

# Boyfriends and 'fuckbuddies': Defining regular sexual partners

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## Background: HIV transmission in relationships

- HIV transmissions in regular relationships:
  - Australia (from PHAEDRA and Seroconversion Study):
    - 2003: **42%**
    - 2006: **29%**
    - 2014: **34%**
  - Peru, 2013: **32-39%** (from modelling)
  - United States:
    - 2009: **68%** ("main partnerships")
    - 2013: **33-66%**

## What do we know about 'regular partners'?

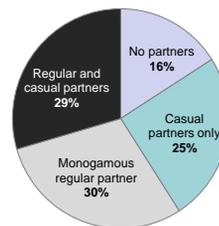
- How do behavioural surveys typically ask about partner types?
- What do gay men actually mean by "regular" and "casual" when they complete these surveys?

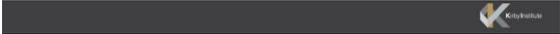
## Two categories: 'Regular' versus 'Casual'

GCPS	Regular (boyfriend/lover)	Casual partners
TAXI-KAB, 2009	Regular male partner (boyfriend)	Casual male partner(s)
PREPARE, 2013	Regular male partner e.g. boyfriend, fuckbuddy, partner, husband	Casual partners
Seroconversion Study	Regular can mean a fuckbuddy/boyfriend/lover/husband	Casual means any other sexual partners, BESIDES your regular partners
HIV Futures 7	Regular relationship / regular partner	Casual partners

## Typical breakdown of partner types in Australia

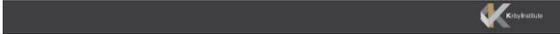
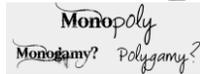
- Approximately 60% of gay men have a regular partner, and of these, half are monogamous.





### The Monopoly Study

- Cross-sectional, online survey on gay men's relationships.
- Conducted in December 2013 to January 2014.
- Part of a larger, NHMRC-funded study on monogamy and gay men's relationships.
- Over 4,215 useable responses.



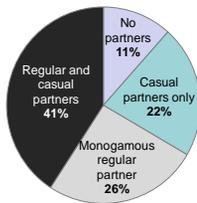
### Sample characteristics

- Broadly similar to other samples of Australian gay and bisexual men:
  - Mean age was 36 years
  - 81% identified as gay and 16% as bisexual
  - About half were university educated
  - Just over half were of Anglo-Celtic ethnic background
  - 78% had ever been tested for HIV
    - 5.5% were HIV-positive
    - 71% were negative
    - 24% were either untested or did not know their test results



### Reported sexual relationships in Monopoly

- Broadly similar proportions to other surveys.
  - Higher proportion of men reported having regular partners; to be expected in a survey about relationships.



### The wording of the question is important

- 70% reported having at least one "regular partner".
- But only 43.1% said they were "in a relationship" with at least one man.



### Were they "in a relationship" with the partner?

- 56.6% considered themselves to be "in a relationship" with this regular partner.

Descriptor	%	
Boyfriend	17.8	} "Romantic": 60%
Partner	26.6	
Husband	9.0	
Lover	4.8	
Fuckbuddy	30.3	} "Non-Romantic": 40%
Friend or "friend with benefits"	4.1	



### Agreements and practice

- 37.6% reported having a monogamous agreement with this partner.
  - Of these, 71.7% were actually monogamous.
- When they reported "open" relationship agreements, practice was more likely to match the agreement.



### Multivariate logistic regression analysis

- **Outcome variable:**

Respondent considers himself "in a relationship" with this partner

*versus*

Respondent does not consider himself "in a relationship" with this partner



### Condoms, HIV status, risk discussion

- Predictors of "being in a relationship" with this partner:

	"In a relationship"	Not in relationship	AOR	95% CI	p
Always uses condoms with partner	25.2%	54.7%	0.49	0.30-0.80	0.004
Knows partner's HIV status	79.6%	55.7%	1.14	0.67-1.92	n.s.
Has discussed HIV risk with partner	74.1%	61.3%	1.17	0.67-2.04	n.s.



