
Special Double Issue

SEX

"I find it very difficult to be interested in people's bedroom habits," Beverly Sills told *The Advocate* in 1977. "I know mine aren't very interesting."

With all due respect to Bubbles, we beg to differ with the first half of her statement. (Indeed, we'd like to challenge her entire thesis, but having no firsthand knowledge of the former opera star's sex life, we will let the second half of it stand.) Most of us have an enormous, insatiable curiosity about what goes on in other people's bedrooms because that information gives us a rare opportunity to make comparisons on something that is basic to our makeup. *Am I more adventurous than my neighbors? How does my sex drive compare? Is anyone actually practicing*

a n d
safe sex, or is everyone just talking about it? Even if the answers to these questions place us in a minority category, we nonetheless feel assured that we are not alone—a thought that similarly comforted many of us when we first came to grips with our sexuality.

In the following pages we look not only at sex in the bedroom (presenting results from the 1994 Advocate Survey of Sexuality and Relationships: The Men) but also at the role the courts have played in our sex lives and the role sex has played in political circles, in our organizations, and in film, music, and other realms of popular culture.

Clearly, our fascination with the subject of sex is intense and endless. Because for all the bad press it's gotten lately, sex—good sex—is still filled with all those life-affirming qualities like passion, danger, excitement, tension, feverish activity, and maybe even love. Just like good opera.

SEXUALITY

Alfred Kinsey set the precedent of asking men about their sexual history back in 1938 when he and his colleagues began interviews for the landmark book *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Kinsey found that homosexual behavior was widespread—over one-third of the 5,300 white men interviewed had some homosexual experience to the point of orgasm between adolescence and old age.

For years the scientific community did little to build on Kinsey's pioneering work. Until the AIDS epidemic forced a recognition of the importance of people's sexual behavior, there were very few large-scale studies of the bedroom habits of Americans. Because neither the govern-

THE 1994 ADVOCATE SURVEY OF SEXUALITY
AND RELATIONSHIPS: THE MEN

Sexual revelations

BY JANET LEVER, PH.D.



ment nor private foundations were funding that type of research, much of what we know about the post-Kinsey, pre-AIDS years comes from magazine surveys.

In the '70s *Redbook* and *Cosmopolitan* published sex surveys, and each received more than 100,000 replies from their female readers. In the early '80s *Playboy* gave its mostly male readers a chance to describe their experiences and also received more than 100,000 replies. Those are big numbers, to be sure, but given the millions of issues each magazine had in circulation, the percentage of replies is quite small—for example, *Playboy's* response rate was approximately 2%, about standard for magazine and mass-market mail surveys.

The editorial staff at *The Advocate* decided six months ago to conduct the first national survey of gay and bisexual men's sexuality and relationships. (An upcoming issue will feature a survey of women.) Although AIDS has prompted hundreds of studies of gay men, all have serious limitations for understanding gay male sexuality. Most are conducted in a handful of the largest cities, where AIDS has taken its greatest toll; they are not national in scope and say nothing about the men who live outside AIDS epicenters. *The Advocate* has a readership that includes men representing a wide age range from all over the country. Furthermore, rural Americans and those who live in small towns—6% and 16% of our sample, respectively—are also better represented here than in AIDS studies. No one has ever done a nationally representative study of gay men, and while this survey is not representa-

tive either, we believe it includes men who have been underrepresented in previous studies.

Another limitation of the AIDS studies is that typically they ask only about behavior related to the conveyance

80% of the men say that if they had to live without sex or without love, they'd live without sex.



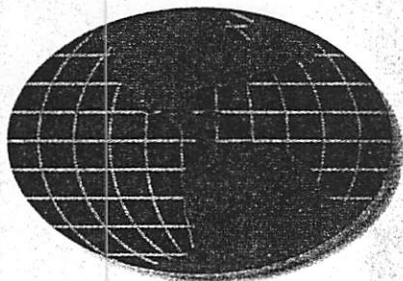
of sexually transmitted diseases, and there is so much more to learn about gay men's sexuality. By contrast we asked a lot of detailed questions about sexual practices and attitudes. Our questionnaire was even longer than those that appeared in *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Playboy*. Nevertheless, we got an overwhelming response. Close to 13,000 questionnaires

were sent back from *The Advocate's* May 3, 1994, issue, yielding an amazing 18% return.

