

Perceived Racism, Community Connection, and PrEP Use among Gay, Bisexual, and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men (GBMSM) of Asian Background in Australia

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Introduction: Asian GBMSM in Australia experience higher HIV incidence and lower PrEP use compared to the general GBMSM population. While structural barriers have been identified, the role of social factors such as community connection and racism is less clear. Thus, we aimed to explore their associations with PrEP use among GBMSM of Asian background in Australia.

Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional analysis using data from the 2023 Gay Asian Men Survey (GAMS). Participants were HIV-negative self-identified adult (≥ 18) Asian GBMSM living in Australia. Perceived racism and community connection were scored from 1 (lowest perceived racism or connection) to 5 (highest), with 4 items each. Racism score included perceived race-based limitations, discrimination, acceptance, and belonging. Connection included self-reported connection to the general and Asian-specific LGBTQ+ communities, events, and social participations. The dependent variable was PrEP use in the last 6 months. Covariates included demographics, immigration history, and sexual practices. Bivariate and multivariable logistic regression models were developed for independent variables and covariates with $p < 0.25$.

Results: The analysis included 1,077 participants with a mean age of 35.3 (SD 10.2) years. Mean perceived racism and community connection scores were 3.04 (SD=0.80) and 2.02 (SD=0.82), respectively. On PrEP, 94.5% were PrEP-aware, 49.8% ever used it, and 38.2% recently used it. Perceived racism (aOR=1.32, 95%CI=1.10-1.60) and community connection (aOR=1.56, 95%CI=1.30-1.87) were positively associated with recent PrEP use.

Conclusions: LGBTQ+ community connection is important in facilitating PrEP use for Asian GBMSM, but with low average connection score to the queer community, suggesting Asian GBMSM may connect to queer spaces through fragmented channels, negotiating intersecting cultural, gender, and sexual identities. Sexual health promotion aimed at Asian GBMSM may need to work with these non-queer-specific spaces. The role of racial discrimination and more work is needed to confirm this association and its mechanism.

Keywords: Asian, GBMSM, PrEP use, HIV, social connection, racial discrimination