

Socio-demographical & behavioural characteristics of MSM attending a VCT Centre in Brussels: Evolution over a five-year period (2008-2012).

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INTRODUCTION

Belgium has one of the highest rates of new HIV diagnoses in Western Europe, with a continuous increase of MSM among new cases representing 23,5% in 2002 and 44,2% in 2012.



OBJECTIVES

To analyse the evolution between 2008 and 2012 of :

- HIV/STI prevalence,
- Socio-epidemiological characteristics,
- Behavioural characteristics,

of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) attending

ELISA Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Centre.



METHODS

- Data collection through a home-made venue-based questionnaire completed by each person attending the VCT centre.
- Selection of MSM based on the question:
“To date, have you ever had sex with : men and/or women?”
MSM answered “men” or “men and women”.
- Calculation of prevalence and analyses done with
SAS 9.2 and Epi Info7



RESULTS OVER a 5-YEAR PERIOD

(2008-2012)

14.652 persons tested
and completed a questionnaire



3226 MSM

23% of all persons tested
34.5% of all men tested

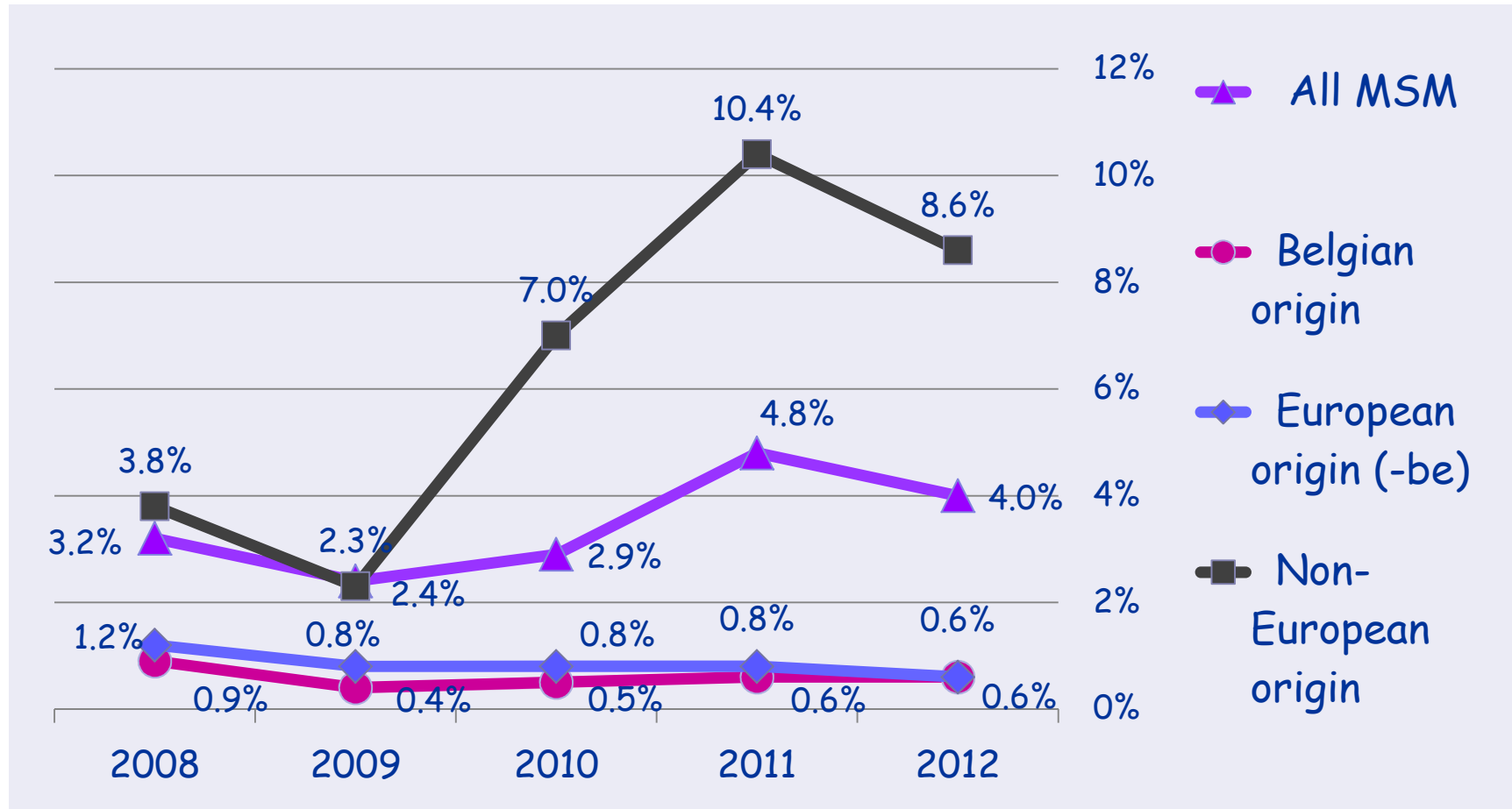


105 HIV+ MSM

Prevalence 3,5%

65% Non-Belgian origin
6 HIV primary infections

HIV PREVALENCE in MSM by Origin



STI prevalences (stable) :

8% for Syphilis, 4,8% for Chlamydia, 2,8% for Gonorrhoea, 0,8% for Hepatitis C.



SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Stable characteristics :

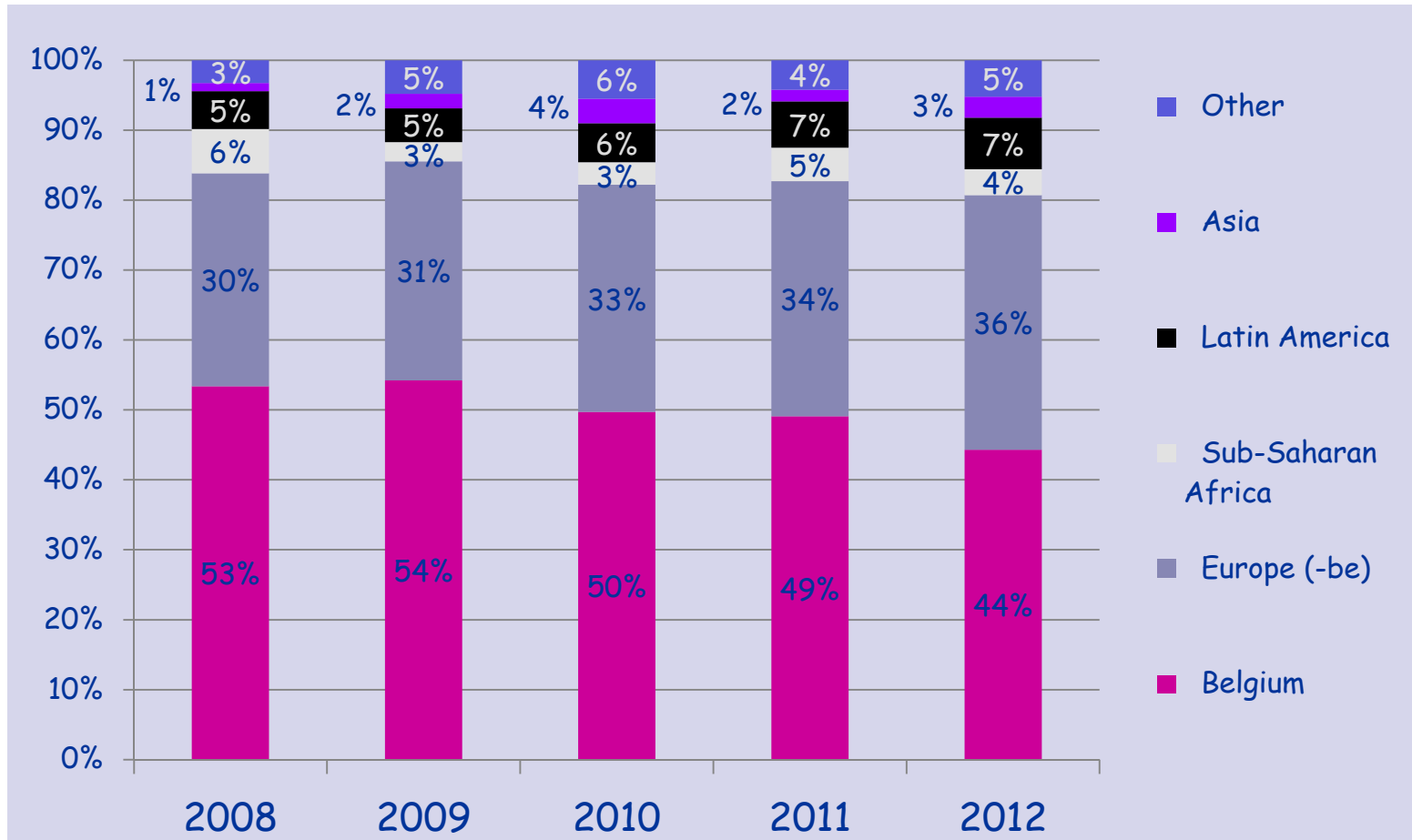
- 32% bisexuals, 68% homosexuals,
- Median age 30, 75% age group : 20 - 39,
- 68% high education 4% low education,
- 37% unemployed of whom :
 - 59% students,
 - 8% undocumented.

