

# ACCELERATE!

## Setting the Scene: Characteristics of the HIV Epidemic Among Black Gay and Bisexual Men in Jackson

Aligned with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, ACCELERATE! is ViiV Healthcare’s four-year, \$10 million commitment to support innovative community projects that focus on improving HIV outcomes for Black gay men in two cities hardest hit by HIV—Baltimore, Maryland, and Jackson, Mississippi.



Jackson, Mississippi

**Jackson**, the capital of Mississippi, is the largest city in the rural state. Jackson holds a significant place in civil rights history for mass demonstrations sparked by the Freedom Riders and Freedom Movement of students and activists, and large-scale voter mobilization and registration.

Nowadays, nearly 80% of 170,000 Jacksonians identify as Black.<sup>1</sup> Jackson was ranked 10th in the nation for the highest concentration of African-American same-sex couples.<sup>2</sup>

**“DESPITE THE SOUTH’S HISTORY OF RACIAL SEGREGATION AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, BLACK GAY MEN HAVE CARVED OUT A SPACE IN WHICH TO LIVE PRODUCTIVE AND FULFILLING LIVES.”**

— E. PATRICK JOHNSON, AUTHOR OF SWEET TEA: BLACK GAY MEN OF THE SOUTH

### A Portrait of Men in the Landscape of Jackson

In a study that included 600 Black men who have sex with men in Jackson (15-29 years):<sup>3</sup>

» Many men experienced economic challenges.



**46%**

of the men reported an average monthly income of **less than \$1,000** (2011-2016)



**59%**

reported being currently **employed** (2011-2016)

» Despite economic hardship, more young men in this study had education beyond high school compared to national figures.



**60%**

had education **beyond high school** graduation (2011-2016)



**51%**

of **Black Americans** 20-29 years old had education **beyond high school** graduation (2014)<sup>4</sup>

Jackson is a car culture. You don’t see many sidewalks or people walking on the street. Without a car, men rely on friends, family, or programs to access health services.



Jackson has a minimally structured gay social scene with few centers for socializing and no distinct gay neighborhood. As a result, men tend to gather with their social network at more informal locations.





## Men's lives are influenced by the context in which they live.



### Health Systems and Prevention



**87%**  
of African-Americans in Mississippi  
have health coverage (2015)<sup>5</sup>

**Primary care physician shortages** are in several of the counties that include Jackson (2013)<sup>6</sup>

As of 2011, Mississippi requires schools teach **abstinence-only or abstinence-plus sex education. HIV education is not required.**<sup>7</sup>



### HIV Criminalization & Social Policies

HIV criminalization can discourage people from accessing HIV prevention, testing, and care.

Mississippi has **broad laws on HIV exposure** in which people can be incarcerated or under house arrest for years, regardless of actually transmitting HIV.<sup>12</sup>

Social policies can also create a climate that fosters prejudice and discrimination for gay and bisexual men and people living with HIV.

Despite federal rulings on gay marriage, the current state government continues to **actively fight the ruling** in court.<sup>11</sup>



### Societal Sphere



**90%**  
of African-Americans in  
Mississippi are **employed** (2015)<sup>8</sup>



**34%**  
**poverty rate** for African-  
Americans in Mississippi (2014)<sup>9</sup>



**14.3%**  
**reduction in prison population**—  
the highest reduction in the  
nation (2013-2014)<sup>10</sup>



### Family and Faith

Family and faith can be a positive support for men.

“My dad will occasionally come on doctor's visits, because he wants to check in and make sure I'm doing okay.... My mother is constantly like: 'When are you going to take your medicine?'”

— Research Participant, Jackson, MS (2015)<sup>13</sup>

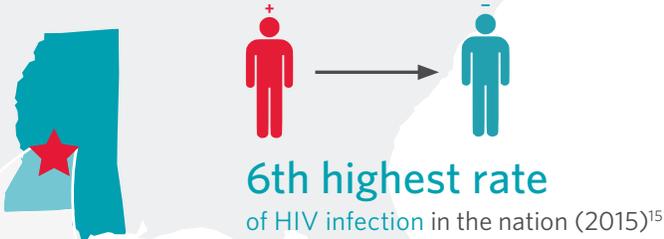
“I wouldn't say [Jackson is] really hostile, it's just kind of separated. There are gays everywhere, and sometimes there will be disapproving eyes, but they won't say anything. The gay people just kind of separate themselves from all that negativity.”

