

# Best sex life idea among Slovenian men who have sex with men (MSM): results of the European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS)



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**Background/Objectives:** Qualitative data from Slovenian men who have sex with men (MSM) about conceptions regarding their sex life are scarce. With the aim to improve our understanding of men's desires, meanings and motivations related to sex in general and safe sex in particular to inform HIV/STI prevention, our objective was to describe the variation in ideas of the best sex life among Slovenian MSM.

**Methods:** In summer 2010, 1005 MSM living in Slovenia, aged from 15 to 69 years, participated in the online European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) by anonymously completing a questionnaire that contained an open-ended question: „What is your idea of the best sex life?“. Using content analysis, the responses were coded using 'initial' and 'in-vivo' coding techniques (Charmaz 2006, Saldana 2009) which provided basis for the construction of categories, themes and interpretations.

**Results:** 586 provided responses (58,3% item response rate). Four main best–sex–life conceptions themes emerged, highlighted in order of frequency of responses: steady relationships, frequency of sex, partner's personal/physical characteristics and types of sex practices.

The different types of steady relationships wished for included the most frequently mentioned exclusively monogamous homosexual relationship („Sex with a man that I love, a man that I trust and he trusts me, a man with whom I create common life“), non-monogamous homosexual or bisexual relationship (steady or casual male and at the same time steady or casual female partner) and sex outside the relationship together with the steady male partner. Partner attributes („trustworthy“, „faithful“, „sincere“, „doesn't cheat“), were predominantly mentioned in the context of steady relationships.

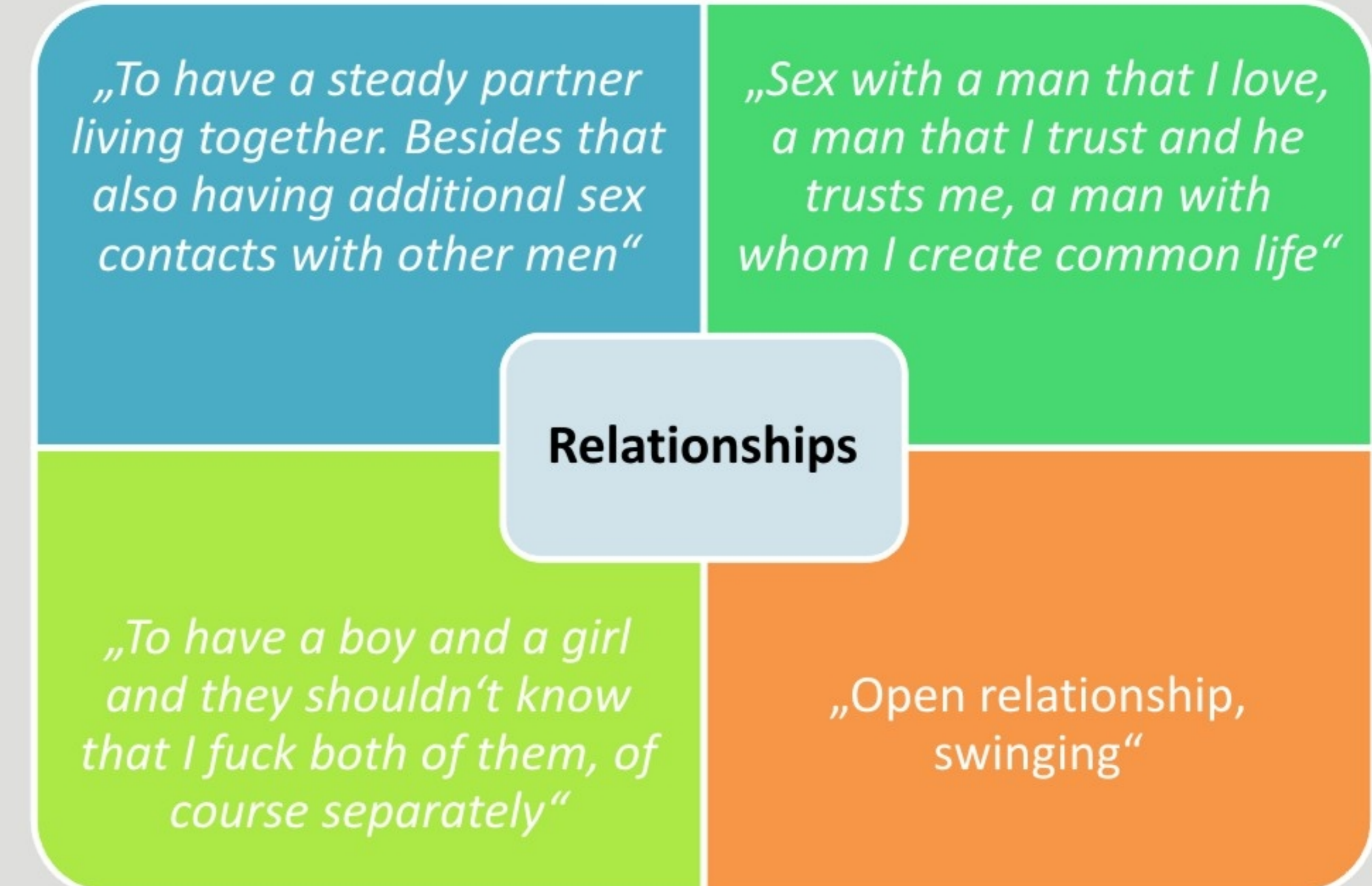
Regardless of whether they wished to be in a steady relationship or not, most MSM wished for frequent sex. Among those not mentioning steady relationships the desire for frequent sex was usually described in more details („Sex 24 hour a day“, „Long and passionate sex at least tree times a week“).