Because of time and financial constraints, we could not tabulate every response for this report. We selected every fourth questionnaire from the first 10,000 returned for a sample pool of 2,500. However, if you answered this survey, rest assured that the social scientists analyzing the data are seeking sources of funding so that every single questionnaire returned (and even those still

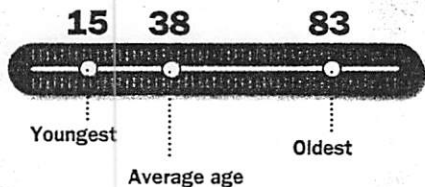
Who responded

Where they live



Answer sheets came back from men in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. A handful came from other countries, such as Canada, Australia, France, and Brazil.

Age of respondents



ICONS BY ANDY MARKLEY/ART 101 FOR THE ADVOCATE

Ethnicity



90% white*



4% Hispanic



1% black



5% other

Education

On average, respondents are highly educated. Two thirds have at least a college degree, and nearly one third have a graduate degree.

Earnings

Respondents are more affluent than the average American. Half have an annual salary of more than \$36,000.

Political party affiliation

66% Democrat 10% Republican



24% Other or no affiliation



Activities

Seven in ten are members of gay organizations, especially local AIDS or gay political groups. Three quarters went to a gay pride march or gay cultural event in the past year.

*Non-Hispanic

arriving) can be tabulated and further analysis can be undertaken for articles in scientific journals.

Sexual orientation and coming out

How many are exclusively homosexual now and have been in the past? Virtually all the men who answered the survey (97%) think of themselves as homosexual or gay; nonetheless, one in seven feels sexual attraction to some women, one in eight indulges in sexual fantasies about the opposite sex, and more than one in three have had women in their sexual dreams. Looking at the overall pattern, close to two thirds of gay-identified men say they are exclusively homosexual in their sexual attractions, fantasies, and dreams.

As for relationships with women, 14% had been married, 6% had been engaged but didn't go through with the marriage, and 2% are dating, engaged to, or married to a woman (nearly all those women know their partner's sexual orientation). More than three quarters (78%) of gay men have never been engaged or married.

Three percent of the men say they are bisexual. (Keep in mind that our generalizations about bisexual men are based on only a small number of people.) As expected more bisexual men are or have been married: 18% are engaged or married to a woman (more than a quarter of the women are unaware that their partners are bisexual);

over half (51%) have been married or engaged; and 5% are dating women. The majority of bisexual men describe their sexual attractions as having shifted away from women and toward men over time.

In contrasting past and present sexual relations with women, bisexual and gay men are very different. Less than 2% of the gay men have had vaginal intercourse in the past 12 months, compared to 41% of the bisexual men. Only 8% of gay men—compared with just under half of the bisexual men—report six or more female partners over their lifetime. But neither the quantity of female partners nor recent experiences tell the whole story, for 8% of the bisexual men have never had a female sex partner and 11% have had only one. For nearly half of the bisexual men, it has been three years or longer since they have had a female sex partner.

Personal theories of causation. Let the experts argue about whether it is in the genes, hormones, or brain. Even though science has not documented the mecha-

**Drag factor
About 1%
are sexually
stimulated by
women's cloth-
ing or wear it
to pass as
women.**



When did you first...?

Become aware of your attraction to males?

Half the men were aware of their attraction by age 12; three quarters, by age 14; and 95%, by age 18.

Recognize you were gay or bisexual?

Half knew by age 16, but nearly one in five did not know until at least his 20s.

Masturbate yourself to orgasm? Masturbate another male?

Half had masturbated themselves by age 12 and someone else by 14.

Have an orgasm with another male?

Half had an orgasm with



a male—usually a friend—by age 16.

Have an orgasm with a female?

Nearly half the men say they have never had an orgasm with a female. Of those who did, half had done so by age 19.

Go to a gay bar?

Half had done so by age 21. It's interesting to note, however, that fully one quarter had been to a bar by age 18, yet one in ten men postponed this rite of passage until his 30s or later.

Say to another person that you were bisexual?

