

Queensland Gay Community Periodic Survey: June 1999

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The 1225 men who donated their time to ensure that the study was fully inclusive of their particular circumstances.

CONTENTS

Description of the study	1
Sample and recruitment	2
Demographic profile	3
Association with gay community	7
HIV testing	9
Sexual practice and 'safe sex'	11
Drug use	19
HIV treatments: Optimism-scepticism	20
Discussion	21
References	23
Questionnaire	24

Description of the Study

The Queensland Gay Community Periodic Survey is an annual cross-sectional survey of gay and homosexually active men recruited through a range of sites in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast, and Cairns. The project was funded by Queensland Health. The Periodic Survey provides an annual snapshot of sexual and HIV-related practices among gay and homosexually active men.

The major aim of the Queensland Periodic Survey is to provide data on levels of safe and unsafe sexual practice in a broad cross-sectional sample of gay and homosexually active men. To this end, men were recruited from a number of gay-community venues and sexual health clinics.

This study, a follow-up to the 1998 South East Queensland Periodic Survey (Van de Ven *et al*, 1998), was conducted in June 1999. If similar surveys are conducted in June each year and employ the same recruitment strategies, it will be possible to examine changes in practice over time, albeit from cross-sectional samples.

Eleven sites were chosen for the study: one sexual health clinic, and five gay-community venues in Brisbane, one each in the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, and three in Cairns. Recruitment in these venues was conducted by trained recruiters over a one-week period. Men were also recruited at the Pride Fair Day.

The questionnaire (appended to this report) is a short, self-administered instrument that typically takes about 10 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 social attachment to gay community, recreational drug use, and a range of demographic items including sexual identity, age, education, occupation and ethnicity. Questions were designed to maximise comparability with Periodic Surveys in other capital cities.

This report describes the data from the second Queensland Gay Community Periodic Survey (June 1999). 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.

Sample and Recruitment

Respondents were recruited from eleven sites in the Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Cairns areas and at a large public gay-community event (Pride Fair Day). In 1999, approximately a quarter of the men were recruited at the Pride Fair Day. This is a smaller proportion than in 1998, attributable to a slight variation in the recruitment strategies—in 1998 the Pride Fair Day recruitment preceded the other sites, in 1999 the reverse so that repeat requests to complete a questionnaire went mainly to men at the Pride Fair Day. At the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast venues, 96 and 71 men respectively were recruited and in Cairns, 60 men were recruited. (Note: The 1998 survey did not include Cairns.) These non metropolitan men are included in the analyses throughout.*

TABLE 1 SOURCE OF RECRUITMENT

	1998	1999
Sexual health centre	116 (8.7%)	109 (8.9%)
Gay venues	712 (53.1%)	808 (66.0%)
Pride Fair Day	513 (38.3%)	308 (25.1%)
TOTAL	1341 (100%)	1225 (100%)

In all, 1597 men were asked to complete a questionnaire and 1225 did so. This represents an acceptable response rate of 76.7%. (Throughout this report, totals which do not sum to 1225 are attributable to small amounts of missing data.)

Previous studies such as BRASH and SMASH (Prestage *et al*, 1995) 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 previous Periodic Surveys, men recruited from events such as the Fair Day are different in some respects from those recruited from clinics and gay venues. Nonetheless, most of the data reported here are for

* The tables in this report present frequencies (and percentages in parentheses) for 1998 and 1999.

Where the categories are mutually exclusive, the percentages have been rounded to sum to 100% down the column. Empty cells (marked '-') indicate non relevant data or that data were not collected.

the sample as a whole, giving an account of practices drawn from a *broad* cross-sectional sample of Queensland gay men.

In all, 287 men indicated that they had participated in the 1998 Periodic Survey. In most respects, the men who said they had participated last year were no different from the rest of the sample on key demographic and behavioural variables.

Demographic Profile

In terms of demographic variables, the participants in this study were quite similar to those recruited in other gay-community-based studies, including the 1998 South East Queensland Gay Community Periodic Survey (Van de Ven *et al*, 1998).

Geographic distribution

The men came primarily from the Brisbane metropolitan area or from other parts of Queensland. A small percentage of men, who indicated that they participated regularly in Queensland gay community, came from outside the State. (Note: 37 men lived in Cairns/Townsville although 60 men were recruited at the Cairns venues—see page 5.)

