

General practice patients treated for substance use problems. A cross-national surveillance study

Nicole Boffin, Jerome Antoine, Viviane Van Casteren.
OD Public Health and Surveillance, Health Services Research



Aims

To describe profile and relative magnitude of general practice population receiving substance use treatment (SUT)



Design-Setting-Participants

Design

Cross-national observational study

Setting

**Belgian Network of Sentinel General Practices
(SGP)**

Participants

**All patients 18-64 years receiving SUT at first GP
contact from mid-May to mid-Oct 2013 +
7-month follow-up data**



The Belgian network of SGP

Representative network of ± 150 GP practices reporting structured clinical care data during 1 year-periods

Developed late 70' to monitor health of population, as

- Most health problems are seen in primary care, also mental health & (chronic) substance use**
- GPs: first source of public health information, next to general population**



Study's rationale

Substance use problems is health policy priority, but...

- **Non-detection of alcohol abuse by GPs**

- **only patients in treatment for SUT**

- **Regional differences in Belgian health affairs, e.g.**

- Opiate Substitution Therapy (OST)**

- **adjusting Flanders versus Wallonia/Brussels**

Pilot on top of regular SGP surveillance to examine feasibility of continuous surveillance

Main measurements 1)

Type of substance use

1. Alcohol alone (not 2-4)
2. Prescription drugs (not 3-4), i.e. hypnotics/sedatives or tranquillizers, opioid analgesics
3. Cannabis, stimulants, hallucinogens, cocaine,... (not 4)
4. Heroin or methadone

Main measurements 2)

Treatment status at follow-up (7 months)

1. Drop-out from study/treatment, deceased

2. Discontinued GP treatment, i.e. no GP contact in past 4 weeks

(3-5) Continued GP care, i.e. GP contact in past 4 weeks

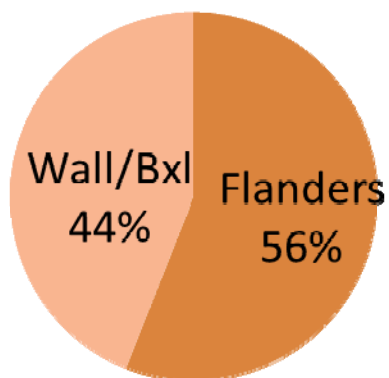
3. Usual GP care, SUT by non-GP

4. Cont'd SUT by GP & non-GP

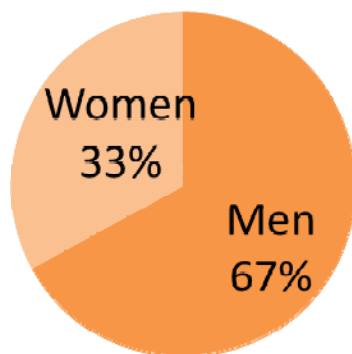
5. Cont'd SUT by GP alone

Population characteristics (N=479)

