

## **Blood Donation Eligibility Amongst Men who have Sex with Men in Australia**

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**Background:** In 2020, blood donation criteria in Australia changed for men who have sex with men (MSM), such that MSM became eligible if their last male-to-male sex event was at least 3 months prior to donation (previously 12 months).

It is not known how many MSM may be eligible to donate blood, nor how many might otherwise be eligible in the absence of the new criterion.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional national population survey was conducted via a probability-based online panel. The survey included questions to estimate the impact of the new deferral period on blood donation eligibility and assess knowledge of MSM criteria.

All respondents were aged over 18 and living in Australia.

**Results:** A total of 5,178 people completed the survey, with 42.9% male, 56.6% female, 0.4% non-binary, and 0.06% who use a different term.

Of the males, 4.3% identified as gay, 2% identified as bisexual, and 0.4% said they use a different term. Of the male-born non-binary people, 30.4% identified as gay or lesbian, 26% identified as bisexual, and 17.4% said they use a different term.

In response to “In the last 3 months have you had male-to-male sex?”, 3.9% of men responded yes, including 7 heterosexually identified men.

Of those who responded yes, 38.4% were otherwise eligible to donate blood, based on criteria assessed in the survey.

Of the non-heterosexual men, 45% had not had male-to-male sex in the last 3 months, and 34% were eligible to donate blood based on criteria assessed in the survey.

Only 12% of eligible non-heterosexual men knew the deferral period after male-to-male-sex is 3 months.

**Conclusion:** One third of non-heterosexual men were eligible under current criteria, and significantly more may be eligible to donate blood in the absence of the MSM criterion. Knowledge of the current MSM criterion is very low.

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