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# Monitoring local drug trends – looking back at 17 years of “Monitoring System Drug Trends” in Frankfurt, Germany

Lisbon Addictions Conference, 2019



# MoSyD – Background and History

- implemented in 2002
- first local drug monitoring system in Germany
- carried out annually
- funded by the municipal drug policy coordination office of Frankfurt



# Objectives

- provide reliable and timely data on emerging trends in licit and illicit drug use
- obtain a broad picture of various drug-using populations
- identify new, emerging drug phenomena
- yield evidence-based information that helps to inform policy makers and service providers



# Survey Elements – Overview

- expert panel (n=11)  
focus group interviews / twice a year
- trend scout panel (n=20)  
semi structured qualitative interviews / once a year
- school survey (n=1.500)  
standardised questionnaire / once a year
- open drug scene survey (n=150)  
questionnaire based face-to-face interviews / once every two years



# Expert Panel

- 12 representatives of professions associated with the drug phenomenon
  - drug services (harm reduction, outreach, counselling, inpatient and outpatient treatment, peer-to-peer prevention project)
  - youth welfare services (outreach, counselling, youth centre)
  - police (drug squad)
  - criminal justice system (public prosecutor)
  - supervisory school authority (alcohol and drug prevention)
- focus group interviews, twice a year, chaired by CDR staff



# Trend Scout Panel

- 20 key persons informing about drug use in various recreational and party/dancing scenes
  - Focus on techno/ electro/ house
  - Other youth culture scenes (e.g., hiphop, punk rock)
  - Gay party scene, left-wing/squatters, bodybuilding, head shop etc.
- semi-structured qualitative interviews with quantitative elements
- Data collection: once a year



## School Survey

- representative sample of 1,500 students in grades 10-12 at secondary schools and year 1-3 at vocational schools in Frankfurt
- focus on 15-18 year-old students (approx. 1,000)
- standardised questionnaire on tablet computers filled out in class anonymously in the presence of CDR staff



# Open Drug Scene Survey

- 150 members of the open drug scene (50 women and 100 men)
- questionnaire-based face-to-face interviews
- Recruitment in the field (on the street, drop-in centre, safer injection sites etc.)
- Data collection: July-August (every other year)

