



A study about you
and your experiences

Flux Study COVID-19 Diary Monthly Report

Report 01: Reporting week ending 14 June

Prepared by Daniel Storer
On behalf of the BRISE Reference Group for the Flux Study

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Collaborating Organisations

COVID-19 Diary Study is a collaboration between the Kirby Institute, the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC), the Australian Research Centre in Sex Health and Society (ARCSHS), the Centre for Social Research in Health (CSRH), University of Auckland, Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO), National LGBTI Health Alliance, ACON, and Thorne Harbour Health.

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Executive summary

This is a report on the findings from the Flux Study COVID-19 Diary for the period 3 May 2020 to 14 June 2020. The report is a summary of data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia among gay and bisexual men (GBM). Weekly data are collected on key sexual and other risk behaviours, and monthly data collected on health seeking practices and social connectedness in relation to COVID-19.

Between 382 and 399 gay and bisexual men completed online diary entries at weekly intervals followed by an extended weekly diary at Week 4. There were 387 responses in Week 1, 395 responses in Week 2, 397 responses in Week 3, 399 responses in Week 4, 385 responses in Week 5, and 382 responses in Week 6.

Summary of findings:

- The number of sexual partners among GBM remained relatively stable over the reporting period with a slight increase in Weeks 4-6. Men in NSW tended to have higher partner numbers than men in other jurisdictions.
- Consistently, around half of men reported any type of sex each week? over the six weeks.
- The proportion of men reporting sex with a non-relationship partner varied from 20.8% to 20.9%.
- Condomless anal intercourse (CLAI) among men with more than one non-relationship partner fluctuated between a third to almost two thirds of respondents.
- Group sex was low, with around one in 20 men engaging in group sex up to Week 4.
- Among non HIV-positive men reporting CLAI with multiple non-relationship partners, about three quarters were protected by PrEP.
- NSW respondents were more likely to report sex with multiple non-relationship partners.
- The proportion of men reporting being tested for COVID-19 was low and peaked in Weeks 2 and 3 at approximately 4%.

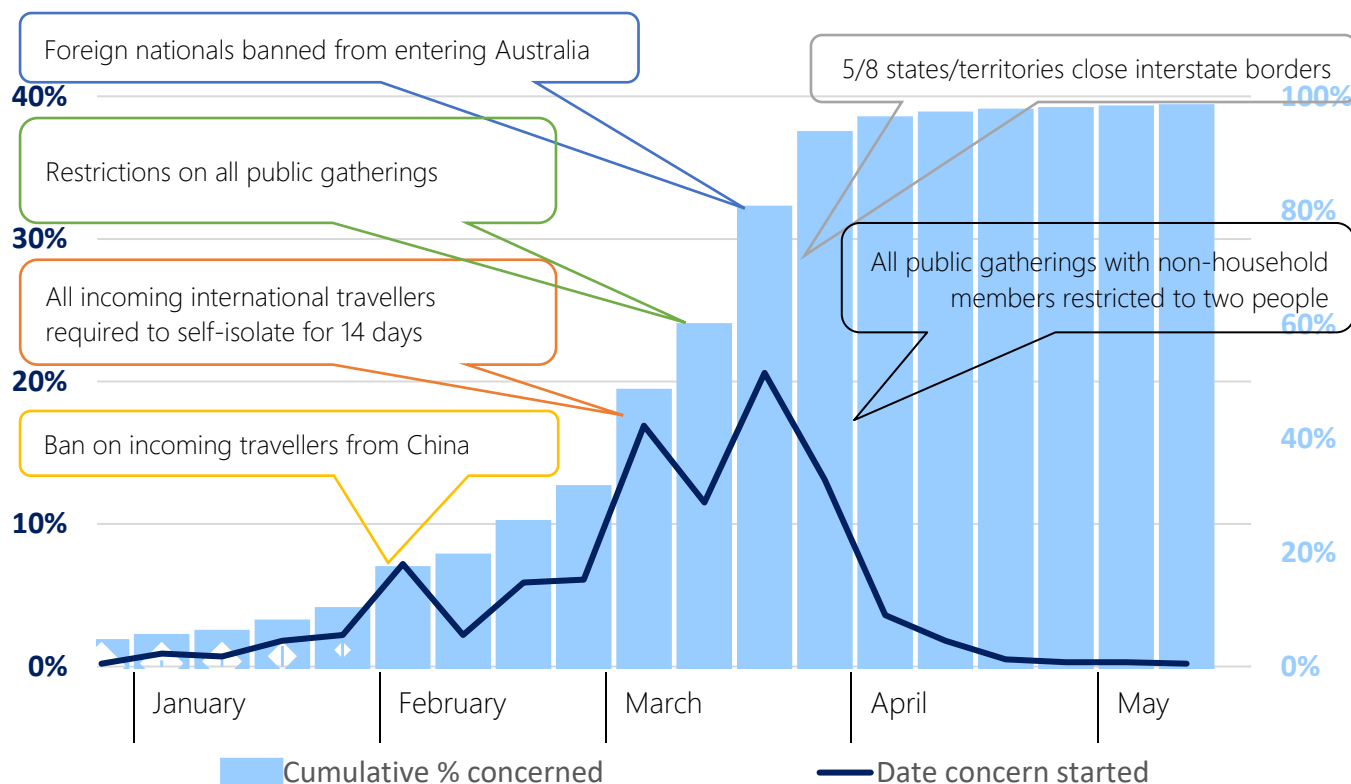
- About one in six men indicated they were coping poorly with the current COVID-19 crisis, and this reached a peak of nearly one in four at Week 4.
- 13% of men reported testing for HIV and/or STIs over the first four weeks.



Background

At baseline, gay and bisexual men reported the date they became concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 1 details the cumulative percentage as men became concerned and the date concern started. This is accompanied by implementation of restrictions around the country.

Figure 1. Onset of concern about COVID-19 by date and cumulative frequency



Changes in restriction by study week

The COVID-19 Diary Study commenced collecting weekly diary entries from participants on 10th May 2020. Each Sunday thereafter participants are asked to complete their diary entries within 48 hours of receiving an emailed invitation.

Week 1 (3-10 May 2020):

NSW: Up to two adults and their children allowed to visit another household.

Queensland: Drives up to 50kms from home and family picnics allowed, along with other recreational activities (such as non-essential shopping). Up to five people from one household can visit another household from 10 May.

WA: Gatherings of up to 10 people permitted.

ACT: Up to 10 people allowed for indoor and outdoor gatherings. Larger families coming from a maximum of two households where they exceed 10 people are allowed but physical distancing and one person per four square metres must be maintained. Non-essential retail shopping allowed. Auctions, open houses and display homes allowed to open. Up to 10 people at weddings, places of worship and religious ceremonies, outdoor bootcamps and non-contact personal training. Up to 20 people allowed at indoor funerals and 30 for outdoors funerals.

