

# Harmonizing surveillance and prevention research: The European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS)

## Европейский интернет-опрос мужчин, практикующих секс с мужчинами

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### Issues

Surveys of sexual behaviour and prevention needs among men who have sex with men (MSM) have mainly been conducted on national levels. Due to different sampling methods (particularly Internet-based vs. venue-based), and because of similar, but not identical questions, a harmonisation of indicators is needed, e.g. to allow reporting of comparable data to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). In the last decade, MSM social networking and other websites have been shown to be (cost-)effective and valid means for recruitment of respondents, and are thus increasingly used for surveying MSM in particular.

### Description

The European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) is a joint project of academic, governmental, and non-governmental partners from 33 countries in Europe (EU and neighbouring countries) to simultaneously run an online questionnaire in 25 different languages:

български език, Čeština, Dansk, Deutsch, Eesti keel, Ελληνικά, English, Español, Français, Italiano, Latviešu valodam, Lietuvių kalba, Magyar nyelv, Nederlands, Norsk, Polski, Português, Română, Русский язык, Slovenščina, Srpski, Svenska, Suomi, Türkçe, Українська мова.

EMIS is currently collecting self-reported data from MSM across Europe. This data can be used to be included in national follow-up surveys for behavioural surveillance, but also for cross-sectional analyses – comparing different groups of MSM, comparing different countries or regions, etc. EMIS is the first study in which a direct comparison of data on homosexuality, homosexual behaviour, and STIs among 33-40 countries can be undertaken. For some of the participating countries, it will generate the first empirical data on homosexuality.

EMIS is co-funded by a grant of the European Union (EU Health Programme 2008-2013).

### Lessons learned

Scientists who already have experience of Internet-based surveys for MSM, scientists who so far only have experience with print questionnaires, and activists from community-based NGOs have jointly prepared and pre-tested a pan-European questionnaire that was launched on June 4, 2010.

### Next steps

Data collection will run until August 31, 2010. EMIS results will inform the planning of prevention interventions for MSM by identifying prevention needs commonly unmet across MSM (priority aims), and subgroups of MSM who have many prevention needs poorly met (priority target groups).

### Research questions and covered items

- The EMIS questionnaire is structured by four questions:
1. What are the levels and distributions of sexual HIV/STI exposure and transmission facilitators?
  2. What are the levels and distributions of unmet (prevention) needs of MSM?
  3. What is the population coverage / what are the biases of prevention interventions?
  4. What information is needed to compare samples and target interventions?

As to #1, the EMIS questionnaire covers all six core indicators (left) and nine of ten population-specific indicators for MSM (right) that have recently been suggested by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

- Numbers of sex partners in the last 12 months
- Use of condom at last (anal) intercourse, separate for steady vs. non-steady partners
- Tested for HIV, ever and in the last 12 months; year and result of the last test
- Having paid for sex in the last 12 months; use of condoms at last paid intercourse
- Level of education (ISCED); nationality/'origin', sexual orientation (Kinsey modified classification)
- Knowledge (identify ways of preventing sexual HIV transmission, reject major misconceptions)
- Age at 1st sex
- Recent STIs
- Condom use with different types of partners
- Exposure to risk (last 12 months)
- Recency and result of hepatitis C test
- Types of drugs consumed
- Proportion on treatment
- (Detectable or undetectable) viral load
- CD4 count (at diagnosis)

To balance questions on behavioural surveillance with items needed for prevention planning, including needs for policy and structural interventions, EMIS includes the following question areas needed to cover priorities #2 and #3 above:

- Knowledge (transmission, risks, non-risk, safe condom use, PEP)
- Problems related to drinking habits and recreational drug use, types of drugs and recency of drug use
- Barriers to early treatment
- HIV-related discrimination
- Anti-gay violence / Homophobia
- Access to gay-specific information
- Access to condoms
- Access to testing (HIV/STI)
- Used HIV/STI testing sites, service performance regarding MSM
- Relationships / Loneliness

