

HIV Prevalence and Risk Behaviors Among Persons Active in the New York City House Ball Community

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Objectives

- Identify HIV prevalence in the House Ball community
- Assess patterns of risk behavior and psychosocial factors associated with HIV infection.
- Needs assessment for development of sub-culturally specific (targeted) prevention services.

House Ball Background

- The first 'Ball': 1865 at the Hamilton Lodge in Harlem.
- **House:**
 - A 'family' structure of African American and Latino gay and transgender people
 - An appointed Father and Mother leads the remaining members, referred to as "children"
 - Some Houses have original names: Ebony, Xtravaganza (Latin), Maasai.
 - Today most are named after designers: Dior, Givenchy, Manolo Blahnik, Chanel, etc.
- **Balls:** events for spectators and 'Houses' competing for trophies, prize money and community recognition in categories (Vogueing, Runway, Realness, Body, Face, etc.)





TEACH Ignite Ball/Fashion Show, September 2003, NYC

Photography by Robert Risse & Luiz Guimaraes



Study Design

- Cross-sectional HIV prevalence and behavioral risk survey of House Ball community
- Participants were approached at balls, house meetings, bars, dance clubs, streets, and other programmatic outreach events.
- Participants consented to an interviewer-administered computerized survey, pre and post counseling and testing for HIV.
- \$50 reimbursement for participation.

Community Assessment Process (CAP)

- System level interviews
- Focus groups
- Community advisory board
- Observation
- Enumeration of Houses
- Calendar of events



HBS Community Partners

- Programmatic design and outreach elements were developed through a community-based participatory research training initiative known as TEACH (Technology Exchange and Capacity Building for Community Health).
- HBS served as a field practicum for TEACH, which included collaborations with 9 CBOs.
- HBS and TEACH co-sponsored balls, rehearsals, parties.
- Public service announcements shown at house ball events promoted the HBS and HIV prevention programs.



