

# MALE CALL CANADA METHODS SUMMARY



## BRIEF BACKGROUND

While a significant number of new HIV infections continue to occur among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Canada, there is a lack of in-depth and current Canadian data on the social situation, sexual attitudes and knowledge, and men's understanding of risk behaviours related to HIV. Information that does exist is limited in its scope of examination of social, behavioural and other determinants; and in its ability to examine and explain variations between communities, subgroups and urban and rural contexts. To date survey research on MSM in Canada has focussed largely on self-identified gay men who frequent gay venues, or who are attached to the community in some manner.

In 2011–2012, Male Call Canada conducted a cross-sectional national toll-free telephone survey of MSM to gather information on a broad spectrum of attitudes, behaviours and related social issues and determinants. The study recruited gay and bisexual men as well as other MSM who don't identify as gay or bisexual.

## RESPONSE TO THE SURVEY:

- 1,562 calls were logged including 1,235 complete and partially complete interviews with eligible participants.
- Calls were received from all across Canada and from all provinces and territories.
- The youngest respondent was 16 years of age and the oldest was 89.

## SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Male Call Canada adapted a toll-free telephone method that previously had proven successful in Australia, New Zealand, and the UK. For Male Call Canada separate telephone lines were set up for English and French participants.

## EQUIPMENT

The interviewing space was housed in the Research Services Unit at the University of Toronto. Seven data collection stations were designated for English interviews and 3 stations for French interviews. Stations were separated by noise cancelling dividers and each was equipped with a telephone, headset and laptop. Respondents who dialled the advertised toll-free number (1-855-846-MALE [6253]) would reach an automated bilingual message that provided information about the study and the option to select the survey in English or French.

**Call  
me**  
**1-855-846-MALE**



## **PERSONNEL: THE INTERVIEWERS**

Thirty-four interviewers were hired and trained for data collection, the majority worked part-time, all were male, and 12 were fluent in French. Training sessions covered topics ranging from ethical data collection to cultural sensitivity. The training sessions also provided an opportunity for interviewers to familiarize themselves with the equipment, database, and questionnaire.

## **DATA COLLECTION PERIOD**

Data collection began in October 2011 and finished in February 2012. Phone lines were open Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. Eastern Standard Time as well as Saturdays and Sundays from 12 p.m. until 8 p.m.

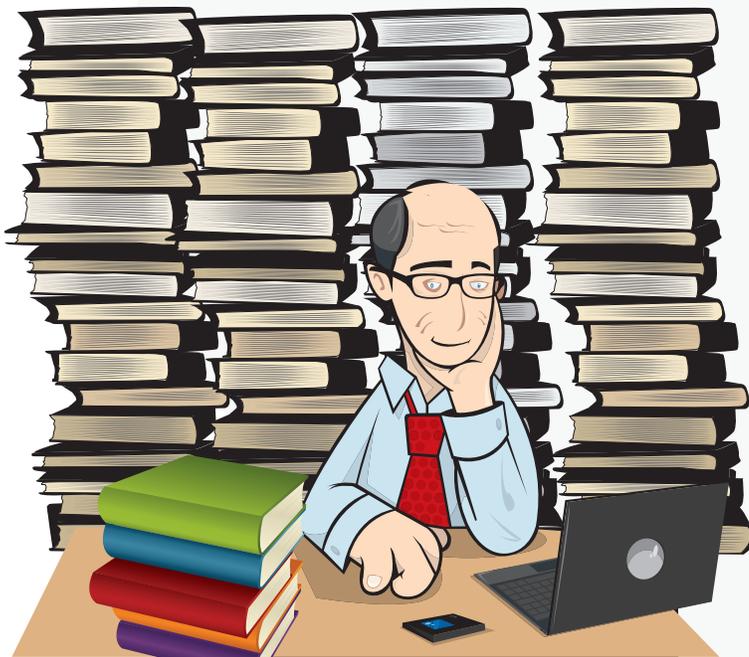
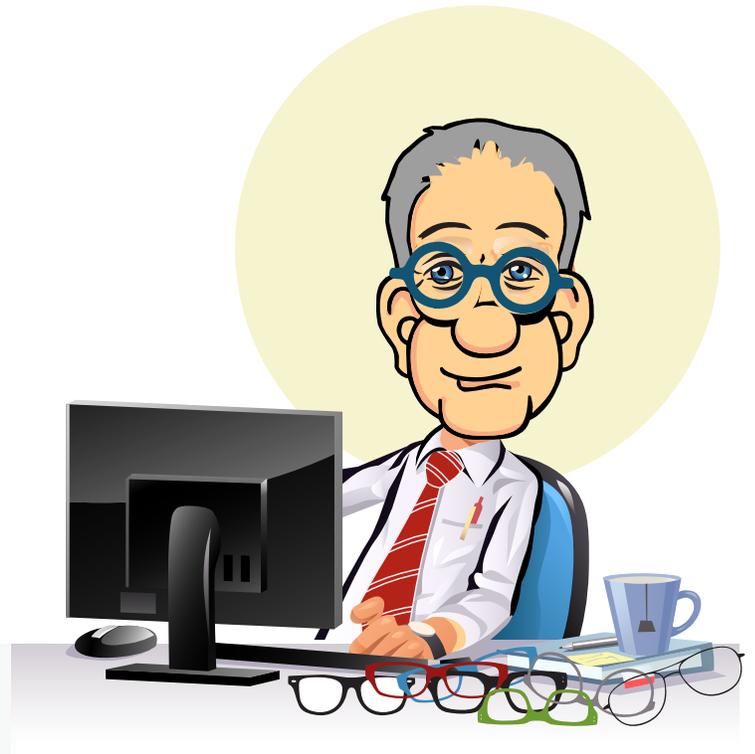
## **DATA COLLECTION: ELIGIBILITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT**

