Author's response to reviews

Title: Factors associated with sexual risk behaviors with non-steady partners and lack of recent HIV testing among German men who have sex with men in steady relationships: results from a cross-sectional internet survey

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors,

We appreciate the thoughtful responses of the reviewers to our manuscript “Factors associated with sexual risk behaviors with non-steady partners and lack of recent HIV testing among German men who have sex with men in steady relationships: results from a cross-sectional internet survey,” manuscript ID 1087491752168204. We have taken all suggestions into consideration, and have revised the manuscript accordingly. A point-by-point response follows.

Reviewer 1:

“For many readers, the paper could be made more interesting by comparing the German figures on testing practices and unprotected anal intercourse with other European data. I am very surprised, for example, by the relatively low rates of testing – at least as compared with Australia.”

- We have added a comparison of UAI and HIV testing rates in Germany and in Europe as a whole to the Background section (see lines 103-106).

“‘without an HIV diagnosis’ is unclear: Does it mean that the participants haven’t been tested or that they are HIV-negative or both? Please clarify.”

- Participants “without an HIV diagnosis” include both those who tested negative at their last HIV-test and those who have never been tested. We have changed the wording in the Abstract to clarify this (line 33).

“‘outcome group’ as used in the abstract is unclear. It is clear in the paper proper but it needs to be clarified in the abstract.”

- We have edited the abstract to clearly identify the outcome group (line 37).

“Line 260: p> 0.05 .. I assume the authors mean p< 0.05?”

- This p-value refers to a chi-square goodness of fit test, which tests the extent to which the predictions of our final multivariate model match the actual behaviors of the study population. A significant result would indicate that our model’s predictions did not agree with reality, and would therefore indicate poor model fit. The p-value of above 0.05 here indicates that our model fits the data well and has been reported correctly.

Reviewer 2:

“The objectives are not always clearly defined.”

- We have added some clarification to both the Background (lines 107-108) and Methods (lines 156-159) sections in order to emphasize our objectives.
“Some results which are not enabling to differentiate between two possible answers may not be of great interest (e.g. in line 219, it is noted that 9.7% are immigrants or being the child of immigrants). It may be more useful to have only one possible answer.”

- We have edited the manuscript (lines 224-225), as well as Table 1, to report the percentage of respondents born outside of Germany and the percentage of respondents with parents born outside of Germany separately. Both variables remain non-significant in bivariate analyses. We also reviewed the manuscript for other variables with response levels that appeared to be inappropriately collapsed, but did not find anything else that warranted editing.

“Some results should be re-checked and quoted consistently in the separate places: for example, in lines 229 and 358, the number of persons from high risk groups who believe themselves to be at low HIV risk are reported differently (55.35% and 57.2%, respectively).”

- We have reviewed the manuscript for consistency, and have corrected values that were misreported in the original (the percentage of men in the outcome group who believed themselves to be at low risk for HIV in line 364). We have also rounded all reported percentages so that only the first value after the decimal point is shown, in order to improve consistency.

We thank you again for the feedback and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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