

QUICK FACTS BOX

Estimated number of MSM & TG	Unknown
Latest country-wide HIV prevalence estimate for MSM & TG	4.2 – 10% (2004 to 2009)
Number of times higher than national prevalence	210 (2004)
Male-male sex is legal or illegal	Legal
MSM-specific program line in NSP	No

I. THE CURRENT SITUATION

Epidemiology

- There appear to be no estimates available for the size of the combined MSM and TG population in Taiwan.
- Country-wide HIV prevalence estimates for MSM and TG between 2004 and 2009 were between 4.2% and 10%. (References: 19,21)
- There is higher HIV prevalence among MSM who use bathhouses, with estimates ranging from 5.2% to 15.8%. (11,12)
- The estimated HIV prevalence among MSM and TG is significantly higher than the general population prevalence rate of 0.02% (as reported in 2004). (19,21)
- From 2004 to 2008, between 48.2% and 57% of HIV cases were among MSM. This is likely to be an underestimate, as MSM in Taiwan may be unlikely to report their sexual orientation due to social stigma. (5,19,21,22)
- In 2007, the percentage of homosexual or bisexual HIV patients under 20 years of age was 3%, where as for heterosexuals of the same age it was 1.7%. (4)
- MSM HIV patients have a younger average age (30.9 years) than heterosexuals (37.9 years) or injecting drug users (32.3 years). This could mean MSM are being infected at a younger age, or that they access services earlier. (22)
- The HIV incidence rate among MSM who use bathhouses ranged from 5% to 15% from 2004 to 2008. (19)
- In 2006, it was found that there had been a two-fold increase in HIV infections in MSM bathhouse users in the previous 2.5 years. (24)
- In 2008, it was reported that MSM were at higher risk of being infected with antiretroviral-resistant strains of HIV. (2)

- Studies of STIs among MSM bathhouse users have shown 16% for hepatitis B, 38% for hepatitis A and 3% for hepatitis C. In 2007, depending on the city, 8.1% to 13.8% of MSM bathhouse users had an STI. Between 2000 and 2005, a study of the medical records of 124 HIV positive MSM found 37.5% had had syphilis and 40% had had hepatitis A. (4,11,12,15,19,22,23)

Behaviour, Knowledge and Social Research relating to HIV

- In 2008, it was found that 10% of MSM in Taiwan were married. (15)
- 91.7% of MSM who attend bathhouses have sex with one or two persons at each visit. (24)
- 43.5% of MSM bathhouse users always or often bring their own condoms. (24)
- Almost half (46.6%) of MSM bathhouse users never asked for free condoms, even though 48.3% of them practice anal sex at least occasionally. (24)

Legal Situation and Law Enforcement Authorities

- Male-male sex and anal sex are legal in Taiwan. (6)
- Sex work is legal in Taiwan. (9)
- Bathhouse owners cite police harassment as a deterrent to providing condoms. (11)
- Taiwan is typically not included in regional reviews of legislation relating to MSM, TG or sex workers.
- In 2005, the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control announced a policy requiring all bathhouses to provide free condoms. However, ethnographic studies found that only 3 bathhouse owners knew about the policy, and condoms were only provided upon request. (11,13)

TAIWAN

MSM Country Snapshots – Country Specific Information on HIV, men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender people (TG)

MSM Community, other Social Research and Stigma/Discrimination

- There is very little published information about the MSM and TG community in Taiwan.
- There are bars, entertainment venues and bathhouses for MSM to meet, although it is unclear how many venues exist. One study reports that there are less than 12 bathhouses in Taipei, and approximately 12 more throughout the country. (6,11,24)
- It has been reported that MSM congregate in three fairly distinct groups based on their meeting places: saunas/bathhouses, public parks or gay bars. (24)
- In Taiwan, gay men are known as *tongzhi*. (6)
- There does appear to be some level of homophobic backlash against the increasing openness of the *tongzhi* community in Taiwan. (6)

II. THE RESPONSE TO HIV

Government Response

- There is no specific program line for MSM in the national strategic plan (NSP).
- The current NSP ends in 2011.
- There is no specific MSM strategy.

Strategic Information

- There does appear to be ongoing research by academic researchers on MSM in Taiwan. Much of this research appears to focus on MSM in bathhouses.
- It appears that the national surveillance system records information on the mode of transmission. (3)

Health System

- People living with HIV in Taiwan, including MSM, have access to free antiretroviral treatments. When free access to treatment was introduced, the estimated HIV transmission rate (general population) decreased by 53%. (5)

National and International Networks

- Taiwan participates in the sub-regional Developed Asia Network, which formed in 2009.

III. THE RESULTS

Effectiveness of prevention efforts

- In 2009, it was found that a structural intervention in bathhouses significantly increased access to condoms and availability of condoms at the reception desk as compared to the control bathhouses. Access to condoms in bathhouses was significantly associated with using condoms for anal sex. (13)

IV. RECOMMENDED RESPONSES

List of recommended actions

- National strategic plan should include a costed comprehensive response for MSM and TG.
- More systematic and regular surveillance of HIV rates, risk behaviors and MSM communities.
- Fully fund prevention programs, including condom and lubricant provision, peer education and outreach, community development, mass media, and individual counseling.
- Develop the capacity of MSM community-based organizations to provide advocacy and peer-based programs.
- Scale up MSM-friendly VCT and sexual health screening centers.
- Expand care, treatment and support facilities for HIV-positive MSM and TG.
- Address stigma and discrimination toward PLHIV in MSM communities.
- Specific prevention activities should focus on transgender people.

V. REFERENCES

All references are available at:

www.apcom.org/snapshots2010.html

For more information on UNAIDS, please see:

www.unaids.org



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