### Sex frequency and satisfaction

- Predictors of "being in a relationship" with this partner:

	"In a relationship"	Not in relationship	AOR	95% CI	p
Sex with partner more than once a week	44.3%	15.2%	2.11	1.25-3.57	0.005
Satisfied with partner sexually	74.9%	80.9%	0.42	0.24-0.75	0.003
Satisfied with partner generally	87.0%	75.6%	1.21	0.66-2.23	n.s.



### Agreements and practice

- Predictors of "being in a relationship" with this partner:

	"In a relationship"	Not in relationship	AOR	95% CI	p
Monogamous agreement	54.9%	6.7%	2.79	1.44-5.38	0.002
Having casual partners	50.8%	86.2%	0.94	0.52-1.70	n.s.
Having more than 1 regular partner	25.7%	52.5%	0.60	0.35-1.03	n.s.



### Commitment, romance and trust

- Predictors of "being in a relationship" with this partner:

	"In a relationship"	Not in relationship	AOR	95% CI	p
Considers partnership "committed"	Mean = 2.51	Mean = 0.48	3.78	2.79-5.13	<0.001
Considers partnership "romantic"	Mean = 2.30	Mean = 0.80	1.38	1.03-1.86	0.029
Level of trust in this partner	Mean = 3.32	Mean = 2.27	1.13	0.87-1.46	n.s.



### Partnership characteristics

- Predictors of "being in a relationship" with this partner:

	"In a relationship"	Not in relationship	AOR	95% CI	p
Living together	63.6%	2.7%	17.7	7.70-40.9	<0.001
No one knows about this partner	3.4%	38.5%	0.41	0.19-0.86	0.019
Length of relationship	Mean = 7 years	Mean = 3 years	1.00	0.95-1.05	n.s.
Met partner online	48.7%	70.6%	0.92	0.55-1.53	n.s.



### Summary of predictors of being “in a relationship”

- “In a relationship”:
  - More condomless sex with this partner
  - Monogamous agreement
  - More frequent sex
  - Considers the partnership “committed”
  - Considers the partnership “romantic”
  - Feels more satisfied with the partnership sexually
  - Living full-time with each other
  - More people know about this partner
- No statistical difference:
  - Length of partnership
  - Knowing partner’s HIV status
  - Having casual partners
  - Having more than one regular partner
  - Meeting this partner online
  - Discussing HIV risk with this partner
  - Level of trust in this partner
  - General satisfaction with the partnership

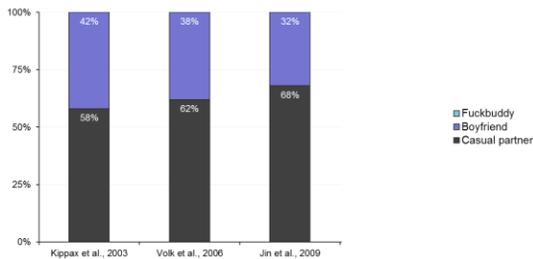


### Implications

- Gay men’s relationships are diverse and complex.
- Many of the relationships reported in research are often assumed to be “boyfriend” type relationships, when in fact many of them are “fuckbuddy” relationships.
- HIV prevention should acknowledge “fuckbuddy” arrangements more explicitly.
  - Multiple, simultaneous “fuckbuddies”
  - Boyfriend plus one or more “fuckbuddies”



### Recent data from the Seroconversion Study



Down, 2014



### Implications

- Commonalities between “fuckbuddies” and “boyfriend”-type partners:
  - Greater **familiarity** and **trust**
  - Frank **discussions** about **HIV risk** and **HIV status**
- Commonalities between “fuckbuddies” and casual partners:
  - Less **emotional commitment** and **romance**
  - Greater focus on **sexual pleasure** and **satisfaction**
- HIV prevention/reduction strategies appropriate for “boyfriends” and casual partners may not be seen as appropriate or suitable for “fuckbuddies”.



### Acknowledgements

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