

# Representing men who have sex with men (MSM) in Britain: Evidence from comparative analyses of the latest convenience & probability surveys

Philip Prah<sup>1</sup>, Ford Hickson<sup>2</sup>, Christopher Bonell<sup>1</sup>, Lisa McDaid<sup>3</sup>, Bob Erens<sup>1,2</sup>, Julie Riddell<sup>3</sup>, Sonali Wayal<sup>1</sup>, Anthony Nardone<sup>4</sup>, Pam Sonnenberg<sup>1</sup>, Anne M Johnson<sup>1</sup>, Catherine H Mercer<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University College London, <sup>2</sup> London school of Hygiene and tropical medicine, <sup>3</sup> University of Glasgow, <sup>4</sup> Public Health England  
Contact details: philip.prah@ucl.ac.uk



## INTRODUCTION

- Convenience surveys of MSM can provide timely data from large samples of men to inform health promotion services
- However, previous research has shown convenience surveys over-represent men reporting greater sexual risk behaviours & men who identify as gay
- Probability sample surveys may be better placed to collect data from the population of MS, regardless of their sexual identity
- **Aim: To compare data from 3 major convenience samples of MSM with a probability sample to examine the extent to which differences persist in Britain**

## COMPARISON OF SURVEY METHODS

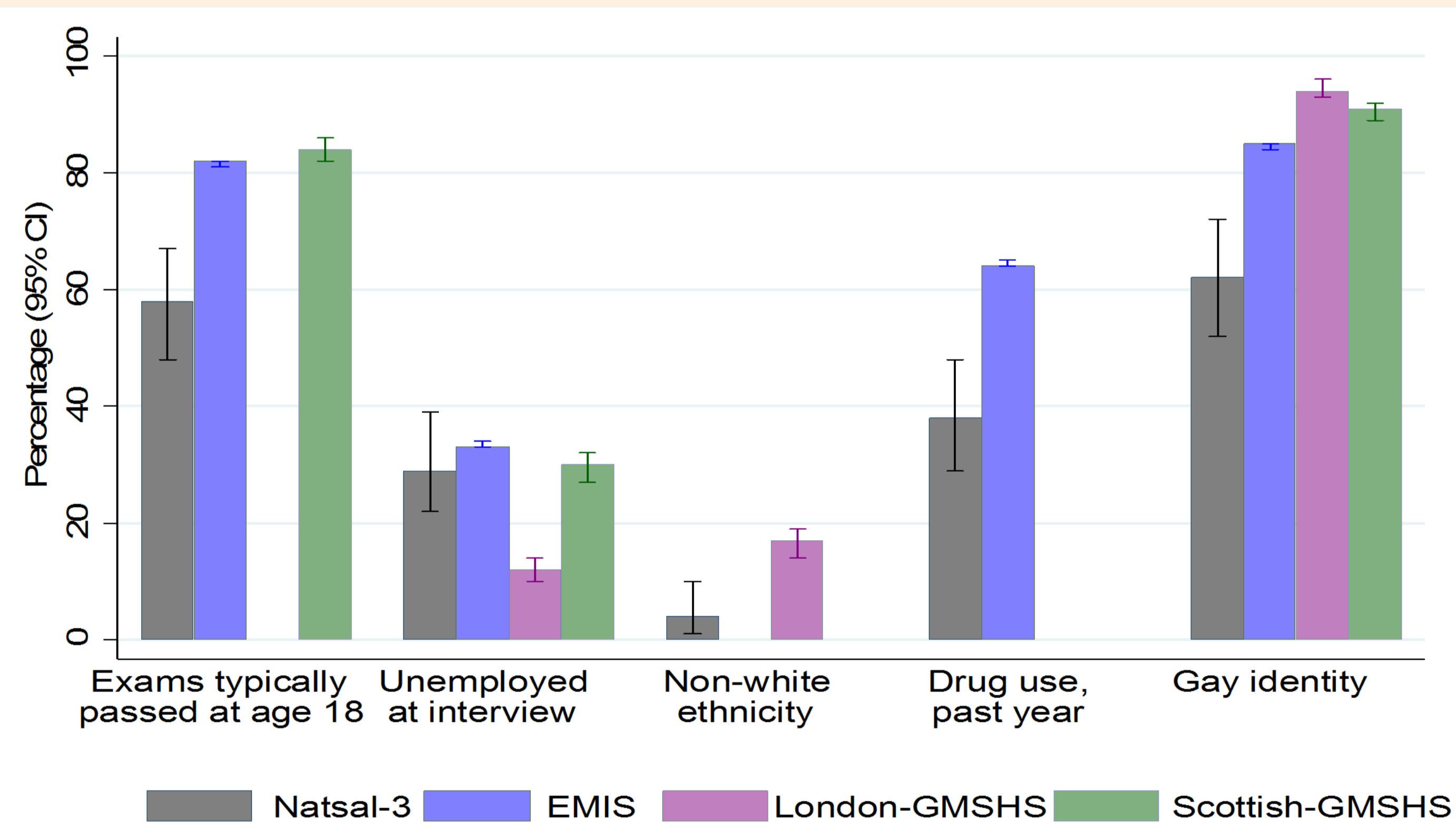
	Probability sample	Convenience samples of MSM		
	National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3)	European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS)	London Gay Men's Sexual Health Survey (London-GMSHS)	Scottish Gay Men's Sexual Health Survey (Scotland-GMSHS)
Data collection period	2010 - 2012	2010	2011	2011
Data collection venue	Household survey	>230 websites e.g. Gaydar, Manhunt, GayRomeo, etc	Gay bars, clubs and saunas	Gay bars, clubs and saunas
Collection method	Computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) and computer-assisted self-interview (CASI)	Internet survey	Pen-and-paper questionnaire	Pen-and-paper questionnaire
Eligible age range	16-74	18+	18+	18+
Total sample size	15,162	18,435	1,185	1,515
Participants aged 18-64, resident in England, Scotland and Wales, and who reported at least one male sexual partner in the last year				
All MSM sample size	148	15,500	797 (London resident)	1,234 (Scotland resident)
MSM who identify as gay				
MSM who identify as gay sample size	98	13,088	752	1,119

