

# ChemSex: knowledge and behaviours among Italian MSM

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PERSONE LGBT  
SIEROPOSITIVE  
ONLUS



# Disclosure



# What is Chemsex?

ChemSex is a common term used by gay men on sexual networking sites and smartphone Apps.

**ChemSex is NOT the same as recreational drug use.**

It is a specific form of recreational drug use.

ChemSex is defined by the use of any combination of drugs that includes three specific drugs (“chems”) before or during sex by MSM (Men who have Sex with Men).

These three drugs are meth, meph and G.

- Methamphetamine (crystal/crystal meth/Tina/meth).
- Mephedrone (meph/drone).
- GHB/GBL\* (G, Gina).

**56 DEAN STREET** ChemSex Support at 56 Dean Street GET SUPPORT CODE FILMS TIPS CONTACT BLOG FOR PROFESSIONALS

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The definition applies specifically to MSM who are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, and can be more likely to have a higher number of sexual partners. ChemSex is associated with some cultural drivers unique to gay men and communities that include psychological ideologies and new technologies (gay-sexual networking Apps) that can facilitate faster introduction to new partners, and to “Chems”. (See a longer description here)

Referring clients/patients to ChemSex support at 56 Dean Street

- Email website link leads in thread to your client/patient
- Email person's details (with their consent) to David Stuart, Substance Use Lead, 56 Dean Street
- Download/print Clinic flyer for your client/patient
- David Stuart, Substance Use Lead, Dean Street Walking programme curator

# Reasons for ChemSex are similar to using other drugs

- To feel more sexually free and to overcome intimacy issues.
- To overcome fear of rejection, sexual shame.
- To cope with stigma over HIV/hepatitis C (HCV).
- To overcome problems in the past, including sexual abuse.
- To overcome internalised homophobia.
- Wanting 'better' sex, that lasts longer.
- Loneliness.
- Wanting intimacy, to connect to others, to feel part of a community.
- Wanting sexual affirmation.
- Because "everyone's doing it".
- Because it is an online hook-up 'norm'.
- Peer pressure.



# However, side effects from ChemSex are more severe than other commonly used recreational drugs

ChemSex is associated with more extreme behaviour and risk:

- Extended sex for many hours.
- Sometimes multiple partners, multiple times.
- Extreme sexual disinhibition.
- Side effects include overdose (fatal), paranoia, psychosis and black-outs.
- Drug interactions can be serious and difficult to predict (i.e. between alcohol and GBL/GHB).
- Meth and meph are often injected (“slamming”).
- Serious short and long term impact includes chronic depression, anxiety, weight-loss, paranoia, psychosis.



# Our research: Background

The first European Chemsex Forum (London, 6-8 April) launched a brief survey throughout Europe to understand knowledge and behaviour about Chemsex among MSM. Plus onlus translated the survey and launched it on the internet to assess knowledge and behaviour related to chemsex among Italian MSMs.



# The survey

European  
ChemSex  
6-8 April 2016 Forum  
Congress Centre London

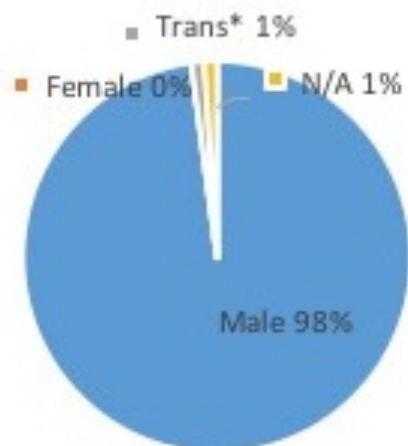
## ChemSex: parlati di sesso gay e droghe

Ti è mai capitato di fare sesso sotto effetto di droghe? Aiutaci a capire meglio! Partecipa a questo semplice e veloce questionario anonimo. Presenteremo i risultati al 1° European ChemSex Forum che si tiene a Londra il 6-8 aprile

