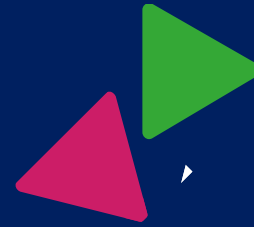


# The Citizens' Assembly on Drugs Use

A perspective from the third-level sector

Dr. Michael Byrne  
Head of Student Health  
University College Cork





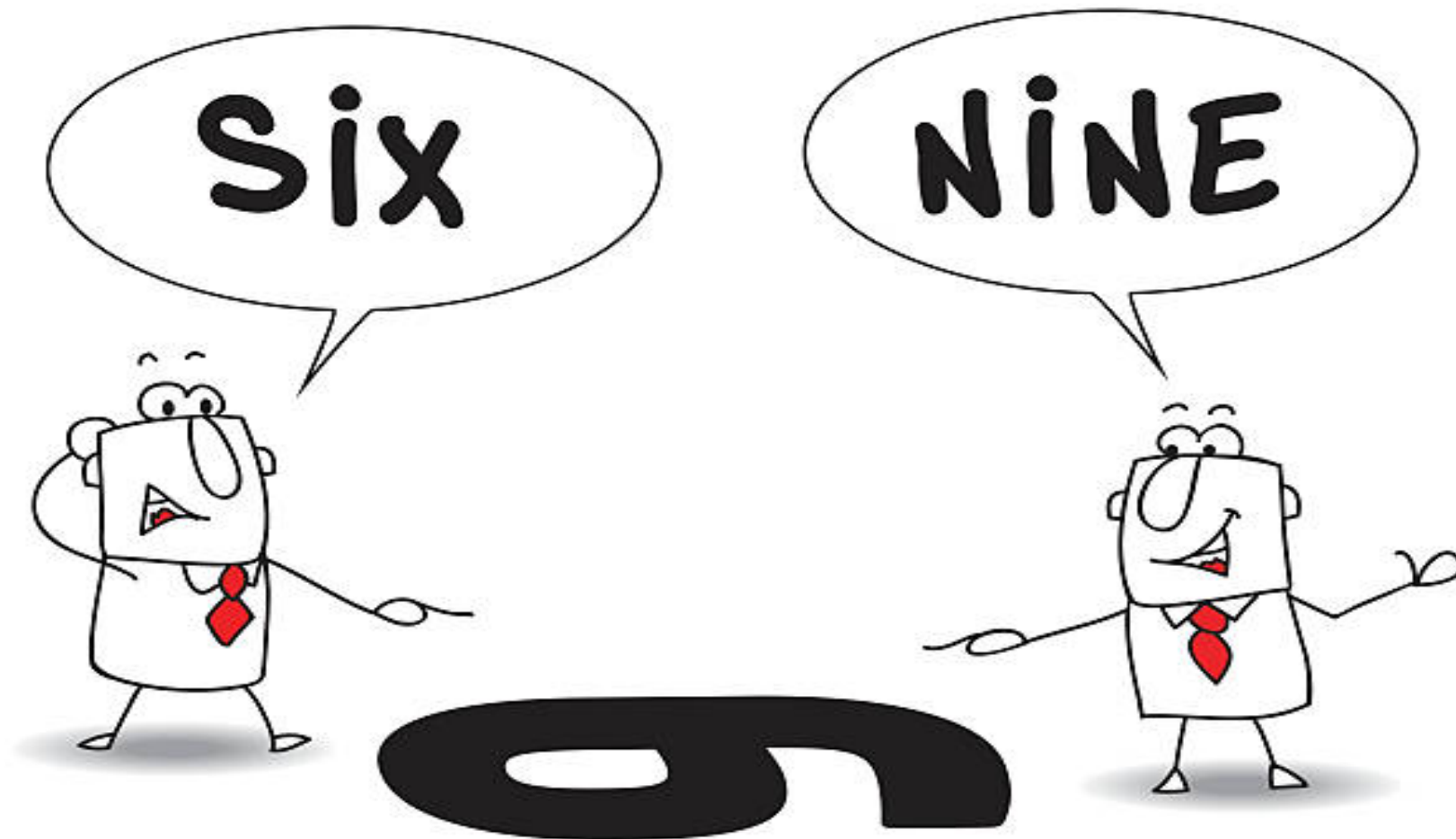
**2021**

# Drug User in Higher Education in Ireland Survey

A perspective from the third-level sector



# WHAT YOU SEE MAY DEPEND ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE



# TEAM

## MEET THE DUHEI TEAM



**Dr. Michael Byrne**  
Student Health



**Dr. Samantha Dockray**  
Applied Psychology



**Dr. Ciara Heavin**  
Health Information Systems



**Dr. Martin Davoren**  
Public Health



**Dr. Conor Linehan**  
Applied Psychology



**Jo-Hanna Ivers**  
Addiction Studies



**Samantha Dick**  
Public Health



**Dr. Vasilis Vasilou**  
Applied Psychology



**Lisa Ryan**  
Public Health



*Leading expertise in  
Applied Psychology,  
Public Health,  
Information Systems,  
Student Health and  
Addiction Studies.*