## RESULTS

### What proportion of MSM in Natsal-3 would be eligible for taking part in convenience surveys?

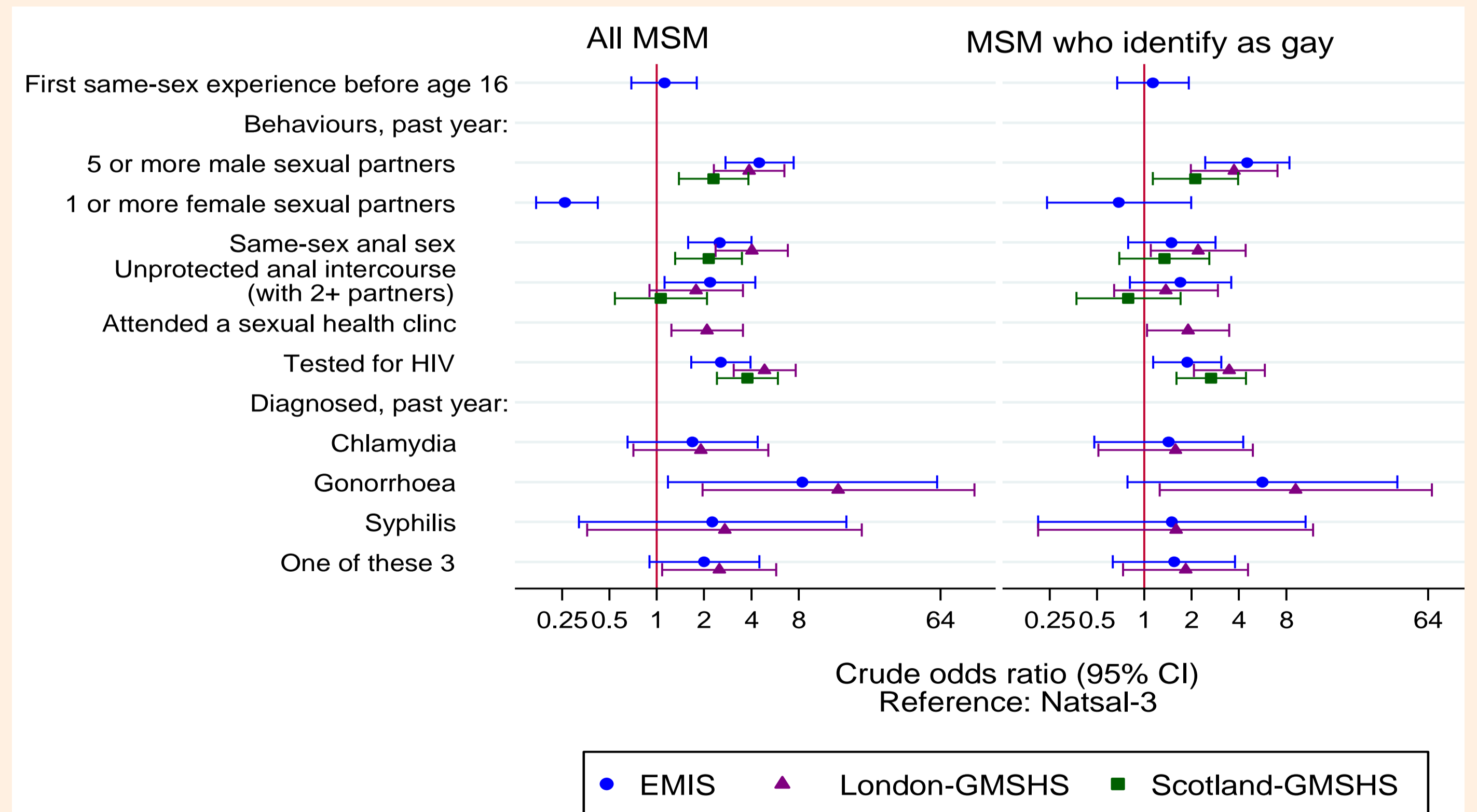
- 55% of MSM in Natsal-3 reported attending a gay bar in the past year
- 41% of MSM in Natsal-3 reported using the internet to find a sexual partner in the past year

### Demographic differences



- Median age of MSM in Natsal-3 was 41 years, older than that found in the convenience samples, 36 (EMIS), 33 (London-GMSHS), and 30 (Scotland-GMSHS)
- Participants in the convenience samples were better educated than those in Natsal-3
- Two-thirds of men in Natsal-3 identified as gay, whilst at least 85% did so in the convenience samples

### Differences in key sexual health indicators



- Men in convenience samples were more likely to report in the past year:
  - Same-sex anal sex
  - Diagnosis of gonorrhoea
  - HIV test
- Whilst less likely to report opposite sex partners
- Restricting the comparison to MSM who identified as gay reduced the difference in reporting opposite sex partners, and same-sex anal sex, but many differences between the samples remain.

## CONCLUSION

- We have been able to show the extent to which MSM taking part in convenience surveys differ to MSM in a national probability survey
- Greater similarity between samples exists among gay-identified MSM
- Methods should be developed to triangulate data from probability and convenience surveys of MSM to strengthen the evidence base for interventions that improve the health and well-being of MSM

