

 **European Web  
Survey on Drugs**

## EWSD in Luxembourg: contributions and challenges

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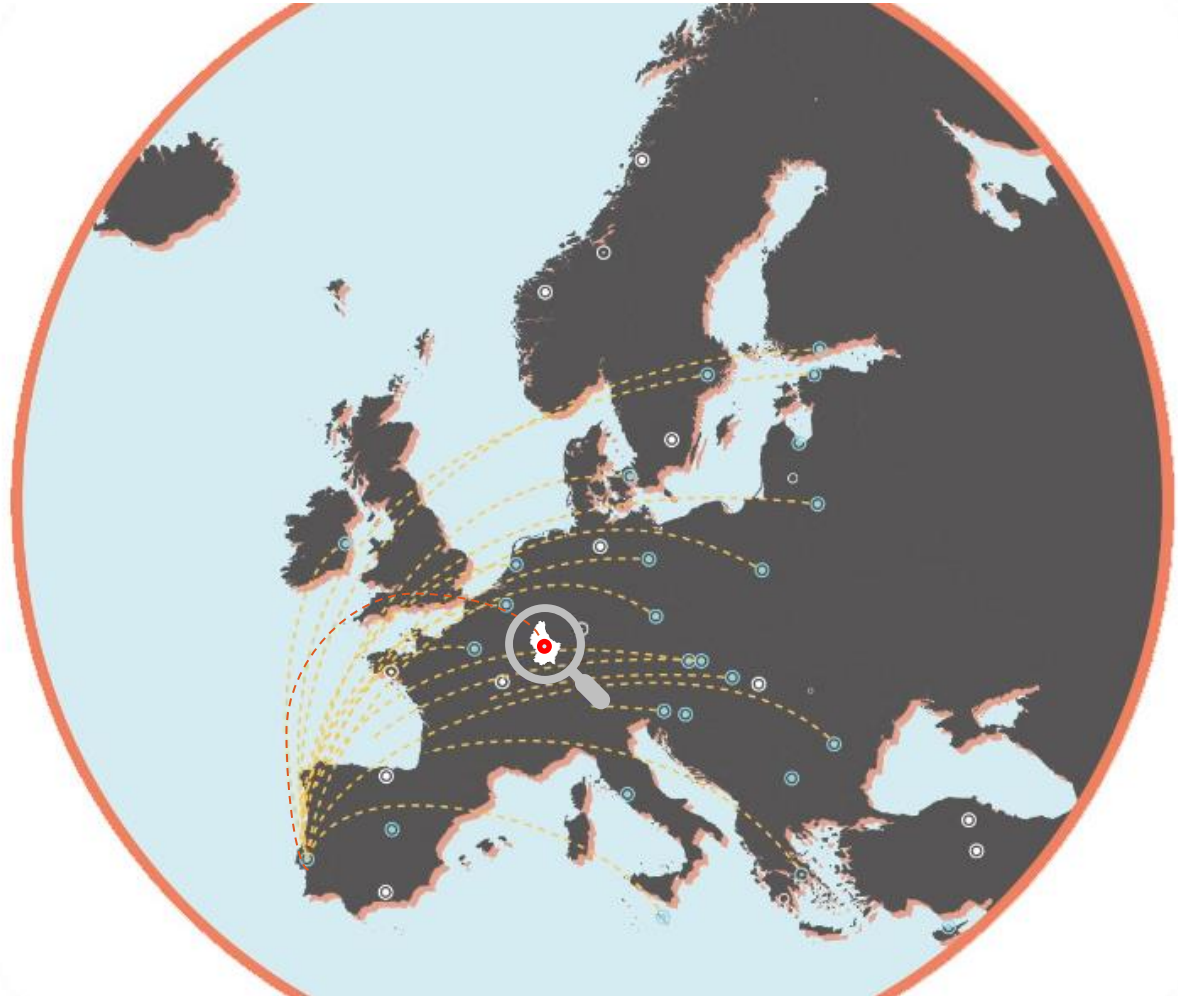
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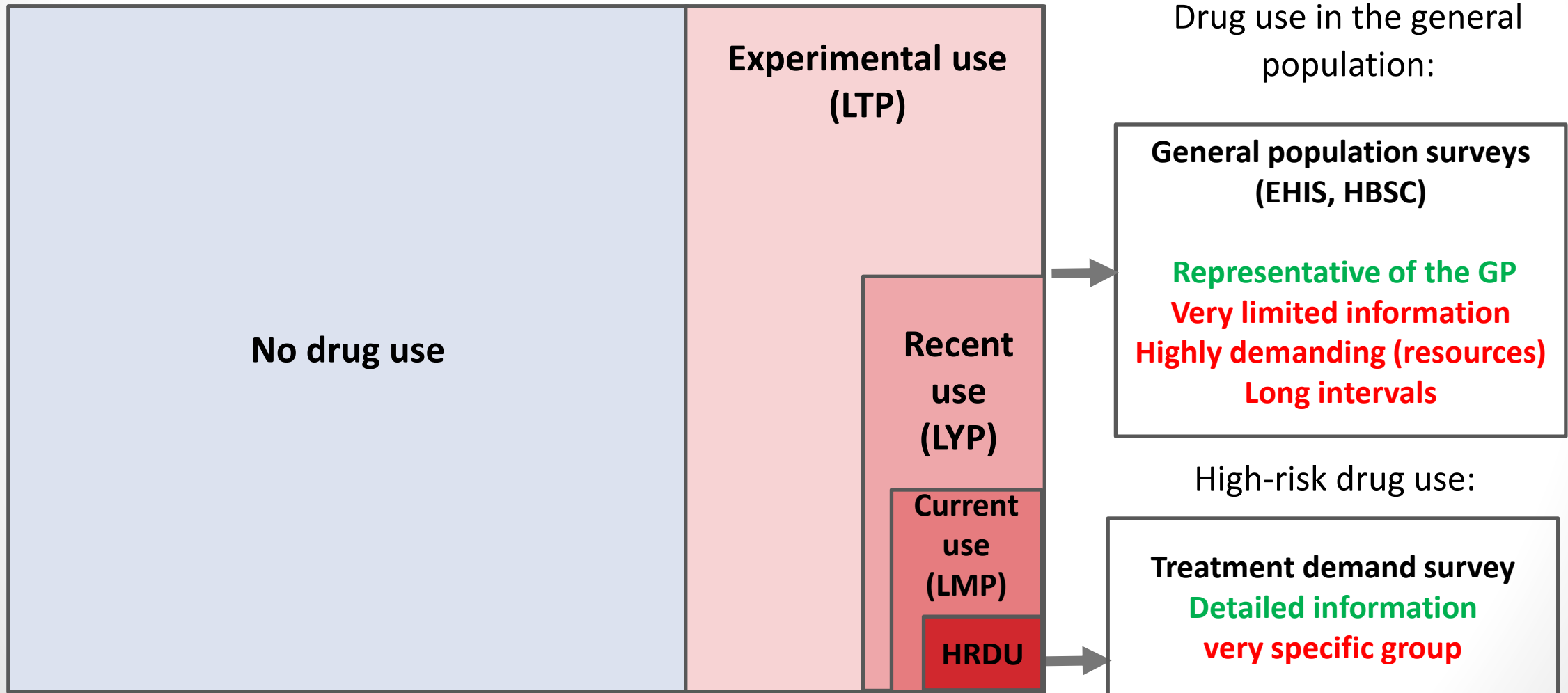
# Context

