

INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CHEMSEX BEHAVIOR AMONG MEN **WHO** HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN HO CHI MINH CITY: CONTROLLED INTERVENTIONS

ICUDDR and ISSUP Global Conference- Thessaloniki, Greece June 2024

Vu Vi – MPH - Heller School for Policy and Management, Brandeis University

Vo Huynh Ngoc Han, Do Van Dung, Vo Van Tam, Nguyen Trang Nguyen, Diep Nguyen



Setting the Stage: HIV and substance use in Vietnam

- 250.000 people living with HIV; HCMC accounted for 35% of people living with HIV in Vietnam
- HIV still focuses on crucial populations: Injecting Drug Users, Female sex workers, Transgender women, and Men **who have** sex with men (**MSM**)
- 47% of newly diagnosed HIV infections 2020 were among MSM. HIV prevalence in young MSM aged 15-24 has significantly increased from 3% in 2011 to 10,2% in 2021.

Agenda

Background and
rationale

01

Study objectives

02

Study design

03

Results

04

Recommendation

05

Agenda

- Background and rationale
- Study objectives
- Study design
- **Results**
- Recommendation

Background and rationale: Chemsex definition

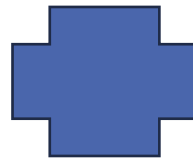


Definition 1: Using substances before and during sexual activities for the purpose of enhancing the sexual experience.

Definition 2: Using substances (excluding alcohol and tobacco) before and during sexual activities for the purpose of engaging in sexual activities



Chem



Sex

Why engage in chemsex?

FUN

- ● Better sex ; Increased intimacy
- **FORGETTING-**
- Loneliness
- **Displaying ability to clients**
- **Peer pressure**
- **Shame**
- **Stigma and discrimination around HIV/HCV.**

