

High Rates of Recent Substance Use Among Transgender People with HIV Associated with Riskier Sexual Behavior



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Background

- Transgender (TG) people, and people with HIV (PWH) have higher rates of substance use than the general population.
- We sought to understand the rates of substance use in a cohort of TG-PWH, and associations with HIV outcomes and risk behaviors.

Methods

- PATCH is a longitudinal natural history study of transgender individuals in Washington, DC accessing a low-barrier gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) clinic.
- Participants complete laboratory assessments and surveys assessing demographics, behaviors, and non-marijuana drug use patterns.
- For this analysis, we included only people with HIV.
- Recent substance use was defined as use within one month, excluding marijuana, alcohol, tobacco.
- Fisher's exact test was used for statistical analysis.

Results

Table 1. Patient demographics

Demographics	Total (n=51)	Recent Substance Use		p-value
		No (n= 29)	Yes (n= 22)	
Age, Median, Y	37	38	36	>0.05
Gender, n (%)				
Female	41 (80)	26 (90)	15 (68)	
Non-binary / other	10 (20)	3 (10)	7 (32)	
Sex assigned at birth, n (%)				>0.05
Female	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Male	51 (100)	29 (100)	22 (100)	
Race				>0.05
Black or African American	48 (94)	28 (97)	20 (91)	
Education				>0.05
High School or less	38 (75)	22 (76)	16 (73)	
More than High School	13 (25)	7 (24)	6 (27)	
Housing Status				>0.05
Unstable	22 (43)	10 (34)	12 (55)	
Stable	29 (57)	19 (66)	10 (45)	
Employment				>0.05
Unemployed	33 (65)	19 (66)	14 (64)	
Employed / other	18 (35)	10 (34)	8 (36)	
Drug use within 12 months	32 (63)	10 (34)	22 (100)	
Cocaine*	17 (49)			
Hallucinogens*	10 (29)			
Amphetamines*	10 (29)			
Club Drugs*	7 (20)			
Heroin*	5 (14)			

