men appeared somewhat optimistic about the potential for treatment of HIV, there was little evidence of optimism about the possibility of reducing transmission as a consequence of combination anti-retroviral treatment and undetectable viral load. There was little evidence of a change in this regard over time.

Table 36: Agreement with optimistic statements about anti-HIV treatments and viral load testing 1997—1999

	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%
Combination therapies appear to be effective in preventing serious illness for most people with HIV	59.2	57.7	56.8	55.5	65.8
Taking combination therapy is simple and straightforward	21.4	21.5%	17.6	18.3	N/A
An HIV-positive person on combination therapy is unlikely to transmit HIV	1.3	3.3	2.0	2.1	3.0
A person with a blood test showing undetectable viral load cannot pass on the virus	10.0	17.7	5.8	5.4	7.4
I'm less worried about HIV infection than I used to be		30.9	32.9	30.3	31.9
Total	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

There were also no discernible differences in the samples on these items either across the various categories of recruitment sites, or over time among the men recruited at any of these sites.

9 AGREEMENTS AND CONDOM USE

The proportion of men engaging in unprotected anal intercourse, both with regular and with casual male partners, appears to have increased since the first survey in February 1996. However, this increase mostly occurred between 1996 and 1997.

9.1 Agreements about condom use with regular male partners

At each survey, most men with regular male partners had a verbal agreement with that partner about condom use within their relationship. Overall, about a third had agreed to dispense with condoms within their relationship. In general, there has been little change over time in the pattern of agreements about condom use with regular partners but in the most recent survey, in February 1999, fewer men had made such an agreement.

Similarly, the only evidence of change in the pattern of agreements about condom use within regular relationships over time across the various groupings of sites was an apparent decline in the proportion of men who had made such an agreement in the latest survey. This was true for all categories of sites except the clinics where there was no evidence of a recent decline in such agreements.

Table 37: No agreement with regular male partners about condom use within relationships 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	19.7	18.1	18.7	18.8	13.6	14.2	12.4
Clinics	18.8	22.2	15.0	17.1	9.0	14.5	10.2
Social venues	28.6	18.1	20.0	26.3	22.1	14.7	23.8
Sex venues	15.6	20.1	21.2	18.0	18.1	12.4	11.6
Fair Day	19.0		17.2		21.4		18.8
Suburban venues	25.8	25.8	11.1	26.1	24.2	16.7	29.6
All sites	19.3	20.0	17.4	19.4	19.1	13.9	17.5
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting no agreement with regular male partner about sex within relationship at each interview.

On the other hand, the proportion of men who had agreed to dispense with condoms within their relationships has changed very little over time across the various groupings of sites. There was also no evidence of differences between the different categories of recruitment sites.

Table 38: Agreement with regular male partners to dispense with condoms within relationships 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	27.5	28.3	31.3	27.4	35.6	36.9	36.7
Clinics	29.0	27.8	36.4	32.4	33.7	42.8	34.4
Social venues	25.0	38.9	30.0	30.5	38.2	41.3	34.6
Sex venues	27.3	23.1	27.1	25.9	31.9	29.9	40.2
Fair Day	36.1		38.9		37.1		42.7
Suburban venues	29.0	32.3	38.9	31.9	33.3	38.9	18.5
All sites	33.5	28.5	37.0	30.0	36.1	38.5	40.3
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting agreement with regular male partner to dispense with condoms within relationship at each interview.

At each survey, the majority of men with regular male partners also had a verbal agreement with that partner about condom use outside their relationship. Overall, about a third had agreed to always use condoms outside their relationship, and about a quarter agreed not to have any sex with casual partners. There has been little change over time in the pattern of agreements with regular partners about condom use with casual partners.

