

Sexual behaviour & STI testing/reporting down under

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Findings from the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships

The Australian Study of Health and Relationships is conducted every 10 years to provide a snapshot of the sexual health and well-being of the Australian population. It:

- Provides information for social and behavioural scientists, public health researchers and health policy planners
- Determines population-based prevalence of sexually transmissible infections (STIs), human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) and associated risk practices
- Examines the sexual behaviour and practices of Australian adults

AIM: To determine the associations between sexual behaviour, testing and self-reported STIs.

METHODS:

Computer-assisted telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of the Australian population aged 16-69. Participants were surveyed about their sexual behaviour and experiences with STI testing. Responses were weighted based on the study design and location, age and sex distributions in Australia. Univariate logistic regression was used to determine the associations between sexual behaviour, testing history and having had an STI.

A total of 20 094 men and women were interviewed in 2012-2013, with an overall participation rate of 66.2%.

Demographics

N=20 094 (10 056 male, 10 038 female)

| Characteristic | Proportion (%) |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Age | |
| 16-19 | 7 |
| 20-29 | 21 |
| 30-39 | 20 |
| 40-49 | 20 |
| 50-59 | 18 |
| 60-69 | 14 |
| Education | |
| Less than secondary | 16 |
| Secondary | 31 |
| Post-secondary | 53 |
| Language spoken at home | |
| English | 92 |
| Other | 8 |

Sexual identity, experience and partners

| Characteristic | Men (%) | Women (%) |
|---------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Sexual identity | | |
| Heterosexual | 96.7 | 96.3 |
| Bisexual | 1.3 | 2.2 |
| Homosexual | 1.9 | 1.2 |
| Undecided/other | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| Sexual experience | | |
| Opposite-sex only | 91.2 | 83.7 |
| Opposite and same-sex | 5.6 | 13.2 |
| Same-sex only | 0.9 | 0.3 |
| No one | 2.3 | 2.6 |
| Number of partners | | |
| Lifetime: 0 or 1 | 17.3 | 25.5 |
| 2 or more | 82.7 | 74.5 |
| Last year: 0 or 1 | 86.2 | 92.6 |
| 2 or more | 13.8 | 7.4 |

STI testing in the previous year

17% of women and 13% of men reported STI testing ($p < 0.001$).

| Associations with STI testing | Men Odds ratio (95% CI) | Women Odds ratio (95% CI) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Partners in the last year | | |
| 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| 1 | 1.7 (0.6-4.9) | 2.3 (0.6-8.4) |
| 2 or more | 10.2 (3.5-30.0) | 15.0 (4.1-54.2) |
| Sexual experience in last year | | |
| Opposite-sex only | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Both opposite and same-sex | 9.4 (4.9-17.8) | 5.7 (3.2-10.1) |
| Same-sex only | 11.7 (8.0-17.2) | 1.3 (0.8-2.3) |

CONCLUSION:

Men and women who have had more than one sexual partner and/or same-sex experience in the past year are more likely to test and have had an STI.

Despite similar risks of exposure, women test and report STIs more frequently than men, suggesting that the sexual health of men could be improved by increased testing.

Self-reported STIs in the previous year

2.7% of women and 1.1% of men reported having an STI ($p < 0.001$).

| Associations with self-reported STI | Men Odds ratio (95% CI) | Women Odds ratio (95% CI) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Partners in the last year | | |
| 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| 1 | 1.7 (0.8-3.8) | 1.5 (0.9-2.5) |
| 2 or more | 8.0 (3.5-18.0) | 5.5 (3.1-9.8) |
| Sexual experience in last year | | |
| Opposite-sex only | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Both opposite and same-sex | 5.6 (1.9-16.6) | 3.2 (1.2-8.4) |
| Same-sex only | 6.3 (3.4-11.5) | 1.1 (0.3-3.6) |



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