- Drug use is measured through different sources, each tackling different types of use and with certain advantages and limits
- NO GPS focused on drug use in the country:  
↓
- Information on drug use among the general population is limited
- If understanding drug use would be a puzzle, Luxembourg disposes of some pieces of the puzzle, while others are still missing.



# Available data sources

## Population



# Available data sources (cont.)

**Lack of insight and understanding of drug use (and the drug market) in the country**

**What are drug users'...**

Consumption habits?

Patterns of use ?

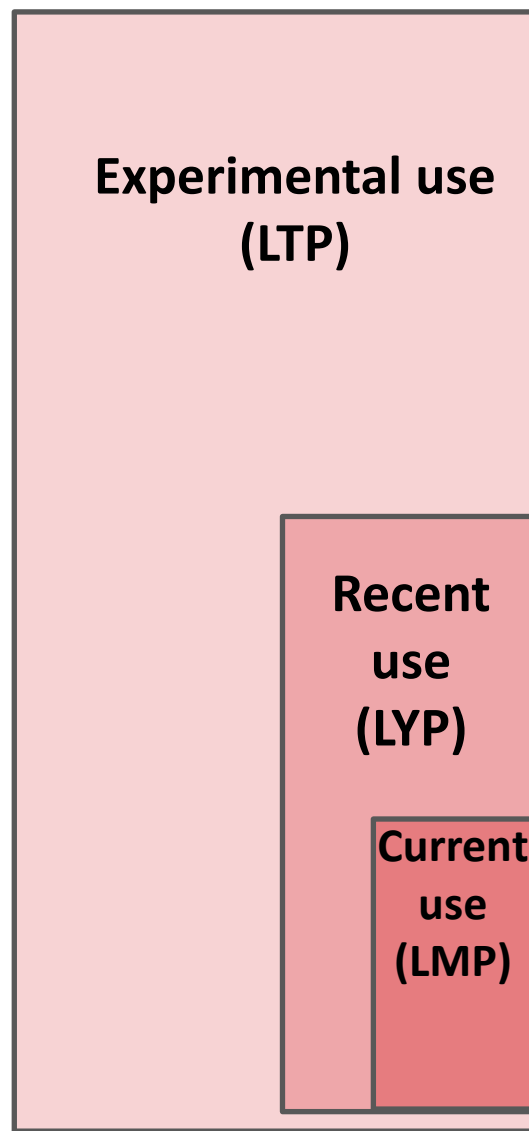
Risk perceptions?

Attitudes towards drug use  
(in particular cannabis)?

New (risky) trends?

Sources of provision of drugs?

Prices on the illicit market?