TABLE 2 RESIDENTIAL LOCATION			
		1998	1999
Brisbane	Metropolitan Area	957 (71.3%)	850 (69.4%)
	Gold Coast	114 (8.5%)	102 (8.3%)
	Sunshine Coast	108 (8.1%)	74 (6.1%)
	Cairns/Townsville	—	37 (3.0%)
	Other Queensland	56 (4.2%)	72 (5.9%)
	Elsewhere	106 (7.9%)	90 (7.3%)
TOTAL		1341 (100%)	1225 (100%)

Age

Respondents ranged between 17 and 73 years of age, with a median of 33. Age range and distribution were similar to those of the 1998 participants.

TABLE 3 AGE

	1998	1999
Under 25	224 (17.2%)	212 (19.0%)
25–29	252 (19.3%)	189 (16.9%)
30–39	477 (36.5%)	429 (38.5%)
40–49	226 (17.3%)	175 (15.7%)
50 and over	127 (9.7%)	110 (9.9%)
TOTAL	1306 (100%)	1115 (100%)

Ethnicity

As in 1998, this was predominantly an 'Anglo-Australian' sample (based on responses to Q49). In 1999 a more specific question about Indigenous status was asked (Q48). In response to this more specific question, 121 men (9.9% of the sample) indicated that they were of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (compared with only 21 men or 1.8% to Q49).

TABLE 4 ETHNICITY		
	1998	1999
Anglo-Australian	973 (84.1%)	945 (84.1)
European	87 (7.5%)	103 (9.2%)
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander	20 (1.7%)	21 (1.8%)
Other	77 (6.7%)	54 (4.9%)
TOTAL	1157 (100%)	1123 (100%)

Employment and occupation

As in 1998, the proportion of men who were not in the work force was fairly high compared with the general population. This was particularly true of HIV-positive men, probably due to the relatively high percentage who were in receipt of some form of social security payment.

TABLE 5 EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
	1998	1999
Full-time	798 (61.9%)	728 (61.0%)
Part-time	192 (14.9%)	170 (14.3%)
Unemployed/Other	300 (23.3%)	295 (24.7%)
TOTAL	1290 (100%)	1193 (100%)

Compared with 1998, the 1999 survey attracted fewer men who were professionals/managers and fewer men in blue collar trades.

TABLE 6 OCCUPATION		
	1998	1999
PROFESSIONAL/MANAGERIAL		
Professional/ Managerial	357 (33.6%)	253 (26.6%)
Paraprofessional	153 (14.4%)	203 (21.3%)
WHITE COLLAR		
Clerical/ Sales	347 (32.6%)	346 (36.3%)
BLUE COLLAR		

Trades	133 (12.5%)	70 (7.3%)
Plant operator/Labourer	72 (6.7%)	81 (8.5%)
TOTAL ¹	1062 (100%)	953 (100%)

¹Includes all men who specified their occupation, whether currently employed or not.

Education

As in previous gay-community-based studies, this sample was relatively well educated; three fifths of the men had received some post-secondary education and two fifths had some university education.

TABLE 7 EDUCATION		
	1998	1999
Up to 3 years of high school	232 (17.9%)	198 (16.6%)
Up to Year 12/Senior Certificate	299 (23.1%)	269 (22.6%)
Trade certificate or diploma	267 (20.6%)	245 (20.6%)
University	498 (38.4%)	478 (40.2%)
TOTAL	1296 (100%)	1190 (100%)

Sexual relationships with women

As in 1998, few men had had sex with women in the previous six months.

TABLE 8 SEX WITH WOMEN IN PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS		
	1998	1999
No female partners	1128 (87.9%)	1064 (89.7%)
One female partner	90 (7.0%)	71 (6.0%)
More than one female partner	66 (5.1%)	51 (4.3%)
TOTAL	1284 (100%)	1186 (100%)

Sexual relationships with men

As in 1998, well over half the men in the sample were currently in a regular sexual relationship with a man. Approximately one quarter of the participants was monogamous (ie had sex only with a regular partner). Over half the men had sex with casual partners and about one in six men was 'currently' not having sex with men at all.

TABLE 9 RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN

	1998	1999
None	215 (16.4%)	218 (18.1%)
Casual only	278 (21.2%)	289 (24.1%)
Regular plus casual	454 (34.7%)	404 (33.6%)
Regular only (monogamous)	363 (27.7%)	291 (24.2%)
TOTAL	1310 (100%)	1202 (100%)

Among those men who were in a regular relationship, approximately three in five of the relationships had lasted for more than a year. This finding was similar to that of 1998.