FUNCTION

- **Displaying ability to clients**
- **Craving**
- **Deal with physical pain**

“Drugs are not the problem; drugs are the solution to the problem
-Gabor Maté

Chemsex, HIV and other health problems

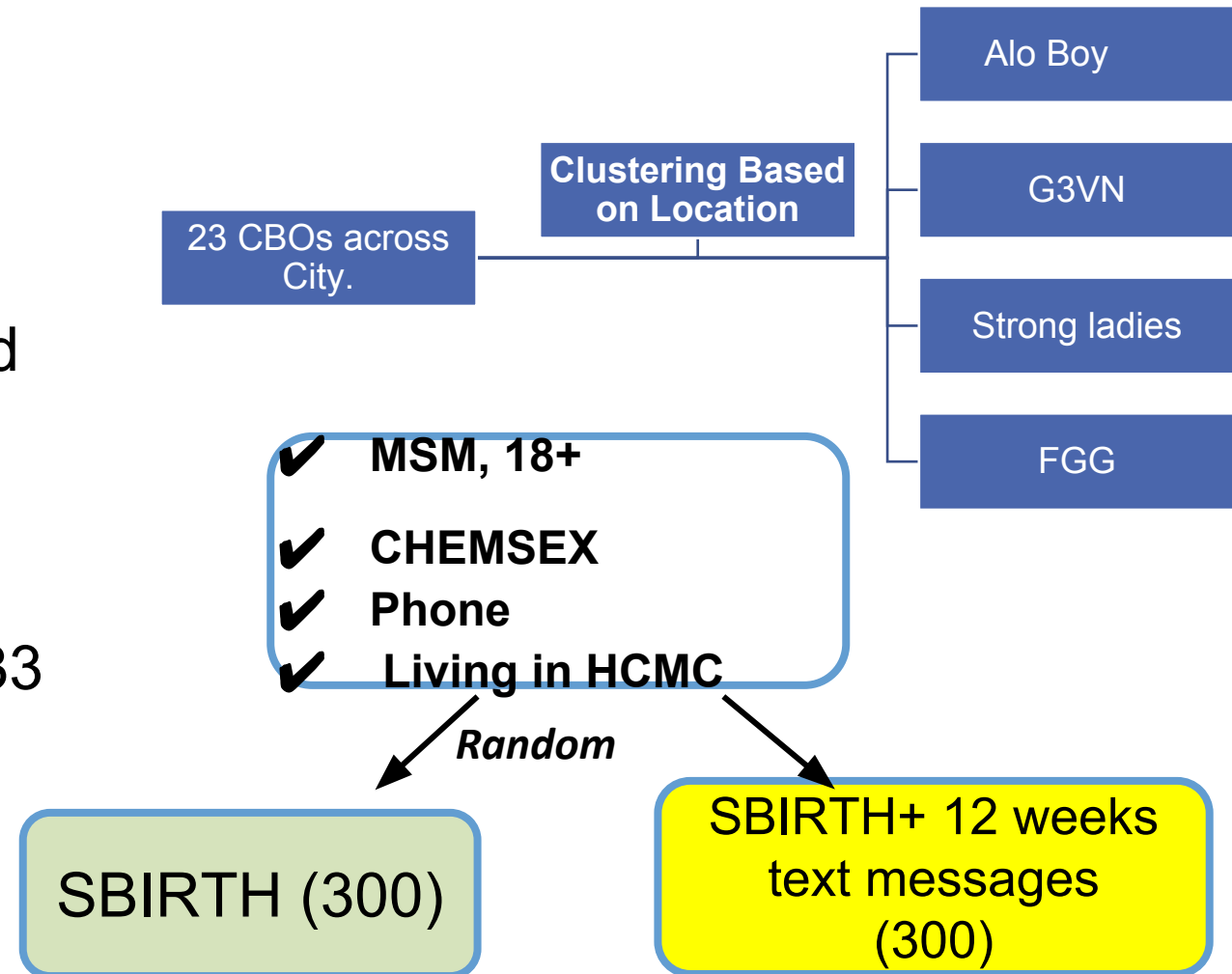


- Elevated risks of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Unprotected sexual activities, group sex, with strangers, and aggressive behavior
- Shared use of injection equipment
- Reduced adherence to PrEP and ARV treatment
- Negative impact on mental health and overall quality of life and mental health

(Tangerli et al., 2022) (Howarth et al., 2021)

Methods

- Study design: Randomized Controlled intervention study
- Time: March to October 2020 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- **Total:** Sample size 741, Follow-up 733



Demographic & Sexual Relationship Characteristics

Social Demographic of study participants:

- **Median Age:** 25 years and 89.7% under 30 years **old**
- **Financial Autonomy:** 83%
- **Education:** 88.1% completed high school or higher
- **STIs:** 21%
- **HIV Positive:** 10.1%

Sexual Roles:

- Insertive partners: 29.7%
- Receptive partners: 24.5%
- Both roles: 23%
- **Group Sex:** 31.8% in the past three months
- **Association:** Higher risky sexual activity under the influence in the 25-30 age group

