

Perceived Racism, Community Connection, and PrEP Use among GBMSM of Asian Background in Australia

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Introduction

- PrEP emerged as the dominant bio-behavioural HIV prevention strategy among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) in Australia.
- PrEP use differs considerably between GBMSM of different cultural backgrounds, especially lower among GBMSM of Asian background.
- One hypothesis to explain this phenomenon is the social connections individual Asian GBMSM has to the LGBTQ+ community and the wider Australian society

Aims

- To describe LGBTQ+ community connection, perceived racism, and PrEP use among GBMSM of Asian background in Australia
- To investigate the associations between LGBTQ+ community connection, perceived racism, and PrEP use among GBMSM of Asian background in Australia

Methods

- Cross-sectional study using the Gay Asian Men Survey (GAMS) 2023, eligible for HIV-negative men aged 18 years or above who had had sex with other men in the past five years, currently lived in Australia, and self-identified as an Asian person or a person with an Asian background.
- Recruitment was conducted online and face-to-face in collaboration with community organisations. Data were collected in English, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), and Thai.
- Independent variables included LGBTQ+ community connection and perceived racism scores (Table 1). Covariates included Asian community connection, demographics, and sexual behaviours. The dependent variable was self-reported PrEP use in the last 6 months of the survey.

Table 1. Selected characteristics at baseline.

	n = 1,077
Age, mean (SD)	35.3 (10.2)
Sexual orientation, n (%)	
Gay	937 (87.0)
Bisexual	80 (7.4)
Others	60 (5.6)
Country of birth, n (%)	
Australia	222 (20.6)
Overseas	855 (79.4)
Ethnicity or heritage, n (%)	
East Asian	500 (46.4)
Southeast Asian	342 (31.8)
South Asian	83 (7.7)
Multiple Heritages	117 (10.9)
Other Asians	35 (3.2)
Time lived in Australia, n (%)	
< 2 years	168 (15.6)
2-5 years	118 (11.0)
> 5 years	791 (73.4)
Number of sex partners in 6 months, n (%)	
0-10 men	880 (81.7)
> 10 men	197 (18.3)
Condomless anal sex in 6 months, n (%)	
No	591 (54.9)
Yes	486 (45.1)

Table 2. Perceived racism, LGBTQ+ community connection, and Asian community connection scores.

Items	Cronbach's alpha	Mean (SD)
Perceived racism • Agreement on 'I sometimes feel that my Asian background is a limitation in Australia.' • Agreement on 'I feel discriminated against by mainstream Australians because of my Asian background.' • Agreement on 'I believe the broader LGBTQ+ communities in Australia are welcoming and accepting of Asian people.' (reverse coded) • 'In general, how strongly do you feel you belong in Australia?' (5 items from 'Not at all' to 'Very strongly', reverse coded)	0.715	3.04 (0.80)
LGBTQ+ community connection • 'How connected do you feel to the Asian LGBTQ+ communities in Australia?' (5 items from 'Not at all' to 'Very strongly') • 'How connected do you feel you are to the general LGBTQ+ communities in Australia?' (5 items from 'Not at all' to 'Very strongly') • 'In the past 6 months, how often have you attended public LGBTQ+ events or festivals in Australia?' (5 items from 'Never' to 'Several times per week') • 'In the past 6 months, how often have you spent time with your LGBTQ+ friends or participated in private gatherings with other LGBTQ+ individuals in Australia?' (5 items from 'Never' to 'Several times per week')	0.759	2.02 (0.82)
Asian social connection • How many of your closest friends in Australia are from an Asian background? (5 items from 'No close friend' to 'All of them') • How many of your closest LGBTQ+ friends in Australia are from an Asian background? (5 items from 'No close friend' to 'All of them')	0.718	3.25 (0.87)

Table 3. Logistic regression model for PrEP use with perceived racism, LGBTQ+, and Asian community connection.

Variables (n=1,077)	PrEP in the last 6 months		OR (95% CI)	aOR (95%CI)
	No (n=666)	Yes (n=411)		
Perceived racism, mean (SD)	3.00 (0.80)	3.11 (0.79)	1.20 (1.02-1.40)*	1.32 (1.10-1.60)**
LGBTQ+ community connection, mean (SD)	1.89 (0.75)	2.26 (0.88)	1.76 (1.50-2.05)**	1.56 (1.30-1.87)**
Asian community connection, mean (SD)	3.24 (0.90)	3.28 (0.82)	1.05 (0.92-1.21)	

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; aMultivariable model is controlled for sexual orientation, relationship, citizenship/immigration status, time lived in Australia, Medicare eligibility, English language barrier, education, employment, weekly income, number of sex partners, condomless anal sex, group sex, and chemsex.

Discussions

- Connection to LGBTQ+ communities appeared to facilitate PrEP uptake by supporting access to PrEP knowledge, norms, and service pathways.
- Lower-than-expected LGBTQ+ community connection suggests that some Asian GBMSM may remain outside traditional HIV prevention networks.
- Asian social connections were not associated with PrEP use, indicating that culturally specific or non-LGBTQ+ spaces may be underused for PrEP promotion.
- Future HIV prevention efforts should expand culturally tailored, peer-led, and community-based PrEP promotion beyond traditional LGBTQ+ settings.
- The association between perceived racial discrimination and PrEP use was unexpected and needs further investigation.
- LGBTQ+ community connection may be an important pathway for PrEP uptake among Asian GBMSM in Australia. Still, PrEP promotion should also extend into culturally specific and non-LGBTQ+ spaces to reach less-connected groups.