TABLE 10 LENGTH OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEN		
	1998	1999
Less than one year	283 (40.1%)	230 (37.5%)
At least one year	422 (59.9%)	384 (62.5%)
TOTAL ¹	705 (100%)	614 (100%)

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

Association with Gay Community

In several respects, this was a highly gay-identified and gay-community-attached sample.

Sexual identity and sexual relations

As in 1998, the men in the sample were mostly homosexually identified. Homosexual identification included 'gay/homosexual'. Non homosexual identification included 'bisexual' and 'heterosexual'.

TABLE 11 SEXUAL IDENTITY		
	1998	1999
Homosexually identified	1115 (84.3%)	1050 (86.4%)
Not homosexually identified	207 (15.7%)	165 (13.6%)
TOTAL	1322 (100%)	1215 (100%)

Furthermore, few men said they enjoyed having sex mostly with women or with men and women equally. Typically, and consistent with 1998 preferences, the men enjoyed having sex with men only or mostly men.

TABLE 12 SEXUAL PREFERENCE		
	1998	1999
Men only	1006 (75.5%)	936 (76.8%)
Mostly men	219 (16.4%)	200 (16.4%)
Other ¹	107 (8.1%)	83 (6.8%)
TOTAL	1332 (100%)	1219 (100%)

¹Includes 'Men and women equally', 'Mostly women', 'Women only' and 'No-one'.

Gay community involvement

Like in 1998, the men in this sample were quite socially involved with gay men. Over half of the men in the sample said most or all of their friends were gay men.

TABLE 13 GAY FRIENDS		
	1998	1999
None	24 (1.8%)	16 (1.3%)
Some or a few	619 (46.3%)	590 (48.3%)
Most or all	698 (51.9%)	617 (50.4%)
TOTAL	1337 (100%)	1223 (100%)

Correspondingly, almost half of the men said they spent a lot of their free time with gay men.

TABLE 14 PROPORTION OF FREE TIME SPENT WITH GAY MEN		
	1998	1999
None	16 (1.2%)	8 (0.7%)
A little	211 (15.8%)	207 (16.9%)
Some	506 (37.9%)	475 (38.8%)
A lot	603 (45.1%)	533 (43.6%)
TOTAL	1336 (100%)	1223 (100%)

HIV Testing

Most of the men had already been tested for antibodies to HIV. Almost one man in seven had not been tested or had failed to obtain the test results. As in 1998, less than 10% of the men were HIV-positive.

TABLE 15 HIV TEST RESULTS		
	1998	1999
Not tested/No results	177 (13.5%)	168 (13.9%)
HIV-negative	1021 (77.9%)	942 (77.8%)
HIV-positive	113 (8.6%)	101 (8.3%)
TOTAL	1311 (100%)	1211 (100%)

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. Similar to 1998 findings, relatively few men reported infrequent testing.

TABLE 16 TIME SINCE MOST RECENT HIV TEST		
	1998	1999
Less than 6 months ago	599 (53.1%)	553 (52.7%)
7–12 months ago	177 (15.7%)	169 (16.1%)
1–2 years ago	175 (15.5%)	170 (16.2%)
Over 2 years ago	178 (15.8%)	158 (15.0%)
TOTAL	1129 (100%)	1050 (100%)

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

Combination therapies

Of the men who indicated that they were HIV-positive, almost seven in ten were taking combination therapy—consistent with 1998 data.

TABLE 17 USE OF COMBINATION ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPIES		
	1998	1999
Yes	77 (68.8%)	67 (67.0%)
No	35 (31.3%)	33 (33.0%)
TOTAL	112 (100%)	100 (100%)

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. About two thirds had an HIV-negative regular partner, while approximately one in 10 had an HIV-positive regular partner and one in four of the men had a regular partner whose serostatus they did not know.

TABLE 18 HIV STATUS OF REGULAR PARTNERS		
	1998	1999
HIV-positive	61 (8.3%)	63 (9.1%)
HIV-negative	486 (66.3%)	442 (64.2%)
HIV status unknown	186 (25.4%)	184 (26.7%)
TOTAL	733 (100%)	689 (100%)

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

Half the HIV-positive men had an HIV-negative regular partner and approximately two fifths had an HIV-positive regular partner. HIV-negative men tended to have HIV-negative regular partners. Men who did not know their own serostatus tended not to know the serostatus of their regular partners. These findings fairly closely match the 1998 ones.