Publication

## Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances in Higher Education

From [Department of Education](#)  
Published on 25 February 2020  
Last updated on 25 February 2020

PDF

### Report of the Rapid Response Group (RRG) on use of illicit substances within Higher Education

The Rapid Response Group met on a number of occasions during the months of October and November 2019. The report that follows sets out the context to the problem of drug use facing students in our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

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PDF

### Framework based on the report of the Rapid Response Group (RRG)

Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education based on the Report of the Rapid Response Group (RRG) on Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education

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# 2021 DUHEI SURVEY

The Drug Use in Higher Education in Ireland (DUHEI) Survey 2021: Main Findings

# OBJECTIVES

## Objectives of DUHEI

**1.**

The prevalence of drug use and the range of drugs being used by students.

**2.**

The frequency, type, and impacts of reported harms arising from drug use by students.

**3.**

The motivations for drug use, and the desire and capacity to change or stop using drugs.

**4.**

The use of cognitive enhancers by students to enhance academic performance.

**5.**

The use of drugs by students during sexual activity.

**6.**

The experiences of students in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction.

**7.**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug use amongst students.



# PARTICIPANTS

---

**21** publicly funded HEIs in the Republic of Ireland participated in DUHEI

**11,500+** responses were included for analysis

**60%** were female

**81%** were undergraduates

the median age was **21**

**9%** were registered with a Disability Support Service

**90%** were EU students

The response rate to the survey was **29%**

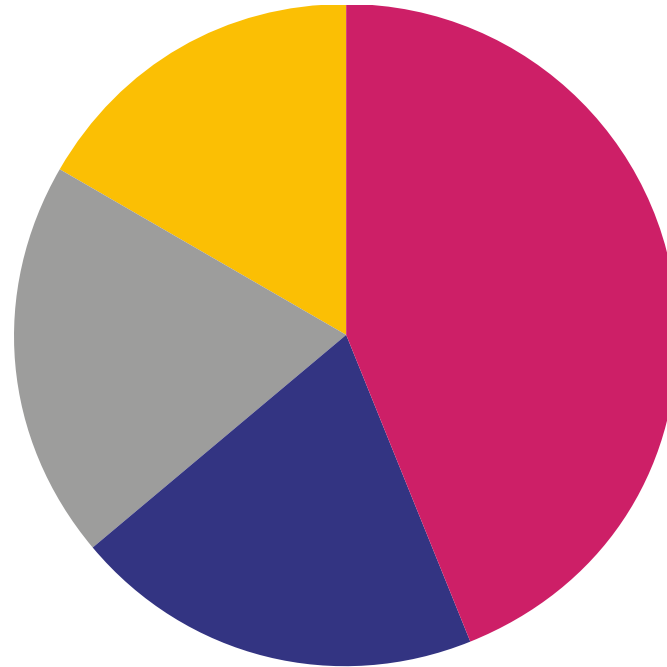
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# FINDINGS - OVERALL

Categories – Drug User Overall

DUHEI Survey

<b>43.2%</b>	<b>Never</b>
<b>19.4%</b>	<b>Prior</b>
<b>19.1%</b>	<b>Current</b>
<b>16.2%</b>	<b>Recent</b>