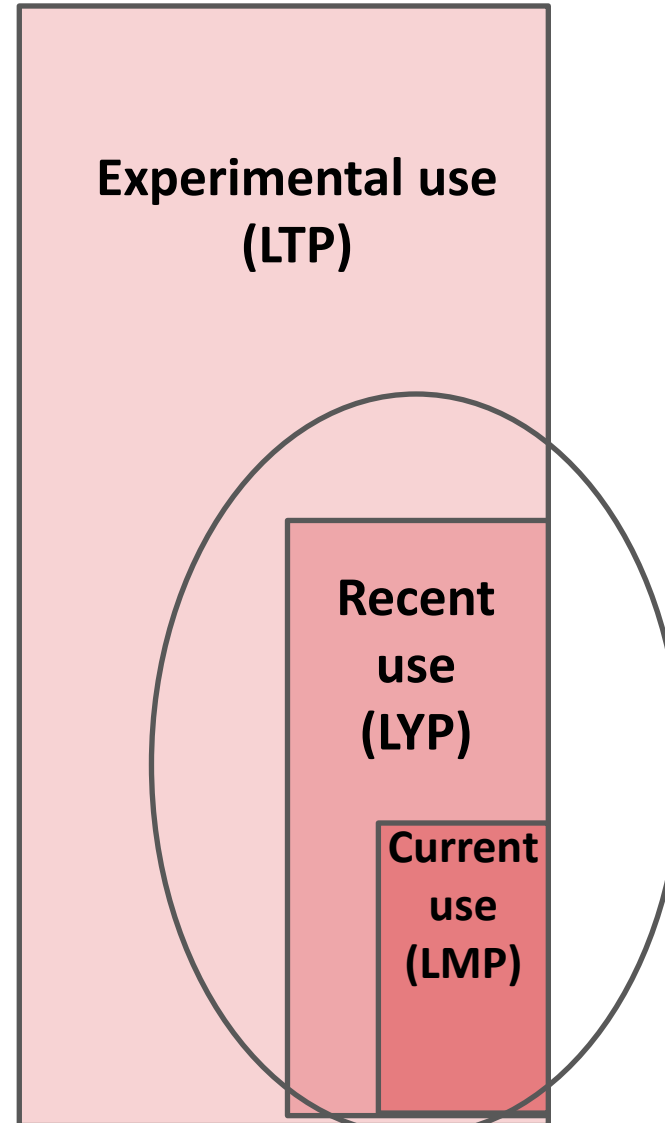


# EWSD: aim

an opportunity to complement treatment and GPS data, focusing in the specific group of recent and current drug users

## Aim:

to develop a better understanding of drug use patterns among a target group of “recreational drug users” and learn more about the national illicit drug market



European Web Survey on Drugs



# EWSD: method

- Target group: **Adults** aged 18 years **residents in Luxembourg** with experience of **illicit drug use over the past 12 months**
- Recruitment: social network platforms (Facebook, Instagram) supported by Health Authorities and national partners
- Voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Available in several languages (English, German, French or more)
- Respondents: approx. 2/3 of male respondents; a great majority aged 18 - 34 years old

EWSD, 2018	Mini-EWSD2020 : COVID-19, 2020	EWSD, 2021
Between August -October 2018	Between April - June 2020	Between April -June 2021
Gain insight about: drug users' patterns of use supply habits attitudes Risk perceptions towards drug use	To rapidly assess the impact of the COVID-19 related restrictions on drug consumption patterns, drug acquisition behaviors and drug market.	To identify latent subgroups/clusters of herbal cannabis users and analyze associations between these subgroups and auxiliary variables

# EWSD: highlights

	CANNABIS (RESIN)	CANNABIS (WEED)	COCAINE POWDER	AMPHETAMINE	MDMA	NPS HERBAL
Average number of days of use – last month	12 DAYS / MONTH	16 DAYS / MONTH	5 DAYS / MONTH	6 DAYS / MONTH	4 DAYS / MONTH	14 DAYS / MONTH
Amount (grams or units) used on a typical day	2.85 JOINTS	2.44 JOINTS	1.18 GR	0.8 GR	0.81 GR	1.75 GR
Amount bought on a typical purchase (grams/units)	4.06 GR	4.56 GR	2.45 GR	8.75 TABLETS	4.61 TABLETS	16.69 GR

FIGURE 3  
Risk perception of regular cannabis use among frequent and infrequent cannabis users

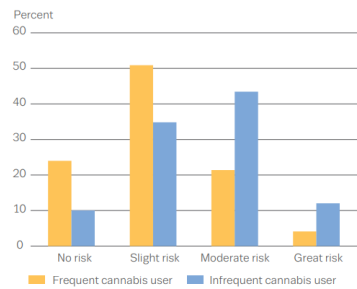


FIGURE 4  
Risk perception of experimental cocaine or crack use among frequent and infrequent cocaine users

