



# Blood donating histories and attitudes among MSM using Flux data

Following Lives Undergoing Change

2018 Report

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## 2018 Blood Donation using Flux Data

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## 2018 Blood Donation using Flux Data

Since its inception in 2014, a total of 3,967 participants have joined the Flux Study. Participants responded to at least one round of study questionnaires between 2014 and 2018. Each round of follow up has been modified to reflect current trends in drug-taking and sexual behaviours. In 2018, questions were added to the Flux Study around blood donation. 520 men recruited at baseline in 2018, as well 1,182 men who completed a follow-up survey, were asked questions on their donating history, understanding of the existing rules, and attitudes towards them. A total of 1,702 men had answered these questions.

### Recruitment

Over half of the participants were recruited from Facebook's targeted advertising. About one-tenth of participants learned about Flux through other studies, mainly the EPIC-NSW PrEP clinical trial.

**Table 1. Recruitment source**

	N=1,702
Social Media (Facebook)	930 (54.6)
Gay cruising/dating site (Squirt / Manhunt, etc)	150 (8.8)
Gay organisation (ACON, Positive Life, Queer Screen, etc)	44 (2.6)
Friend	58 (3.4)
Other	75 (4.4)
Work Colleague	10 (0.6)
Online forum (Craigslist, etc)	5 (0.3)
Phone apps (Jackd, Grindr, etc)	78 (4.6)
Community event (Fair Day, Mardi Gras, etc)	35 (2.1)
Referred from other studies	162 (9.5)
Instagram	126 (7.4)
Tumblr	29 (1.7)

### Gender

The majority of participants identified as male. There were 36 transgender male, and 3 intersex participants. 14 people had unspecified genders.

**Table 2. Gender**

	N=1,702
Male	1649 (96.9)
Transgender Male	36 (2.1)
Intersex	3 (0.2)
Unknown gender	14 (0.8)

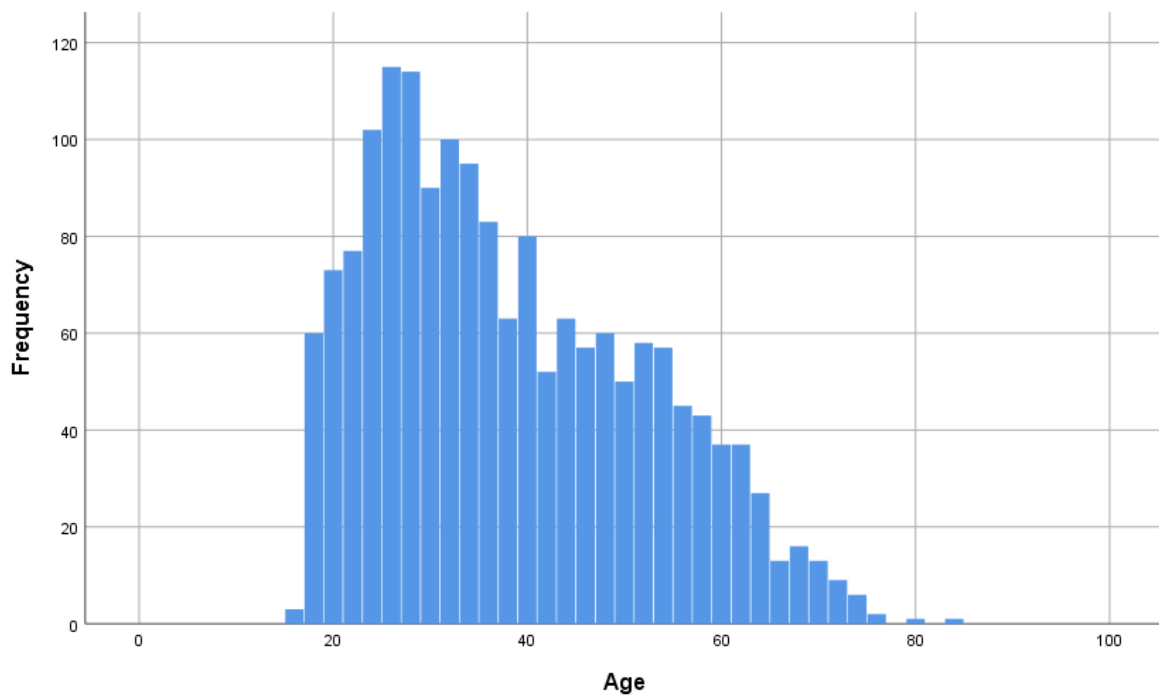
**Age**

Ages ranged from 16 years to 84 years. The mean age was 37.8 years (SD 13.8). Participants' most frequent age was 26 years and the median age was 35 years (IQR = 26-48).

**Table 3. Age of participants**

	N=1,702
Less than 18 years	28 (1.6)
18 to 25 years	332 (19.5)
26 to 35 years	519 (30.5)
36 to 45 years	308 (18.1)
46 to 55 years	284 (16.7)
Over 55 years	231 (13.6)

**Figure 1. Distribution of age of participants**



**Sexual Identity**

The majority of the participants identified as gay or homosexual. Other sexual identities included asexual, queer, homoflexible, human, pansexual, and queer.

**Table 4. Sexual identity**

	N=1,702
Gay	1559 (91.6)
Bisexual	99 (5.8)
Heterosexual	2 (0.1)
Other	42 (2.5)

**Education**

Over half of the same were university educated. One in nine had a trade certificate, and just under one fifth had only completed their year 12 high school.

