

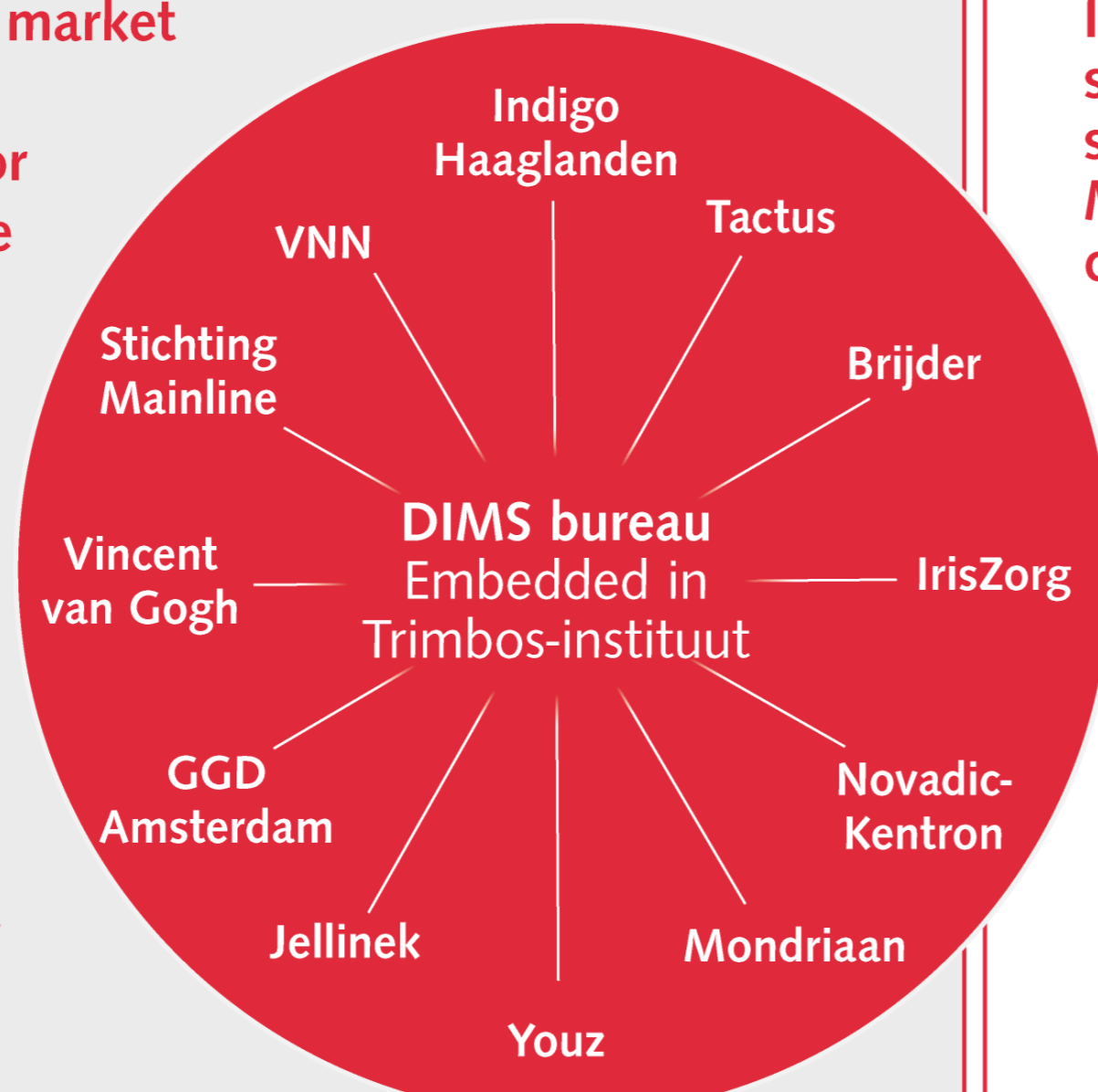
Trends on the Dutch drug market identified by DIMS in 2018