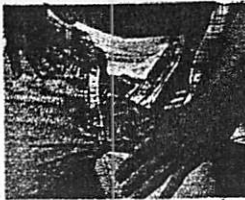
Six in ten gay men have never said they were bisexual en route to their gay identity, but the others did, with the vast majority of them calling themselves bisexual between ages 16 and 25. Nearly all the bisexuals have told someone they were bisexual; three in ten waited until their 30s, 40s, or later.

Say to another person that you were gay?

Only a handful (8%) had told someone by age 15, half had told someone by age 21, and nearly three quarters had made this acknowledgment by age 25. The oldest was over 70.

Come out to a family member?

One in seven has yet to come out to any family member. The most typical period to come out to a family member is between 18 and 22. Half had done so by age 22. More mothers than fathers have been explicitly told (64% versus 48%), but most who have not told their parents think they know anyway.



Size and whispers

37% are content with their penis size

52% wish it were somewhat bigger

10% wish it were much bigger

1% wish it were smaller

nism for the biological origins of homosexuality, nine out of ten men believe they were born with their sexual orientation. One in five of those men also believes that early childhood environment somehow had something to do with his being gay. Only 4% of all men believe that orientation comes solely from environmental factors at any time in life. Another 4% say that choice has something to do with the equation. Most men were aware of their attraction to males at a young age, recognized they were gay while still in their teens, and had sexual experiences with males before females.

Do gay men believe in the concept of bisexuality? Forty percent accept bisexual men for who they say they are, agreeing that they are truly attracted to both sexes and rejecting the notion that bisexual men are really gay and either don't yet know it or just won't admit it. Slightly fewer men, 33%, clearly don't believe in bisexuality, while the rest are not sure.

Who's in the closet? The majority of respondents say they are "mostly" (37%) or "completely" (34%) out of the closet. Only 3% say they are definitely in the closet,

while another 7% say they are in the closet most of the time. The remaining 19% describe themselves as "half in and half out." Looking at the total sample of men, 71% say most or all of their heterosexual friends know they are gay or bisexual. At work 44% have told their boss about their sexual orientation, and 26% just assume he or she knows; more than half say most or all of their coworkers know. Neighbors are less likely to know, but still, 45% say most or all of their neighbors do.

We reviewed the demographics of the third who are completely out in contrast to the tenth who are mostly or completely in to see if we could better understand what social factors underlie this personal choice. Those who attended any college—even if they didn't complete their degree—are far more likely to be out than those with only a high school education. Also important

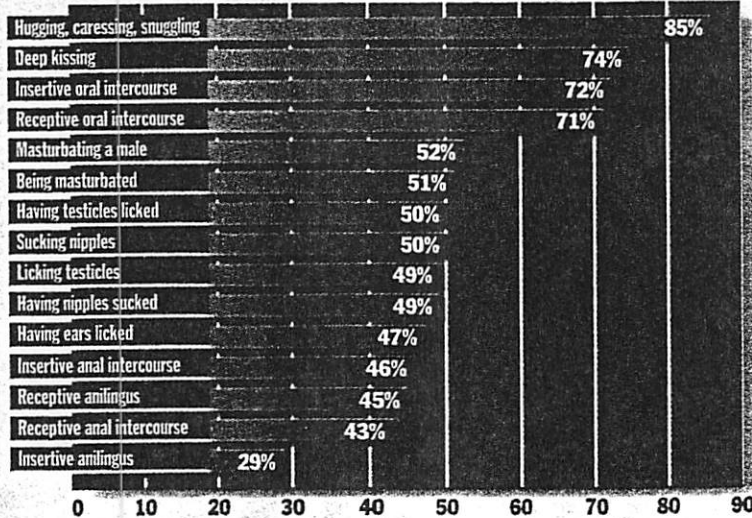
is one's present environment and geographic region and whether one lives in a metropolis. Where is one most likely to be closeted? According to our respondents, in the states of Alaska, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, Rhode Island, and Wyoming. Where is one most likely to be out? Delaware, Massachusetts, Nevada, Washington, D.C., and Washington State. The bigger the city a man lives in, the more likely he is to be out. Men are most

Childhood sexual abuse

Just over one in five (21%) of the men say they were sexually abused by an adult by age 15. According to a national poll, one in six men in the total population report childhood sexual abuse. Thus, this group of gay men is close to that statistic and doesn't support the belief by some that gay men were more likely to have been abused when growing up.

