

Non-medical prescription drug use among Estonian adults

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Background and aim

The aim was to describe a non-medical use of prescription drugs (like sedatives, tranquilizers and pain relievers available on prescription only) (NPDU) and associated factors among Estonian adult population.

Methods

A cross-sectional population survey was conducted in 2018. A survey questionnaire was sent to 5000 Estonian people aged 16 to 64 years. Postal questionnaire with possibility to complete survey online was used. After two reminders the final response rate remained 45% (n=2234).

Logistic regression was used to estimate the associations and gender adjusted odds ratios (OR) were calculated.

Results

In total of 16% (95% CI 14%–18%) females and 11% (95% CI 9%–13%) of males reported life-time use of NPDU. Last year prevalence was 4% (95%CI 3%–5%) and 2% (95%CI 1%–3%), respectively. (Figure 1)

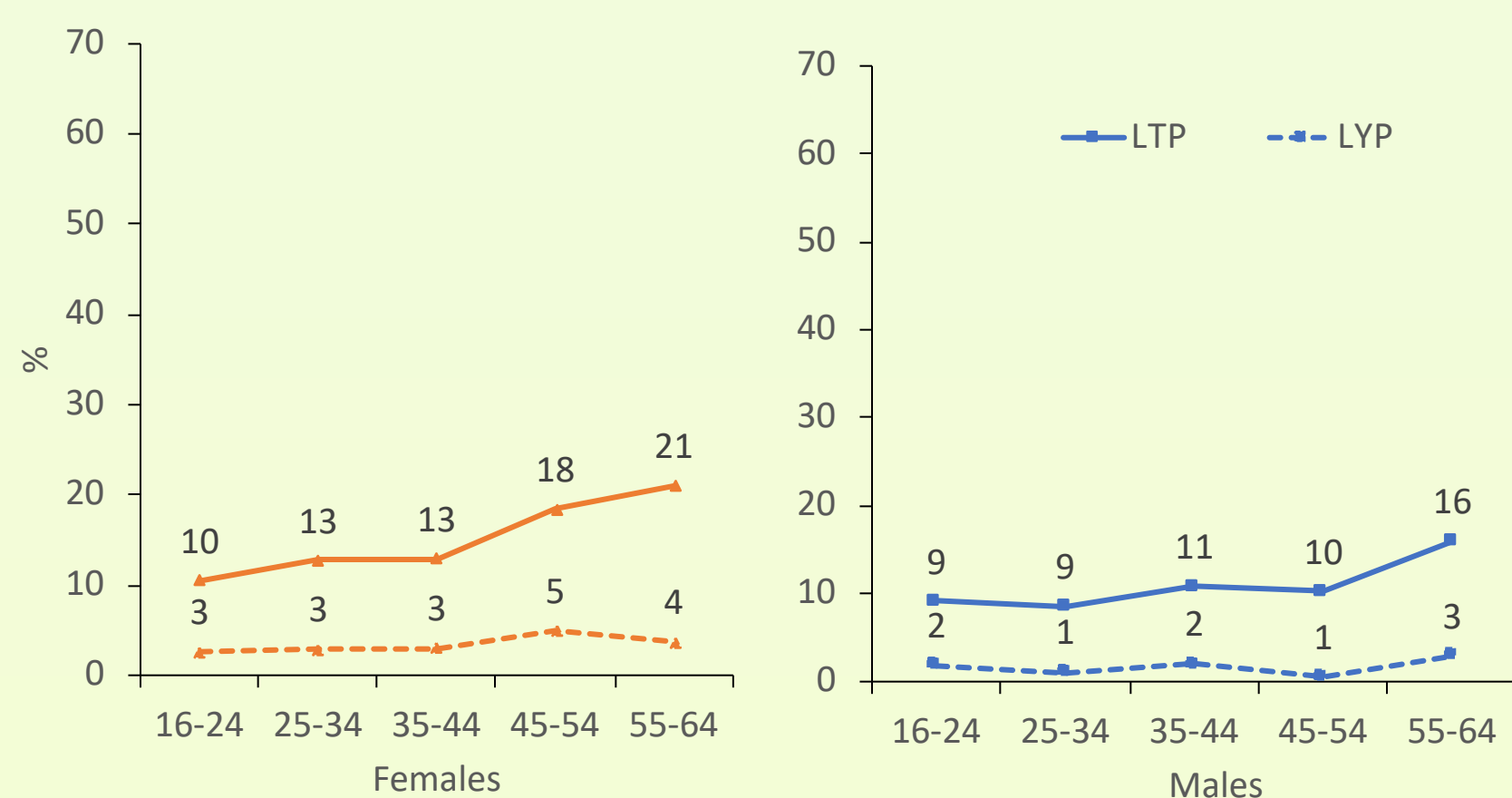


Figure 1. Non-medical prescription drug use according to gender and different age groups.

