



Gay Community Periodic Survey 2009:
Issues and trends for South Australia

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Gay Community Periodic Survey 2009: Issues and trends for South Australia

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Darling House
64 Fullarton Road
Norwood, SA 5067
Reception: (08) 8334 1611
Toll Free: 1800 888 559
Facsimilie (08) 8363 1046
Email: information@acsa.org.au
Website: www.acsa.org.au

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Glossary of Acronyms

ACSA	AIDS Council of South Australia
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Anti-Retroviral Therapy
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
MSM	Men who have sex with men
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
STI	Sexually Transmissible Infection
UAIC	Unprotected Anal Intercourse with Casual partners
UAIR	Unprotected Anal Intercourse with Regular partners

Glossary of Terms

HIV - seroconcordant relationship - a relationship in which both partners are of the same HIV serostatus, either HIV-positive or HIV-negative

HIV - serononconcordant relationship – refers to a relationship in which the HIV status of at least one partner is either not known or is untested.

HIV - serodiscordant relationship - a relationship in which both partners are known (as a result of testing) to be of different HIV serostatus, e.g. HIV-positive and HIV-negative

HIV serostatus – refers to a person’s antibody status in relation to HIV infection. This can either be confirmed by testing or can be unknown.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present a précis of the data and identify any issues or trends for the future based upon the information captured in the 2009 Adelaide Gay Community Periodic Survey.

Sample size and demographics

The following summary of the Gay Community Periodic survey must be read with a cognisance of the differences in sample sizes between the 2007 survey and the 2009 survey. The 2007 survey had a relatively small sample size: 527 men were recruited for the survey and came from metropolitan Adelaide (85.6%), 3.6% came from other areas in the state and 10.8% came from outside of the state. In 2009, 970 men completed the survey and were recruited during the Adelaide Feast Festival (particularly the Festival 'hub', Higher Ground, and Picnic in the Park) and from gay social venues, sex-on-premises venues and sexual health clinics. The response rate for the survey was 63.5%.

While there was no discernable change in the sample's age distribution between 2007 and 2009, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of men aged under 25 who have taken part in the survey since 2003. This is reflected in a concomitant decrease in men aged over 30 taking part in the survey.

Key Findings

Through an analysis of the data contained in the Gay Community Periodic Survey, a series of key findings become apparent, which could have impacts upon the health and wellbeing of MSM, and also on the planning and implementation of campaigns, programs and services for sexual health educators in South Australia. The reports showed that:

HIV Testing and treatments

- Around 20% of MSM have never been tested for HIV
- Around 25% of MSM had not been tested for HIV in the 12 months prior to the survey
- Compared to 2007 figures there had been a significant increase in men who were untested or had unknown HIV sero-status
- However, among those tested for HIV the proportion reporting recent HIV testing has increased in the 12 months prior to the survey
- In 2009, only 38 HIV-positive men took part in the survey. Of these HIV-positive men, 31 reported using Anti-Retroviral Therapy at the time of the survey.
- 3.1% of all respondents reported receiving post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in the last 6 months with 5 of them indicating that they received PEP more than once.

Relationships with Men

- 27.5% of respondents reported having both regular and casual male partners
- Just under one in five respondents reported only having casual partners
- This means that nearly half of all men (46.7%) have casual partners
- 20% of respondents indicated that they were in a monogamous relationship
- 23.2% indicated that they were not in a sexual relationship at the time of the survey
- Of the men who indicated they had regular partners, 56.6% said they were in HIV-negative seroconcordant relationships
- Less than 5% of men in relationships reported being in HIV positive seroconcordant relationships
- Of men with regular partners, 34.5% were in HIV-serononconcordant relationships where one partner had an unknown HIV serostatus
- Of men with regular partners, 5.4% reported being in a serodiscordant relationship
- Since 2003, the numbers of MSM reporting casual partners only has decreased significantly.

Where men met their sexual partners

- The most common way that men found sexual partners was through the internet (41.4%)
- 31.8% met men at gay bars
- 30.7% met men at gay saunas
- 20% of respondents reported meeting their sexual partners in Melbourne
- 17.8% of respondents reported meeting their sexual partners in Sydney, and
- 16.6% of men reported meeting their sexual partners overseas.