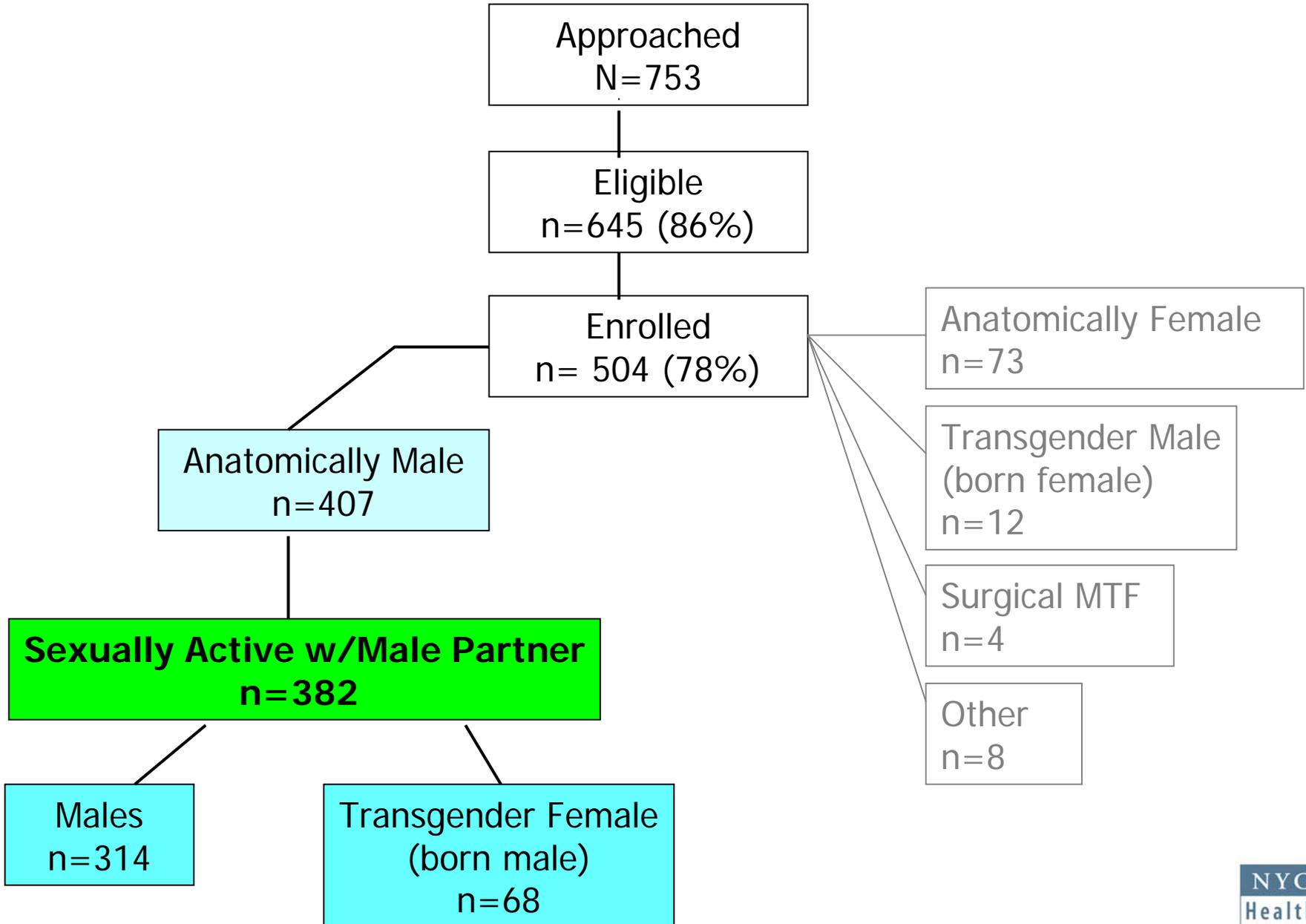
Eligibility Criteria

- 15 years or older
- Resident of NYC metropolitan area
- House Ball community member

Recruitment

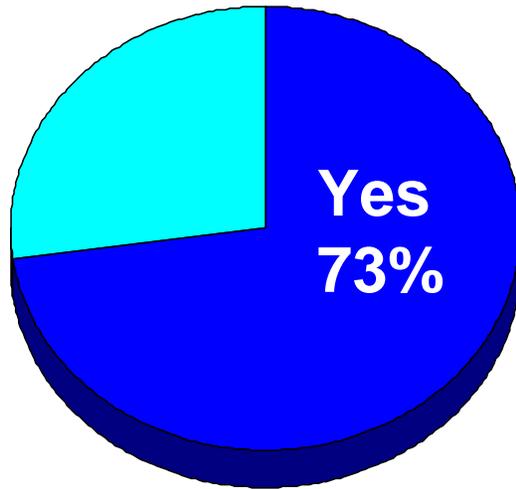
- Locations selected through CAP
- “Intercept area” established for each location
- Eligible participants were enrolled, interviewed and tested at venue or scheduled for other day appointments at an office location.

Study Sample

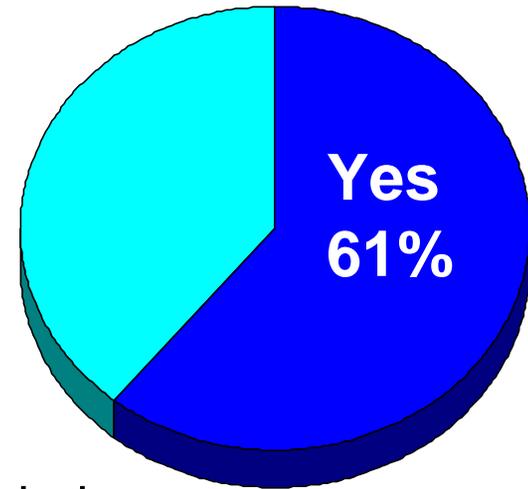


House Membership and Ball Participation (N=382)

