

Racial/Ethnic Differences in Social Environment and Health among Urban Substance Using MSM



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Background

- African American/Black MSM have a disproportionately high HIV infection rate compare to MSM of other ethnicities [1-4].
- Studies from the past 10 years show that African American/Black MSM do not exhibit greater sexual risk behavior, in the form of unprotected anal intercourse (UAI) either receptive (RUAI) or insertive (IUAI), than Caucasian counterparts [2]. Further, young black MSM are less likely than White or Latino counterparts to report UAI [2,5]. However, some studies have shown more African American/Black MSM do engage in trading, selling, or buying sex [X].
- Though some studies show that Black MSM report frequent stimulant use [6], there is no definitive evidence to suggest that African American/Black MSM are more likely to abuse drugs that increase their risk for HIV infection [2].
- African American/Black MSM experience more arrests, homelessness, and abuse [5] and have less social support from peers, friends, and family [7,8].

Purpose

- The current study aims to describe HIV prevalence, sex risk, drug use, and social environmental indices among MSM in South Florida (Miami-Ft. Lauderdale), a region known for its racial/ethnic diversity and high HIV rates.
- Our analysis focuses on the distribution of HIV risk factors across three racial/ethnic groups: African-Americans, Hispanics, and non-Hispanic whites, in an effort to aid prevention initiatives targeting specific populations.

Methods

Baseline data from a randomized clinical trial of a small group behavioral risk intervention study, "Men Reaching Out to Other Men" (ROOM).

An extensive cross-section of MSM were recruited using a combination of print advertisements in both gay and non-gay publications, direct outreach, online advertising in a broad range of websites, and word of mouth, to the point of saturation.

Eligibility:

- Reported unprotected anal intercourse in the past 90 days
- Substance use or alcohol to intoxication at least three times or marijuana use at least 20 days in the past 30 days.
- Between ages of 18-55

A total of 504 participants were interviewed using a modified version of the GAIN (Global Appraisal of Individual Needs) structured interview was the primary data collection instrument. This version included the following sections:

- Demographics / Environment
- Substance Use
- Mental Health
- Sexual Risk Behaviors