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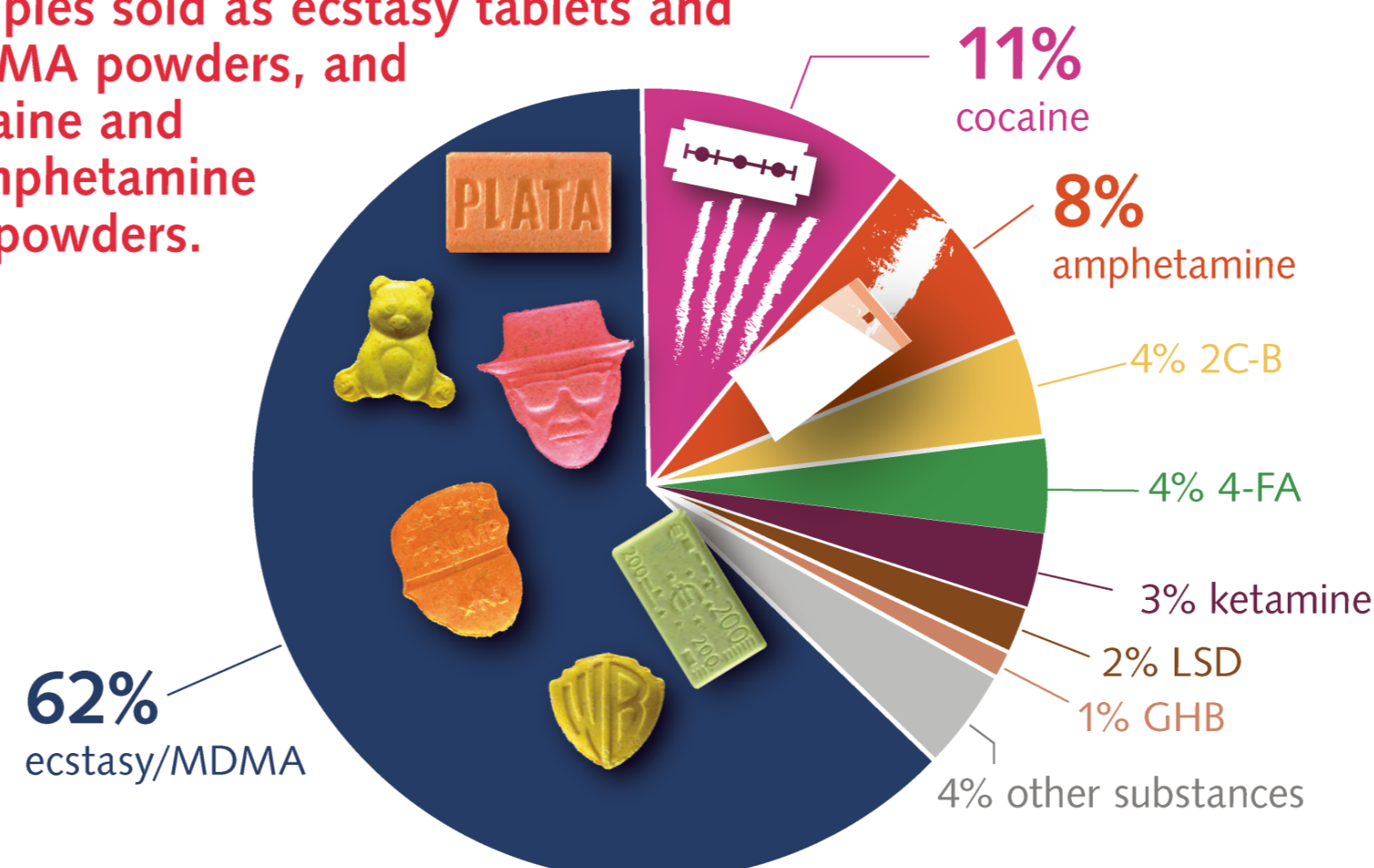
What is DIMS?

- DIMS monitors the Dutch drug market for 27 years.
- The main objective is to monitor trends and developments of the Dutch recreational drug market and to identify and issue possible additional health risks.
- The DIMS network consists of 32 office-based drug checking facilities hosted usually by institutions for addiction care and drug prevention.
- DIMS is funded by the Ministry of Health (VWS) and local authorities.