NT: Personal gatherings including weddings and funerals allowed. Playgrounds, parks and campgrounds outside biosecurity areas open. Public swimming pools, lagoons and water parks open. Outdoor sport where physical distancing can be maintained allowed. Fishing, boating and sailing with other people allowed. Open houses, auctions and gatherings in homes allowed.

Week 2 (11-17 May 2020):

NSW: Indoor dining venues allowed with restricted numbers to 10 seated diners. Outdoors gatherings of up to 10 people and up to 5 non-household visitors allowed at one time. Weddings allowed up to 10 guests, indoor funerals up to 20 people and outdoors funerals up to 30. Religious gatherings/places of worship allowed up to 10 people. Use of outdoor equipment allowed as well as outdoor pools (with restrictions).

Victoria: Up to 5 visitors permitted in private homes. Outdoor group activities with up to 10 people permitted. Up to 20 guests allowed at weddings, 20 people at indoor funerals and 30 people at outdoor funerals. Outdoor recreational activities allowed including fishing, hiking, golf, etc.

Queensland: Kindergarten, prep and years 1, 11 and 12 return to school. Pubs, clubs, restaurants and cafes reopen for up to 10 patrons from Saturday 16 May.

WA: Gatherings of up to 20 people indoors or outdoors permitted. Bars and restaurants to reopen to serve up to 20 people. Museums, libraries, and community sports permitted for up to 20 people.

SA: Outdoor dining permitted for up to 10 people. Elective surgeries recommence.

Tasmania: Up to 20 people allowed for funerals. One visit per week with no more than two visitors allowed to aged care residents. National parks and reserves open to residents for exercise within 30km of their home. TasTAFE opens for small groups attending practical and assessment sessions.

ACT: Up to 10 people allowed for restaurants, cafes, playgrounds and outdoors fitness stations, parks, nature reserves and national parks, non-contact, outdoor community and social sport, pools, libraries, community centres, facilities or youth centres, auction houses, and hairdressers and barbers.

NT: Expansion of permitted activities to include opening of food courts, restaurants, cafes, bars and sports or RSL club, organised training activities for sporting clubs and teams, indoor markets, beauty therapy for non-facial services, fitness studios, indoor physical training, gyms, libraries, indoor playgrounds, places of religious worship, art galleries, museums, public memorials, historic sites, zoo or wildlife facilities and parks and reserves. All activities conducted in these facilities or places must be less than two hours in duration.

Week 3 (18-24 May 2020):

WA: Residents encouraged to return to work, unless unwell or vulnerable. Travel permitted throughout most of WA. Up to 20 people allowed for indoor and outdoor non-work gatherings, indoor weddings and funerals (30 outside), non-contact community sport, outdoor or indoor fitness classes with no shared equipment, places of worship, community facilities, libraries, public pools, and cafes and restaurants.

SA: Indoor seated dining permitted for up to 10 people and 10 outdoors including with alcohol for restaurants.

Tasmania: Up to five non-household visitors allowed at any one time. Up to 10 people allowed for indoor and outdoor gatherings. Up to 10 people allowed for weddings, religious ceremonies and private worship. Up to 20 people allowed for indoor funerals and 30 for outdoors. Up to 10 people allowed for outdoor gyms, skate parks, play equipment, boot camps and sports training, indoor and outdoor pools. Parks can be used for picnics in addition to exercise. Restaurants and cafes open for table service up to 10 patrons.

Week 4 (25-31 May 2020):

NSW: Schools reopened.

Victoria: Parks and outdoor venues reopened for up to 10 people.

Queensland: All other students return to school.

Tasmania: Kindergarten to Year 6 students return to school. Year 11 and 12 at extension schools and colleges return to school. Aged care visit restriction moves to two visitors, once a day.

ACT: Business to reopen and up to 20 people for: beauty therapy, tanning or waxing services, nail salons, spa and massage parlours, tattoo and body modification parlours, gyms, health clubs, fitness or wellness centres (small group supervised sessions and no unsupervised free weight training or use of other gym equipment) and other fitness facilities, galleries, museums, national institutions and historic places, outdoor amusement/attractions (e.g. zoo), choirs, bands and orchestras, caravan parks and campgrounds, indoor sporting centres, and low contact indoor and outdoor sport including dance activities (one parent per minor). Further easing for restaurants, cafes, clubs and other licensed venues. Up to 20 people allowed at weddings, places of worship and religious ceremonies, boot camps and personal training, pools and community centres, facilities and youth centres. Up to 50 people allowed for indoor and outdoor funerals. Universities and other vocational training providers to increase face-to-face learning where possible.

Week 5 (1-7 June 2020):

NSW: Restaurants and bars allowed to serve up to 50 seated customers. Schools, museums, galleries, libraries, beauty salons, spas and personal services permitted to reopen. Regional travel within the state for any reason, including holidays, allowed. 50 people allowed at funerals and places of worship, 20 people allowed at weddings, all subject to four square metre rule.

Victoria: Up to 20 people permitted in private homes and outdoor gatherings also increased to 20 people. Overnight stays permitted in homes and tourist accommodation.

Beauty salons, spas and personal services permitted to reopen. Restaurants and bars

permitted to serve up to 20 customers. Up to 20 people allowed at weddings, 50 people at funerals and 20 people at other religious ceremonies. Libraries, youth centres and other community facilities, galleries, museums, drive-in cinemas, historic sites, zoos and outdoor amusement parks, swimming pools, community sporting activities (non-contact), and auctions and open for inspections can open up to 20 people. Non-food and drink market stalls can open.

Queensland: Up to 20 people allowed to dine-in at restaurants and cafes, attend a gym, cinema, library, museum, art gallery, or place of worship. The same for bars but patrons must be seated. From 5 June, hospitality venues are allowed 20 people per 'section' as long as no more than one person per four square metres.

WA: Four square metre rule revised to 2 square metres. Non-work gatherings allowed for up to 100 people and 300 for venues with multiple spaces. Full contact sport and training permitted. Seated service for food businesses and licensed premises. Galleries, cinemas, theatres, gyms and other fitness studios, beauty salons, spas and wellness centres, playgrounds and play centres, Rottnest Island, zoos and wildlife parks all open with restrictions.

SA: Cinemas, theatres, gyms, museums, galleries, libraries, beauty salons, spas and personal services permitted to reopen. Bars, restaurants and other hospitality venues are allowed 20 people per 'section' as long as no more than one person per four square metres to a maximum of 80 customers in the venue. Bars and clubs allowed to have patrons consume alcohol without a meal. Driving lessons able to take place.