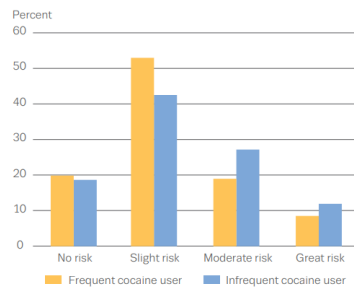
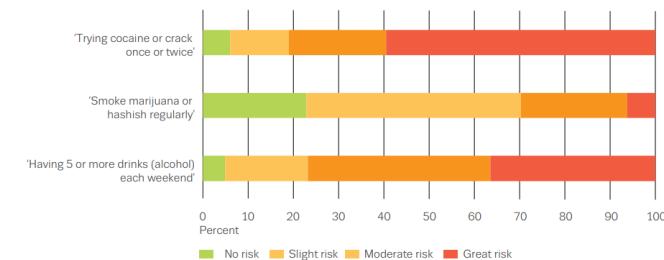


FIGURE 2  
Risk perception associated to the use of cocaine, cannabis and alcohol



## EWSD2018 We learned that...

- Cannabis and alcohol use are not associated with the use of other types of drugs. Use of other drugs such as cocaine increases the likelihood of using other types of hard drugs
- NPS may have a higher presence in LU than expected and are being used by this target group
- The majority of the drugs obtained are shared with others – calling attention to the social component of drug use
- Prices: Cocaine is the most expensive drug and amphetamine the cheapest
- Drugs are obtained predominantly through a dealer (i.e. bought on the illicit market) or for free
- The use of cannabis is considered less risky than the use of cocaine and alcohol. Frequent cannabis users tend to consider frequent cannabis use as less risky than infrequent users
- Recreational drug users tend to be favorable to the permission of cannabis use



# EWSD: highlights

## EWSD2021 We learned that...

- Subgroups of herbal cannabis users may be differentiated beyond the criteria of frequency of use during last month
- (herbal) cannabis users can be better categorized if other variables such as **frequency of use per day** (i.e. nb of joints smoked per day), **amounts used per consumption** and the **frequency of buying** are also taken into account:
  - Experimental users (Cluster 1)
  - Medium-responsibility users (Cluster 2)
  - Low responsibility users (Cluster 3)
- The variable “frequency of use” per se did not allow to distinguish between “medium-responsibility users” and “low responsibility users” and the other variables were important to better distinguish these 2 groups
- These groups/profiles differ in terms of socio-demographic characteristics but also in their use of illicit and licit substances. These different groups may be exposed to varying risks