Samples submitted to DIMS

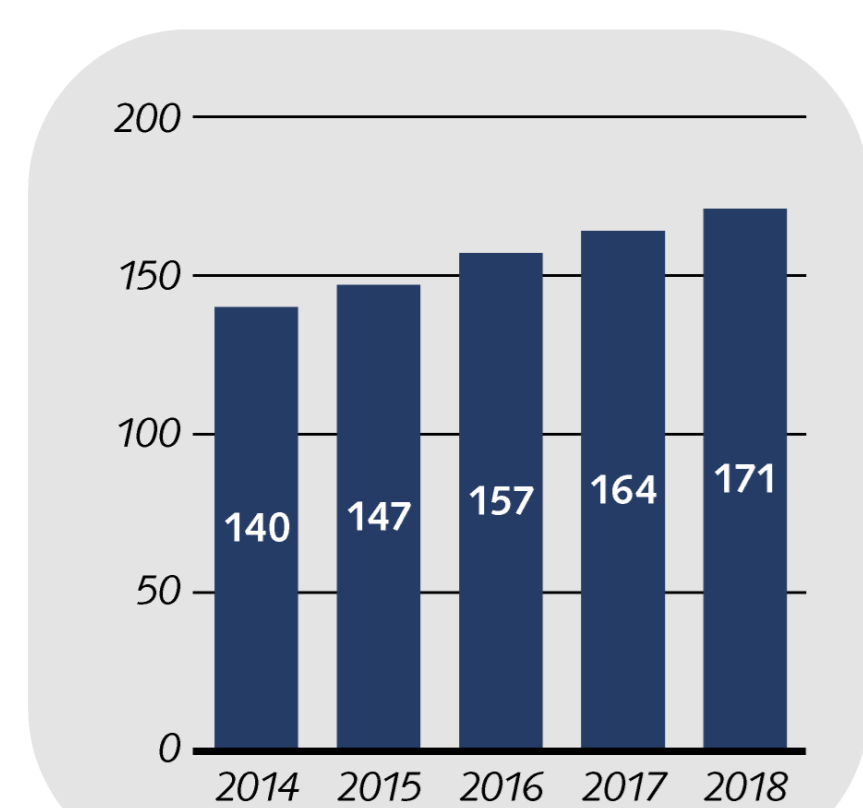
In 2018, 13,540 visitors handed in 12,634 samples for analysis. This involved mainly samples sold as ecstasy tablets and MDMA powders, and cocaine and amphetamine powders.



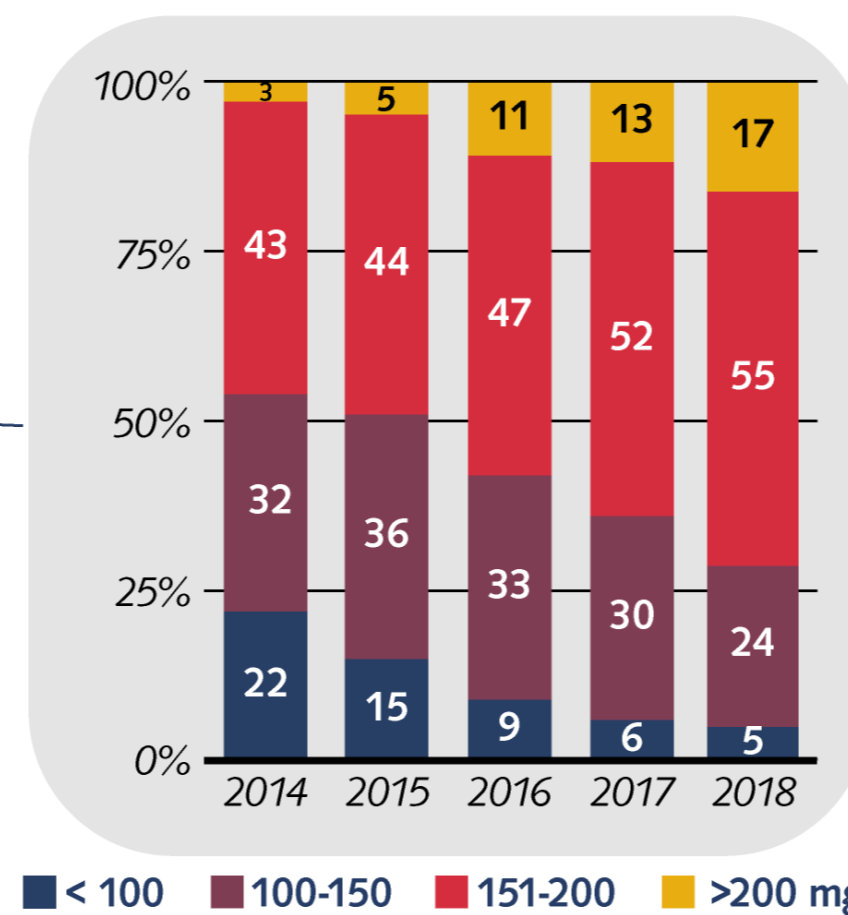
- All tablets that could not be determined and identified through a database, as well as other substances, were either analysed using Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) or using gas chromatography mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and liquid chromatography diode array detection (LC-DAD).
- Wherever applicable, data are calculated in base, not in salt.

