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Changes in chemsex and sexual behaviour over time, among a cohort of MSM in London and Brighton: Findings from the AURAH2 study

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Background

- ▶ MSM attending sexual health clinics who disclosed participating in chemsex had a higher likelihood of being newly diagnosed with HIV-infection¹
- ▶ Chemsex has increased among MSM attending sexual health clinics in large UK cities²
- ▶ Lack of longitudinal data which would help contextualise cross-sectional prevalence data

¹Pakianathan et al., *HIV Medicine*, 2018

²Sewell et al., *Int Journal of Drug Policy*, 2018

Study Procedures

- ▶ AURAH2: prospective cohort study of HIV negative or undiagnosed MSM from sexual health clinics in London & Brighton
- ▶ Baseline paper questionnaire in clinic (11/2014-04/2016)
- ▶ Online questionnaires (03/2015-03/2018) –max 9 over 3 years

4 monthly questionnaires (3 month recall period):

- HIV status, HIV testing history, recent sexual behaviour, health and lifestyle factors including recreational drug use and chemsex, STI diagnoses

Annual questionnaires (3 month recall period):

- Same information as 4 monthly plus PEP and PrEP use (past year), relationship status, mental health and alcohol consumption

Study Procedures

4 monthly/annual questionnaire:

“...have you used drugs before or during sex (chemsex) in the last 3 months?”

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes→

“have you used (please select any that you have used)”

☐ Mephedrone

☐ GHB/GBL

☐ Crystal methamphetamine

☐ Other (please insert)

“Approximately how often did you have chemsex in the last 3 months?”

☐ Once

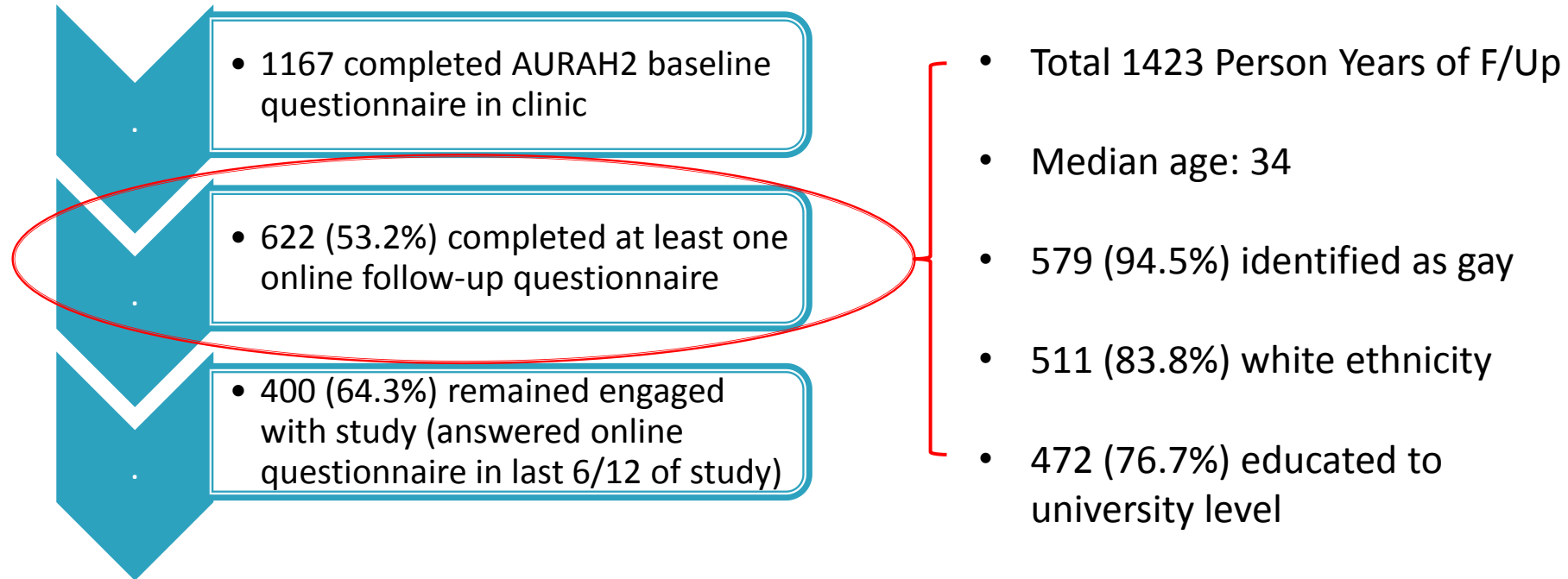
☐ Monthly

☐ Weekly

Study Procedures

- ▶ Seven measures of sexual risk behaviour ascertained from 4 monthly and annual questionnaire:
 - i. Any anal sex
 - ii. Condomless anal intercourse (CLAI) with ≥ 1 partners
 - iii. CLAI with ≥ 2 partners
 - iv. CLAI with partners of unknown HIV status
 - v. Diagnosis with a bacterial STI (GC/CT/ST/LGV)
 - vi. Group sex
 - vii. Recent HIV test
- Recall period for all measures – last 3 months