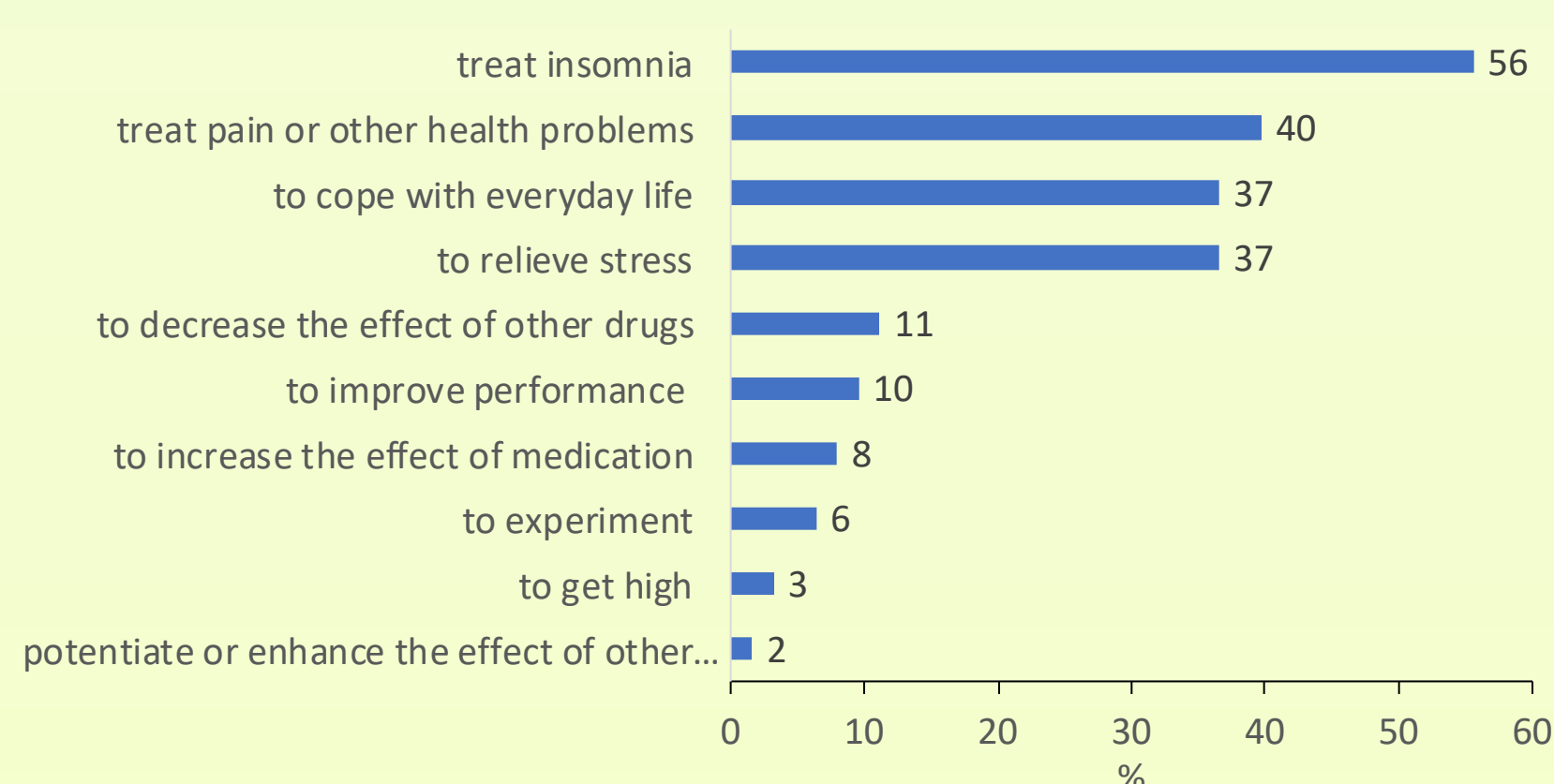


Figure 2. Reasons for non-medical prescription drug use.

Sources for medicines:

- prescribed previously by a doctor (60%, n=38)
- from a friend, an acquaintance or family member (24%, n=15)
- bought abroad (n=6)
- bought from a street (n=3)

Females had two times higher odds (OR=2.1, 95%CI 1.2–3.8) for NPDU. Other factors related to NPDU are described in the table below.

Table. Factors related to last year non-medical prescription drug use adjusted for gender

	OR	95%CI
Married	1	
Single/divorced/widow	2.1	1.3-3.5
No depression (MHI-5 >53)	1	
Depression symptoms (MHI-5 <53)	3.5	2.0-6.2
Physical health:		
Good	1	
Average	2.7	1.5-4.8
Poor	6.2	2.9-13.3
Currently non-smoking	1	
Daily smoking	1.8	1.0-3.2
Drug use last 30 days	3.4	1.2-9.9
NPS use last year	13.0	2.5-66.4
Drinking alcohol ≥6 units per one occasion during last year:		
Never	1	
Less than once in a month	1.2	0.6-2.2
At least once in a month	2.1	1.0-4.2
Prevalence of health problems due to medicines use	1.4	1.2-1.7
Being on drug treatment	7.7	1.8-33.0
Concurrent use of drugs LTP	2.5	1.4-4.4
Concurrent use of drugs LYP	4.1	2.0-8.3
Combinations of concurrent use:		
medications and alcohol	6.6	3.1-14.2
medications and drugs	28.7	7.9-104.6
cannabis and alcohol	3.5	1.3-9.1
drugs (besides cannabis) and alcohol	8.3	3.0-22.7
2 or more drugs	14.7	5.0-42.6
medicines, drugs and alcohol	41.7	10.7-162.0

Conclusions

Although the proportion of the sample who reported last year NPDU was small, this study provides first evidence about NPDU among Estonian adults. 3 out of 100 persons had experienced nonmedical prescription drug use, during last year. NPDU was related to depressive symptoms and poor physical health, which warrants special attention because it could create further serious health issues. Also was related to other substance use including concurrent substance use. Further research is needed to tailor prevention and treatment efforts.