

# "The PrEP You Want": A survey of online shopping and border crossing for HIV prophylaxis medications

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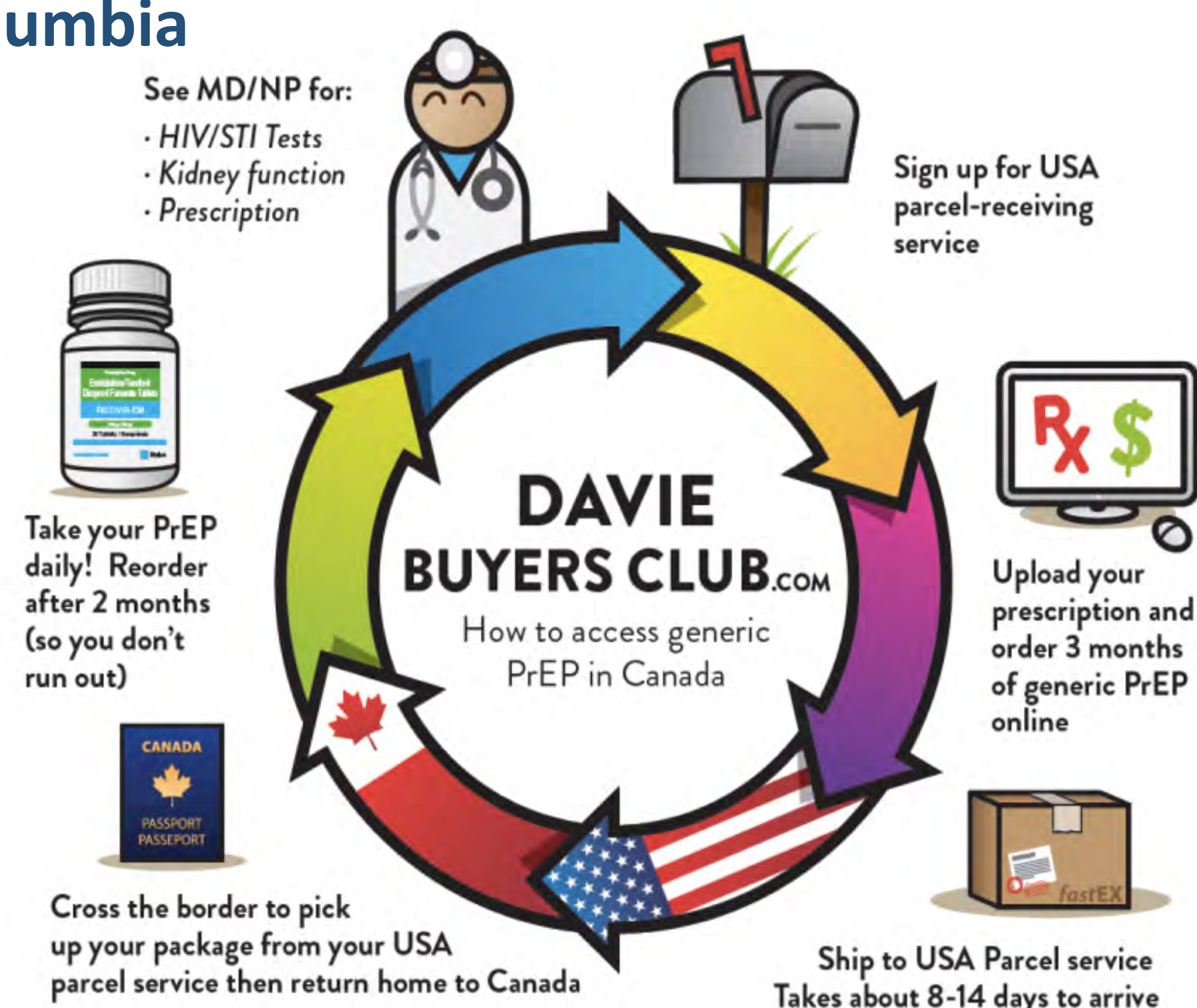
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## Background

- The cost of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medications in Ontario remains high (\$220 CAD per month if no subsidization)
- Less-expensive medications (\$33 CAD per month) are available for order online, but direct shipment into Canada is illegal
- In response, community organizations have created guides detailing how patients can order medications online to a United States mailbox, cross the border to collect them, and then legally transport a 90-day supply back to Canada

Figure 1: Schematic of a cross-border shopping strategy from British Columbia



- As little is known about the patients following these guides, we conducted a survey of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) accessing the website to determine their interest in and experience with this approach