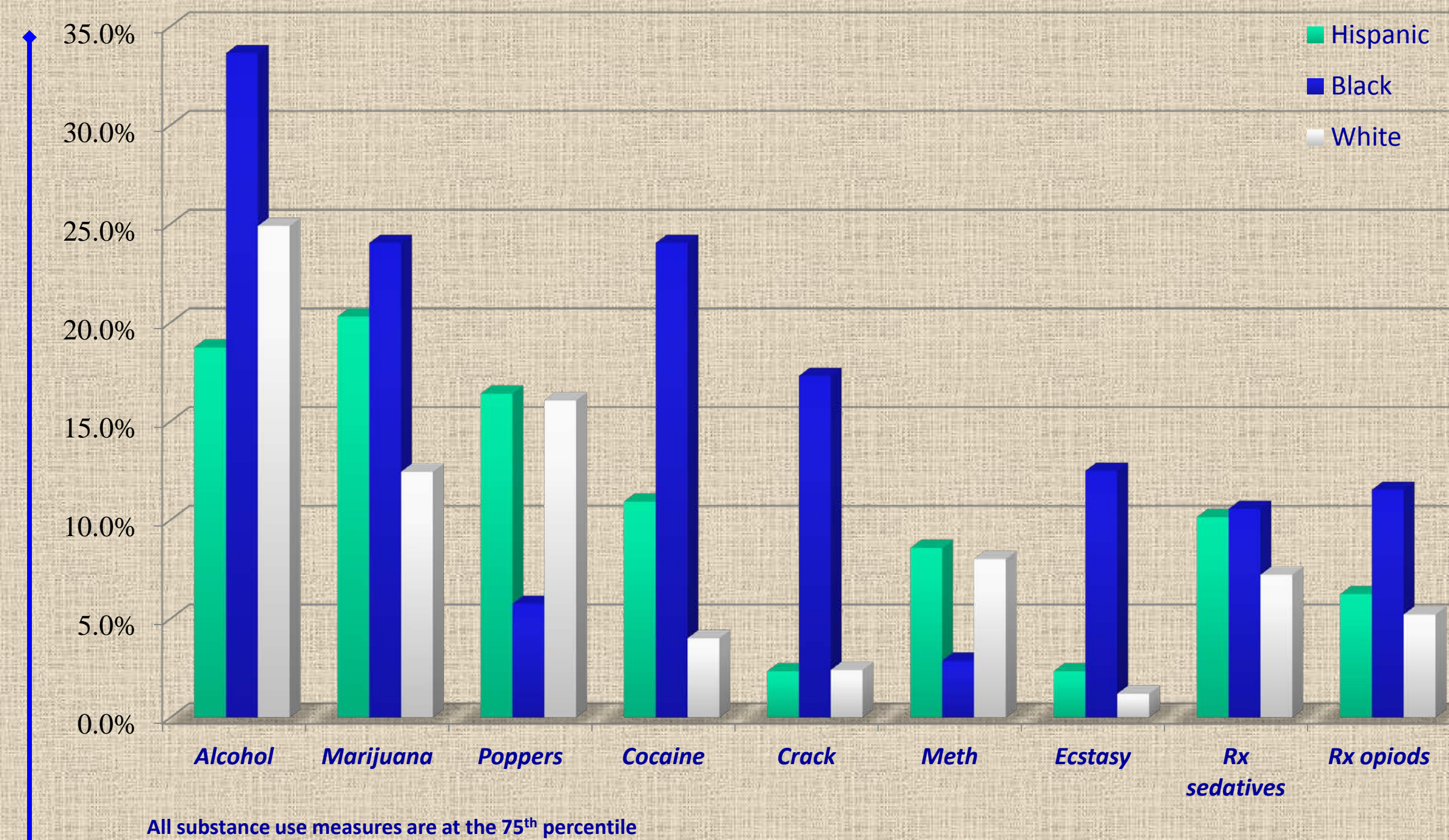
Logistic regression was used to analyze variables across race/ethnicity. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 50 Project ROOM participants, following their completion of the study. The interviews focused on strengths and needs of the MSM community in South Florida.

