

# HIV prevention and sexual health

In 2022 almost 4000 people took part in the Sex and Prevention of Transmission Study (SPOTS). The survey was open to men (cis and trans) who have sex with men (MSM) and their sexual partners. SPOTS aims to improve our understanding of HIV prevention and sexual health practices by MSM in Aotearoa New Zealand today.

SPOTS is the largest study of HIV prevention and sexual health ever in Aotearoa. Originally planned as a national in-person study, COVID-19 meant we launched it fully online. SPOTS involved an online questionnaire and an optional dried blood spot (DBS) that we tested for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis C. We want to thank everyone who took part, including those who shared the study among their friends, whānau and networks. It's been incredible to see the community support the kaupapa.

SPOTS data will provide evidence about safe sex, testing and health that can improve services for our communities in Aotearoa.

This is a snapshot of early findings from the study.

## Dried blood spots (DBS)

Three-quarters of participants who started SPOTS made it to the end of the survey. Of these, just over half (52%) agreed to being sent a dried blood spot (DBS) kit to their home. We're analysing the specimens for evidence of undiagnosed HIV and will report on these findings soon.

### Next steps

We'll continue to analyse SPOTS data and will share findings with our communities and health organisations to improve HIV prevention and sexual health in Aotearoa.

## SPOTS

Sex and Prevention of Transmission Study

SPOTS is a collaboration between the University of Auckland School of Population Health, the University of Otago, Burnett Foundation Aotearoa, Body Positive, Te Whāriki Takapou and the NZ Blood Service.

The study is funded by the Health Research Council of NZ and the Ministry of Health/Manatū Hauora.

The SPOTS team wishes to thank everyone who participated in the survey and supported the project.



For updates and to contact the SPOTS team, visit [SPOTS.org.nz](https://SPOTS.org.nz)



**Burnett  
Foundation  
Aotearoa**



# SPOTS

Sex and Prevention of Transmission Study

## EARLY STUDY FINDINGS

# HIV prevention and sexual health



## Who took part?

3838 people aged 16 and over completed SPOTS. This includes MSM, trans women and non-binary people who have sex with MSM. People from all around Aotearoa participated, reporting a wide variety of sexual identities and sexual histories. One in eight (13%) identified as Māori, one in ten (10%) as Asian and one in thirty (3%) as Pasifika. One in five (21%) identified as something other than “gay”, and two out of five (43%) were aged under 30.

## Sexual partnering

### When?

Over half (55%) of all participants had had sex with a man in the last 7 days.

### Which genders?

97% had ever had sex with a man and 47% with a woman. A quarter (23%) had sex with a non-binary person.

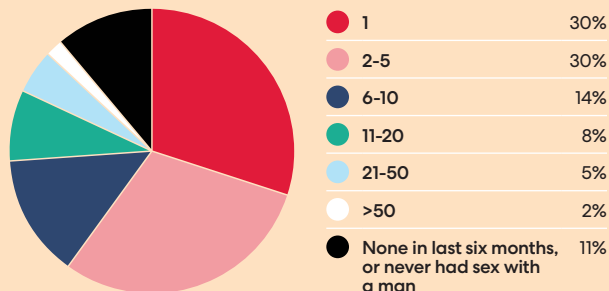
### What partner types?

Three-quarters (74%) reported a regular male sexual partner in the six months prior to survey, and 60% had casual sex with men recently.

### How many?

Most (60%) reported 1-5 male sexual contacts in the last six months and 15% reported more than 10.

### Number of male sexual partners in the last six months

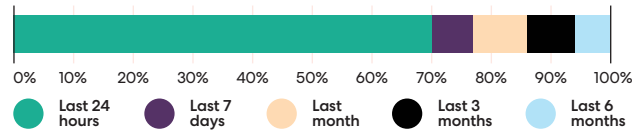


## Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)

Virtually all participants (97%) had heard about PrEP. Overall, a quarter (24%) of all participants had taken PrEP in the last 6 months, two thirds (68%) had not.

Of those who took PrEP, three-quarters (77%) had taken PrEP in the last week.

### When was the last time you took PrEP?



## HIV testing

Most (87%) participants had tested for HIV at least once in their life. One in 22 people (4.5%) had been diagnosed with HIV; of these, 98% were taking HIV treatments and had an undetectable viral load (UVL).

Of participants who last tested HIV negative, 44% had tested in the last three months, a quarter (25%) between 3-12 months ago, and 31% more than 12 months ago.

## Sexual health

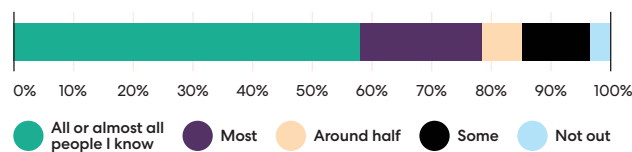
The majority of participants (62%) had had a sexual health checkup in the 12 months before the survey. This suggests proactive sexual health screening among our participants, since most were not experiencing any symptoms the last time they went.

One in six of all participants (17%) were diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the last year, the most common being gonorrhoea, chlamydia and/or syphilis.

## Being out

Many participants were open (out) about their sexual identity to all or most people they knew. Around 15% weren't out or were only open to some others.

### How open (out) are you about your sexual identity?

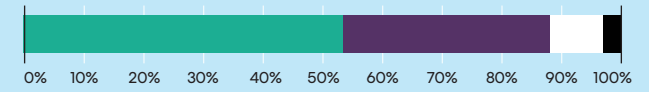


## Attitudes and knowledge

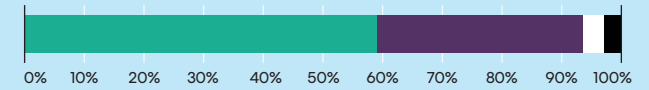
The majority of participants felt confident about safe sex and were knowledgeable about reducing the risks of HIV and STIs, but this was not true for everyone.

### Attitudes

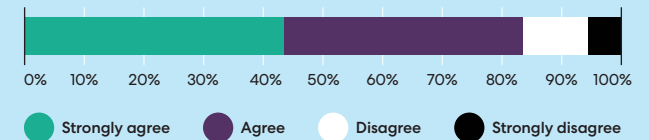
The sex I have is always as safe as I want it to be



Condoms are ok as part of sex

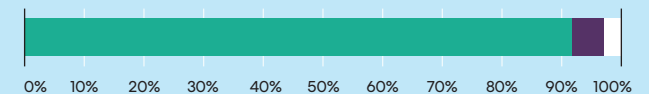


HIV and AIDS are a less serious threat than they used to be because of treatment

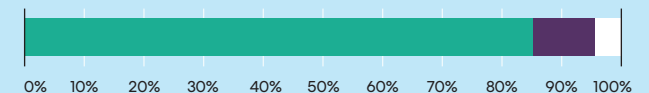


### Knowledge

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a pill that can be used by someone who is HIV negative to significantly decrease their risk of acquiring HIV, if taken as prescribed



Being on HIV treatments, reaching and maintaining an undetectable HIV viral load (UVL) means that someone living with HIV cannot pass on HIV to their sexual partners



Condoms are the most effective tool to prevent both HIV and STIs

