

SEX, RELATIONSHIPS, AND COVID-19

Sexual Behavior Change among Gay Men in the US

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Health disparities, economic inequalities, and differences in social and sexual contact patterns may put some LGBTQ Americans at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19.¹⁻⁷ New data, collected in partnership by researchers at Vanderbilt University and [The Henne Group, Inc.](#), track the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTQ Americans.⁸ This brief reports the responses of 318 gay and bisexual men and provides a snapshot of how men are changing their sexual behavior in response to the pandemic.

Gay and bisexual men are making significant changes to their sexual behavior in response to the coronavirus epidemic. Four out of five men report having one or no sexual partner in the last 30 days. For many, this is less than before the epidemic. Some men are still meeting new partners in person. Some are taking steps to reduce their risk of coronavirus transmission by asking partners about their risk and prevention behaviors. Most men in our study who report using hookup apps and sites are using them less now. Many are having virtual sex to reduce their risk of exposure to coronavirus. About 30% of gay and bisexual men in our sample are HIV positive; a majority are concerned about how HIV affects coronavirus risk, treatment, and recovery.

Gay and bisexual men are making significant changes to their sexual behavior in response to the coronavirus epidemic.

- In the first month of the COVID-19 epidemic, just over half of the sample reported not having sex.
- For most of these men (55%), having no sex in the last month was *less* sex than they were having before the epidemic.
- Among men who did have sex, most reported having one sexual partner (71%) in the last 30 days.
- For many (32%), one partner was *fewer* partners than before the start of the epidemic.
- 34% reported masturbating *more* in the last month compared with before the epidemic.

Gay and bisexual men engaged in several strategies to directly or indirectly reduce their risk of COVID-19 with sexual partners.

- 19% stopped having sex with casual partners
- 16% avoided crowded places to find new romantic or sexual partners
- 14% avoided group sex events or sex parties
- 4% stopped having sex all together

Some are taking steps to reduce their risk of coronavirus transmission by asking partners about their risk and prevention behaviors.

- 20% asked partners whether they had symptoms like a fever or cough.
- 20% asked partners if they were taking precautions to avoid the virus.
- 19% asked partners if they were staying home.

Gay and bisexual men are using hookup apps less now.

- 58% reported using hookup sites or apps *less* now.
- 90% of those who ever met potential new partners in person reported *reducing* the number of people they met in person.
- 38% reported using video or text chat functions to have virtual sex with a partner(s) in the last week.

Gay and bisexual men are concerned about how HIV may affect coronavirus risk.

- 32% reported being HIV positive.
- A majority are concerned about how HIV might affect COVID-19 risk (63%) and COVID-19 treatment and recovery (64%) for themselves or someone else.

Methodology

From April 10 to April 30, 2020, 318 gay and bisexual men residing in 47 US states completed the online survey.

Contact

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