Attributes describing partner's characteristics used in the context of steady relationships but not limited to them, included „trustworthy“, „honest“, and „compatible“. Visual look („Straight looking“), preferences for sexual positioning (mostly „versatile“ but also „active“ and „passive“) and genital characteristics („big dick“) were more often mentioned by those who did not mention their wish for a relationship.

The wishes for sex practices were described with attributes such as „passionate“, „sensible“ or by short detailed descriptions of sex acts ranging from „...no need for penetration, touching hugging and kissing is enough“ to „Being raped by five guys and me dressed like a whore“. The ideas were stated more in detail usually by those not mentioning a steady relationship in their response.

„Safe sex“ related concepts were mentioned often both as a phrase or descriptions of intentions and practices. For example, some addressed condom use („To have sex in which I am convinced of its safety, if though it's without condom...“, „When I will be vaccinated against HIV and therefore be able to have relaxed sex without condom“) or general safety concerns („If I am absolutely convinced that the guys are healthy and not dangerous“). Not only partner attributes such as „trustworthy“, „faithful“, „sincere“, „doesn't cheat“ but also specific, partnership related safety tactics such as diagnostic STI testing of both partners were described mainly by those mentioning steady relationship („Relaxed unprotected sex in monogamous relationship, where both are tested for STI's“, „Having a steady partner with a relationship build on trust and where both are jointly going for STI tests“).

**Conclusions:** Our results show great diversity of best–sex–life ideas among Slovenian MSM and suggest differences between those who wish for monogamous relationships in comparison to others. The wish to be in a steady relationship with a man and the wish for frequent sex were the two most often mentioned best–sex–life ideas. Some men, who described sexual practices they desired, indicated their awareness of and intention to practice safe sex, although some also wished for condomless sex. The latter was more often stated in the context of steady relationships accompanied by regular STI check-ups and the notion of partner's trustworthiness, leading to the conclusion that some men use other safety strategies in addition to the use of condoms. The results will contribute to our understanding of different men's wishes and desires, meanings and motivations related to sex in general and safe sex in particular and will inform HIV/STI prevention.



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Further information about EMIS: <http://www.emis-project.eu/>