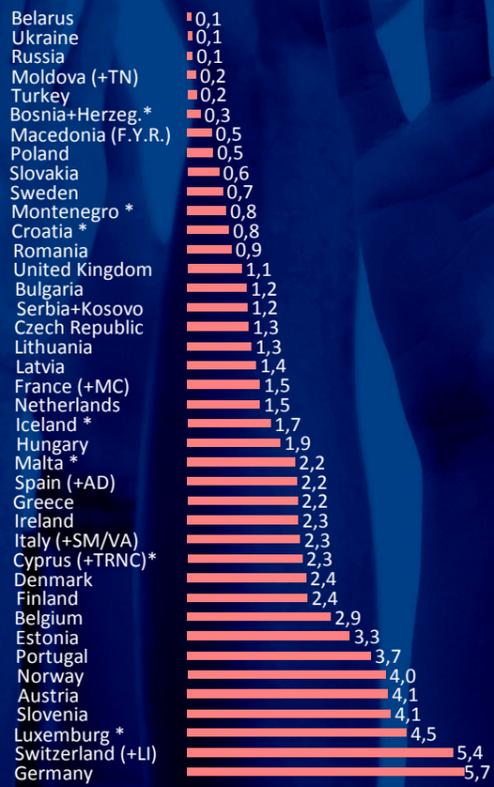
### Preliminary analysis of responses

As of July 12, 2010, the questionnaire has been completed by more than 128,000 MSM living in Europe, and more than 117,000 MSM living in the 27 EU member states. After 38 days online, EMIS is already the largest international study ever conducted on homosexually active men. This strong response to a 20-30 minute survey demonstrates both a highly acceptable instrument and high community engagement. Neither would have been possible without the participation and support of local, national, and international LGBT organizations, as well as pan-European gay-organised social online-networks like GayRomeo and Manhunt.

The diagram shows country-specific relative response rates to EMIS per 10,000 inhabitants (as of July 12; data collection will end on August 31). Relative response rates might change substantially as some countries have yet to launch some of the main elements of their planned online promotion.

(Countries without a designated EMIS partner are marked with \*, or are included into neighbouring/surrounding countries:

LI=Liechtenstein; MC=Monaco; SM=San Marino; TRNC=Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; TN=Transnistria; VA=Vatican City)



### Collaborating Partners

- Austria: Aids-Hilfe Wien
- Belarus: Vstrecha
- Belgium (Flemish speaking part): Institute of Tropical Medicine
- Belgium (French speaking part): Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis
- Bulgaria: National Centre of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases
- Czech Republic: Charles University, Institute of Sexology
- Denmark: Statens Serum Institut, Department of Epidemiology
- Estonia: National Institute for Health Development (Tervise Arengu Instituut)
- Finland: University of Tampere, Department of Nursing Science
- France: Institut de veille sanitaire (InVS)
- Germany: Berlin Social Science Research Center (WZB)
- Greece: Positive Voice
- Hungary: National Centre for Epidemiology
- Ireland: Gay Men's Health Service (Health Services Executive /Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte)
- Italy: University of Bologna
- Latvia: The Infectiology Centre of Latvia
- Lithuania: Center for Communicable Diseases and AIDS
- Macedonia (F.Y.R.): Equality for Gays and Lesbians (EGAL)
- Moldova: GenderDoc-M
- Norway: The Norwegian Institute of Public Health
- Poland: National AIDS Centre
- Portugal: GAT Portugal
- Romania: PSI Romania
- Russia: PSI Russia
- Serbia: Safe Pulse of Youth (SPY)
- Slovenia: National Institute of Public Health
- Spain: National Centre of Epidemiology
- Sweden: Malmö University, Health and Society
- Switzerland: Institut universitaire de médecine sociale et préventive
- Turkey: Turkish Public Health Association
- Ukraine: Gay Alliance
- United Kingdom: City University London, Department for Public Health

### Further National Partners

- Belgium: Ex Aequo
  - Belgium: Sensoa
  - Belgium: Arc-en-ciel
  - Bulgaria: Queer Bulgaria Foundation
  - Denmark: stopaids
  - Finland: Finnish AIDS council
  - France: Collectif EMIS/France (AIdes, Act UP Paris, Sida Info Service, Le kiosque, The Warning)
  - Germany: Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe (DAH)
  - Germany: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA)
  - Greece: Hellenic Centre for Disease Control & Prevention
  - Hungary: Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ)
  - Hungary: Háttér
  - Italy: Italian Lesbian and Gay Association (Arcigay)
  - Netherlands: Schorer
  - Norway: Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services
  - Poland: Lamda Warszawa
  - Portugal: Institute of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
  - Portugal: University of Porto, Medical School
  - Slovakia: OZ Odysseus
  - Slovenia: ŠKUC-Magnus
  - Slovenia: Legebitra
  - Spain: stopside
  - Spain: Ministry of Health and Social Politics
  - Sweden: RFSL
  - Sweden: National Board of Health and Welfare
  - Switzerland: Aids-Hilfe Schweiz
  - Turkey: Siyah Pembe Üçgen Izmir
  - Turkey: Istanbul-LGBT
  - United Kingdom: CHAPS (Terrence Higgins Trust)
- (If you feel your organisation is missing here, please let us know.)

### International Partners

- Gayromeo.com
- Manhunt and Manhunt Cares
- Oguys.ru
- International Gay and Lesbian Organization (ILGA)
- European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG)

### Advisory Partners

- Executive Agency for Health and Consumer Protection (EAHC)
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
- World Health Organization, Europe (WHO Europe)

Είσαι έτοιμος για κάτι τόσο μεγάλο!  
 Бъдете част от нещо колосално!  
 Kocaman bir şeyin parçası olun!  
 Postani del nečesa velikega!  
 Participez ! C'est énorme !  
 Be part of something huge!