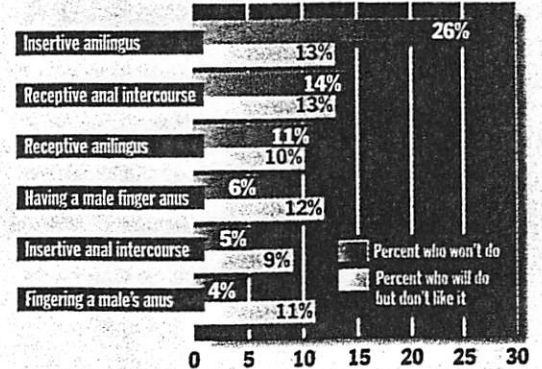
Sex acts men say they love

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Greatest turnoffs

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likely to be closeted in rural areas and cities with a population of less than 100,000 and are most likely to be completely out in cities of more than 1 million. No big surprise: Republicans are nearly three times as likely to be closeted as are Democrats.

Sex and intimacy

It is widely believed that all men—gay and straight—have more interest in genital sex than in kissing, hugging, and romance. Therefore, one of the most surprising findings from this survey is the astounding interest expressed in love and intimacy—even if it takes sacrificing sex to get them. Eighty percent of the men say that if they had to live without sex or without love, they'd live without sex. Do they mean it? We believe the relative rankings of favorite bedroom acts support the portrait of gay men as great romantics. Hugging, caressing, and snuggling are far and away what men love to do the most, with deep kissing coming in second.

Pee-shy
46% percent
say they have
difficulty
urinating if
someone is
watching; 16%,
if someone is
listening.

Of course, these men like genital sex too. They like both performing and receiving oral sex almost as much as they like deep kissing, but less than half of the men give their highest marks to anal intercourse, whether receptive or insertive. Relative to anal sex, slightly more men say they prefer masturbating someone or being masturbated, licking or sucking testicles (both giving and receiving), or even sucking a man's nipples or having their own nipples sucked.

When it comes to anal play, it appears men either love

it or hate it, and significant numbers are in both camps. It's interesting to note that the two most popular ways to have an orgasm involve anal intercourse: 26% of the men say their favorite way to have an orgasm is by masturbating or being masturbated while engaging in receptive anal intercourse, and 19% say their favorite is insertive anal intercourse. The third-favorite—17%—is by receiving oral sex.

HIV, sex, and risk

How many men are infected with HIV? Most (80%) of the men have been tested for HIV, and among these men 13% have tested positive. More than half the men who have been tested were relying on recent information, with their last test having occurred in 1993 or 1994.

How many men have a partner who is infected with HIV? Among men who have a primary male partner, 12% know he is HIV-infected, 71% feel sure he is HIV-negative, and 10% just assume he is negative. HIV-positive men are five times as likely as HIV-negative men to have partners who are also positive.

How many men have concluded the series of hepatitis B vaccine shots?

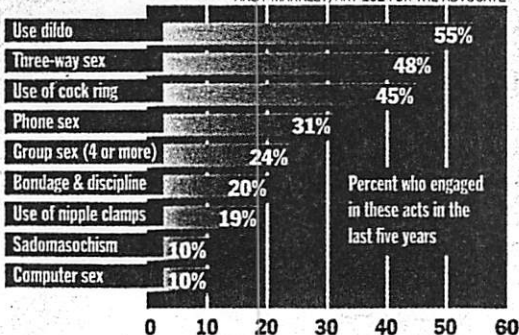
Only 18% of the men have taken all three shots in the hepatitis B vaccine series. This is quite alarming since hepatitis B is a virus that causes a potentially fatal liver

Renee Richards
factor
Less than 1%
believe they are
women stuck in
men's bodies.