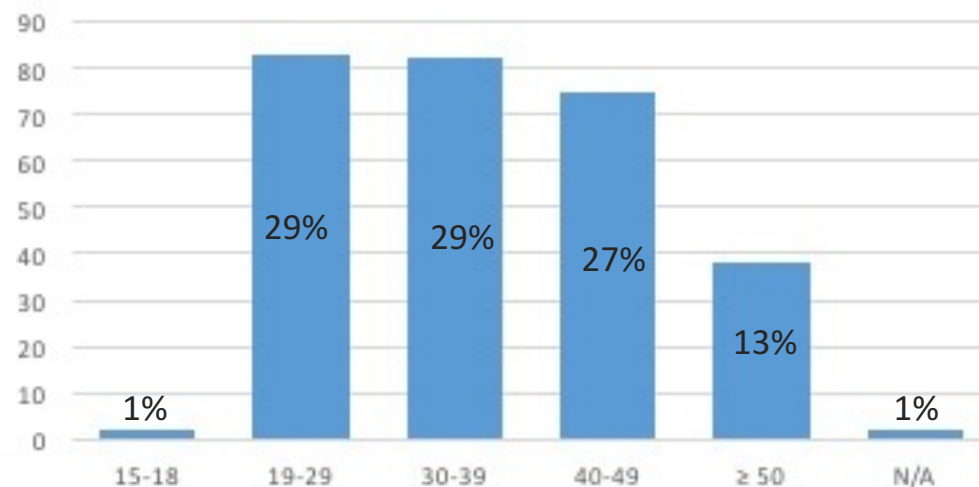
- online survey: promoted on Facebook, Twitter and mailing lists
- 23 February – 23 March, 2016
- 14 questions
- 312 respondents; 282 included in final analysis