## Materials and Methods

- Two online surveys, one baseline and one 3-month follow-up
- From 20/07/2017-18/02/2018 Ontario-based gbMSM accessing an online border-crossing guide posted by a gay men's health organization could opt to complete the baseline if they had seen the materials and decided if they were likely to use the strategy
- Survey domains: demographics, HIV risk, PrEP experience, experience with/interest in border crossing for PrEP
- Participants were compensated \$5CAD for the baseline and \$10CAD for the follow-up
- Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics

## Participants

- Final participation
  - Baseline: 162 respondents and 141 eligible participants
  - Follow-up: 118 respondents and 110 eligible participants
- Most participants identified as young (median age 23; IQR 22, 25), gay (87.1%), Black (82.3%), and 44.9% had private drug coverage

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Baseline (n=141)	Follow-up (n=110)
<b>Ethnicity - n (%)</b>		
Black	112 (79%)	88 (80%)
White	16 (11%)	13 (12%)
Other	13 (9%)	9 (8%)
<b>Education - n (%)</b>		
High school diploma or less	53 (38%)	38 (35%)
College/undergraduate degree	81 (57%)	65 (59%)
Professional or graduate degree	7 (5%)	7 (6%)
<b>Total family income - \$ CAD</b>		
\$0-29,999	28 (20%)	18 (16%)
\$30,000-59,000	76 (54%)	64 (58%)
> \$60,000	35 (25%)	26 (24%)
<b>Medication payment - n (%)</b>		
Private insurance	56 (40%)	43 (39%)
Out of pocket	77 (55%)	63 (57%)
Government drug benefit	8 (6%)	4 (4%)
<b>Has a primary care provider with whom they feel comfortable discussing sexual health - n (%)</b>	117 (83%)	103 (94%)
<b>Has previously used PrEP - n (%)</b>	37 (26%)	35 (32%)
<b>Lifetime diagnosis of STI - n (%)</b>		
Genital herpes	23 (16%)	10 (9%)
Gonorrhoea	12 (9%)	7 (6%)
Chlamydia	8 (6%)	3 (3%)
Syphilis	3 (2%)	4 (4%)
<b>Ever participated in chemsex/party and play - n (%)</b>	50 (35%)	43 (39%)
<b>HIV-MSM Median (IQR)</b>	29 (IQR 26, 30)	29 (IQR 26, 32)

## Results

Figure 2 (Primary Outcome): "How likely is it that you will use this approach to buy generic PrEP drugs?"

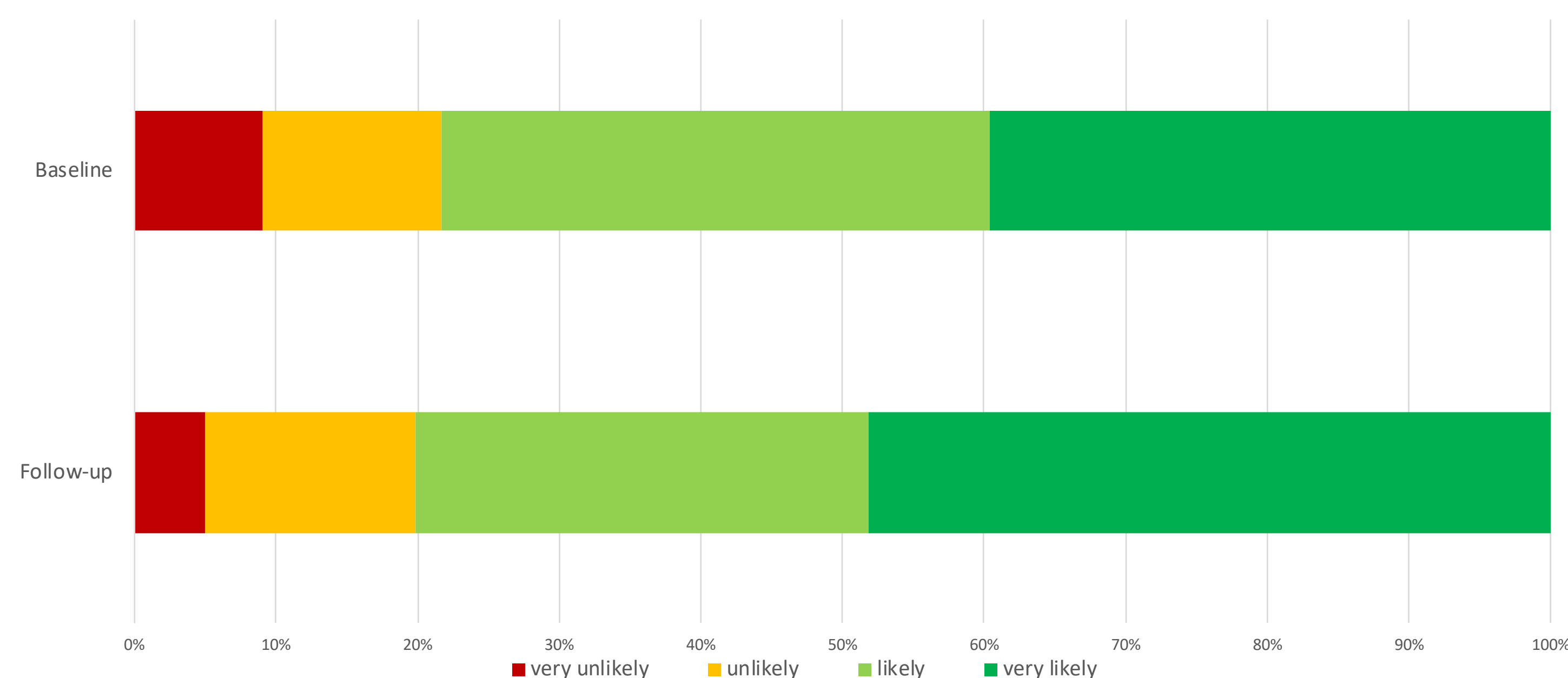


Figure 3: Proportion of participants who had completed each step

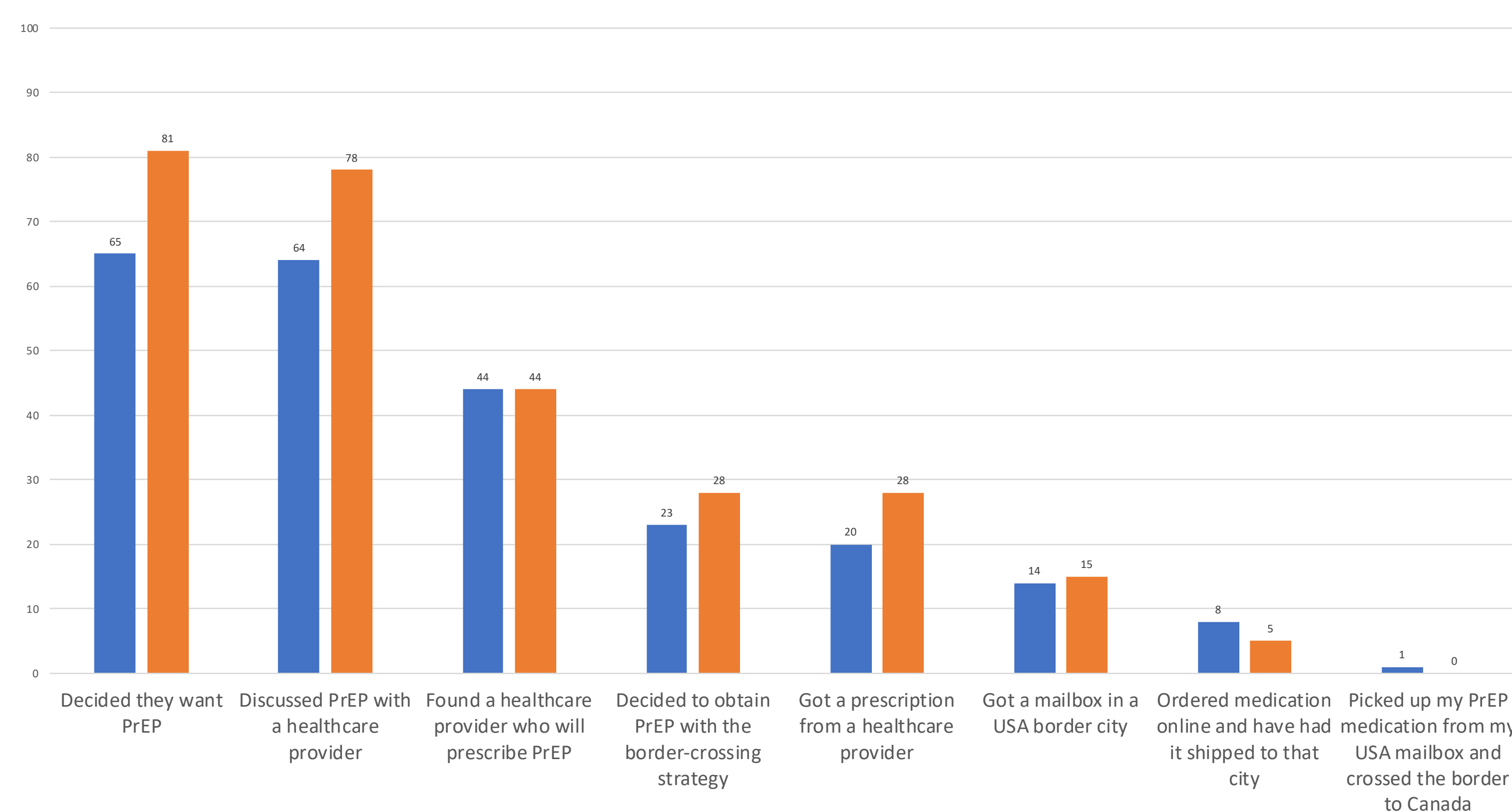
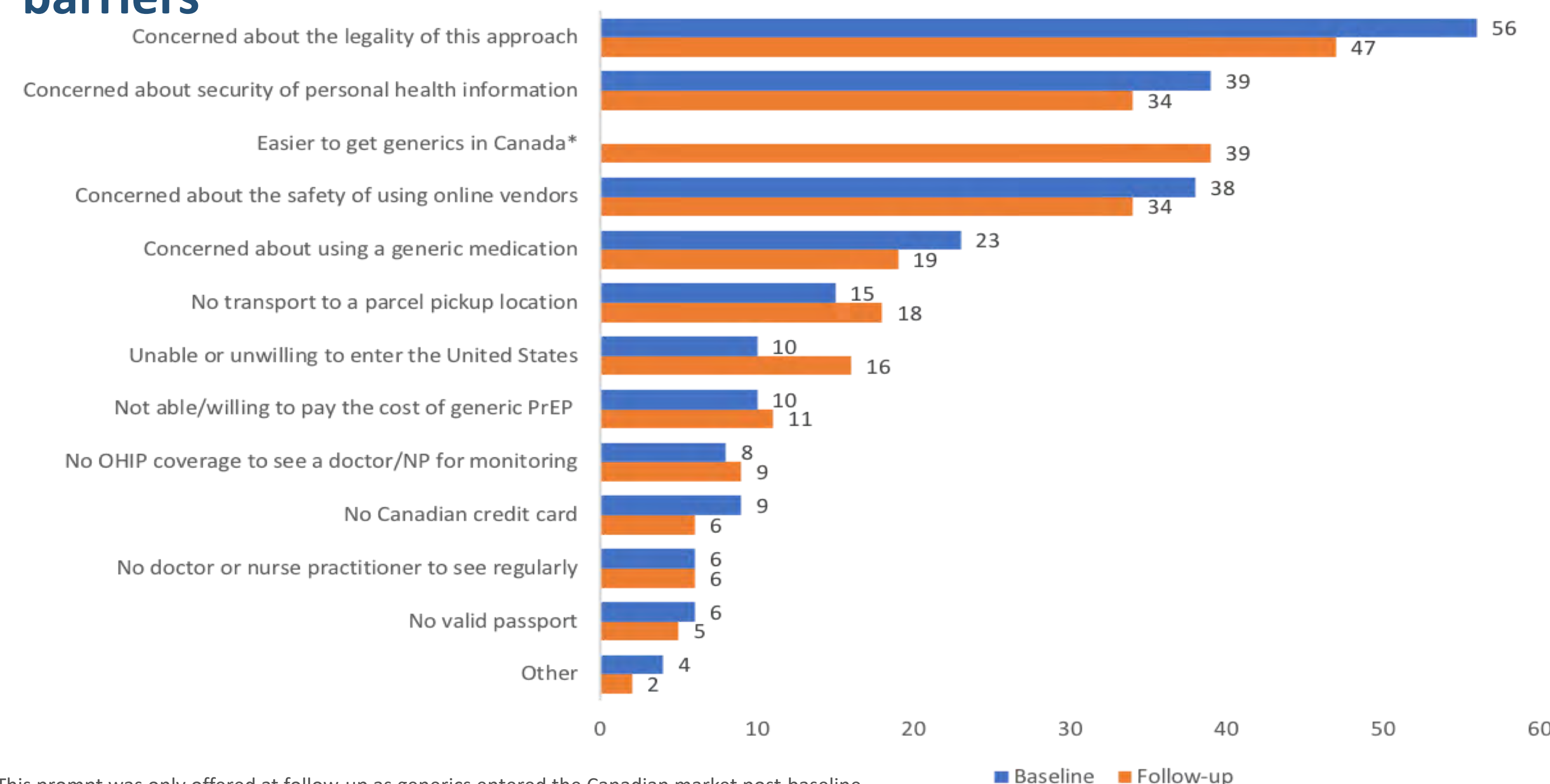


Figure 4: Proportion of participants who identified the following as barriers



\*This prompt was only offered at follow-up as generics entered the Canadian market post-baseline

## Conclusions

- Despite high interest in pursuing an online border-crossing approach to get PrEP medications, such an approach may not be a viable option for interested gbMSM due to logistical challenges and perceptions of safety and legitimacy
- While the introduction of generics and some public PrEP coverage has made PrEP more accessible in certain Canadian jurisdictions, gaps in access persist
- Study limitations: open survey sampling and short follow-up time

## Acknowledgements

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