The Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) survey is a collaborative project run by ACON and researchers from the University of New South Wales and now the University of Sydney. The survey seeks to investigate health issues affecting lesbians and other same-sex attracted women connected to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities in Sydney.

The survey asked questions about the sex you have and your sexual health, your use of drugs and alcohol, and experiences with your doctor - just to name a few - so we can get a better picture of what’s happening for us.

It’s important to recognise that being a lesbian or same-sex attracted woman is not a health problem, but the experience of homophobia and discrimination can be. As a group, we experience lower health outcomes compared to our heterosexual counterparts but as a community we continue to demonstrate considerable strength and resilience.
WHO PARTICIPATED?

How the participants thought of themselves

- Lesbian/dyke/gay/homosexual: 75.3%
- Bisexual: 10.5%
- Queer: 9.4%
- Other: 3.4%
- Did Not Answer: 1.4%

More of us are being screened for cervical cancer than ever before

CERVICAL SCREENING

- 8% of women had their last pap smear screen more than three years ago
- 16% had never been screened

More women who had never had sex with a man, and bisexual women, were more likely to be overdue for screening

ALCOHOL USE

- 83% of women reported drinking alcohol
- 56% of drinkers drank alcohol at a level that puts them at risk of an alcohol-related disease or injury over their lifetime

VIOLENCE

- 34% of women had experienced some kind of anti-LGBTQ behaviour in the past year, down from previous years
- 28% of women had experienced domestic violence with a female partner in their lifetime; just over half had sought help

WHO PARTICIPATED?

women participated: 964

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**GENERAL HEALTH**

- 40% of women had a Body Mass Index (BMI) that put them in the healthy range...
- Nearly as many had a BMI that put them in the overweight or obese range
- 39% (the distribution of weight is similar to the general community)

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**MENTAL HEALTH**

- 8% of women reported high psychological distress (12% of 16 to 24 year olds)
- 42% had received a mental health diagnosis in their lifetime
- 64% of women had accessed psychological services in their lifetime

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**TOBACCO USE**

- 35% of women were tobacco smokers

   - Smoking was more common in 16 to 24 year olds
   - This is substantially higher than women in the general community, which is 16%*

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**DRUG USE**

- In the past six months 47% had used one or more illicit drugs

   - Rates of drug use were much higher than in the general community

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*This is substantially higher than women in the general community, which is 16%*
Want to be a part of the SWASH story?

Look out for SWASH recruiters at the following locations across the 2012 Mardi Gras period, so you can fill out a 2012 survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mardi Gras Fair Day</td>
<td>12 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dykes on Bikes: Bike and Tattoo Show</td>
<td>18 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Hampshire Hotel, Camperdown)</td>
<td>22 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women Say Something (Slide Nightclub)</td>
<td>24 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Velvet Lounge (Bank Hotel)</td>
<td>26 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Deck of Kings (The Vanguard Newtown)</td>
<td>29 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dangerous Doubles - ACON young women’s project</td>
<td>22 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Serial Space, Chippendale)</td>
<td>24 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney Femme Guild Picnic (Enmore Park, Enmore)</td>
<td>26 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Central (Sly Fox Hotel)</td>
<td>29 February</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This is only a snapshot of survey findings.

For more information on the SWASH survey
Contact: Dr Julie Mooney-Somers
Email: Julie.mooneysomers@sydney.edu.au

To find out more about ACON’s services for lesbians and same sex attracted women contact ACON
Visit: www.acon.org.au
Call: (02) 9206 2000 (Free call: 1800 063 060)

For referrals to lesbian friendly health care practitioners
Contact: ALMA (Australian Lesbian Medical Association)
Visit: www.almas.org.au

The SWASH survey is the only one of its kind in the world. This research informs ACON’s lesbian health work, helps us to create better services and advocate for recognition of the health needs of our community in NSW and Australia.