Sexual Practices

- HIV positive men with casual partners were the most likely to report any unprotected anal intercourse with those partners
- 58.6% of men with regular partners reported some UAI with their regular partner
- 32.8% reported that condoms were always used for anal intercourse with their regular partner
- 63.9% of men in HIV-negative seroconcordant relationships reported unprotected anal intercourse, as did 15 men in a serodiscordant relationship
- 46.2% of men with casual partners reported always using condoms for anal intercourse, while 31.7% reported any unprotected anal intercourse
- Just over a quarter of HIV-negative men with casual partners reported any unprotected anal intercourse (26.4%).
- 48.4% of respondents reported disclosing their HIV serostatus to at least some of the casual sexual partners.

Drug Use

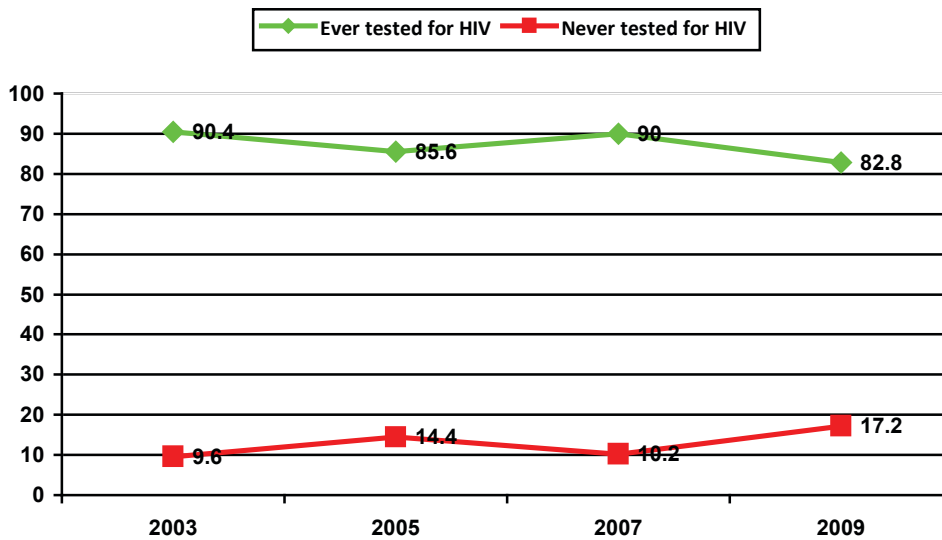
- Drug use was common amongst respondents, with 32.3% using marijuana, 26.4% using ecstasy, 25.2% using amyl/poppers, 14.9% using speed/amphetamines, 11.7% using Viagra, 11.0% using crystal methamphetamine and 9.5% using cocaine
- Generally, HIV-positive men were more likely to report drug use compared with HIV-negative men.

Trend analysis

HIV Testing and Treatment

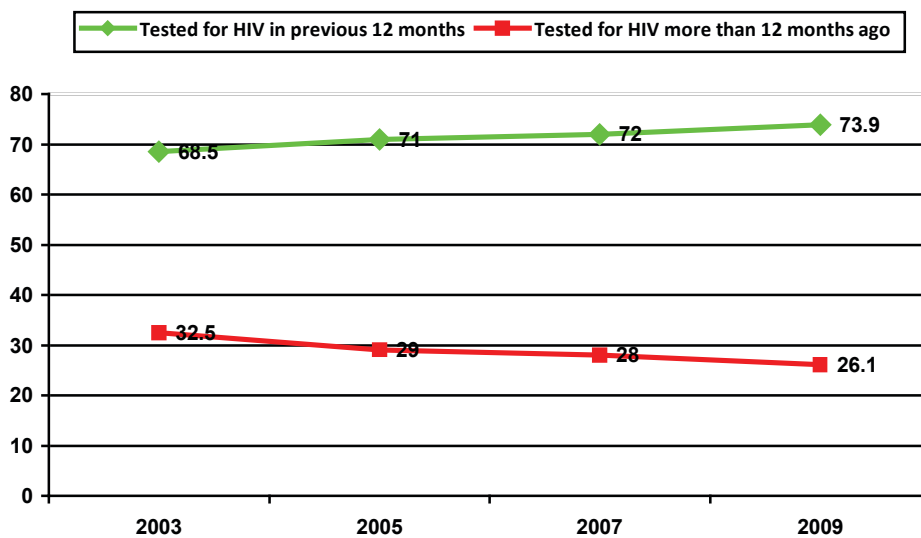
The survey demonstrated that most men had 'ever' been tested for HIV (82.8%), which demonstrates a slight decrease since 2003. Most of these men were HIV-negative (80.0%), with only 4.7% reporting that they were HIV-positive. 15.3% didn't know their serostatus at the time of the survey and there was a significant rise in the numbers of men who were untested and didn't know their sero-status from 2007.

