



## **Durex Global Sex Survey – Supporting Sexual Health & Wellbeing Across the World**

### **Summary**

The Durex Global Sex Survey (GSS) provides an up-to-date picture of sexual wellbeing across the globe. The recent wave of the GSS is the most ambitious yet, increasing its reach to 42 countries, and breaking new ground by fielding in traditionally 'taboo' markets. It has pioneered more inclusive definitions of sexuality, and offered new mobile formats making the survey more accessible to those in Asia and Africa.

The GSS is a unique global source of data on sex, which drives significant impact. Findings have been shared with the United Nations' specialised agencies such as UNAIDS. Durex now sits on the National Prevention Technical Work Group in Nigeria to advise on sexual health and HIV prevention.

It has highlighted the low levels of sexual satisfaction globally and shown how Durex can help people have better sex. Traditional definitions of sexuality have been challenged. The correlation between sex education and good sex and sexual health have been proved.

The GSS relies on respondents sharing their most intimate details so sexual wellbeing can be improved across the world. In exchange, it is committed to providing an accessible, inclusive and appropriate respondent experience in every country involved.

### **Synopsis**

#### **Background**

Durex are the world's number one provider of condoms with over 80 years' experience in the sexual health market. The Durex Global Sex Survey (GSS) was first commissioned in 2006 and has been replicated every five years since. The focus of the original study remains unchanged; it aims to provide an understanding of attitudes towards sex and sexual behaviour across the globe. For Durex the GSS is instrumental in strengthening its overall business strategy and reinforcing the brand's position as the global expert in sexual health and wellbeing.

In 2016, Durex once again partnered with Harris Interactive to implement the third wave of the study, which sought to break new ground in the countries included and its pioneering theme of making the survey inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of country or sexuality.

We believe the 2016 GSS is the largest (in scale and scope), and longest running, Global Sex Survey ever conducted.

42 countries which would provide a worldwide view were included, including Durex’s major markets. The questionnaire was administered in 30 different languages.

### 33,542 adults from 42 different countries participated



## Solution

As with previous waves of the survey, an online methodology was used. This approach was selected as:

- It enabled the inclusion of more countries, as it is the most economical approach
- Robust sample sizes were needed per country in order to use the data for publication
- It was most appropriate for the sensitive nature of the survey. Respondents could complete it in privacy.

New technology developed since the last survey allowed for the survey to be mobile phone enabled, making it more accessible to those in Asia and Africa, where mobile internet dominates. This innovation allowed 14% of respondents to complete the survey on mobile devices, and make their voices heard, where previously this wasn’t possible.

To guide the focus of the project, Durex established an Internal Steering Committee consisting of key project stakeholders, including regional representatives from healthcare and marketing divisions. A day long workshop, facilitated by Harris, gave stakeholders a chance to outline their vision for the study. Key to the success of the project is global consistency and relevance to the overall global strategy, and a study which provided both 'top line' quantitative measures and the depth required to make real tactical changes.

The meeting provided a forum to discuss the ethical and cultural sensitivities of the study, guided by the MRS Code of Conduct. By the end of the session a universal understanding of the research remit existed, along with clear rules of engagement with respondents.

Desk research was undertaken to align stakeholder requirements with what was permissible to ask within each of the 42 markets from a legal perspective. Laws affecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) people vary greatly by country; everything from the legal recognition of same-sex marriage to imprisonment as punishment for same-sex activity.

Even if certain behaviours are legal, they may be taboo within different cultures or age groups. As the survey fielded to a national representative country sample of those aged 18+ (over the legal age of consent in all markets), we considered how it would be viewed very differently by an 18-year-old Canadian versus a 55-year-old Chinese national.

To ensure these sensitives were respected, measures were put in place so not to cause offence. Respondents were warned of the sensitive nature of the survey and could choose not to participate. Less sensitive questions were placed at the beginning to build up trust and respondents could decline to answering each question. Attention was given to the wording of the questionnaire to ensure it was non-judgemental and friendly.

Durex also wanted to break new ground and ensure that the questionnaire adequately reflected contemporary definitions of gender and sexual identity.

