

# HARiS - HIV and AIDS Response Indicator Survey 2013 for Men who have Sex with Men

## Background

Men who have sex with men (MSM) has continued to account for a significant proportion of newly acquired HIV infections in Hong Kong. The last community based survey "HIV Prevalence and Risk Behavioural Survey of Men who have sex with men in Hong Kong" (PRiSM) was conducted in 2011. To track the epidemic and inform intervention, MSM was included as the one of the four major at-risk populations in the HIV/AIDS Response Indicator Survey (HARiS). The first HARiS was conducted in 2013, via commissioning to the Stanley Ho Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease, School of Public Health and Primary Care of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The aims of HARiS survey were to establish a community-based behavioural survey with collection of standardized strategic information; to provide data of a pre-defined set of core indicators among the major at-risk subpopulations for surveillance of HIV-related risk behaviours and HIV testing patterns; and to enable the indicators to be tracked and compared over time for evaluation of the coverage and effectiveness of health-promotion and surveillance programmes in Hong Kong.

## Methods

Participants were recruited via centre-based HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services (by six Non Governmental Organisations (NGO)s) and bars outreach (one NGO) from March to August 2013. Any man who had ever had oral or anal sex with another man was eligible in the survey and be invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire. An online version of the questionnaire was also developed and disseminated by four NGOs during internet outreach programmes.

## Results

### A. Characteristics of participants

A total of 853 MSM (centre-based: 738; outreach: 91; online: 24) were recruited via the six supporting NGOs. A vast majority was Chinese (93.3%), younger than 35 years old (81.9%) and have stayed in Hong Kong for more than 3 months in the preceding 6 months (89.9%).

### B. Sexual behaviours with different kinds of sex partners

In the preceding 6 months, 58.7%, 45.3% and 55.9% of the respondents reported to have anal sex with an emotional relationship partner (ERP), regular sex partner (RSP) and non-regular sex partner (NRSP) respectively. The condom use rate in the last anal sex were 63.7%, 76.7% and 79.5% with ERP, RSP and NRSP respectively. Cellphone applications (34.0%), saunas (26.2%) and the internet (17.4%) were the most reported channels for meeting their last NRSP.

Only 8.6% of the participants had had sex with a commercial male sex partner (CSP), with a condom use rate in last anal sex at 69.9%.

About one-fourth (23.4%) of the MSM reported having a non-Hong Kong resident sex partner (NHKSP) in the preceding six months. Condom use rate in last anal sex was 81.0%. The most reported ethnicities/nationalities of the NHKSP were White (38.0%), Mainlanders (31.5%), and Taiwanese (17.5%).

### **C. HIV testing behaviours**

Overall, 73.7% of MSM had ever had an HIV test and 77.3% of the ever-testers had their last test in the last year. NGOs were the most reported place of having the last HIV test, accounting for 69.6% of all ever-testers. About 10% had their last test in the private sector (8.7%) or public service sector (social hygiene clinics, public hospitals/clinics or DH Kowloon Bay Health Centre) (12.7%). Only 5.6% of ever-testers were not able to recall the results of their last HIV test.

### **Discussions**

1. The prevalence of condom use in the last sex with ERP, RSP and NRSP was 63.7%, 76.7% and 79.5% respectively in this survey, which were comparable to that of 73% in PRISM 2011. Despite that condom use rate in the community has been maintained, continuous health promotion on safer sex with consistent condom use with all partner types needs to be strengthened in the community in order to better control the epidemic.
2. The number of respondents reported having had sex with commercial male sex partners is low, but the prevalence of unprotected anal sex with commercial sex partners was relatively high (over 30%). This suggests that the awareness of safer sex among MSM when they patronised sex workers was low, which is a concern.
3. After the intensive promotion of HIV testing in the MSM community in the previous years, both the ever HIV testing rate (77.5%) and HIV testing rate in past one year (57.0%) increased in this survey, as compared with 2011 PRISM figures (67% and 40% respectively). It might suggest an increased awareness to undergo HIV testing and even regular test in the gay community. However, contribution from methodological difference cannot be excluded.
4. This survey demonstrated that collection and compilation of brief but essential information on the personal demographic and HIV-related risk behaviours of MSM reached by different organizations were feasible. Despite that, recruitment of respondents through the online platforms was suboptimal. Given the popularity among MSM to source NRSP through mobile applications and the internet, adjustment of recruitment strategy may be required in future survey.

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#### **FACTSHEET on HARiS for MSM 2013**

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