

MSM who use dating apps support new features to promote sexual health

Jennifer Hecht^{1,2}, Travis Sanchez³, Maria Zlotorzynska³, David Katz⁴, Dan Wohlfeiler¹

¹Building Healthy Online Communities, ²San Francisco AIDS Foundation, ³Emory University, ⁴University of Washington

BACKGROUND

Dating apps support HIV and STD prevention efforts in many ways. They can:

- help diffuse messages
- link to sexual health interventions like testing and PrEP
- through adding more specific profile options, enable users to make informed choices about their sexual health strategies by sharing their own preferences and seeing those of their partners.

Building Health Online Communities (BHOC), a consortium of HIV/STD organizations, has been partnering with apps to implement strategies that will improve users' sexual health outcomes.

BHOC has consistently assessed users' preferences for interventions to inform implementation. This survey asked users to rate existing and potential online interventions as well as whether they use information about HIV status and sexual health strategy (condoms, PrEP, or maintaining an undetectable viral load) included in the app profiles of potential partners.

METHODS

Building Healthy Online Communities partnered with American Men's Internet Survey (AMIS), an annual online survey of MSM (n=10,049) conducted through Emory University. Recruitment methodology is detailed in AMIS indicators report (M Zlotorzynska, 2017).

Between July and November 2017 AMIS participants were recruited via online advertisements on dating apps and other sites.

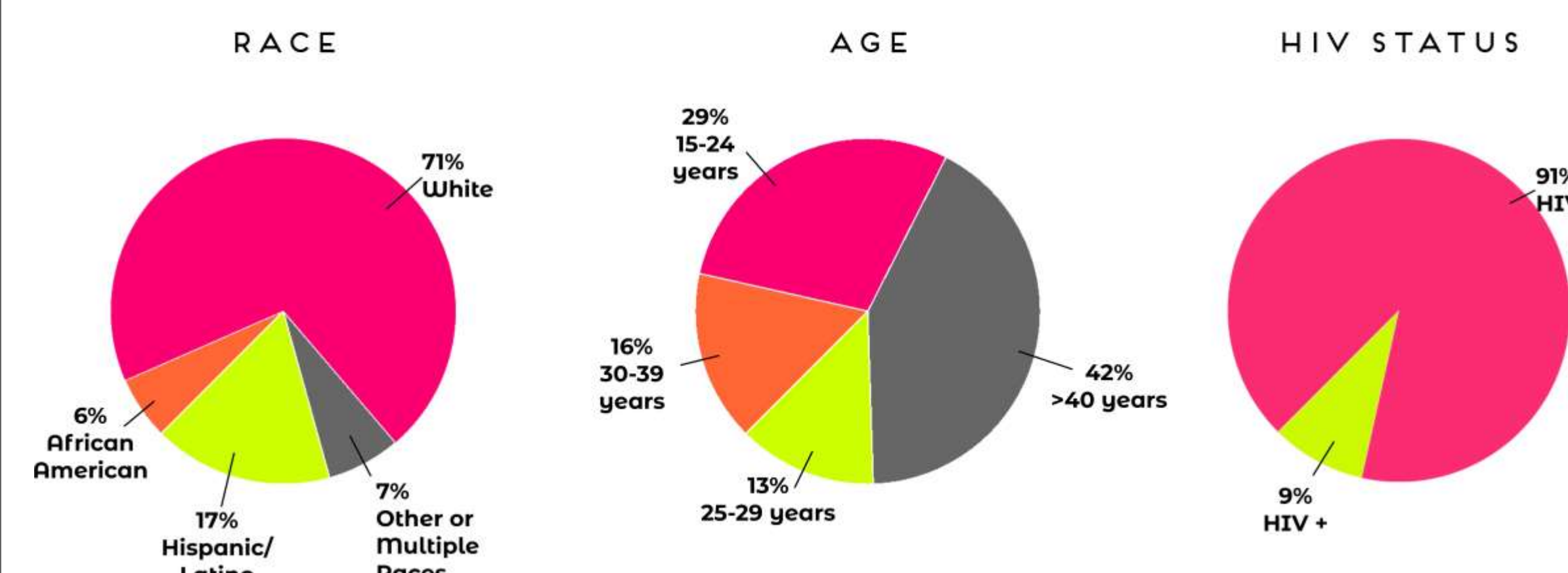
All respondents in this subsample (n=4825, 48% of full sample) were:

- Aged 15 or older
- US residents
- Cis-gender MSM
- Used sites or apps to meet or socialize with other men in the past year

All participants were asked a core set of questions. To reduce participant burden, two sets of questions about using HIV status and accepting reminders to get tested and update profile options were randomly assigned to two subsets of users.

Analysis was completed in SPSS Version 22, using chi-square tests to test for differences in demographic factors and by HIV status.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



RESULTS

Nearly 50% of MSM respondents reported finding out about their partner's HIV status through apps and over 60% about their partner's preferred sexual health strategy, making apps an important means of exchanging information and making informed decisions about sexual behavior.