Figure 1: Proportion of men who had ever been tested for HIV (excluding men recruited from sexual health clinics).



Further, in 2009, 73.9% of non-HIV-positive men said they had been tested for HIV in the 12 months prior to the survey. The numbers of men who reported recent HIV testing (within 12 months) had increased between 2003 and 2009. Men who tested for HIV more than 12 months prior to the survey had gradually decreased since 2003 (Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Non-HIV positive men tested for HIV in the last 12 months prior to the survey (excluding men recruited from sexual health clinics).

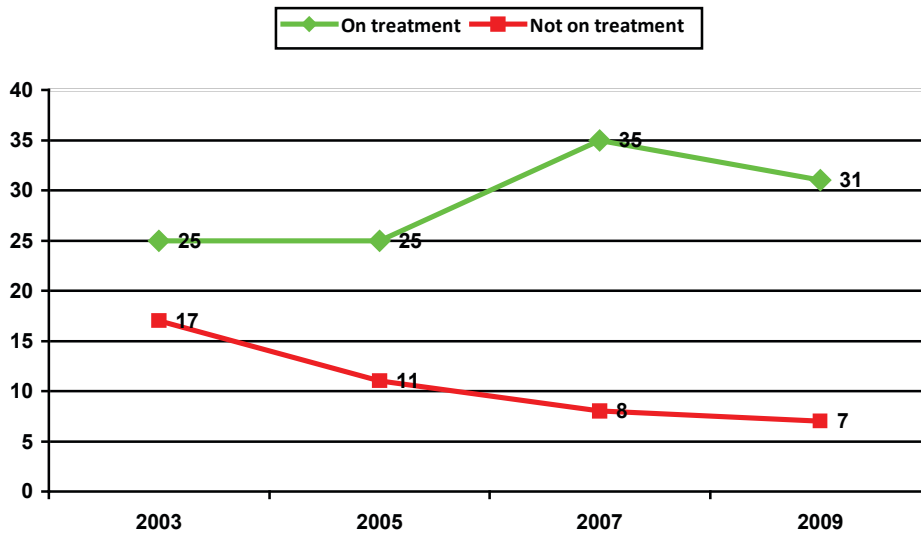


In 2009, 22 men reported that they had used PEP in the last 12 months with a further 5 respondents

indicating that they had used PEP more than once in the last 12 months.

Lastly, in 2009 31 HIV-positive men reported using combination antiretroviral therapies. The numbers of men using ART has remained relatively unchanged since 2003 (Table 3 below).

Figure 3: Use of combination antiretroviral therapies.

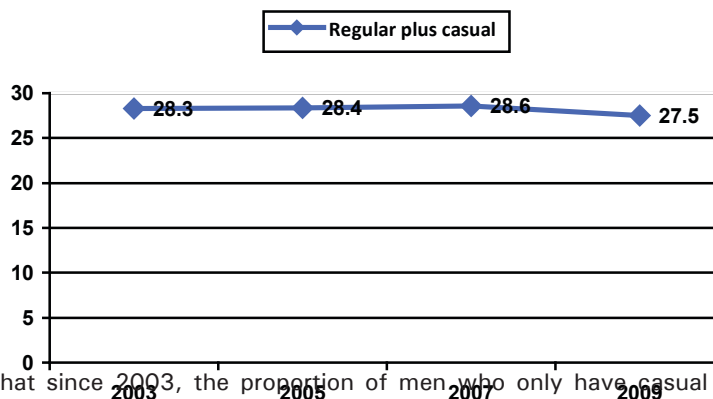


Relationships with men

In the 2009 survey, 27.5% of respondents reported having both regular and casual male partners (Table 4 Below), 19.2% had casual partners only (Table 5 on the next page), and 20.1% indicated that they were in a monogamous relationship (Table 6 on the next page). Just under a quarter of men reported that they had no sexual relationship at all at the time of the survey (Table 7 on the next page).