Tasmania: Up to 30 people allowed for indoor and outdoor gatherings. Up to 40 people allowed for weddings, religious ceremonies, private worship and church services (indoors and outdoors). Up to 50 people allowed for funerals (indoors and outdoors). Up to 10 non-household visitors allowed in addition to household residents. Travel to and stays at shacks permitted with visitor restrictions the same as primary residence. Business allowed up to 20 people at gatherings. The following also reopen: accommodation (no limit unless rented holiday house, then up to 20), camping and caravan parks, function centres, open homes and auctions, cinemas (up to 40 people per cinema), museums, galleries and

historic sites (up to 80 people), theatres and concert venues (up to 40 attendees), outdoor amusement parks, arcade and play centres, betting shopfronts, indoor gyms, fitness centres and sporting venues, dance schools, health clubs, fitness and wellness centres, and zoos and wildlife parks (up to 40). Up to 40 people allowed in restaurants, cafes, pubs, clubs and bars. Gathering restrictions do not apply to beauty and personal care services but one person per four square metre rule must apply. National parks and reserves no longer restricted to people within 30kms of their home. Up to 20 people allowed for indoor and outdoor exercise or sport, including pools. No limits on boating and overnight stays are permitted.

NT: Permitted activities expanded to gaming venues, playing in teams sports, cinemas, theatres, concert and music halls, dance halls, nightclubs and other entertainment venues, amusement venues and parks, attending a bar without consuming food, all other beauty therapy, cosmetic services and tattooing or body art previously restricted, community, recreation or play centres, arenas, stadiums and sporting facilities (above 500 people requires a COVID-19 Safety Plan), and all other business, facilities and services previously restricted can resume. Major events approved on a case by case basis. Biosecurity areas lifted.

Week 6 (8-14 June 2020):

NSW: Gyms, indoor pools, yoga and dance studios, tattoo and massage parlours, community centres reopened, and 20 people were allowed at home and outdoor gatherings.

Queensland: Community sport able to recommence.

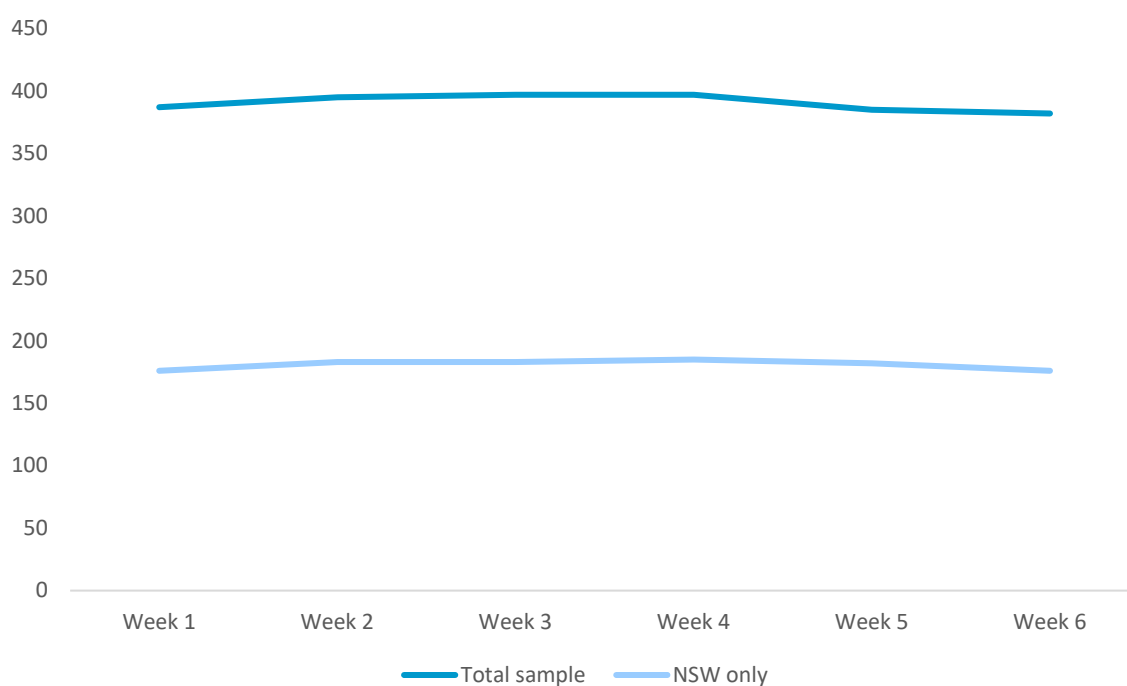
Tasmania: Years 7 to 10 students return to school. Racing resumes.

Responses

Responses have been consistent with high retention. Men from NSW comprised at least 45% of participants each week.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
NSW only	176	183	183	185	182	176
Total sample	387	395	397	397	385	382
Initial enrolment	387	47	5	2	0	0
Previous enrolment		348	392	395	385	382
Non-response		39	42	44	56	59
Cumulative total	387	434	439	441	441	441

Figure 2. Number of respondents each week (total and NSW)

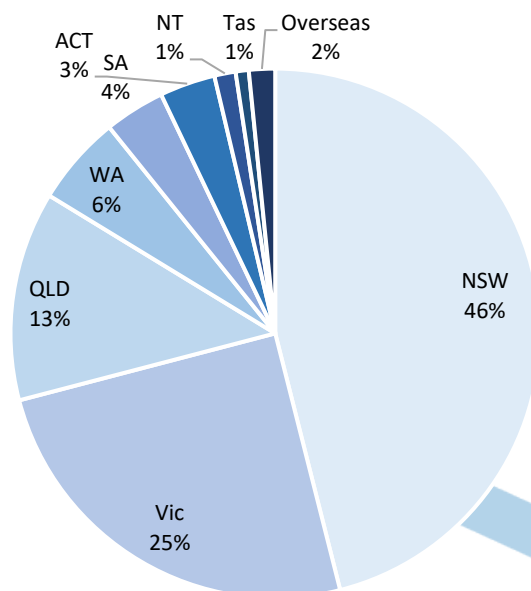


Geographic distribution

	Existing Flux cohort	Newly enrolled cohort*	Total
State/territory			
New South Wales	176 (46.1)		176 (46.1)
Victoria	95 (24.9)		95 (24.9)
Queensland	49 (12.8)		49 (12.8)
Western Australia	21 (5.5)		21 (5.5)
South Australia	14 (3.7)		14 (3.7)
ACT	13 (3.4)		13 (3.4)
Northern Territory	5 (1.3)		5 (1.3)
Tasmania	3 (0.8)		3 (0.8)
Overseas	6 (1.6)		6 (1.6)
Postcode			
Highly gay populated	107 (28.0)		107 (28.0)
Moderately gay populated	165 (43.2)		165 (43.2)
Sparsely gay populated	103 (27.0)		103 (27.0)
No response	7 (1.8)		7 (1.8)

*Note: New enrolments into the study commenced in Week 8 and will be included in all future reports.