**Table 5. Education**

	N=1,702
Less than year 12 high school	117 (6.9)
Completed high school (year 12)	307 (18.0)
Trade certificate	200 (11.8)
Undergraduate degree	585 (34.4)
Postgraduate degree	493 (29.0)

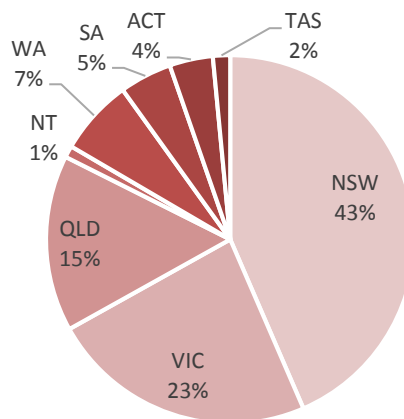
**Residence**

There were participants in every state. The majority resided in New South Wales. About one in five lived in Victoria, and one in six lived in Queensland.

**Table 6. State of Residence**

	N=1,702
New South Wales (NSW)	719 (42.2)
Victoria (VIC)	387 (22.7)
Queensland (QLD)	256 (15.0)
Northern Territory (NT)	17 (1.0)
Western Australia (WA)	110 (6.5)
South Australia (SA)	76 (4.5)
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	63 (3.7)
Tasmania (TAS)	25 (1.5)
Overseas	8 (0.5)
Did not answer	41 (2.4)

**Figure 2. State of residence for Australian residents only**

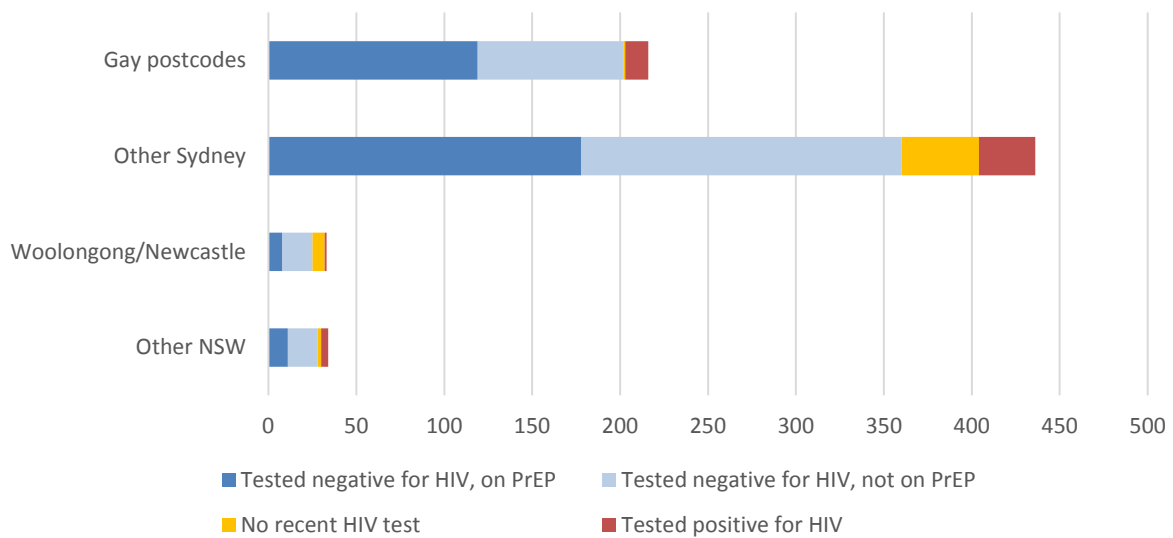


About one third of the participants living in New South Wales live in “Gay Sydney”: Chippendale (2008), Surry Hills / Darlinghurst (2010), Woolloomooloo / Potts Point (2011), Alexandria (2015), Redfern (2016), Newtown / Enmore (2042), Erskineville (2043), Marrickville (2204), Bondi (2026), and Paddington (2021). Two-thirds live in a suburb in Sydney outside of the gay postcodes.

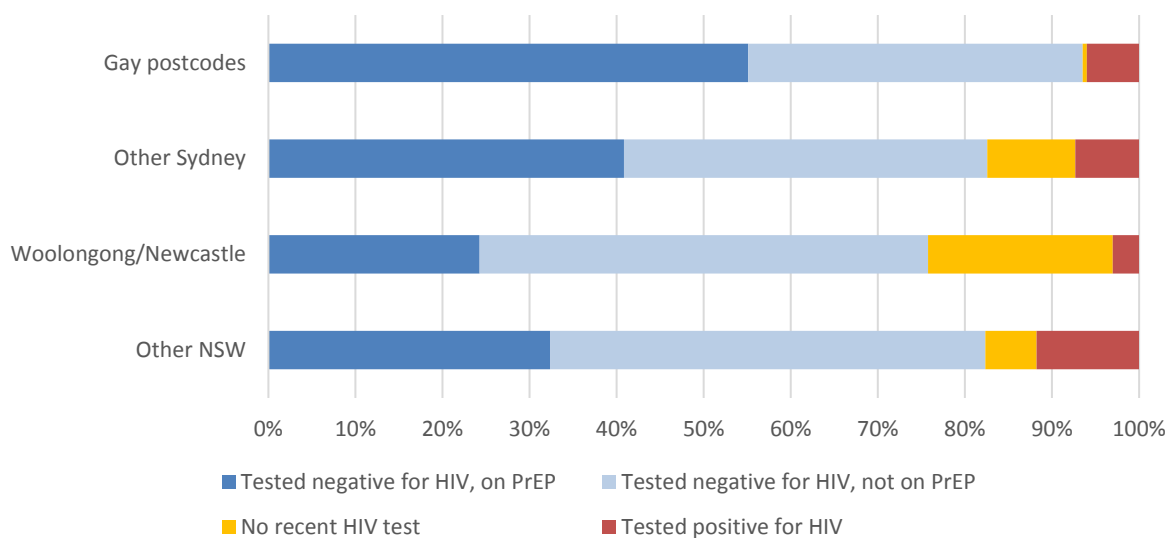
**Table 7. Postcodes for participants living in New South Wales**