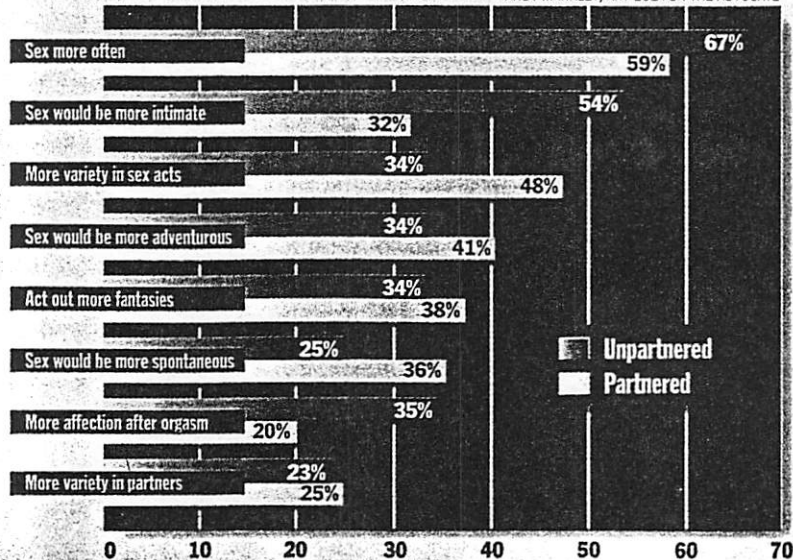
When it's not vanilla sex

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How would you change your sex life?

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Tops and bottoms

Many heterosexuals stereotype gay men as following strict sex roles. They take the role of either the "male" or the "female" in anal intercourse. In truth many do both, and quite a lot don't even like anal intercourse. Of all the men who say they like or love being the top (71% of the total sample), 72% also like or love being the bottom. Twenty percent don't like it but do it for a partner. Other respondents refuse to be the bottom



illness and is transmitted primarily through blood, semen, saliva, and other bodily fluids—much like HIV. Gay men are one of the top risk groups for being exposed to hepatitis B, and 2% to 5% of people who are infected become chronic carriers, remaining contagious throughout their lives.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there are at least 300,000 new hepatitis B infections each year. Five percent to 10% of infected individuals develop acute liver disease, which can have fatal implications. Those with chronic infections often remain contagious throughout their lives. Immunization with the hepatitis B vaccine is the most effective means of preventing infection. The CDC recommends that all people in

high-risk categories be vaccinated.

How many sex partners do men have? A minority of men have chosen celibacy or for reasons not of their choosing has been sexually inactive. Four percent have had no sex with other men in the past five years—a figure not very different from those in a national representative survey showing that 5% of American men have been celibate for that length of time—while 28% have gone six months to two years without a sexual partner, and 12% have gone two to five years without a sexual partner.

At the time of the survey, about three quarters of the men reported recent sexual activity with another man, 27% had not had sex in the previous month, and 9% had not had sex in the previous year. Most men report having had no more than four partners in the past year, 28% say they have had sex with only one

male in the past year, 24% have had two to four male partners, and 18% have had five to ten partners. One percent report having had more than 100 sex partners.

Of course, men report many more partners on a lifetime basis. Less than 1% have never had sex with another man, and 2% say they have had sex with only one. Most men (57%) report having had more than 30 partners over their lifetime, and about a third (35%) report more than 100 partners.

What risky sexual activities do men report?

Most of the men have engaged in a variety of sexual activities during the past year, many of which are less risky in terms of HIV transmission than oral or anal intercourse, such as deep kissing (88%) and masturbating with another male (89%). Oral intercourse is nearly as common: 85% have received oral sex, and 85% have performed it. What level of risk is taken?

- When men engage in oral sex, they most frequently do so without a condom. During the past year approximately one quarter of all men (26%) used a condom for insertive oral sex; 20%, for receptive oral sex.
- Among men who have had receptive oral intercourse in the past year, 58% had another man ejaculate in their mouths—most often a long-term partner—and 44% of men who have had insertive oral intercourse ejaculated in a partner's mouth.
- About one quarter (26%) of HIV-positive men who have had insertive oral intercourse have ejaculated in another man's mouth, most typically with someone they have just met.

Anal intercourse is less common: In the past year 58% have performed insertive anal intercourse, and 56% have engaged in receptive anal intercourse.

What level of risk is taken during this sexual activity?

- Condom use is more common in anal than in oral intercourse, but it is far from universal. Nearly half (45%) have had in-

Four in 10 men have partners; 87% have made long-term commitments to the relationship.



Sex and condoms

30% find it difficult to stop and use a condom once they start to get aroused.

56% feel that sex isn't as good when they use a condom.

25% find it embarrassing to buy condoms in a store.