Characteristics of sexual Relationship

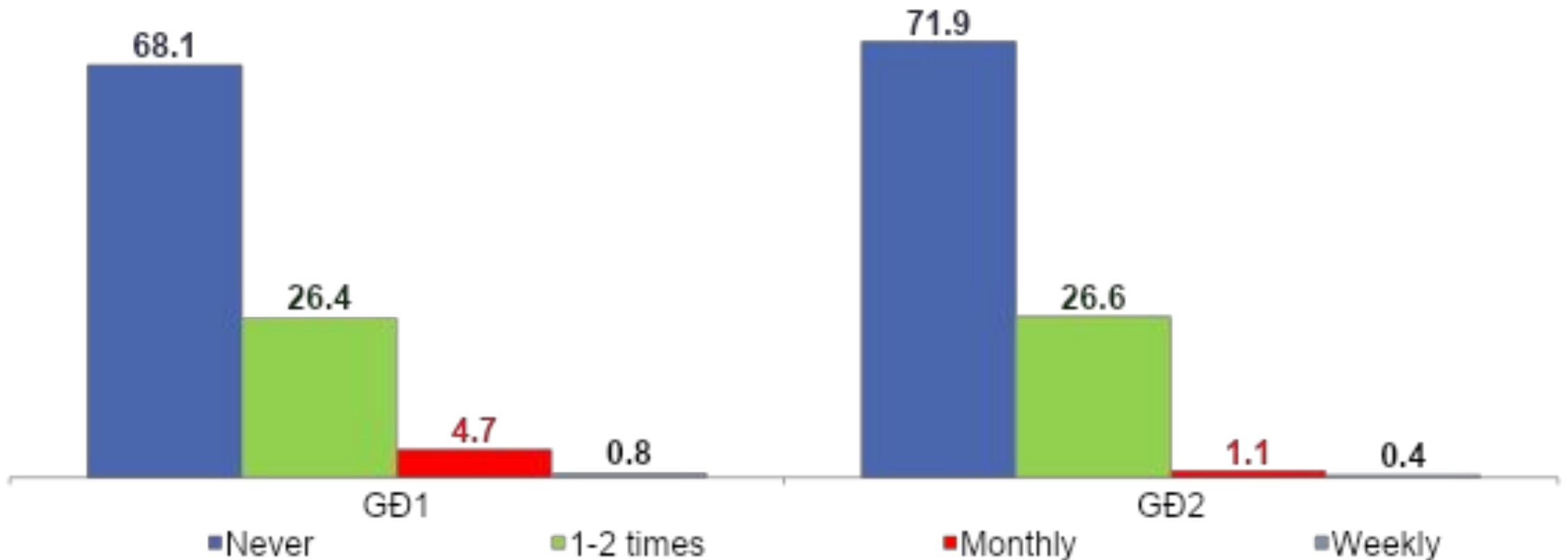
Characteristics of sexual intercourse with regular Partners

| | having sexual intercourse with regular partners | ≥ 2 partners | Always use condom |
|--------------------------|---|--------------|-------------------|
| Pre-intervention | 68.4% | 44.1% | 30.0% |
| Post intervention | 77.1% | 44.0% | 51.9% |

Characteristics of sexual intercourse with Casual Partners

| | Having sexual intercourse with casual partners | ≥ 2 partners | always use condom |
|--------------------------|--|--------------|-------------------|
| Pre-intervention | 67.2% | 85.6% | 48.1% |
| Post-intervention | 77.2% | 91.3% | 64.0% |