*Out of people with drug use within 12 months

Figure 1: Substance Use within 1 month

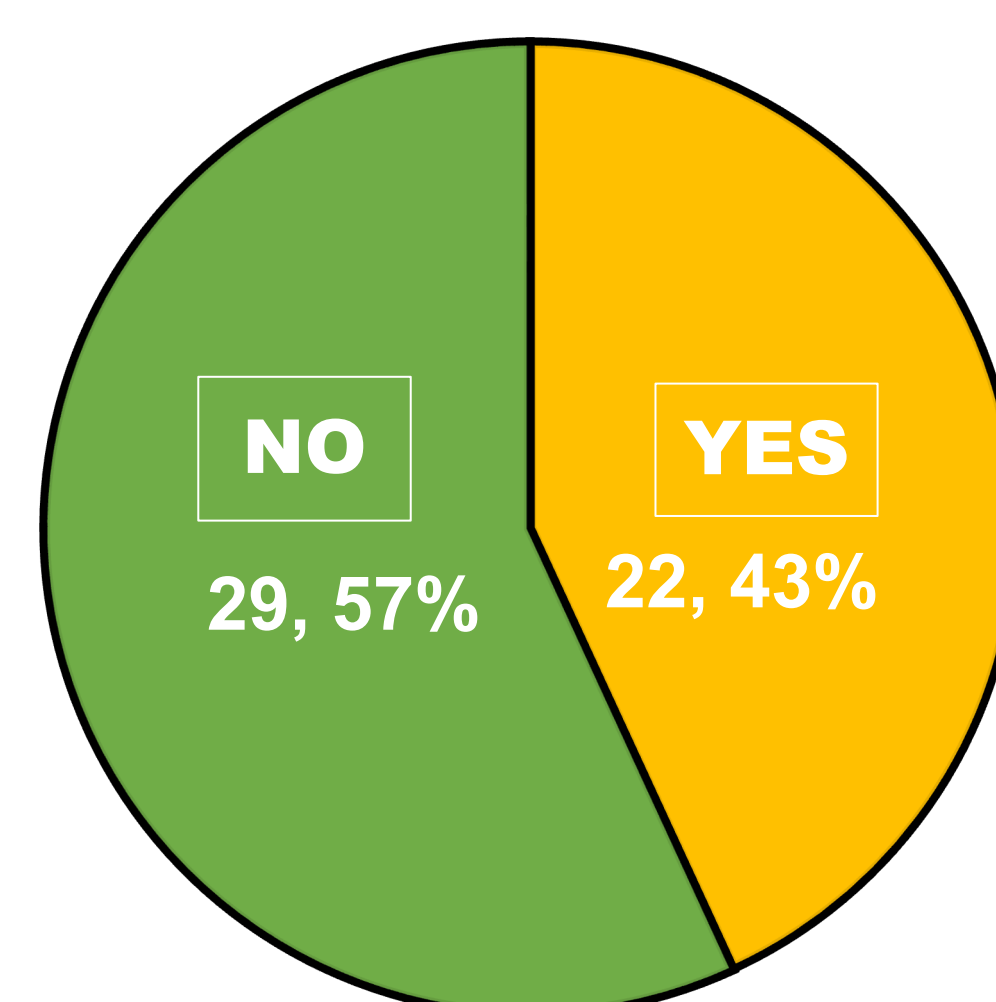


Figure 2: Frequency of Substance Use Among Those with Past Month Use

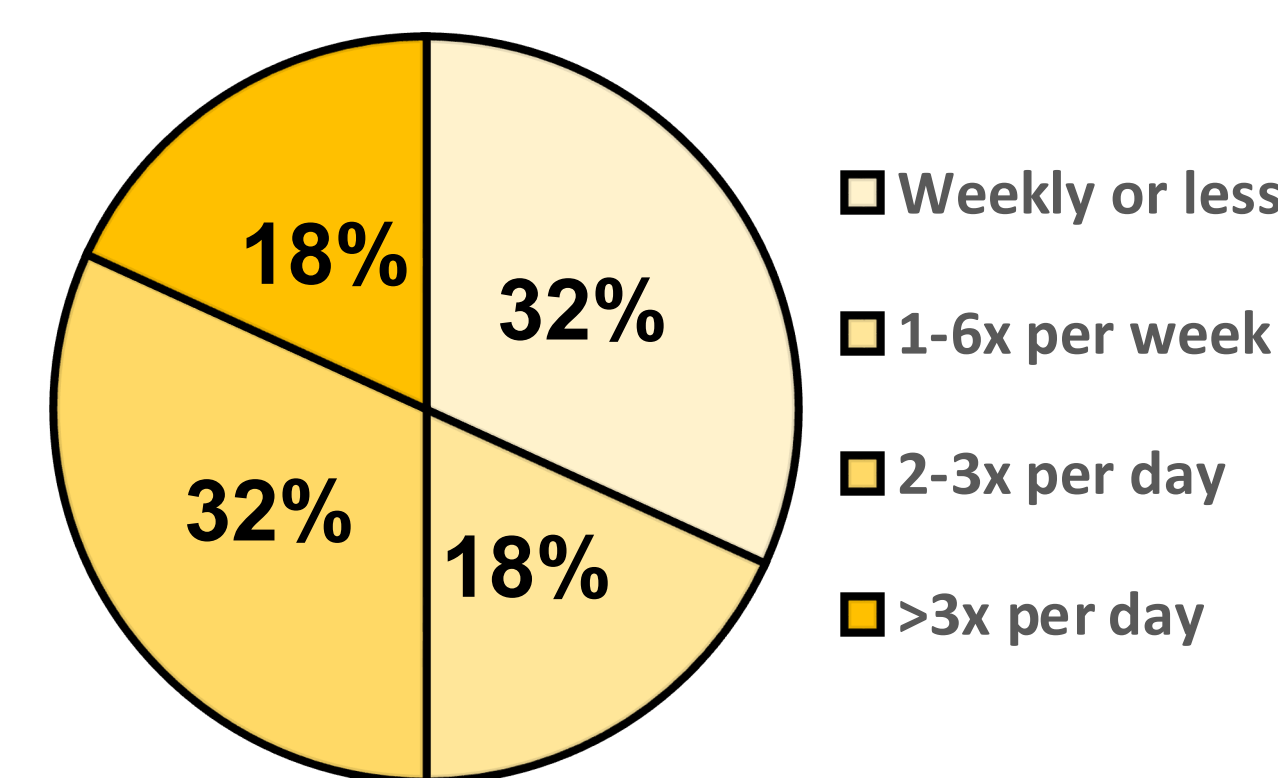


Figure 3: "How Troubled or bothered have you been by drug problems in the past 30 days?" Among those with past month Use