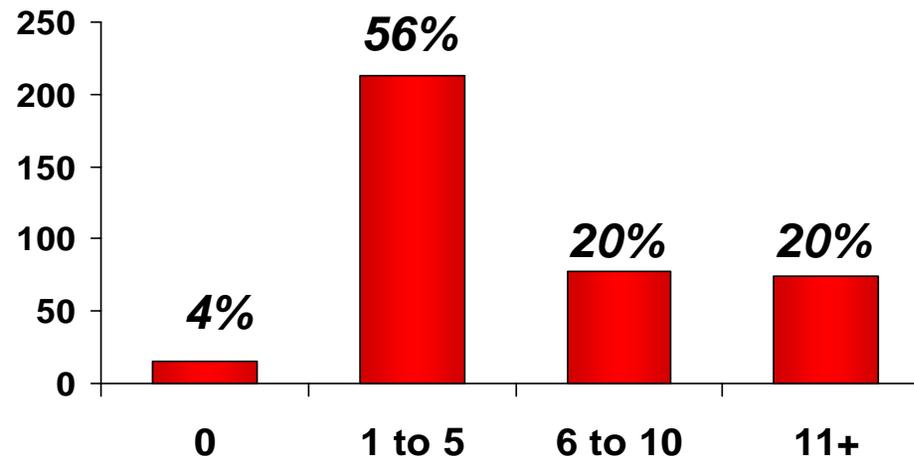
Ever House Member



Current House Member



House Balls Attended
in the past 12 months



Demographic Characteristics

	Male (N=314)	Transgender Female (N=68)	Overall (N=382)
Age (%) *			
15-19	34	28	33
20-30	47	63	50
31 +	19	9	17
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
White	3	1	2
Black	51	54	52
Hispanic	44	43	44
Other	2	2	2

* $p < 0.05$

Sexual Behaviors in Past 12 Months

	Male (N=314)	Transgender Female (N=68)	Overall (N=382)
# Male Partners (%) *			
1 - 5	74	53	71
> 5	26	47	29
Sex with Female (%)	13	16	13
Exchange Sex for Money or Drug (%) *	5	32	10
Unprotected Anal Sex (%)	30	25	29
STD Diagnosis (%)	7	10	8