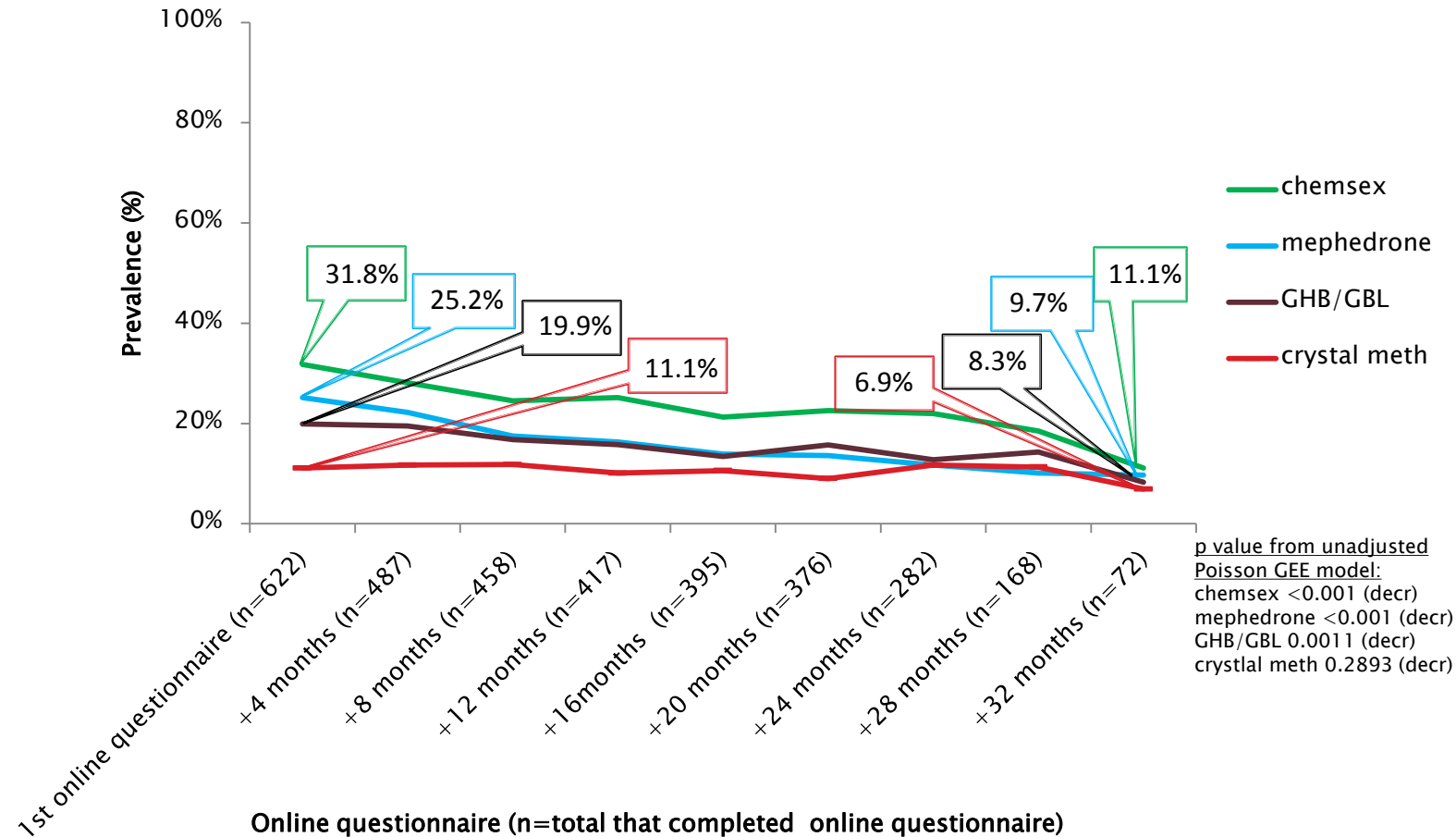
Results



	Any online questionnaire (N=622) YES	Any online questionnaire (N=545) NO
Chemsex	32.3%	29.4%
Mephedrone	28.5%	26.8%
GHB/GBL	20.3%	17.4%
Crystal meth	10.0%	9.4%

