



Initiating sex work among Australian gay and bisexual men

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Initiating sex work among gay & bisexual men



Male sex work & HIV in Australia

- **Sex work is not uncommon among gay and bisexual men (GBM)**
 - About one in five have ever been paid for sex
 - Only a small proportion (about 2%) have been 'professional' sex workers
 - About 5% report recent sex work
 - Most sex work is casual & opportunistic
- **GBM who engage in sex work tend to be sexually adventurous, & therefore to also:**
 - engage in high risk sexual behaviors
 - use illicit drugs, especially for chemsex
- **All previous data cross-sectional**

The Flux Study:

Prospective observational study of drug use among gay and bisexual men



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4

Retention (2014-5 cohort)

Virtual visit	Retention (%)
Baseline	-
6-month	77.5
12-month	71.3
18-month	54.6
24-month	58.1

By December 2017, 1395 men had provided follow-up data, & responded to questions about sex work.

Characteristics of the sample at baseline

Characteristics	%
Sample used	1395
Mean age	34.0 (SD 12.5)
Identified as gay	95.9
Anglo-Celtic background	76.4
University educated	59.5
Full time employment	60.0
In relationship	38.7
Recently tested for HIV	84.6
HIV-positive	6.7

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Results:

Sex work among gay and bisexual men in Australia

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Sex work history

	%
Ever (lifetime) engaged in sex work	19.0
Over 6 months prior to baseline	13.8
During 6 months prior to baseline	5.2
Initiated sex work after baseline	4.8
Never engaged in sex work	76.2

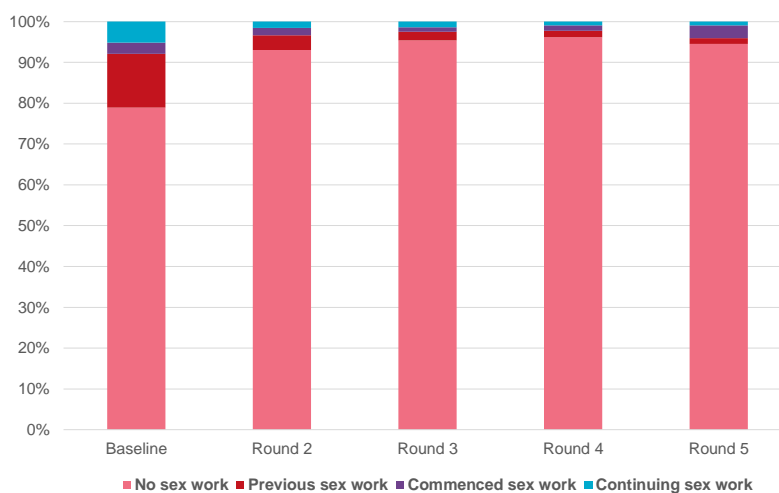
Sex work at baseline

Types of exchange	%
Any exchange	7.9
Exchanged sex for:	
Money	5.2
Food	1.2
Accommodation	2.4
Clothing	0.6
Transport	1.3

Sex work over time

First engaged in sex work (during study)	%
Baseline	7.9
During follow-up:	
Round 2	1.3
Round 3	0.9
Round 4	1.1
Round 5	1.6
<i>Ever</i>	4.8

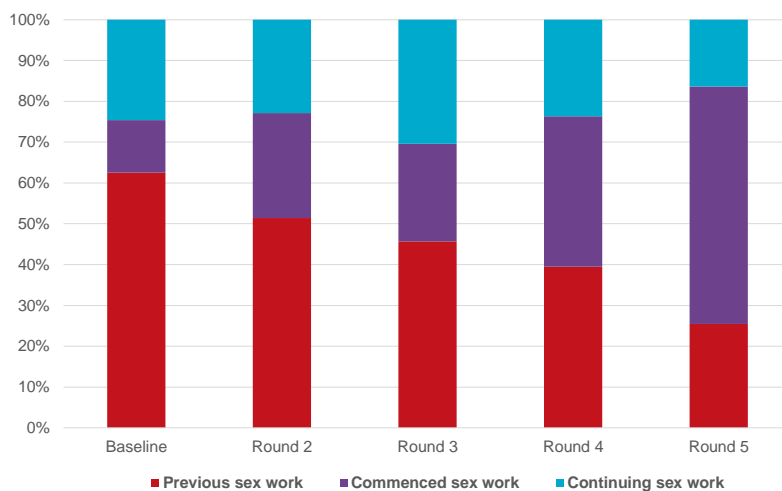
Patterns of sex work over time



11 Initiating sex work among gay & bisexual men



Patterns of sex work over time



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12 Initiating sex work among gay & bisexual men