TABLE 19 MATCH OF HIV STATUS IN REGULAR RELATIONSHIPS							
SEROSTATUS OF REGULAR PARTNER	HIV- POSITIVE		HIV- NEGATIVE		UNKNOWN		
	1998	1999	1998	1999	1998	1999	
HIV-positive	20 (30.8%)	25 (38.5%)	34 (5.9%)	34 (6.3%)	5 (6.0%)	4 (5.1%)	
HIV-negative	33 (50.8%)	32 (49.2%)	426 (74.1%)	386 (71.3%)	22 (26.2%)	20 (25.7%)	
HIV status unknown	12 (18.5%)	8 (12.3%)	190 (20.0%)	121 (22.4%)	57 (67.9%)	54 (69.2%)	
TOTAL ¹	65 (100%)	65 (100%)	575 (100%)	541 (100%)	84 (100%)	78 (100%)	

¹Includes only those men who 'currently' had a regular partner.

Sexual Practice and 'Safe Sex'

Sexual behaviour between men

Participants were only asked to report on a limited range of sexual practices (separately for regular and casual partners): anal intercourse with and without ejaculation; and oral intercourse with ejaculation. These practices were selected for their possible association with HIV transmission. Based on the responses to the sexual behaviour items and the sort of sexual relationships with men indicated by the participants, approximately six in 10 of the men were classified as having had sex with a regular male partner and approximately seven in 10 of the men were classified as having had sex with a casual male partner 'in the previous six months'—proportions consistent with those of 1998.

TABLE 20 REPORTED SEX WITH MALE PARTNERS IN PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS

	1998	1999
Any sexual contact with <i>regular</i> partners	826 (61.6%)	762 (62.2%)
Any sexual contact with <i>casual</i> partners	962 (71.7%)	901 (73.6%)
TOTAL	1341	1225

Note: These categories are not mutually exclusive.

Unlike in 1998, there was little difference between men recruited at the Pride Fair Day and their counterparts recruited at venues or clinics in respect of having had sexual contact with regular partners. However, the men recruited at Venues/Clinics remained more likely to have casual partners.

TABLE 21 REPORTED SEX WITH MALE PARTNERS IN PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS BY RECRUITMENT SITE

	PRIDE FAIR DAY		VENUES/CLINICS	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
Any sexual contact with <i>regular</i> partners	360 (70.2%)	202 (65.6%)	466 (56.3%)	560 (61.1%)
Any sexual contact with <i>casual</i> partners	338 (65.9%)	196 (63.6%)	624 (75.4%)	705 (76.9%)
TOTAL	513	308	828	917

Note: These categories are not mutually exclusive.

As in 1998, the majority of the men had engaged in sex with between 1 and 10 partners 'in the previous six months', although more than a quarter of the men had more than 10 partners.

TABLE 22 NUMBER OF MALE PARTNERS IN PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS		
	1998	1999
None	97 (7.3%)	67 (5.5%)
One	282 (21.2%)	250 (20.5%)
2–10	610 (45.9%)	574 (47.1%)
11–50	268 (20.1%)	266 (21.9%)
More than 50	74 (5.6%)	61 (5.0%)
TOTAL	1331 (100%)	1218 (100%)

Comparison of sexual practices between regular and casual partners

Not all participants engaged in oral intercourse with ejaculation with their regular male partners, but those who did were equally likely to do so in the insertive as in the receptive role. Almost two thirds of those with regular male partners engaged in oral intercourse with ejaculation with their partners.

Most participants engaged in anal intercourse with their regular male partners. About three quarters of those with regular partners engaged in insertive anal intercourse; somewhat fewer engaged in receptive anal intercourse.

TABLE 23 SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR WITH REGULAR MALE PARTNERS

SEX PRACTICES	TOTAL SAMPLE		THOSE WITH REGULAR PARTNERS	
	1998 (N = 1341)	1999 (N = 1225)	1998 (n = 826)	1999 (n = 762)
Any oral intercourse with ejaculation	523 (39.0%)	497 (40.6%)	523 (63.3%)	497 (65.2%)
Insertive fellatio with ejaculation	417 (31.1%)	403 (32.9%)	417 (51.9%)	403 (52.9%)
Receptive fellatio with ejaculation	427 (31.8%)	409 (33.4%)	427 (53.5%)	409 (53.7%)
Any anal intercourse	725 (54.1%)	674 (55.0%)	725 (87.8%)	674 (88.5%)
Insertive anal intercourse	628 (46.8%)	592 (48.3%)	628 (76.0%)	592 (77.7%)
Receptive anal intercourse	592 (44.1%)	533 (43.5%)	592 (71.7%)	533 (69.9%)

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.