Evolutions between 2008 and 2012 :

Increase of :

- MSM with no health insurance ↗ 7% to 12%,
- MSM living outside the Brussels area ↗ 19% to 24%,
- Non-Belgian MSM ↗ 47% to 56% (graph) .

DISTRIBUTION of MSM' s REPORTED ORIGIN



67% of Non-Belgians living in Belgium < 5 years (7% just passing through)
33% > 5 years



BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS⁽¹⁾

Stable characteristics :

- Concurrent sexual partners : 35%,
- Never had sex without a condom : 21%,
- Unprotected sexual penetration in the last 3 months : 38%,
- Previous STI : 34%,
- Practiced transactional sex : 3,5%,
- Clients of prostitutes : 8%.

In the last 12 months before testing :

- > 10 partners : 32%, >20 partners : 15%,
- Consistent use of condom for oral sex : 3%,
- Consistent use of condom for penetrations : 33% ,
- Used IV drugs : <1%.



BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS⁽²⁾

Evolution between 2008 and 2012 :

- Never used a condom for oral sex ↘ 75% to 66%.
- Main reported reasons for not using condoms are :
 - " I trust my partner" : 60%,
 - " I'm in a steady relationship" : 57%,
 - " It reduces sensations" : 37%.
- Unprotected sex because of alcohol and/or drugs consumption in the last 12 months before testing ↗ 24% to 69%.



BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS⁽³⁾

Evolutions between 2011 and 2012 :