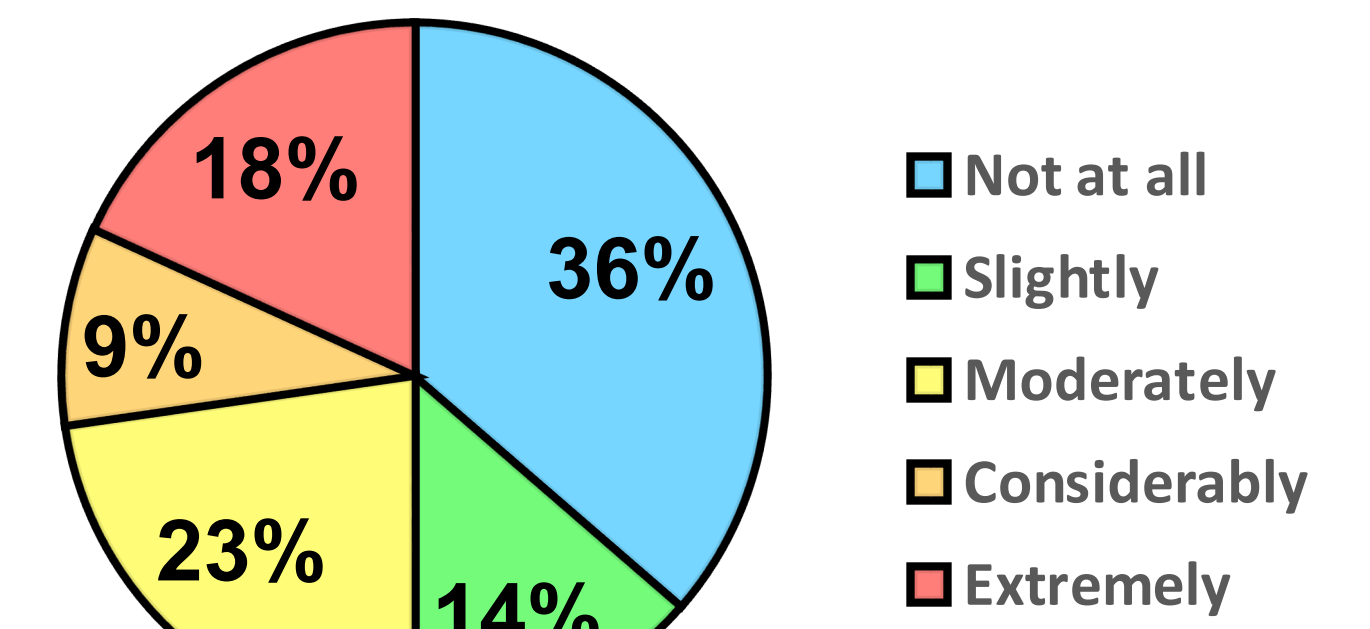


Figure 4: Factors Associated with Recent Substance Use

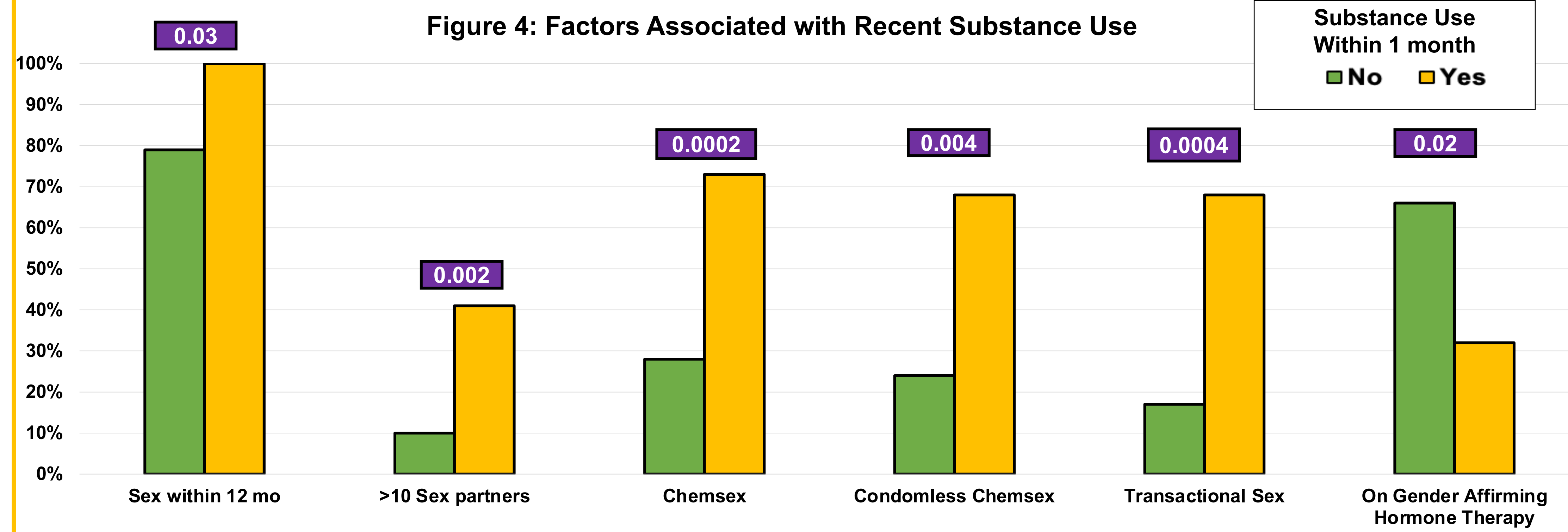


Figure 5: Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy Engagement Among TG-PWH with Recent Substance Use

