

P013

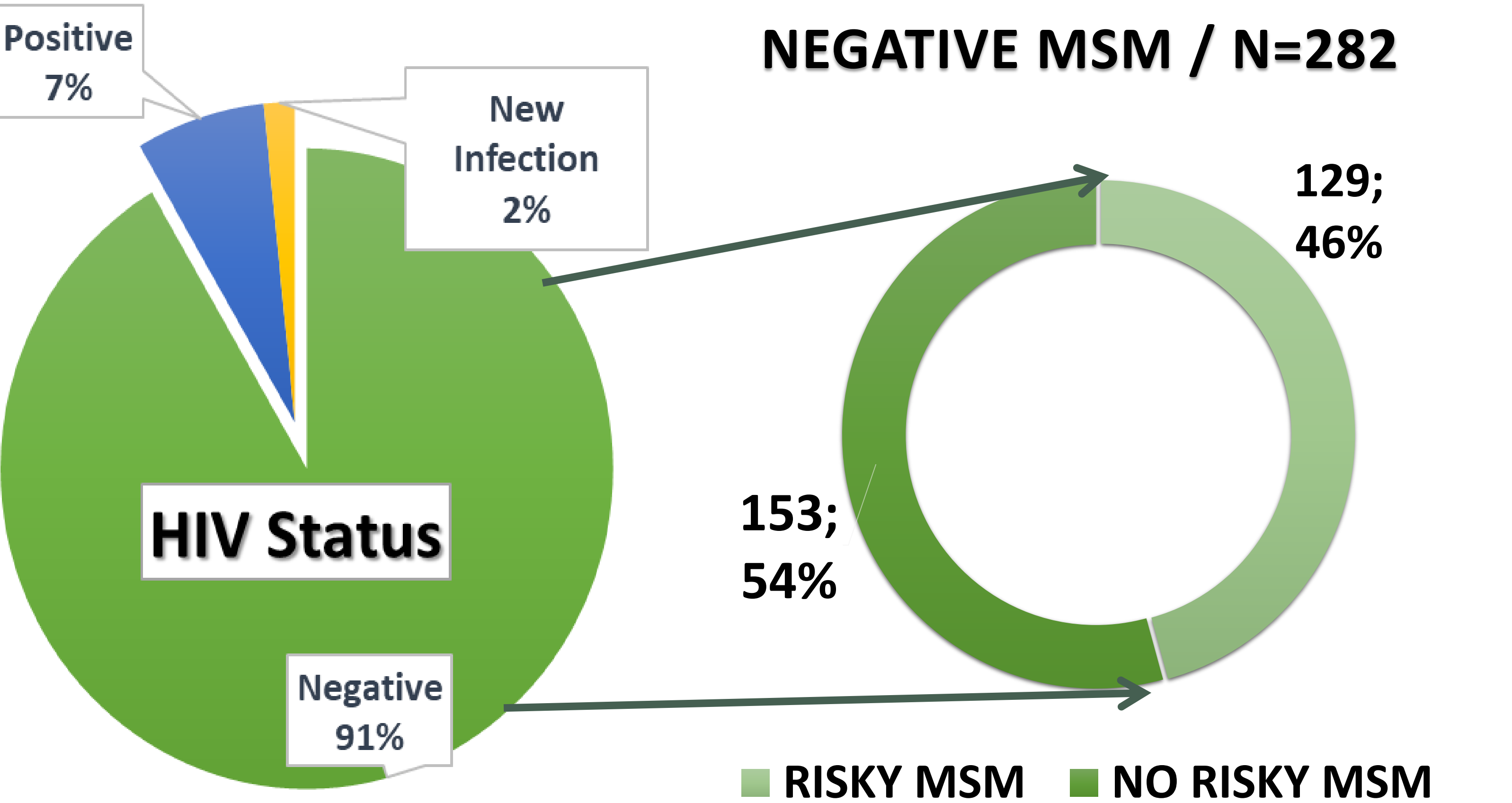
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Background

The benefits of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in HIV prevention are well established. Elimination of HIV transmission could be achieved through a combination of preventive strategies taking into consideration specific population characteristics and the potential for high population coverage. We investigated demographic, behavioral, psychosocial and network characteristics of MSM at ongoing high risk for acquiring HIV infection who were willing to take PrEP.

Materials and Methods

Sophocles-P4G, a pilot PrEP study in Athens, Greece, was designed to identify, within MSM networks, the population at highest risk for HIV, based on specified criteria, who were eligible to be treated with PrEP. It was based on recruitment through Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) and facilitated by a community organization (Positive Voice – Ath Checkpoint). The program included rapid HIV testing and interview with a structured questionnaire.



Results

Between 2016-2018, of the 308 MSM enrolled, 21 were already known to be HIV (+) seeds, 5 were newly HIV diagnosed and 282 were confirmed to be HIV-negative. The 282 MSM at risk had a mean (SD) age of 28.3 (8.2) years, a mean (SD) of 15.7 (2.5) years of education;54 (19.4%) were unemployed; 40 (14.2%) identified as bisexual; 211(74.82%) reported having tested for HIV during the previous year; 71 (25.36%) had a sexually transmitted infection (STI) during the previous year. The median (25th,75th) size in their sexual network was 10 (3,30) people; 165 (58.5%) reported using drugs associated with chemsex and 84 (31.2%) reported symptoms of depression.

PrEP enrollment criteria were met by 129/282 (41.9%) MSM. Specifically, compared to the low-risk MSM, they reported more frequent condomless sex (66.3% vs 25%; p=0.005), higher participation in group sex (90.7% vs 41.2%; p<0.001), higher median MSM network size (25th, 75th) (30 (10, 50) vs 3 (1,9) p<0.001), greater use of drugs associated with chemsex (81.4% vs 39.2%; p<0.001), while no difference was observed in symptoms of depression. This high-risk subgroup was older (mean age [SD] 32.5 [9.2] vs 25.8 [5.7] years; p<0.001) and had a higher incidence of STIs over the previous year (46.1% vs 7.9%; p<0.001). 107 out of 129 of them initiated PrEP (82.9%).

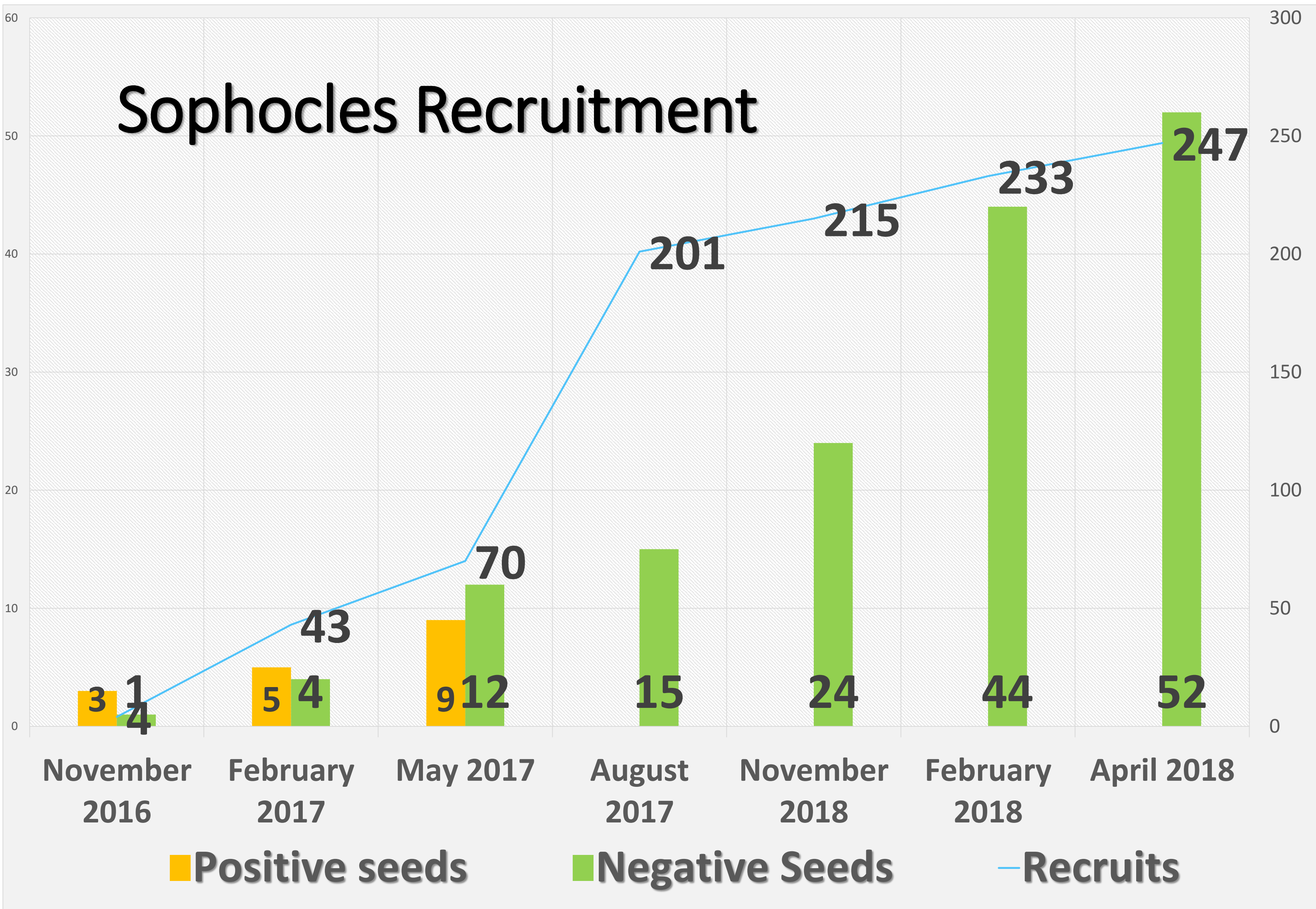


Image 4: Timetable of Sophocles Recruitment in correspondence with negative & positive seeds

