

## ONTARIO MEN'S SURVEY

# Doing it in the 00s...

## A lot can happen in ten years.

It's been a long time since part of a national study surveyed 1,350 Ontario gay and bisexual men to find out who they were, how they had sex, and what they knew about HIV and AIDS. The Canadian Men's Survey gave us a picture of men's knowledge, attitudes and sexual behaviours. It showed us where we needed to be more careful, and it showed educators where to focus so we could all learn more about safer sex.

Since then, a lot has happened.

To find out just how life has changed—or remained the same—another survey was conducted: The Ontario Men's Survey. Perhaps you participated. The Ontario Men's Survey got answers from gay and bisexual men from all over the province. And this time, a lot more men answered the questions. They came from small towns and cities, men who were HIV positive and men who were HIV negative, from all walks of life and with different backgrounds, beliefs and cultures. It is the largest survey of gay and bisexual men in Canada—ever—and volunteers and community groups in thirteen communities helped make it happen.

The Ontario Men's Survey fills a huge gap—ten years of no research to reflect cultural and social changes in men's lives and habits. Now we have new information to compare to what we have learned in the past. Now we can see where we stand.

So how was this information collected? This survey was truly a community project. AIDS service organizations and the people who organize and run community groups helped formulate the questions; gay dances, bars and bathhouses provided places where men could answer them. The goal was to find 5,000 men who would complete the questionnaire, and

for many to provide a saliva sample—all anonymously. That goal was met and surpassed, and the 5,080 men who participated were an extremely diverse group. For the first time, men were asked questions about race. Also for the first time, questionnaires were available in seven languages.

Using saliva to learn about HIV prevalence (the rate of all HIV infections in a population) is a way to get accurate information. To test for HIV, scientists look for antibodies we produce in response to our systems' attempts to fight off HIV infections.

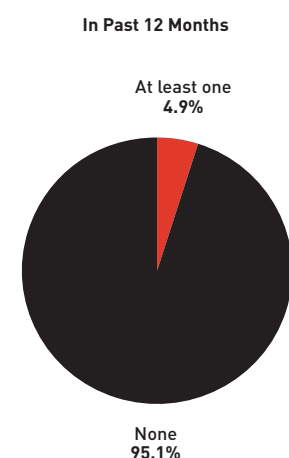
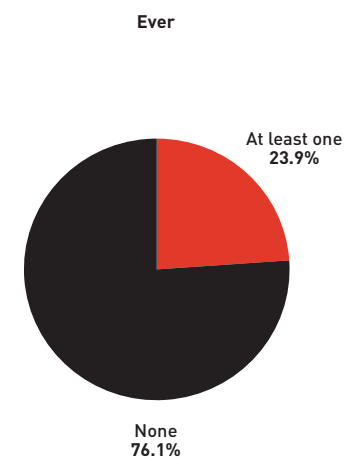
Remember: Antibodies in saliva do not transmit the virus.

Men reported what they believed their HIV status to be, as well, so now we can compare the numbers of HIV positive men to the numbers of men who think or say they are positive. And yes, the numbers are different. The study gives us the most accurate record of HIV prevalence in the gay and bisexual community to date, and can also help with research about hepatitis C. We can learn from this information. It can help keep us safe.

To make the information more accessible, the results have been organized by where they were collected. The thirteen regions were grouped into four larger regions for analysis: Toronto, Ottawa, Northern Ontario (Sudbury and Thunder Bay) and Southern Ontario (Durham, Hamilton, Kitchener, Kingston, London, Peel, Peterborough, Niagara and Windsor).

## The 5,080 men who participated were an extremely diverse group.

### SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



## Where we come from

The 5,080 men came from all around the province:

CITY	RESPONDENTS
Durham	146
Hamilton	307
Kingston	200
Kitchener	201
London	300
Ottawa	602
Peel	150
Peterborough	78
Niagara	200
Sudbury	238
Thunder Bay	105
Toronto	2,428
Windsor	125

More than half the men who answered questions came from Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario's two largest cities. And 3,635 respondents agreed to provide the saliva sample—that's more than 71%.

### PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

	ONTARIO %
<b>AGE</b>	
20 or younger	6.7
21-30	31.2
31-40	32.0
41-50	18.8
50 or older	11.3
<b>EDUCATION</b>	
Elementary	0.8
Secondary	22.6
College/university	63.2
Graduate education	13.4
<b>RACE</b>	
White/Caucasian	83.9
Chinese	3.1
South Asian	1.9
Black	2.9
Aboriginal	2.4
Arab/West Asian	0.8
Filipino	1.7
South East Asian	0.7
Latin American	2.2
Japanese	0.2
Korean	0.2

### NUMBER OF PEOPLE KNOWN TO HAVE DIED FROM AIDS

	%
None	41.1
One	12.4
Two	11.1
3-5	15.2
6-10	9.0
11-20	5.5
More than 20	5.6

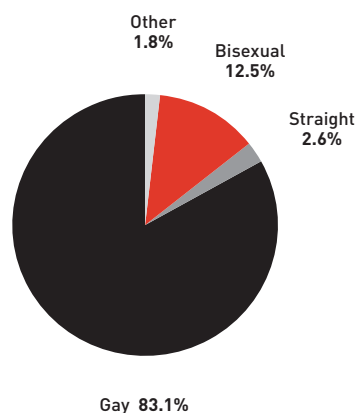
## The men in the picture

Who gave us information? Self-identified gay and bisexual men answered 88 questions. The men ranged in age from 17 to older than 70—a real cross-section of the community. Most of them spoke English as a first language, about 8% spoke French, and almost 13% spoke another language. Questions also were answered in Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Tamil and Vietnamese.

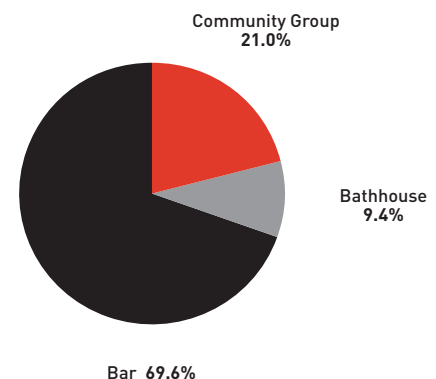
Clearly, Ontario's demographics are changing, and this is especially true in the province's largest city, where an increasingly large part of the population is non-Caucasian. How do these changing demographics show up in the gay community? About a quarter of Toronto men who answered the survey questions said they came from visible racial minorities or ethno-cultural groups. Many of them said yes when asked if they had ever experienced racism in the gay community, and they described their experiences: feeling uncomfortable in gay bars, not being able to find a boyfriend, being turned down, feeling pressured to have sex when they didn't really want to. And there was a common feeling that not everyone looked past skin colour to see the person within.

People who come from visible racial minorities face special challenges in a mostly Caucasian world, just as people who come from sexual minorities have to struggle in a mostly heterosexual world. We've come a long way since Stonewall, but apparently we still have more to learn.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION



### WHERE MEN PARTICIPATED



### WHERE MEN LOOK FOR SEX

	TORONTO %	OTTAWA %	S. ONTARIO %	N. ONTARIO %	ONTARIO %
Gay bar	63.1	58.5	57.1	60.1	<b>60.3</b>
Internet	35.7	35.9	32.5	44.9	<b>35.3</b>
Bathhouse	40.1	30.2	22.5	16.0	<b>31.4</b>
Introduction from friends	24.4	26.1	22.4	28.0	<b>24.2</b>
House party	20.6	23.4	20.0	20.1	<b>20.7</b>
Gay dance party	23.3	15.9	17.1	22.4	<b>20.3</b>
Park or cruising area	16.1	18.9	14.9	14.0	<b>15.9</b>
Straight bar	10.7	11.1	14.4	18.4	<b>12.5</b>
Telephone chat lines	13.2	16.6	8.7	11.4	<b>12.0</b>
Personal ads	10.4	13.0	9.5	14.6	<b>10.7</b>
Public washroom	10.6	11.5	7.1	8.2	<b>9.4</b>
Shopping malls	8.3	9.3	8.0	10.8	<b>8.5</b>
Bookshop/video club	7.2	5.3	4.6	4.4	<b>5.9</b>

## What we do

The self-identified gay and bisexual men who answered questions go to gay bars (about 46% go at least once or twice a week); to straight bars (about 35% go at least once a month); to bathhouses (14% said they go more than once a month); and to gay dances (31% go at least once a month).

A lot of men have joined gay or bisexual groups:

- 38% in Ottawa
- 26% in Southern Ontario
- 22% in Toronto
- 21% in Northern Ontario

And a lot are associated with an AIDS-related group as volunteers, clients or staff:

- 18% in Northern Ontario
- 15% in Southern Ontario
- 14% in Toronto
- 13% in Ottawa

But when they want to go out looking for sex, most men still prefer gay bars: about 60% named the bars as their favourite sex-partner meeting places. The internet is becoming increasingly popular: 35% said they'd tried cybersex. Almost a third went to bathhouses. Other popular methods for finding sex: telephone chat lines, personals, gay dances and video clubs.

