

Black Masculinities: Resistance and Resilience

PROJECT BACKGROUND

weSpeak is a 5-year program of research and related activities with African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) heterosexual men in four cities in Ontario to engage and mobilize ACB communities for HIV prevention and promote collective resilience.



Windsor



London

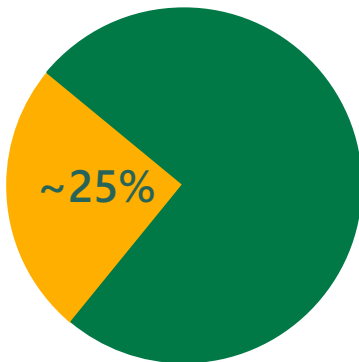


Toronto



Ottawa

New HIV cases in Ontario (2017)¹



● ACB People
● Other Priority Populations

In Ontario, ACB people make up about 5% of the population but nearly 25% of new HIV cases.

What We Did



Engaged more than

2000

ACB men and community members



Surveyed

879

Heterosexual Black Men



Talked with

203

Heterosexual Black men and 41 service providers through focus groups & individual interviews.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS:



Resilience requires persistence in the face of challenges and also comes from having good supports.



Heterosexual Black Men (HBM) share normative beliefs of masculine expectations similar to other men.



Misconception of HIV as a gay disease can lead to feelings of invulnerability about HIV.



Critical dialogue about Black masculinities and anti-Black racism support HBM to resist racist stereotypes.



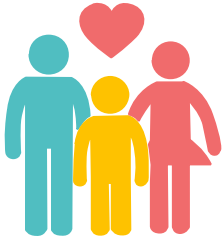
Anti-Black racism (re)produces systemic economic, social and symbolic marginalization.



HBM are resisting racist stereotypes and oppressions through exploring new and alternative ways of doing masculinities.

What We Found

Supporting Facts



HBM share normative beliefs of masculine expectations similar to those of other men: economic security, independence, productivity, being providers for and protectors of their families.

67% of HBM felt that being physically strong was important to being a man while 51% considered having power is necessary as a man.

67%

ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Anti-Black racism (re)produces systemic economic, social and symbolic marginalization that undermines HBM's aspirations and access to achieving these masculine expectations.

Critical dialogue about racialized Black masculinities and anti-Black racism support many HBM to resist racist stereotypes and define their own masculine identities.



“ IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

...ON WORKING HARD TO EARN A LIVING.

"To be a Black man, to consider yourself Black, you have to work hard and provide for your family, and take care of the people around you. Regardless of how hard you have to work to get it. And whatever you have to do to get it." (Eaze, 16)

...ON LABOUR MARKET DISCRIMINATION

"I am a degree holder, I am a teacher, and then I am also an IT engineer. Now, being Black and not having done the education here, when you come from Africa or different locations you're going to find problems here. You're starting up here, and then they say 'oh, you have a degree from Africa, now go back to high school'. That is a very, very big step back."² (Chuka, 42)

...ON NOT DISPLAYING EMOTIONS TO BE MANLY.

"[B]eing a father of a 3 year old son and daughter, and having been raised by predominantly women, I also notice that when I was raised there was a sense of you have to be strong, you have to be not emotional. Looking at my son now and his closeness to sensitivity, I'm encouraging his sensitivity" (Marvin, 39)

...ON FAMILY & COMMUNITY VALUES

"We're coming into a more gender fluid society... when we continue to unlearn what we've learned in terms of this particular colonial experience, and come back to a sense of responsibility, and not necessarily a gender role but an opportunity to do something for your community, for your village, for your family, whatever that means to you as an individual, regardless of your gender. I feel like we can create a culture that's more equitable."² (Leroy, 23)



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Sources:

- (1) Ontario HIV Epidemiology and Surveillance Initiative (OHESI). New HIV diagnoses in Ontario, 2017. Toronto, Ontario, July 30, 2019
- (2) Husbands, W., Miller, D., McCreedy, L.T., Williams, C., Guy, L., Harriott, A., Luyombya, H., Mohidin, O., Ozzoude, C., Poon, M.K., Tabi, E., & James, C.E. (2019) (accepted). Sexuality and Sexual Agency Among Heterosexual Black Men in Toronto: Tradition, Contradiction and Emergent Possibilities in the Context of HIV and Health. Canadian Journal of Sociology.