



Barometre Gay 2002, France: Partnership for a large survey and feed back to respondents



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MoPeD3969

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BACKGROUND

In France, since 1985, repeated surveys were conducted among readers of the gay press on risk behavior and HIV prevention. In 2000, a new survey Barometre Gay was carried out in Paris commercial gay venues in order to target men having sex with men (MSM) with high sexual activity; results showed that respondents had riskier behaviors than readers of the gay press. In 2002, Barometre Gay was conducted all over France.

METHODS

The 2002 survey resulted from the **collaboration** between a **national public health institution**, Institut de veille sanitaire (InVS), a **gay union**, Syndicat national des entreprises gaies (SNEG), and an **aids organization**, AIDES-France. SNEG promotes HIV and STI prevention in commercial gay venues e.g. bathhouses, sexclubs, bars, discos; AIDES volunteers' work fields include cruising venues such as parks, beaches, etc.

Most 2002 questions were issued from 1st Barometre Gay questionnaire which had been established by InVS specialists and the SNEG team.

Short anonymous self-administered questionnaires named "Sondage flash" were handed out in cruising venues during 2 months in summer, and were displayed or handed out in commercial gay venues in autumn and winter for 6 months.

Analysis was performed by InVS epidemiologists; results and their return to the gay community were discussed between partners.



Description of men in gay venues:

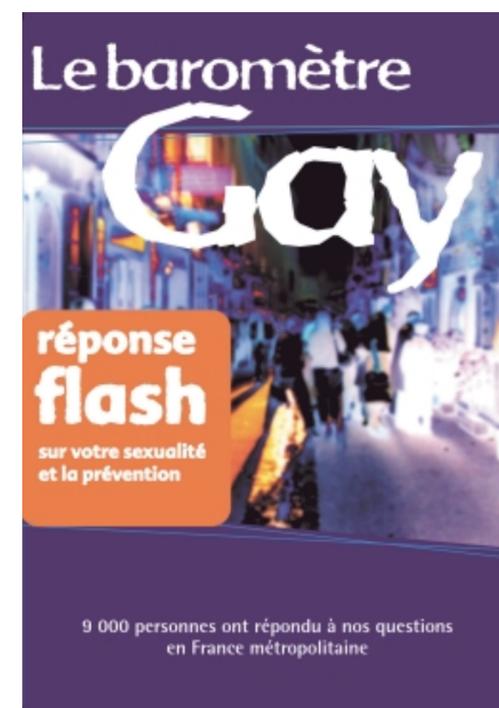
- living all over France ; 1/3 in Paris area,
- occupations: management 25%, white collar 54%, blue collar 9%, students 7%
- mean age: 35 years [16-100]
- self-reported HIV (+): 12% (among tested)

While 60% reported steady partners, most respondents had **high risk behavior**:

- 50% had over 10 partners per year,
- 8% reported gonorrheal infection or syphilis in last 12 months
- 33% reported at least one unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) with casual partners in last 12 months period
- UAI concerned mostly young men (<25 yr), respondents with HIV (+) status or reporting recent STI, with lower education and those reporting oral sex with ejaculation
- HIV status was often unknown, 25% of respondents didn't know their own, and 70% had UAI with casual partners whom status was ignored.

In order to inform and increase gay venues men' awareness of their risk behavior, Barometre Gay findings were presented in leaflets named "**Reponse Flash**".

60,000 leaflets were handed out less than a year after the survey's completion, by AIDES and SNEG teams in the same gay venues all over the country.



RESULTS

(Other results available: posters WePeC6057, WePeC6066)

Questionnaires were offered in 91 cruising venues and 569 commercial gay venues in France. The return rate was 15% (**8902** questionnaires returned); 60% were issued in sex-on-site venues

CONCLUSIONS

Barometre Gay was successful with regard to the high participation of MSM.

Results confirmed that MSM in gay venues had high sexual activity and high risk behavior. Specific actions are needed in all gay venues, sex-on-site or not, and have the use for new educational tools like "Reponse flash" and its large diffusion.

To perform research among the specific population of gay venues, partners with long lasting field work were essential.