

Understanding

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NIHR National Institute
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Stimulant use over time

Results and
conclusions
from
in-depth
qualitative
interviews in five
European
countries



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From Newcastle. For the world.

Background

Rationale, methods, sampling strategy

Qualitative methods in substance use research

“Drug use and drug dependence are social processes inseparable from the social and political contexts in which they occur”

Maher and Dertadi (2017) *Addiction*

Methods

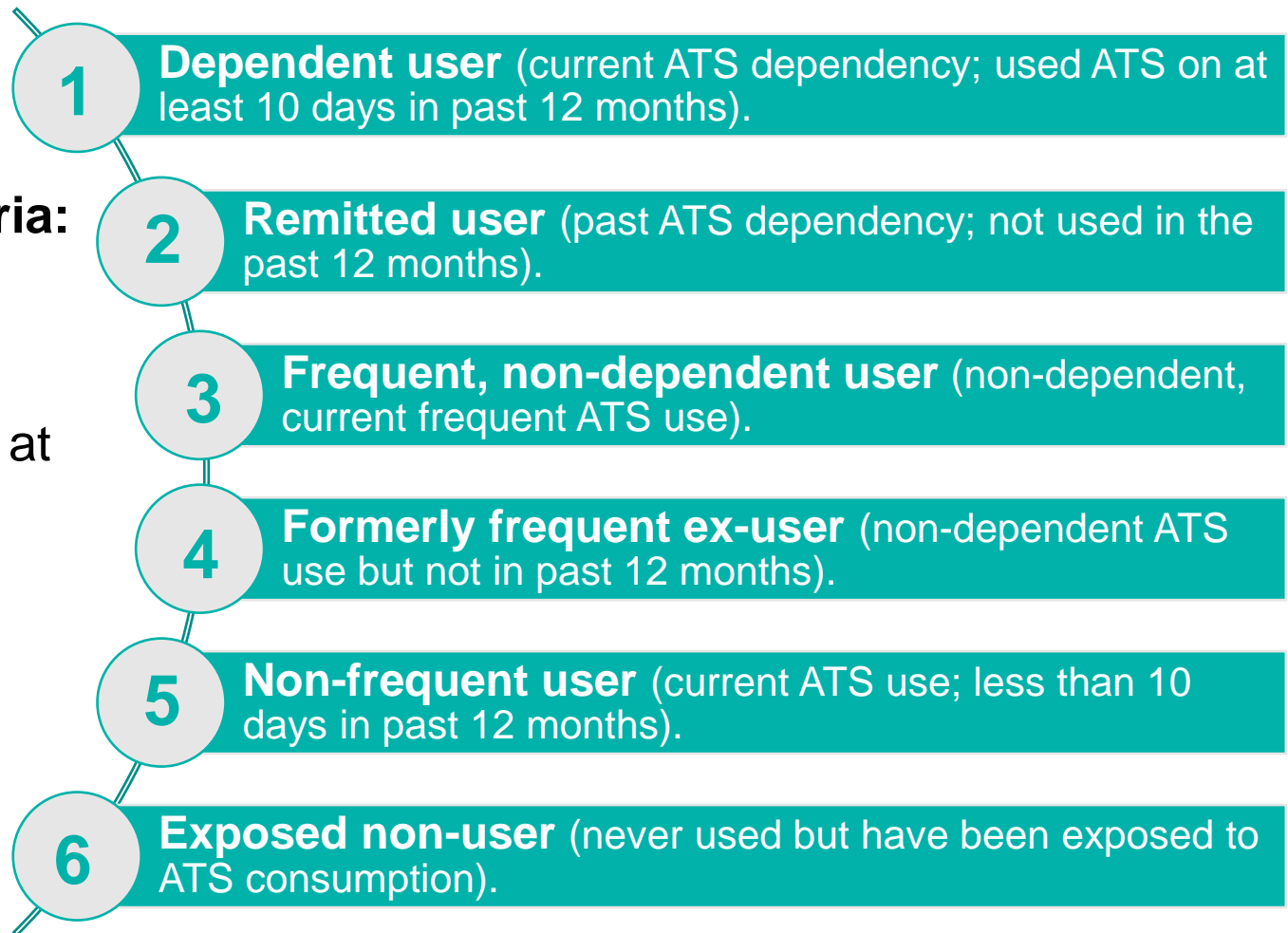
- Face-to-face semi-structured interviews
- Topic guide and life-chart
- Informed consent
- Audio-recorded, fully transcribed, analysed thematically



Sampling strategy & participant groups

Inclusion criteria:

- Aged 18+
- First use/exposure at least 5yrs previously
- Based in participating region