Results

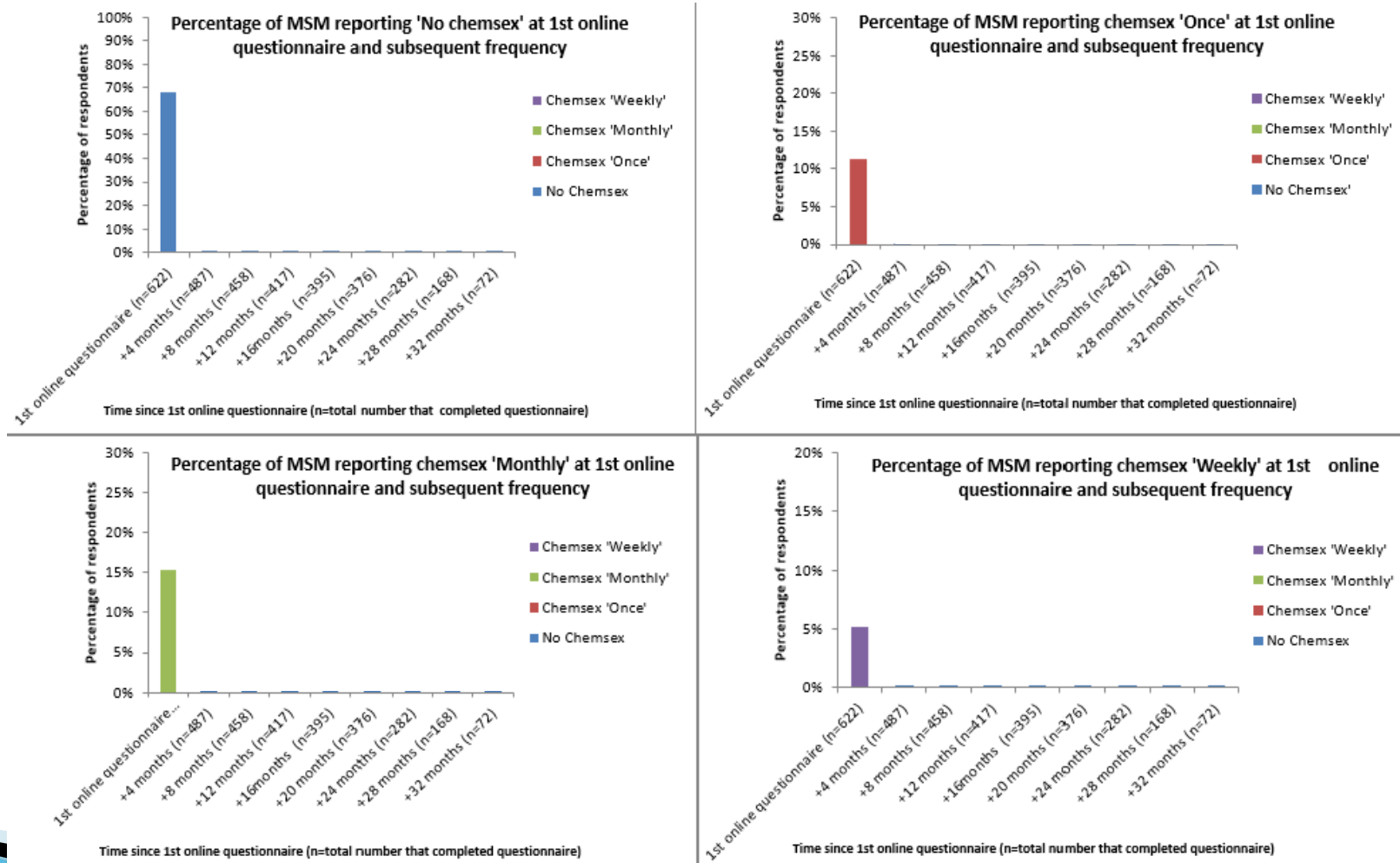
Prevalence of chemsex, and individual chemsex drugs over time in the study among MSM in the AURAH2 study (n=3277 questionnaires)*



*No missing data for question on chemsex at any online questionnaire among respondents