The research was approved by the University of Toronto HIV Research Ethics Board. Participants were screened for eligibility at the beginning of the call: they needed to be at least 16 years of age, live in Canada, and have at some point in their life engaged in any kind of sex with a man. Participation was anonymous. Eligible participants were given a unique survey code which they could use in the event the interview was interrupted. This code allowed respondents to call back at another time and continue the survey from where they had left off. Participants were informed that they could skip any questions that made them feel uncomfortable and they were able to end the interview at any time. Participants were not compensated for their participation.

## **DATA COLLECTION: THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The questionnaire was developed over the course of several months with contributions from the team of investigators and national advisory members. Once pretested and finalized, the questionnaire was housed online on a secure password-protected site. To collect data, interviewers would login to the centralized online database which provided the script, questions and response fields. Only members of the core research team had access to data stored in the online database through a separate password-protected Internet address. Operating a centralized online database was a highly efficient method of collecting and storing information. It also provided an almost seamless transition from data collection to data analysis, avoiding data entry errors and saving time and costs. On average, interviews conducted in English lasted 45 minutes and those in French lasted 60 minutes.

The questionnaire covered topics ranging from sexual identity and behaviour, drug use, and social support, to attitudes towards condoms, people living with HIV, and issues of non-disclosure and criminalization. A referral database was developed in-house to assist interviewers to provide referrals to health and social care services, if requested.



## **CALL VOLUME**

Higher call volumes were experienced on weekdays during the daytime, compared to evenings and weekends. Although equipped with 7 English phone lines, there was never a time when all 7 lines were occupied. There were several instances when all 3 French lines were occupied.

## RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

Canada is a world leader in adopting information technology. Canadians increasingly use social media platforms and mobile technology is common place. At the same time, newsprint continues to be widely read and advertising that uses traditional means is often a requirement for a successful marketing strategy. Further, Canada's relatively small multilingual population is spread over a vast territory. As a result, a recruitment strategy that employed multiple mediums and messages was necessary to successfully appeal to a diverse sample of MSM. Male Call Canada engaged a marketing firm and a graphic designer to develop a national recruitment campaign.

The results of the campaign demonstrate a media landscape undergoing rapid change. Classified ads were placed in nearly 1000 local and major newspapers coast-to-coast and produced 43.9% of calls received – surprising in a digital-age! Radio supplemented classified ads were used when reaching MSM in Canada's northern territories. Different approaches were employed on Facebook, which resulted in 19.8% of calls. All online advertisements included a link to the Male Call Canada bilingual website [www.malecall.ca](http://www.malecall.ca) or [www.appelauxhommes.ca](http://www.appelauxhommes.ca). Over the course of the study the websites attracted

19,228 visitors. Male Call Canada's online presence included email listservs such as Squirt.org, a major national cruising site for MSM, which produced 8.2% of calls. More localized sites such as Craigslist produced 2.8% of calls. Posters and postcards placed in gay establishments in major urban centres helped reinforce marketing messages; however, only 1.5% of participants reported these as their primary source of recruitment. Further, display advertisements in gay publications were rarely referenced by respondents as their source of recruitment.

In January 2012, David Testo, a professional Canadian soccer athlete endorsed Male Call Canada and a robust public relations campaign was initiated. This resulted in a 43.0% increase in call volume from survey participants and over 30 media stories on national broadcast and print networks, as well as articles in major and minor sports and queer publications. This was the first time an endorsement of this kind had been linked to HIV prevention research with MSM in Canada.