	HIV Negative On PrEP	HIV Negative Not on PrEP	HIV Positive	HIV status not known / Untested	Total
“Gay Sydney”	119 (37.7)	83 (27.8)	13 (26.0)	1 (1.9)	216 (30.0)
Other Sydney	178 (56.3)	182 (60.9)	32 (64.0)	44 (81.5)	436 (60.6)
Wollongong/Newcastle	8 (2.5)	17 (5.7)	1 (2.0)	7 (13.0)	33 (4.6)
Other NSW	11 (3.5)	17 (5.7)	4 (8.0)	2 (3.7)	34 (4.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>719</b>

**Figure 3. Number of New South Wales residents living in gay postcodes**



**Figure 4. Proportion of New South Wales residents living in gay postcodes**



**Place of birth**

Over three quarters of the participants were born in Australia. The United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States were the next most frequent country of birth. 53 countries were represented in this sample.

**Table 8. Birthplace**

	N=1,702
Australia	1317 (77.4)
United Kingdom / Ireland	116 (6.8)
Asia Pacific	65 (3.8)
New Zealand	65 (3.8)
North America	41 (2.4)
South Africa	32 (1.9)
Europe	27 (1.6)
South America	15 (0.9)
Africa	5 (0.3)
Middle East	2 (0.1)
Did not answer	17 (1.0)

**Employment and Occupation**

Just under two thirds of the sample were employed full time, one in eight were employed part time, and another one in eight were students.

**Table 9. Employment status**

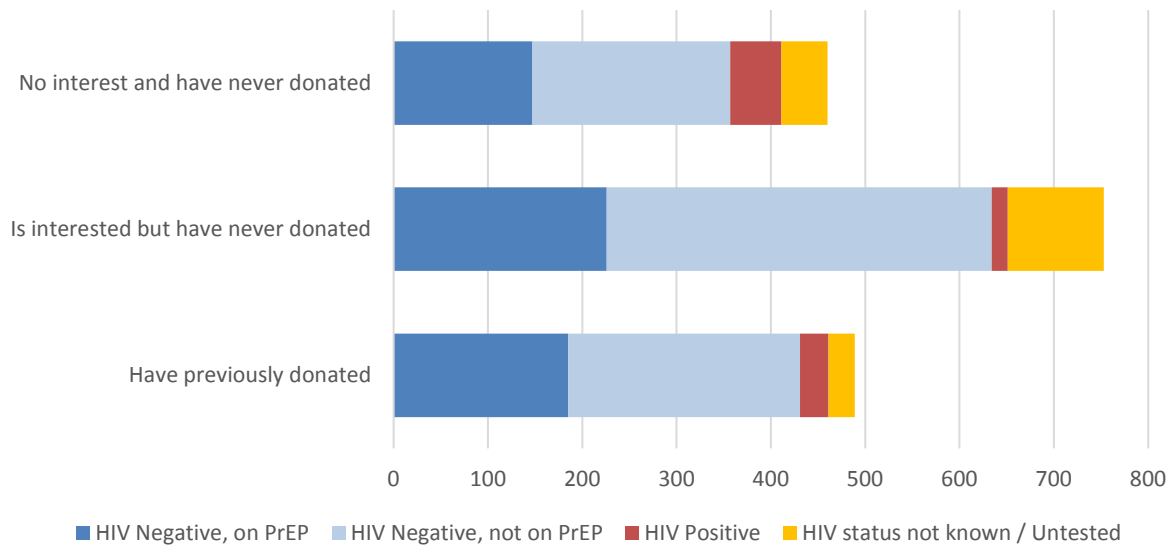
	N=1,702
Full-time	1048 (61.6)
Part-time	222 (13.0)
On pension / social security	60 (3.5)
Student	232 (13.6)
Unemployed	76 (4.5)
Unable to work	61 (3.6)
Did not answer	3 (0.2)

Approximately one third of men have previously donated blood. Just over one quarter said they had never donated and had no interest in donating, and just under half of all men said they would be interested in donating, but never had prior. Nearly half of HIV negative men, who were not taking PrEP, said they were interested in donating, while one-sixth of HIV positive men said they were interested.

**Table 10. HIV Status and Blood Donation History**

	HIV Negative On PrEP	HIV Negative Not on PrEP	HIV Positive	HIV status not known / Untested	Total
Have previously donated	185 (33.2)	246 (28.5)	30 (29.7)	28 (15.6)	489 (28.7)
Is interested but have never donated	226 (40.5)	408 (47.2)	17 (16.8)	102 (57.0)	753 (44.2)
No interest and have never donated	147 (26.3)	210 (24.3)	54 (53.5)	49 (27.4)	460 (27.0)
Total	558	864	101	179	1702

**Figure 5. HIV Status and Blood Donation History**





The majority of the men in the sample were aware of the existing rule that gay and bisexual men cannot engage in any sexual activity for the 12 months prior to donating blood. This proportion was much less in the men who were untested or who did not know their own HIV status.

**Table 11. Proportion of men who were aware of the rules around blood donation**

	HIV Negative On PrEP	HIV Negative Not on PrEP	HIV Positive	HIV status not known / Untested	Total
Yes, aware	481 (86.2)	776 (88.7)	79 (78.2)	125 (69.8)	1451 (85.3)
No, unaware	71 (12.7)	94 (10.9)	22 (21.8)	50 (27.9)	237 (13.9)
Did not answer	6 (0.1)	4 (0.5)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.2)	14 (0.8)
Total	558	864	101	179	1702

When comparing the year of last donation to the participants HIV and PrEP status, HIV negative men who were on currently PrEP were less likely to donate blood recently compared to HIV negative men who were not taking PrEP. The proportion of men who were not tested for HIV were more likely to donate blood in recent years, and no HIV positive men donated blood since 2010.