# Characteristics of respondents

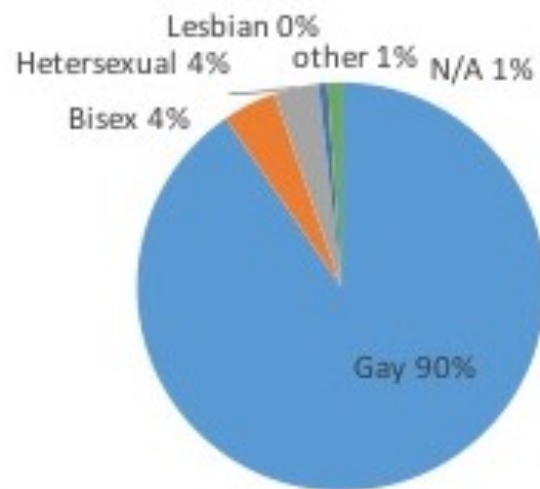
Sex



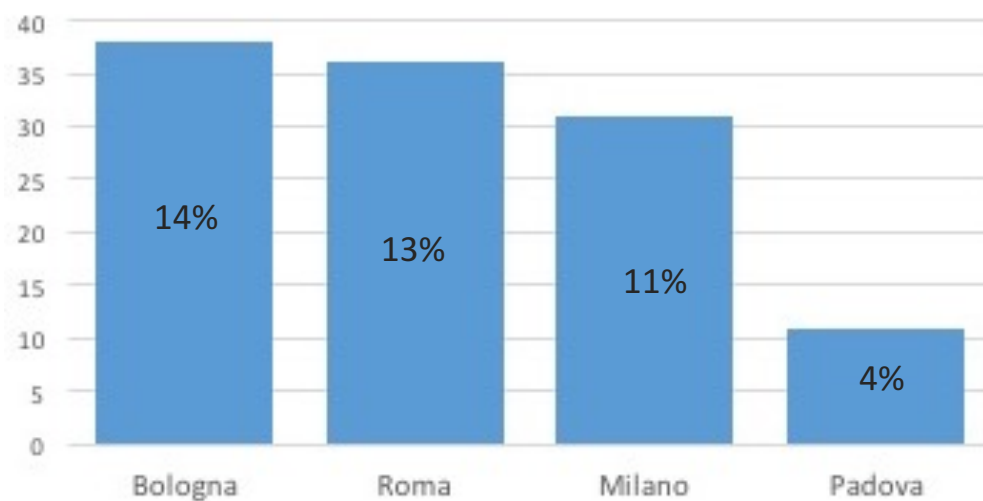
Age range



Sexual orientation



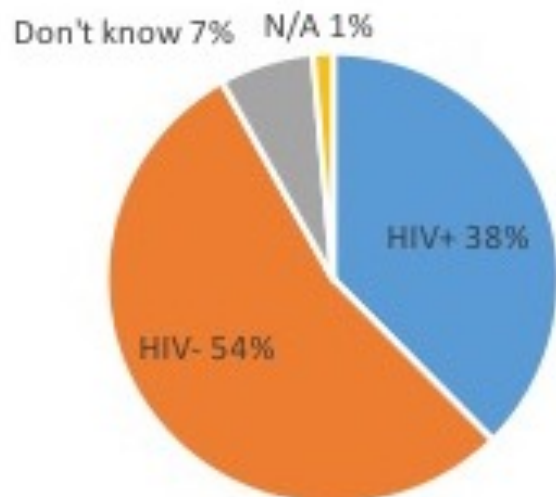
Where do you live?