Table 39: No agreement with regular male partners about condom use outside relationships 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	32.1	27.0	33.2	25.9	28.0	30.0	27.3
Clinics	27.8	32.7	37.3	30.8	25.4	28.0	23.2
Social venues	41.8	29.6	28.9	22.0	38.9	26.4	36.7
Sex venues	35.1	27.6	29.1	25.2	31.0	29.3	31.9
Fair Day	29.2		27.7		30.8		28.2
Suburban venues	36.7	38.7	29.4	20.7	51.7	11.8	30.8
All sites	30.4	29.2	29.1	27.3	30.9	28.0	28.8
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting no agreement with regular male partner about sex outside relationship at each interview.

In general, there is little evidence of an overall change in the proportion of men who have an agreement with their regular partner to always use condoms with casual partners. However, there does appear to have been some fluctuation over time among men recruited through sex venues. These men were more likely to have such an agreement during 1997 and 1998 than they were either at the time of the first survey in February 1996 or at the most recent survey in 1999. Also, in general, the men recruited through sex venues were more likely to have such an agreement than were men recruited through other sites.

Table 40: Agreement with regular male partners always to use condoms outside relationships 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	38.0	42.5	38.1	45.0	43.6	43.8	41.9
Clinics	39.1	34.5	26.5	33.3	40.1	37.8	37.4
Social venues	23.6	28.2	34.2	24.4	24.6	23.6	25.0
Sex venues	41.9	49.3	55.7	54.8	46.0	53.5	48.7
Fair Day	27.9		30.3		32.9		27.7
Suburban venues	23.3	29.0	41.2	19.0	20.7	11.8	23.1
All sites	30.6	40.4	32.5	38.5	34.5	39.5	30.9
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting agreement with regular partner to always use condoms with casual male partners at each interview.

9.2 Condom Use

Sexual behaviour and condom use with regular and casual partners changed somewhat over time, particularly between 1996 and 1997.

Table 41: Anal intercourse and condom use 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Regular partners							
No regular partner	28.1	36.5	37.1	39.4	37.3	42.3	33.4
No anal intercourse	10.6	8.6	7.4	7.8	6.0	5.9	9.2
100% protected	31.7	31.6	25.5	26.9	25.9	23.2	25.4
Any unprotected	29.7	23.3	30.0	25.9	30.9	28.6	31.9

Casual partners							
No casual partner	18.4	15.0	29.2	22.3	27.0	18.7	33.4
No anal intercourse	25.7	18.0	18.6	18.1	18.9	19.0	16.6
100% protected	44.2	47.2	36.3	37.6	37.1	41.3	34.2
Any unprotected	11.7	19.8	15.9	21.9	17.1	21.1	15.9
Total	1611	627	1609	1021	2201	836	2401

As noted previously, the proportions of men at each recruitment site reporting sex with either a casual or regular partner differed, often due to the particular nature of those sites. For this reason, the remaining analyses and tables in this section are based on the behaviours of men who had regular and casual partners, respectively, during the six months prior to each survey.

9.3 Condom use with regular male partners

At each survey, most men with regular male partners engaged in anal intercourse with those partners and a little less than half did so without a condom. There has been a slight increase over time in the proportion of men engaging in unprotected anal intercourse with their regular partners.

This trend has been strongest among HIV-negative men. In general, HIV-positive men have been no more or less inclined toward unprotected anal intercourse with their regular partners over time.

Table 42: HIV serostatus and unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
HIV-positive	47.3	33.8	52.9	47.1	47.0	51.4	43.7
HIV-negative	41.8	38.4	48.1	40.7	51.6	51.1	49.5
Unknown HIV status	24.6	31.4	30.9	41.7	37.4	37.2	40.9
Total percentage	41.3	36.7	47.6	42.6	49.2	49.6	48.0
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men reporting unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

Similarly, there was some evidence of a greater tendency toward unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners over time across the various groupings of sites. This was

significant among men recruited through the repeated sites, the sex venues and at Fair Day. However, there was little evidence of differences between the different categories of recruitment sites.

