

Centre for Drug Research – Report: Risk behaviour, changes in patterns of NPS use and consumers' motivation in Germany

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SPICE II Plus



German Online Survey on NPS, 2nd edition

□ **Methods and Database**

□ Two online surveys in Germany, directed to persons with experience in NPS use (eligibility criterion):

1. June - September, 2011, funded by the German Ministry of Health

2. **September, 2013 – January, 2014, as part of the EC project “Spice II plus”**

□ **Sampling method:** self-selected, recruitment via online forums/ discussion boards, Facebook/Twitter, prevention websites and other online resources

□ **Adjusted samples** (eligible respondents who completed the questionnaire): n = 860 (2011), n = 771 (2013/14)

□ **Limitations** include biases towards experienced and current users (compared to lifetime users in representative samples) – which is quite a welcome kind of bias –, towards highly educated persons (as it is generally often the case with this kind of survey), and towards persons who regularly use internet resources on NPS or drugs in general

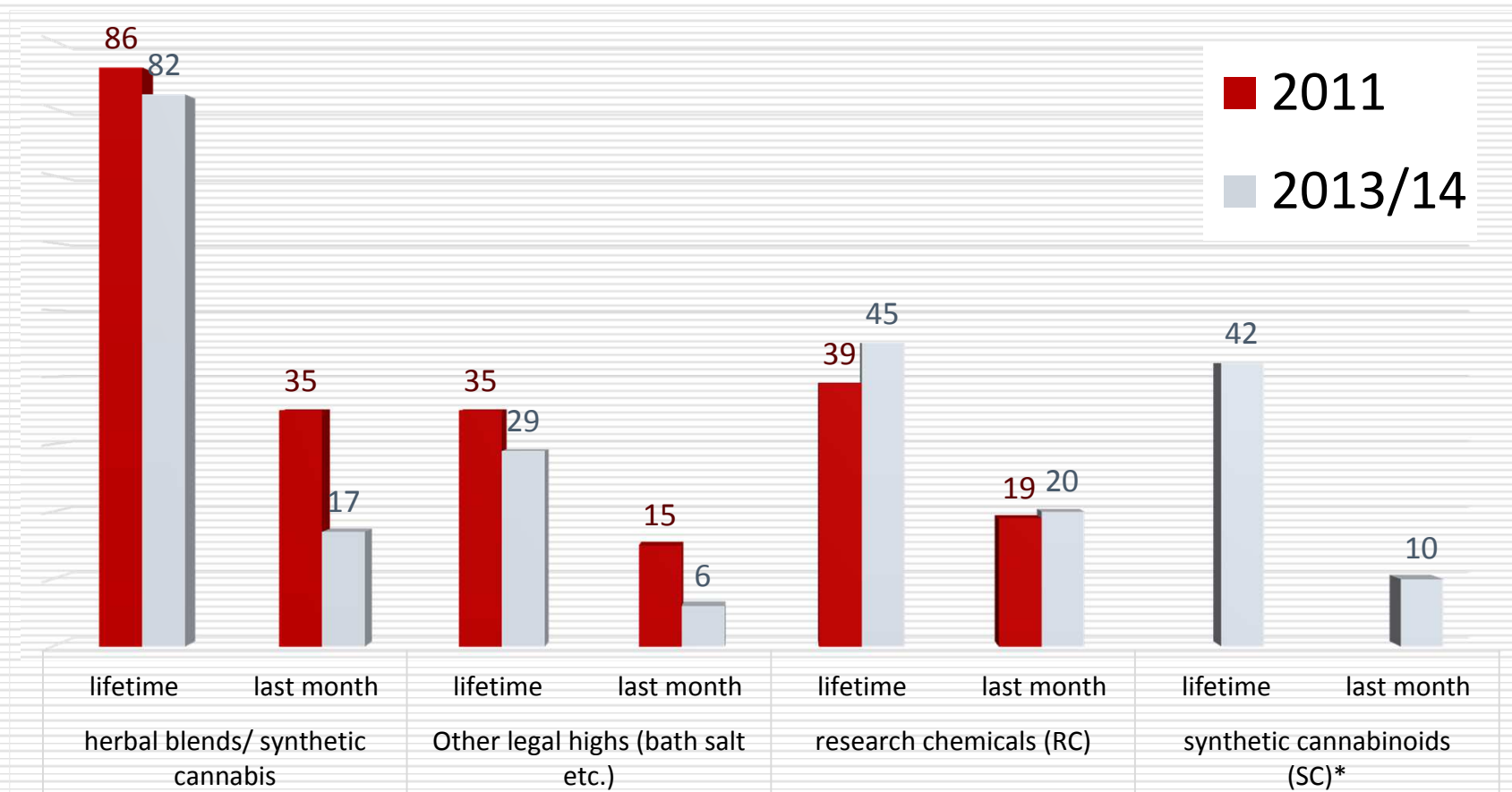
□ The **average age** was exactly the same in both surveys (**24.4 years**), and also the **gender ratio (89% males)**. The level of **education** was very similar: 60% (2011) and 56% (2013/14) with higher education (German *Abitur*). Same for **employment status**: roughly half students or acquaintances, about 40% full- or part time work, about 7% unemployed