Figure 3. Place of residence



Sample characteristics

		Existing Flux cohort	New enrolled cohort*	Total
Age				
	Mean (SD)	45.5 (14.1)		45.5 (14.1)
	Median	45		45
	Under 25	15 (3.9%)		15 (3.9%)
HIV Status				
	Positive	31 (8.1)		31 (8.1)
	Negative	340 (89.0)		340 (89.0)
	Unknown	11 (2.9)		11 (2.9)
Sexuality				
	Gay	344 (90.1)		344 (90.1)
	Bisexual	2 (5.8)		2 (5.8)
	Other	16 (4.2)		16 (4.2)
Country of birth				
	Australia/NZ	342 (78.6)		342 (78.6)
	Asia	22 (5.1)		22 (5.1)
	Other	73 (16.3)		73 (16.3)
Changes to employment				
	Laid off temporarily	20 (5.2)		20 (5.2)
	Laid off completely	15 (3.9)		15 (3.9)
	Reduced hours	38 (9.9)		38 (9.9)
	Working from home	99 (25.9)		99 (25.9)
	Redeployed due to COVID-19	5 (1.3)		5 (1.3)
	Commenced new job	7 (1.8)		7 (1.8)
	Returned to workplace	20 (5.2)		20 (5.2)
	Increased hours	25 (6.5)		25 (6.5)
	Began taking payment for sex	1 (0.3)		1 (0.3)
	No changes	196 (51.3)		196 (51.3)

*Note: New enrolments into the study commenced in Week 8 and will be included in all future reports.

Sexual Behaviour

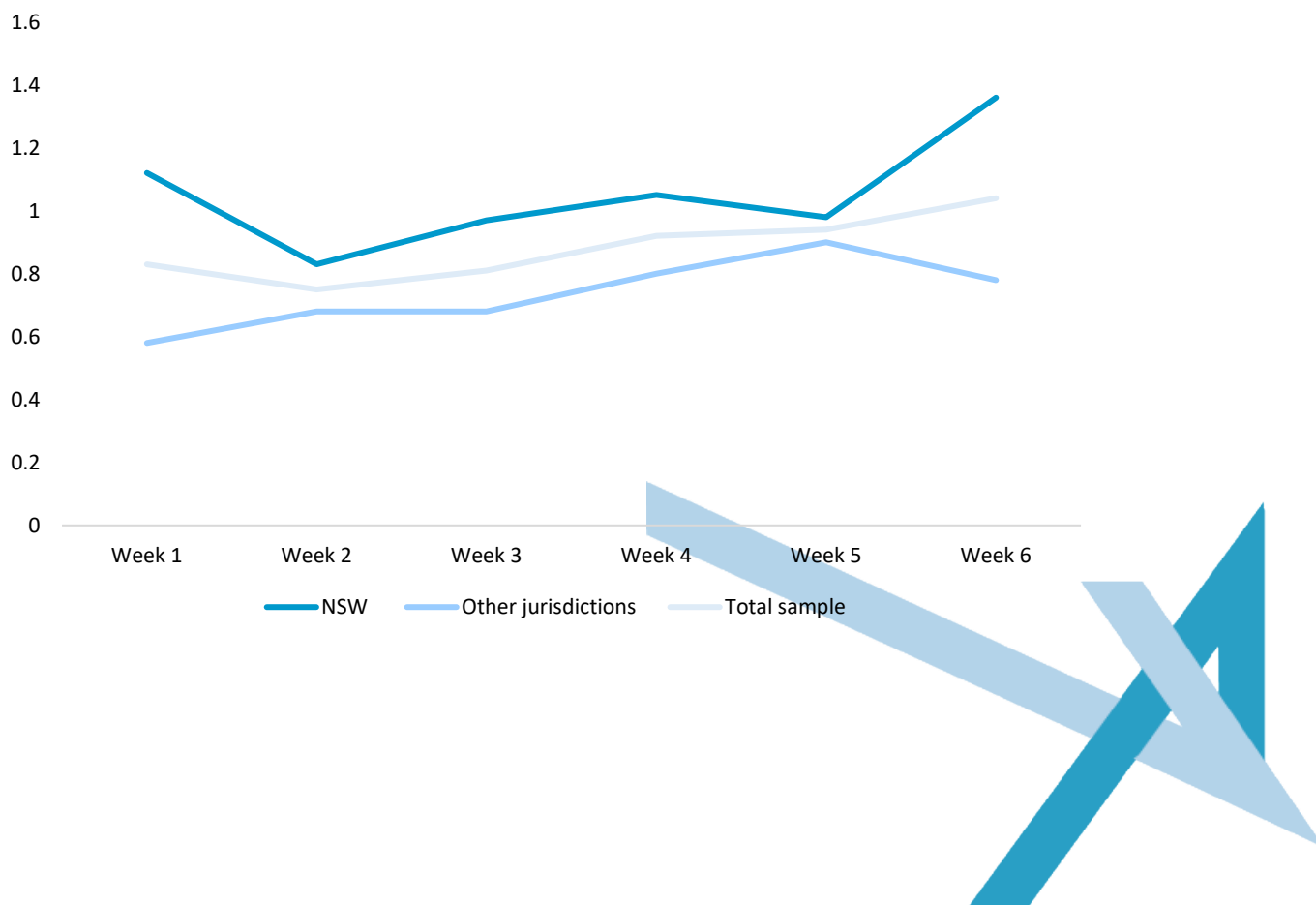
Number of sexual partners

Number of partners remained stable over the reporting six-week period and then appeared to begin to increase slightly, possibly reflecting some easing of restrictions at this time

Mean (SD)	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
NSW	1.12 (2.39)	0.83 (1.44)	0.97 (1.61)	1.05 (1.93)	0.98 (1.51)	1.36 (3.36)
Other jurisdictions	0.58 (0.87)	0.68 (1.21)	0.68 (1.21)	0.80 (1.40)	0.90 (1.78)	0.78 (1.44)
Total sample	0.83 (1.77)	0.75 (1.30)	0.81 (1.42)	0.92 (1.67)	0.94 (1.66)	1.04 (2.53)
Median	0	0	0	0	1	0

Men in NSW tended to have a higher mean number of partners than men in other jurisdictions, and the recent upward trend in partner numbers was most evident among NSW respondents. It should be noted that most men had 1 or no partners.

