

New psychoactive substances: user profiles and practices



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An online survey among users of New Psychoactive Substances was conducted in France, the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic in 2014, in the context of the I-TREND project, supported by the European Commission. It aimed to gain greater insight into the profiles, motivations and practices of individuals having tried or using these substances.

Focusing on individuals having used a NPS in the last 12 months, this text will examine the contexts and reasons for use on the most recent occasion, together with practices in terms of use. It will then examine the channels used to purchase the products, notably online purchases, issues relating to information on NPS, ending with a brief insight into the opinion of the respondents on the properties and dangers of NPS compared to "established" drugs.

French respondents were divided into three groups: "Ascertained NPS users", "Probable or former NPS users" and "Non-users of NPS". These results substantiate the assumption for NPS diffusion mainly among individuals who are already psychoactive substance users, as NPS do not appear to be a doorway into drug use. Users motivations are consistent with those relating to recreational use of "established" drugs. Young adults are predominantly concerned. While most use observed among survey respondents takes place in a private setting (home), 40 % of intakes took place in a recreational setting, half of which in a conventional setting (bars, clubs, etc.) and half outdoors (alternative recreational setting), thus confirming NPS diffusion in these environments.

Slightly over 4 out of 10 users experienced adverse effects following last use. Recourse to a health professional, reported by less than 4 % of the users concerned, remains low, although the effects do not always appear harmless

The survey did not reveal any new emerging populations specific to NPS, particularly populations only using synthetic cannabinoids as a substitute for cannabis use, either because promotion of the survey failed to reach them, or because they felt a survey on NPS did not apply to them, or because this is ultimately a marginal profile.

The expressed need for information concerning the last substance used in the year mainly involves health risks: 64 % of users believe that they do not have sufficient information on this matter, and 44 % on the dose not to be exceeded. The first source of information utilised by respondents concerning NPS involves user forums and friends, family or relatives. The media (television, radio, newspapers) appears to be the leading source of information for the "Non-users of NPS" group (35 %).