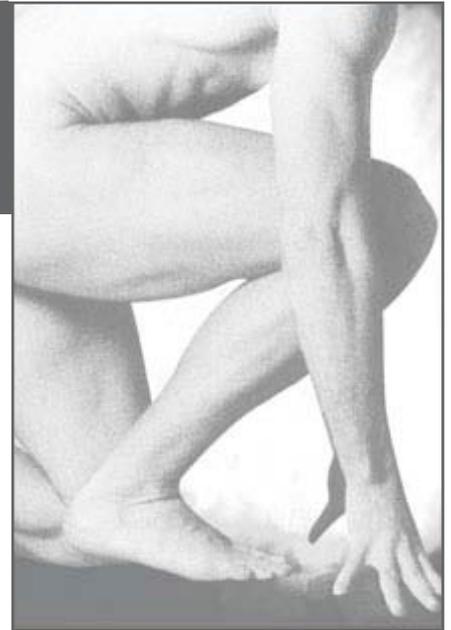


# ARGUS

Cycle 2008-2009

**ARGUS is a survey of HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STI), and associated risk behaviours among Quebec men who have sex with men (MSM).**



The ARGUS survey combines infection surveillance (through biological tests) and behavioural monitoring. It is repeated at regular intervals to follow changes in the levels of infections and at-risk behaviours.. ARGUS is one of a group of similar surveys of MSM in several Canadian cities.

The survey was carried out under the direction of the *Direction de santé publique de l'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal*, the *Institut national de santé publique du Québec* and the Public Health Agency of Canada and by a team of representatives from the community, university and public health.

All MSM 18 years of age and over were eligible to participate in the study, regardless of their HIV status.

Men were recruited in a wide variety of locations where gay men socialize (ex.: bars, saunas, coffee shops, sports and recreational groups, etc.).

During recruitment sessions, the interviewers solicited people according to a sampling method adapted to the location visited (for example: one person in two or all men in one area of the venue). The sample is considered representative of MSMs who spend time in locations where gay men socialize.

The questionnaire focused on the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, the composition of their social network, the public places they go to seek sexual partners, their sexual activities with regular and casual partners, their consumption of alcohol and drugs, health history, screening for sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs) and their opinions concerning HIV.

Between May 2008 and March 2009, 1873 men were recruited in 42 locations (37 in Montréal, 4 in Québec et 1 in Laval). All participants were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire and provide a blood sample (finger prick).

Most of the respondents (98.0%) also provided a few drops of blood to allow laboratory analyses to screen for HIV, the hepatitis C virus and syphilis.

This document offers a brief overview of the descriptive results from the study.

# HIGHLIGHTS - ARGUS 2008 - 2009

## Survey of Québec men aged 18 and over who have sex with other men

	n=1873 %
<b>SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA</b>	
Is under 30 years old	24.2
Has completed secondary school	85.5
Lives on the island of Montréal	75.0
Has an annual income before taxes of \$40,000 or more	44.1
<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GAY SOCIAL LIFE</b>	
Defines himself as homosexual or gay	89.1
At least 50% of his friends are gay men	71.4
Is in a common-law relationship with or is married to a man	24.1
Is in a couple relationship with a man for over 6 months	33.0
Has experienced some form of discrimination (e.g. verbal abuse, insults, harassment, rejection, physical violence, sexual assault) because of his sexual orientation or sexual activities in the past 6 months	22.7
Has ever been sexually abused	20.2
<b>SEXUAL ACTIVITIES</b>	
	<i>among all respondents</i>
Has had oral or anal sexual relations with a man in the past 6 months	92.4
Has had sexual relations with a woman in the past 6 months	16.8
	<i>among respondents who have had sexual relations with a man in the past 6 months</i>
Has had sexual relations with 6 or more male sex partners	44.4
Has had sexual relations with 6 or more «one-night-stand» male sex partners	32.4
Has had group sexual relations (sexual relations involving three men or more at the same time) at least once	33.0
Has had anal relations with 6 or more male sex partners	21.3
Has had unprotected (without a condom) anal relations with a male partner at least once	44.5
Has had unprotected (without a condom) anal relations with a «one-night-stand» male partner at least once	17.7
Has intentionally had unprotected (without a condom) anal relations with a «one-night-stand» male partner at least once	11.6
Has had anal relations without a condom at least once with a sex partner considered to be «at risk»: «one-night stand»; «casual» partner or «regular» partner who is HIV-positive; «casual» partner or «regular» partner whose HIV status is not known (among respondents who are HIV-negative or whose HIV status is not known)	31.5
<b>CONTEXTS IN WHICH SEX PARTNERS WERE MET</b>	
	<i>among respondents who have had sexual relations with a man in the past 6 months</i>
Has given money in exchange for sex at least once in the past 6 months	6.2
Has received money in exchange for sex at least once in the past 6 months	5.2
Has met a new sex partner in a gay bar at least once in the past 6 months	42.1
Has met a new sex partner in a sauna at least once in the past 6 months	41.6
Has met a sex partner on the Internet at least once in the past 6 months	35.0
Has met a new sex partner in public place (e.g. park, bicycle path) at least once in the past 6 months	22.1
Has met a new sex partner in a sex club or in a bar with a backroom at least once in the past 6 months	17.8
Has met a new sex partner in a café at least once in the past 6 months	14.4
Has met a new sex partner in a circuit party at least once in the past 6 months	8.8
<b>ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE DURING SEXUAL RELATIONS IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS</b>	
	<i>among respondents who have had sexual relations with a man in the past 6 months</i>
Has had sexual relations while under the influence of alcohol, half the time or more	16.9
Has had sexual relations while using marijuana (pot, hash, grass), half the time or more	9.0
Has had sexual relations while using amyl nitrite (poppers), half the time or more	8.3
Has had sexual relations while using erectile dysfunction medicine, half the time or more	4.3
Has had sexual relations while using cocaine (powder, snow), half the time or more	3.6
Has had sexual relations while using ecstasy (MDMA, E), half the time or more	2.3
Has had sexual relations while using gamma - hydroxybutyrate (GHB, GH, G or juice) half the time or more	2.1
Has had sexual relations while using amphetamines, half the time or more	1.4
Has had sexual relations while using ketamine (K, Special K), half the time or more	1.3
Has had sexual relations while using methamphetamine, half the time or more	0.4
Has had sexual relations while using recreational drugs (mushrooms or ecstasy or ketamine or poppers or GHB amphetamines or crystal meth) half the time or more	11.6

