

Survey Says: Vermont Gay Men Practicing Safer Sex

Burlington— According to a 1995 survey conducted at June's g/l/b/t Pride weekend activities in Burlington, the majority of gay men in Vermont are practicing safer sex on a regular basis. 253 men who have sex with other men (MSM) took part in the anonymous study conducted by the Vermont Department of Health.

Most respondents reported that they felt very comfortable discussing safer sex with sex partners and friends and calling a hotline for information about HIV. Most also reported feeling that they knew all they needed to about safer sex, that they were comfortable with their sexual orientation, and that they had engaged in only safer sex in the previous six months.

Only 17% of the men reported having anal sex outside of a primary relationship in the previous six months, and most of these men used condoms every time. 31.5% of men surveyed had no or one sexual partner in the previous six months, and only 11.9% engaged in sex with five or more partners in the same time period.

Tom Aloisi, HIV Prevention Coordinator for the Department of Health AIDS Program, feels that

this information is very important for doing HIV prevention work within the gay community. "Until now we never had any real data about what people were doing sexually or how they felt about sexuality, HIV, and being sexual with other men. No one had asked these questions in Vermont before on such a large scale. This data is incredibly important. We need to look at this data and see where work needs to be done."

Though the survey shows a majority of men using condoms for anal sex, it also shows that the majority of gay men are not using condoms for oral sex. 65% of men reported having never used condoms during oral sex with someone other than their primary partner. Approximately 80% of men never used condoms with a primary sexual partner during oral sex in the previous six months. "Oral sex is much less risky than anal sex," reported Aloisi. "It seems that these men are making informed decisions about reducing their risk of HIV infection. I'm glad to see that so many men are using condoms for anal sex."

Aloisi also commented on the limitations of surveying during Pride weekend. "Diversity is always difficult using a convenient sample like Pride in Burlington. We tended to find well-educated, Chittenden County men who are comfortable enough with their sexual orientation to show up at gay-related activities, some of which were outdoors. For that reason, these numbers don't represent a comprehensive sample of the Vermont gay men's community, and that's very important to remember."

Of those surveyed, over 51% had a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 91% were white. 204 of the men surveyed were from Vermont (85%) and 135 were Chittenden county residents.

"It is very difficult to find out what rural men need," Aloisi said. "There are a lot of men whom we still need to reach. It looks like a lot of the prevention work with well-educated, out gay men has been successful. What we need to do now is connect with everyone else."

The state hopes to contract with an outside group to do a more scientific study of MSM knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the coming year. "This new study will be done by researchers who have the skills to gather data using strict scientific methods," Aloisi commented. "I'm anxious to compare the new data to what we found at Pride last year. The new data could look similar to our survey, or it could be incredibly different. We'll just have to wait and see."

The Vermont Department of Health is currently seeking organizations to apply for grants for HIV prevention in Vermont. For more information on the grant process or the Pride Day survey, please call Tom at (800) 244-7639. ▼

Health Resources

AIDS HOTLINES:

Vermont	800-882-2437
New Hampshire	800-752-2437
New York State	800-541-2437
Massachusetts	617-522-4090
Maine	800-851-2437
National	800-342-2437
Canadian	613-563-2437

AIDS Community Awareness Project (ACAP)

PO Box 608
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
(802) 748-1149

AIDS Community Resource Network (ACoRN)

PO Box 2057
Lebanon, NH 03766
(603) 448-2220

Bennington Area AIDS Project

PO Box 1066
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 442-4481 or 1-800-845-2437

Brattleboro AIDS Project

PO Box 1486
Brattleboro, VT 05302
(802) 254-4444 (Helpline)
(802) 254-8263 (Office)

Franklin-Grand Isle

AIDS Task Force
P. O. Box 241, St.
Albans, VT 05478
(800) 524-7742 • (802) 638-7834

Gay/Lesbian Alcoholics

Anonymous
GLAA, P.O. Box 5653
Burlington, VT 05402
(802) 658-4221

Lesbian Cancer Support Group (802) 660-8386

North Star (Holistic Health Care)

RR2 Box 3255
Morrisville, VT 05661
(802) 888-2858

Vermont AIDS Council

PO Box 275
Montpelier VT 05601
(802) 229-2557

Vermont C.A.R.E.S.

(Committee for AIDS Resources,
Education, and Services)
PO Box 5248 • 37 Elmwood Ave., Bur-
lington, VT 05401
(802) 863-2437 (Burlington)
1-800-649-2437 (VT)

Vermont Department of Health

1-800-882-2437 (AIDS Hotline)
or (802) 863-7245
(AIDS Program office)

VT PWA Coalition

PO Box 11
Montpelier, VT 05452
1-800-69-VT-PWA or (802) 229-5754

Vermont Women's

Health Center
336 North Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 863-1386



Don't forget your rubbers.

You don't get it from toilet seats.
You don't get it from coffee cups. You
don't get it from desk tops in a school
room.

It doesn't fly through the air or
swim around in hot tubs.

You don't catch it from shaking

hands, kissing, sneezing, wrestling or
dancing.

According to the Surgeon General,
your best protection against AIDS,
barring abstinence, is use of a condom.

For the facts about AIDS, call the
Vermont AIDS Hotline.

VERMONT AIDS HOTLINE: 1-800-882-AIDS

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