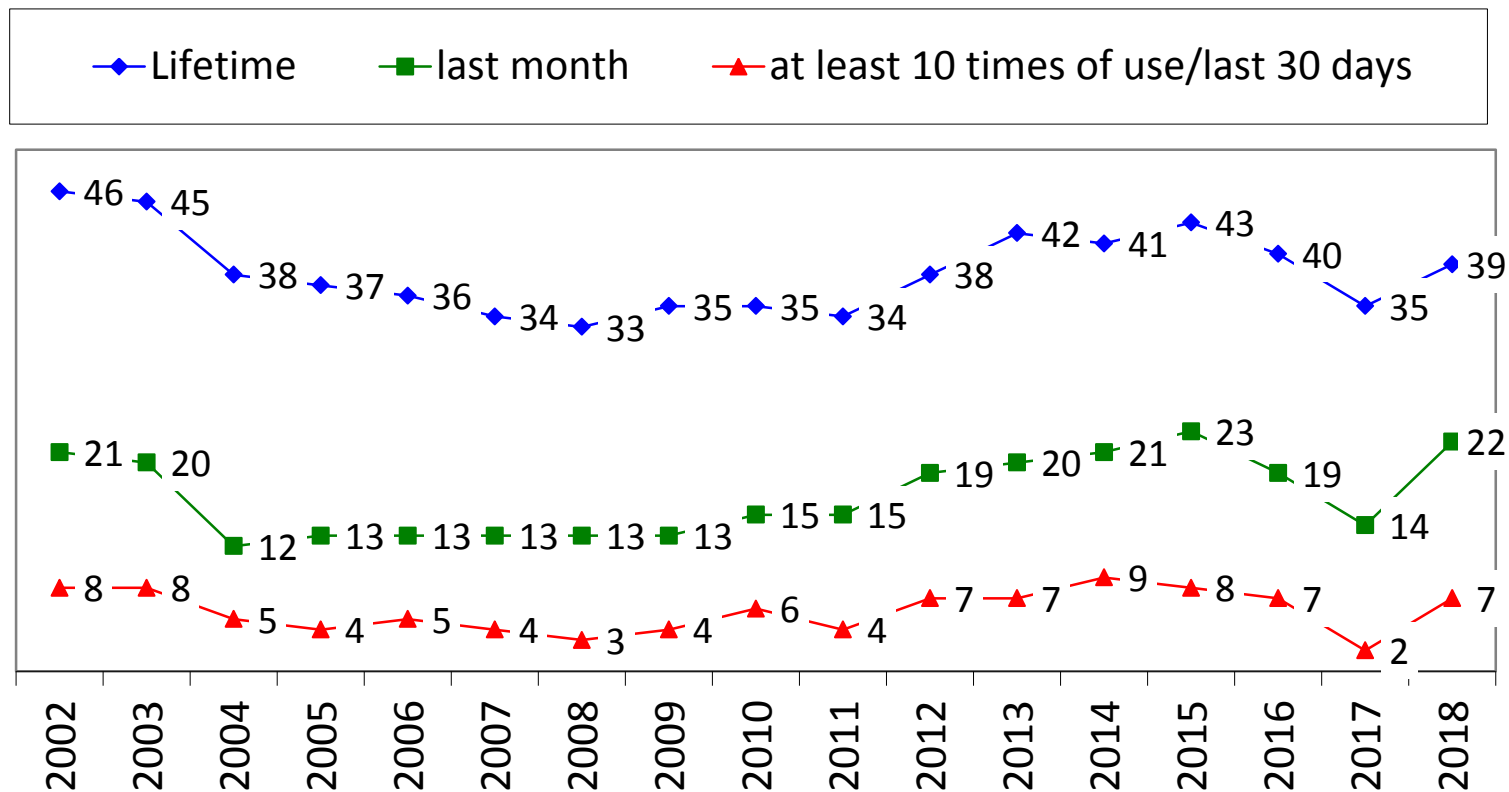




# Monitoring System Drug Trends in Frankfurt: Results (some examples)



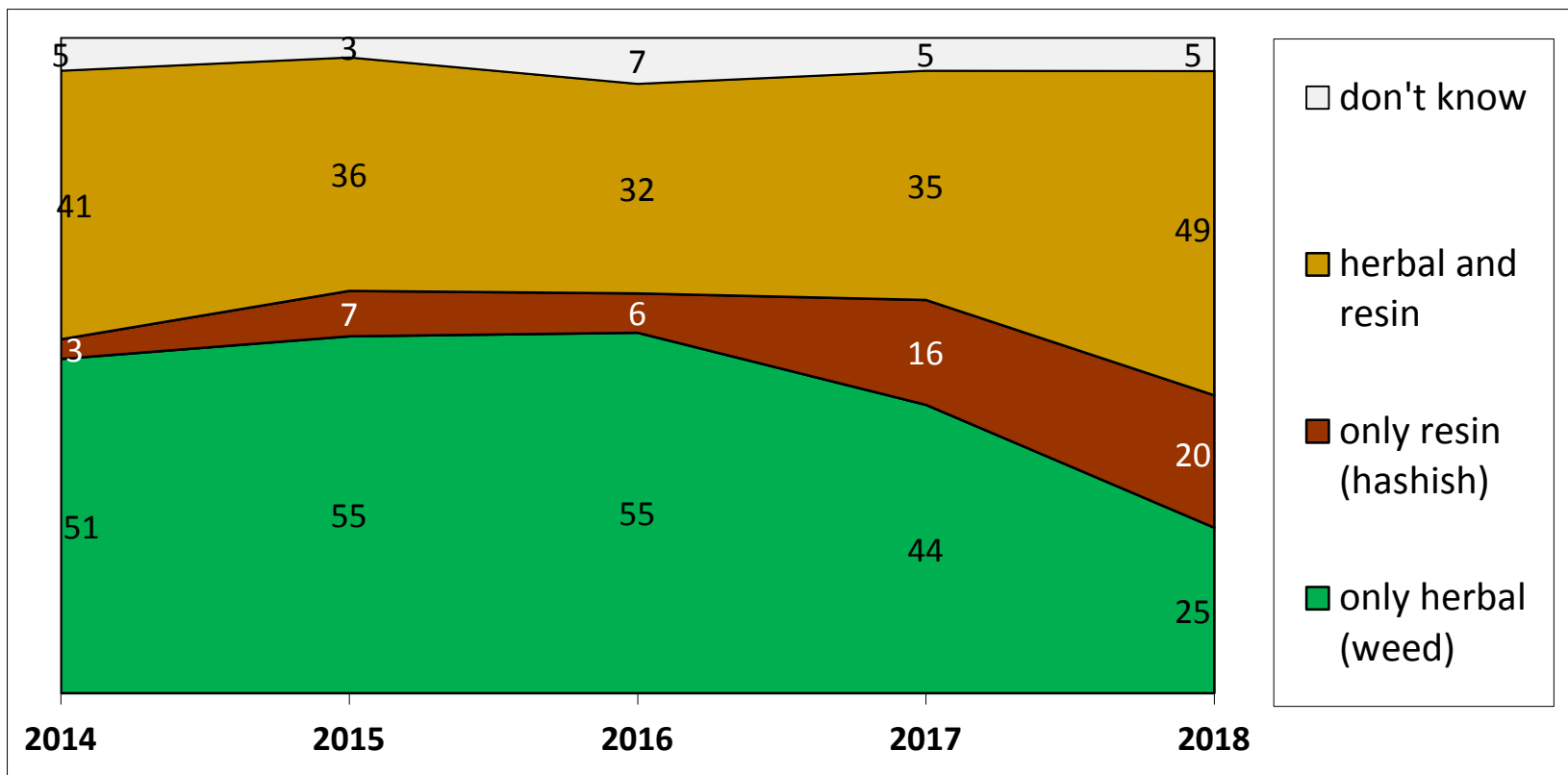
## Cannabis (% , 15-18-y-o)