— Research Participant, Jackson, MS (2015)<sup>13</sup>

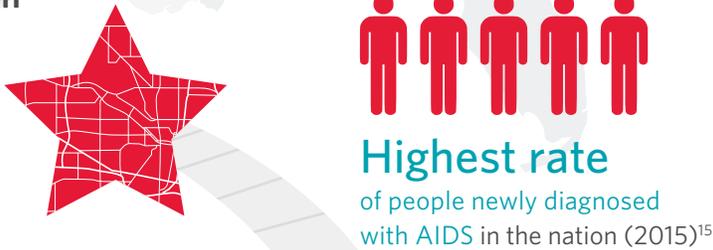
# A Focused Look at HIV

While the growing promise of HIV prevention, care, and treatment is remarkable, not all people are benefiting from the standard of care. If diagnoses remain unchanged, 1 in 2 Black men who have sex with men (MSM) will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetimes.<sup>14</sup>

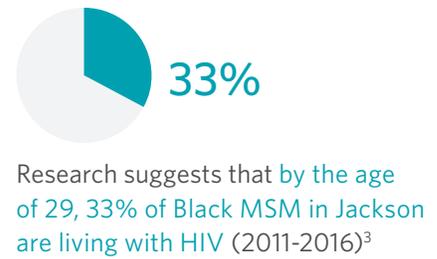
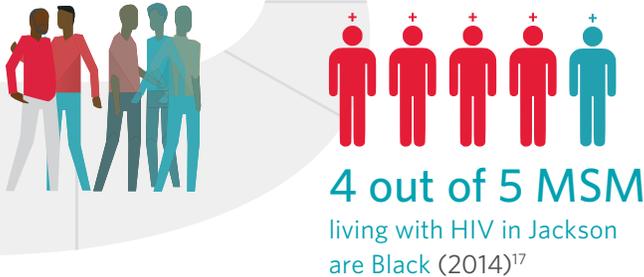
## » Mississippi



## » Jackson



## » Black Gay and Bisexual Men

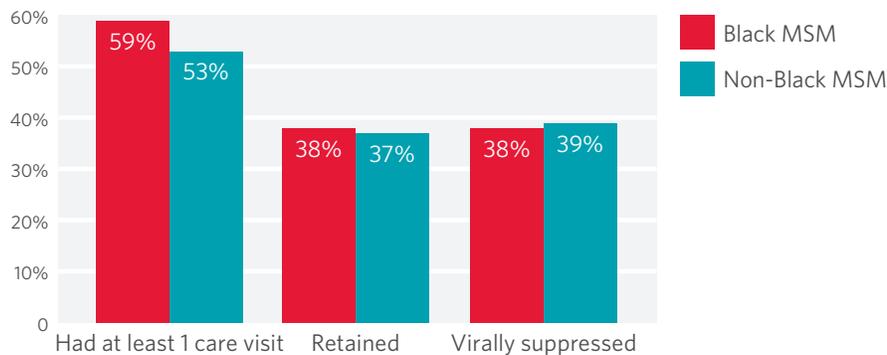


Research has found this increased vulnerability to HIV is not explained by behavioral factors alone—Black gay men do not engage in more “risky” sexual behaviors than other groups.<sup>18</sup> Men care about their health. Environmental factors, such as undiagnosed HIV, access to care and treatment services, and use of HIV medication, create a situation where HIV flourishes.<sup>19</sup> While men are heavily impacted, there are many opportunities ACCELERATE! has to build on across the HIV Cascade of Care, including clinics that prescribe pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention.

## Cascade of Opportunities

The HIV Cascade of Care is a way to visually understand how a group of people are supported and engaged in the standard of care.

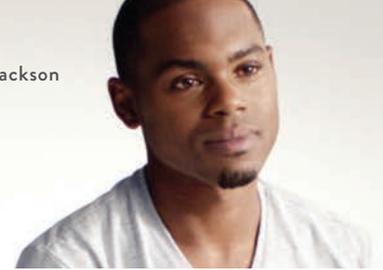
Cascade of Care for Men Who Have Sex with Men in Mississippi (2014)<sup>20</sup>



The Cascade of Care is dynamic.

Even under the best circumstances, men fall in and out of care for a variety of reasons ranging from:

- » Financial hardship
- » Depression
- » Feeling healthy enough and wanting to pause treatment
- » Difficulty finding care that fits
- » Incarceration
- » Getting a new job with different health insurance



## What We Are Doing

Building on key insights gleaned from an ethnographic research study and community discussions, ACCELERATE! will activate a platform for new projects and collaborations and will support enhanced, community-driven efforts.