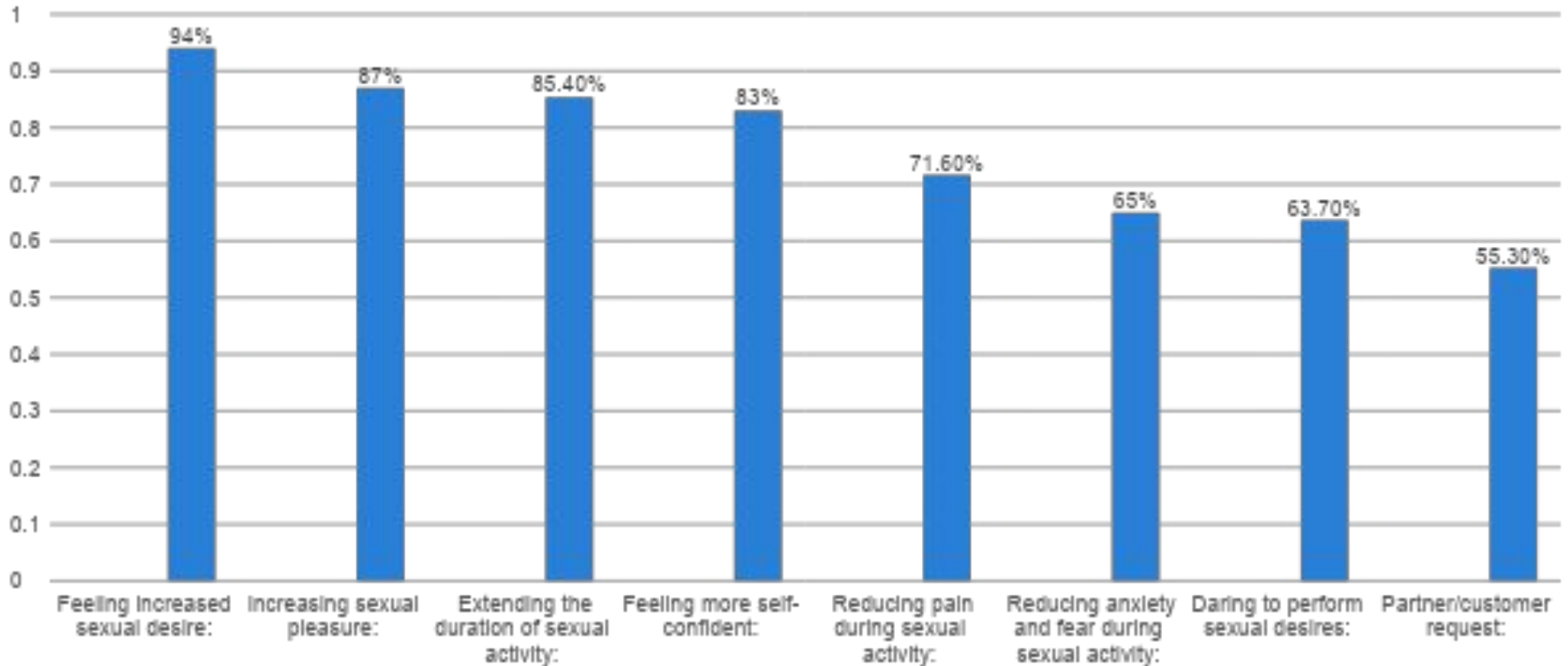
Frequency of Group Sex in the Past 3 Months