Table 43: Unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	36.0	34.1	46.0	42.6	42.9	48.6	45.2
Clinics	42.4	40.0	44.6	44.7	41.2	53.2	40.8
Social venues	32.2	45.7	46.4	39.4	52.3	49.6	46.3
Sex venues	28.8	30.7	47.7	42.7	45.8	45.5	48.1
Fair Day	44.0		48.2		51.4		49.7
Suburban venues	36.0	53.8	47.6	39.7	45.8	52.5	33.3
All sites	41.3	36.7	47.6	42.6	49.2	49.6	48.0
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

Among men in seroconcordant relationships, despite some fluctuation, there has been little change over time in the proportion of men who engage in unprotected anal intercourse with their regular partners. However, men in serodiscordant relationships and men in relationships where either or both partners HIV status is unknown have been more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with their regular partners over time.

Table 44: HIV seroconcordance and unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Unknown serostatus	28.7	38.0	34.3	36.9	37.9	42.9	41.9
Seroconcordant	59.4	53.4	60.3	53.2	63.8	65.6	58.8
Serodiscordant	23.8	23.8	38.5	24.7	31.2	44.4	31.7
Total percentage	41.3	36.1	47.8	42.6	49.2	49.6	48.0
Total	846	246	812	436	1056	322	1214

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a regular male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men reporting unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partner during previous six months at each interview.

Although there is some evidence for an increase in unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners, and this increase may have occurred particularly among sero-nonconcordant couples, it might equally be argued that during 1996 men in regular relationships were less

inclined to engage in this practice. In general, there has been less evidence of an increase in this practice since February 1997 than there was between 1996 and 1997.

9.4 Condom use with casual male partners

The majority of men who reported having sex with casual partners prior to each survey engaged in anal intercourse with those partners and, in general, about one in five did so without a condom. There has been some increase in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners over time. However, this greater tendency toward unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners appears to have occurred mainly in 1996.

This trend has been strongest among non-positive men but HIV-positive men have also been somewhat more inclined toward unprotected anal intercourse with their casual partners over time. Most of these changes appear to have occurred between 1996 and 1997. As has been found in previous studies, HIV-positive men were more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with their casual partners. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, it is known from the SMASH data that much of this is accounted for by sex between casual partners who are both HIV-positive.

Table 45: HIV serostatus and unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
HIV-positive	27.0	41.8	40.2	43.1	38.8	37.9	38.5
HIV-negative	11.8	18.4	18.2	22.5	20.3	18.8	20.3
HIV-unknown	10.7	20.8	15.1	15.7	13.0	36.2	22.3
Total percentage	14.4	23.3	22.5	28.2	23.4	25.9	23.8
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men reporting unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

Similarly, there have been increases in the proportions of men engaging in unprotected anal intercourse over time across the various categories of recruitment sites. This has been less true of men recruited through clinics. However, as with the findings in general, most of these changes

in the practice of unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners across the various categories of recruitment sites occurred between 1996 and 1997.

Table 46: Unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partners 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	17.2	22.7	28.1	30.4	27.4	26.6	30.8
Clinics	19.3	27.8	26.0	23.3	28.2	25.0	21.9
Social venues	13.9	14.5	18.4	23.9	29.2	26.2	21.5
Sex venues	17.2	25.0	32.7	33.8	26.4	26.5	34.3
Fair Day	12.7		19.1		18.8		20.7
Suburban venues	14.8	25.5	26.1	25.2	23.7	24.5	6.3
All sites	14.4	23.3	22.5	28.2	23.4	25.9	23.8
Total	1158	404	1008	619	1381	482	1598

NB: Includes only those men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

These same trends over time across the various categories of recruitment sites were also found specifically among the HIV-negative men, except that there is also some suggestion of an increase in the proportion of men engaging in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners among HIV-negative men recruited through clinics as well. The number of HIV-negative men recruited at suburban venues was not sufficient at each survey to enable a separate analysis of these men.

