

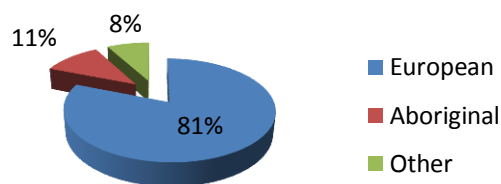
## Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM) in the Interior of BC: Study Results

Thank you for participating in the study of MSM in BC Interior. Thanks to you, our knowledge about the lives of MSM residing outside of major urban centres has expanded and your strengths and needs are better understood.

Here is a short summary of what we've learned in this project:

The sample consisted of **163 MSM living in the Interior of BC.**

### Participant Ethnicity

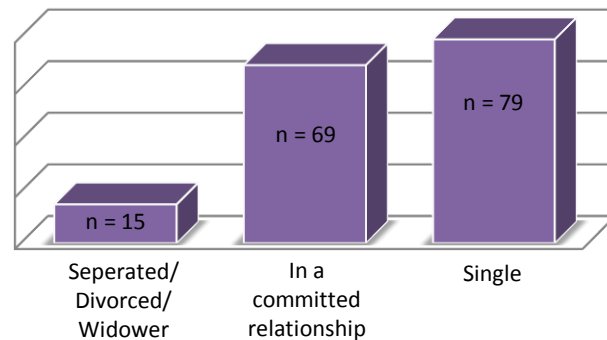


As the bar graph on the right illustrates, the sample consisted of **79 men who were single** and **69 men who were in committed relationships** (e.g., married or in common-law relations). A small group of **15 men reported being separated, divorced, or widowers.**

The average age of the sample was **39 years**, with a range between 18 to 72 years.

Interestingly, **35%** of participants were from **rural communities**, where the population is smaller than 20,000 people.

### Participant Marital status



### Gender Identity of the Sample

**84%** of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement  
"I am gay/bisexual, and am happy to be who I am."

**Five** participants identified themselves as females or transgendered.

### STI- and HIV-Related Information

One of the most important objectives of this study was to obtain STI- and HIV-related information, such as the occurrence of STI's, prevalence and common locations of HIV testing, and rates of HIV. Here is what was found:

**88%** of the sample were STI FREE in the past year

Among those with some form of STI, *herpes* was the most common, followed by *gonorrhea* and *syphilis*.

**Prevalence of HIV-Testing:** Three quarters of the sample had been tested for HIV *at some point in their lifetime* (around 50% of those had been tested *within the past year*).

**HIV Testing Locations\*:** The most common places to get tested for HIV were at a **private doctor's office** or a **public health clinic**.

**Rates of HIV-Positive:** Fifteen percent (15%) of those who had been tested reported being HIV positive.

*\* To find a testing location in your area, please refer to the attached sheet.*

PLEASE NOTE: The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends getting tested for HIV no sooner than 3 months after you engage in risky sexual behaviour. For more information on who should get tested, when to get tested, and how to find a testing center near you, please visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/info/4-eng.php>

### **Mental Health and Related Factors**

In addition to the physical health of MSM, this project also aimed to learn about the mental health of MSM in BC Interior. Research has shown that **self-disclosure** is beneficial to people's mental health, while **discrimination** can negatively affect it. Here is what was found in our study:

**Disclosure of Sexual Orientation:** The **vast majority** of participants have told someone about their sexual interests in men.

- It was most common to tell a friend who was gay/lesbian/bisexual, and second most common to tell a friend who was not gay/lesbian/bisexual.
- About three-quarters of participants had told a family member, and almost two-thirds had told their healthcare provider.

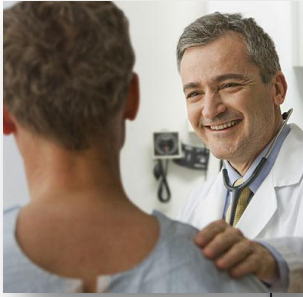
**Perceived Experience of Discrimination:** Forty-five men (28%) in our sample reported they had been physically attacked in the past because of their sexual orientation.

The prevalence of **depressive symptoms** was this study's main indicator of mental health. It was found that,

**45% of the study participants reported significant levels of depressive symptoms**

**Discrimination and Depression:** As has been found in previous samples, reports of discrimination were related to more symptoms of depression.





### Experiences with Health-Care Providers

11% said they had felt discriminated against by their physician during the year prior to the study.

24% reported feeling “uncomfortable” or “very uncomfortable” talking to their health care provider about their sexual health

### Sexual Behaviour

With regards to the sexual behaviours of our MSM sample, it was found that **41% had engaged in risky sexual behaviour in the three months prior to the study**; by “risky sexual behaviour” we mean, *unprotected\* anal sex with more than one person*.

\*Unprotected sex was defined as sex without a condom for all or part of the time during intercourse.

### Involvement with the LGBTQ community

Another important factor related to physical and mental health is availability of social support. People’s social support is often strengthened through interaction and involvement in their community. Here is what our sample reported about their community involvement during the three months preceding the study:

**32% of participants were involved at least once a month with organizations promoting gay rights.**

**55% of participants spent social or leisure time with other gay or bisexual men either occasionally or most of the time**

**If you would like to become involved with the LGBTQ community, here are some organizations that may be in your area:**

Okanagan Rainbow Coalition for the Central Okanagan <http://gayokanagan.com/orc/>

SOGALA, South Okanagan Gay and Lesbian Association for Penticton <http://www.sogala.com/>

NOGLO, North Okanagan Gay Lesbian Organization for Vernon <http://www.gayvernon.com>

**Thank you again for your cooperation. Your participation in this project is valuable and highly appreciated!**