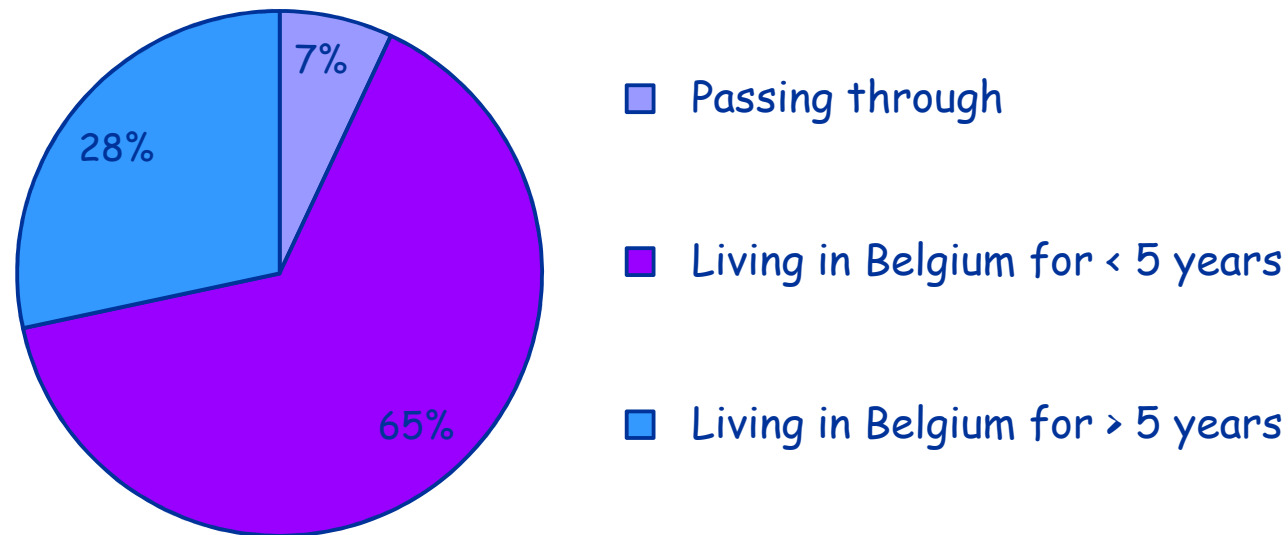
- Increase of all reported daily life consumptions :
 - Alcohol ↗ 68 to 72%,
 - Cannabis ↗ 22 to 29%,
 - Cocaine ↗ 12 to 15%,
 - Ecstasy ↗ 8% to 12%,
 - Used more than 2 illegal drugs ↗ 12% to 16%.

- Decrease of MSM who always used condoms for sex :
 - in Sex Clubs ↘ 37% to 28%,
 - in Bars ↘ 38% to 29%,
 - in Public places, like parks and car parks from ↘ 31 to 26%,
 - on the Internet ↘ 37% to 35%.

BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS⁽⁴⁾

Having never been tested before :

- 15% of all MSM tested (stable over the 5 years)
- Median age \searrow 40 to 25 years
- MSM of Belgian origin \searrow 61% to 46%.
- Distribution of non-Belgians by time of their stay in Belgium





OTHER FINDINGS

Between 2011 and 2012 :

- 61% had a General Practitioner (GP), but 66% never mentioned their sexual orientation.
- 16% chose ELISA VCT to avoid being tested by their GP.
- 66% were aware of post exposure prophylaxis, 69% among Europeans and 53% among Non-Europeans.

Main Reasons for testing :

- 43% because of unprotected sexual intercourse (2008-2010),
- 43% because of unprotected oral sex (2011-2012).

4,5% because they had sex with an HIV positive partner (2008-2012).
(steady or occasional)



CONCLUSION ⁽¹⁾

Over the five-year period (2008-2012) :

- **MSM HIV prevalence** increased from 3,2% to 4%.
- **Socio-demographical characteristics** :
 - Most proportions remained stable including : age, level of education, sexual orientation, ...
 - Increase in : non-Belgians and social vulnerability.



CONCLUSION ⁽²⁾

- **Behavioural characteristics :**
 - Few proportions remained stable such as : previous STI, number of partners, transactional sex, ...
 - Increase of unprotected sex because of alcohol and/or drugs consumption,
 - Scarce use of condoms in all sexual practices and all meeting places.
- **Other findings :**
 - Missed opportunities to disclose sexual orientation to GP.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All Participants

Cécile La Morte and Pr Pascal Semaille

Elisa VCT Centre staff :

- Dr S. de Rouffignac
- Dr D. Daniel
- Dr M. Roux
- Dr M. Madoukou
- Dr R. Mauze
- Dr P. Vuylsteke
- Dr A. Baguette
- Dr D. Piquard
- Dr S. Swannet
- S. Dubois
- A. Van Erck
- M. Monheim
- O. Deman
- P. Segers