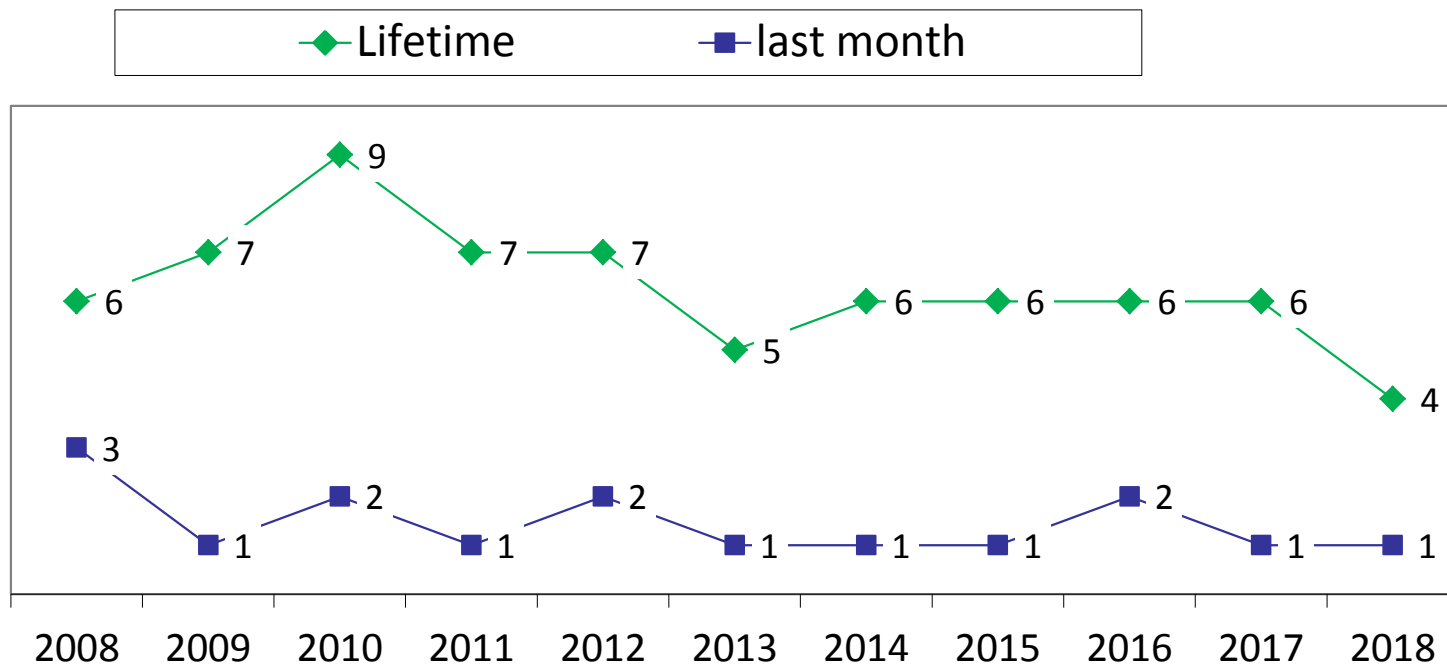
- While former changes in prevalence were supported by the other survey elements, the recent drop and spike cannot be explained