Fewer respondents engaged in either oral intercourse with ejaculation or anal intercourse with casual male partners than with regular male partners. Approximately two fifths of the men with casual partners engaged in oral intercourse with ejaculation, more commonly in the insertive role. Approximately three quarters of those who had sex with casual male partners engaged in anal intercourse with those partners, again more usually in the insertive role.

TABLE 24 SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR WITH CASUAL MALE PARTNERS

SEX PRACTICES	TOTAL SAMPLE		THOSE WITH CASUAL PARTNERS	
	1998 (N = 1341)	1999 (N = 1225)	1998 (n = 962)	1999 (n = 901)
Any oral intercourse with ejaculation	424 (31.6%)	391 (31.9%)	424 (44.1%)	391 (43.4%)
Insertive fellatio with ejaculation	351 (26.2%)	332 (27.1%)	351 (40.0%)	332 (36.8%)
Receptive fellatio with ejaculation	274 (20.4%)	260 (21.2%)	274 (31.0%)	260 (28.9%)
Any anal intercourse	673 (50.2%)	660 (53.9%)	673 (70.0%)	660 (73.3%)
Insertive anal intercourse	597 (44.5%)	585 (47.8%)	597 (62.1%)	585 (64.9%)
Receptive anal intercourse	486 (36.2%)	483 (39.4%)	486 (50.5%)	483 (53.6%)

In the overall sample the proportion of men who engaged in oral intercourse with ejaculation or anal intercourse with regular or casual partners was little changed from 1998.

Sex with regular male partners

Condom Use

Based on the entire sample, a little less than one third of the men who participated in the survey engaged in any unprotected anal intercourse with regular male partners 'in the previous six months'—similar to the 1998 finding.

TABLE 25 CONDOM USE WITH REGULAR PARTNERS

	TOTAL SAMPLE		THOSE WITH REGULAR PARTNERS	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
No regular partner	515 (38.4%)	463 (37.8%)	—	—
No anal intercourse	101 (7.5%)	88 (7.2%)	101 (12.2%)	88 (11.6%)
Always uses condom	314 (23.4%)	308 (25.1%)	314 (38.0%)	308 (40.4%)
Sometimes does not use condom ¹	411 (30.6%)	366 (29.9%)	411 (49.8%)	366 (48.0%)
BASE	1341 (100%)	1225 (100%)	826 (100%)	762 (100%)

¹Of the 366 men who engaged in unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners 'in the previous six months', 83 (6.8% of the total sample) practised only withdrawal prior to ejaculation, 120 (9.8%) practised only ejaculation inside, and 163 (13.3%) engaged in both withdrawal and ejaculation inside.

Unlike the 1998 findings, there were no significant differences between HIV-negative, HIV-positive and men of unknown serostatus in their condom use with regular partners.

TABLE 26 SEROSTATUS AND CONDOM USE AMONG REGULAR PARTNERS

	HIV-POSITIVE	HIV-NEGATIVE	UNKNOWN SEROSTATUS
1998 ($p < .001$)			
No Anal	6 (9.1%)	68 (10.6%)	25 (25.5%)
Always uses condom	33 (50.0%)	249 (38.7%)	26 (26.5%)
Sometimes does not use condom	27 (40.9%)	321 (50.8%)	47 (48.0%)
TOTAL ¹	66 (100%)	644 (100%)	98 (100%)
1999 (ns)			
No Anal	3 (4.6%)	70 (11.7%)	14 (15.7%)
Always uses condom	34 (52.3%)	231 (38.6%)	39 (43.8%)
Sometimes does not use condom	28 (43.1%)	297 (49.7%)	36 (40.5%)
TOTAL ¹	65 (100%)	598 (100%)	89 (100%)

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

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'. Although the

numbers are small, 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. Most of the unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners involving participants who were HIV-negative occurred in relationships where both partners were known to be HIV-negative or where the other partner's status was unknown. Again, the numbers are small, but participants of unknown serostatus were roughly as likely to have unprotected anal intercourse with HIV-negative partners as they were with HIV-positive or status-unknown partners.