Within the sample of men who reported that they had regular partners, 56.6% were in HIV-negative seroconcordant relationships and 34.5% were in HIV-serononconcordant relationships, where at least one partner is of unknown serostatus. In addition, 5.4% of men with a regular partner reported being in a serodiscordant relationship (where one partner is HIV-positive and the other is HIV-negative). Less than 5% of men reported being in HIV-positive seroconcordant relationships in 2009. In the period 2003 to 2009, the proportion of men in HIV-negative seroconcordant relationships decreased.

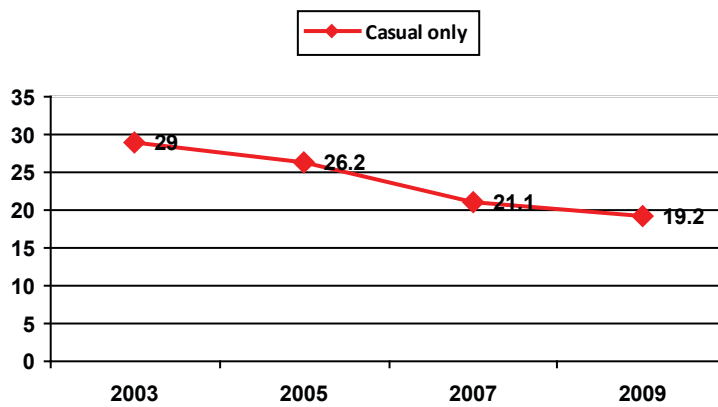
Table 4: Relationships with men at the time of completing the survey – Regular plus casual



The data indicates that since 2003, the proportion of men who only have casual partners has declined

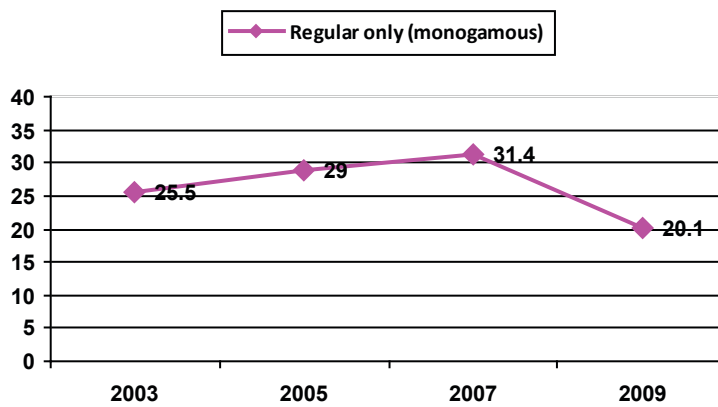
considerably (Table 5 below).

Table 5: Relationships with men at the time of completing the survey – Casual only



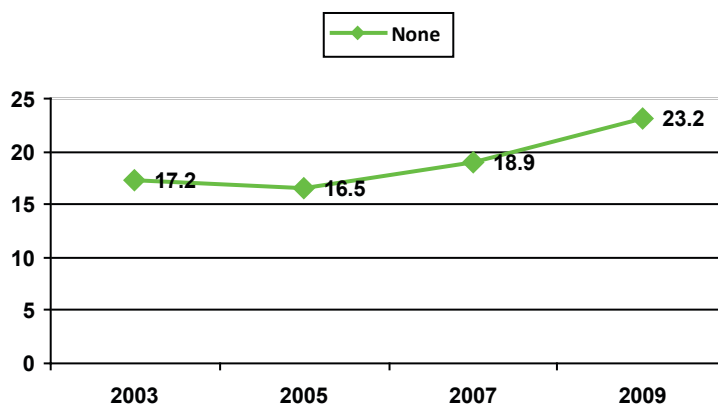
Interestingly, the figures also demonstrate that while the number of respondents indicating that they were in a monogamous relationship had steadily risen between 2003 and 2007, there has been a significant reduction in men reporting regular relationships since 2007 (Table 6).