## Speaking up

The question: "In the past three months, when you have had sex with male casual partners, how often have you told each other of your HIV status?"

The answer: Not that often. Here's how it breaks down:

- always disclosed status: 25%
- sometimes disclosed status: 30%
- never disclosed status: 45%

What does this mean? There are times when it's really not easy to discuss HIV status. Some of us know how hard it is, especially if disclosure means potential rejection, and some of us know how hard it is to learn about someone else's HIV status. Regardless of what we know or believe our HIV status to be, it is important to be as safe as we can be.

The question: Have you been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection in the past three months? Or ever?

The answer: A lot said yes to having had gonorrhoea, chlamydia, genital or anal warts, syphilis and genital herpes.

Conclusion: Unprotected sexual activities are still happening.

Take care, use a condom.

## Covering up

The study results tell us that almost everyone was having sex, but not everyone was having safer sex all the time. Here are some statistics:

### Number of casual sex partners in the past 3 months

one	18%
2-4	46%
5-9	16%
10 or more	20%

### Potentially risky activities with casual sex partners without condoms

fucking	21%
getting fucked	16%

What does all this tell us? About a third of the men who answered the questions say they have fucked at least once without using a condom. Why does this happen? Well, these things *do* happen—maybe our partner for the night doesn't want to wait while we cover up, or things get so hot we don't want to take the time to cover up. Sometimes we just don't want to risk losing the moment for the sake of a condom. Maybe we're feeling down or depressed and just want to have sex and the last thing on our mind is protecting ourself or the other guy. But what are we really risking here?

Yes, we want intimacy, and fun, and hot sex. But sometimes it's a good idea to stop and think—and take cover. We need to keep working as a community to find ways to protect ourselves and each other.

## Taking the test

Getting tested for HIV seems to have become a fairly regular part of most men's lives. Ten years ago, only 65% of gay and bisexual men in Toronto had been tested; now the number is closer to 80%. In the rest of the province, about 60% had been tested in the 1990s; now the numbers are between 73% and 82%. Some men may never have been tested because they have never participated in any high-risk activity. But there are still a few of us out there who just do not want to know. And some of us think we are healthy when we may not be: the survey compared the results of the saliva to what men said about their HIV status. In total, almost 27% of men (87 of 324) whose saliva tested positive for HIV antibodies did not correctly identify their HIV status, either because they did not know, had never been tested or did not answer. Clearly, this shows that a significant number of gay and bisexual men in Ontario don't know they are living with HIV.

## How often have you told each other of your HIV status?

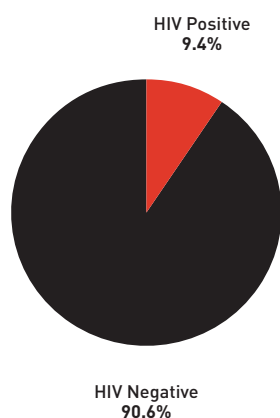
### SEXUAL ACTIVITIES WITH CASUAL MALE PARTNER(S) IN PAST 3 MONTHS

	%
Deep kissing	77.8
Jerking off	77.6
Rimming	40.3
Sucking - condom	17.0
Sucking - no condom	80.3
Getting sucked - condom	14.4
Getting sucked - no condom	73.2
Fucking - condom	46.5
Fucking - no condom	21.0
Getting fucked - condom	34.5
Getting fucked - no condom	16.0

### NUMBER OF HIV TESTS

	TORONTO %	OTTAWA %	S. ONTARIO %	N. ONTARIO %	ONTARIO %
One	23.3	24.3	25.4	23.3	<b>24.1</b>
Two	19.8	19.4	22.1	21.7	<b>20.6</b>
Three	15.7	15.5	13.6	15.0	<b>15.0</b>
Four	9.7	8.4	10.8	13.0	<b>10.1</b>
Five	6.5	7.3	5.3	8.3	<b>6.4</b>
Six	7.2	7.7	7.0	6.3	<b>7.2</b>
7-10	10.6	10.8	8.8	6.3	<b>9.7</b>
11-20	5.9	5.4	6.2	4.7	<b>5.9</b>
More than 20	1.2	1.3	0.7	1.2	<b>1.1</b>
<b>(N)</b>	<b>1,749</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>1,138</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>3,605</b>