Findings

**Participant characteristics, key
interview themes**

Participant characteristics by gender and country

Country		Group 1 (dependent)	Group 2 (formerly dependent)	Group 3 (frequent user)	Group 4 (formerly frequent user)	Group 5 (non-frequent user)	Group 6 (no ATS use)	Total
Germany	male	4	9	9	4	6	5	37
	female	5	8	3	2	3	2	23
United Kingdom	male	5	8	5	3	6	3	30
	female	7	6	4	8	5	8	38
Poland	male	7	5	11	3	11	9	46
	female	3	5	1	2	4	0	15
Netherlands	male	5	6	6	6	4	3	30
	female	5	4	4	4	6	7	30
Czech Republic	male	4	3	5	4	2	3	21
	female	2	2	0	1	2	2	9
Total	male	25	31	36	20	20	23	146
	female	22	25	12	17	29	19	115

Initiation

- Motivation: hedonistic versus functional
- ATS using social networks and repeat exposure
- Means (capital) and opportunity (place, access, availability)



Initiation

“I was...smart, funny...it was easy to make friendships for one night...one loses those barriers...loses the shyness and so on”.

A404, G4-formerly-frequent, male, Czech Republic

‘I could do things ten times as quickly...so, say, I had the cleaning and the dinners to do and all the washing and the ironing, that would take me a full day, it would take about three hours if I had had that.’

ATS05, G2-remitted, female, UK

Non-Use

- Fear of effects and wanting to stay in control
- Stable socio-economic context
- Wider non-using network
- Influence of parental and educational authority figures



Non-Use

“I wouldn’t ever want to be like that, sort of out of control of themselves and not really having an awareness of what they looked like’

ATS42, G6-non-user, female,
UK

“....people say ‘yeah it’s so great and you should try it and it’s not addictive’ and so on, but I think...if it’s not addictive, why then are you taking it at every party and every occasion...”

N230, G6-non-user,
Netherlands

Increase

- Trying to regain positive effects
- Other responsibilities neglected
- Health complications
- Fewer non-users in network
- Varied by substance type



Increase

“I started to use more when my dog died. And I increased my use when Yasmine died [his stillborn daughter]. And when me and Anna broke up, or when she didn't come home, I used a lot, I used more.”

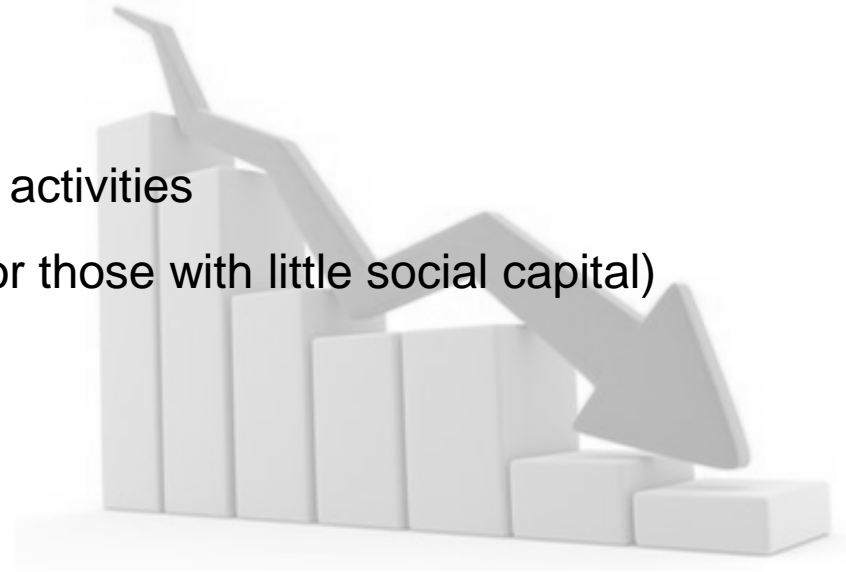
J212, G1-dependent,
male, Netherlands

“The tolerance had really decreased. If you usually took half a pill for the evening, I started to take two pills in one night...Then it increased dramatically as I also took speed in addition...”

A515, G3-frequent, female,
Germany

Decrease

- Dependent (functional) users → sharper transitions → pivotal life event
- Frequent (hedonistic) users → declined more gradually → ‘maturing-out’
- Supporting factors:
 - Finding ‘structure’, health-promoting activities
 - Changing social networks (difficult for those with little social capital)
- Complicating factors:
 - Co-occurring stressors
 - Access to treatment



Decrease

“Ending up in prison was the best option form. If not for prison I had been gone. They diagnosed me with addiction and started the treatment. Now I still go to therapy and I have a job.”