Table 6: Relationships with men at the time of completing the survey – Regular only (monogamous)



There was also a modest rise in the numbers of men who reported having no sexual relationship at the time of the survey (Table 7).

Table 7: Relationships with men at the time of completing the survey - None



Sexual practices

58.6% of respondents with regular partners reported some unprotected anal intercourse with their regular partner and 32.8% of men reported that condoms were always used for anal intercourse (Table 8, below). Further, HIV positive men with casual partners were the most likely to report 'any' unprotected anal intercourse with those partners. Just over a quarter (26.4%) of HIV-negative men with casual partners reported any UAI with those partners.

The survey found, not surprisingly, that the use of condoms for anal intercourse remains much more likely with casual partners than regular partners. In 2009, 46.2% of respondents with casual partners reported always using condoms for anal intercourse, while just under a third reported any unprotected anal intercourse (31.7%).

While the proportion of respondents who reported always using condoms with casual partners has remained stable since 2003, the survey found that the proportion of respondents reporting 'any' unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners has been increasing; this is reflected in falling rates of respondents reporting that they do not have anal intercourse with casual partners (Table 8, over the page).

Table 8: Anal intercourse with regular partners and condom use, among men who reported having regular partners

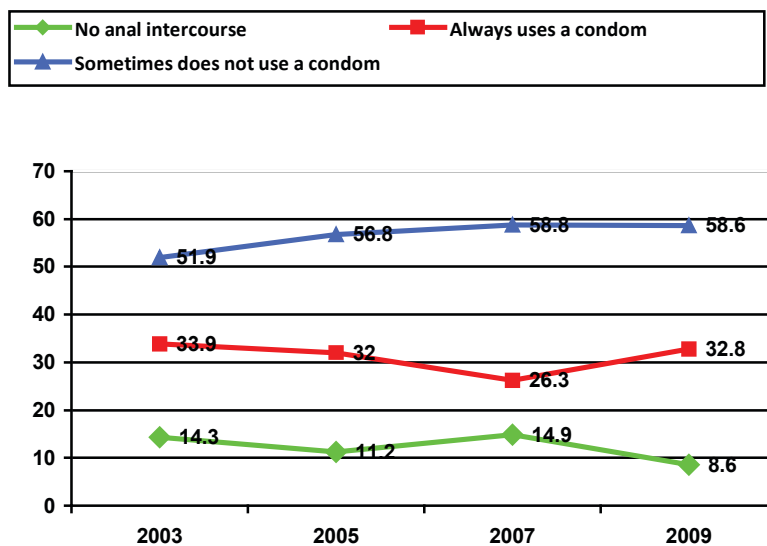
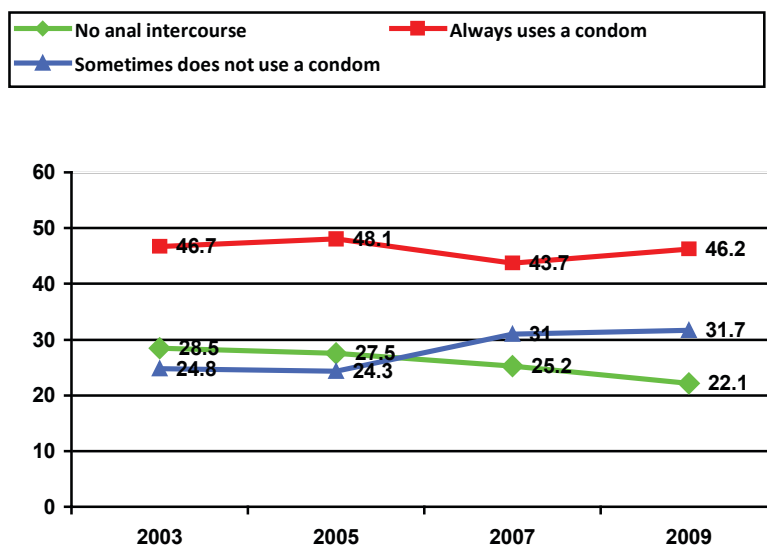