Prior characteristics & initiation of sex work

%	Never did sex work (n=1034)	Initiated sex work after baseline (n=67)	p value
Condomless unprotected sex with casual partners	23.0	34.3	0.028
Group sex	11.0	34.3	<0.001
University education	60.4	44.8	0.030
Employed full-time	61.1	45.6	-
Student	17.4	31.6	-
Born overseas	16.9	16.4	-
HIV-positive	6.6	9.0	-
PrEP use	0.7	3.0	-
Used methamphetamine	14.2	16.4	-
Mean			
Age	34.9	31.4	0.026
Social engagement with other gay men	2.80	2.60	-
Number of partners	10.9	26.8	0.003
Anxiety (GAD)	1.54	1.90	0.002
Depression (PHQ)	1.88	2.49	<0.001
Sexual sensation-seeking	28.55	32.02	<0.001

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13 Initiating sex work among gay & bisexual men



Follow-up characteristics & initiation of sex work

%	Never did sex work (n=1034)	Initiated sex work after baseline (n=67)	p value
Condomless unprotected sex with casual partners	11.6	35.8	<0.001
Group sex	20.4	43.3	<0.001
Employed full-time	64.8	44.6	0.001
Student	12.4	23.1	
HIV-positive	9.9	15.8	-
PrEP at follow-up	12.7	13.4	-
Used methamphetamine	10.8	22.4	0.022
Mean			
Social engagement with other gay men	2.82	2.76	-
Number of partners	13.7	29.5	0.006
Anxiety (GAD)	1.58	1.78	-
Depression (PHQ)	1.88	2.12	-
Sexual sensation-seeking	29.02	32.21	<0.001

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14 Initiating sex work among gay & bisexual men



Changes in characteristics among men who initiated sex work

%	Prior to sex work (n=67)	At commencing sex work (n=67)	McNemar
Condomless unprotected sex with casual partners	34.3	35.8	-
Group sex	34.3	43.3	-
Employed full-time	45.6	44.6	-
Student	31.6	23.1	
PrEP use	3.0	13.4	0.001
Used methamphetamine	16.4	22.4	-
Highly socially engaged with other gay men	16.4	26.9	-
More than 10 partners	31.6	52.6	0.002
Evidence of anxiety (GAD)	25.5	21.6	-
Evidence of depression (PHQ)	43.4	35.4	-
High scores on sexual sensation-seeking	63.0	53.7	-

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Predictors of sex work initiation

**Men who never engaged in sex work (n=1034)
vs men who initiated sex work after baseline (n=67)**

Factor	Adjusted Odds Ratio	Lower	Upper	P-trend
Age	0.97	0.94	0.99	0.038
Baseline factors				
Group sex	4.80	2.33	9.87	<0.001
Depression (PHQ)	1.56	1.22	1.99	<0.001
Sexual sensation-seeking	1.10	1.04	1.17	0.001
Follow-up factors				
Part-time employment	2.52	1.12	5.67	0.026
Student	4.04	1.71	9.54	0.001
Group sex	2.32	1.17	4.59	0.016

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Conclusion:
What does all this mean?

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Conclusion

- **Sex work was not uncommon though most is infrequent**
- **About one in 20 men initiated sex work over 2 years**
- **Men who initiated sex work were:**
 - younger & less likely to be in full-time employment
- **Some men who started sex work experienced depression**
 - Depression was not a distinguishing factor after commencing sex work
- **They were also more sexually adventurous, & risky**
- **But no more likely to use PrEP**
- **The only things that changed after commencing sex work:**
 - More partners
 - More likely to use PrEP (but no more than men who didn't do sex work)
- **Male sex workers may need to be prioritised for access to PrEP.**

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Thank you

The Flux participants

3935 participants

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