**Table 12. Year of last donation among men who have ever donated blood**

	HIV Negative On PrEP	HIV Negative Not on PrEP	HIV Positive	HIV status not known / Untested	Total
2018	0 (0.0)	5 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (14.3)	9 (1.8)
2017	2 (1.1)	8 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (10.7)	13 (2.7)
2016	3 (1.6)	7 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	6 (21.4)	16 (3.3)
2015	4 (2.2)	7 (2.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (3.6)	12 (2.5)
2010 to 2014	36 (19.5)	46 (18.7)	2 (6.7)	6 (21.4)	90 (18.4)
2005 to 2009	31 (16.8)	49 (19.9)	2 (6.7)	4 (14.3)	86 (17.6)
2000 to 2004	35 (18.9)	24 (9.8)	2 (6.7)	1 (3.6)	62 (12.7)
1995 to 1999	28 (15.1)	30 (12.2)	5 (16.7)	2 (7.1)	65 (13.3)
1990 to 1994	13 (7.0)	24 (9.8)	5 (16.7)	0 (0.0)	42 (8.6)
1985 to 1989	12 (6.5)	17 (6.9)	4 (13.3)	1 (3.6)	34 (7.0)
Before 1985	19 (10.3)	26 (10.6)	10 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	55 (11.2)
Did not answer	2 (1.1)	3 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (1.0)
Total	185	246	30	28	489

Figure 6. Number of men who last donated blood, and year of last donation, by HIV status

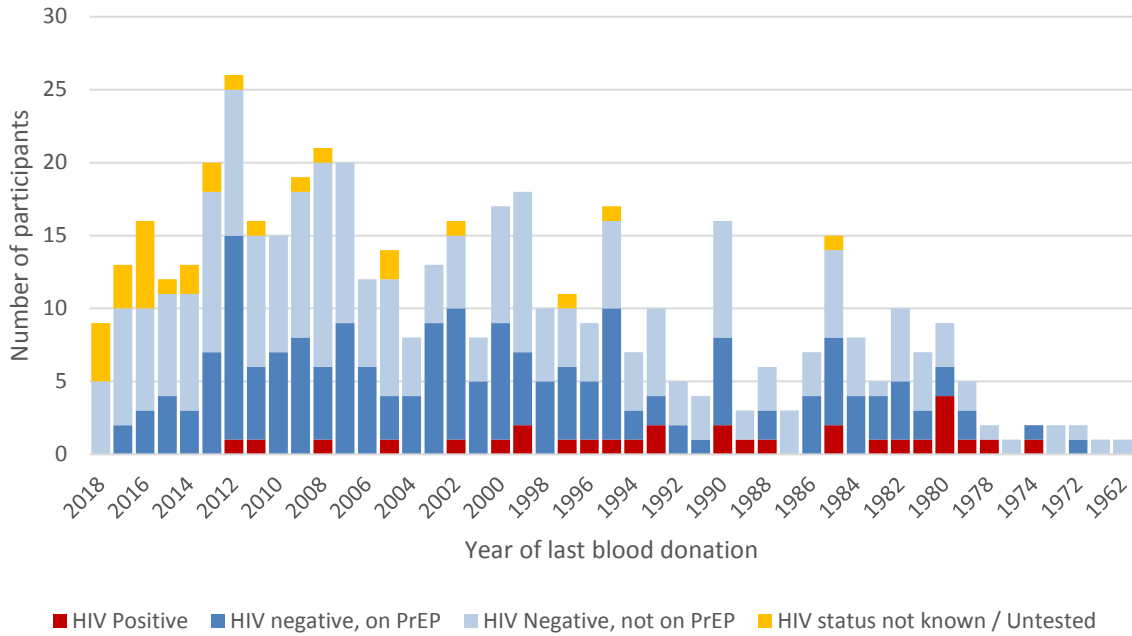
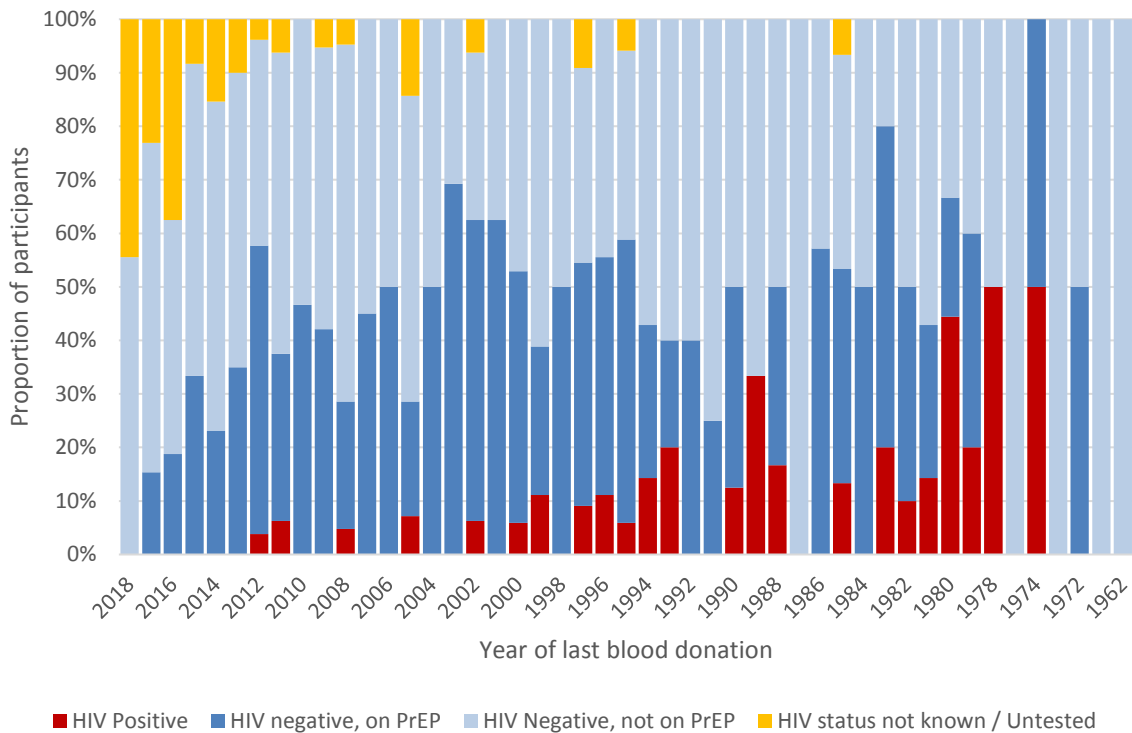