Figure 4. Mean number of sexual partners by week of response



Non-relationship partners and condomless anal intercourse (CLAI)

Up to half of men reported engaging in any type of sex throughout the first six weeks, with around a quarter engaging in sex with a non-relationship partner (fuckbuddy/casual partner).

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Any sex	181 (46.8)	172 (43.5)	179 (45.1)	197 (49.6)	195 (50.6)	182 (47.6)
Sex with 1 partner only	129 (33.3)	122 (30.9)	122(30.7)	135 (34.0)	127 (33.0)	117 (30.6)
Any sex with FB/CP	83 (21.4)	82 (20.8)	94 (23.7)	116 (29.2)	111 (28.8)	106 (27.7)
Any sex with >1 FB/CP	46 (11.9)	48 (12.3)	52 (13.1)	48 (12.1)	67 (17.4)	64 (16.8)
Any receptive CLAI*	21 (45.7)	26 (54.2)	33 (63.5)	16 (33.3)	30 (44.8)	30 (46.9)
Used PrEP or TasP**	15 (71.4)	14 (53.8)	17 (51.5)	15 (93.8)	20 (66.7)	26 (86.7)
Any insertive CLAI*	30 (65.2)	27 (56.3)	32 (61.5)	18 (37.5)	37 (55.2)	35 (54.7)
Used PrEP or TasP**	21 (70.0)	13 (48.1)	17 (53.1)	15 (83.3)	22 (59.5)	28 (80.0)

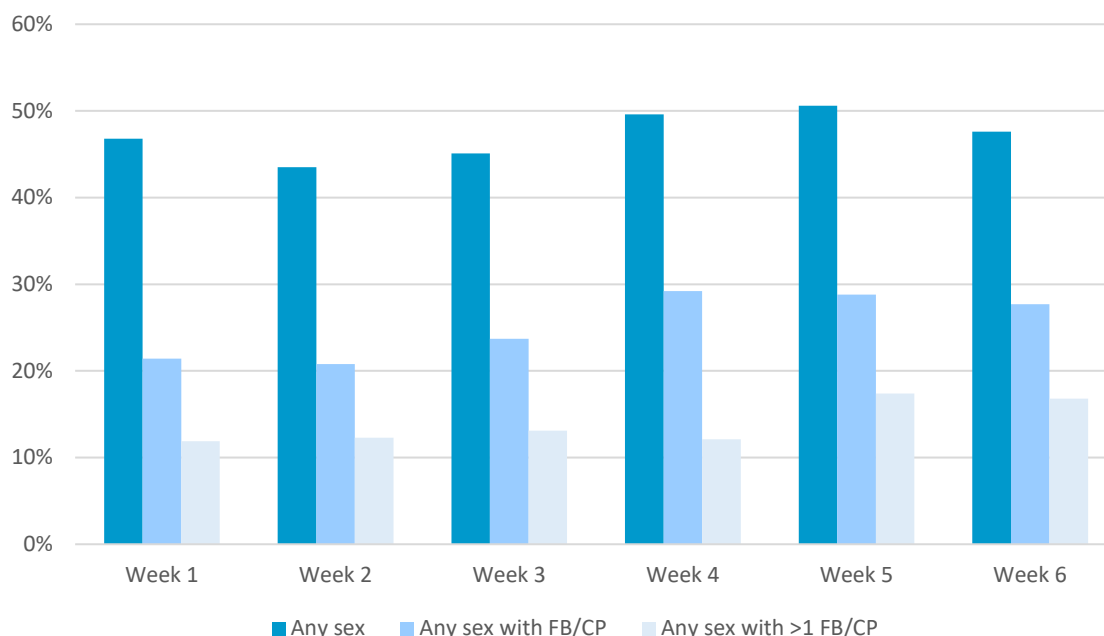
*Note: CLAI is reported specifically among men who had sex with >1 FB/CP.

**Note: PrEP/TasP coverage is reported specifically among men who reported CLAI and had sex with >1 FB/CP. This may be an underestimate of PrEP coverage in Week 2 due to variation in the questions asked in that week.



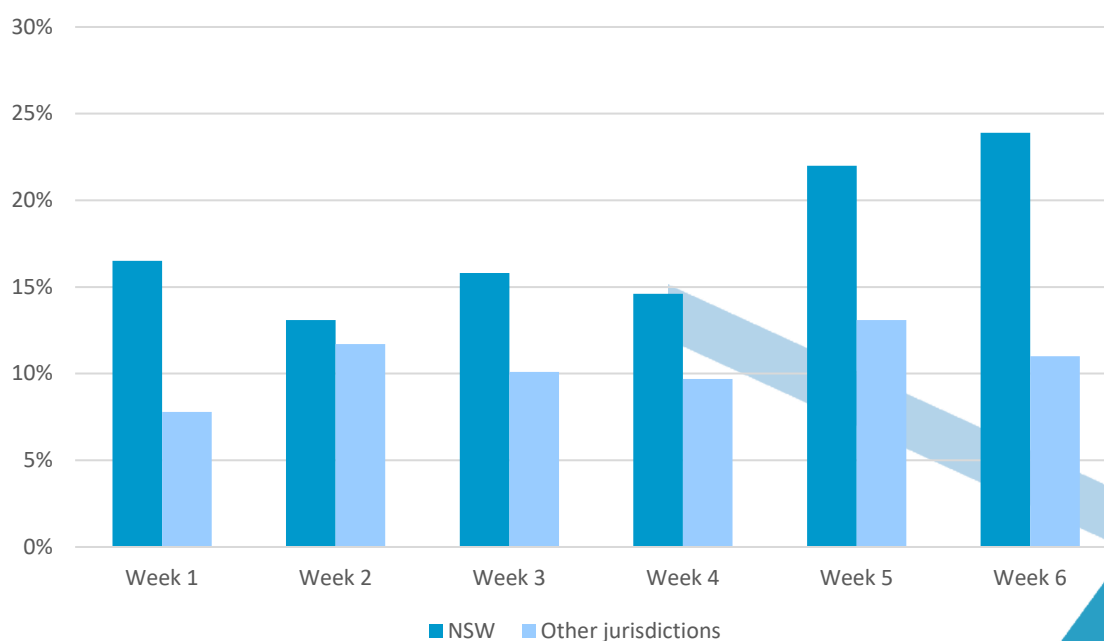
Men engaging in any sex remained relatively stable with a slight increase in Weeks 4 and 5. Reports of sex with non-relationship partners and with more than one non-relationship partner increased slightly over the period.