HOW APP USERS COMMUNICATE ABOUT HIV STATUS AND SEXUAL HEALTH STRATEGIES

| MODE OF COMMUNICATION | HIV STATUS | SEXUAL HEALTH STRATEGY |
|----------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| App profile | 46% | 61% |
| Talked about it | 55% | 58% |
| Didn't know | 14% | 14% |
| Other | 1% | 1% |
| N/A, didn't meet a partner | 8% | 7% |

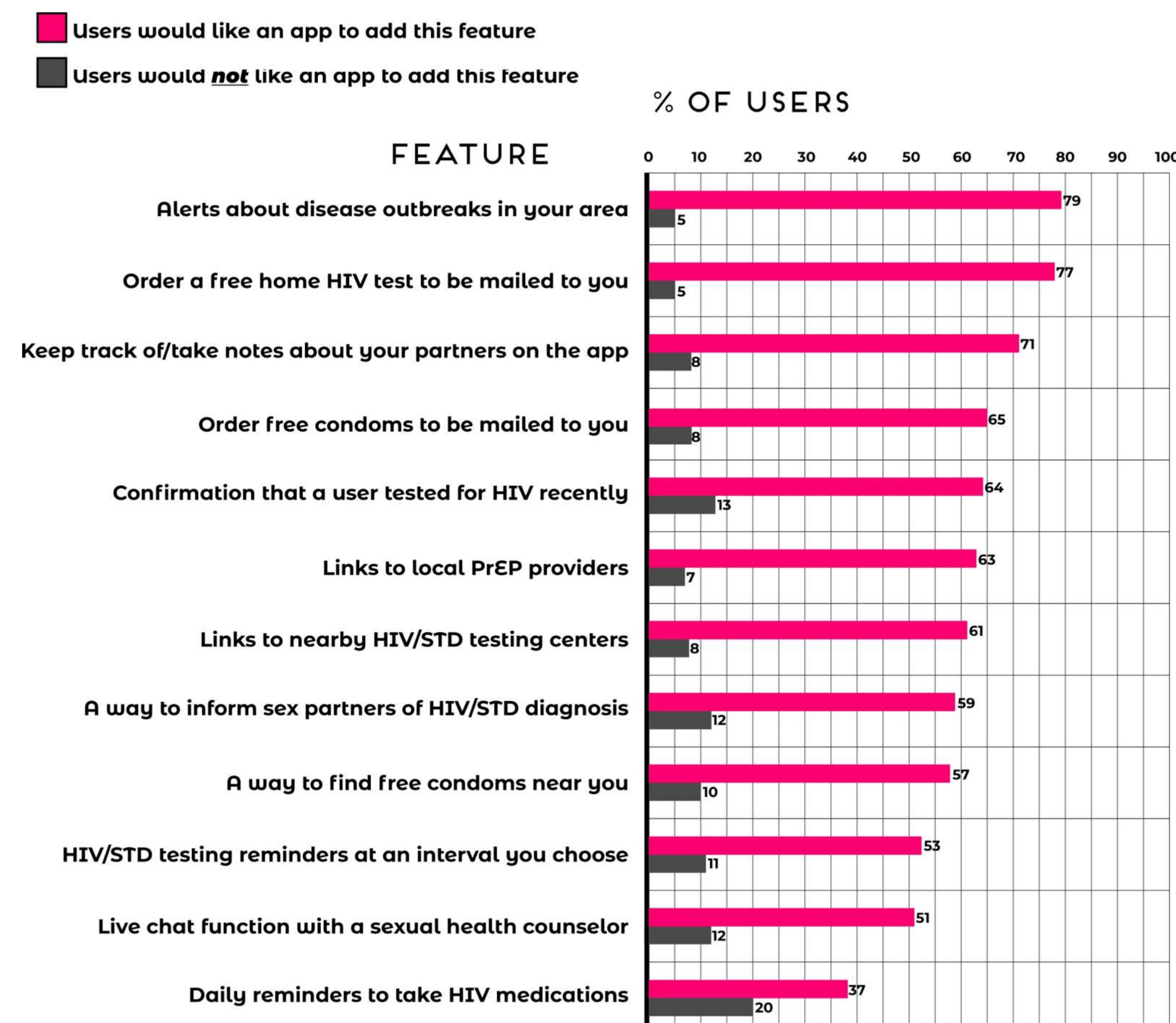
HIV-positive respondents were:

- less likely to find out their partner's HIV status on an app (40%; p=.03)
- less likely to talk about HIV status with their last new partner met via app (46%; p<.01)
- less likely to know their partner's status (22%; p<.01)
- less likely to have talked about a sexual health strategy (52%; p=.04)
- did not differ from HIV negative respondents in other modes of communication about sexual health strategies.

African-American respondents, compared to other respondents, were:

- less likely (49%, p=.02) to have talked about their HIV status with their most recent partner
- less likely (18%, p=.03) to know their partner's HIV status
- did not differ from other respondents in using other modes of communication about sexual health strategies.

APP USERS' SUPPORT FOR SEXUAL HEALTH FEATURES



CONCLUSIONS

- While a significant number of users utilize app features to exchange information about HIV status and prevention strategies, greater effort is needed to increase communication about both.
- A large proportion of users support adding sexual health features to the dating apps.
- BHOC continues to provide data and ongoing consultations to owners to integrate sexual health features into their apps.

LIMITATIONS

- This study relied on self-report, which may not be validated by actual behavior.
- While respondents indicated that they "would like the app to add" a feature, they may choose not to use the feature.

CITATIONS

1. M Zlotorzynska, P Sullivan, T Sanchez. The annual American Men's Internet Survey of behaviors of men who have sex with men in the United States: 2015 key indicators report. JMIR Public Health and Surveillance, 2017; 3(1): e13.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the participants who made this study possible. This study was funded by the NIH, MAC AIDS Fund, and the National Coalition of STD Directors with unrestricted grant funding from Gilead Sciences, Inc. Gilead Sciences, Inc. has had no input into the development or content of this research.

Contact: Jen Hecht at jhecht@sfaf.org

Twitter: @BHOCPartners