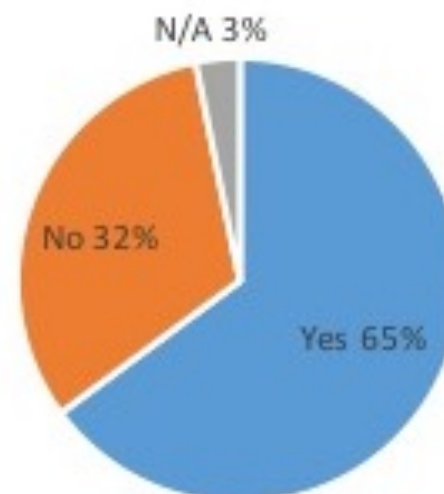


# HIV status of respondents

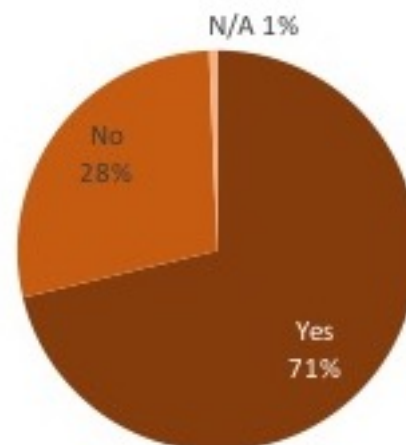
HIV status



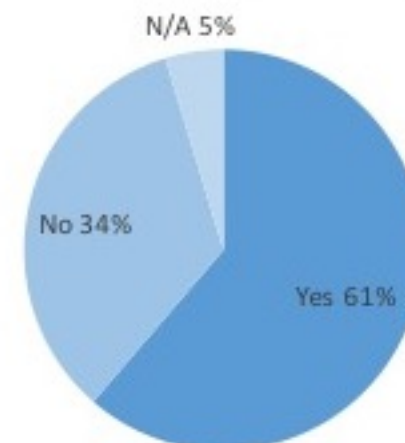
HIV test in the past year



HIV test in the past year among HIV-

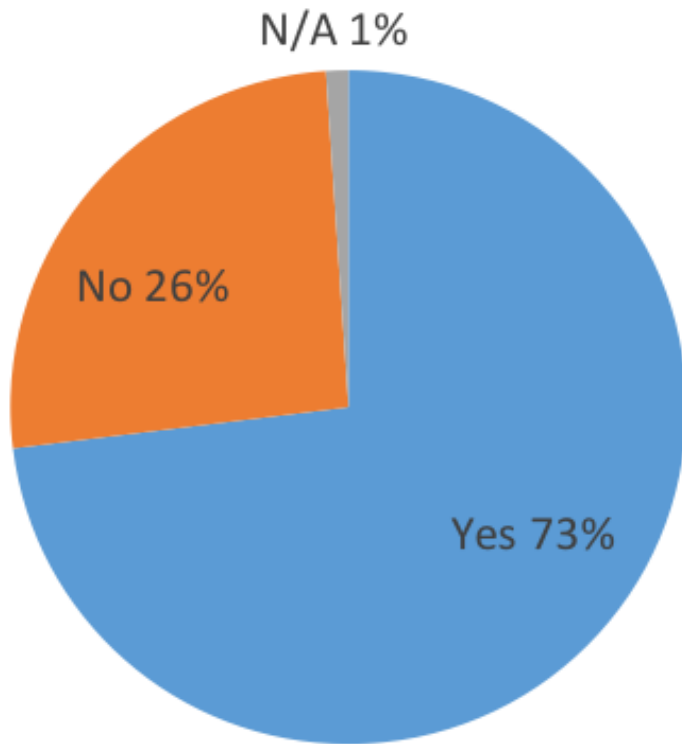


HIV test in the past year among HIV+

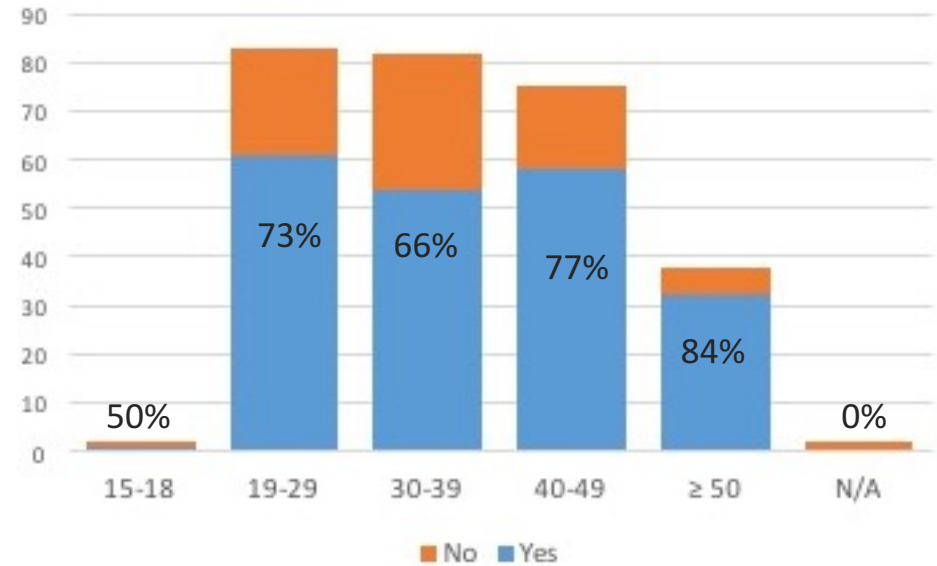


# Knowledge of ChemSex

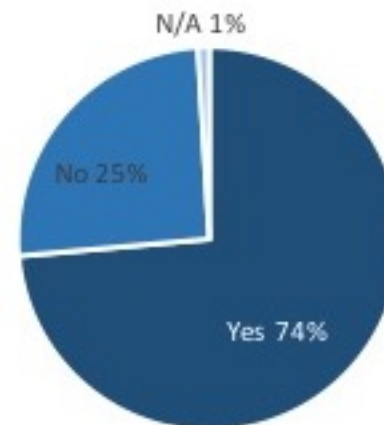
Do you know the word "chemsex"?