Acknowledgments

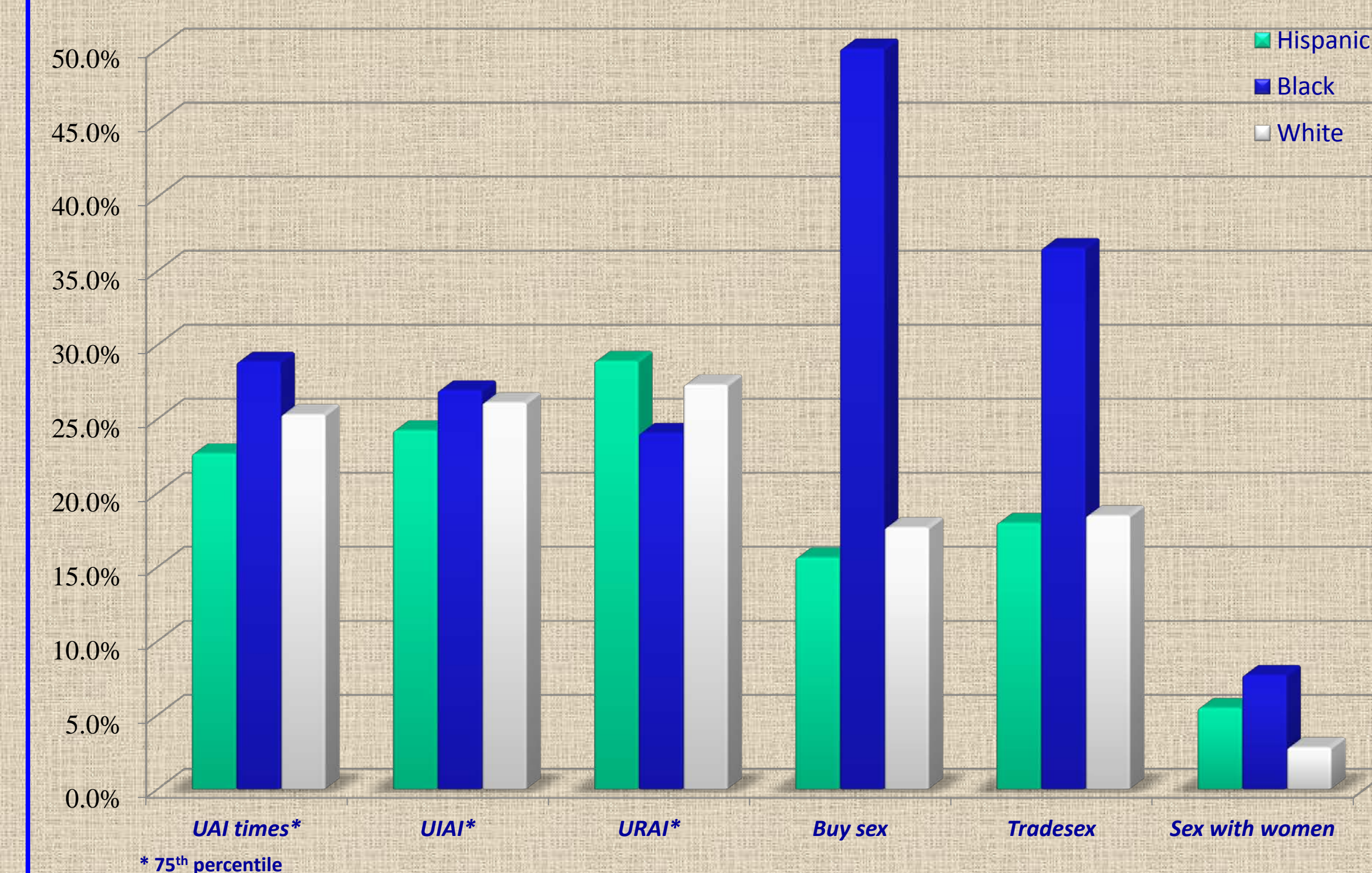
This research was supported by Grant Number R01DA024579 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institute on Drug Abuse or the National Institutes of Health. There are no conflicts to report.