Figure 7. Proportion of men who last donated blood, and year of last donation, by HIV status

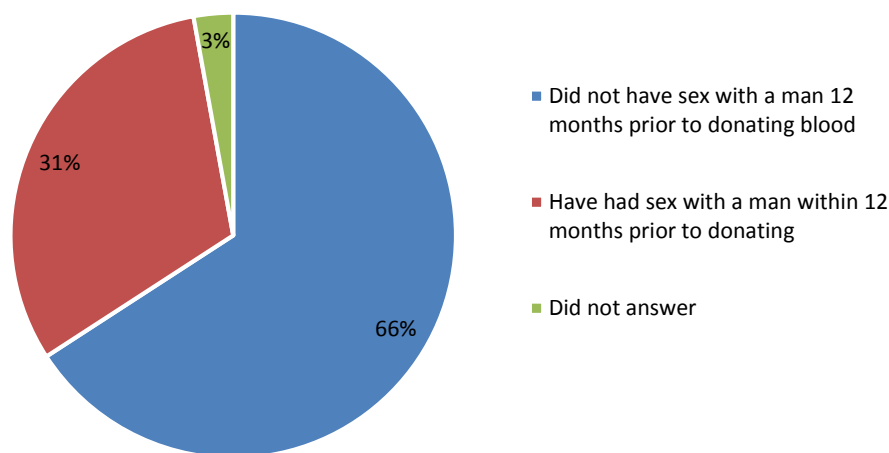


Among the men who have ever donated blood, two thirds reported not having sex with a man in the 12 months prior to donating. This proportion was much lower among HIV positive men.

**Table 13. Proportion of men who have had sex with another man in the 12 months prior to donating among men who have ever donated blood**

	HIV Negative On PrEP	HIV Negative Not on PrEP	HIV Positive	HIV status not known / Untested	Total
Did not have sex	119 (64.3)	165 (67.1)	13 (43.3)	25 (89.3)	322 (65.8)
Have had sex	61 (33.0)	73 (29.7)	16 (53.3)	3 (10.7)	153 (31.3)
Did not answer	5 (2.7)	8 (3.3)	1 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	14 (2.9)
Total	185	246	30	28	489

**Figure 8. Proportion of men who abstained from sex with a man in the 12 months prior to donating blood**



**Table 14. Year of last blood donation by men who have had sex with another man within the previous 12 months prior to donating**

	Did not have sex	Have had sex	Did not answer	Total
2018	6 (66.7)	3 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	9
2017	7 (53.8)	5 (38.5)	1 (7.7)	13
2016	10 (62.5)	6 (37.5)	0 (0.0)	16
2015	3 (25.0)	7 (58.3)	2 (16.7)	12
2010 to 2014	64 (71.1)	25 (27.8)	1 (1.1)	90
2005 to 2009	62 (72.1)	23 (26.7)	1 (1.2)	86
2000 to 2004	45 (72.6)	17 (27.4)	0 (0.0)	62
1995 to 1999	48 (73.8)	15 (23.1)	2 (3.1)	65
1990 to 1994	31 (73.8)	11 (26.2)	0 (0.0)	42
1985 to 1989	21 (61.8)	12 (35.3)	1 (2.9)	34
Before 1985	25 (45.5)	29 (52.7)	1 (1.8)	55
Did not answer	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (100.0)	5
Total	322 (65.8)	153 (31.3)	14 (2.9)	489

Focusing specifically on the men who had sex with another man in the 12 months prior to their donating blood, with the last year of donating occurring between 2014 and 2018, there were 25 men. Seven of the men had sex with only one partner in the previous six months, two did not have sex with anyone (casual nor regular partners). One man reported having 100 partners in the previous six months (in 2018), but his year of last donation was 2014.

**Table 15. Recent sexual history of men who had sex with another man in the previous 12 months prior to donating blood (n = 25)**

	N = 25
No sexual partners	2 (8.0)
One sexual partner	7 (28.0)
More than one sexual partners	16 (64.0)

In their latest round of follow up, over one third of men who reported to have sex with another man within 12 months of donating blood (between 2014 and 2018), did not have any casual sexual partners. Nearly one third reported not engaging in penetrative anal intercourse with their casual partners. One had reported consistent condom use, while three had reported any condomless sex while using PrEP. There were three men who had any receptive condomless sex without the use of PrEP with casual partners. It is important to note that these sexual practices were not within the year of last donating blood, but rather within the most recent survey follow up.