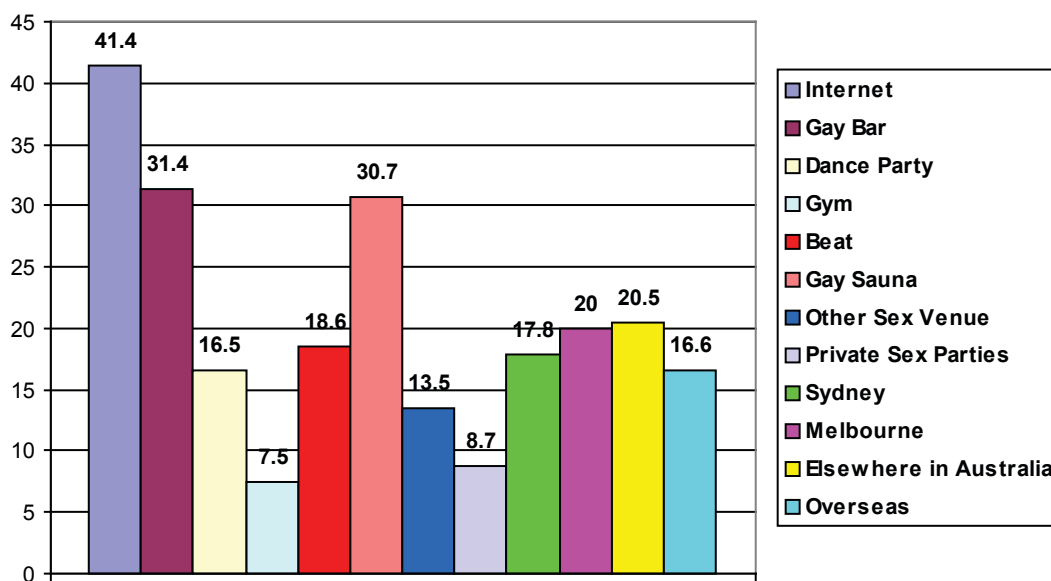
Table 9: Anal intercourse with casual partners and condom use, among men who reported having casual partners



Where men met their male sex partners in the last 6 months

According to respondents, the most common places to men to meet sexual partners in South Australia was the internet (41.4%), followed by gay bars (31.8%) and gay saunas (30.7%). Beats were still relatively popular meeting places for men, with 18.6% of respondents reporting the use of beats, while 16.5% of men met other men at dance parties. 20.0% of respondents reported meeting sexual partners in Melbourne and 17.8% indicated that they had met sexual partners in Sydney. 20.5% of men reported meeting men 'elsewhere' in Australia.

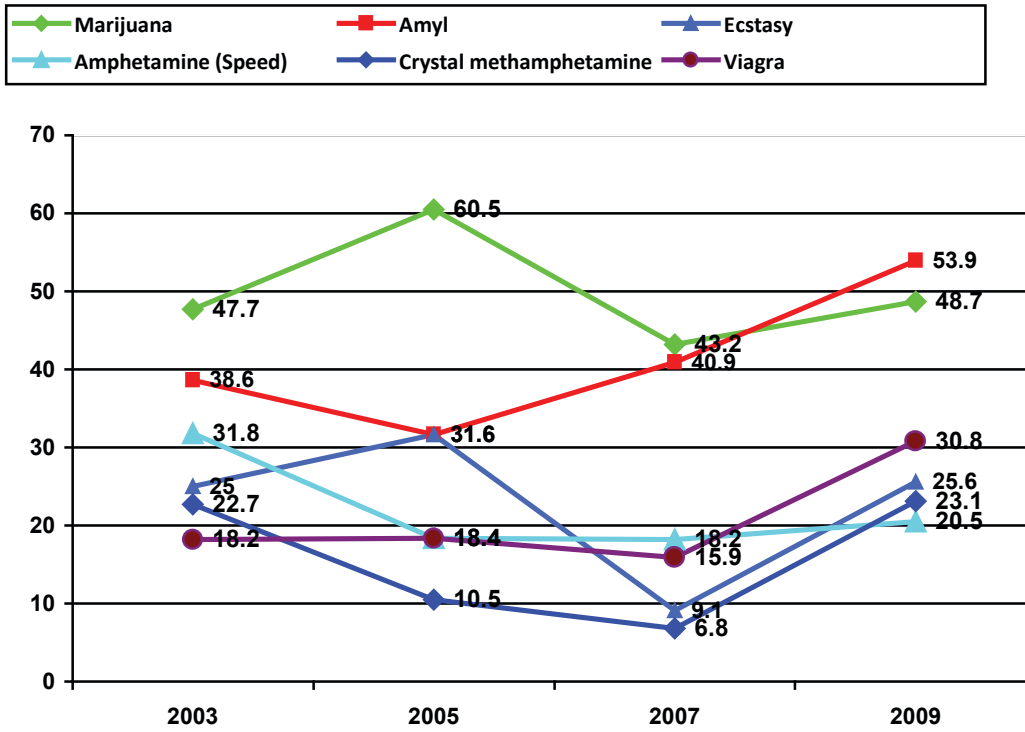
Table 11: Where men met men met their male sex partners in the last 6 months