Figure 5a. Proportion of men engaging in sex



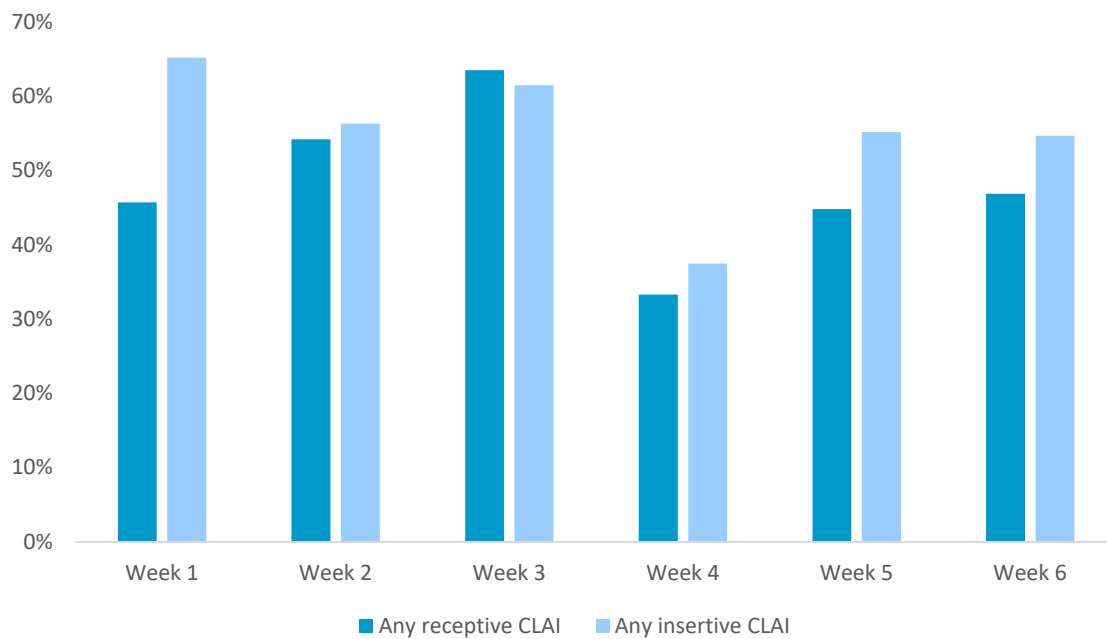
NSW respondents were more likely to report sex with more than one non-relationship partner each week, but this difference has become more pronounced in recent weeks.

Figure 5b. Proportion of men in NSW vs other jurisdictions engaging in sex with multiple (>1) non-relationship partners



Receptive CLAI with more than one non-relationship partner gradually increased until Week 4 when it reduced and has since increased again. Any insertive. Insertive CLAI among men with more than one non-relationship partner fluctuated slightly up to Week 4 where it reduced to just over a third. Both receptive and insertive CLAI with more than one non-relationship partner increased slightly in Weeks 5 and 6.

Figure 5c. Proportion of men engaging in CLAI with multiple (>1) non-relationship partners



Group sex

Participation in group sex was rare with approximately one in 20 men at Week 4 reporting that they had engaged in group sex at some time in the previous four weeks.

Sex within the household and with fuckbuddies/casual partners

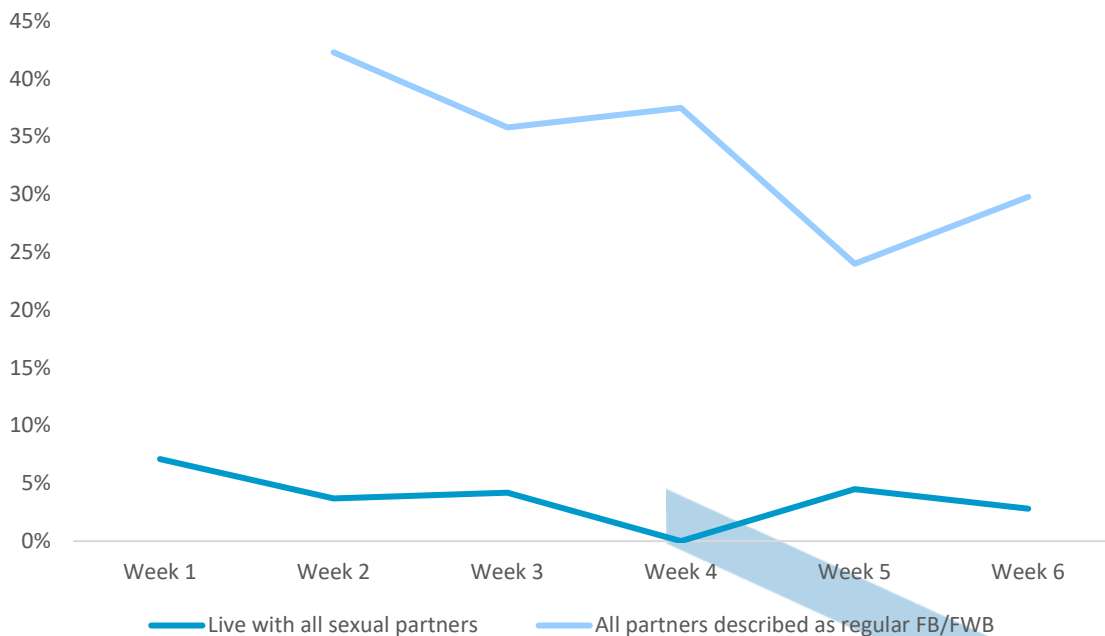
Of the men that had sex with multiple non-relationship partners, only a small proportion indicated that they lived with all the men with whom they had sex. Sex was mostly conducted with men outside of the participant's household. This changed little from week to week.

	Week 1 N=46*	Week 2 N=48*	Week 3 N=52*	Week 4 N=48*	Week 5 N=67*	Week 6 N=64*
Live with all sexual partners	6 (7.1)	3 (3.7)	4 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	5 (4.5)	3 (2.8)
All partners described as regular FB/FWB	-	33 (42.3)	33 (35.8)	15 (37.5)	24 (24.0)	28 (29.8)

*Note: N = men each week who reported having >1 fuckbuddy or casual partner

Each week around a third of the small number of men who had sex with multiple non-relationship partners nonetheless reported that they would describe all these sexual partners as regular fuckbuddies or friends with benefits. Data were not collected to determine whether these were previously established or recent regular partners. Around a third of gay and bisexual men who engaged in sex outside of their immediate household chose men who would all be considered familiar sexual partners. This proportion remained fairly steady over time, although in recent weeks there was some indication that slightly fewer men were restricting their sexual contacts to these more familiar partners.

