

Sweden pushes condom use as study hints risky sex common

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Only 56 percent of young Swedes always use a condom when having casual sex, a study published Monday showed, as health authorities launched a campaign to promote condom use in an attempt to halve new HIV infections.

The study by the National Board of Health and Welfare -- based on an online poll of 4,714 Swedes aged 15 to 24 -- also showed that 40 percent could not accurately say how HIV was transmitted, and only seven percent believed there was a high risk of contracting the virus that causes AIDS.

"In many ways, we have in our country all the necessary information to live a healthy life with low risk of disease," Health Minister Maria Larsson and Christer Wennerholm, who heads the National Council for Coordination of [HIV Prevention](#), said in an open letter to the *Dagens Nyheter* daily.

"But there is often a gap between what we know and what we do, and the gap is big when it applies to the risk of sexually transmitted infections," they wrote.

A total of 468 people contracted HIV in Sweden in 2009 and almost 38,000 were infected with chlamydia, according to the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control.

Referring to the study published Monday, Larsson and Wennerholm

pointed out that young Swedes "in principle" had a positive attitude to condoms, but did not always put the theory into practice.

"Only 51 percent of girls and 56 percent of guys aged 15 to 19 consider it obvious to use a condom with a casual partner," they said, referencing the study.

The fact that 26 percent of men aged 20 to 24 told online pollsters "they would rather risk contracting a sexually transmitted disease than abstain from sex when they don't have a condom," indicates Sweden has a long way to go before achieving truly healthy attitudes to condom use, they said.

"The question is how many will get HIV and how many young people will become infertile (as a result of a chlamydia infection) before condom use becomes obvious with new partners," Larsson and Wennerholm said, adding "we have to start working on attitudes."

The objective of the newly launched national campaign, the first in seven years, is to halve the spread on HIV in Sweden by 2016.

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