

# Baromètre Gay 2002: Internet use and sexual risk behaviour - France



INSTITUT DE  
VEILLE SANITAIRE

A. Velter  
12, rue du Val d'Osne - 94415 St-Maurice Cedex - FRANCE  
Tel. : 33 (0)1 41 79 68 06 Fax : 33 (0)1 41 79 67 66  
a.velter@invs.sante.fr

A. Velter, A. Michel, C. Semaille, J-C. Desenclos  
Institut de veille Sanitaire, Saint-Maurice, France

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## BACKGROUND

In France, through surveys, men who have sex with men (MSM) are more and more numerous to report use Internet sex seeking (15% Enquête Presse Gay 2000; 38% Baromètre Gay (BG) 2002). The aim of this study was to describe the characteristics of MSM using Internet for sex seeking and to evaluate the level of sexual risk behaviour among them thanks to "Baromètre Gay 2002" survey.

## METHOD

In 2002, during a 6 months period, short anonymous self-administered questionnaires were displayed in all commercial gay venues in metropolitan France (bars, bathhouses, sexclubs), handed out on 91 cruising venues and made available on 2 internet MSM sites.

Logistic regression analyses were performed, the use of Internet sex seeking being the outcome variable. Results on "Baromètre Gay 2002" survey are available: WePEC6057 Poster "Baromètre gay, a survey in commercial gay venues Paris (France): 2000 and 2002".

## RESULTS

- Among the 8 963 questionnaires collected, 8 719 were filled by males. 38% (3 334) indicated using Internet for sex seeking, 16% of which on a regular basis.

Table 1. Characteristics of MSM seeking sex by Internet

	Seeking sex by Internet		p values (X <sup>2</sup> )
	Yes N = 3 334	No N = 4 596	
<b>Socio characteristics</b>			
Means age	32 years	35 years	
University graduates	58%	48%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Employment	82%	80%	< 0.05
Living alone	58%	56%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Paris area residence	36%	36%	NS
Gay identity	86%	82%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Regular partner	64%	60%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
<b>Gay venues</b>			
Baths	66%	63%	< 0.05
Cruising venues	63%	60%	< 0.05
Sexclubs	54%	46%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Bars	86%	78%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
<b>Sexual activity with casual partners</b>			
≥ 10 partners last 12 months	52%	44%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Oral sex with ejaculation	54%	47%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Anal intercourse	95%	90%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
Unprotected anal intercourse (UAI)	36%	31%	<10 <sup>-4</sup>
UAI insertive only	37%	39%	} NS
UAI receptive only	39%	37%	
UAI insertive/receptive	23%	24%	
UAI with unknown HIV partners	71%	69%	NS
<b>Test and status</b>			
Tested for HIV	90%	89%	} NS
HIV negative	72%	72%	
HIV positive	12%	12%	} NS
HIV not sure negative	8%	7%	
HIV unknown	8%	8%	
Tested for syphilis	62%	64%	
Syphilis diagnosis	2,5%	2%	NS

=> Socio demographic differences were observed between the Internet users and other respondents but not for residing in the Paris area (table 1).

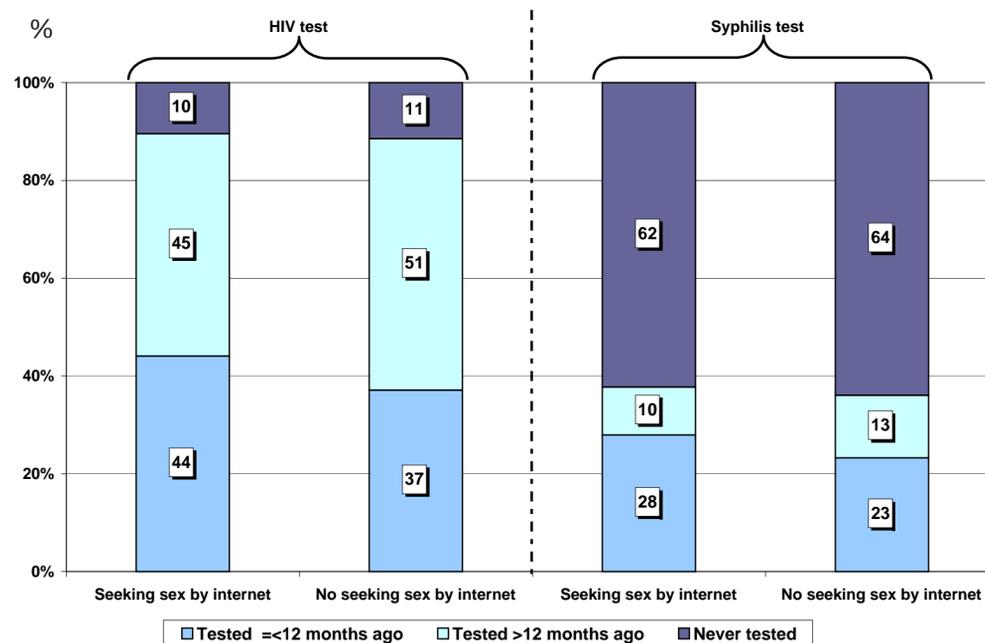
=> MSM seeking sex by Internet reported more gay venues attendances (especially sexclub).

=> MSM seeking sex by internet reported:

- a higher sexual activity
- more sexual practices with casual partners

- more likely to have higher risk in oral sex with ejaculation and UAI
- but no differences for insertive or receptive anal sex with casual partners and the UAI with casual partners with unknown HIV status
- more likely to have had both an HIV test and a syphilis test in the 12 months prior to survey (figure 1)

Figure 1. Time elapsed since HIV and syphilis testing according to MSM seeking sex by Internet or not



=> Among men reported tested for HIV, there was no difference in self HIV status and no difference for syphilis diagnosis in the previous 12 months (table 1).

- Factors associated with using the internet for seeking sex were being independently young, having a high education level, having oral sex with ejaculation and UAI with casual partners (table 2).

Table 2. Factors associated with MSM seeking sex by Internet

Variables	Ajusted Odds ratio	95% confidence interval
<b>&lt; 25 years old</b>		
No	1	[1.8-2.4]
Yes	2.2	
<b>University graduate</b>		
No	1	[1.5-1.8]
Yes	1.7	
<b>Oral sex with ejaculation with casual partners</b>		
No	1	[1.2-1.5]
Yes	1.3	
<b>UAI with casual partners</b>		
No	1	[1.1-1.3]
Yes	1.2	

## DISCUSSION

=> We found specific socio-demographic characteristics independently associated to the Internet tool: those younger and more educated have easier access to the web than others. MSM Internet sex-seekers reported higher levels of sexual risk behaviour than the other respondents. Similar finding have been reported in Europe and USA.

=> A dual behaviour in respondents seeking sex by Internet: specific HIV and STI testing more frequent but no appropriation of preventive sexual behaviours. Since 2000, sexual risk behaviour with casual partners was particularly marked among young MSM; this generation use internet like any other gay venues to search sex partners but can simultaneously get prevention informations.

## CONCLUSION

=> To better characterize these elements, further investigation should be conducted through survey directly online using MSM web sites.

=> Prevention programs should also take place on a bigger scale through MSM web sites.