Ecstasy/MDMA

Most of the samples handed in involve ecstasy tablets or MDMA powders, in 2018 62% of the total.



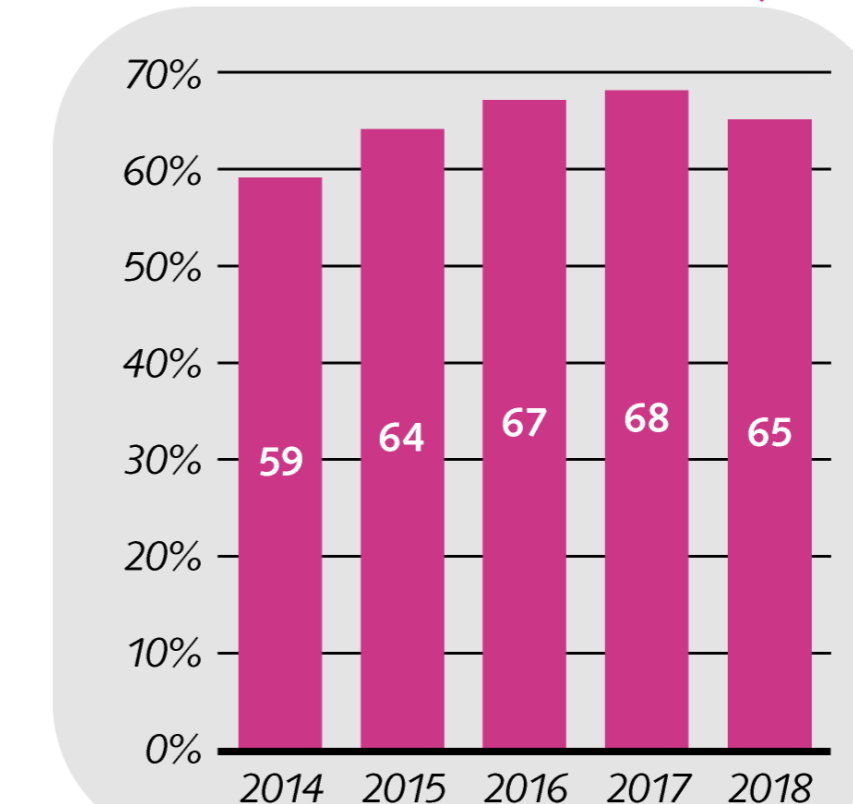
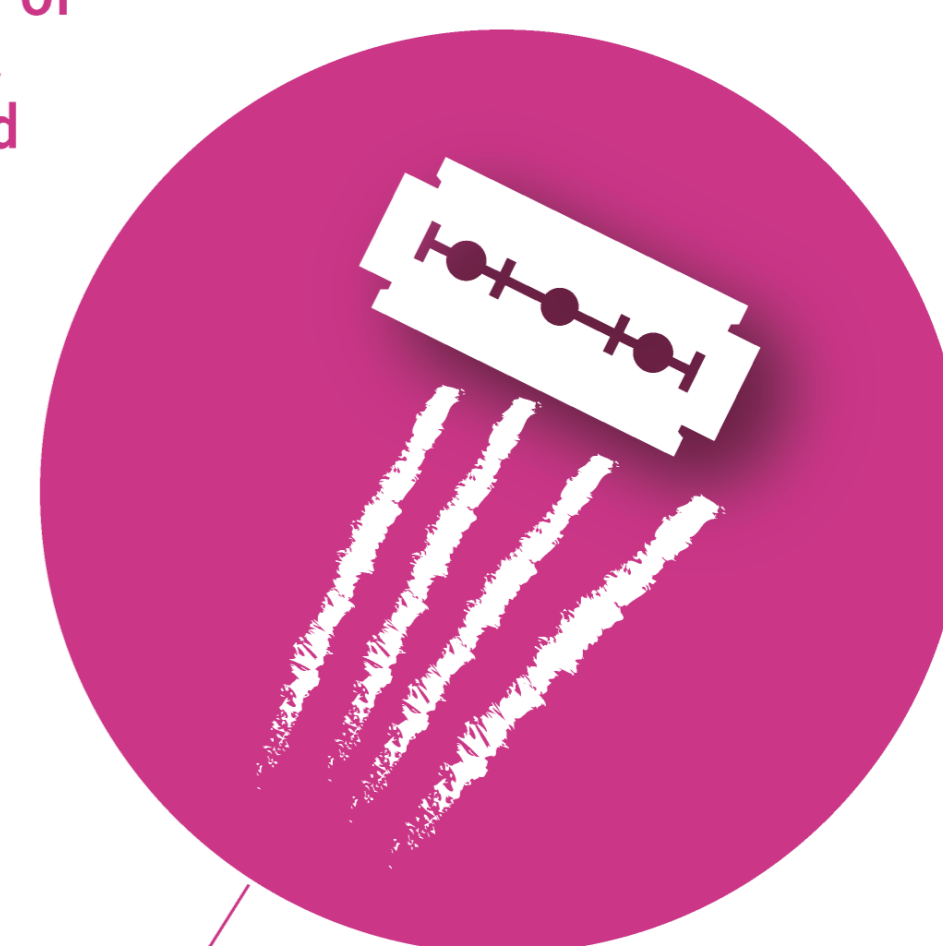
Average dosage of MDMA in ecstasy tablets (in mgs).