### HIV ANTIBODY STATUS FROM SALIVA SAMPLES



### FREQUENCY OF HIV TESTING

	TORONTO %	OTTAWA %	S. ONTARIO %	N. ONTARIO %	ONTARIO %
More than 2 times a year	10.2	6.0	11.2	12.3	<b>10.1</b>
About twice a year or every 6 months	20.0	16.4	19.5	23.3	<b>19.6</b>
About once a year or every 12 months	23.1	23.6	19.1	21.7	<b>21.8</b>
About once every 24 months	10.4	12.4	11.1	6.3	<b>10.6</b>
About once every 36 months	4.0	4.9	3.6	4.3	<b>4.0</b>
More than 3 years between tests	3.4	5.1	3.7	3.6	<b>3.7</b>
I don't test regularly for HIV	23.7	27.3	25.4	21.7	<b>24.6</b>
Don't know	5.1	4.2	6.4	6.7	<b>5.5</b>
<b>(N)</b>	<b>1,717</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>1,135</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>3,555</b>

# ONTARIO MEN'S SURVEY

## So... what did we learn?

First, it seems clear that gay and bisexual men know a lot about safer sex, and that many of us are making an effort to be safe and to keep our partners safe. Many of us, but not all of us. In Ontario, our rate of new HIV infections has almost doubled in the past ten years, and most of the new infections are among men who have sex with men.

Why are rates of new HIV infections increasing? For one thing, we know condoms may not be the perfect solution. For example, sometimes they break, or they aren't used correctly. But we also need to look at ourselves: To look at how we interact with each other and with our communities. We need to examine some of the assumptions we make when we have unprotected anal sex—assumptions that can place us at risk for getting or passing on HIV.

The information gathered in the survey can help us in community discussions across the province. As gay and bisexual men change the ways we meet, interact and have sex with each other, and as our methods for finding

sex partners change, we need to find new ways to provide information, services and support so that we can remain healthy. And, we need to make sure that each one of us—those of us who have been around for some time, those of us just arriving, those of us who are HIV negative and those of us living with HIV or AIDS—takes care of our own health and the health of the other men in our communities.

For questions about HIV/AIDS, call the AIDS and Sexual Information hot line:

**English: 1-800-668-2437**

**French: 1-800-267-7432**

#### Acknowledgements

Provincial community advisory committee:  
ACCESS AIDS Committee of Sudbury  
AIDS Committee of Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo  
AIDS Committee of Durham  
AIDS Committee of London  
AIDS Committee of Ottawa  
AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay  
AIDS Committee of Toronto  
AIDS Committee of Windsor  
AIDS Niagara  
Hamilton AIDS Network  
HIV/AIDS Regional Services, Kingston  
Peel HIV/AIDS Network  
Peterborough AIDS Resource Network

Principal investigator: Ted Myers

Project director: Dan Allman

Investigative team: Liviana Calzavara, John Maxwell, Robert Remis, Carol Major, Carol Swantee and Robb Travers  
Research staff: Stan Fong and Noah Rossman

#### Thank you

To all survey participants, volunteers and venues. And thanks to the staff and management of *Xtra!* for their assistance in producing this community report.

To the funders of the Ontario Men's Survey: The Research Unit, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and GlaxoSmithKline Positive Action Program.

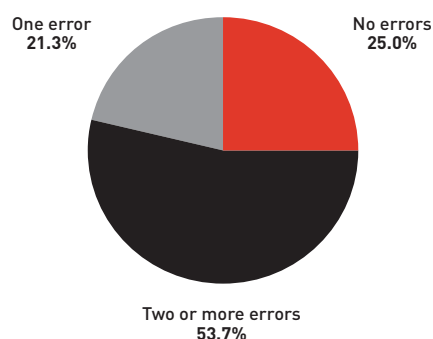
And to the funders of the HIV Social, Behavioural and Epidemiological Studies Unit: The AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto.

Design: Jenny Armour

Writing and editorial assistance: Edna Barker

[www.mens-survey.ca](http://www.mens-survey.ca)

### ERRORS IN CONDOM USE



### CONDOM USE ERRORS IN PAST YEAR

Error Category	ONTARIO %
Unrolled condom before putting on	6.5
Did not use any lubricant	11.9
Used saliva as a lubricant	15.8
Too much lubricant in condom	9.1
No lubricant on outside of condom	6.4
Used a condom that was too short	5.2
Used a condom that was too long	2.6
Used a condom that was too tight	10.2
Used a condom that was too loose	2.7
Anal sex over 30 min—same condom	12.5

## Take care, use a condom.