□ **Similarities suggest that roughly the same kind of respondents have been reached, making both samples comparable**

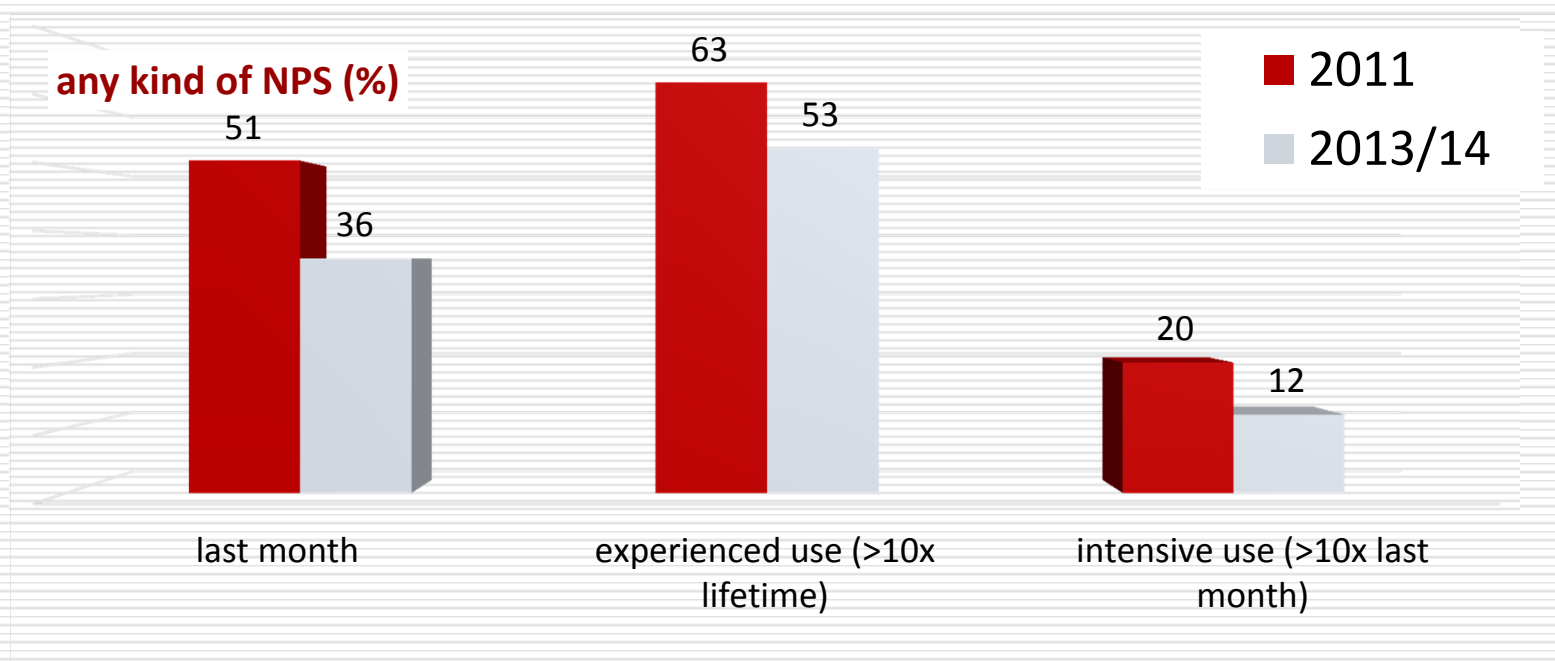
Illicit drugs use (%)