* $p < 0.001$

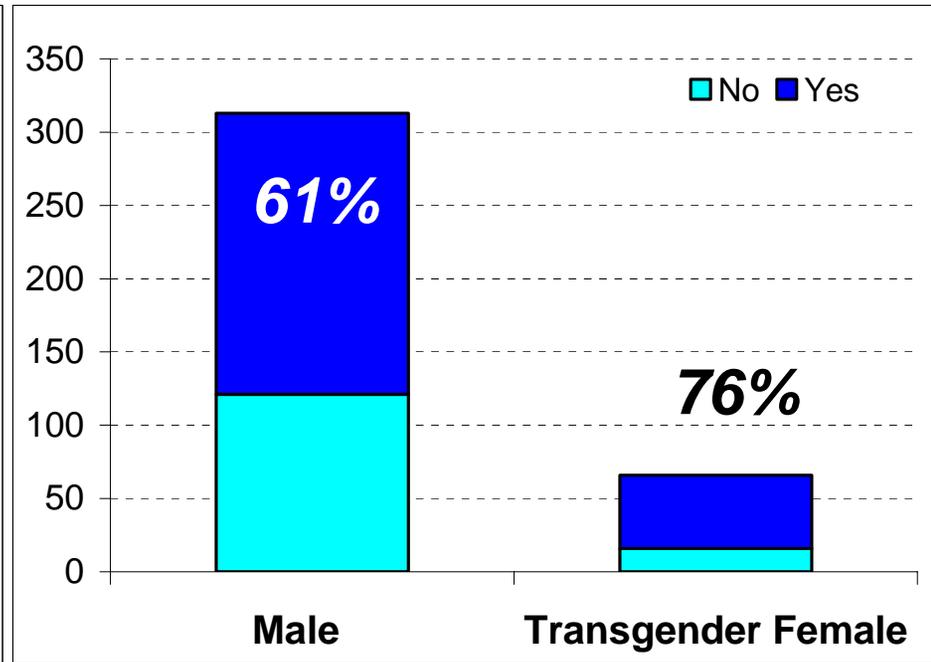
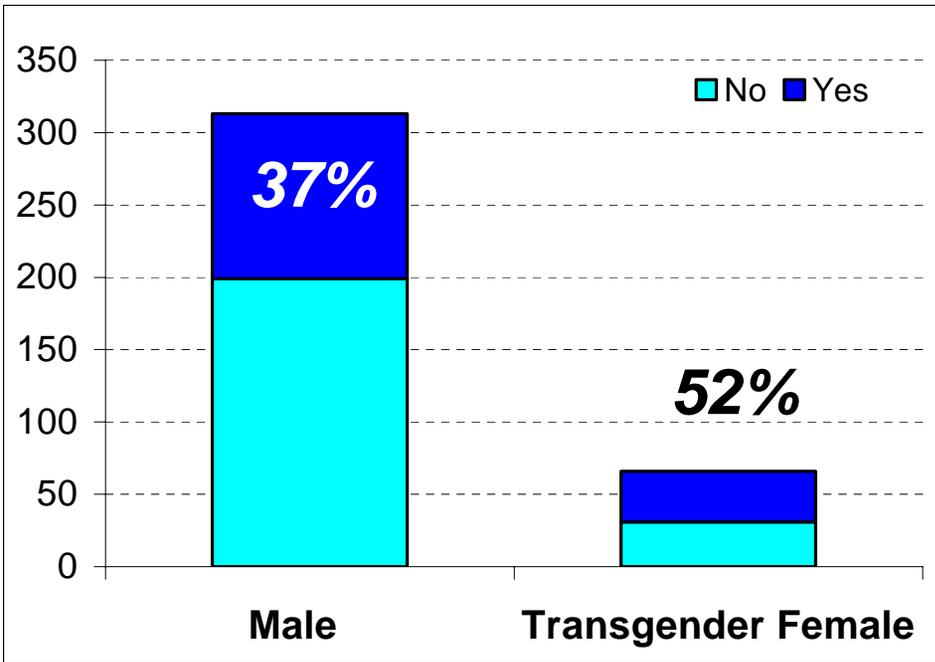
Substance-Use Behaviors

	Male (N=314)	Transgender Female (N=68)	Overall (N=382)
Used Non-Injected Drugs in Past 12 Months (%)	40	46	41
Marijuana (%)	40	43	40
Ecstasy (%)	12	10	12
Crystal (%)	6	4	6
Ever Injected Drugs (%)	2	2	2
Had >5 Drinks a Day in Past Month (%)	38	28	36

Psychosocial Factors

**Depression (CES-D screened)
in Past 7 Days**

**Stressful Life Events
in Past 12 Months**



*** $p < 0.05$**

*** $p < 0.05$**

Stressful Life Events (Past 12 months)

	Male (N=314)	Transgender Female (N=68)	Overall (N=382)
Friend Died (%) *	20	46	25
Been Arrested (%) ***	12	24	14
Been Beaten up (%) **	4	15	6

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

Stressful Life Events (Lifetime)

	Male (N=314)	Transgender Female (N=68)	Overall (N=382)
Been Arrested (%) *	36	53	39
Been Beaten up (%) **	22	40	25
Forced to Have Sex (%) *	17	29	19
Tried to Commit Suicide (%) *	12	24	14

