

One in ten men who have sex with men do not identify as gay or bisexual

Ground-breaking research project has been the foundation of critical sexual health policy and services in Ireland

A European-wide survey of sexual health and practices of men is urgently asking men who have sex with men to complete the latest version of their survey. With a particular focus on those who do not identify as gay or bisexual.

The previous version of the EMIS survey from 2010 found that over 9% of respondents in Ireland indicated that they had had sexual contact with other men, but did not consider themselves gay or bisexual. Given this finding was higher in other parts of Europe, it is felt that this figure under-represents reality and greater access to this cohort would see this figure rise. This makes this group even more essential to reach and even more important to accurately research in this round of the EMIS Survey.

The Gay Health Network (GHN) and HSE's Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) are calling for more men who have sex with men (MSM) living in Ireland to complete the European internet sex survey (EMIS) at www.emis2017.eu.

This research comes at a critical time in men's sexual health and reflects the community interest in promoting awareness especially in regional and non-urban settings. The EMIS 2010 Ireland findings were a key input in the joint HSE and Gay Health Network (GHN) first National Sexual Health and HIV awareness programme for MSM (www.man2man.ie) which is now one of the most important sexual health tools for MSM in Ireland.

This, as with the MISI research in 2015 has also contributed to the planning, promotion and increased access to HIV and STI testing, free condoms and to the greater understanding of the psychological needs of men living with HIV. Importantly it also highlighted HIV related stigma and homophobic related attacks on MSM.

The EMIS 2017 survey is due to end on January 31st, 2018 and the LGBT community and sexual health services are promoting participation around Ireland encouraging MSM to join tens-of-thousands across Europe who have completed it so far.

Ciaran McKinney, Chair of Gay Health Network, said:

"GHN the only MSM resource network in Ireland has promoted National research among gay, bisexual men and men who do not identify as gay or bisexual since 2000. With our network members and partners, HIV, STI services and LGBT community groups around the country and among MSM living with HIV, we are actively calling on MSM; living outside Dublin, those living with HIV and those not born in Ireland to take part in EMIS2017 which is available in 33 languages. The findings from this as with previous research contributes to advances in services and support such as man2man.ie programme, and ways of promoting safer sex and access to such things as testing, free condoms, PEP and PrEP."

Dr Derval Igoe, Health Protection Surveillance Centre, HSE, said:

“As cases of HIV and other STIs continue among men who have sex with men, the information from EMIS 2017, as with previous surveys, will provide vital information for the GHN, HSE and other organisations to help plan services and campaigns in Ireland. It will also greatly contribute to the knowledge of MSM sexual health needs across Europe.”

Martin Davoren, Executive Director, Sexual Health Centre, Cork said:

“We actively promote and encourage MSM living in the Munster region to take part in the EMIS survey. It’s results will allow us, like all services in Ireland, to continue to deliver campaigns, support and testing services based on the needs of MSM”

-ends-

For interviews, photography and further information please contact Niall Cowley at niallcowley@wethepeoplecomms.ie or 083-835-4976

Notes to editors

- The first [EMIS](#) was completed in 2010. More than 180,000 MSM living in 35 European countries, including 2,610 men in Ireland completed the survey, making EMIS the largest international MSM study ever conducted.
- Details of the EMIS 2017 are available at www.esticom.eu
- Details of previous Irish and European MSM surveys including MISI 2015 at www.misi.ie and www.gayhealthnetwork.ie/research
- GHN and HSE Partnership Initiative: www.man2man.ie for information and support in four key languages.
- HIV and STI statistics in Ireland: www.hpsc.ie
- The MSM Internet Survey Ireland (MISI), using a similar methodology, was conducted in 2015. This was completed by over 3,090 MSM in Ireland, and provided health services and policy makers with important insights into MSM including the following information:
 - 79% of respondents identified as gay, 13% as bisexual and 8% as other
 - 9% were not out to anyone at all; 66% were out to all or most of the people they know
 - 37% had never had an HIV test; 12% lacked confidence in getting an HIV test
 - 55% had unprotected anal intercourse in the last 12 months
 - 24% reported a lack of access to a condom in the previous 12 months, and 16% had unprotected anal intercourse due to lack of access to a condom in the last 12 months