

Increased Awareness but Persistently Restricted Access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) against HIV in an Urban Midwestern Community

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Background

Pre-exposure HIV prophylaxis (PrEP) was approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration in 2012, but uptake of PrEP by individuals in the community has been slow. This study sought to assess changes in PrEP awareness and access between 2015 and 2020, during which a major community-wide PrEP awareness campaign was initiated in greater Cleveland.

Methods

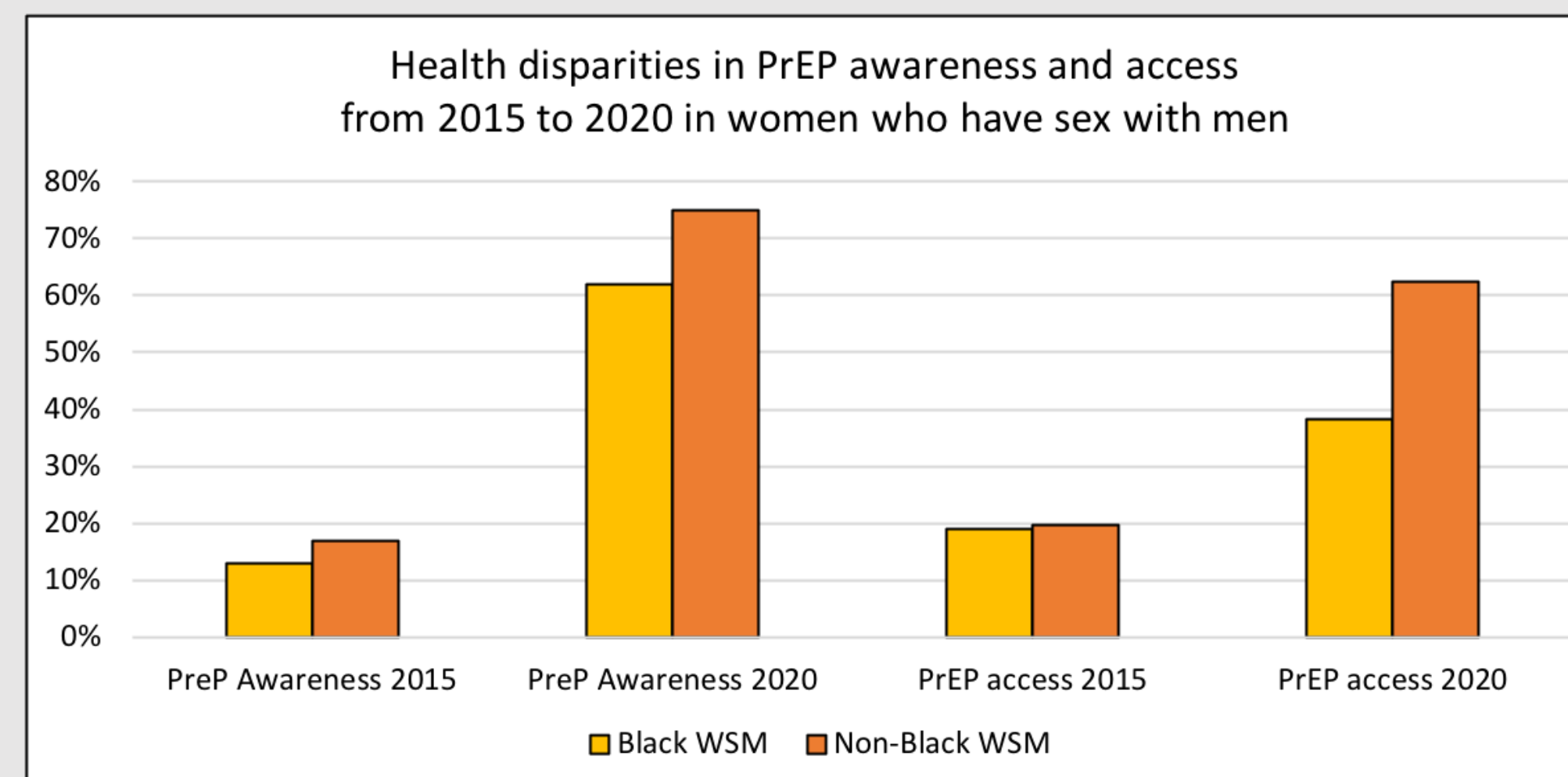
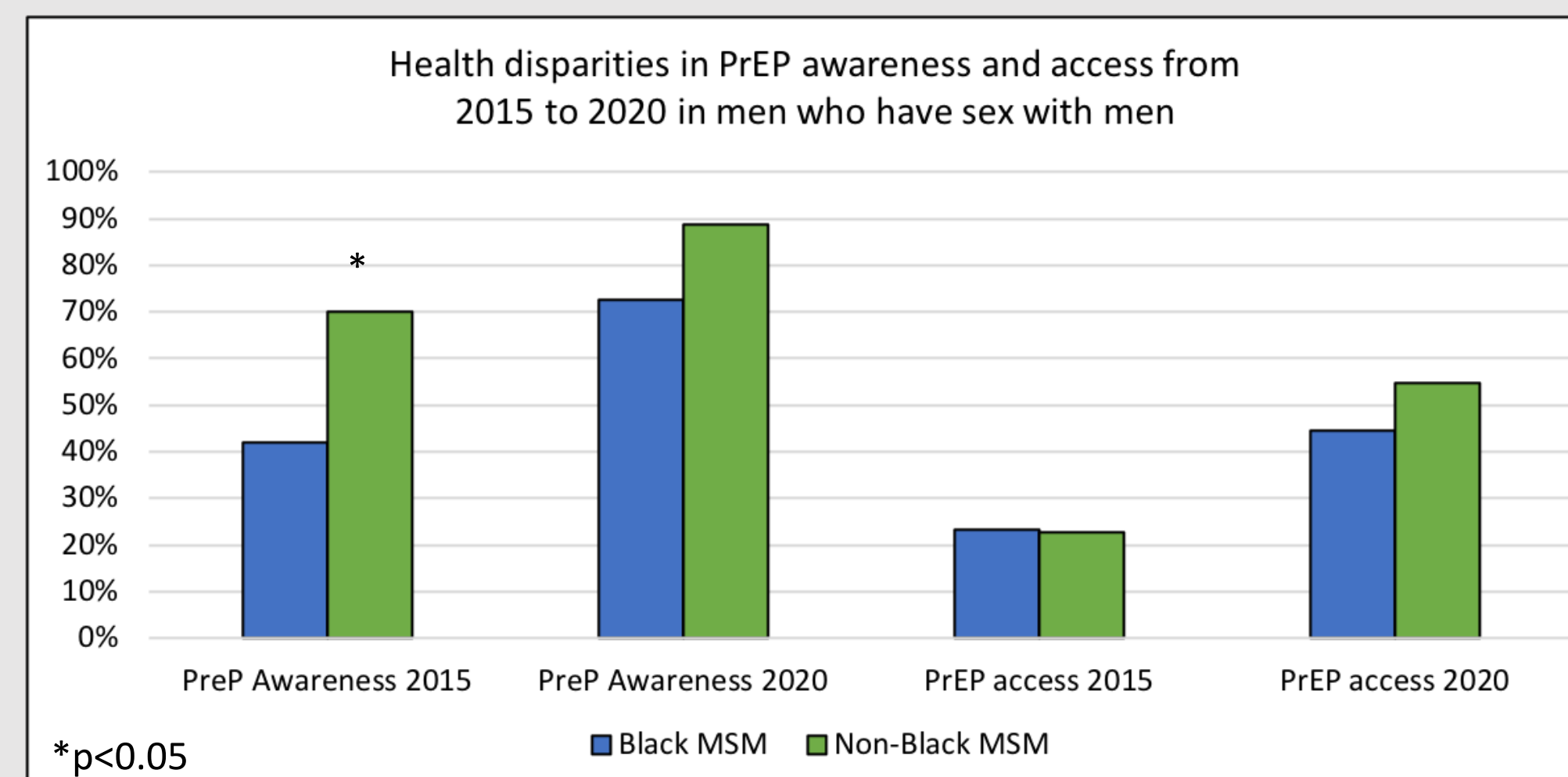
We surveyed patients at three STI clinics in Cleveland, Ohio in 2015 and 2020. The participants' involvement was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were asked questions regarding demographics, sexual behavior and orientation, and awareness of and knowledge of how to access PrEP.