The questionnaire was crafted to comprise all definitions of gender identity, not just male and female, but transgender and intersex. The traditional paradigms of sexuality were revolutionized. Heterosexual, Bisexual and Homosexual existed alongside new definitions of Pansexual, Autosexual and Asexual. This allowed 6% of all global respondents to define their sexuality in a way they hadn't been able to before. It was inclusive to all.

The final questionnaire delicately covered topics ranging from first sex experience, sex education, attitudes and behaviour, contraception, STIs, sexual experimentation and sex products.

A handful of countries represented a real challenge to the study. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are culturally complicated landscapes in which to talk about sex. However, Durex was keen to be a pioneer in understanding sexual health and wellbeing in these markets.

Research practitioners from the region were enlisted to help navigate around the topic. The questionnaire was immediately rejected; no fieldwork agency was prepared to field it. In a region where traditionally, sex education is not taught in school other than in a religious or biological context, and the internet is heavily censored, the questionnaire was considered extremely offensive.

After extensive collaboration, an adapted version of the questionnaire fielded in the Middle East. It maintained elements of the original survey, but no reference was made to sex, rather 'intimate relations with husband/wife'. Furthermore, only married people could participate in the survey. The survey was not fielded during Ramadan, when Muslims abstain from sex.

The inclusion of the Middle Eastern markets represents real innovation for the GSS. Five years ago, an extensive online sex survey would not have been feasible. Increased membership to online panels has meant respondents in these countries are more accessible and likely to participate in a sex survey, than if using a CATI or F2F technique. Our regional research partners highlighted, wider technological innovations have helped shift cultural attitudes and aided the permissibility of the study.

"There's more acceptance in these societies now. They are becoming more open due to the internet and TV channels like Netflix's bringing such topics to the foreground. It helps lift off the taboo curtain".

Overall these markets fielded without issue with minimal refusals.

## **Effective communication of outputs across territories**

The data generated from the GSS was immense. A range of communication tools were designed to ensure insights were globally accessible and suitable for all audiences, be it Directors looking to share top line metrics with the medical community, through to local Brand Managers requiring detailed insights.

The following measures were used to aid the effective communication of outputs across territories:

- An easy-to-read (for non-primarily English Speakers) infographic presentation of the key global data
- A two-phase global workshop with Key Stakeholders. The first stage consisted of sharing results and exploring initial reactions. A second strategy and implementation workshop took

place later to assess how Durex could use the GSS to make a business impact on NPD/Social Policy/Education and Health and Wellbeing

- Provided local market access and training to a state of the art web-based analytics platform which transformed the way markets obtained insights compared with previous waves
- All 42 local markets were given ownership of their own data. Local market gatekeepers were nominated to manage access for their wider team and to ensure the responsible interpretation of the data especially given the 'newsworthiness' of the topic.
- Custom reports, presentations and Q&A sessions built to the requirements of each market.

## **Effectiveness in influencing decisions made and outcomes achieved**

To date the GSS has helped to influence the following decisions and outcomes:

- The research findings have been shared with the United Nations' specialised agencies such as UNAIDS and Durex now sits on the National Prevention Technical Work Group in Nigeria to advise on opportunities to promote sexual health and HIV prevention.
- Local organisations within Reckitt Benckiser across the globe are using the GSS data to help drive condom usage & adoption via Point of Market Entry programmes.
- The research highlighted the general state of low sexual satisfaction globally and amongst specific groups of people, such as those suffering from sexual health issues and lacking sex education. This has helped Durex to identify targeted opportunities to help people have better sex across the world. Subsequent data mining and modelling of the data has unlocked the key factors driving sexual satisfaction on a global level, and amongst those factors where Durex can look to directly influence as a brand.
- The research has shown how sex education is correlated to sexual satisfaction and to better sexual health. These findings have been used to lobby and advise policy makers on the importance of sex education, with suggestions to include topics such as communication in sex, privacy and sexual consent and how to have better sex – subjects that those aged 18-24 expressed they needed more information on.
- The study showed that over half of 18-24 years olds defined themselves as completely heterosexual. This has challenged Durex to adopt new ways to talk about sexuality to millennials who think about sexuality more fluidly.
- The research has helped Durex to destabilise traditional definitions of sex by demonstrating that people define sex very differently across the world – for example 59% of Indians define

having sex as vaginal penetration versus 90% of South Africans.

Durex can now more effectively and inclusively communicate about sex in all markets.