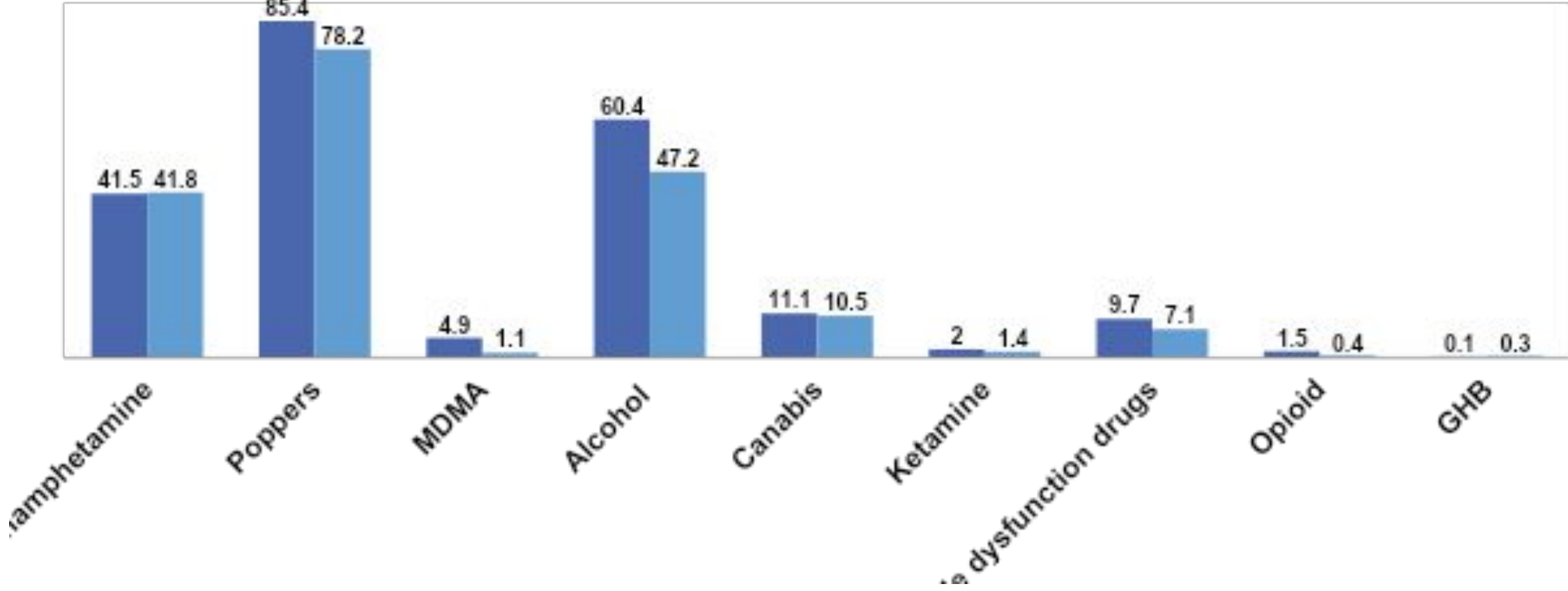
Chemsex characteristics

| Number of chemsex days in the last 30 days | Pre | Post |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Median | 5 [2 – 8] | 3 [2 - 5] |
| GTNN - GTLN | 0 - 28 | 0 – 25 |