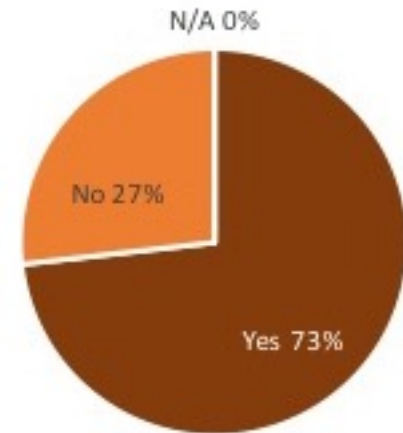
Knowledge per age



Knowledge HIV+

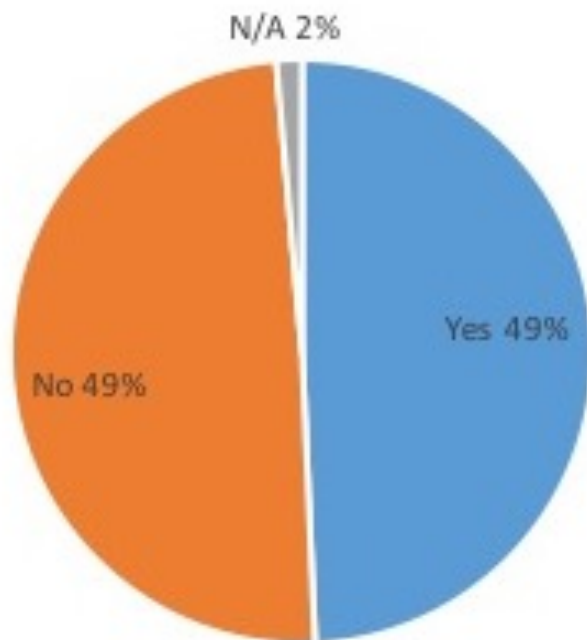


Knowledge HIV-

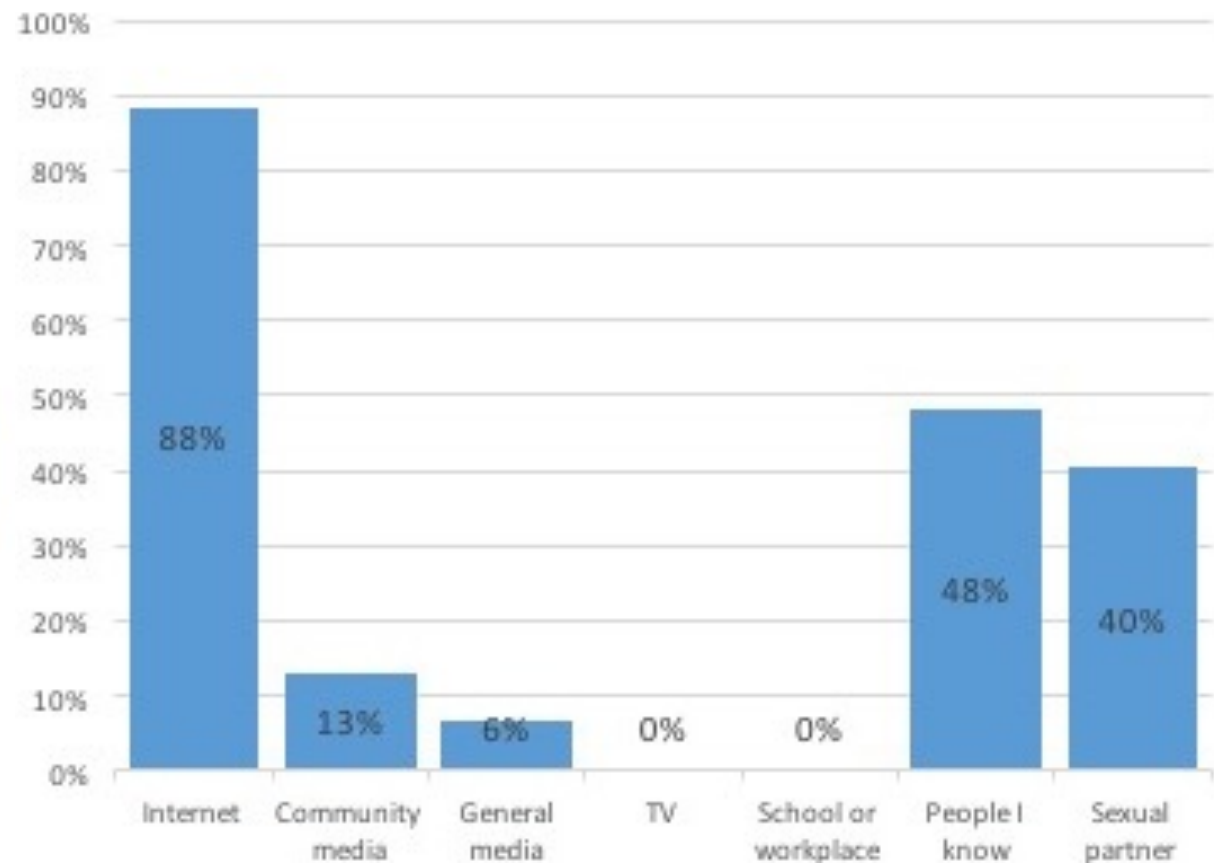


# Information about ChemSex

Could you find information on ChemSex?

