

COMFORT IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT HIGHER RISK SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS IN A GENDER-NEUTRAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR BLOOD DONATION AMONG DIVERSE POPULATIONS

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Background:

Currently in Australia, a man cannot donate blood if he has had sex with another man within the past three months. However, Australia is progressing a gender-neutral assessment (GNA) for blood donation eligibility to address perceived inequity. The GNA will include questions for all donors on new or multiple recent partners, and, if applicable, questions on anal sex. Understanding the acceptability of such questions among existing and potential blood donors is paramount. Additionally, having an ethnically diverse donor panel is crucial to meet patient needs, however individuals from minority backgrounds are underrepresented in blood donation. Assessing acceptability of potential GNA questions among minority populations is essential to minimise shortages of rare blood types.

Methods:

We used data from a nationally representative survey to estimate comfort in the proposed GNA questions among minority populations. Respondents were aged over 18 and living in Australia. Data were weighted to match the population.

Results:

A total of 5,178 people completed the survey, with 43% male, 57% female, 0.4% non-binary, and 0.1% using a different term. Most were comfortable with answering questions about new partners (73.1%, 95%CI 71.4-74.8%) or anal sex (64.0%, 95%CI 62.1-65.8%) to donate blood. By religion, the least comfortable group was Muslims, with 11.5% (95%CI 3.4-32.8%) and 14.6% (95%CI 5.4-33.9%) saying that being asked questions about new partners and anal sex respectively would stop them donating. By country-of-birth, respondents born in the Middle East were least comfortable with 17.0% (95%CI 4.8-45.7%) and 26.1% (95%CI 10.7-51.1%) saying that being asked questions about new partners and anal sex respectively would stop them donating.

Conclusion:

A GNA appears to be broadly acceptable in the study population, however there are some signals that GNA questions may be less acceptable in some population subgroups, suggesting a need for targeted education to address cultural sensitivities.

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