

New world, old questionnaires

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Population Survey

- A principal method for monitoring the development of drug use.
- A serious limitation: its capability to measure the state of art correctly is dependent on the know-how of a researcher to ask right questions.
- When conditions change, questions should be adjusted to that.
- In time-series studies researchers are quite conservative and, in the fear of weakening the follow-up potentialities of their instrument, reluctant to make changes in questions.
- In practice, a changing world is often followed up for years with unaffected instruments.

In this presentation

- To take up two issues where drug surveys have lost track of change
 1. The modes of cannabis use
 2. Polydrug use
- Baselines
 - EMCDDA Annual Drug Report 2016 and the model questionnaire
 - Literature

A changing world of cannabis use: Herbalization

- Increase in domestic cannabis cultivation => Import substitution => herbalization of the cannabis markets
- In 2010 and 2014 drug surveys we have asked marihuana and hash separately. Results show that marihuana has replaced hash as the most popular cannabis product in Finland.

The prevalence of cannabis use in Finland 2014 (The National Drug Survey, N=3,485)

	LTP	LYP
	%	%
Hashish	12,8	2,0
Marihuana	16,0	5,8
Both	9,4	1,8

- Not separated in European drug surveys. Estimations of the market shares are based on seizures data.

A changing world of cannabis use: Medical cannabis

- The revival of medical cannabis.
- But do we know how many of the cannabis users define themselves as medical users?
- In Finland, 2014, 78,5 % of cannabis users (LYP, N=226) was using mostly for recreational purposes, **4,5 %** mostly for medical purposes and **17 %** told that they were using equally for both aims.
- In the U.S. numbers in 2014 (LMP) were 53 % for only recreational purposes, **10 %** only for medical purposes, and **36 %** for both aims (Schauer et al., 2015).

A changing world of cannabis use: Legalization

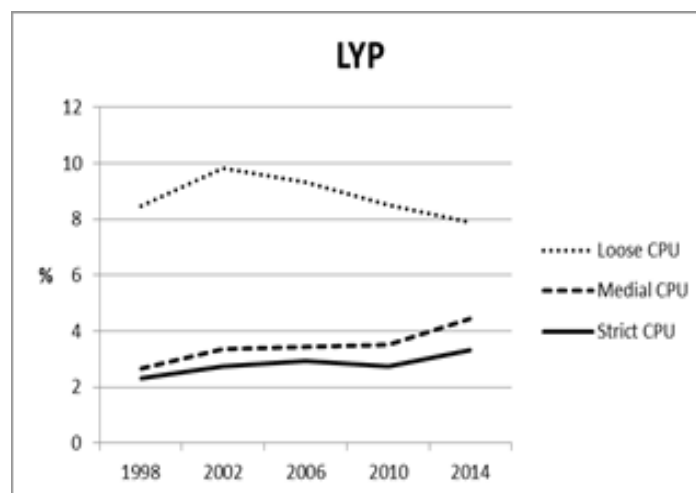
- Legalization has created a fertile ground for commercial interests in the development and marketing of new cannabis technology (edibles, concentrates and vaporizers/vape pens).
- Little is known about different modes of use.
- In the U.S., Schauer et al. (2015) is the first nationally representative assessment of the modes of marijuana use: among cannabis users LMP for vaporizers = 8% and for edibles or drink = 16%.
- In Finland, 2014 (LYP, N=210), the routes of administration for cannabis:
- **Usually** smoking = 91%, vape pen/e-cig = 2%, other vaporizer = 4%, eating = 2%
- **Occasionally** smoking = 8%, vape pen/e-cig = 8%, other vaporizer = 23%, eating = 22%
- Are vaporizers booming? Who are the users? Will Europe follow the U.S.? We don't know since we don't have measures!

Conceptual problems in the definition of polydrug use: CPU

- Polydrug use may be increasing due especially to a hyper-availability and normalization (Lamy, 2014).
- An overwhelming majority of the studies of polydrug use are employing the concept of concurrent polydrug use (CPU) which refers to the use of two or more substances within a given period of time.
- The time period used in the measurements may vary from lifetime prevalence to last year, last month and last two weeks prevalence.
- Since there is no established practice of how to measure polydrug use, the results from different studies are barely comparable, and therefore the overall picture of the prevalence of polydrug use remains vague.
- Similarly, the comparability of the results of different studies across countries remains weak.

Conceptual problems in the definition of polydrug use: Substances

- Results depend on that what substances are included in the concept, especially if tobacco is included
- From the Finnish population surveys 1998-2014



Conceptual problems in the definition of polydrug use: SPU (1)

- A rationale for the study of polydrug use as a separate phenomenon is that it induces particular pleasures and/or risks of negative health consequences.
- Occasional concurrent use of two or more substances, e.g. using cannabis once or twice and trying ecstasy in a party in addition to some weekend drinking during a year, however, does not make much sense in regards to either possible harms or intended pleasures of the use of multiple substances.
- Studies should be targeted to simultaneous use.
- *Simultaneous polydrug use* (SPU) is used to describe the ingestion of two or more substances in combination at the same time or in temporal proximity.
- But this concept has not been used in quantitative studies because it is difficult to measure.

Conceptual problems in the definition of polydrug use: SPU (2)

- In 2010 and 2014 drug surveys, we tried questions concerning simultaneous polydrug use in Finland [**prevalence among the general population/cannabis users in 2014**].
- *Have you during the last 12 months used cannabis and alcohol simultaneously? [4 / **61%**]*
- *...other illicit drugs and alcohol simultaneously? [- / **16%**]*
- *...illicit and psychoactive pharmaceutical drugs simultaneously? [1 / **8%**]*
- *...alcohol and psychoactive pharmaceutical drugs simultaneously? [2 / **13%**]*
- *...illicit drugs, alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs? [- / **7%**]*

Conclusion

1. There is an urgent need to evaluate and update our survey instruments!
2. More-detailed information about patterns of cannabis use should be collected.
3. Instead of CPU surveys should try to measure SPU

Thank you for your attention!