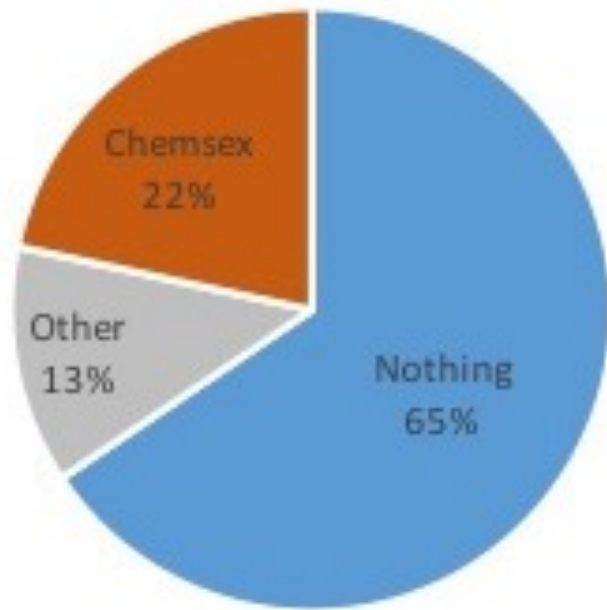


Sources of information

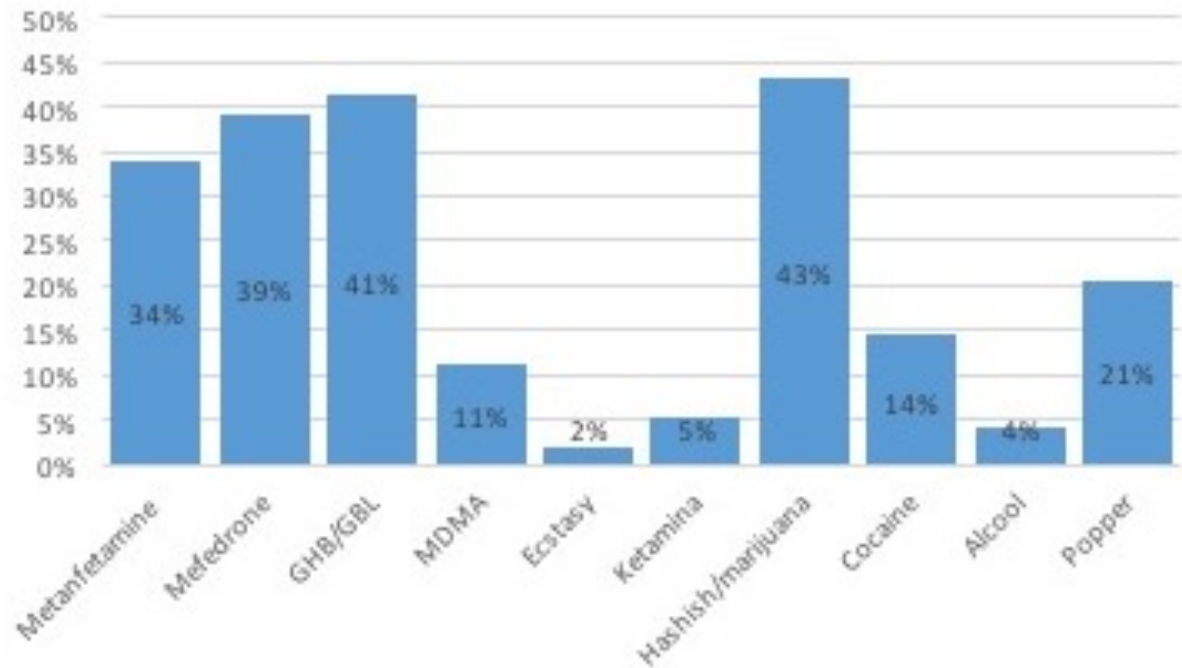


# ChemSex use

Did you use any drug during sex in the past year?

