



Social and racial disparities are associated with unattainability of maintaining social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic among men who have sex with men and transgender/non-binary populations in Brazil

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INTRODUCTION

- Brazil has the second-highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the world. From February 26, 2020 to June 29, 2020 there have been more than 1,300,000 confirmed cases and 57,000 deaths in the country (1).
- Social distancing measures were adopted in Brazil since March 2020 to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and the collapse of the health system. These measures may disproportionately affect individuals from sexual and racial minorities, as well as the poorest.

METHODS

- **Study design:** Cross-sectional web-based study among Brazilian residents, age≥18y, self-identifying as cisgender men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender/non-binary people.
- **Recruitment:** Hornet, Facebook and WhatsApp during April-May, 2020.
- **Measure:** Sociodemographic, gender, sexual orientation, HIV self-reported status, substance use and social distancing/COVID-19 pandemic impact in personal life.
- **Outcome:** Unattainability of maintaining social distancing due to any reason, such as work or housing challenges (yes/no).
- **Statistical analysis:** Logistic regression model to assess the factors associated with unattainability of maintaining social distancing.

RESULTS

- Of 5,490 individuals accessing the questionnaire, 3,486 completed it (Figure 1).
- Median age was 32 years (IQR:27-40). Most were cismen, high schooling (completed secondary school or higher) and middle/high income. Almost half were non-white (Black/mixed-black/Native) and 23% self-reported HIV positive status (Table 1).
- Among those reporting alcohol use (63%), 30% increased its use during the social distancing period. Among those reporting illicit drug use (23%), 30% increased its use.
- Most of respondents reported that social distancing had highly impacted their lives (63%). The majority were very afraid or afraid of getting COVID-19 (77%). Salary/job reduced or lost was the challenge most reported by respondents (Figure 2).
- A total of 917 (26%) were unable to maintain social distancing. Being non-white, having lower schooling and lower income increased the odds of unattainability of maintaining social distancing when adjusted for age, gender, sexual orientation, region and HIV self-reported status (Table 2).

CONCLUSIONS

- The lives of minorities in Brazil have been highly impacted by social distancing measures, likely deepening the inequality in Brazil.
- Social and racial disparities are associated with unattainability in maintaining social distancing among sexual minorities in Brazil.
- Tailored social and economic support policies during the COVID-19 pandemic should be made available to these individuals.

REFERENCE

(1) Brasil. Painei Coronavírus [Internet]. 2020. Available from: <https://covid.saude.gov.br/>

Table 1. Characteristics of study population.

	N=3,486 (%)
Age (years)	
Median	32(IQR:27-40)
18-24	505 (14.5)
25-35	1627 (46.7)
>35	1354 (38.8)
Recruitment	
Hornet	2137 (61.3)
WhatsApp	1098 (31.5)
Facebook	251 (7.2)
Gender	
Cisgender men	3400 (97.5)
Transgender men	12 (0.3)
Transgender women	28 (0.8)
Non binary/ gender fluid	46 (1.3)
Sexual orientation	
Gay	2961 (84.9)
Bisexual	438 (12.6)
Heterosexual	17 (0.5)
Other	70 (2.0)
Race	
White	1927 (55.3)
Black	494 (14.2)
Pardo/Mixed-black	1005 (28.8)
Native	35 (1.0)
Asian	25 (0.7)
Schooling	
Low	1252 (35.9)
High	2234 (64.1)
Family Monthly Income	
Low	1323 (38.0)
Middle	1404 (40.3)
High	759 (21.8)
Region	
Southeast	2784 (80.4)
South	313 (9.0)
Central-west	165 (4.8)
Northeast	166 (4.8)
North	33 (1.0)
Resident of metro area	
Yes	1976 (74.4)
No	679 (25.6)
HIV self-reported status	
Negative	2375 (68.1)
Positive	814 (23.4)
Unknown	97 (2.8)

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Figure 1. Study flow-chart. Brazil, 2020.