	2011	2013/14
Illicit drugs lifetime	99	99
Cannabis last month	69	74
Other illicit drugs lifetime	80	82
Other illicit drugs last month (mainly amphetamine and MDMA)	33	36

NPS use, product categories (%)



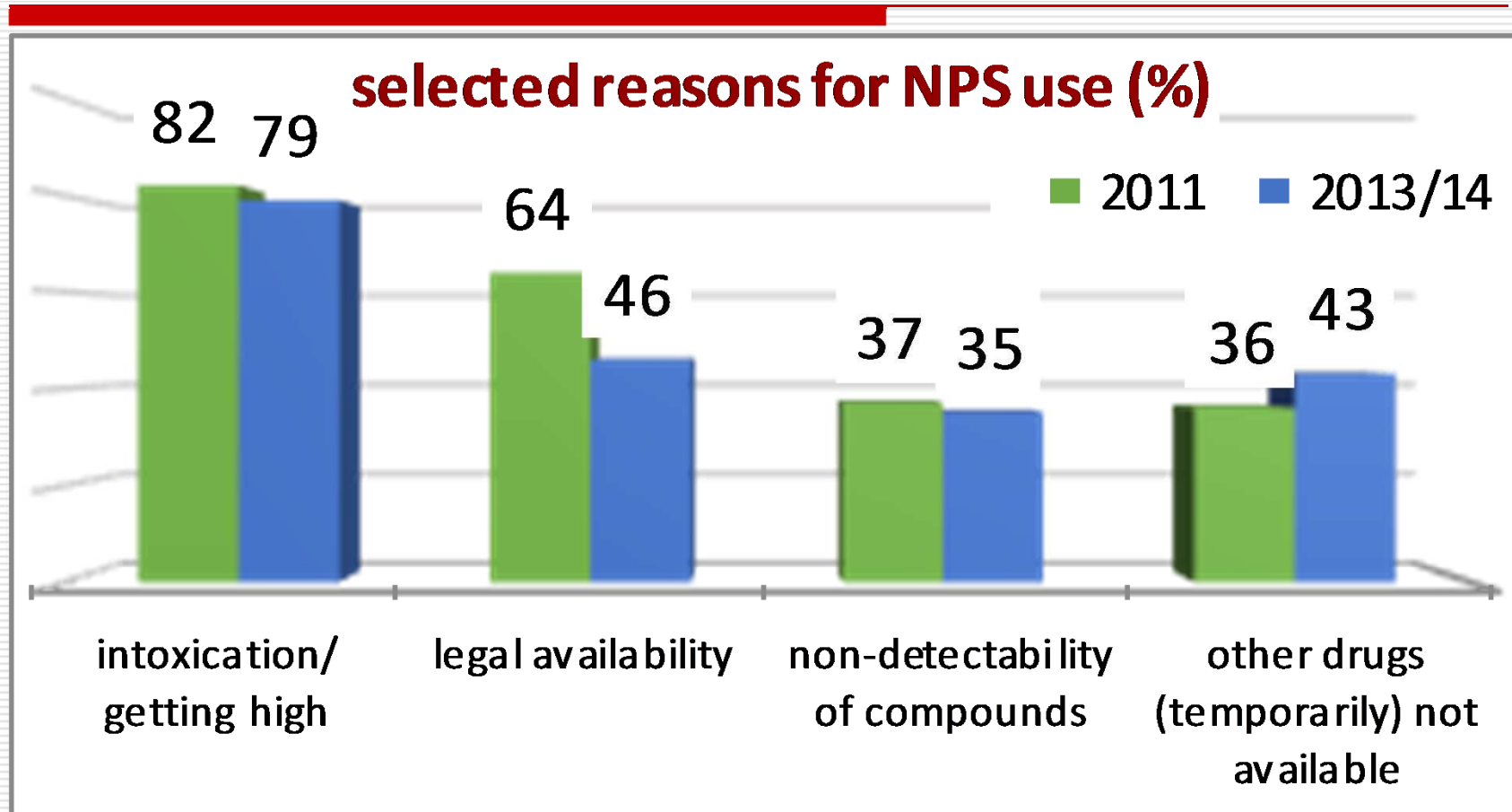
Other results on patterns of NPS use



- Overlaps between current herbal blends and SC users
- Current RC users use illicit drugs other than cannabis twice as often as current herbal blends users
- Almost two-thirds of current herbal blend/SC users are also current cannabis users

Most significant trends regarding prevalence/patterns of use

- Current use has decreased → has **NPS use in general** passed its peak?
- Clear shift from products without declaration of active compounds to **pure substances** (e.g., SC as pure substance were virtually unknown in 2011)
- But when looking at **herbal blends and/or SC**, current use has also dropped (from around 36% to 22%)
- Sharp decrease of **intensive use** (predominantly synthetic cannabis)
- Only use of **research chemicals** has remained stable
 - among the remaining group of current users, there are more adventurous “**psychonauts**” and less “**stoners 2.0**” (who temporarily substitute cannabis use with NPS) than in 2011
- Even more pronounced than in 2011: massive overrepresentation of **regions with rather repressive drug policy practice** (mainly Bavaria)



Specifics and trends regarding reasons for use

- ❑ Current **synthetic cannabis users** agree to more motives than others, particularly **legal reasons** (detectability, availability)
→ clear focus on ‘substituting’ cannabis use, different from RC users
 - ❑ Clear decrease of ‘**legal availability**’ probably results from the restrictions on open NPS sales increasingly enforced between the surveys (perception of ‘legality’ has decreased)
 - ❑ Rise in ‘**other drugs not available**’ mainly refers to current synthetic cannabis users
