

# NOVEL PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES REQUIRE NOVEL HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES

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The phenomenon of Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) presents a novel challenge in the field of harm reduction. Almost daily, new molecules and products pop up on the market. However, nearly no data about consumers' habits and motivations are available. Thus we conducted a survey among the attendees of music events who stated having consumed NPS. Participants were asked among others about brand names, consumption habits, sought-after effects, positive and negative experiences as well as their personal reasons for NPS use. In a further step these results will be used to raise the awareness of experts in the public health sector about the NPS phenomenon.



## SAMPLE

The **survey** took place during summer 2013 in the surroundings of music events. Approximately **600 persons** were questioned about their NPS use. **32 semi-directive** interviews were conducted (4 women) with persons stating they had NPS experiences. These participants were aged between **16 and 34 years** (mean = 21.6 years).

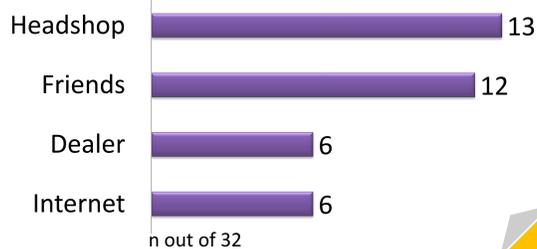
## RESULTS

Almost all reported brand names are sold under an herbal form, but many users cannot name the NPS they have consumed

The main desired effects are relaxation and sociability

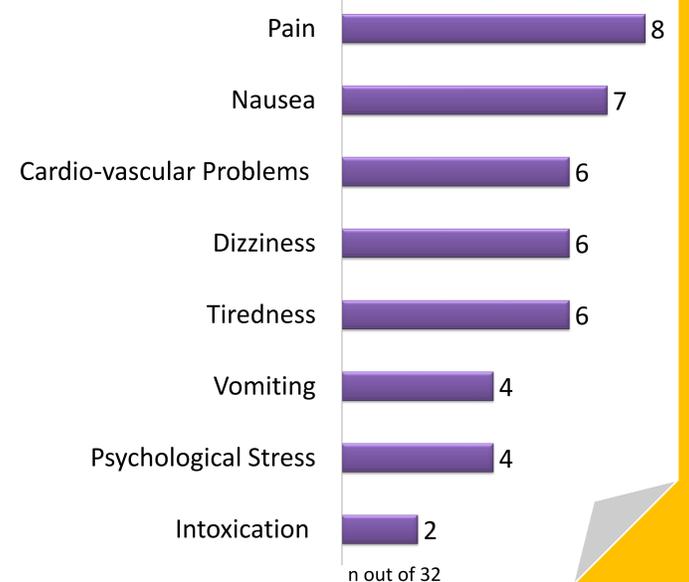
Over 50% of the users are looking for information about NPS on the Internet, about 25% discuss NPS with friends

### PLACE OF PURCHASE



Nearly no user takes NPS all alone

### EXPERIENCED SIDE-EFFECTS



Nearly every NPS user has had previous experiences with other illegal psychoactive substances

25 out of 32 participants qualify their NPS use as not problematic

21 out of 32 users have not taken any NPS during the past 12 months

## DISCUSSION

Only 5% of the festival attendees that we contacted had experiences with NPS. Our overall impression is that consumers prefer to stick to their traditional drugs (e.g. cannabis or cocaine), if available.

If they do take NPS, there seems to be only a limited awareness of the increased health risks when consuming novel or even unknown substances.

Users consume NPS with their friends, they receive NPS from their friends and they gather information about NPS from their friends and via Internet.

**Web-based social networks** in combination with the relevance of the **peer approach** seem to be the most efficient way to promote NPS harm reduction strategies for us. Besides reaching a large audience in a very cost effective way and guaranteeing the exchange of experiences and best practices, the new media are also the most responsive way to react in case of an emergency with the current ever changing situation.