

Circumcision in Australia: further evidence on its effects on sexual health and wellbeing

Australian Longitudinal Study of
Health and Relationships

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- NHMRC-funded cohort study
- [Any other general stuff to say about LongSex?]
- Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
- La Trobe University, Melbourne

The team

Chief investigators

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Background

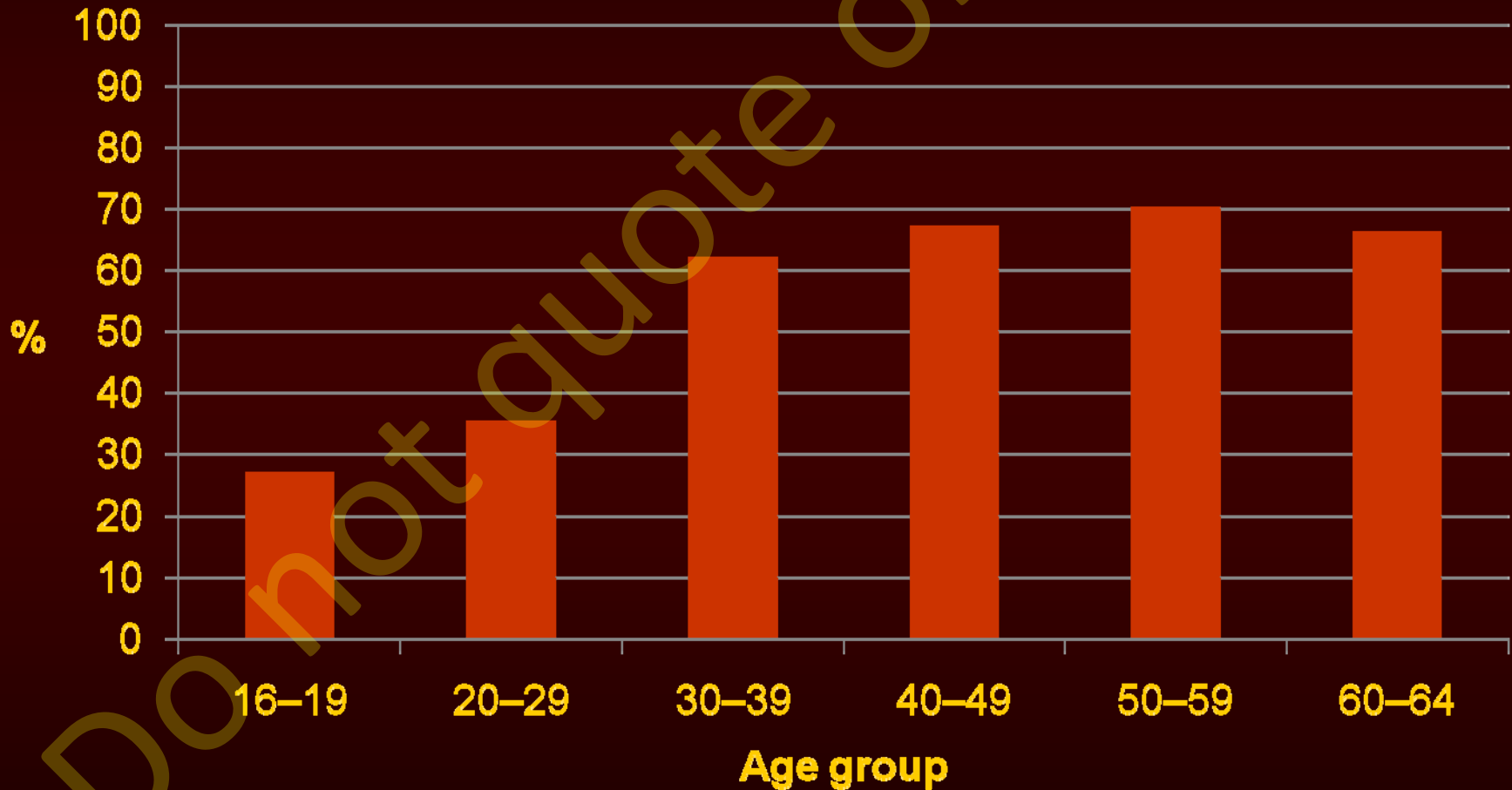
- Sex in Australia survey in 2001–02 found that circumcision had little effect on sexual health
- Men 50–59 were less likely to have trouble with erection if they were circumcised
- US study 10 years earlier found same thing
- Both teams suspected social correlations not physiological cause