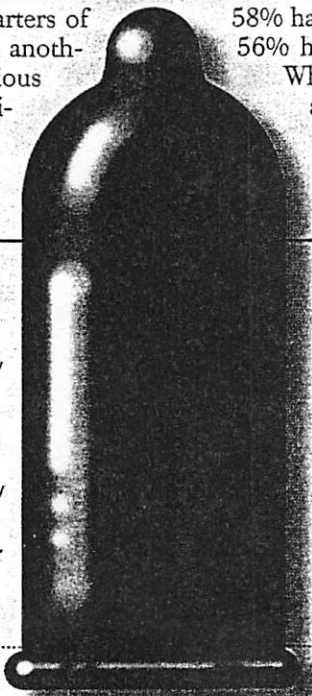
65% always have a condom available to use when they think they might get into a sexual situation.

79% feel confident they can find ways to suggest using condoms that their partners would accept.

6% feel that sex without condoms is worth the risk of getting HIV.

27% have had a condom slip off during anal intercourse.

27% have had a condom break during anal sex.



sertive anal intercourse with a condom, and 42% have had receptive anal intercourse with a partner wearing a condom.

- Among men who have had insertive anal intercourse in the past year, 44% ejaculated in a partner without a condom. Among those who have had receptive anal intercourse in the past year, 58% had a partner ejaculate without a condom.

- Among HIV-infected men who have had insertive anal intercourse in the past year, 19% ejaculated without wearing a condom. They most typically did this with long-term partners or with men with whom they had a purely sexual encounter rather than within the context of a relationship.

- Among HIV-negative men who have had receptive anal intercourse in which their partner ejaculates without a condom, most did so with long-term partners only.

Anilingus (tongue on or in the anus) is fairly common: 41% have performed it in the past year, and 47% have received it. When engaging in insertive and receptive anilingus, only 4% and 5%, respectively, have used dental dams to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

Survey results indicate the following perspectives on HIV risk:

- Nearly half (46%) of the men sometimes have sex that they consider riskier than they should be having, and an additional one in seven (14%) says he has such sex half of the time or more.

- Most men recognize the difficulty in judging whether another person is infected with HIV. Among the whole sample 83% strongly disagree with the notion that they can tell if someone is

HIV-positive by the way the person looks and acts. Almost as many (79%) strongly disagree with the statement that if they were really in love with someone, they wouldn't worry about getting infected with HIV when they had sex.

- Among men who have had a positive result from an HIV antibody test, 11% have said or implied that they were HIV-negative in order to have sex.

Sex appeal: Who's got it, who's working on it

Let's just say many men are confident about their sex appeal. More than four in ten (41%) rate themselves as above or far above average in their attractiveness to other males. Forty-six percent rate themselves as average, whereas only 13% say they are below average. The more masculine a man rates himself, the more attractive he assumes he is to other men. Men are also confident

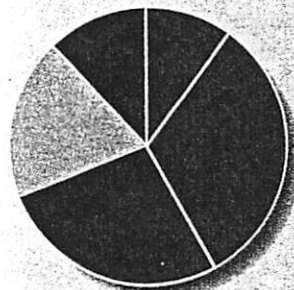


How good are you at handling the emotional part of relationships?

Great ■ 17%
Good ■ 53%
Fair ■ 24%
Bad ■ 4%
Terrible ■ 2%

How would you rate your sex life?

Great ■ 10%
Good ■ 32%
Fair ■ 27%
Bad ■ 19%
Terrible ■ 12%



How good do you think you are at sex?

Great ■ 22%
Good ■ 57%
Fair ■ 18%
Bad ■ 2%
Terrible ■ 1%

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when it comes to ranking themselves as lovers: 22% think they're great, and 57% say they are good.

Very few (2%) have used steroids to increase the size of their muscles. Some do it the hard way, lifting weights: 19% put in six or more hours per week, 59% put in less than six hours, while almost a quarter (22%) do not exercise at all.

Adding ornaments is easier than buffing up, yet nearly two thirds (64%) are pierced nowhere on their body. Of those who are pierced, most have pierced their left ear; some their right; and just a few have pierced their nipples, penis, or navel.