*** $p < 0.05$**

**** $p < 0.01$**

HIV Testing History

	Male (N=314)	Transgender Female (N=68)	Overall (N=382)
<i>Ever Tested (%)</i>			
Yes	87	91	87
No	13	9	13
<i>Tested in Past 12 Months (%)</i>			
Yes	60	65	60
No	26	26	26
Refused/Unknown	14	9	14
<i>Self-Reported HIV Status (%)</i>			
Positive	5	7	6
Negative	74	75	74
Refused/Unknown	21	18	20

HIV Prevalence - Demographics

	Total Tested (N)	HIV+ (%)	% HIV+ Unaware of Infection
Total	380	19	73
Gender			
Male	312	20	74
Transgender	68	16	67
Age *			
15 - 19	125	19	79
20 - 29	190	16	70
30 +	65	46	73
Race/Ethnicity *			
Black	198	30	83
Hispanic	166	7	25
White	8	12	0
API/Other	8	12	100

*** $p < 0.001$**

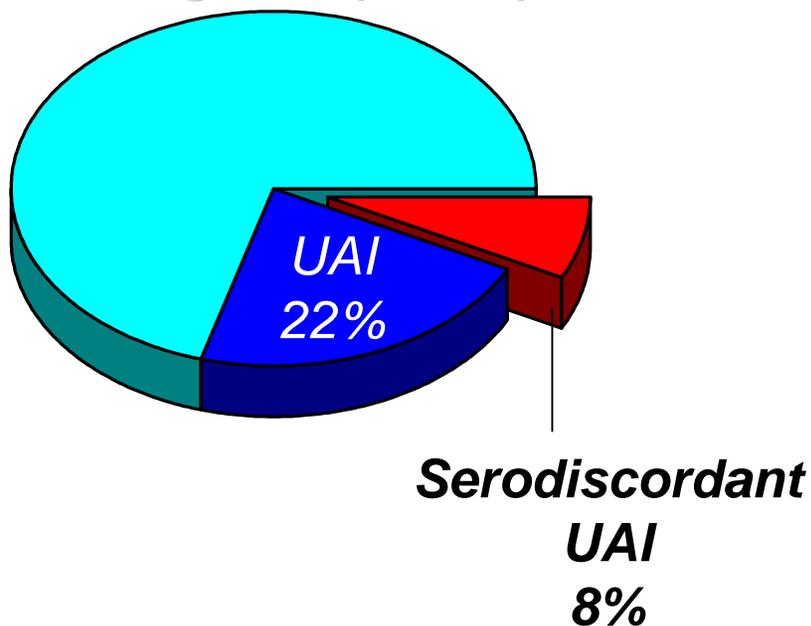
HIV Prevalence – Risk Behaviors in Past 12 Months

	Total Tested (N)	HIV+ (%)
Total	380	19
<i>Number of Male Partners</i>		
1 - 5	267	18
> 5	110	23
<i>Unprotected Anal Intercourse</i>		
Yes	109	18
No	271	20
<i>STD Diagnosis</i>		
Yes	29	31
No	351	19
<i>Exchange Sex for Money/Drug</i>		
Yes	37	30
No	343	18
<i>Non-Injection Drug Use</i>		
Yes	157	17
No	223	22

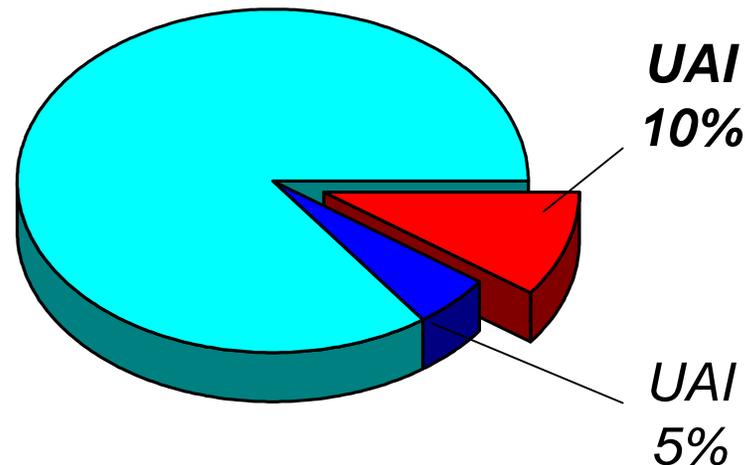
Partner's HIV Status and Unprotected Anal Intercourse during Last Encounter