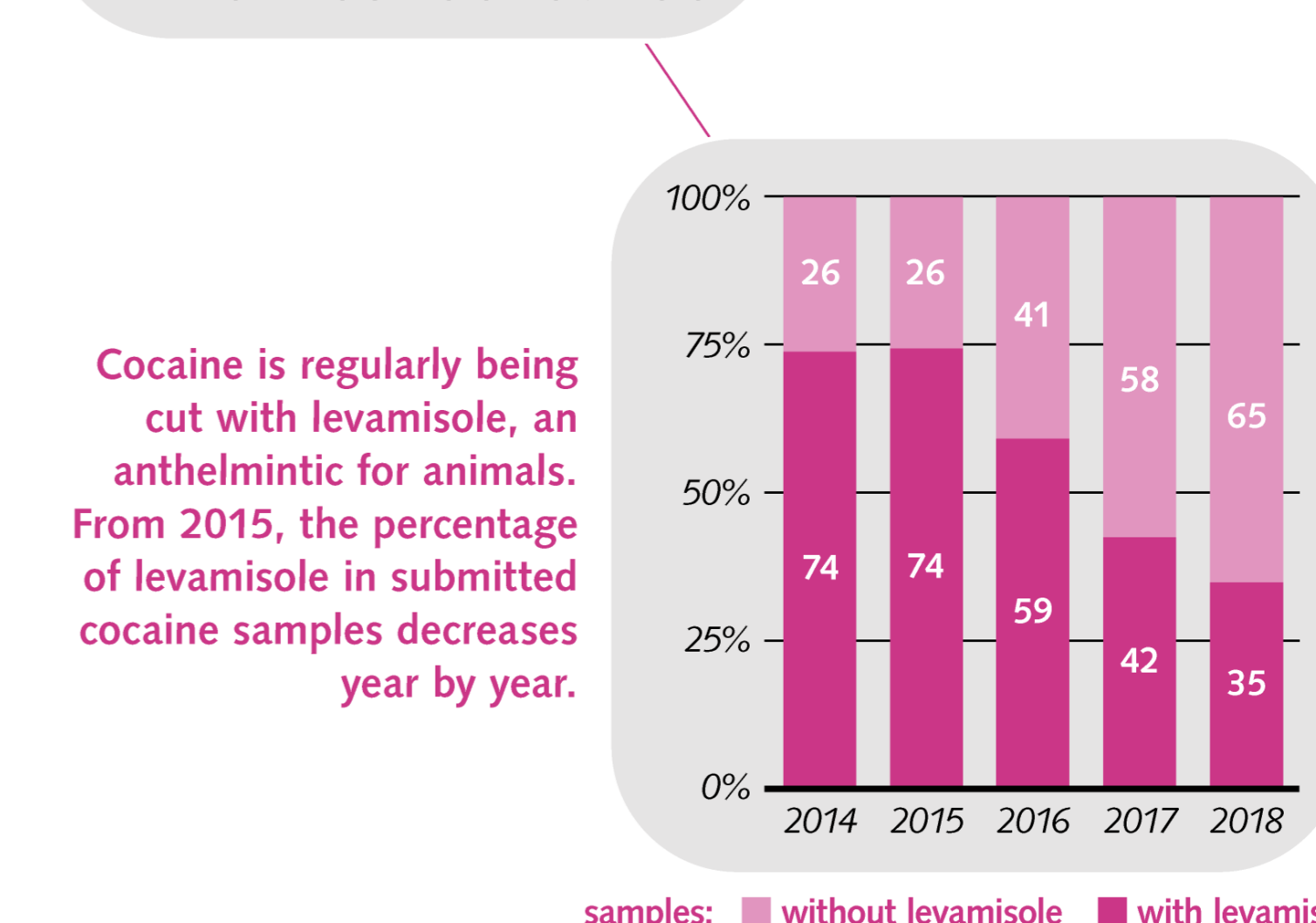
72% of the samples handed in at DIMS contain over 150 mgs of MDMA, the strongest tablet in 2018 contained 296 mgs of MDMA.

