

GREATER SOCIAL SUPPORT, LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, AND LGBTQ+ SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH HIV TESTING AND PrEP UPTAKE

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Background:

The HIV response has relied on gay community mobilisation for health promotion among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBM). HIV prevention efforts might not fully engage GBM who are less connected to the broader gay community.

Methods:

An online cross-sectional survey of GBM was conducted between November 2022 to January 2023. Participants were eligible if aged ≥ 18 years, self-identified as male, lived in Australia, and identified as GBM. A latent class analysis was conducted to identify patterns in participants' sources of social support, LGBTQ+ community involvement, and social engagement with LGBTQ+ people. Multinomial multivariable logistic regression was used to compare classes.

Results:

Among 1,032 participants, the mean age was 41.8 years (SD=13.5), 62.5% identified as gay and 29.0% as bi+. Participants were categorised into four classes: 'Gay men focused' (n=293, 28.4%) with high support from gay men, 'High and diverse' (n=75, 7.3%) with high support from a range of sources (bi+ men, other LGBTQ+ friends, cisgender heterosexual friends, and family), 'Moderate overall' (n=177, 17.2%) who received some support from all sources, and 'Low overall' (n=487, 47.2%) who had generally low support. The proportion who had ever tested for HIV was lower in the 'Low overall' (78.0%, aRR=0.16, 95%CI=0.07-0.34) and 'Moderate overall' (81.9%, aRRR=0.30, 95%CI=0.13-0.70) groups compared to 'Gay men focused' (96.9%) and 'High and diverse' (93.3%) groups. Among participants not living with HIV (n=971), lifetime PrEP use was lower in the 'Low overall' (28.9%) than 'Gay men focused' group (56.2%; aRRR=0.50, 95%CI=0.35-0.72), but 'Gay men focused' was comparable to 'High and diverse' (59.7%) and 'Moderate overall' (37.5%) groups.

Conclusion:

Our findings indicate social support facilitates HIV testing and PrEP use by GBM. However, nearly half of GBM have low levels of social support. Future interventions are needed to reach GBM with fewer social connections.

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