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Evaluation of the online counselling

- Design of an online questionnaire
 - Survey will be conducted in the next four months
 - Questionnaire will be distributed among users of the online counselling by each user is asked whether he/she participates or not
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In-depth interviews with NPS-users

- 9 interviews
 - Some reported no effects or effects similar to cannabis (first generation of herbal incense)
 - Some reports of negative effects of herbal incense (second and third generation): loss of short-term memory, headache, nausea, vomiting, increased heart-rates, horror trips
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Risk behaviour of NPS users

- Interviews: NPS user employ online forums for harm reduction; they compare different information sources; they look for information about dosage, setting, negative experience and legal status
 - Online survey:
 - Online forums are the most important source for information (2011: 72%, 2013/14: 63%), in second place is Wikipedia (2011: 38%, 2013/14: 44%)
 - Internetshops have lost even more relevance (2011: 38%, 2013/14: 28%)
 - Slight tendency to reputable sources of information
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Online monitoring of shops

- Interval: Every five months
 - Search Engine: Google
 - Key Words: Räuchermischung, Badesalz online kaufen
 - Results: Currently more German-speaking herbal incense shops are located in Germany again
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Other activities

- Research in online forums for trends and risk behaviour
 - Dissemination of the online survey on legal highs in other European countries in cooperation with IFT
 - Revision of the brochure for multipliers
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