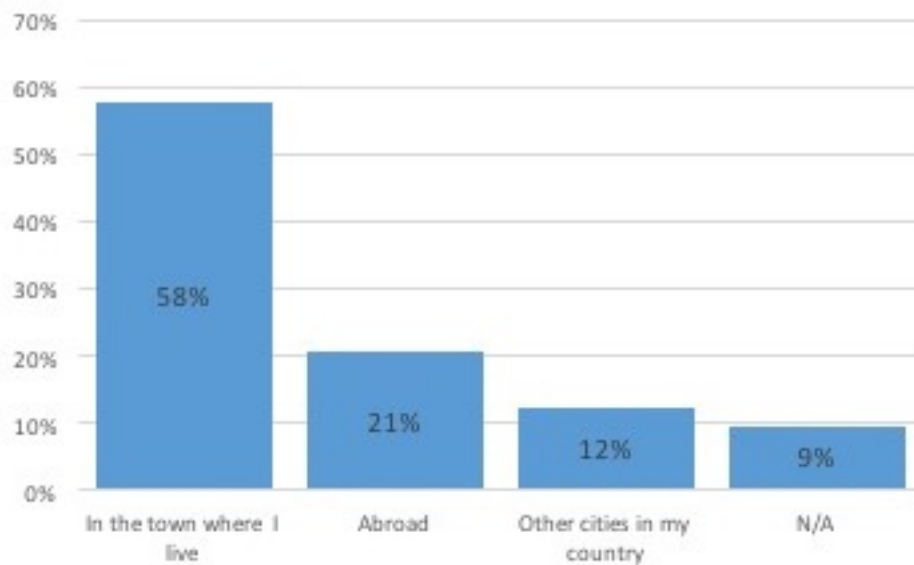


Which drug did you use?

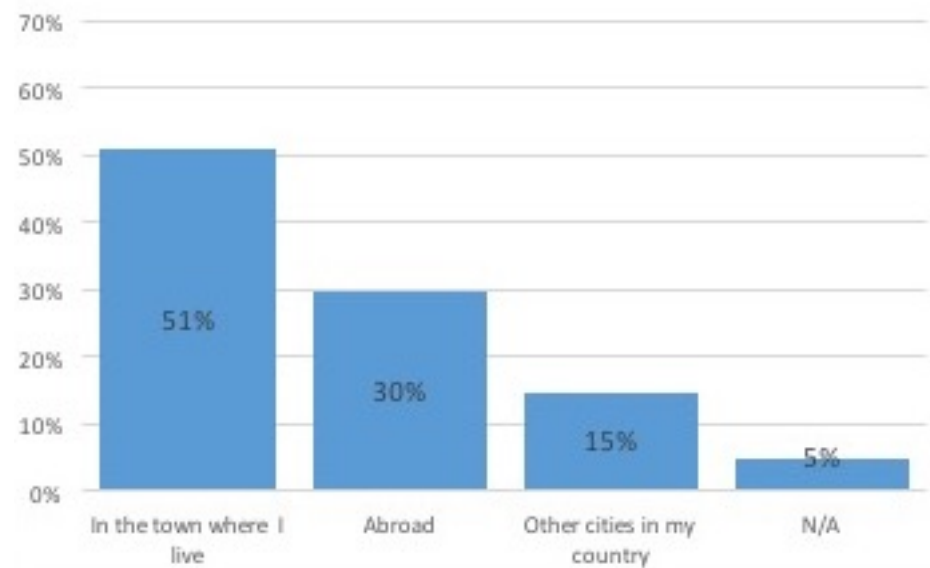


# ChemSex habits

Where did you use them? (Any drug)



Where did you use them? (Chemsex only)



# Conclusions

## Study limitations:

- Small sample
- Online recruitment
- Geographical limits
- Few demographic data

## Despite these limitations:

- Many MSM in Italy know about Chemsex
- A significant proportion of MSM in Italy use Chemsex
- Little is known about health consequences of Chemsex
- There is a big need for harm reduction interventions and more information



# Thank you for your attention



Special thanks to Sandro Mattioli,  
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Paolo Gorgoni, Stefano Pieralli  
and all our fabulous Plus volunteers!