



LGBTI and HIV/STIs

**HIV high among gay men in Dominica - National Epidemiologist
Paul Ricketts**

Dr.

Men who have sex with men are the main people being affected by HIV in Dominica, National epidemiologist Dr. Paul Ricketts, has revealed.

“The majority of persons who have tested positive have been male but we also do have females being tested positive,” he said. “So this not just an epidemic affecting men who have sex with men, although men who have sex with men are the main people affected in our epidemic here in Dominica.”

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The National HIV Strategic Plan calls for targeted interventions among MSM groups. To meet these goals, the Ministry of Health (MoH) with funding from UNAIDS and in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) conducted a pilot behavioral and seroprevalence survey among the population. In addition, a size estimates exercise was conducted. The results of these will be used to inform programmes and policies for the populations.

Excerpt from the Global Aids Report 2012 National HIV and Aids Response Programme Secretariat

The Survey was an anonymous cross-sectional study of MSM in Dominica. Participants were sampled through chain-referral sampling and when necessary, convenience sampling. The target survey sample size was 100 MSM and participants had to be 16 years or older and live or work in Dominica. Data on knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours was collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. Interviewers were members of the local and/or regional MSM community who were provided with specialized training for this project. HIV serostatus was determined using locally available HIV screening methodology administered by the interviewer before and after the interview.

Participation was voluntary (with provision of informed consent) and the study protocol was approved by the research ethics boards of the implementation partner agencies i.e. the Ministry of Health (Dominica) and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The survey revealed that the prevalence of HIV among the population studied was 26.7% which is in keeping with or lower than the prevalence rates in other Caribbean countries which have conducted studies of that nature.