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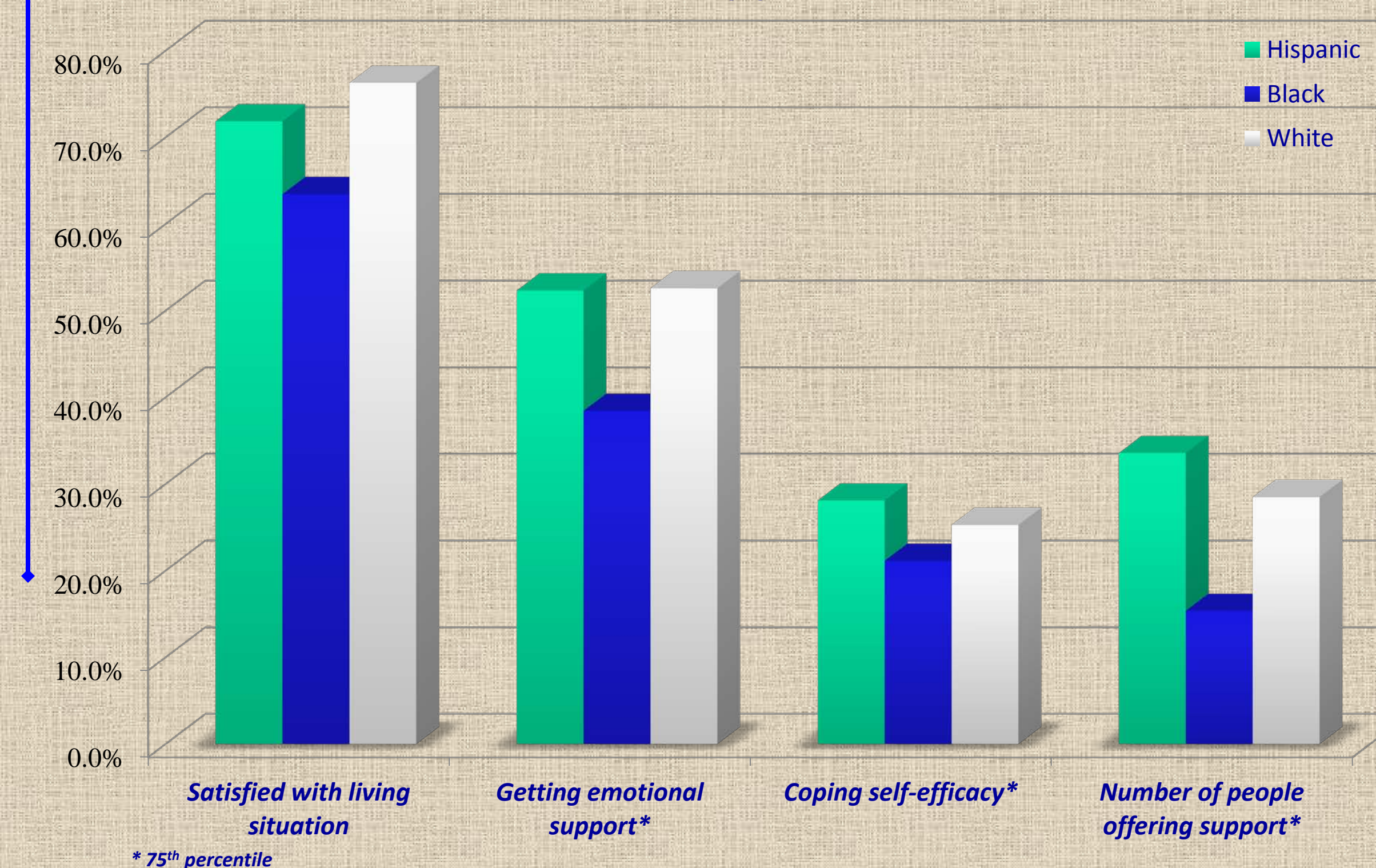
Substance Use



Sexual Behavior



Social Environment and Support



Demographics

Baseline characteristics of MSM by race/ethnicity N=504

	Hispanic N=128 25.4%	Black N=104 20.6%	White N=249 49.4%
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Demographics

Age (mean; SD)	33.78(9.34)	39.35(9.21)	42.06(8.45)
Education - 16 years	43 33.6%	16 15.4%	100 40.2%
Work full-time	38 29.7%	12 11.5%	76 30.5%

Sexual Behavior (past 90 days)

Partners (mean; SD)	11.88 (14.23)	13.68 (18.83)	13.19 (18.89)
Anal sex times (mean; SD)	34.03 (37.53)	42.33 (60.69)	27.77 (33.15)
UAI times (mean; SD)	22.55 (34.95)	25.86 (46.50)	20.88 (27.59)
HIV-positive	49 38.3%	65 62.5%	115 46.2%

Social/environmental characteristics

Severe mental distress (past year)	80 62.50%	62 59.62%	140 41.77%
DSM-IVR substance dependence	86 67.19%	76 73.08%	134 53.82%
Homeless (past year)	26 20.3%	48 46.2%	52 20.9%
Ever abused	94 73.4%	80 76.9%	211 84.7%
Ever arrested	70 54.7%	86 82.7%	151 60.6%