# Type(s) of cannabis used in the last 30 days (% , 15-18-y-o)



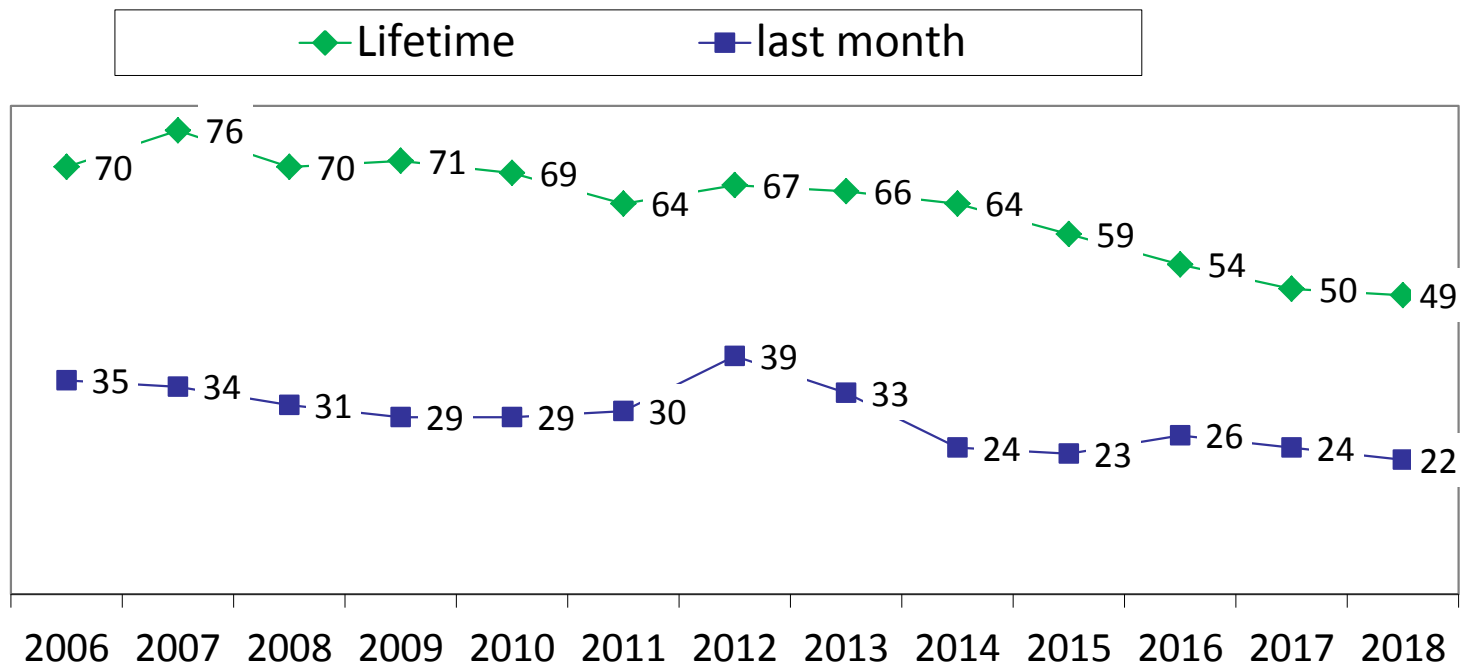
## NPS: „herbal blends“ / synthetic cannabinoids (% , 15-18-y-o)



- NPS hardly play any role in *any* drug-using setting in Frankfurt
- Asking for other NPS (e.g. stimulants/“bath salts“ or even opioids) among students doesn't make sense



## Shisha (hookah) smoking (% , 15-18-y-o)



- Biggest drug trend observed since 2002 in terms of proportions among young students



## Other remarkable results

- Growing prevalence of **MDMA** among partygoers around 2011-2014, followed by a spike of ecstasy use among 15-18-y-o in 2015
- **Ketamine** gradually entering the Frankfurt party/club scene since 2009-2010
- Recently rising popularity of **cocaine** in party settings where it wasn't really prevalent before
- Spike in **nitrous oxide**/laughing gas use in 2017 (lifetime among 15-18-y-o at 13%)
- **Open drug scene**: crack cocaine is most prevalent drug, up to 84% 24-hour use (2016), outranking heroin, alcohol, cannabis and benzodiazepines. Fentanyl slowly becoming an issue (last 24 hours: 3%)
- Crystal meth almost plays no role anywhere, with a small exception



## Conclusions (with limitations)

- It makes sense to combine different methods for continuous monitoring:
  - For timely detection of new trends
  - Sometimes, qualitative methods indicate changes detected later in quantitative surveys (“early warning”)
  - To provide possible explanations for changes documented in quantitative surveys
- However, sometimes we don’t get an idea why certain changes take place
- Research instruments must continuously be changed as well:
  - New questions and categories (e.g., module on media use), deletion of questions
  - Key persons must be replaced when they do not have good insights anymore
  - Evaluation of relevance of settings and professions
- It is not possible to cover the whole of drug-using populations in town



Thank you very much for your  
attention!

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