TABLE 27 CONDOM USE AND MATCH OF HIV STATUS IN REGULAR RELATIONSHIPS

REGULAR PARTNER'S SEROSTATUS		PARTICIPANT'S SEROSTATUS		
		POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	DON'T KNOW
1998				
Positive	No UAI	6 (42.9)	10 (38.5)	1 (50.0)
	Some UAI	8 (57.1)	16 (61.5)	1 (50.0)
Negative	No UAI	18 (69.2)	117 (34.6)	3 (18.7)
	Some UAI	8 (30.8)	221 (65.4)	13 (81.3)
Don't Know	No UAI	4 (50.0)	35 (44.3)	14 (41.2)
	Some UAI	4 (50.0)	44 (55.7)	20 (58.8)
TOTAL		48	443	52
1999				
Positive	No UAI	6 (26.1)	21 (72.4)	1 (33.3)
	Some UAI	17 (73.9)	8 (27.6)	2 (66.7)
Negative	No UAI	17 (70.8)	103 (33.6)	7 (43.7)
	Some UAI	7 (29.2)	204 (66.4)	9 (56.3)
Don't Know	No UAI	4 (80.0)	42 (60.0)	19 (52.8)
	Some UAI	1 (20.0)	28 (40.0)	17 (47.2)
TOTAL		52	406	55

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, 72 men in the above table had unprotected anal intercourse in a relationship where seroconcordance was in doubt.

Agreements

As in 1998, most participants with regular male partners had agreements with their partners about sex *within* the relationship.

TABLE 28 AGREEMENTS WITH REGULAR MALE PARTNERS ABOUT SEX *WITHIN* RELATIONSHIP

	1998	1999
No spoken agreement about anal intercourse	178 (24.9%)	155 (22.9%)
No anal intercourse between regular partners is permitted	46 (6.4%)	61 (9.0%)
Anal intercourse permitted only with condom	243 (34.0%)	253 (37.3%)
Anal intercourse without condom is permitted	247 (34.6%)	209 (30.8%)
TOTAL ¹	714 (100%)	678 (100%)

¹Based on the responses of men who 'currently' had a regular partner.

In accord with the 1998 findings, most participants had made an agreement with their regular partner about sexual interactions *outside* the relationship. Where men did make such an agreement, very few permitted unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners.

TABLE 29 AGREEMENTS WITH REGULAR MALE PARTNERS ABOUT SEX <i>OUTSIDE</i> RELATIONSHIP		
	1998	1999
No spoken agreement about anal intercourse	214 (29.9%)	195 (29.1%)
No sexual contact with casual partners is permitted	213 (29.8%)	199 (29.6%)
No anal intercourse with casual partners is permitted	56 (7.8%)	50 (7.5%)
Anal intercourse permitted only with condom	217 (30.3%)	215 (32.0%)
Anal intercourse without condom is permitted	15 (2.1%)	12 (1.8%)
TOTAL ¹	715 (100%)	671 (100%)

¹Based on the responses of men who currently had a regular partner.

Sex with casual male partners

Condom use

Rates of unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners were little changed from 1998. Based on the entire sample, 14.7% 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 180 men, 70 also had unprotected anal intercourse with regular partners.

TABLE 30 CONDOM USE WITH CASUAL PARTNERS				
	TOTAL SAMPLE		THOSE WITH CASUAL PARTNERS	
	1998	1999	1998	1999
No casual partner	379 (28.3%)	324 (26.4%)	—	—
No anal intercourse	289 (21.6%)	241 (19.7%)	289 (30.0%)	241 (26.7%)
Always uses condom	485 (36.2%)	480 (39.2%)	485 (50.4%)	480 (53.3%)
Sometimes does not use condom ¹	188 (14.0%)	180 (14.7%)	188 (19.5%)	180 (20.0%)
BASE	1341 (100%)	1225 (100%)	962 (100%)	901 (100%)

¹Of the 180 men who engaged in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners 'in the previous six months', 90 (7.3% of the total sample) practised only withdrawal prior to ejaculation, 26 (2.1%) practised only ejaculation inside, and 68 (5.6%) engaged in both withdrawal and ejaculation inside.

A comparison of the data in Tables 25 and 30 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.

Unlike in 1998, there was no statistically significant association between serostatus and condom use with casual partners.