Demographics

- **2015:** 910 patients surveyed
 - 31.4% ≤ 24 years old
 - 54.2% self-identified as Black
 - 11.3% MSM
- **2020:** 262 patients surveyed
 - 20.9% ≤ 24 years old
 - 83.2% self-identified as Black
 - 7.6% MSM

Results

- PrEP awareness increased from 18.0% to 57.7% between 2015 and 2020 ($p < 0.001$)
- Knowledge on how to access PrEP improved but remained low between 2015 and 2020 (18.1% vs. 32.0%, $p < 0.001$)



Logistic regression adjusted for year, age, and sexual behavior showed Black adults were still **less likely** to be aware of PrEP compared with non-Black adults (OR 0.69, 95% CI 0.49, 0.98)

Results

Changes in Awareness and Access to PrEP from 2015 to 2020 among Black adults

	2015	2020	P Value
Black MSM			
PrEP awareness	41.9%	72.7%	0.02
PrEP access	23.3%	44.4%	0.24
Black WSM			
PrEP awareness	12.9%	62.0%	0.001
PrEP access	19.0%	38.2%	0.001

Conclusion

- We observed an increase in PrEP awareness and knowledge of how to access PrEP between 2015 and 2020, especially among the Black population.
- However, when adjusted for year, age, and sexual preference, Black individuals were still less likely to be aware of PrEP compared with non-Black individuals.
- Knowledge on how to access PrEP remains low in the community regardless of race.
- With increased awareness of PrEP, novel approaches to increase knowledge of PrEP access are needed to address health disparities in our community.