Drug use

The survey found that drug use was quite common amongst the respondents, with marijuana the most commonly used drug (32.3%) (Table 8 on the next page). Men who were HIV positive were also more likely to use drugs compared to men who were HIV negative (Tables 9 and 10 on pages 12 and 13).

Table 8: Drug use among all men



Since 2007 there have been upward trends in the use of all listed drugs apart from amphetamines (speed), which have demonstrated relatively consistent usage over the last 7 years. Although, once again, there needs to be a cognisance of the difference in sample sizes between 2007 and 2009.

Table 9: Drug use among HIV positive men

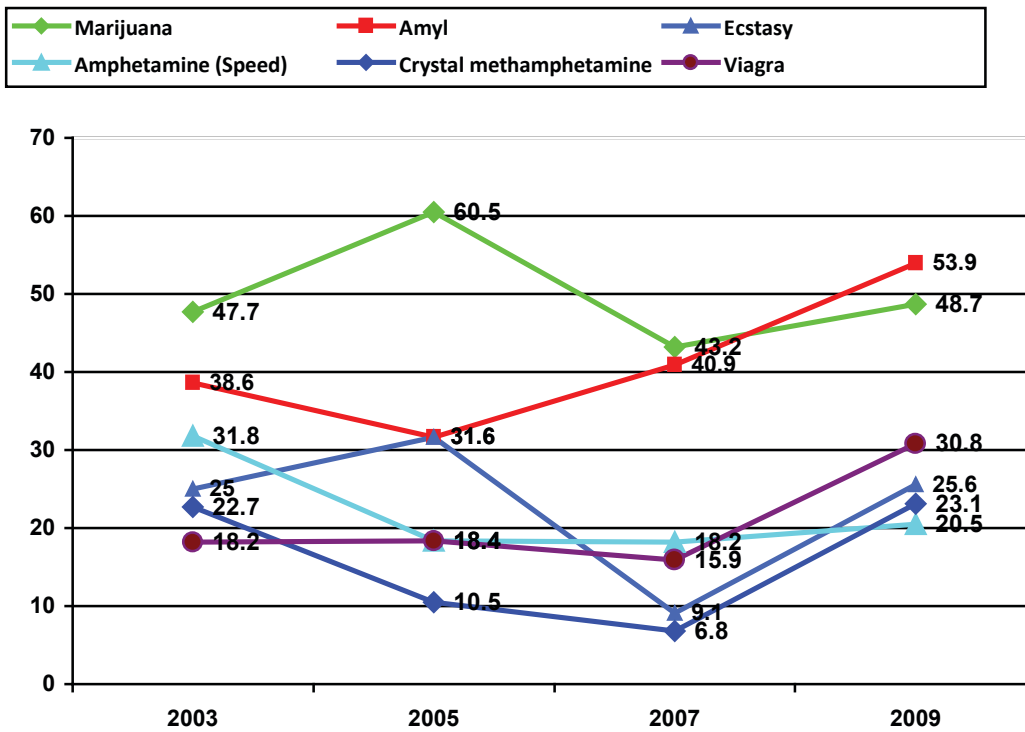
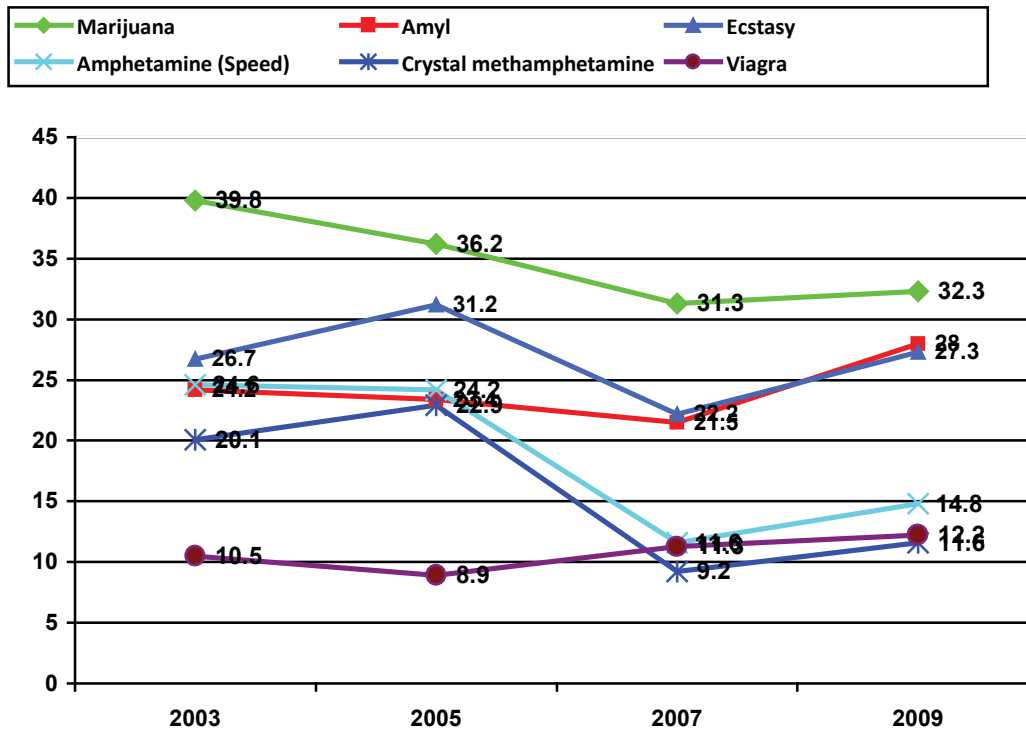


Table 10: Drug use among HIV negative men



There were no significant changes between 2007 and 2009 with regard to the use of party drugs for the purposes of sex, nor were there any significant changes in the numbers of men who had group sex while using party drugs.

In Sum

The survey results show that while many indicators either remained static or showed no significant change or fluctuation between 2003 and 2009, there were observable changes in the types of relationships that men had and in sexual practices over the seven years surveyed. While men reporting casual partners only decreased significantly between 2003 and 2009, the number of men reporting regular, monogamous relationships decreased also.

With regard to sexual practices, the 2009 results also demonstrated relative stability in the numbers of respondents who reported using condoms with casual partners since 2003; but the survey also found increases in the proportion of respondents reporting 'any' unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners in the same time period. These figures were bolstered by falling numbers who indicated that they do not have anal intercourse with casual and regular partners. Within these figures, men who were HIV-positive were more likely to report unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners.

With regard to HIV testing there was no significant change in the numbers of men who had 'ever' tested for HIV, but there was an increase in the proportion of men who reported recent testing (in the previous year) observed from 2003.

And finally, while the use of all drugs surveyed showed rises (with the exception of amphetamines), neither the use of party drugs for the purpose of sex, nor the use of party drugs while engaging in group sex, showed any significant changes in this sample.

References

Lee, E, Holt, M, Zablotska, I, Prestage, G, Mortimer, E, Dinnison, S, Logue, W, Wentzlaff-Eggebert, M, O'Brien, R, De Wit, J 2010, Gay Community Periodic Survey: Adelaide 2009, National Centre in HIV Social Research, University of New South Wales.