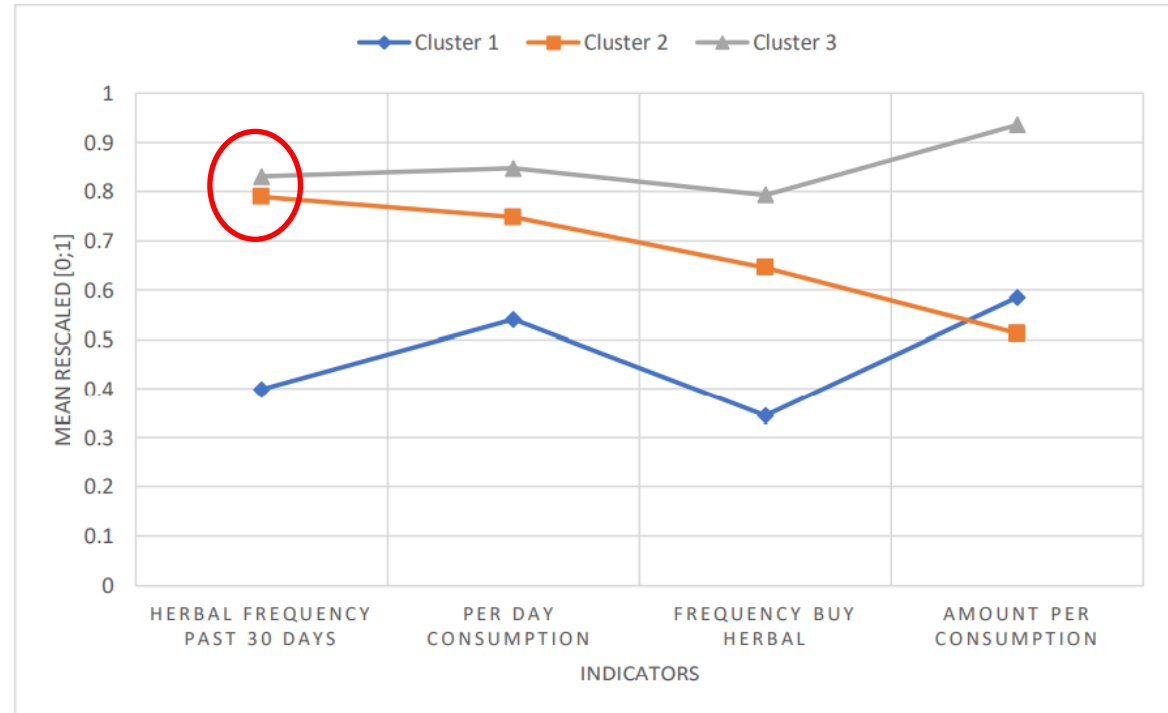


Figure 2. Cannabis user profiles for the 3-class model on relevant indicator variables

# EWSD: the pros !

- Method wise:
  - Allowed a **wide** distribution and access to **hidden populations**; these format increased the respondents perception of anonymity/security, hence facilitates disclosure on sensitive topics; **cheap and quick** data collection
  - **Participation rates** were **high!** Sample sizes for subgroups of users were larger than in GPS data (small country) : more meaningful!
- Content wise: **detailed information!**
  - Allowed a level of **in-depth information** that other national sources didn't
  - Particularly in a country without GPS Drugs
  - Increased knowledge about:
    - Consumption and supply habits of drug users
    - Motivations to use
    - Attitudes towards drug (cannabis) use
    - Risk perceptions related to drug use
    - Profiles of (herbal) cannabis users

**High potential to inform  
and draw targeted  
prevention and  
intervention programs  
AND  
To inform policy making**

# EWSD: the cons...

- Large number of respondents excluded : non-eligible → **large number of non-residents**
- Self-selected sample highly skewed to a younger demographic (**older groups underrepresented**)
- **Other specific groups may also be under-represented** in our web-survey (e.g. persons with limited internet access, no use of social networks)
- Restricted to 18y or above → **exclusion of younger groups of users**
  - missing important/relevant and rich information on drug use among the younger
- A self-selected sample restricts the possibility of generalization of the results beyond the specific targeted group. **Non-representative** of the general population but also not possible to generalize results to a broader group of recreational drug users

**How can we improve recruitment and sampling strategies in order to include broader/different types of recreational drug users in our samples (increase representativity and potential generalization of results)?**

# Key takeaway messages

- Understanding drug use in the country is complex
- Different data sources are pieces of a puzzle that contribute in different ways to the overall understanding of the phenomenon.
- Target web-surveys (EWSD) are an important piece of the puzzle:
  - While results from the EWSD are not representative of the general population, its findings have been **improving significantly the understanding of substance use and the drug market** in the country
  - High potential to contribute to the development of **targeted prevention and intervention strategies** and to **inform drug-related policies**
- The relevance of websurveys in LU tends to increase, even more considering the **political context of regulation of access to cannabis for recreational purposes**:
  - Previous editions already contributed to inform the process (e.g. amounts used; prices)
  - Data expected to become increasingly important to inform the following phases of the regulation process (**EWSD-Cannabis?**)

*How can we improve recruitment and sampling strategies in order to include broader/different types of recreational drug users in our samples and increase representativity and potential generalization of results?*

*How to improve comparability across countries?*



# Thank you for your attention

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# EWSD: highlights

## Mini-EWSD: impact COVID-19

### We learned that...

- During lockdown:
  - MDMA/ecstasy and cocaine use were the most affected – more often reduced. Likely related to reduced mobility, closure of nightlife and festive events.
  - More cannabis users increased their use, compared to those who reduced or stopped using during the first lockdown
  - Reasons to increase drug use: Boredom, anxiety or to help coping with the pandemic
  - Reasons to decrease drug use: reduced availability, ability to obtain and fewer opportunities to use
  - Perceived no changes in terms of purity and quantity of drugs obtained. In terms of price, a slightly higher proportion considered that prices increased