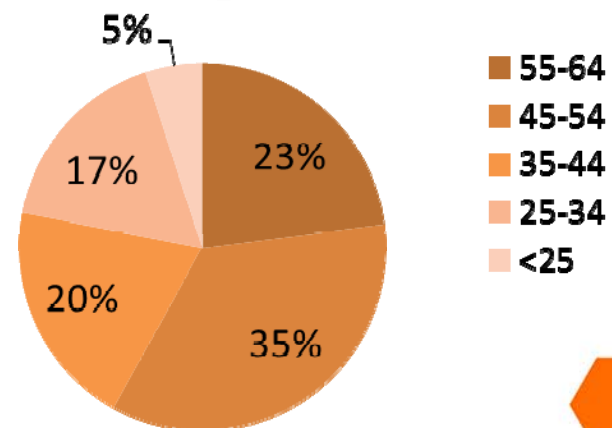
Region



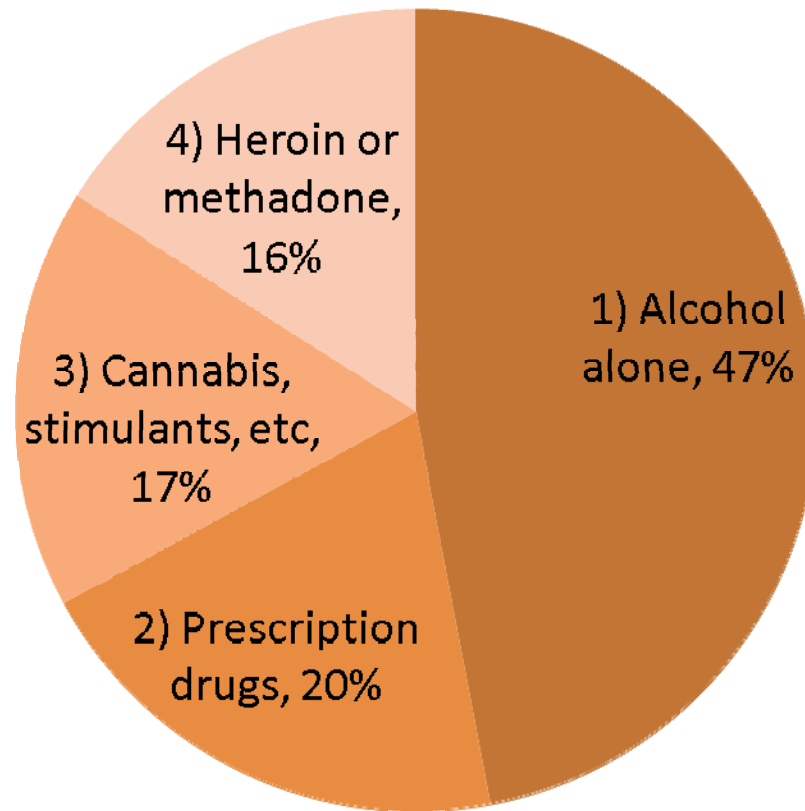
Gender



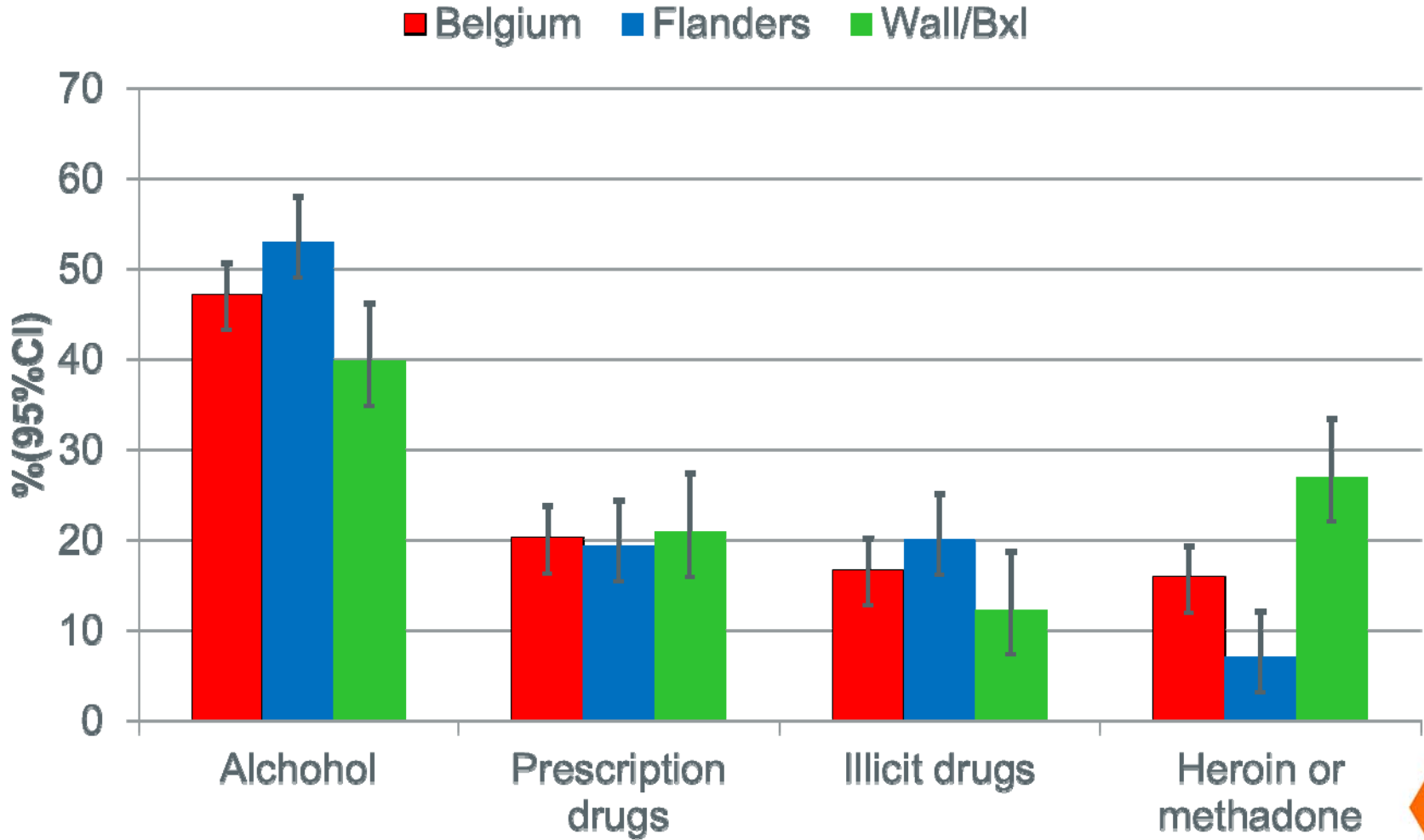
Age



Type of substance use

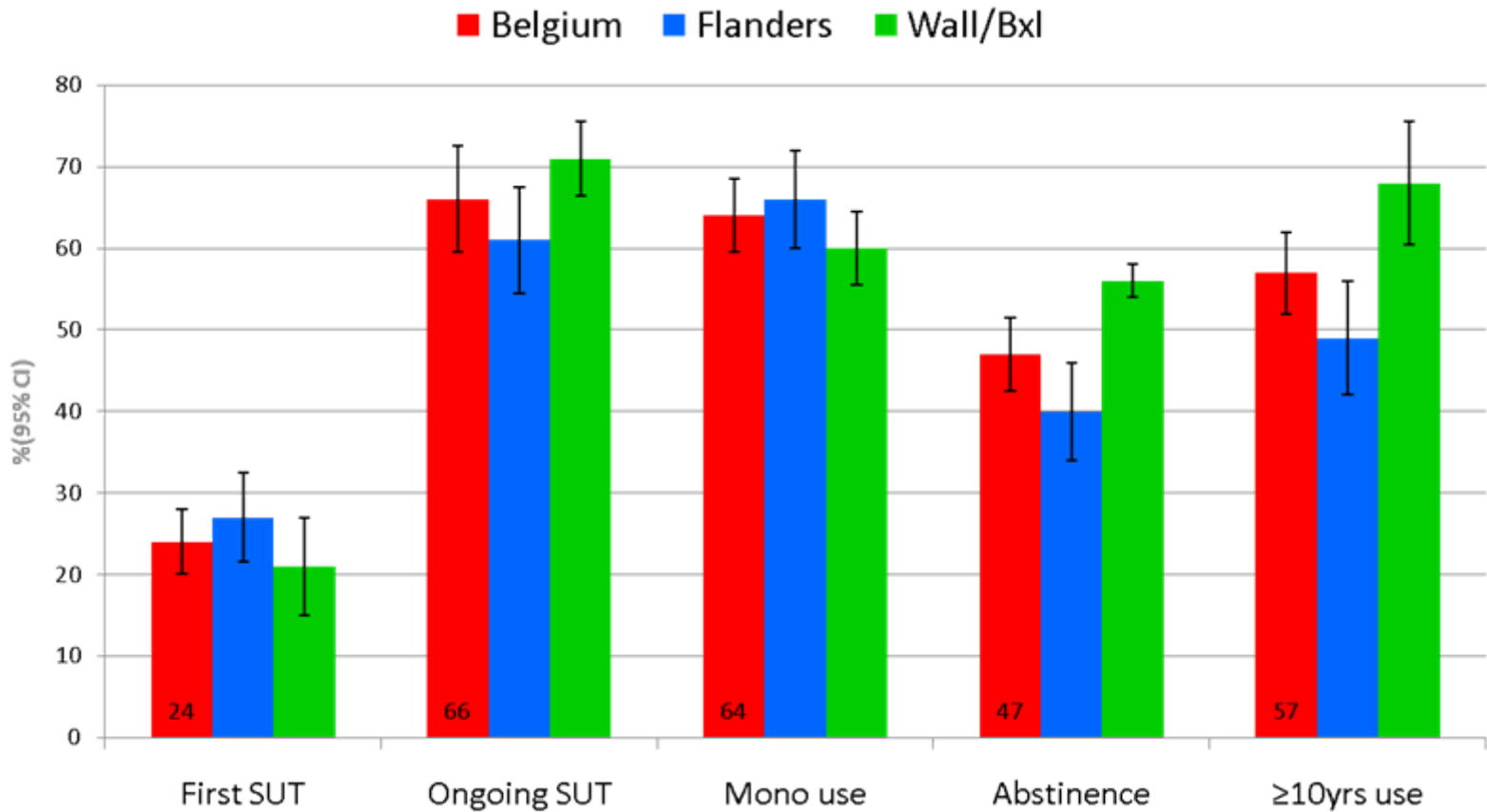


Type of substance use

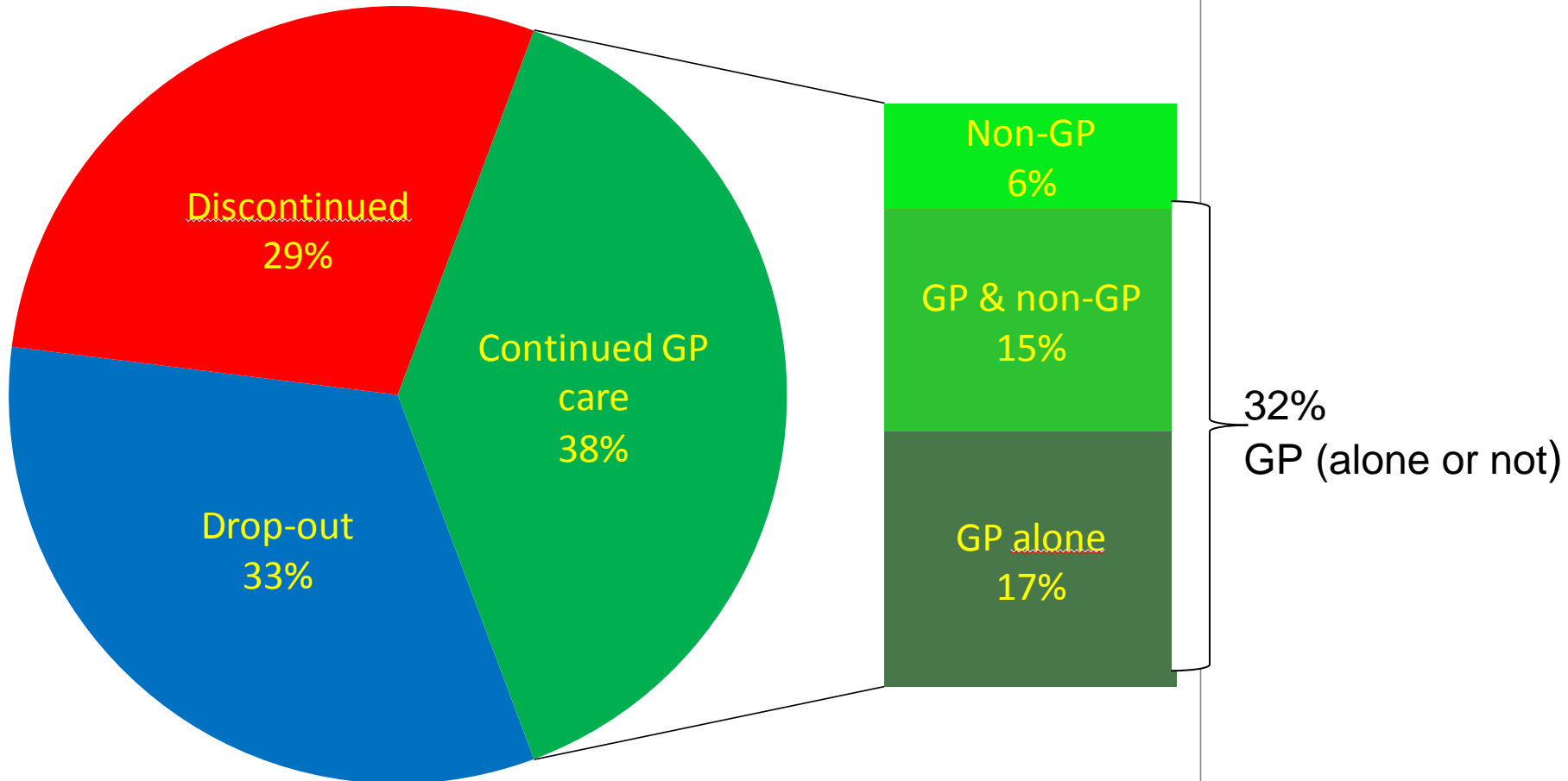




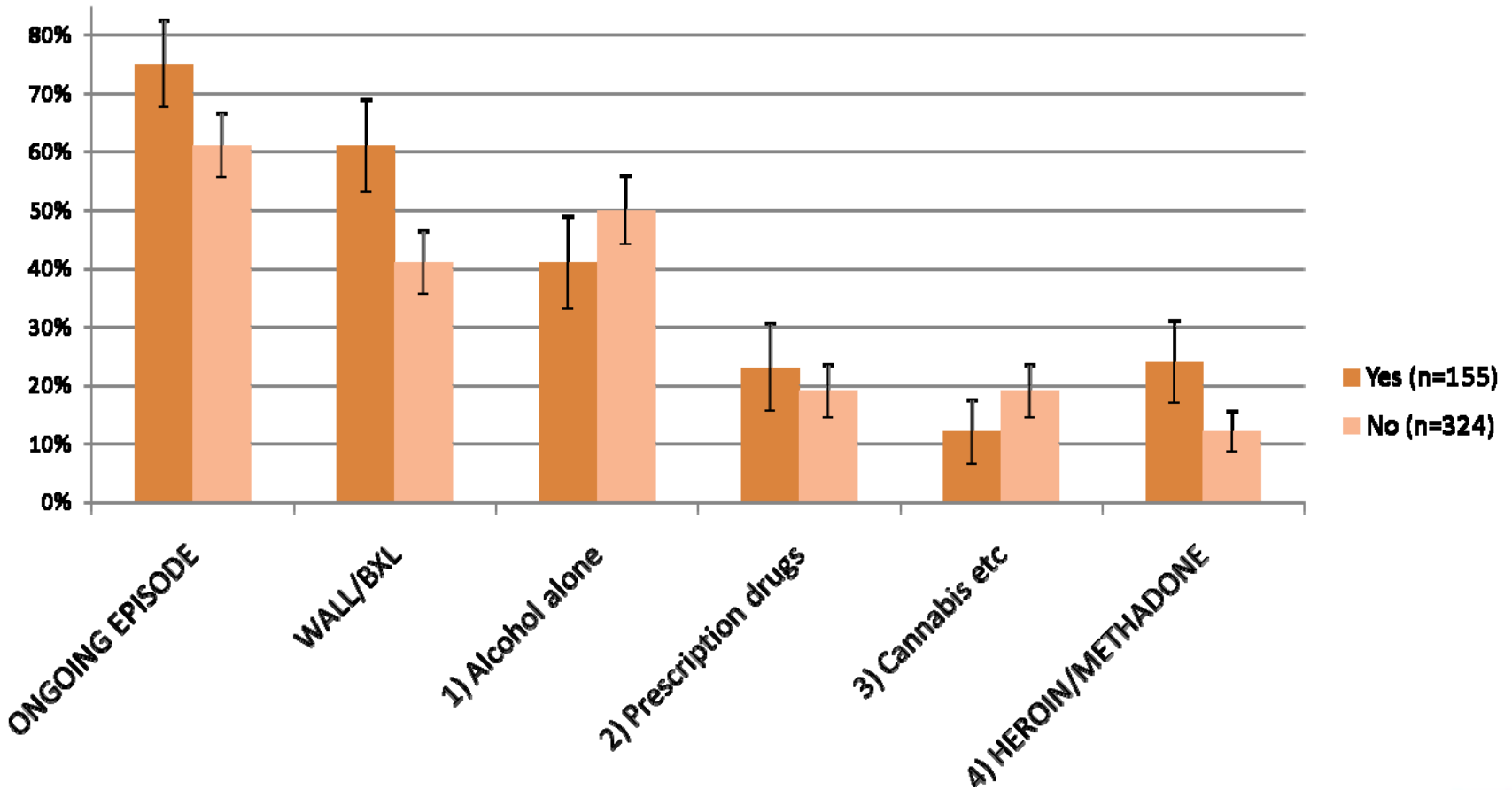
Substance use characteristics



Treatment status at follow-up



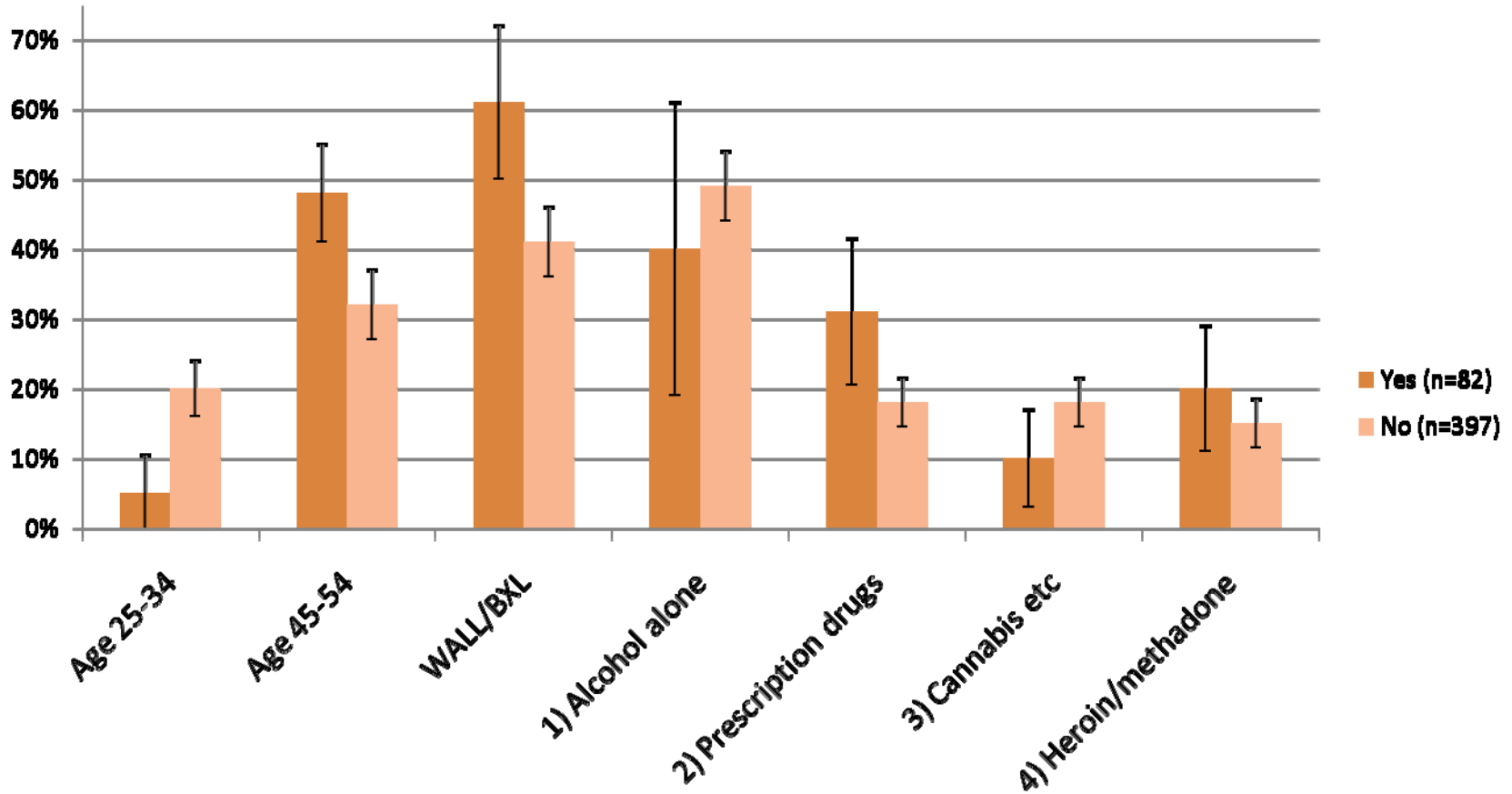
Continued SUT by GP



Continued SUT by GP

Determinants Belgian population	
	OR(95%CI)*
Type of substance use	
Alcohol alone	ref
Prescription drugs	1.40(0.81-2.42)
Illicit drugs	0.85(0.47-1.51)
Heroin or methadone	1.59(0.80-3.16)
Region Wall-Bxl (vs Flanders)	1.97(1.16-3.34)
* Adjusted for age (ns), gender (ns) and ongoing vs new treatment episode (ns)	

Continued SUT by GP alone



Continued SUT by GP alone

Determinants Flanders population (no model for Wall/Bxl)	
	OR(95%CI)*
Type of substance use	
Alcohol alone	ref
Prescription drugs	4.04(1.65-9.94)
Illicit drugs	0.78(0.15-4.10)
Heroin or methadone	6.64(1.76-25.06)
* Adjusted for age (ns) and gender	



Discussion

Main findings

- Majority of general practice patients with SUT have (chronic) problems of alcohol alone
- 1/3 patients cont'd SUT by GP, 1/5 by GP only

Implications

- Adjust for large regional differences in SUT data
- Include GPs in Treatment Demand Indicator (TDI) register?
- Surveillance by SGP will continue



Declaration

No conflicts of interests