

# HARiS - HIV and AIDS Response Indicator Survey 2015 for Male-to-female transgender

## Background

Male-to-female transgender (TG) has been a neglected and hard-to-reach community, yet various overseas studies have shown that their HIV prevalence can be quite high. To better study the situation in Hong Kong, it has been included as one distinct at-risk populations in the HIV/AIDS Response Indicator Survey (HARiS) since 2014.

The aims of HARiS survey were to establish a community-based behavioural survey with collection of standardized strategic information; to provide data of a pre-defined set of core indicators among the major at-risk subpopulations for surveillance of HIV-related risk behaviours and HIV testing patterns; and to enable the indicators to be tracked and compared over time for evaluation of the coverage and effectiveness of health-promotion and surveillance programmes in Hong Kong.

The third HARiS was conducted in 2015 via commissioning to the Stanley Ho Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease, School of Public Health and Primary Care of the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

## Methods

A total of three NGOs joined the survey. Participants were recruited via centre-based HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services (two NGOs), outreach service (one NGO) and online channel (one NGO) from April to June 2015. Any male who identify himself as female gender and ever had oral or anal sex with another man was invited to complete a self-administered questionnaire.

## Results

### A. Characteristics of participants

A total of 66 TG (centre-based: 13; outreach: 39; online: 14) were recruited from three NGOs. About half were Chinese (53.0%), followed by Filipino (37.9%) and Thai (4.5%). Less than half (42.4%) had stayed in Hong Kong for more than 3 months in the preceding 6 months.

### B. Sexual behaviours

In the last 6 months, 59.1%, 53.0% and 56.1% of the respondents reported to have had sex with emotional relationship partners (ERP), regular sex partners (RSP) and non-regular sex partners (NRSP) respectively. The condom use rates in the last sexual intercourse were 82.1%, 85.7% and 91.9% with ERP, RSP and NRSP respectively. About two-third of the participants (48.5%) had had sex with a commercial sex partner (CSP), and the condom use rate in last sexual intercourse was 93.8%.

### **C. HIV testing behaviours**

Of all 66 respondents, 52 (78.8%) respondents had ever had an HIV test, and 48 (72.7%) were able to recall their HIV test results. 40 (60.6%) had their last test in the preceding 1 year and 36 (54.5%) knew their last HIV test results.

NGOs and private sector were the most commonly reported place of last HIV test, accounting for 38.5% of all ever-testers respectively, followed by public sector (19.2%).

### **D. Substance abuse and alcohol use**

Of all respondents, 43.9% and 12.1% reported to have taken alcohol or drugs respectively before or during sex in the last 6 months. Poppers (62.5%) and ice (37.5%) were the commonest drugs used.

### **Discussions**

1. Although the condom use rates with all partner types were above 82%, health promotion on safer sex with consistent condom use with all partner types needed to be emphasized.
2. The overall ever HIV testing rate (78.8%) and HIV testing rate in past one year (60.6%) which was increased compared with 72.9% and 50.8% in 2014 but still were suboptimal. Increase in awareness to undergo regular HIV testing has to be promoted in the community.
3. This survey showed that a significant proportion (58%) of TG were mobile population, non-Chinese (47%) and involved in commercial sex (48.5%). They were unlikely to access centre-based services for HIV related services. Therefore, outreach services (with peer involvement if possible) should be the main way of contacting this population for HIV prevention and HIV testing.

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#### **FACTSHEET on HARiS for TG 2015**

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