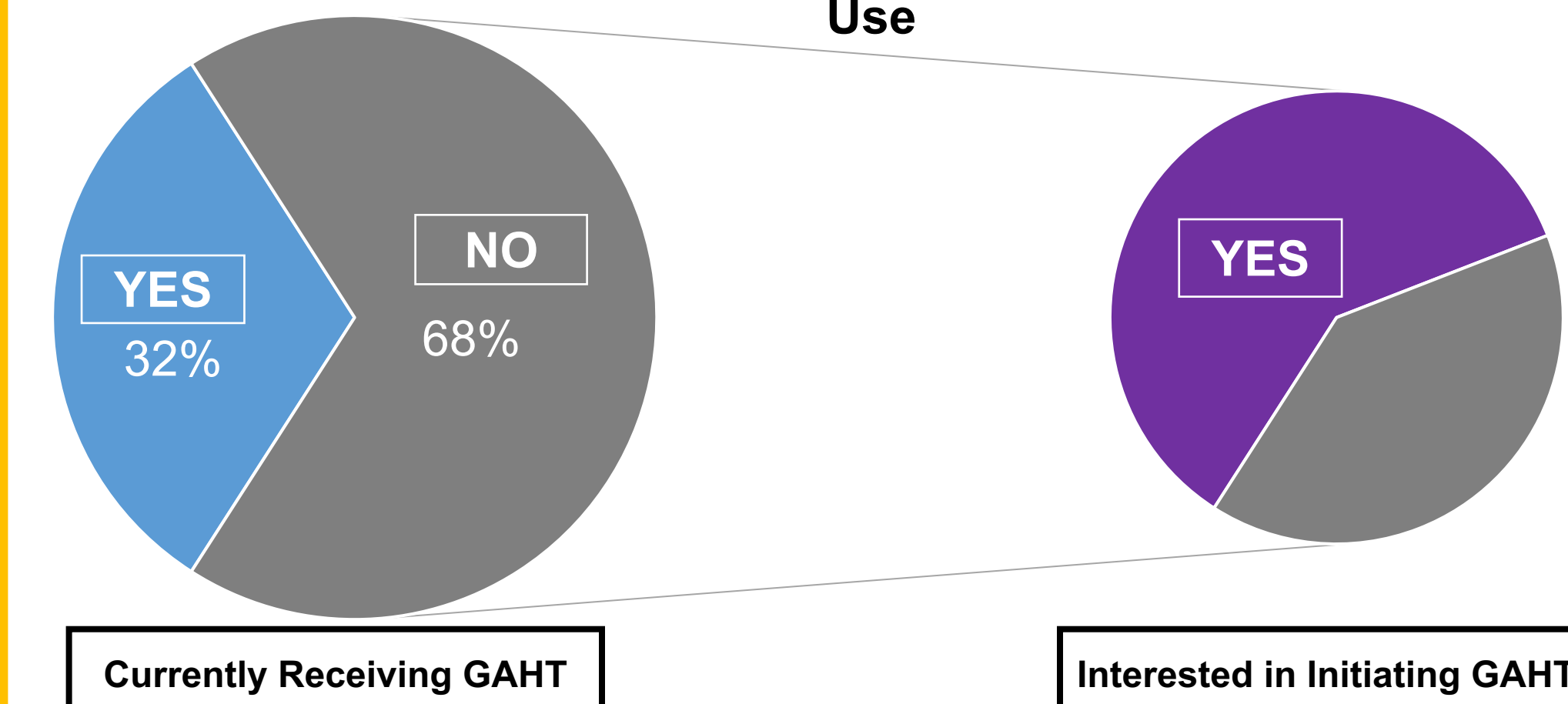
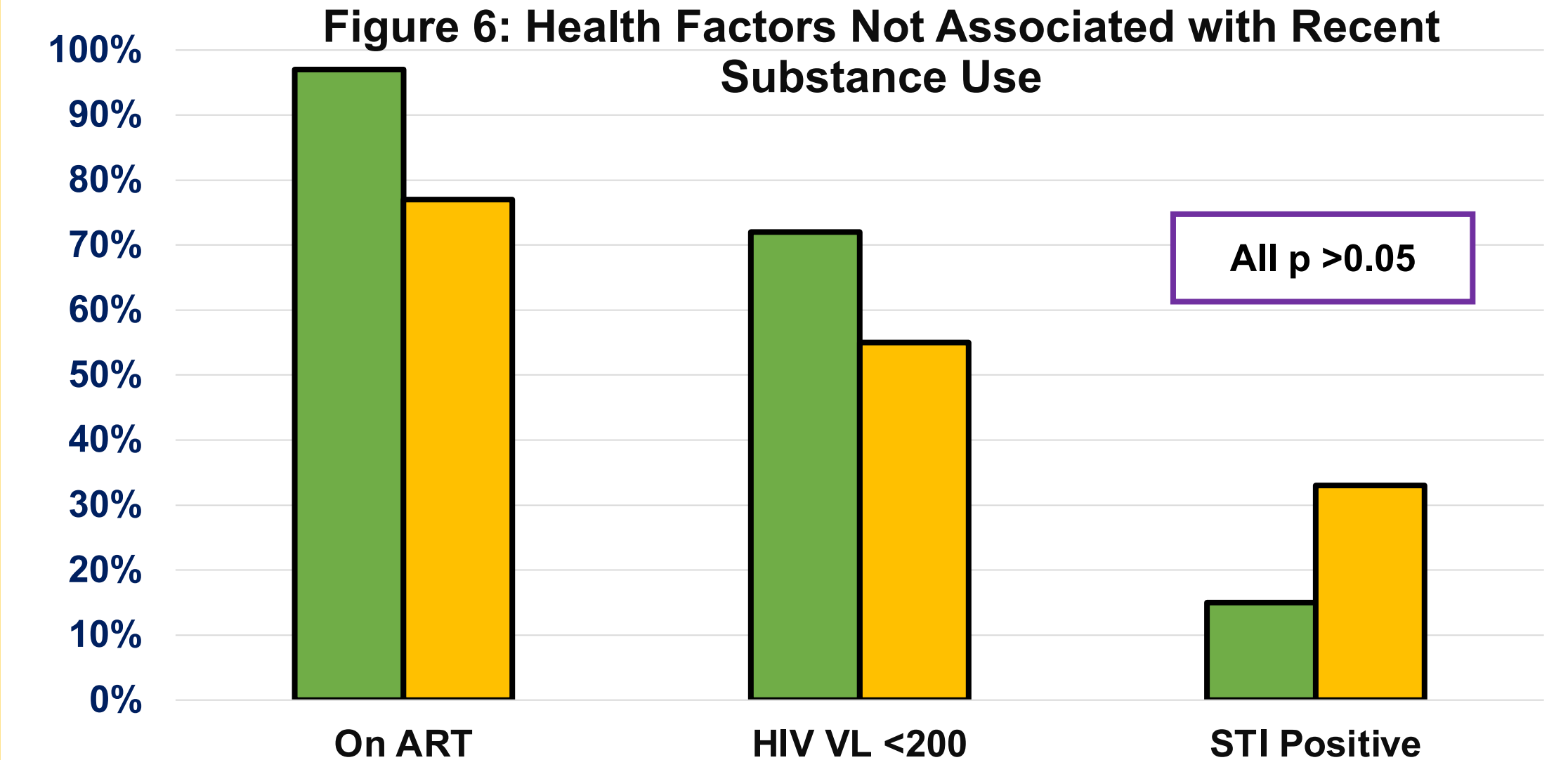


Figure 6: Health Factors Not Associated with Recent Substance Use



Conclusions

- Among TG-PWH, we found high rates of recent substance use associated with riskier sexual behavior than those without recent substance use. However, rates of STI positivity and HIV viral suppression were similarly suboptimal.
- These data reinforce the importance of addressing sexual health among TG-PWH, especially those with recent substance use.
- Given low rates of GAHT and high interest among individuals with recent substance use, providing access to GAHT may serve as an opportunity to further engage this population in treatment for substance use and associated infections.