- No UAI
- UAI with Seroconcordant Partner
- UAI with Serodiscordant Partner

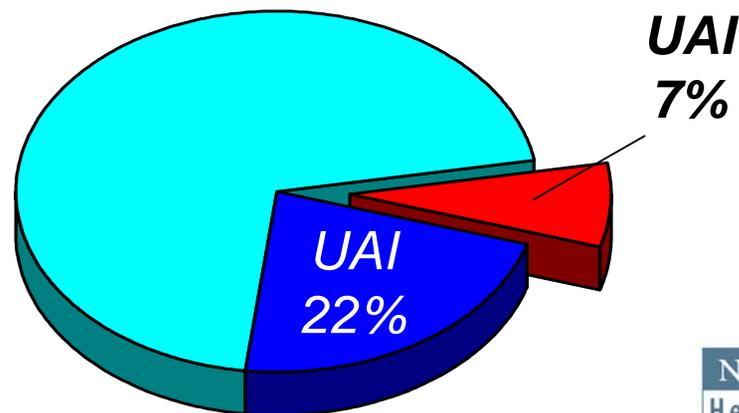
Self-reported and Tested Negative (n=305)



Self-reported and Tested Positive (n=20)



Unaware of HIV Infection (n=54)



UAI: Unprotected Anal Intercourse

Variables in Multiple Logistic Regression Models

– HIV status as outcome variable

- Respondent's Characteristics: gender, race, age
- During Last Sexual Encounter:
 - high on drugs/alcohol with steady and/or casual partner
 - discussed HIV status before sex with steady and/or casual partner
 - serodiscordant steady and/or casual partner
- In Past 12 Months:
 - number of balls attended
 - number of male partners, sex with any female
 - UAI with steady and/or casual partner
 - STD diagnosis, exchange sex for money/food/drugs
 - ever used injection drug, non-injection drug use, high during sex
- Stressful Life Events:
 - in past 12 months (personal loss, arrest/incarceration, personal harm/illness)
 - prior to past 12 months (personal loss, violence, other)
- CES-D Depressive Symptoms in Past 7 Days

Significant Factors Associated with HIV Infection Status (n=302)

	Adjusted OR (95% C.I.)	P-value
Race: Black vs. Non-Black	3.90 (1.76 – 8.63)	0.0008
Age (years): >24 vs. ≤24	2.11 (1.01 – 4.42)	0.048
High on Non-Injection Drugs during Sex in Past 12 Months: Yes vs. No	0.12 (0.03 – 0.49)	0.003
Serodiscordant Steady Partner during Last Sexual Encounter: Yes vs. No	2.99 (1.21 – 7.39)	0.018

Variables in Multiple Logistic Regression Models

- UAI during Last Encounter as outcome variable

- Respondent's Characteristics:
 - gender, race, age
- Partner's Characteristics:
 - race, age difference between respondent and partner, HIV status
- During Last Sexual Encounter:
 - high on drugs/alcohol, discussed HIV status before sex
- In Past 12 Months:
 - number of balls attended
 - STD diagnosis, exchange sex for money/food/drugs
 - non-injection drug use, high on non-injection drug during sex
- Stressful Life Events:
 - in past 12 months (personal loss, arrest/incarceration, personal harm/illness)
 - prior to past 12 months (personal loss, violence, other)
- CES-D Depressive Symptoms in Past 7 Days

Significant Factors Associated with UAI with **Steady Partner** during Last Encounter (n=192)