**Table 16. Recent sexual history with casual partners among men who had sex with another man in the previous 12 months prior to donating blood (n = 25)**

	N = 25
No casual partners	9 (36.0)
Did not engage in anal intercourse	8 (32.0)
Used condoms consistently	1 (4.0)
Engaged in condomless sex, using PrEP	3 (12.0)
Had insertive only condomless sex without PrEP	1 (4.0)
Had any receptive condomless sex without PrEP	3 (12.0)

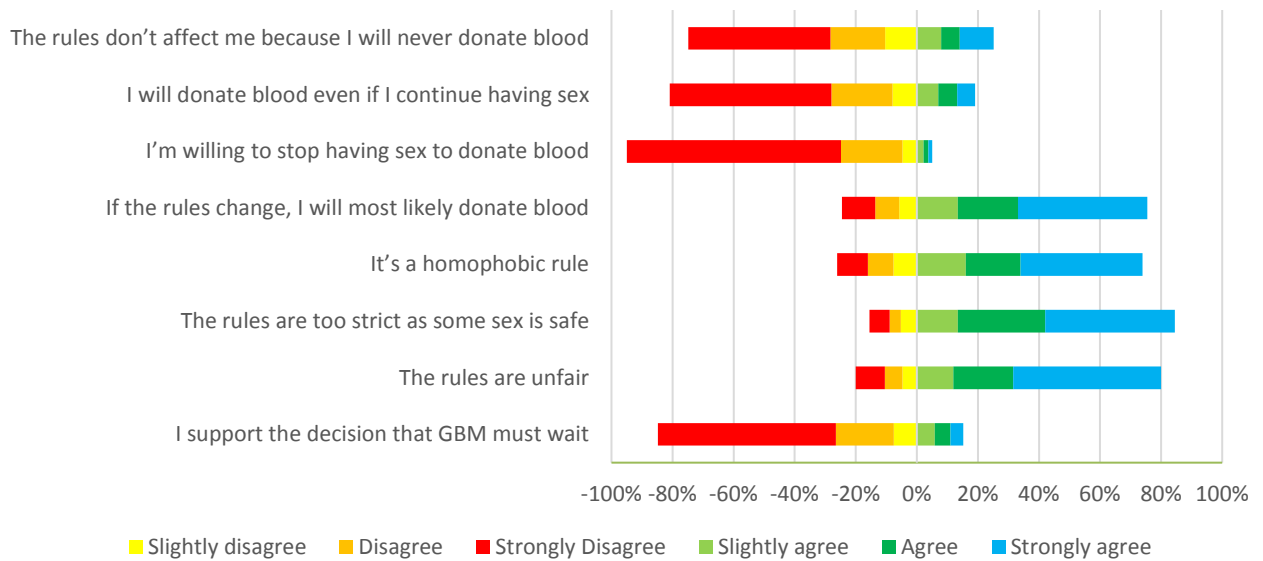
Among the 30 HIV positive men who have reported previous donation of blood, the duration since the year of their HIV diagnosis and the year of their last blood donation are reported below. There was one participant who reported donating blood (2008) after the year they were diagnosed with HIV (2004).

**Table 17. Duration of time (years) between HIV diagnosis and the last blood donation**

	N = 30
4 years after diagnosis	1 (3.3)
1 year before diagnosis	2 (6.7)
2 years before diagnosis	1 (3.3)
4 years before diagnosis	4 (13.3)
5 to 10 years before diagnosis	8 (26.7)
11 to 15 years before diagnosis	5 (16.7)
16 to 20 years before diagnosis	4 (13.3)
Over 20 years before diagnosis	5 (16.7)

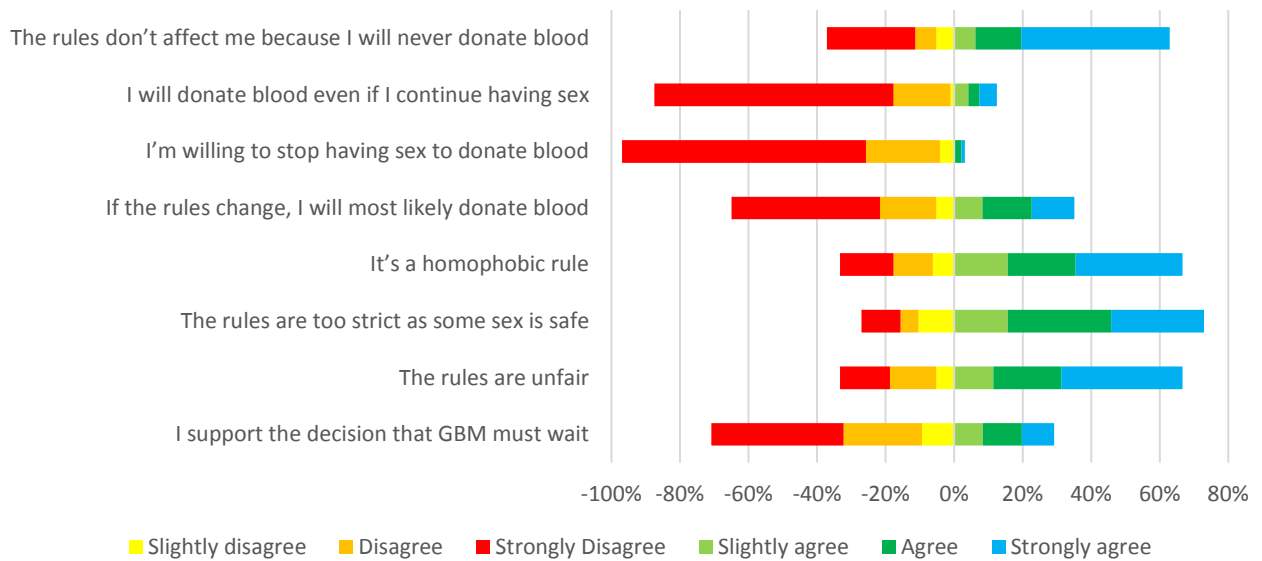
**Table 18a. Attitudes towards blood donation – entire sample**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I support the decision that GBM must wait 12 months before donating	983 (58.3)	320 (19)	127 (7.5)	99 (5.9)	86 (5.1)	71 (4.2)
The rules are unfair	161 (9.5)	97 (5.7)	80 (4.7)	202 (12)	330 (19.5)	818 (48.5)
The rules are too strict as some sex is safe	111 (6.6)	62 (3.7)	88 (5.2)	226 (13.4)	484 (28.7)	717 (42.5)
It's a homophobic rule	169 (10.0)	142 (8.4)	129 (7.6)	271 (16)	302 (17.9)	676 (40.0)
If the rules change, I will most likely donate blood	183 (10.9)	133 (7.9)	97 (5.8)	226 (13.4)	333 (19.8)	714 (42.3)
I'm willing to stop having sex to donate blood	1184 (70.1)	340 (20.1)	79 (4.7)	37 (2.2)	26 (1.5)	22 (1.3)
I will donate blood even if I continue having sex	888 (53)	336 (20)	133 (7.9)	118 (7)	103 (6.1)	99 (5.9)
The rules don't affect me because I will never donate blood	785 (46.6)	302 (17.9)	174 (10.3)	134 (8.0)	103 (6.1)	187 (11.1)



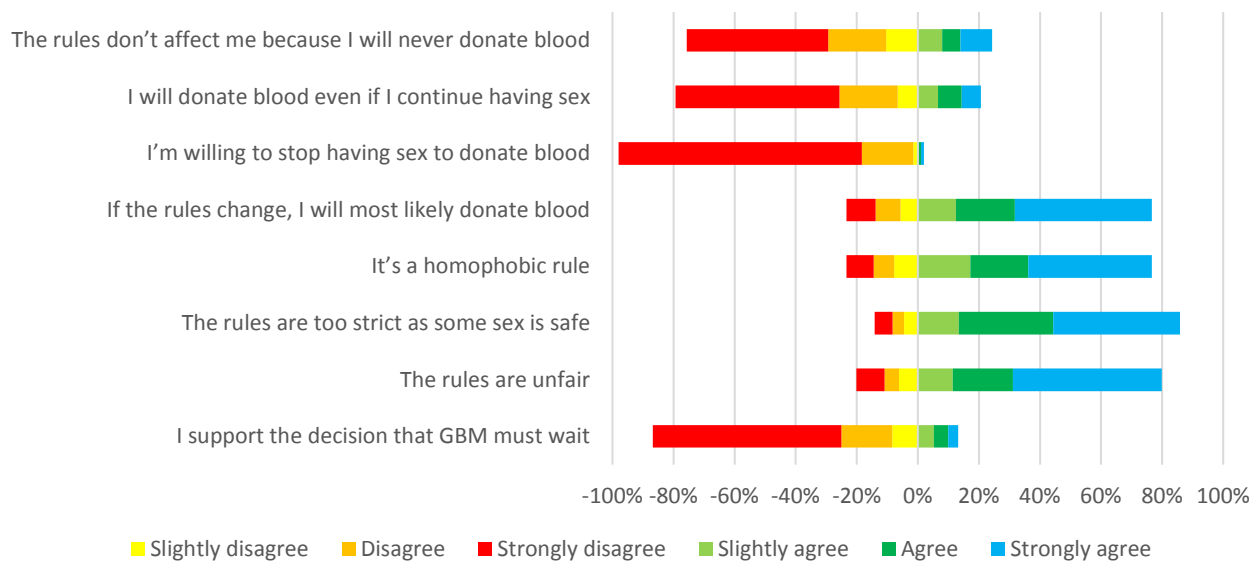
**Table 18b. Attitudes towards blood donation – HIV positive men**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I support the decision that GBM must wait 12 months before donating	37 (38.5)	22 (22.9)	9 (9.4)	8 (8.3)	11 (11.5)	9 (9.4)
The rules are unfair	14 (14.6)	13 (13.5)	5 (5.2)	11 (11.5)	19 (19.8)	34 (35.4)
The rules are too strict as some sex is safe	11 (11.5)	5 (5.2)	10 (10.4)	15 (15.6)	29 (30.2)	26 (27.1)
It's a homophobic rule	15 (15.6)	11 (11.5)	6 (6.3)	15 (15.6)	19 (19.8)	30 (31.3)
If the rules change, I will most likely donate blood	42 (43.3)	16 (16.5)	5 (5.2)	8 (8.2)	14 (14.4)	12 (12.4)
I'm willing to stop having sex to donate blood	69 (71.1)	21 (21.6)	4 (4.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.1)	1 (1.0)
I will donate blood even if I continue having sex	67 (69.8)	16 (16.7)	1 (1.0)	4 (4.2)	3 (3.1)	5 (5.2)
The rules don't affect me because I will never donate blood	25 (25.8)	6 (6.2)	5 (5.2)	6 (6.2)	13 (13.4)	42 (43.3)