	<b>n= 1873</b>
	<b>%</b>
<b>GENERAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE PATTERNS</b>	
	<i>among all respondents</i>
Has drunk alcoholic beverages four times or more a week in the past 12 months	21.8
Has used cocaine (snorted or sniffed) at least once in the past 6 months	22.0
Has used cocaine (smoked) at least once in the past 6 months	6.9
Has used ketamine (snorted or sniffed) at least once in the past 6 months	8.7
Has injected drugs (other than steroids) at least once in the past 6 months	3.4
Has used a needle or a syringe which had already been used by someone else at least once in the past six months (among respondents who injected drugs other than steroids in the past six months)	19.0
Has injected steroids at least once in the past 6 months	1.5
<b>HEALTH CARE AND HISTORY OF STI</b>	
	<i>among all respondents</i>
Has seen a doctor for a medical or STI checkup in the past 12 months	65.5
Doctor aware of his sexual orientation (among respondents who saw a doctor in the past 12 months)	88.9
Has been told by a doctor or a nurse in the past 12 months that he has gonococcal infection	5.4
Has been told by a doctor or a nurse in the past 12 months that he has genital or anal warts	3.6
Has been told by a doctor or a nurse in the past 12 months that he has chlamydia	3.6
Has been told by a doctor or a nurse in the past 12 months that he has genital or anal herpes	3.7
HIV test in the past 12 months (among respondents who had not had a positive test before this 12-month period)	59.3
Hepatitis C test in the past 12 months (among respondents who had not had a positive test before this 12-month period)	34.2
Syphilis test in the past 12 months	42.8
<b>USE OF PREVENTIVE SERVICES</b>	
	<i>among all respondents</i>
Has had at least one dose of hepatitis B vaccine in his lifetime	73.6
Know that he has received two doses or more of hepatitis B vaccine in his lifetime	50.4
Has taken post-sexual exposure prophylaxis at least once in his lifetime	5.5
Has seen a poster about sexual health, STBBI, HIV or safer sex in the past 12 months	89.6
Has read a leaflet about sexual health, STI, HIV or safer sex in the past 12 months	74.4
Has read about sexual health, STI, HIV or safer sex on the Internet in the past 12 months	53.6
Had discussed sexual health, STI, HIV or safer sex with a health or community group worker on the Internet in the past 12 months	9.4
Has discussed sexual health, STI, HIV or safer sex with a health or community group worker while in a social venue in the past 12 months	21.6
Has participated in a group session with a health or community group worker on the subject of sexual health, STI, HIV or safer sex in the past 12 months	7.4
Has participated in an individual session (counselling) with a health or community group worker on the subject of sexual health, STI, HIV or safer sex in the past 12 months	13.6
Obtained for free (in bars, saunas, community organizations or other place) 90% to 100% of condoms used in the past 6 months (among people who used condoms in the past 6 months)	38.6
<b>OPINIONS ABOUT HIV INFECTION - agree moderately or very much</b>	
	<i>among all respondents</i>
I am less concerned about getting HIV now that better anti-HIV medications are available	9.8
An HIV-positive man who takes his medication lowers his risks of transmitting HIV	20.7
HIV/AIDS has become a controllable disease (like diabetes)	26.1
I am fed up with being told to use condom	12.4
I believe I am at risk of being infected by HIV in the next 6 months (or re-infection if I am already HIV-positive)	14.8
With new anti-HIV treatments, HIV-positive people are under the impression that they don't need to use a condom as much as they used to	26.6
Anti-HIV medications contribute to a return to unsafe sex among HIV-positive people	39.4
<b>STI PREVALENCE</b>	
HIV prevalence	<i>among all respondents</i>
	13.6
Unaware of HIV-positive status	<i>among individuals who HIV-test during the survey was positive</i>
	14.5
HCV prevalence (current or past resolved infection)	<i>among injection drug users</i>
	30.7
	<i>among non users of injection drugs</i>
	1.4
	<i>among all respondents</i>
	3.8
Syphilis prevalence (current or treated infection)	<i>among all respondents</i>
	8.5

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## The highlights are extracted from:

G Lambert, J Cox, Y. Miangotar, C. Tremblay, M Alary, J Otis, R Remis, M McGuire, P Sandstrom, the M-Track team. ARGUS 2008 - 2009 : A survey on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STI) as well as associated risk behaviours among Quebec men who have sex with men (MSM). *Direction de santé publique de l'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal, Institut national de santé publique du Québec and the Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011.*