| When engaged in chemsex | | |
| When having a sex party | 80% | |
| A random chance | 36% | |
| When with a partner | 21% | |

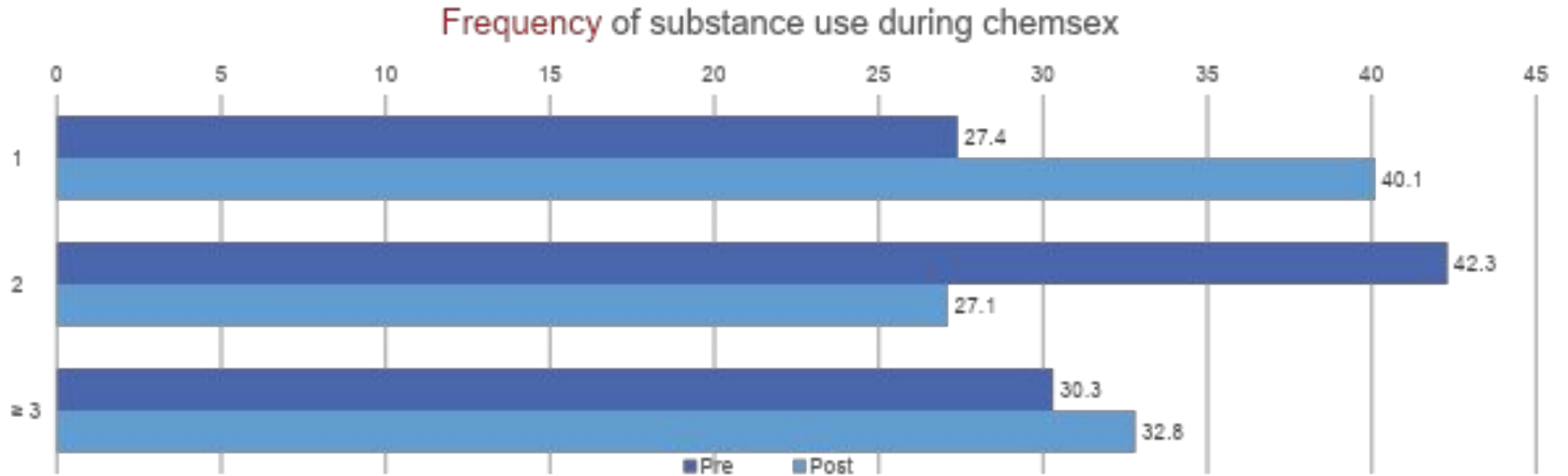
REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN CHEMSEX