Figure 6. Proportion of men having sex within the immediate household and with fuckbuddies/friends with benefits



PrEP and PEP use*

About a third of non HIV-positive men were using PrEP at Weeks 4 and 6, whereas about a quarter of non HIV-positive men were using PrEP in Weeks 1-3 and 5, and one man had used PEP. Among non HIV-positive men reporting multiple non-relationship partners, about two thirds were using PrEP, and among those reporting any CLAI with those partners, about three quarters were protected by PrEP, the majority of whom had used PrEP on at least four days in the previous week. On average, men who had PrEP pills in their possession had about 40 pills remaining.

	Week 1	Week 2**	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
No use	267 (74.6)	277 (77.4)	269 (75.1)	247 (67.3)	272 (76.0)	250 (69.8)
PrEP use	91 (25.4)	81 (22.6)	89 (24.9)	119 (32.4)	86 (24.0)	108 (30.2)
PEP use				1 (0.3)		
Mean PrEP pills remaining				41.2 (32.3)	38.4 (32.5)	38.2 (28.6)
Any sex with >1 FB/CP	42	43	46	43	58	55
PrEP use among men reporting any sex with >1 FB/CP	27 (64.3)	21 (48.8)	26 (56.5)	31 (72.1)	30 (51.7)	37 (67.3)
Any CLAI with >1 FB/CP	33	33	37	21	39	37
PrEP use among men reporting any CLAI with >1 FB/CP	23 (69.7)	17 (51.5)	21 (56.8)	18 (85.7)	24 (61.5)	31 (83.8)
4+ days/week PrEP use among men reporting sex with >1 FB/CP	20 (60.6)	17 (51.5)	21 (56.8)	12 (57.1)	21 (53.8)	26 (70.3)

*Note: HIV-positive men excluded.

**Note: May be an underestimate of PrEP coverage in Week 2 due to variation in the questions asked in that week.

COVID-19 Testing

Testing for COVID-19 has been relatively low among participants, peaking at Weeks 2 and 3 and gradually reducing in the following weeks.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Tested in previous week	10 (2.6)	16 (4.1)	16 (4.0)	12 (3.0)	8 (2.1)	9 (2.4)

Test type

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Blood test	1 (10.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (12.5)	1 (11.1)
Nose and throat swab	9 (90.0)	16 (100.0)	15 (93.7)	12 (100.0)	7 (87.5)	8 (88.9)
Positive COVID-19 result	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)



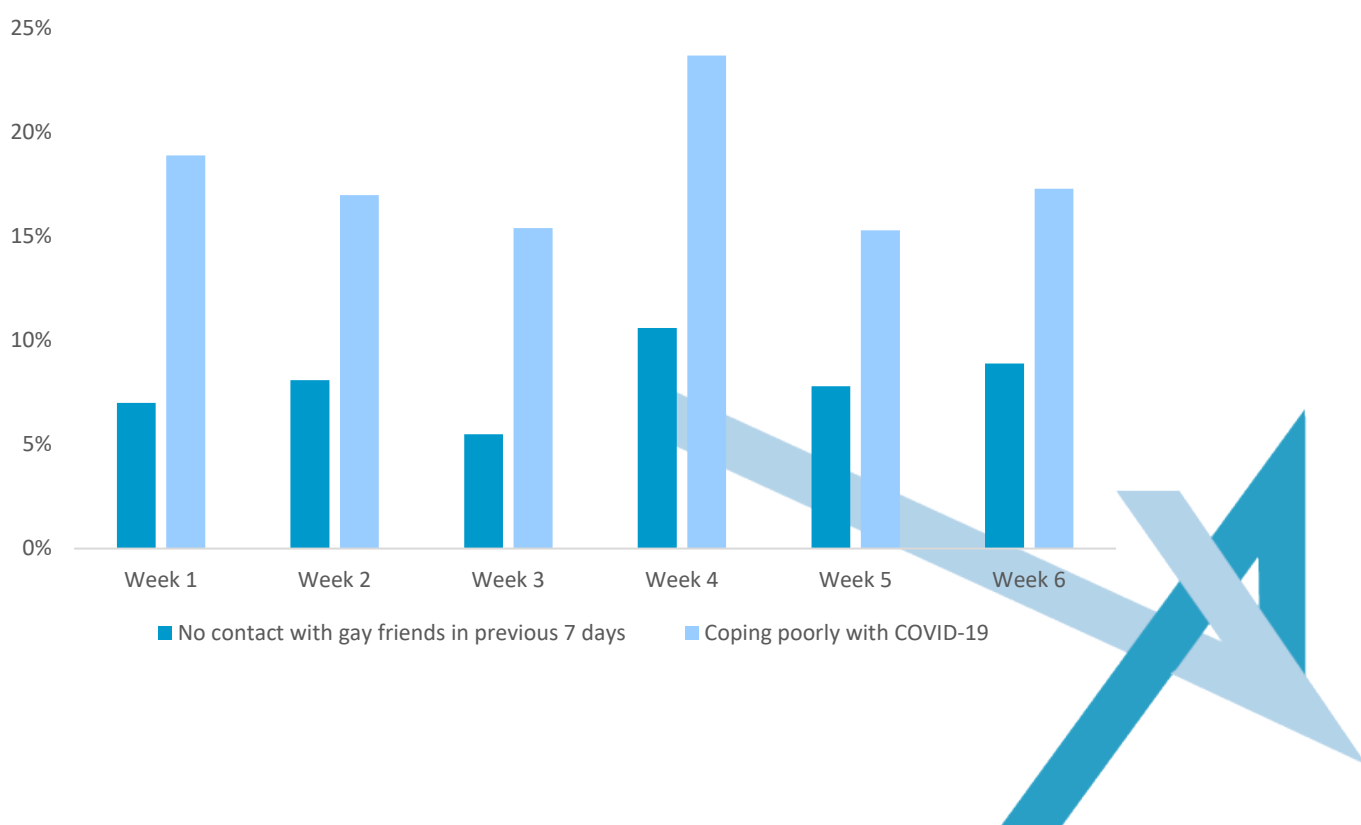
Social connectedness

Despite some fluctuations, contact with gay male friends remained fairly steady, with about one in twelve reporting no contact. The majority of men had some contact with family or other friends in the first four weeks of the study period, with less than five percent reporting no contact. Mostly men were coping with COVID-19 concerns and restrictions fairly well, with little change over time. Coping was measured on a six-point scale from 'Very well' to 'Very poorly'.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
No contact with gay friends in the past 7 days	27 (7.0)	32 (8.1)	22 (5.5)	42 (10.6)	30 (7.8)	34 (8.9)
No contact with other friends and family in the past 7 days	18 (4.6)					
Coping poorly	73 (18.9)	67 (17.0)	61 (15.4)	94 (23.7)	59 (15.3)	66 (17.3)

Approximately one in six respondents indicated that they were coping poorly, and this reached a peak of almost one in four in Week 4.