Table 47: Unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partners among HIV-negative men 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	10.4	18.3	24.6	23.5	21.3	18.1	26.1
Clinics	11.8	22.9	23.1	18.5	19.5	15.9	17.6
Social venues	9.2	11.4	19.4	24.2	29.0	25.3	20.3
Sex venues	11.4	20.2	27.4	23.8	21.3	17.5	29.3
Fair Day	12.2		14.7		18.0		17.4
All sites	11.8	18.4	18.2	22.5	20.3	18.8	20.3
Total	917	364	784	489	1106	420	1145

NB: Includes only those HIV-negative men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

The general trends over time across the various categories of recruitment sites were also true for the HIV-positive men. The number of HIV-positive men recruited at social venues and at suburban venues was not sufficient at each survey to enable a separate analysis of these men.

Table 48: Unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partners among HIV-positive men 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	30.8	42.1	39.1	49.4	43.3	41.5	43.7
Clinics	25.8	34.2	30.1	29.1	35.7	31.3	26.8
Sex venues	37.2	48.2	56.4	69.2	51.6	56.9	58.3
Fair Day	20.9		40.8		35.0		37.8
All sites	27.0	41.3	40.2	43.1	38.8	37.9	38.5
Total	226	100	219	216	325	177	296

NB: Includes only those HIV-positive men reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

The general trends over time among men recruited through repeated sites were less true for the men who had not been tested for HIV. Although there is some evidence of an increase in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners among these men, the data tends to fluctuate more. The number of men who had not been tested for HIV recruited at other sites was not sufficient at each survey to enable a separate analysis of these men.

Table 49: Unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partners among men of unknown status 1996—1999

	Feb 1996	Aug 1996	Feb 1997	Aug 1997	Feb 1998	Aug 1998	Feb 1999
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Repeated sites	10.3	18.4	15.4	13.0	23.5	36.7	27.3
Fair Day	8.0		15.2		4.1		23.2
All sites	10.7	20.8	15.1	15.7	13.0	36.2	22.3
Total	140	53	89	51	146	58	148

NB: Includes only those men of unknown serostatus reporting sex with a casual male partner during previous six months at each interview. Percentages refer to proportion of those men, from respective groupings of sites, reporting unprotected anal intercourse with casual male partner during previous six months at each interview.

Although there is some evidence for an increase in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners, and that this increase may have occurred among men recruited from all the categories of recruitment sites and regardless of HIV status, it might equally be argued that during 1996 men who had sex with casual male partners were less inclined to engage in unprotected anal

intercourse with those partners. In general, there has been less evidence of an increase in this practice since February 1997 than there was between 1996 and 1997.

10 DISCUSSION

There are few indications of change over time in the circumstances and behaviour of gay men recruited into the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Surveys. Association with other gay men and sexual identity have remained relatively stable in the seven surveys conducted since February 1996. There has been no indication of changes in the proportion of men engaging in sex with women, nor in the number of male partners with whom gay men had sex in a six-month period.

Patterns and frequency of HIV testing have also remained relatively stable over time, as has seroprevalence in the various recruitment sites included in the surveys. Also, there has been no indication of a change in the overall proportion of HIV-positive men using combination anti-retroviral treatments.

There is no indication of a change over time in the types of gay men's sexual relationships. However, there are indications of some changes over time in the sexual behaviour of gay men. There is at least some suggestion of a greater tendency toward anal intercourse, particularly receptive anal intercourse, with regular partners. These same trends over time were also found with regard to sex with casual partners. There are also some, somewhat stronger, indications of an increase over time in the proportion of men engaging in unprotected anal intercourse with both regular and casual male partners. With regard to regular partners, this increase in unprotected anal intercourse appears to apply in particular to sero-nonconcordant couples.

These changes in sexual behaviour over time do not appear to have occurred evenly across the seven survey periods, however: most of the changes appear to have taken place between 1996 and 1997. In general, since February 1997, the sexual behaviour reported by men in these surveys has remained relatively stable.