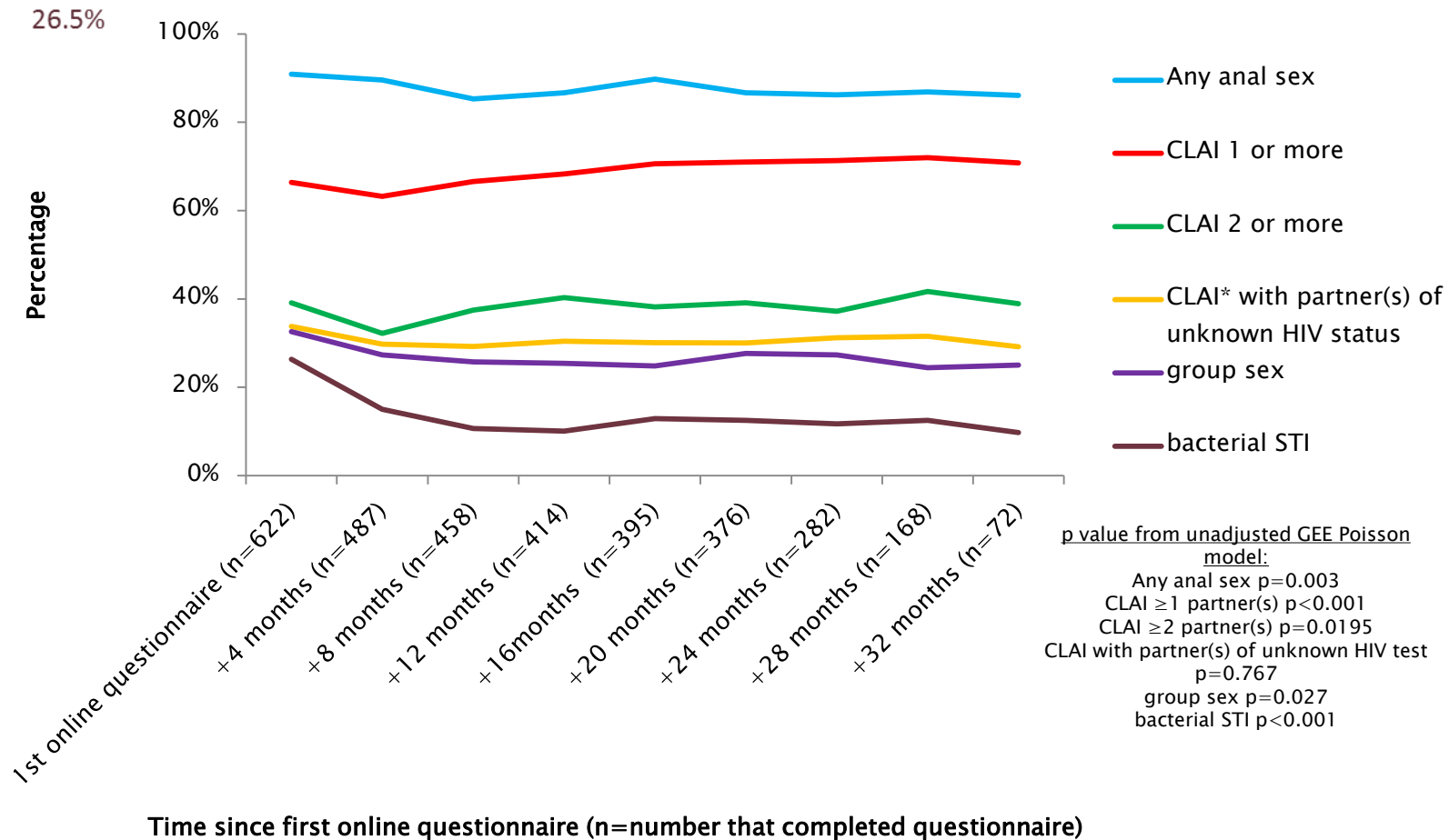
Results

Within-person changes in frequency of chemsex over time in the study among MSM in the AURAH2 study (n=3277 questionnaires)



Results

Prevalence of measures of sexual behaviour¹ over time in the study among MSM in the AURAH2 study (n=3277 questionnaires)



*CLAI = condomless anal intercourse

¹Missing data were treated as no, the number of missing data was limited

Conclusion

- ▶ First longitudinal analysis of chemsex among a cohort of MSM in Europe
- ▶ Chemsex significantly declined over time among individuals in the study alongside most measures of sexual behaviour with the exception of CLAI with 1 or more partner(s)
- ▶ Health promotion and HIV prevention should be targeted towards MSM that report chemsex, would be highly beneficial and potentially only necessary for a relatively short period of time for individuals



Acknowledgements

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Any questions?