Figure 7. Proportion of men with no contact with gay male friends and coping poorly with COVID-19



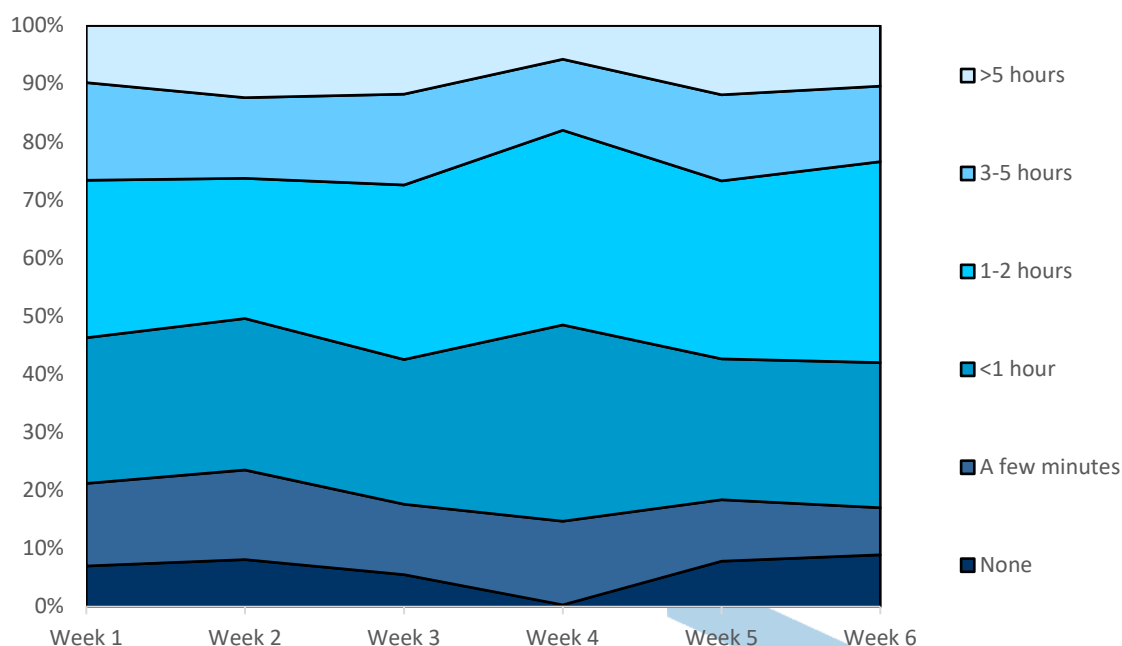
Time spent communicating with gay male friends

Communication, in person, by phone or online, with gay male friends among gay and bisexual men has been consistent. Over half the sample consistently spent an hour or more each day communicating with gay male friends.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
None	27 (7.0)	32 (8.1)	22 (5.5)	1 (0.3)	30 (7.8)	34 (8.9)
A few minutes	55 (14.2)	61 (15.4)	48 (12.1)	52 (14.4)	41 (10.6)	31 (8.1)
<1 hour	97 (25.1)	103 (26.1)	99 (24.9)	122 (33.8)	93 (24.2)	96 (25.0)
1-2 hours	105 (27.1)	95 (24.1)	119 (30.0)	121 (33.5)	118 (30.6)	133 (34.6)
3-5 hours	65 (16.8)	55 (13.9)	62 (15.6)	44 (12.2)	57 (14.8)	50 (13.0)
>5 hours	38 (9.8)	49 (12.4)	47 (11.8)	21 (5.8)	46 (11.9)	40 (10.4)

The proportion of men not engaging in daily communication with gay male friends remained low over the six-week period, at less than one in ten men. The majority of men spend up to two hours daily communicating with gay friends.

Figure 8. Time spent communicating with gay friends



Health-seeking behaviour

Influenza vaccine uptake

Almost three quarters of men indicated they had received the 2020 seasonal influenza vaccine by Week 4.

STI/HIV testing

Just over one in ten men indicated they had been tested for STIs or HIV at some time during the first four weeks of the study. During this period positive STI results were low. One percent of men indicated they tested positive for chlamydia and gonorrhoea respectively, less than one percent indicated they tested positive for syphilis. At Week 4, 90 percent of men reported being HIV negative at that time, around seven percent HIV positive and three percent reported an unknown HIV status. Three quarters of men who were HIV positive reported an undetectable viral load at Week 4.



Appendix A – Methods

Data collection

The Flux Study COVID-19 Diary leverages the existing Flux cohort study infrastructure to investigate the experiences of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact on pre-existing epidemics among GBM. Individual follow occurs systematically among consenting GBM every week for an initial three-month period, to be revisited at the end of each three-month period for up to a maximum of one year to collect specific information about sexual and other risk behaviours and direct impacts of COVID-19.

Baseline questionnaires are completed by newly enrolling participants to establish the characteristics, behaviours, and beliefs required to assess changes over time, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional information collected includes associated harms, health-seeking, social connectedness, COVID-19 physical distancing behaviours, mental health, and relevant personal characteristics.

Weekly diary questionnaires collect specific limited information on sexual behaviour, PrEP use, and COVID-19 health-seeking practices, to enable measurement of changes in behaviours against the rapid changes in physical distancing regulations as they are enforced, or relaxed. Every four weeks, a slightly expanded questionnaire will also collect specific information on physical distancing and social connections, drug use, and access to services.

Six-monthly follow-up questionnaires monitor changes in characteristics, behaviours, and beliefs over time, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, required to assess changes over time as specified in the study aims.

Data analysis

SPSS™, Version 26 (IBM Corporation) was used to analyse data. Percentage values exclude the proportion of respondents who did not answer the question and may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Ethical approval for data collection was obtained from UNSW Human Research Ethics.



Appendix B – Glossary

CLAI – condomless anal intercourse

COVID-19 – the disease caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2

Fuckbuddy/Friend with benefits – a regular sexual partner with whom ongoing sexual contact occurs, generally in the absence of romantic attachment

GBM – gay and bisexual men

HIV – human immunodeficiency virus

HIV status – a person’s antibody status established by HIV testing (e.g. HIV-negative, HIV-positive, or unknown [untested])

Non-relationship partner – a sexual partner that is not a boyfriend or husband with whom participants are in an ongoing romantic relationship, but characterised as a fuckbuddy, friend with benefits or casual partner

PEP – post-exposure prophylaxis; for the purpose of this report, it refers to the use of antiretroviral drugs by HIV-negative people to reduce the risk of HIV infection after a potential exposure has occurred

PrEP – pre-exposure prophylaxis; for the purpose of this report, it refers to the use of antiretroviral drugs by HIV-negative