Regression Models

Bivariate logistic regression models predicting African American/Black MSM health and social environment (N=504)

	P	OR	95% CI
Substance Use (past 90 days)			
Days high (75th percentile)	0.000	2.785	1.766, 4.391
Days used uppers (75th percentile)	0.000	2.899	1.790, 4.696
DSM-IVR substance dependence	0.009	1.886	1.171, 3.039

Sexual Behavior (past 90 days)

Buy sex	0.000	4.714	2.967, 7.489
Trade or sell sex	0.000	2.377	1.486, 3.801

Social/environmental characteristics

Satisfied with living situation	0.026	0.594	0.376, 0.940
Getting emotional support from others	0.011	0.565	0.364, 0.879
Number of people offering support (75th percentile)	0.002	0.400	0.226, 0.710

Multivariate logistic regression models predicting African American/Black MSM health and social environment (N=504)

	P	OR	95% CI
Days high (75th percentile)	0.003	2.092	1.287, 3.401
Buy sex	0.000	3.822	2.366, 6.174
Number of people offering support (75th percentile)	0.047	0.544	0.299, 0.991

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Discussion

HIV prevalence for Black MSM is roughly 25% higher than White MSM and almost twice that of Hispanic MSM, though all other measures of sex behavior are similar. Regarding social and environmental characteristics, Hispanic and Black MSM report similar levels of mental distress and all three populations report comparable amounts of abuse. Yet, Black MSM report higher levels of substance dependence, homelessness, and arrest, and less education and full-time work.

Bivariate logistic regression reveals that compared to Hispanic and White MSM, African American/Black MSM in South Florida have higher odds of several risk factors during the past 90 days, including number of days high and use of uppers, substance dependence, and buying or trading sex (p<.011).

In the multivariate model, the surviving variables show that compared to White and Hispanic MSM, Black MSM have twice the odds of being in the 75th percentile of number of days high in the last 90 (p=.003), having almost 4 times the odds of buying sex (p=.000), and .544 lower odds of having a higher number of people offering help or support (p=.047).

Conclusion

Among high risk MSM in South Florida, African American/Black men report higher levels of certain sexual risk behaviors, as well as greater frequency of drug use. This could help explain higher HIV prevalence among Black MSM in South Florida. Additionally, Black MSM report lower levels of social and environmental support that, when combined with substance use and sex risk, could exacerbate HIV transmission risk in this population. With this data elected to further examine strengths and needs of African American/Black MSM in South Florida.

In a pilot study for Project ROOM, Black MSM were more likely to report no UAI (p=.008) and significant reductions in the number of days high (p=.005) from baseline to three month follow-up assessment. Further, in qualitative interviews African American/Black MSM all stated that a lack of adequate social support was the primary obstacle for overcoming problems of substance use and HIV transmission risk associated with their social environment.

- *Most black guys, we don't have, like support, where the white guys have support.*

- *If you give a black guy support, they'll be your friend for life...it's not always money support either. Somebody to talk to, somebody to be there, and somebody to hang out with that's positive other than, like, what they're use to – the drugs, the alcohol, the gangbangers, the thugs, the criminals – you know, somebody positive.*

- *Black guys have more hardships and therefore they thrive in a more supportive place. White and Hispanic guys have jobs, healthcare. Blacks [in the study] didn't.*

- *I started looking forward to it. I don't have people to talk to about certain things and having that helped me realize I need those kind of people and that kind of support. Now I'm trying to make friends so I can have that.*

Participants stated that providing Black MSM with necessary social support will go a long way in helping this population overcome a multitude of syndemic social and environmental risk factors not faced by other racial/ethnic groups in South Florida. Interventions that are focused on empowerment theory, motivational interviewing techniques, and genuine concern will benefit this population by providing the necessary social support and alleviating some of the additional risk factors faced by this population.