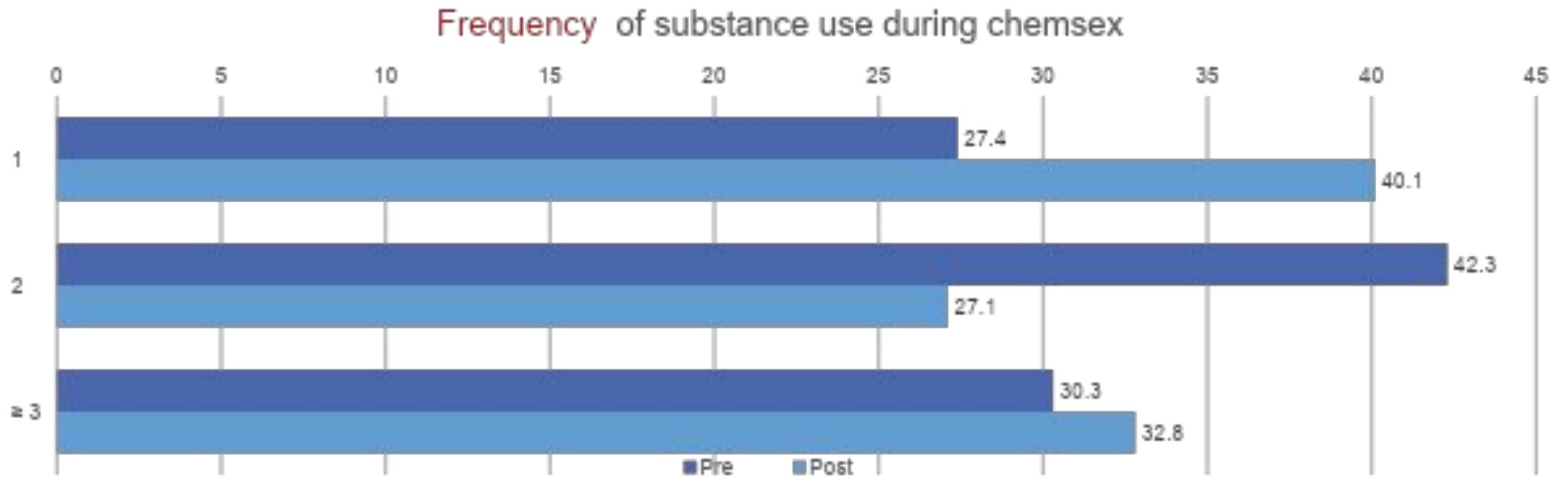
Substance use in chemsex



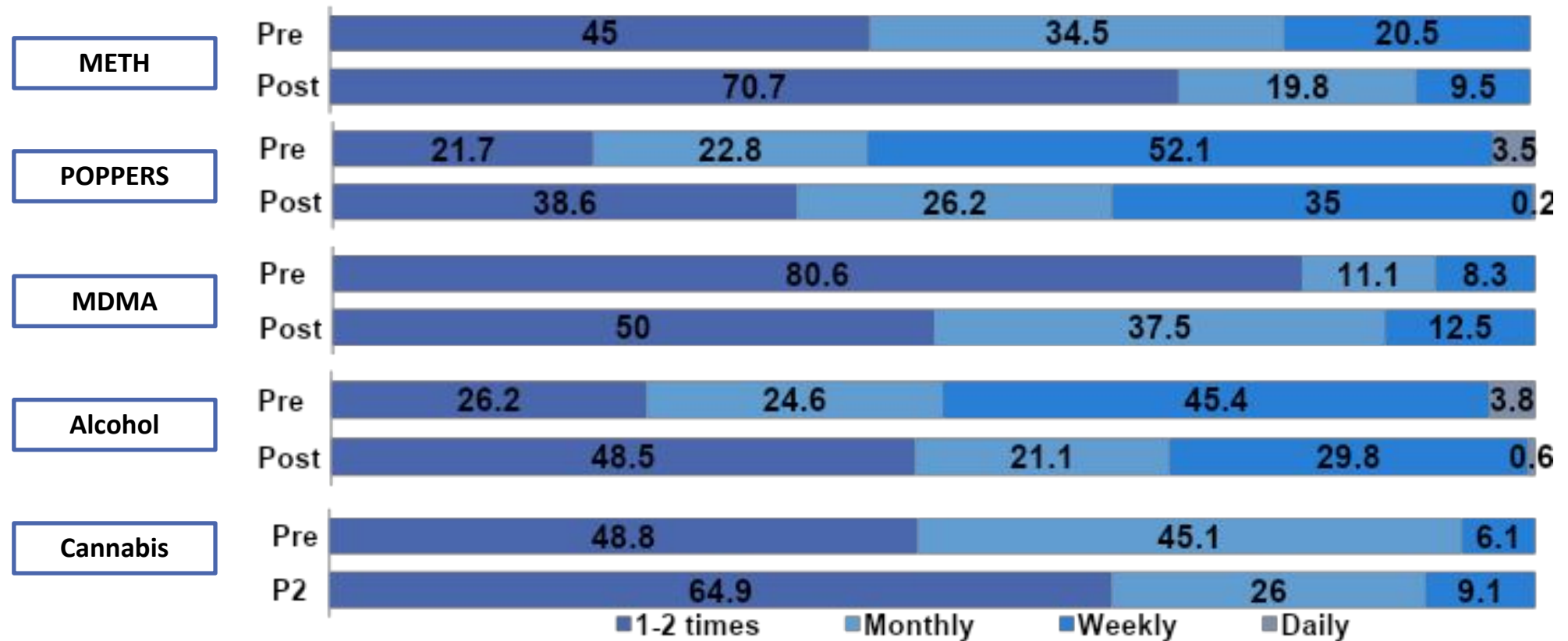
Chemsex characteristic (n=744)