Men and relationships

Most gay men state a clear preference for long-term relationships. Many are partnered: A third (33%) live with a partner, while 11% say they have a primary male partner, but they don't live together. Only 8% say they are dating one man in particular, and 13% say they are dating more than one person. More than a third (35%) of the men describe themselves as single and not dating. Of all the men who are not in a relationship, 87% say they wish they were. Of all the men who say they

71% say they prefer long-term monogamous relationships to other arrangements.

have a primary male partner, 87% say they have made a long-term commitment to the relationship. Of those who live with a partner, nearly four in ten have either exchanged rings or had a commitment ceremony.

Would you want to legally marry another man if you could? Most of the men (59%) give a yes to the question, and 26% say maybe. The vast majority (71%) say they prefer long-term monogamous relationships to other arrangements, but 20% prefer long-term open relationships. The few remaining split between short-term or no relationships.

How many men are trying to be monogamous? Referring to either their current or their last relationship, more than half (52%) are or were monogamous as far as they know; 28% are supposed to be monogamous, but one or both partners have had sex with someone else; and 20% are or were in open relationships.

How long do men's relationships last? Contrary to some stereotypes that gay men's relationships lack longevity, the number of years some men have been together is impressive. Of the men who are in a relationship, more than three quarters (77%) report that it has lasted a year or longer, and roughly a quarter (26%) say they have been with their partner for more than ten years.

By the way, if you think the price of companionship is routinized sex, you are in the minority: Men who are partnered are more likely to rate their sex life as "good" or "great" than men who are dating (65% versus 47%).

Do single men engage in more solo sex? Not surprisingly, men who are partnered masturbate less than those who are not: 31% of those partnered either masturbated only once or not at all in the previous seven days; only 14% of those unpartnered masturbated that infrequently.

How many gay men are fathers? Nearly 10% of the men are fathers, although most don't live with their chil-

dren. The vast majority of men with children had them when the man was married or in a relationship with a woman. But the rest are offspring of the man's male partner, are adopted, or are products of sperm donation. Among the men who have no children, about a quarter would like to have a child someday and another quarter are unsure.

Final words

Obviously, some of the information provided helps to expose as myths certain stereotypes about gay and bisexual men. Popular images emphasize the quest for sexual gratification and underplay the quest for romance and companionship. But many gay men are seeking love and intimacy—and many more have found both in their longtime partners. On the other hand, although the gay community is recognized for its adoption of safer-sex practices, our findings provide evidence of backsliding. Significant numbers of men say they are taking more sexual risks than even they think they should.

If you answered this survey, you have contributed useful data for the ongoing war against AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. For example, learning about the low numbers of gay men who have been vaccinated against hepatitis B can serve to stimulate efforts to target gay men with an important disease-prevention message.

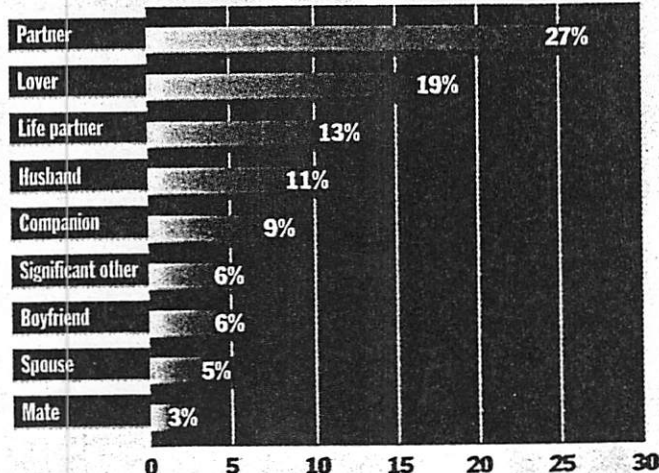
But we are also excited by what can be learned from your answers about the experience of being gay in America. Never has so much detail on the early stages of the coming-out process been gleaned from such a large and diverse group of gay men. It is notable that a majority of men with mainstream jobs are living their lives freely and openly in front of family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. *The Advocate's* staff and the team of scientists thank you for your help. ●

Gay bashing

More than one in five (22%) have been physically threatened or attacked because they were known or suspected to be gay or bisexual. Men who rate themselves as somewhat effeminate or effeminate are more likely (35%) to have been victims of such hate crimes.

Term preferred to describe a life mate

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Where men have found sex partners in the past five years

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