	Adjusted OR (95% C.I.)	P-value
Seroconcordant Partner during Last Sexual Encounter: Yes vs. No	2.93 (1.32 – 6.51)	0.008
High on Non-Injection Drugs during Sex in Past 12 Months: Yes vs. No	3.35 (1.02 – 10.96)	0.045
Stressful Life Events prior to past 12 Months – Personal Loss: Yes vs. No	2.81 (1.11 – 7.11)	0.029

Significant Factors Associated with UAI with **Casual Partner** during Last Encounter (n=143)

	Adjusted OR (95% C.I.)	P-value
Gender: Transgender Female vs. Male	0.03 (0.001 – 0.55)	0.019
History of Exchanging Sex for Money/Food/Drugs in Past 12 Months: Yes vs. No	56.56 (2.78 – 999)	0.009

Counseling and Referral Linkage

- Interview used as a needs assessment tool to conduct pre and post-test HIV counseling and to provide referrals.
- System developed to flag risks (i.e. depression, violence, UAI, suicidal ideation) to be addressed during counseling sessions.
- Harm-reduction counseling model used.
- Provided peer-based case management for prevention and care.
- Direct referral linkage to local service providers.

Limitations

- These findings may not be generalizable to the NYC House Ball, MSM or transgender communities.
- Risk behavior and testing data are self-reported therefore subject to recall bias.
- Certain questions were of a sensitive nature (psycho-social factors and HIV status), thus underreporting may have occurred.
- Sample size of sexually active transgender females was relatively small.

Summary (I)

- Compared with males, transgender females were more likely to
 - be between 20 to 30 years old
 - have more than 5 male partners
 - report depression or stressful life event
 - have exchanged sex for money or drugs
- Participants aged 30 years and older were more likely to be HIV positive than other age groups.
- Blacks were more likely to be HIV positive than other race/ethnicity groups.
- Participants who were unaware of their HIV infection and those who self-reported and tested negative had a higher proportion of UAI than self-identified HIV-infected participants.

Summary (II)

(Multiple Logistic Regression)

- Compared to HIV negative participants, the HIV-infected participants were more likely to
 - be older than 24 years old
 - be black
 - have a *serodiscordant* steady partner during last sexual encounter
 - not have used non-injection drugs during sex in past 12 months
- The participants who had UAI with a steady partner during last sexual encounter were more likely to
 - have a *seroconcordant* steady partner during last sexual encounter
 - use non-injection drugs during sex in past 12 months
 - experience a stressful life event (personal loss) prior to past 12 months
- The participants who had UAI with a casual partner during last sexual encounter were more likely to
 - be male
 - to exchange sex for money/food/drugs in past 12 months

Recommendations

- Subculture-tailored approaches to accessing and sampling target populations are key for successful implementation of research and intervention activities.
- Simultaneous provision of HIV testing and targeted referral services to a community that may otherwise not routinely access local CBOs.
- Ongoing prevention efforts are needed to promote and maintain reduced risk behaviors in the gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

Acknowledgements

NYC Department of Health

And Mental Hygiene

Lisa Buckley

Laura Coffee

David Hanna

Shavvy Raj-Singh

Darryl Wong

Keyi Xu

CDC

Teresa Finlayson

Duncan MacKellar

Travis Sanchez

Columbia University

Edgar Rivera Colón

Robert Sember

Scout

David Valentine

GMHC

Laura Jones

Harvey Kasdan

Michael Quan

Ana Oliveira

Scott Ikeda

Ricko Hernandez

Field Staff

Jameel Gilbert

Jessee Gonzalez

Wendy Ledsema

Leniere Miley

Jamaul Roots

Julie Santiago

NYS AIDS Institute

Dan O'Connell

HBS/TEACH Collaborators

AIDS Center of Queens County

Callen-Lorde Community

Health Center

Harlem United

Hetrick Martin Institute

Hispanic AIDS Forum

Minority Task Force On AIDS

People Of Color In Crisis



We would like to thank the Mothers and Fathers of the NYC House Ball community as well as members who participated in the study.