### » Local Grantees

ViiV Healthcare provides grants through ACCELERATE! to boost empowerment and strengthen networks, make sex education relevant, make testing a bridge to prevention, care, and treatment, and strengthen navigation services.

### » Learning Communities

Learning Communities connect all grantees to build community leadership, strengthen knowledge, and encourage connectivity.

### » Continuous Listening Sessions

Listening Sessions provide an informal space for the men of Jackson to bring community issues and solutions forward to improve the work of ACCELERATE!



ACCELERATE! will **propel programs and partnerships** that **engage and collaborate differently**.

We have the shared goal of forging a path for current and future generations of **Black men to thrive and prevail** in the face of HIV.

## References

<sup>1</sup>US Census, 2015. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/2836000>. <sup>2</sup>Urban Institute, 2004. Available at: <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/900695-Facts-and-Findings-from-The-Gay-and-Lesbian-Atlas.PDF> <sup>3</sup>Mena, L. & Crosby, R.A., 2016. Portrait of an epidemic: extremely high HIV prevalence and incidence among young black men having sex with men and residing in a southern city. Manuscript submitted and under review. <sup>4</sup>US Census, 2014. Data available at: <https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2014/tables.html> <sup>5</sup>Kaiser Family Foundation, 2015. Available at: <http://kff.org/uninsured/state-indicator/rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0> <sup>6</sup>Southern AIDS Coalition, 2015. Available at: <https://southernaids.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/hiv-infrastructure-study-jackson-mississippi-7-27-15.pdf> <sup>7</sup>Mississippi Legislature, 2011. HB-999. Available at: <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2011/pdf/HB/0900-0999/HB0999SG.pdf> <sup>8</sup>US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015. Available at: <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2016/unemployment-rates-for-african-americans-by-state-in-2015.htm> <sup>9</sup>Talk Poverty, 2015. Available at: <https://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/mississippi-2015-report/> <sup>10</sup>US Department of Justice, 2015. Available at: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p14.pdf> <sup>11</sup>Pettus, E., 2016. Available at: <http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/politics/2016/08/12/mississippi-gay-marriage-law-remains-blocked/88630758/> <sup>12</sup>HIV Law and Policy, 2015. Available at: <http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/states/mississippi> <sup>13</sup>ViiV Healthcare, 2016. Meet Me Where I Want To Be Report. <sup>14</sup>CDC, 2016. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/2016/croi-press-release-risk.html> <sup>15</sup>CDC, 2016. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/reports/surveillance/cdc-hiv-surveillance-report-2015-vol-27.pdf> <sup>16</sup>Rosenberg, E.S., Grey, J.A., Sanchez, T.H., & Sullivan, P.S., 2016. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27244769> <sup>17</sup>CDC, 2016. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/reports/surveillance/cdc-hiv-surveillance-supplemental-report-vol-21-1.pdf> <sup>18</sup>Millet, G.A., Flores, S.A., Peterson, J.L., & Bakeman, R., 2007. Available at: [http://journals.lww.com/aidsonline/Abstract/2007/10010/Explaining\\_disparities\\_in\\_HIV\\_infection\\_among.11.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/aidsonline/Abstract/2007/10010/Explaining_disparities_in_HIV_infection_among.11.aspx) <sup>19</sup>Maulsby, C., Millet, G., Lindsey, K., Kelley, R., Johnson, K., Montoya, D., & Holtgrave, D., 2014. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23620241> <sup>20</sup>Provided by the Mississippi State Department of Health-STD/HIV Office, 2016.

ViiV Healthcare was established to **take an innovative approach to the challenge of HIV**—and we do. It's who we are.

An innovative approach means we **go beyond developing new medicines**. We **seek insights** to better understand the unmet needs of people living with HIV. We **connect individuals and communities to help drive solutions** focused on providing the same **standard of care** for all people living with HIV. We **develop and support community programs** that focus on HIV prevention, care, and treatment. The **voice of the HIV community informs everything we do**.

As the **only company solely focused on HIV**, we **think differently, act differently, and connect differently** to improve the lives and outcomes for all people affected by HIV.

To learn more, visit [viivhealthcare.com/us](http://viivhealthcare.com/us) and follow us  @ViiVUS