G2-formerly-dependent,
male, Poland

“No one of us wants it anymore. I need three days to recover and I can't do that anymore. We have jobs, families and for us it is sufficient if we drink a Cuba Libre here and there and that it is enough for three days”

A501, G4-formerly-frequent,
female, Germany

Conclusions

Summary and reflections

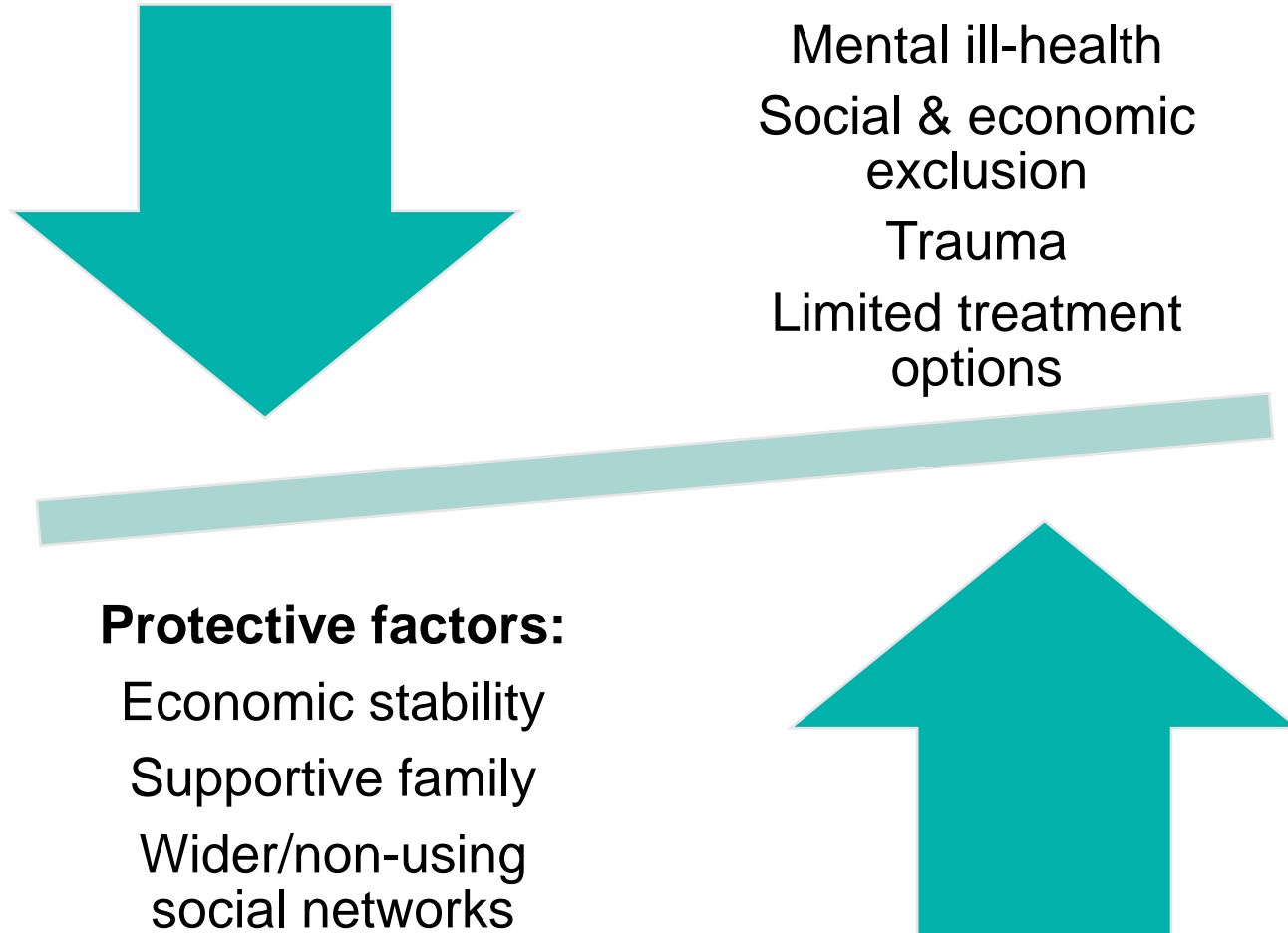
Conclusions

Heterogeneity:

- In *motivations* to use ATS
- In *trajectories* associated with different types of ATS
- In ATS user *socio-demographics*
- Between *countries*



Conclusions



Acknowledgements

ATTUNE is a collaborative project supported by the European Research Area Network on Illicit Drugs (ERANID). This presentation is based on independent research commissioned and funded in England by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Policy Research Programme (project ref. PR-ST-0416-10001); in Germany by the Federal Ministry of Health (project ref. ZMVI1-2516DSM222); in Czech Republic by the Government Council for Drug Policy Coordination; in Poland by the National Bureau for Drug Prevention and in the Netherlands by ZonMw. The views expressed in this presentation are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the national funding agencies or ERANID.

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Understanding Pathways
to Stimulant Use across Europe



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