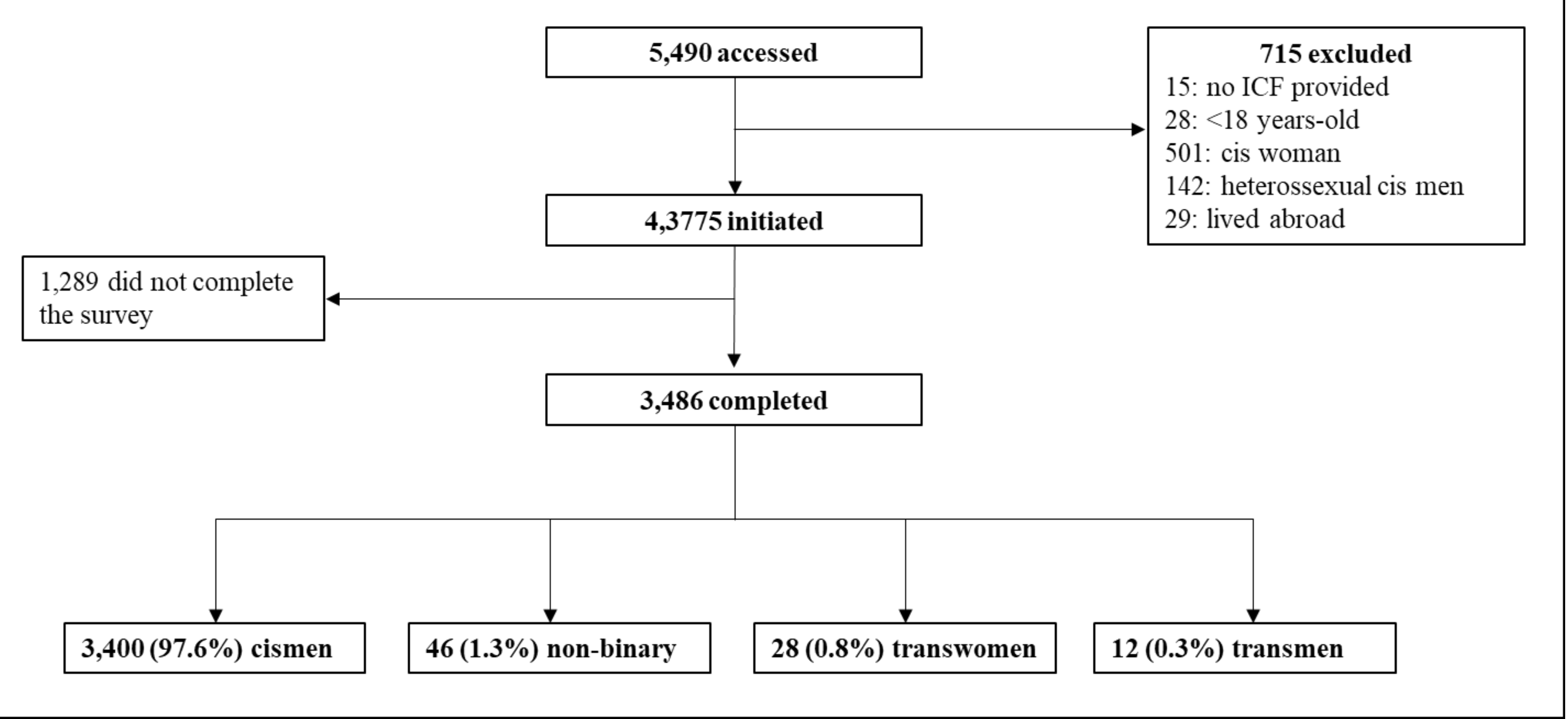


Figure 2. Challenges during COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures (%).