Cocaine

In terms of number of submitted samples, cocaine is in second place with a share of 11%.



The average percentage of cocaine in cocaine samples increased over the last years, but decreased slightly in 2018.

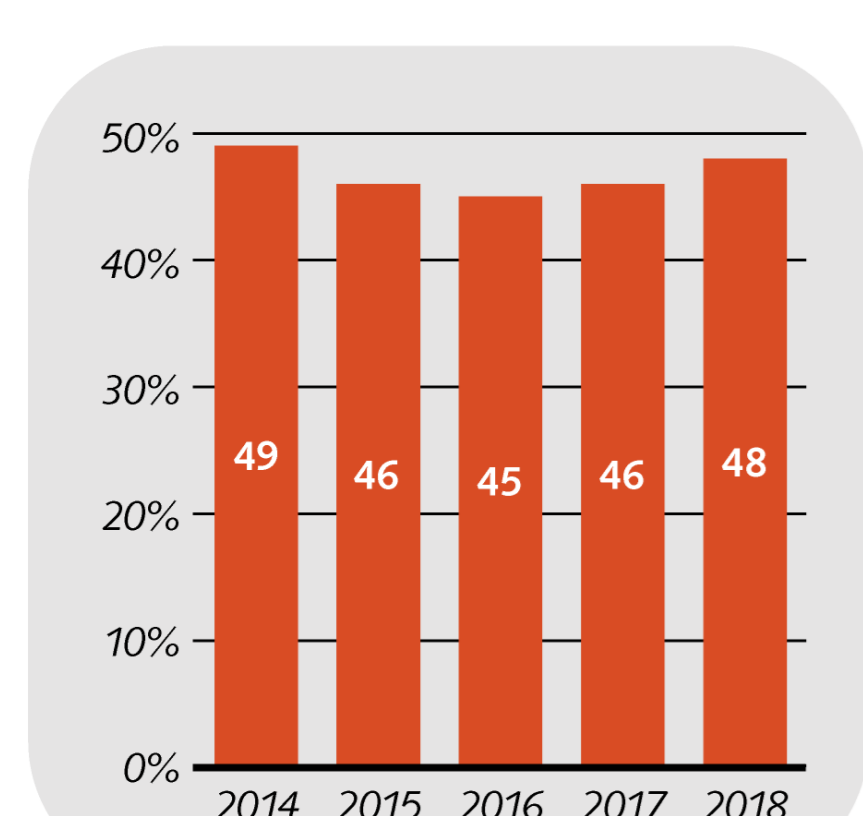


Cocaine is regularly being cut with levamisole, an anthelmintic for animals. From 2015, the percentage of levamisole in submitted cocaine samples decreases year by year.