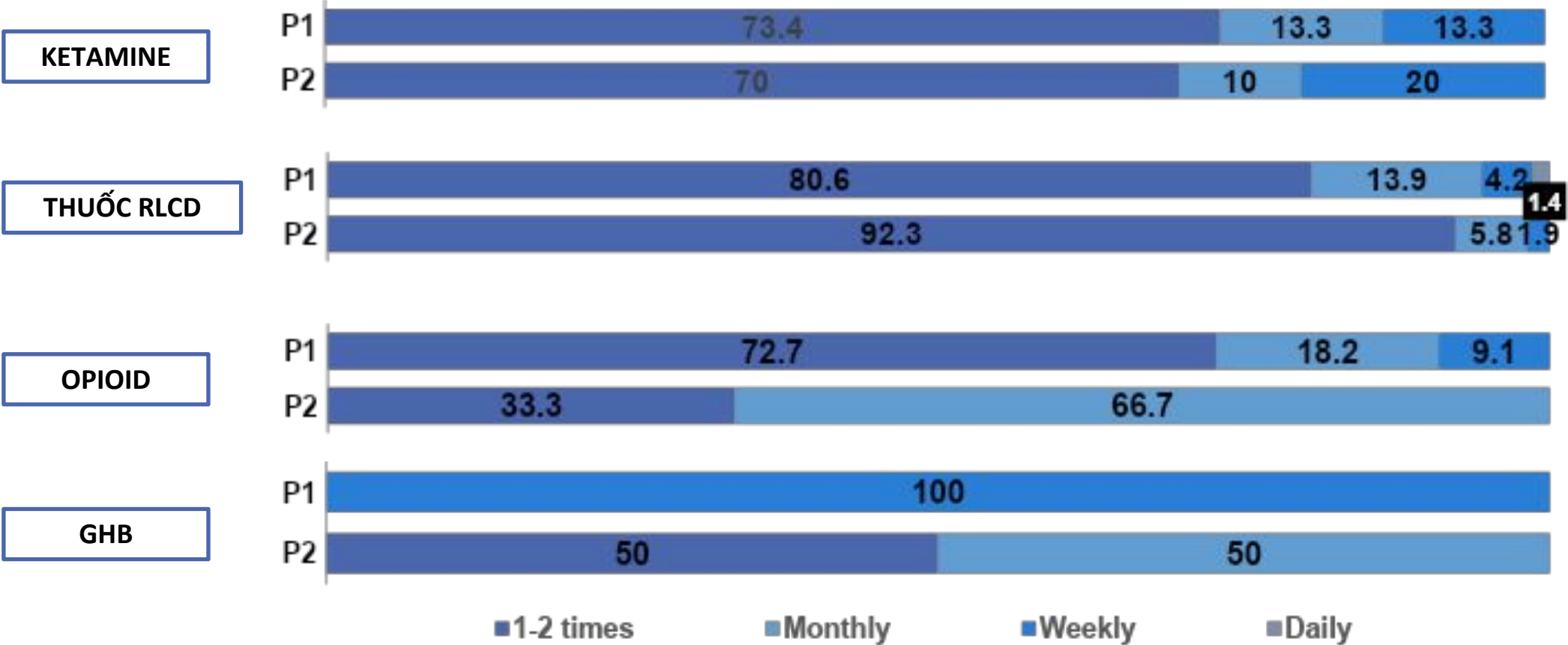
Chemsex characteristic (n=744)



Frequency of Substance Use in Chemsex



Frequency of Substance Use in Chemsex



Factors Influencing Condomless Sex Behavior

| Characteristic | Condomless | | p | OR (KTC 95%) |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | Có (%) | Không (%) | | |
| STIs | | | | |
| Yes | 134 (85,9) | 22 (14,1) | <0,001 | 3,27 (2,06 – 5,20) |
| No/unknown | 380 (65,1) | 204 (34,9) | | |
| HIV | | | | |
| Yes | 62 (82,7) | 13 (17,3) | 0,024 | 7,43 (1,12 – 42,45) |
| No | 452 (68,0) | 213 (32,0) | | |
| PreP | | | | |
| Yes | 69 (54,8) | 57 (45,2) | <0,001 | 0,47 (0,31 – 0,71) |
| No | 408 (72,1) | 158 (27,9) | | |

Comparison between two interventions: SBIRT,

| Đặc điểm | Condomless | | p value | OR (KTC 95%) |
|---------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| | SBIRTH + SMS (%) | SBIRTH (%) | | |
| Condomless | | | | |
| Before intervention | 62,8 | 74,6 | 0,01 | 0,74 (0,58 – 0,93) |
| After intervention | 39,4 | 41,4 | | |
| Depression | | | | |
| Before intervention | 31,9 | 38,5 | <0,001 | 0,72 (0,51 – 1,69) |
| After intervention | 14,4 | 16,9 | | |
| PrEP use | | | | |
| Before intervention | 20,8 | 16,1 | 0,362 | 1,14 (0,86 – 1,52) |
| After intervention | 25,8 | 19,0 | | |

Conclusion

- After the intervention with brief counseling and motivational messages, the results recorded a reduction in the rate of unsafe chemsex in the post-intervention period compared to the pre-intervention period. However, more data is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of motivational messages in this group

Acknowledgments

Study participants who attended his study

Brandeis

THE HELLER SCHOOL
FOR SOCIAL POLICY
AND MANAGEMENT





Thank you
vivu@brandeis.edu