

# Grindr© Use by Men Who Have Sex with Men is Associated with High Rates of Bacterial Sexually Transmitted Infections

Samuel Owen<sup>1</sup>, Thomas Kurka BSc BMBS<sup>2</sup>, Daniel Richardson FRCP<sup>1,2</sup>

1. Brighton and Sussex Medical School, 2. Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust

## INTRODUCTION

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are increasing in men who have sex with men (MSM).

This is multifactorial, including optimised treatment for HIV, recreational drug use, use of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis but also how MSM meet their sexual partners.

Mobile phone 'apps' (geosocial mobile phone applications) such as Grindr©, Tinder, Hornet or Scruff are becoming a more frequent and convenient way to meet sexual partners and may be one of the reasons why sexually transmitted infections are increasing significantly in MSM.<sup>1</sup>

## METHODS

As part of an online National student pride service evaluation project, we asked pride participants about their mobile dating app use in the preceding month and self-reported STI diagnoses. The data was analysed using SPSS.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

1,1186 MSM were recruited over a 3-month period (December 2015 – February 2016). The median age of participants was 24 years, with a range of 18-89. Most MSM (86.5%) self-identified as gay, 9.1% as bisexual and 4.4% as other. More than three-quarters (77.4%) self-identified as HIV-negative, almost two in five (3.5%) as HIV-positive, three in ten (3.2%) did not know their HIV status and 15.9% had never been tested before.



COURTESY: GR

## RESULTS

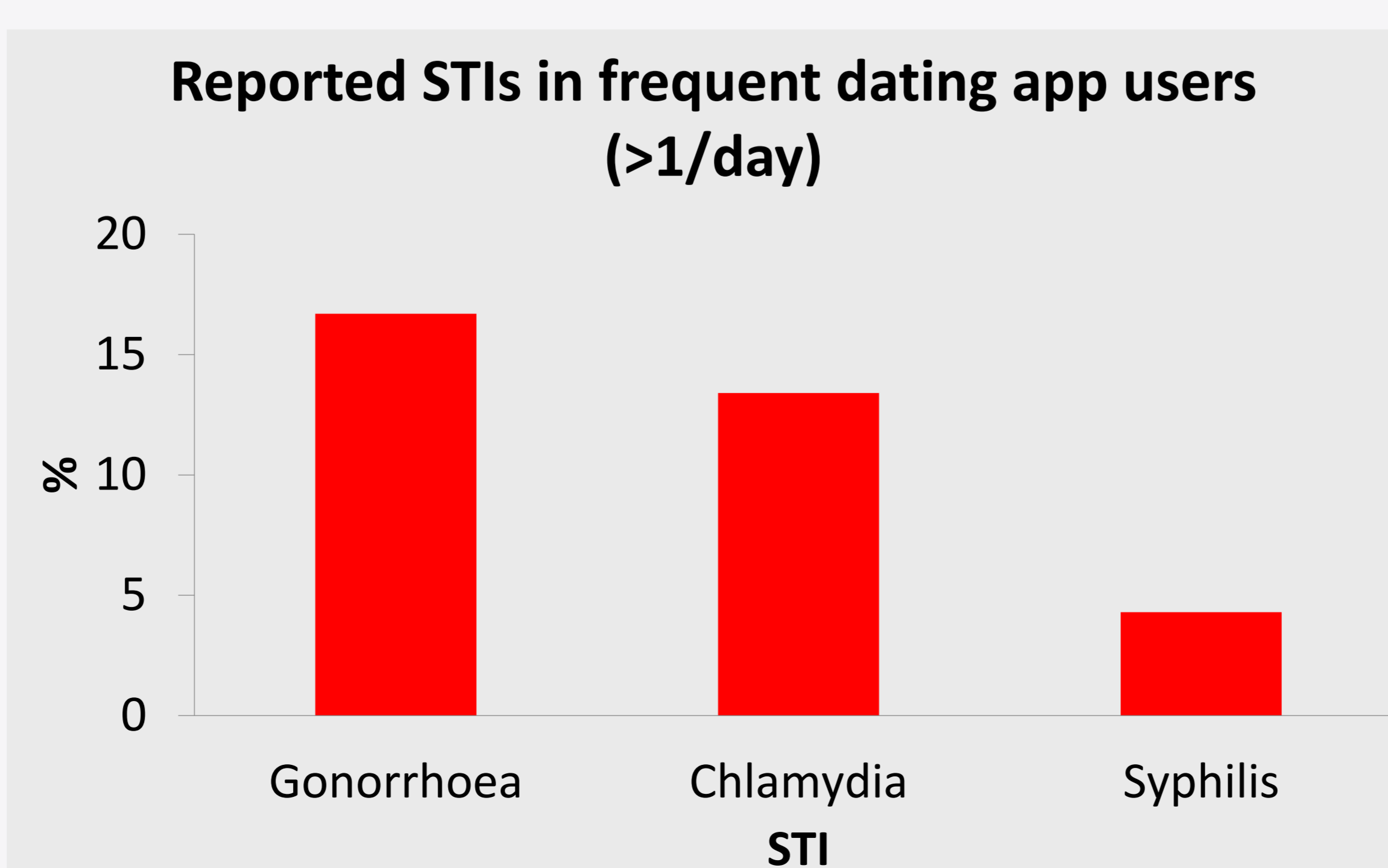
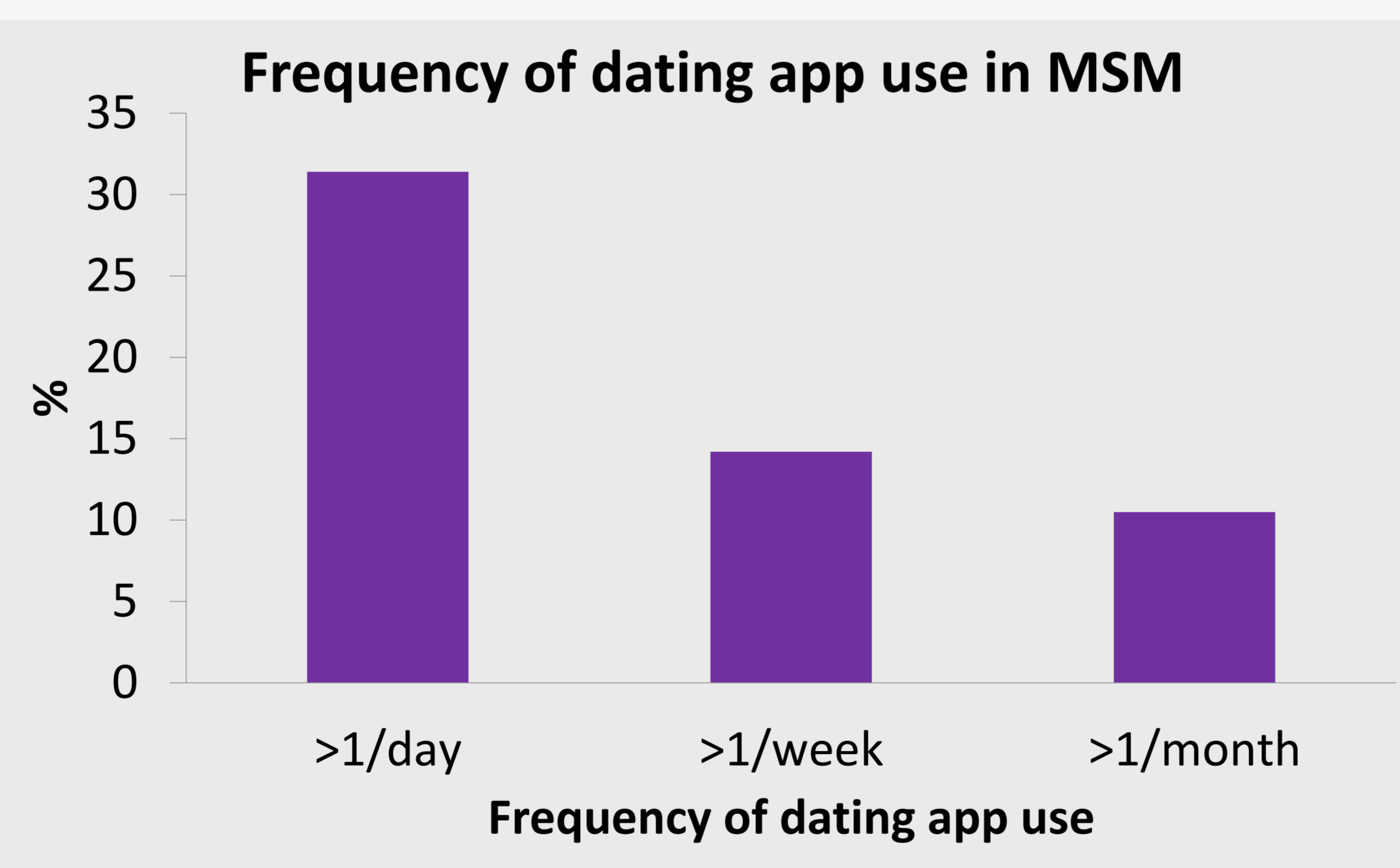
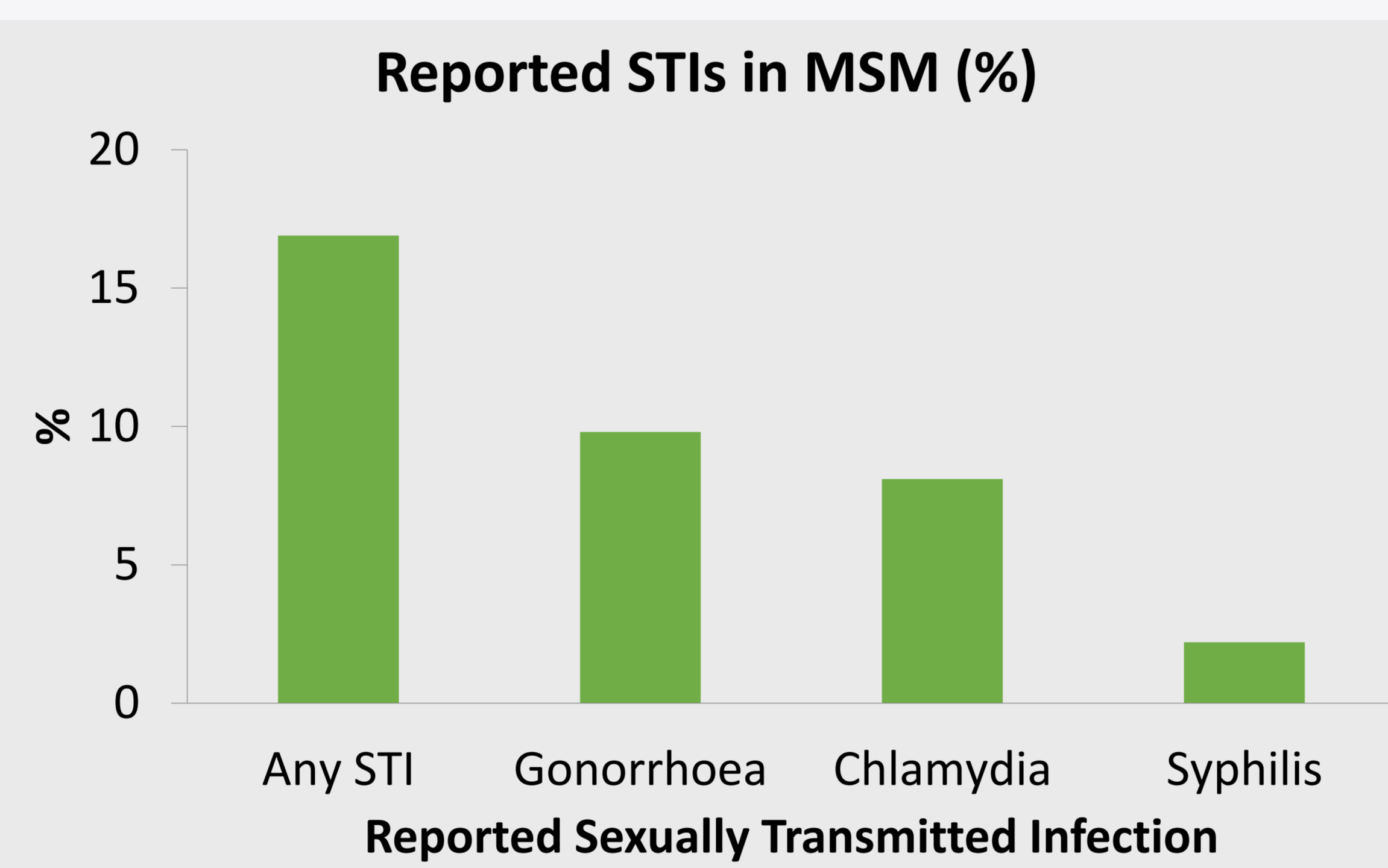
Overall, 200/1186 (16.9%) of respondents reported a bacterial STI within the past 12 months:

- **116/1186 (9.8%) gonorrhoea**
- **96/1186 (8.1%) chlamydia**
- **26/1186 (2.2%) syphilis**

Reported use of Grindr© was:

- **372/1186 (31.4%) more than once/day**
- **168/1186 (14.2%) more than once/week**
- **124/1186 (10.5%) more than once/month**

Of those who used Grindr© more than once per day in the past 12 months, 62/372 (16.7%) reported having had gonorrhoea, 50/372 (3.4%) chlamydia and 16/372 (4.3%) syphilis. 80/116 (70.0%), 64/96 (67%) and 16/26 (62%) MSM who reported having had gonorrhoea, chlamydia and syphilis in the past 12 months, respectively, reported the use Grindr© of least once a month. MSM were significantly more likely to report having gonorrhoea and chlamydia (but not syphilis) in the past 12 months using Grindr© at least once per month compared to never using Grindr© at all (t-test = 2.79; p = 0.003), (t-test = 2.20; p = 0.028), (t-test = 0.58; p = 0.565).



## DISCUSSION

MSM frequently used dating apps on their mobile phones to meet other MSM. There were high rates of reported STIs in this population. MSM who frequently used mobile phone dating apps were more likely to report sexually transmitted infections. To help reduce ongoing STI transmission in MSM, public health needs to understand and utilise mobile phone dating apps for promotion of evidence based interventions.

## REFERENCES

1. Beymer MR, Weiss RE, Bolan RK, Rudy ET, Bourque LB, Rodriguez JP, et al. Sex on demand: geosocial networking phone apps and risk of sexually transmitted infections among a cross-sectional sample of men who have sex with men in Los Angeles County. *Sex Transm Infect* 2014 Nov; 90(7):567-572.