Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll 2015 Results

In 2015, the Burnet Institute conducted the Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll survey with young people online. We asked about their sexual behaviours, knowledge of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), STI testing and alcohol and drug use. A total of 1292 people aged 15-29 years took part. This report focuses on the 767 young people who reported they had attended a music festival in the past three years (60%).

Demographics

• 68% were female
• 50% were aged 21 years or less
• 89% were born in Australia
• 70% had completed post-high school education
• 88% lived in a major city
• 57% lived with their parent/s
• 73% spent less than $120 per week for recreational purposes

Festival attendance

• The most common festivals that young people attended included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Kilda Festival</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soundwave</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Falls Music and Arts Festival</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groovin’ The Moo</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future Music Festival</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sexual identity

- 75% Heterosexual
- 12% Gay/lesbian
- 5% Bisexual
- 2% Questioning
- 3% Queer
- 0.4% Other
- 1% I don't wish to say

Sexual intercourse

- 83% had ever had sex (vaginal or anal sex)

Sexual behaviours

**Of those who were sexually active (n=551)**

- 30% had more than 10 sex partners in their lifetime
- 45% had a casual sex partner in the past year
- 41% had multiple sex partners in the past year
- 47% always used condoms with casual partners
- 48% used a condom at last sex
- 35% were at high risk of acquiring an STI

Testing for STIs

**Of those who were sexually active (n=551)**

![Chart showing when was your last STI test?](image)
Knowledge of STIs

• Participants scored an average of seven out of ten in the STI knowledge test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Knowledge Statement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42% did not know that chlamydia can be diagnosed by a urine test</td>
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<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39% did not know that taking the contraceptive pill for a long time does not reduce fertility</td>
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<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38% did not know that gonorrhoea, syphilis and chlamydia can all be treated with antibiotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51% did not know that pap smears cannot be used to diagnose the main STIs</td>
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<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41% did not know that in Victoria it is illegal to forward sexts on to other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>91% knew that the pill does not provide some protection against STIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84% knew that left untreated chlamydia can last for years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80% knew that people infected with STIs do not always have symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73% knew that chlamydia can make women infertile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81% knew that using two condoms is not safer than using just one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion and conclusions

Results from the Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll survey demonstrate that the majority of young people from music festivals reported having had sexual intercourse. Among participants who had ever had sex, a substantial proportion reported risky sexual behaviours. Over 40% reported having multiple sex partners in the past year. This percentage was higher than reported in young people from the Australian Study of Health and Relationships (Rissel et al., 2014). Furthermore, condom use was inconsistent, with less than half of participants reporting that they always used condoms with casual partners. In addition, less than 50% of participants reported using a condom at last sex. This proportion was lower than reported in Australian secondary schools, in which 59% of students reported using a condom at last sex (Mitchell, Heywood, Blackman, & Pitts, 2014). Only 25% of participants had been tested for an STI in the past six months. This was consistent with previous results from a similar online study in young Australians (Adam et al., 2011). These results show that young people have high levels of risky sexual behaviours and low levels of recent STI testing.

Adequate levels of knowledge are required for young people to make informed decisions about sexual health (Lim, Bowring, Gold, Aitken, & Hellard, 2012). Although participants scored an average of seven out of ten on the STI knowledge test, there were several questions answered poorly. These questions related to STI diagnosis, treatment and sexting laws. Over half of participants did not know that pap smears cannot be used to diagnose the main STIs and 40% did not know that chlamydia can be diagnosed by a urine test. In addition, 38% did not know gonorrhoea, syphilis and chlamydia can all be treated with antibiotics and 41% did not know that in Victoria, it is illegal to forward sexts to other people. These results are expected since most sex education in Australian secondary schools focuses only on scientific information about STIs (Brown, Sorenson, & Hildebrand, 2012; Helmer, Senior, Davison, & Vodic, 2015). As young people have a range of concerns about sexual health, programs that aim to educate this group on sexual development, healthy relationships and sexual practices are required (Kang & Quine, 2007).

A high proportion of young people reported they had attended a music festival in the past three years. The most popular festivals were St. Kilda Festival, Big Day Out, Soundwave, Groovin’ The Moo (GTM), Falls, and Future. Attendance suggests that music festivals are an ideal setting for targeting young people for future sexual health programs. This is supported by evidence from a sexual health peer education and health promotion campaign implemented at GTM from 2011-2014 (Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS YEAH (YEAH), 2014). GTM is Australia’s only national touring music festival that caters to the regional market, making it a unique environment to access a priority population of young Australians aged 15-29 years.
Impact evaluation of YEAH’s activities indicated that over 80% of young people from GTM reported that they saw YEAH’s message of ‘I Love Safe Sex’. Of those who engaged with YEAH’s peer educators, over 60% of young people reported that they learnt something new about sexual health. The total investment in YEAH’s 2014 activities was approximately $2.50 per young person reached (YEAH, 2014). As such, future youth peer led interventions at music festivals have great potential to deliver highly cost-effective interventions that improve STI knowledge, sexual behaviours and STI testing among young people.

These results demonstrate that young people who attend music festivals have high levels of sexual activity, low levels of recent STI testing and poor knowledge pertaining to STI diagnosis, treatment and sexting laws. These young people are in need of interventions that promote safe sex behaviours, encourage regular STI testing and improve STI knowledge. Music festivals are an appropriate setting to deliver such interventions because they provide access to a large number of young people who are sexually active and at high risk of acquiring STIs. It is vital that funding is allocated to youth led sexual health promotion programs to ensure that this high risk group are targeted by cost-effective and appropriate interventions.