This survey

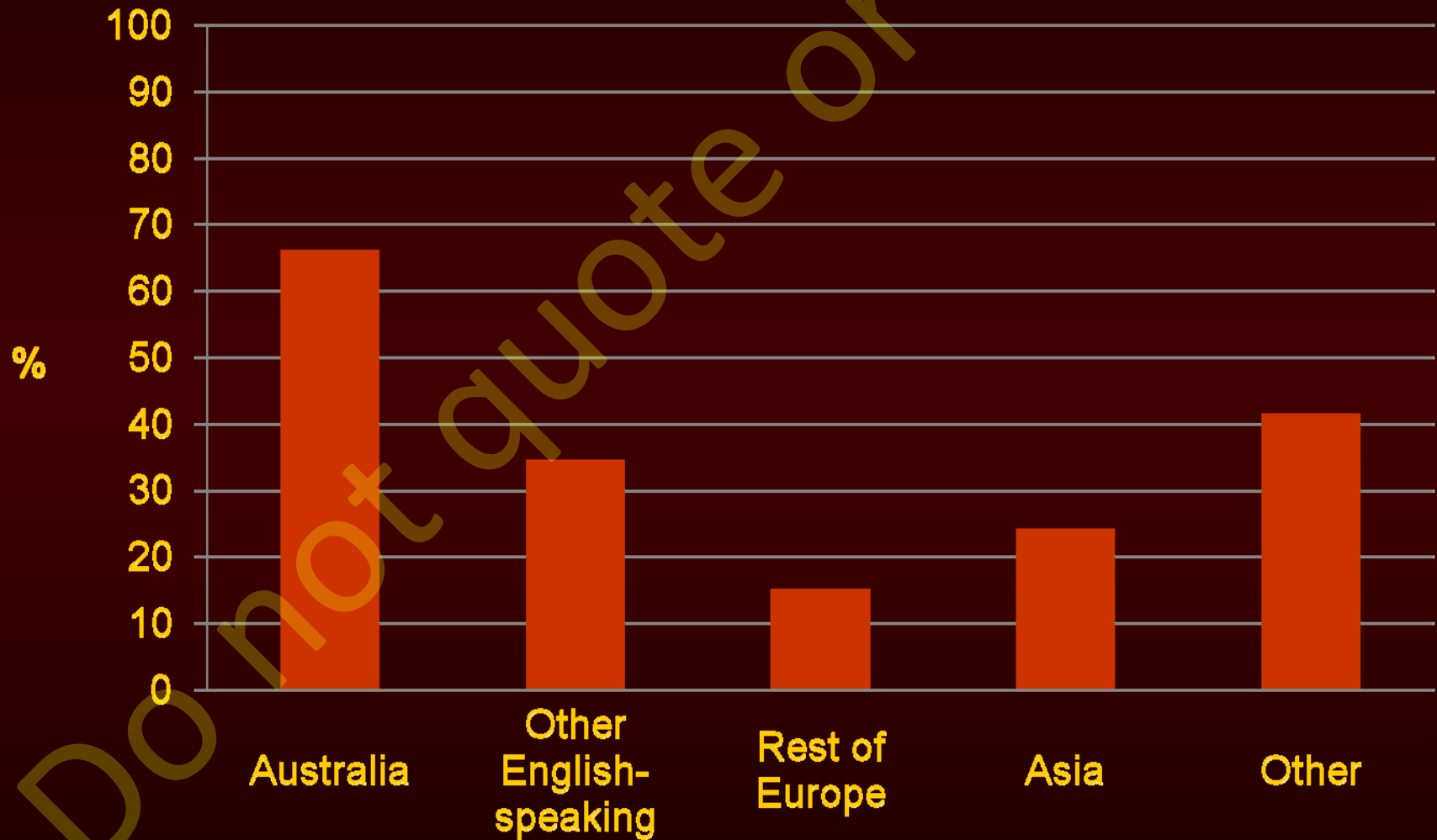
- Representative national sample of Australians aged 16–64
- Households identified through random digit dialling
- Computer-assisted telephone interview
- 4290 men interviewed in 2005–06
- Response rate 54%

DEMOGRAPHICS

% circumcised by age group



Country of birth



Occupational category



SEXUALLY TRANSMISSIBLE INFECTIONS

Sexually transmissible infections

STI	OR for being circumcised	P value
Candidiasis	0.49	<0.001
Pubic lice	1.20	0.22
Genital warts	1.35	0.09
Non-specific urethritis	2.11	<0.001
Chlamydia	1.42	0.12
Genital herpes	1.08	0.74
Gonorrhoea	0.86	0.54

Sexually transmissible infections

- Circumcision protects against candidiasis
- Physiologically plausible
- Consistent with Sex in Australia finding
- Circumcised men have higher risk of NSU
- Reason unclear
- Reporting bias, confounding?
- Sex in Australia OR 1.27, $p=0.29$

SEXUAL DIFFICULTIES

Sexual difficulties

≥ 1 month in previous year

Difficulty	OR	P value
Lacked interest in having sex	0.86	0.10
Came to orgasm too quickly	1.24	0.09
Felt anxious about ability to perform	0.87	0.26
Trouble keeping erection	1.09	0.54
Did not find sex pleasurable	0.88	0.57
Unable to come to orgasm	0.76	0.13
Physical pain during intercourse	0.86	0.59
Worried during sex that body unattractive	0.77	0.04
Any of the above	0.95	0.53

Sexual difficulties

- Fewer circumcised men worried during sex about their appearance (not sig in Sex in Aust, $p=0.43$)
- In Sex in Australia
 - uncircumcised men more likely to have trouble keeping erection
 - uncircumcised men more likely to have pain during intercourse
- Neither effect found in this study

SEXUAL PRACTICE

Masturbation

- Circumcised men slightly less likely to masturbate alone (OR 1.20, $p=0.02$)
- Not significant in Sex in Australia

Sexual practices

at last encounter with female

Practice	OR	P value
Vaginal intercourse	1.32	0.20
Fellatio	0.93	0.39
Cunnilingus	0.97	0.68
Manual stimulation of male partner	1.06	0.56
Manual stimulation of female partner	0.99	0.94

Sexual practices

- No significant differences by circumcision status
- No evidence of women preferring the circumcised penis (as claimed by proponents)
- Any differences in sensitivity or preferences likely to be personal and swamped by social effects

CONCLUSIONS

Circumcision—

- is not significantly protective re STIs of concern in the Australian setting
- has minimal if any effects on sexual wellbeing and practice

Much more exciting

- Sexual Health and Attitudes of Australian Prisoners
- First ever focused study of sex in NSW & Qld prisons
- First telephone interview study in prisons
- Marginalised, high-risk population
- See poster on STIs in NSW and project summary handout