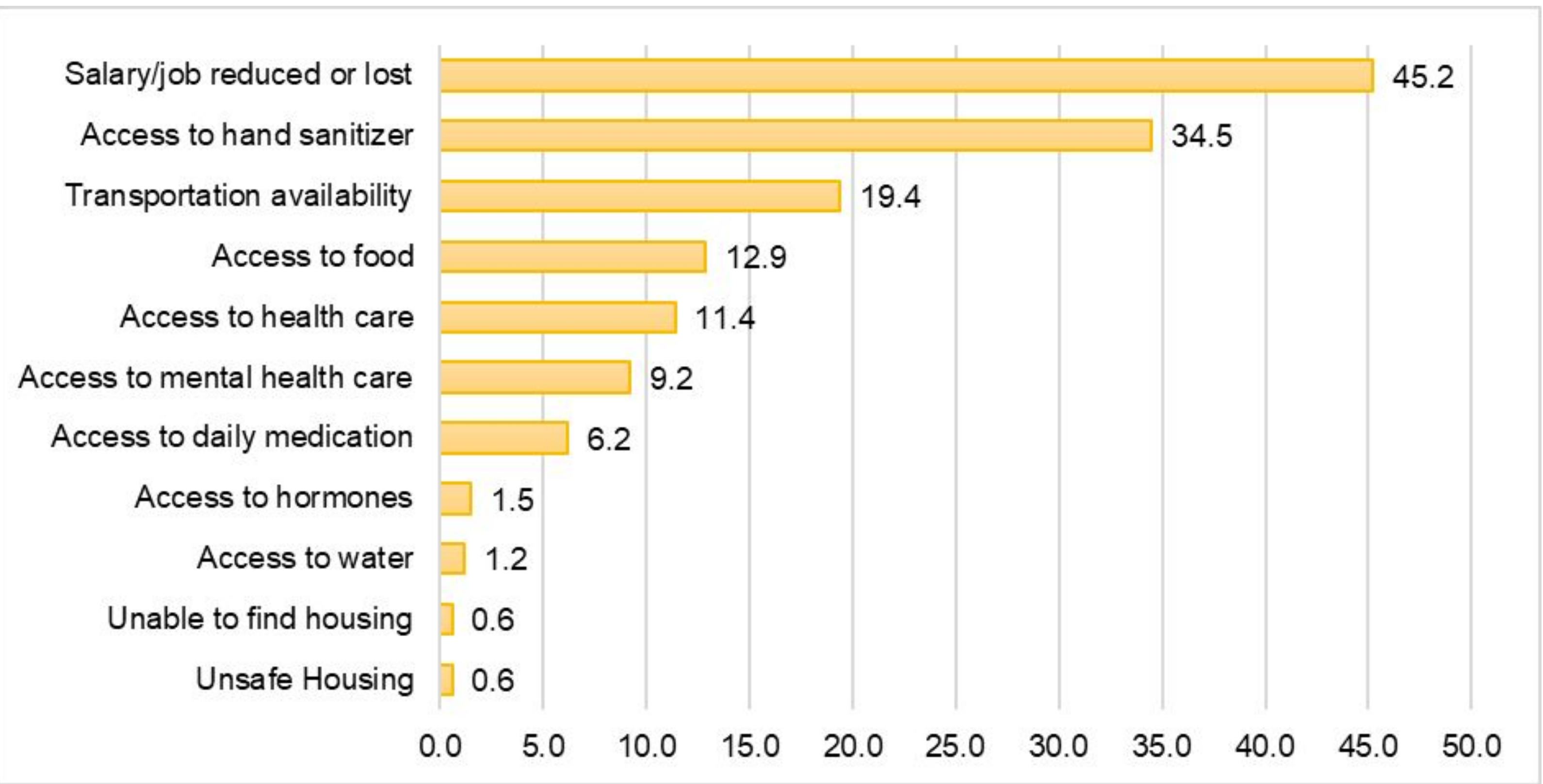


Table 2. Factors associated with unattainability of maintaining social distancing.

	Unattainability of maintaining social distancing		aOR (95%CI)
	Yes (n=917)	No (n=2,569)	
Race			
White	453 (49.4)	1499 (58.3)	Ref.
Non-white	464 (50.6)	1070 (41.7)	1.23 (1.05-1.44)*
Schooling			
Low	232 (25.5)	593 (23.3)	1.53 (1.28-1.82)*
High	679 (74.5)	1957 (76.7)	Ref.
Income			
Low	399 (43.5)	924 (36)	1.34 (1.08-1.68)*
Middle	372 (40.6)	1032 (40.2)	1.30 (1.03-1.66)*
High	146 (15.9)	613 (23.9)	Ref.
Binge drinking			
No	422 (46.0)	1359 (52.9)	Ref.
Yes	495 (54.0)	1210 (47.1)	1.28 (1.09-1.49)*

* p < 0.01. aOR=adjusted OR; model adjusted by age, gender, sexual orientation, region, HIV self-reported status and illicit drug use.