samples: ■ without levamisole ■ with levamisole

Amphetamine

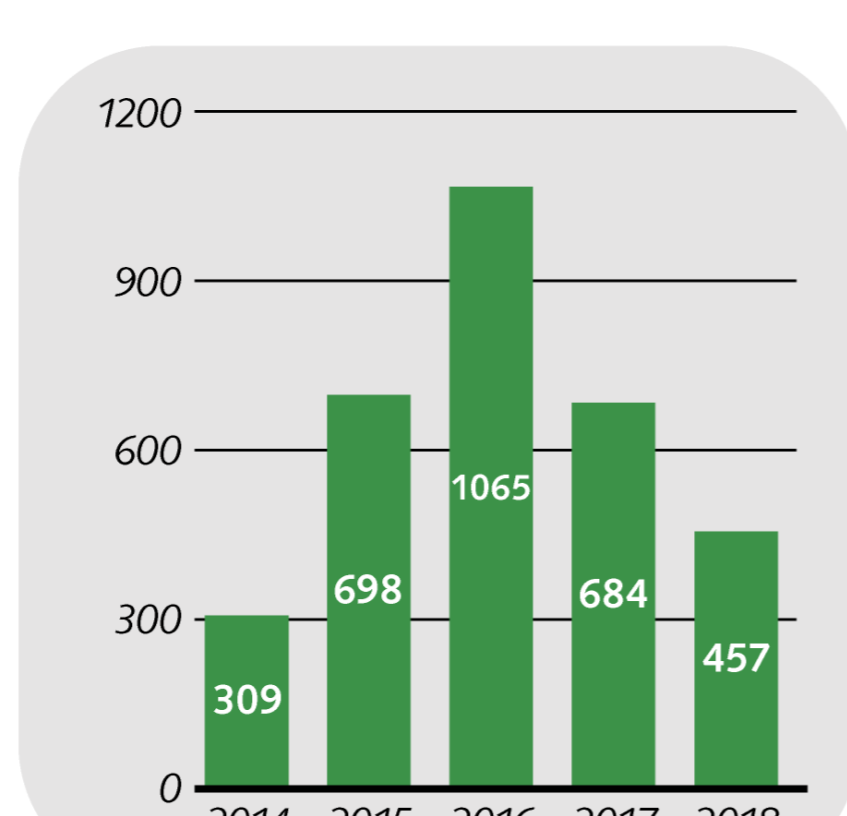
8% percent of all submitted samples is amphetamine.



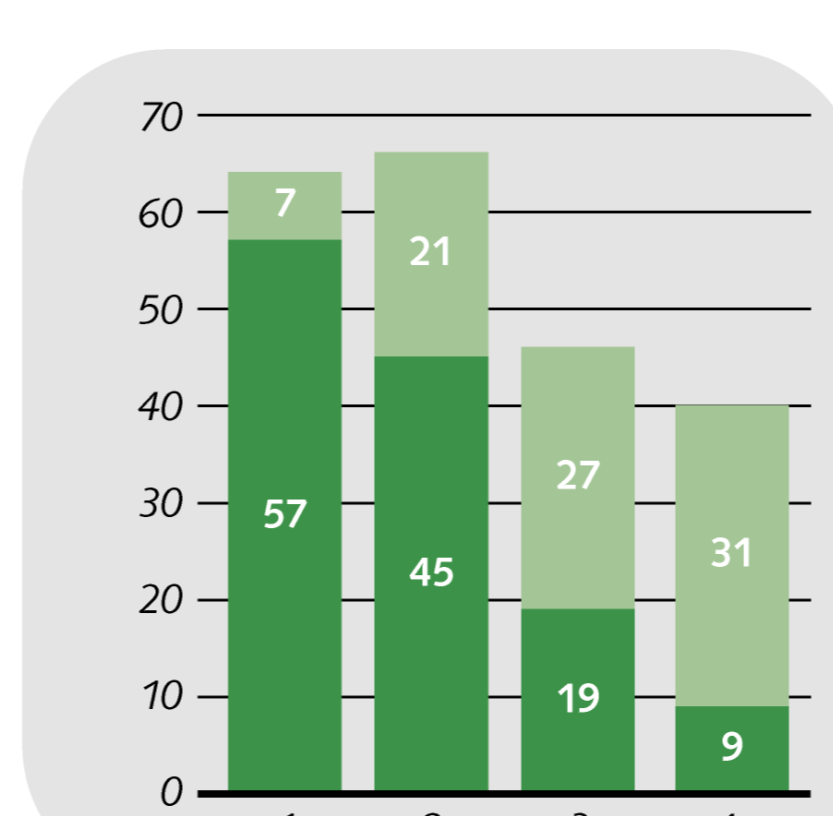
The average percentage of amphetamine in amphetamine samples hardly varies from year to year. In 2018, this average was 48%.