TABLE 31 SEROSTATUS AND CONDOM USE WITH CASUAL PARTNERS			
	HIV-POSITIVE	HIV-NEGATIVE	UNKNOWN SEROSTATUS
1998 ($p < .005$)			
No Anal	18 (20.9%)	219 (29.8%)	47 (37.9%)
Always uses condom	42 (48.8%)	387 (52.7%)	50 (40.3%)
Sometimes does not use condom	26 (30.2%)	129 (17.6%)	27 (21.8%)
TOTAL ¹	86 (100%)	1019 (100%)	186 (100%)
1999 (<i>ns</i>)			
No Anal	12 (16.2%)	187 (26.9%)	37 (30.1%)
Always uses condom	42 (56.8%)	373 (53.6%)	62 (50.4%)
Sometimes does not use condom	20 (27.0%)	136 (19.5%)	24 (19.5%)
TOTAL ¹	74 (100%)	696 (100%)	123 (100%)

¹Includes only those men who had casual partners.

Serostatus

Two questions (ie 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.

Approximately 60% of the participants with casual partners did not disclose their serostatus to any of their casual partners—a similar proportion to that in 1998. Relatively few men disclosed to all casual partners.

TABLE 32 PARTICIPANTS' DISCLOSURE OF SEROSTATUS TO CASUAL PARTNERS		
	1998	1999
Told none	568 (60.5%)	517 (61.8%)
Told some	198 (21.1%)	171 (20.4%)
Told all	173 (18.4%)	149 (17.8%)
TOTAL	939 (100%)	837 (100%)

Likewise, approximately 60% of the participants with casual partners were not told the serostatus of their casual partners—again, a similar proportion to 1998. Relatively few men were routinely disclosed to by casual partners.

TABLE 33 CASUAL PARTNERS' DISCLOSURE OF SEROSTATUS TO PARTICIPANTS		
	1998	1999
Told by none	586 (62.1%)	534 (63.4%)
Told by some	255 (27.1%)	217 (25.8%)
Told by all	102 (10.8%)	91 (10.8%)
TOTAL	943 (100%)	842 (100%)

Drug Use

Among the types of drugs listed (Question 54), drug use remained fairly stable over the one-year interval. In all, 691 men used speed, cocaine, heroin, steroids or 'any other drug'.

TABLE 34 DRUG USE IN THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS		
	1998	1999
Speed	325 (24.2%)	323 (26.4%)
Cocaine	81 (6.0%)	87 (7.1%)
Heroin	42 (3.1%)	33 (2.7%)
Steroids	—	30 (2.4%)
Any other drug	—	443 (36.2%)

Note: Percentages are based on the total samples (1341 and 1225 men in 1998 and 1999 respectively), although not all men responded to these items. Items are not mutually exclusive.

Likewise, rates of injecting drug use remained stable. Altogether, 111 men (9.1% of the sample) had injected drugs 'in the previous six months', most commonly speed. Only 12 men reported having injected steroids.

TABLE 35 INJECTING DRUG USE IN THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS		
	1998	1999
Speed	88 (6.6%)	90 (7.3%)
Cocaine	16 (1.2%)	17 (1.4%)
Heroin	39 (2.9%)	27 (2.2%)
Steroids	10 (0.7%)	12 (1.0%)
Any other drug	28 (2.1%)	35 (2.9%)
ANY OF THE ABOVE	116 (8.7%)	111 (9.1%)

Note: Percentages are based on the total samples (1341 and 1225 men in 1998 and 1999 respectively), although not all men responded to these items. Items are not mutually exclusive.

Of the 111 injecting drug users, only 10 had ever shared a needle/syringe 'in the previous six months'.

HIV Treatments Optimism-Scepticism

The questionnaire included a 12-item scale of Optimism-Scepticism in the Context of New HIV Treatments—Questions 35-46 (Van de Ven *et al*, 1999). Possible scores on this scale range from 12 (sceptical) to 48 (optimistic). In the overall sample, the mean was 19.3 and there were no significant differences associated with serostatus. That is, the men tended on average toward the sceptical end of the scale.

TABLE 36 MEANS ON SCALE OF OPTIMISM-SCEPTICISM BY SEROSTATUS

Participant's serostatus	Mean
HIV Positive	18.6
HIV Negative	19.2
Don't Know	19.4
ENTIRE SAMPLE	19.3

There was a relationship between Optimism-Scepticism and sexual practice. Among men with regular partners, those who had any unprotected anal intercourse with these partners had a higher mean score (20.2) than those who had no unprotected anal intercourse or no anal intercourse *per se* (18.7; $p < .001$). Similarly, for men with casual partners, those who had any unprotected anal intercourse with these partners also had a higher score (21.3) than those who had no unprotected anal intercourse or no anal intercourse *per se* (18.9; $p < .001$).