A focus on change in the national drug market

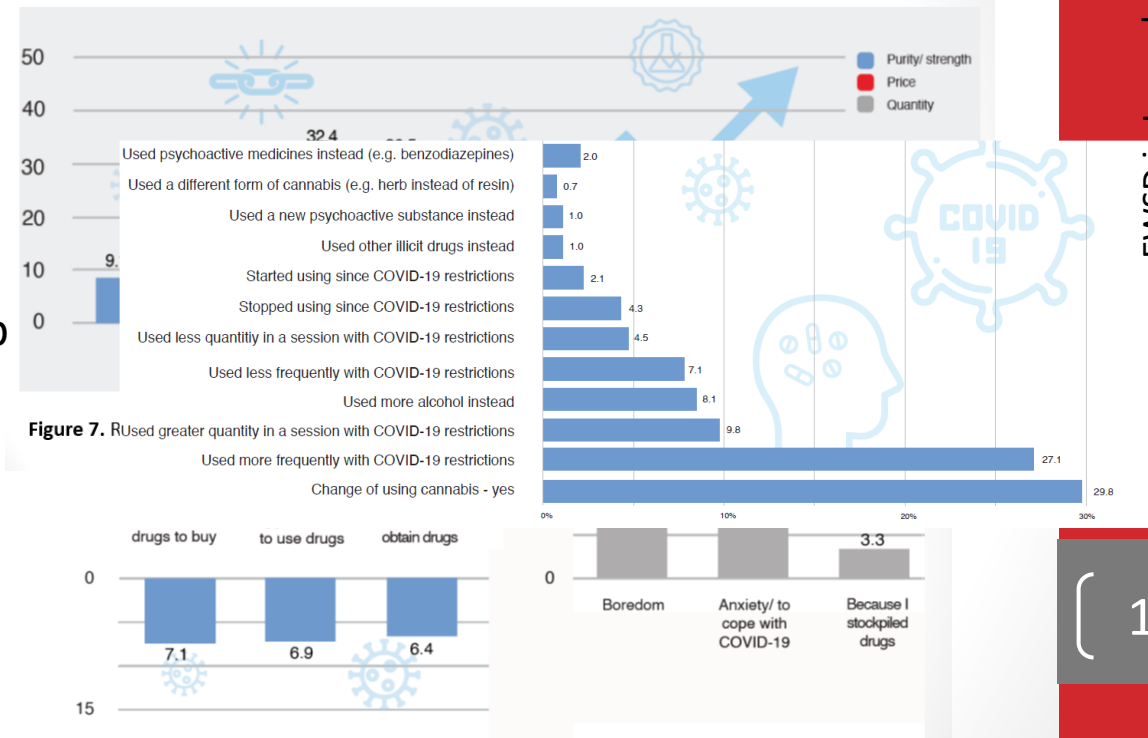


Figure 7. Used greater quantity in a session with COVID-19 restrictions

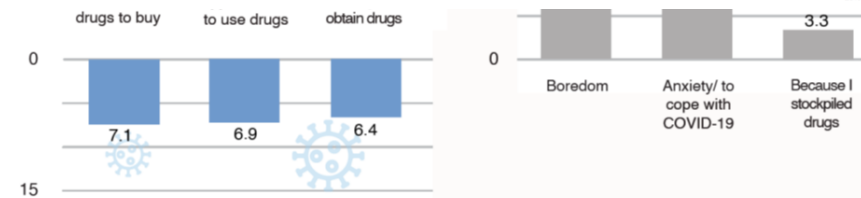


Figure 6. Most frequent reasons (valid %) for increased or decreased drug use as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions