



# Assessing Pharmacists' Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviors surrounding Pharmacy-based Harm Reduction in Pittsburgh

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## Introduction

**HARM REDUCTION:** evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing health risks associated with drug use, including providing:

- Naloxone
- Clean needles/syringes
- Screening for HIV/HCV
- Fentanyl test strips
- Education on safe drug use

### BACKGROUND:

- In 2019, there were 570 accidental overdose deaths in Allegheny County, 92% involved an opioid. [2]
- 89% of the US population lives within 5 miles of a pharmacy, making pharmacies a good point to access health care. [3]
- Recent legal changes in the city of Pittsburgh have expanded the possibilities for pharmacists to participate more in harm reduction practices.
- Pharmacists' stigma impacts patient access to harm reduction materials.

**OBJECTIVE:** to examine the behavior, attitudes, and knowledge of harm reduction among community pharmacists in Pittsburgh.

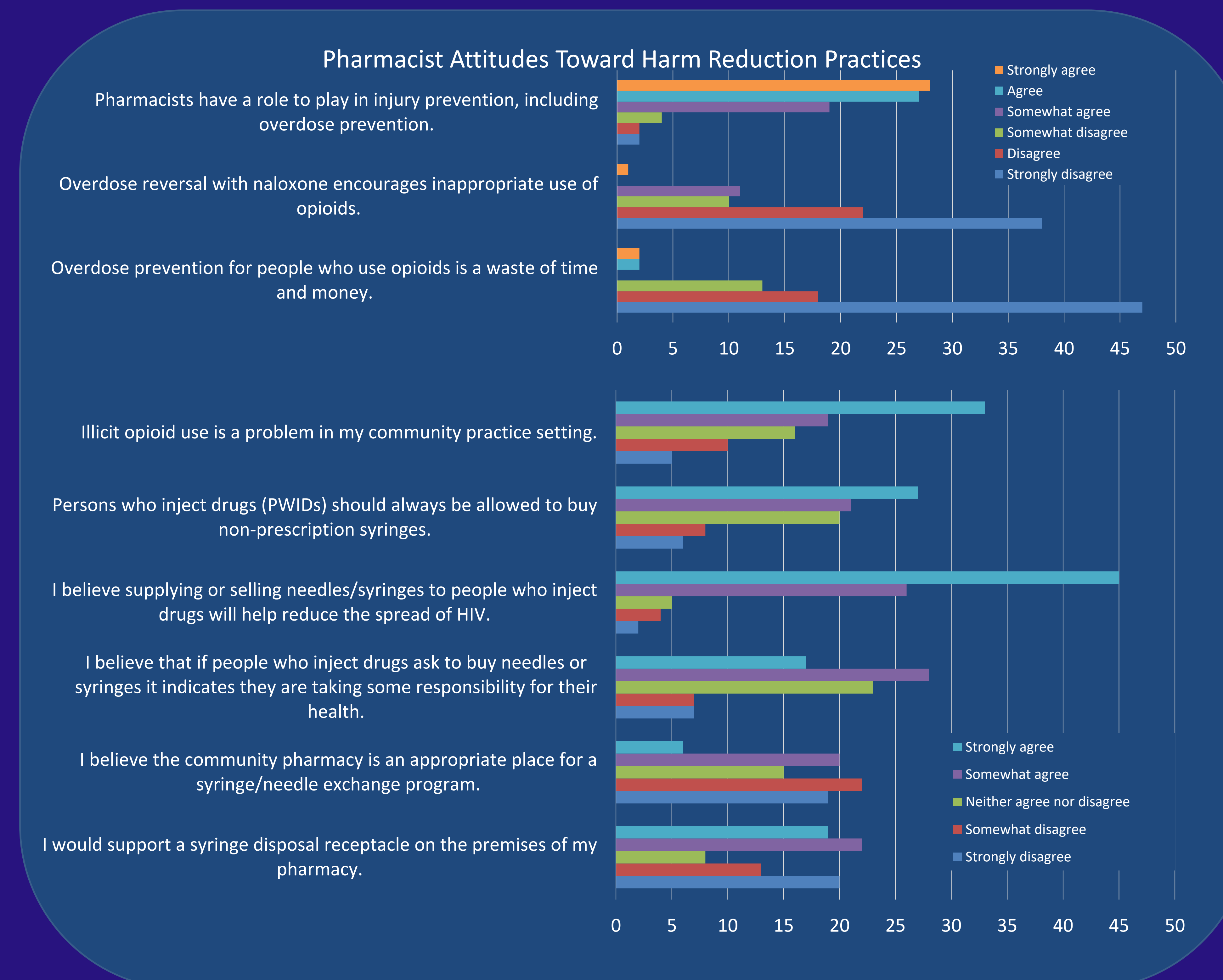
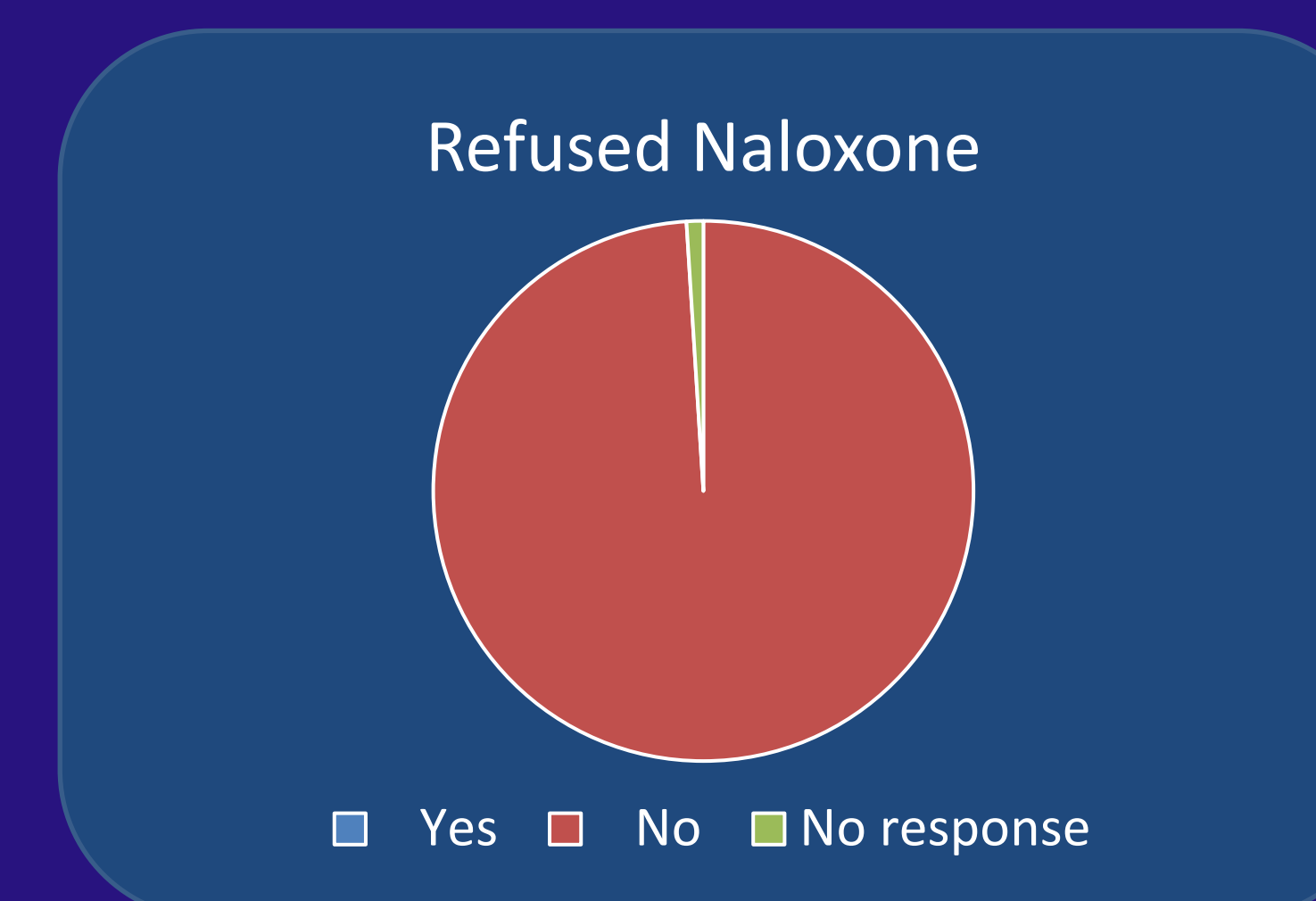
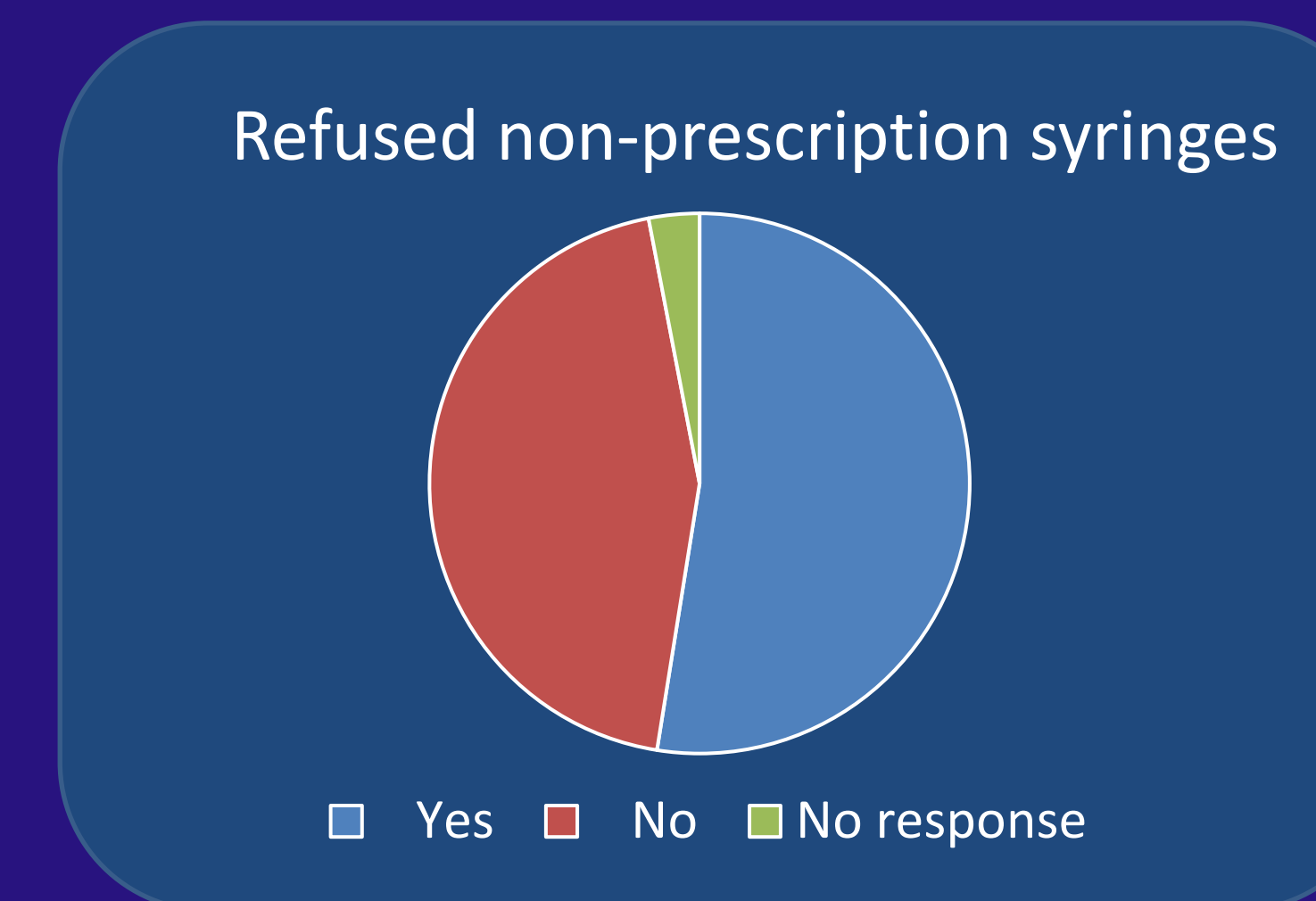
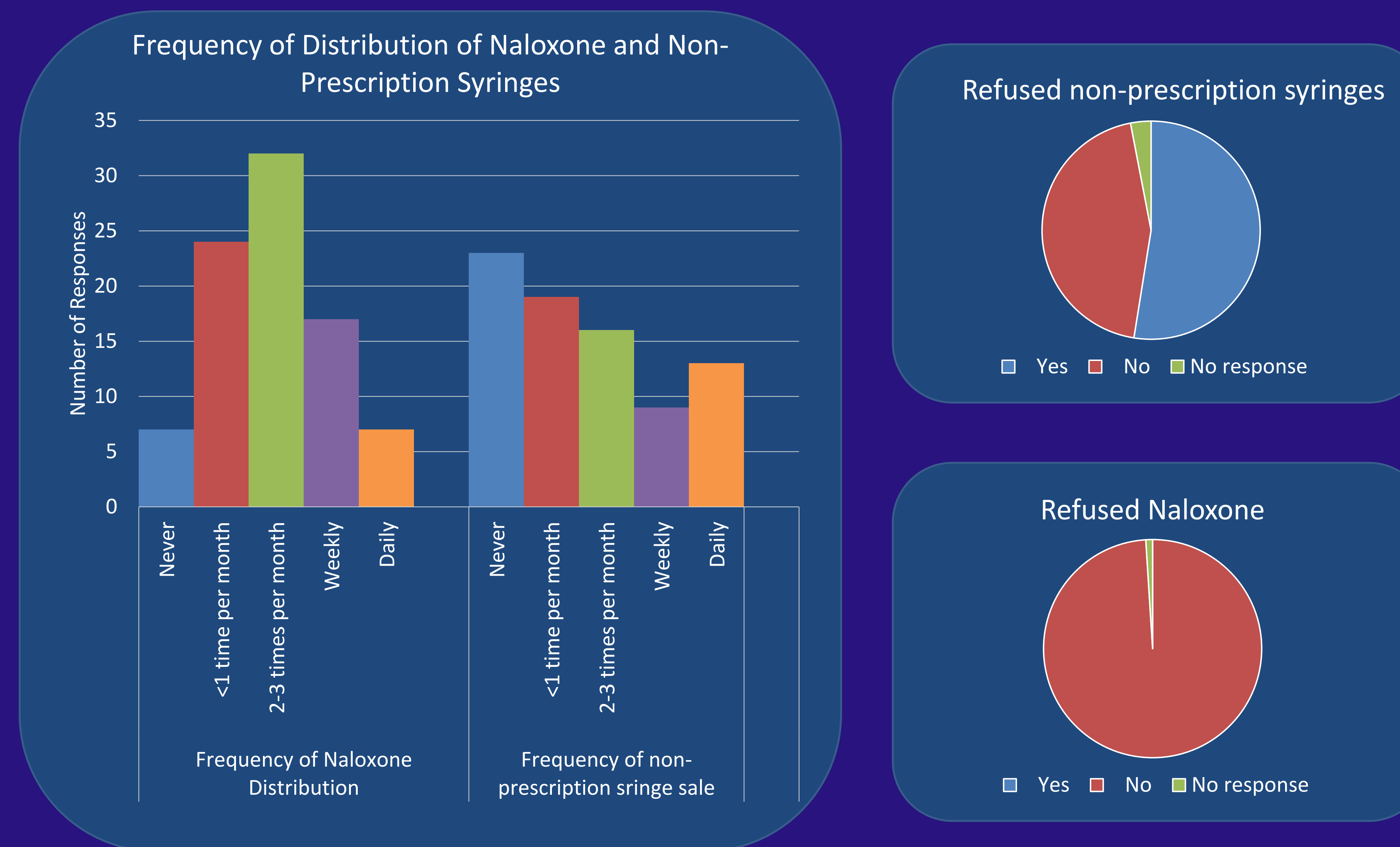
## Methods

**PARTICIPANTS:** Licensed pharmacists practicing in the Pittsburgh area.

**DATA COLLECTION:** A 53-question, online survey was created by adapting validated questions from literature. Investigators traveled to pharmacies in the Pittsburgh area and distributed flyers with a QR code link to the survey.

**ANALYSIS:** Descriptive statistics with frequencies and proportions for categorical variables and means and standard deviations (medians/quartiles for skewed distributions) for continuous variables.

## Results



### DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Mean age 37yo
- Gender: 35% male, 65% female
- Race/ethnicity: 95% White, 5% Other

**BEHAVIOR & ATTITUDES:** Naloxone was viewed more favorably than use of non-prescription syringes (NPS) by people who use drugs.

- Though 91% of pharmacists reported dispensing naloxone, only 44% reported talking about overdose prevention with customers to whom they dispense naloxone.
- 3x more pharmacists reported never having distributed NPS than never distributing naloxone.
- No pharmacists reported refusing to sell naloxone to a patient, but 55% of respondents reported refusing to sell NPS.
- Pharmacists demonstrated positive attitudes toward overdose prevention using naloxone and their role in its distribution.
- Pharmacists reported feeling that NPS were beneficial to PWID but attitudes varied toward a pharmacist's role in providing them.

**KNOWLEDGE:** Pharmacists' knowledge of local laws concerning harm reduction practices was high overall (score of 3.7 (SD 0.5) out of 4).

**BARRIERS:** Pharmacist reported **lack of time and staffing issues** as the biggest barriers to more comprehensive services for PWID at their pharmacies.

## Conclusions

- Pharmacists in Pittsburgh are participating in harm reduction by distributing naloxone and non-prescription syringes/needles.
- Results reflect that pharmacists have accepted the practice of naloxone distribution but not sale of non-prescription syringes for harm reduction use.
- Lack of knowledge about harm reduction practices was not as significant as lack of time and staffing as barriers to greater integration of harm reduction services