Whereas there is evidence of an association between unprotected anal intercourse and optimism in the context of new HIV treatments, the meaning of this association cannot be specified. On the one hand, it may be the case that men who are optimistic about improved HIV treatments are more prepared to engage in unprotected anal intercourse on the basis of altered perceptions of risk. On the other hand, it may be that men who have unprotected anal intercourse subsequently rationalise or account for their behaviour in terms of perceived lower HIV infectivity and the availability of more advanced HIV treatments. Hence, these findings must be interpreted cautiously.

Discussion

The findings from the second Queensland Gay Community Periodic Survey provide a snapshot of the social and sexual lives of gay men in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast and Cairns. In the main, the findings are quite similar to (and thereby corroborate) the evidence from the initial South East Queensland Periodic Survey (Van de Ven *et al*, 1998).

The 1225 participants were recruited at 10 gay venues, at a sexual-health centre, and at the Pride Fair Day. Most of these men lived in the Brisbane Metropolitan or the Gold and Sunshine Coast areas. They were predominantly of 'Anglo-Australian' background, in professional/managerial or white-collar occupations, and well educated.

Most of the participants identified as gay or homosexual. Correspondingly, most preferred to have sex with men only, reflected in the finding that almost 90% had not had sex with any women 'in the previous six months'. As a whole, the sample was quite involved socially in gay community with high levels of gay friendships and with much free time spent with gay men.

Approximately 14% of the men had not been tested for HIV, a similar proportion to that in 1998. The majority of those who had been tested for HIV had done so 'within the past year'. Overall, 9.1% of the men were HIV-positive, consistent with 1998 data.

Among the HIV-positive participants, use of combination antiretroviral therapies was the norm—67% of the HIV-positive men were taking a combination therapy at the time of the survey. Uptake of combination therapies was unchanged from 1998.

Most men reported 'current' sexual contact with at least one other man: about a quarter of the men only had a regular partner; a third had a regular partner and either or both partners also had casual partners; and approximately a quarter of the men only had casual partners. In the six months prior to the survey, approximately 60% of the men had sex with regular partners and approximately 70% of the men had sex with casual partners—both percentages little changed from 1998.

Of the *total* sample and 'in the previous six months', 366 men (29.9%) had any unprotected anal intercourse with a regular partner and 180 men (14.7%) had any unprotected anal intercourse with a casual partner. Some of these men (70 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 overall terms, there was little change in sexual practices over the one year interval.

Not unexpectedly, more men had unprotected anal intercourse with regular than with casual partners. As well, unprotected anal intercourse that involved ejaculation inside was much more likely to occur between regular than between casual partners.

Most of the men with regular partners had agreements about sex within and outside of their relationship. Whereas approximately one third of these agreements permitted unprotected anal intercourse within the relationship, unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners was rarely allowed.

The numbers were small, but HIV-positive men were more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with HIV-positive regular partners than with HIV-negative or 'status unknown' regular partners. Likewise, HIV-negative men were more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with HIV-negative, and to some extent 'status unknown', regular partners than with HIV-positive regular partners. Much of the unprotected anal intercourse within regular relationships occurred between seroconcordant (positive-positive or negative-negative) couples. Nonetheless, of those who had anal intercourse with their 'current' regular partner, 72 men had unprotected anal intercourse in a relationship that was not understood to be seroconcordant.

The men did not routinely disclose their serostatus to casual partners. Similarly, they most commonly did not know the serostatus of their casual partners. About 60% of men never disclosed their serostatus to casual partners and about 60% of men were never disclosed to by casual partners.

Approximately half of the men indicated any drug use (although data on specific details were not collected). Altogether, 111 men (9.1% of the sample) had injected drugs 'in the previous six months', speed being the most likely drug to be injected (among those listed). Injecting drug use was stable over the one year interval between surveys.

In conclusion, the follow-up Queensland Gay Community Periodic Survey was conducted very successfully. Recruitment strategies consistent with those employed in 1998 and at similar sites attracted a large sample of gay men from the Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Cairns regions. The resulting data are robust and comparisons with the 1998 findings are suggestive of sound reliability. The evidence overall is of stable sexual and social practices in these gay communities and provides indispensable indicators against which future cross-sectional data can be compared.

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