Conclusions

RDS recruitment of MSM eligible for PrEP is a promising enrollment strategy to increase PrEP participation and population coverage. The large number of MSM reporting chemsex and high risk sexual behaviors within large networks along with the large number of STIs highlight the population who could benefit from PrEP.

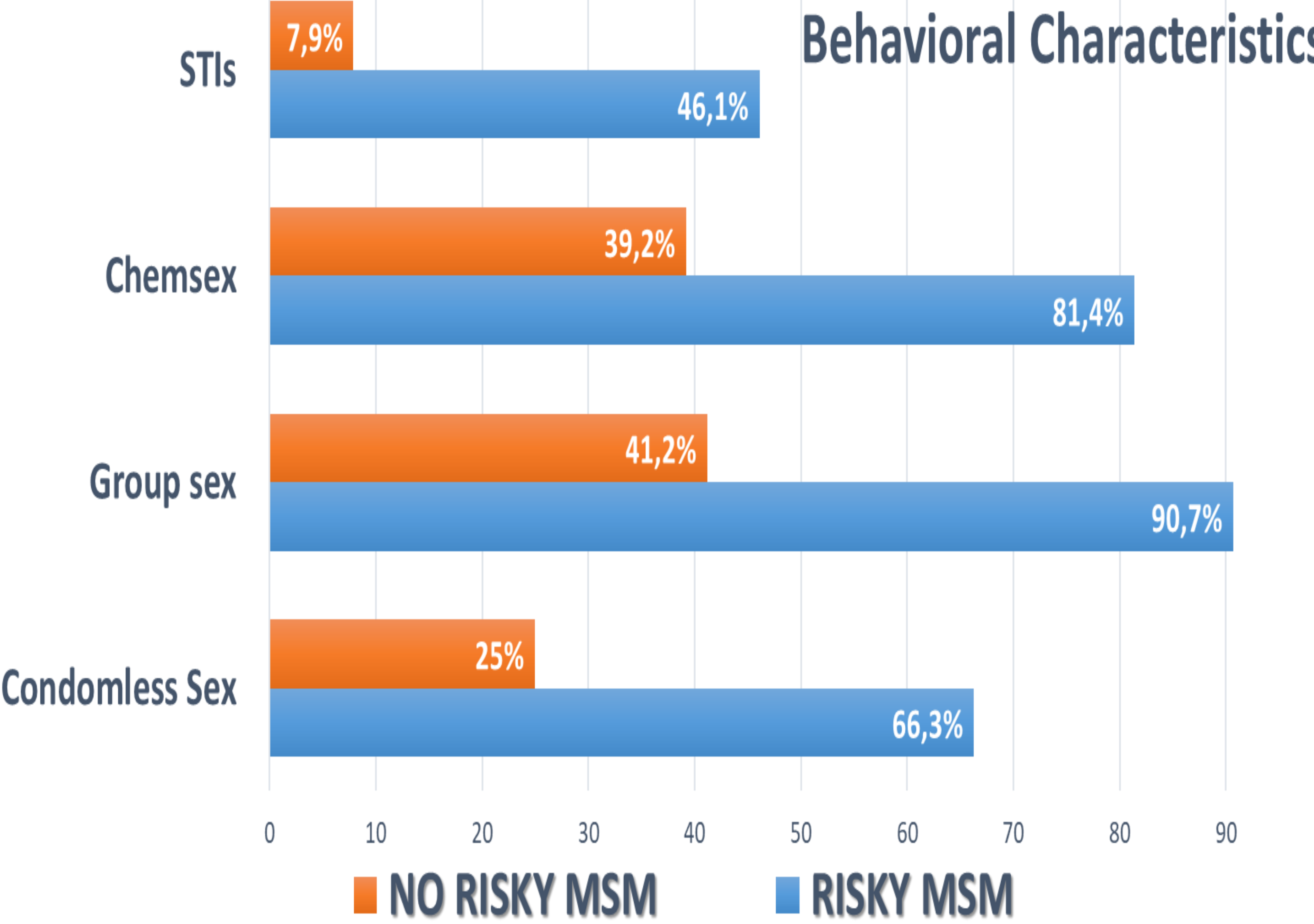


Image 3: Comparison of behavioral characteristics between low-risk & high-risk MSM