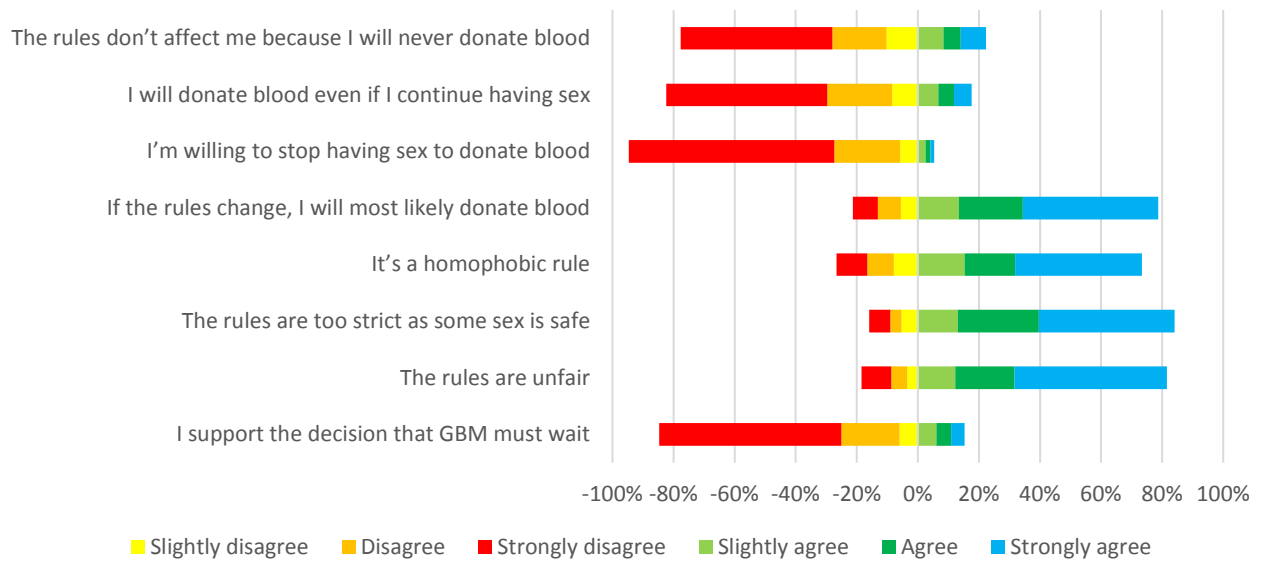
**Table 18c. Attitudes towards blood donation – HIV negative men on PrEP**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I support the decision that GBM must wait 12 months before donating	340 (61.7)	92 (16.7)	46 (8.3)	29 (5.3)	26 (4.7)	18 (3.3)
The rules are unfair	51 (9.2)	26 (4.7)	34 (6.2)	63 (11.4)	109 (19.7)	269 (48.7)
The rules are too strict as some sex is safe	32 (5.8)	21 (3.8)	25 (4.5)	74 (13.4)	171 (30.9)	230 (41.6)
It's a homophobic rule	49 (8.9)	37 (6.7)	43 (7.8)	95 (17.2)	105 (19.0)	224 (40.5)
If the rules change, I will most likely donate blood	53 (9.6)	45 (5.6)	31 (5.6)	69 (12.5)	106 (19.2)	247 (44.8)
I'm willing to stop having sex to donate blood	440 (79.7)	93 (1.4)	8 (1.4)	1 (0.2)	5 (0.9)	5 (0.9)
I will donate blood even if I continue having sex	294 (53.6)	105 (6.6)	36 (6.6)	36 (6.6)	43 (7.8)	34 (6.2)
The rules don't affect me because I will never donate blood	256 (46.4)	105 (10.3)	57 (10.3)	44 (8.0)	33 (6.0)	57 (10.3)



**Table 18d. Attitudes towards blood donation – HIV negative men not on PrEP**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I support the decision that GBM must wait 12 months before donating	513 (59.6)	165 (19.2)	51 (5.9)	52 (6.0)	42 (4.9)	38 (4.4)
The rules are unfair	84 (9.7)	45 (5.2)	30 (3.5)	106 (12.3)	167 (19.4)	430 (49.9)
The rules are too strict as some sex is safe	59 (6.8)	32 (3.7)	46 (5.3)	113 (13.1)	229 (26.6)	383 (44.4)
It's a homophobic rule	87 (10.1)	75 (8.7)	68 (7.9)	132 (15.3)	143 (16.6)	358 (41.5)
If the rules change, I will most likely donate blood	70 (8.1)	65 (7.6)	48 (5.6)	115 (13.4)	181 (21.0)	381 (44.3)
I'm willing to stop having sex to donate blood	581 (67.3)	186 (21.6)	50 (5.8)	22 (2.5)	13 (1.5)	11 (1.3)
I will donate blood even if I continue having sex	453 (52.7)	183 (21.3)	72 (8.4)	58 (6.8)	44 (5.1)	49 (5.7)
The rules don't affect me because I will never donate blood	427 (49.7)	152 (17.7)	88 (10.2)	72 (8.4)	49 (5.7)	71 (8.3)





**Table 18e. Attitudes towards blood donation – Men with unknown / untested HIV status**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I support the decision that GBM must wait 12 months before donating	93 (52.2)	41 (23.0)	21 (11.8)	10 (5.6)	7 (3.9)	6 (3.4)
The rules are unfair	12 (6.7)	13 (7.3)	11 (6.2)	22 (12.4)	35 (19.7)	85 (47.8)
The rules are too strict as some sex is safe	9 (5.1)	4 (2.3)	7 (4.0)	24 (13.6)	55 (31.1)	78 (44.1)
It's a homophobic rule	18 (10.2)	19 (10.7)	12 (6.8)	29 (16.4)	35 (19.8)	64 (36.2)
If the rules change, I will most likely donate blood	18 (10.3)	7 (4.0)	13 (7.4)	31 (17.7)	32 (18.3)	74 (42.3)
I'm willing to stop having sex to donate blood	94 (53.4)	40 (22.7)	17 (9.7)	14 (8.0)	6 (3.4)	5 (2.8)
I will donate blood even if I continue having sex	74 (42.5)	32 (18.4)	24 (13.8)	20 (11.5)	13 (7.5)	11 (6.3)
The rules don't affect me because I will never donate blood	77 (43.5)	39 (22.0)	24 (13.6)	12 (6.8)	8 (4.5)	17 (9.6)