4-FA (4-fluoroamphetamine)

4-FA (also known as 4-fluoroamphetamine or 4-FMP) currently forms 4% of all samples that are handed in at DIMS and is submitted in the form of powders, tablets, crystals and capsules.



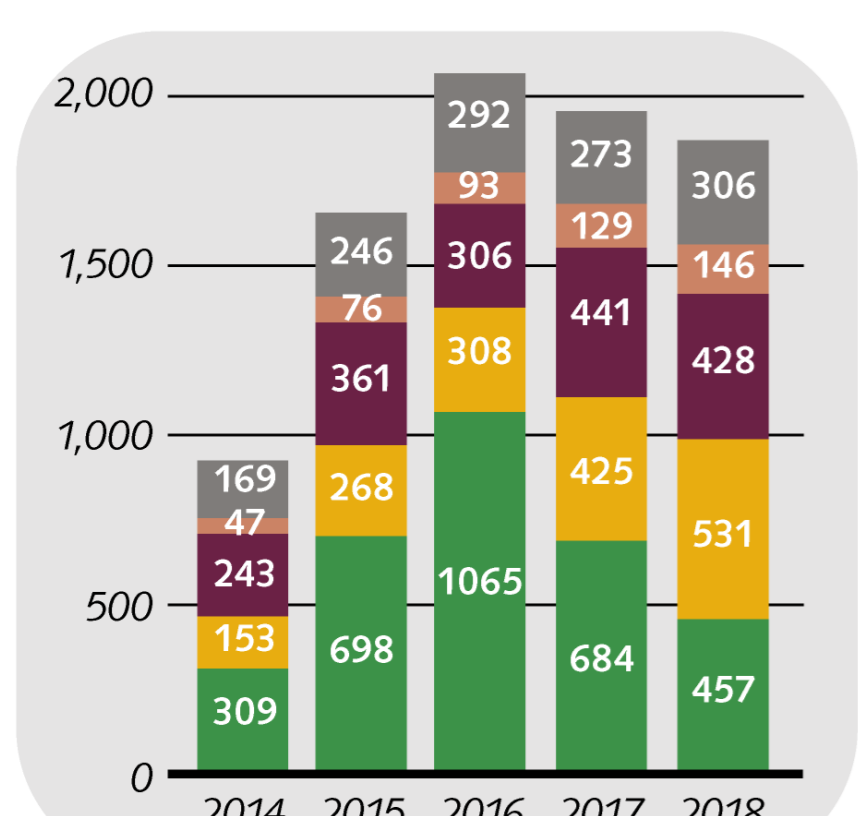
From 2013, a sharp increase of samples sold as 4-FA was seen. Since 2017, the year in which 4-FA was banned, this number decreased sharply.



In 2018, lab analysed samples sold as 4-FA (■) increasingly contained only 4-FMA (■)(4-fluoromethamphetamine).

NPS

2% of all submitted samples are other NPS mostly belonging to the category of phenethylamines and cathinones.



Number of samples related to new psychoactive substances (NPS), sold as:

Conclusions

- In the Netherlands, MDMA is the most popular submitted substance.
- The increasing high dosages in ecstasy tablets, but also the replacement of 4-FA by 4-FMA are potential hazardous developments that need to be shared with users.
- By rapidly communicating these results to users of these drugs, DIMS is an efficient tool not only for monitoring the national drug market, but also for harm reduction.

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.



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