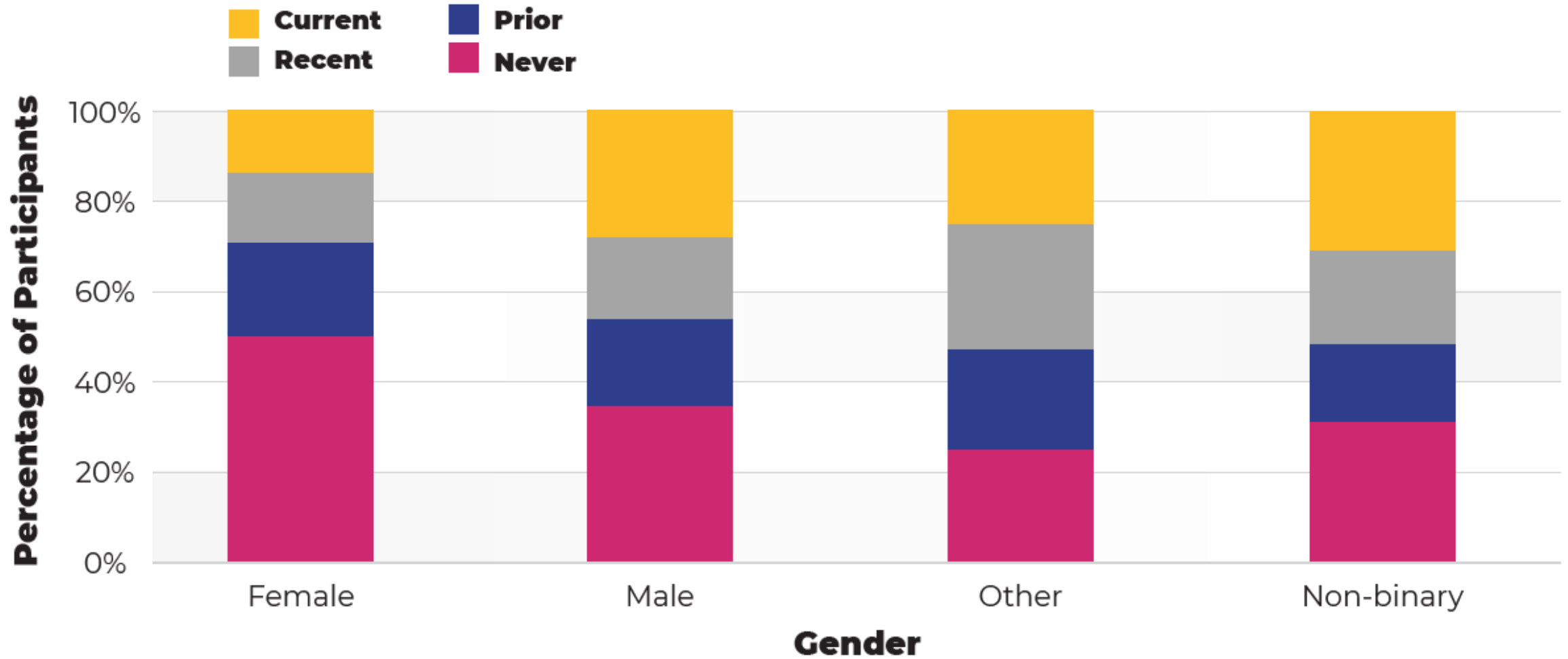


**Over half of participants reported ever using an illicit drug, with over one-third reporting drug use in the last year, and one-fifth reporting using drugs in the last month .**



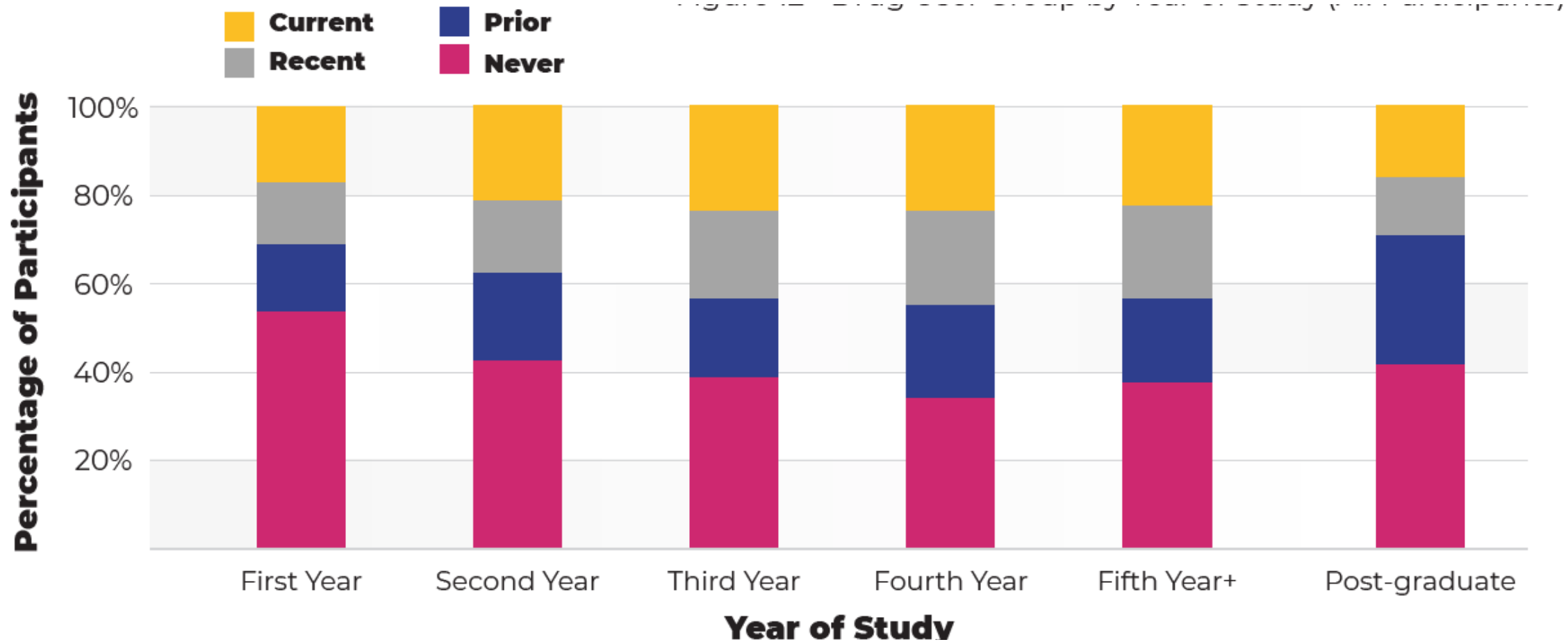
# FINDINGS - OVERALL

## Drug Use by Gender



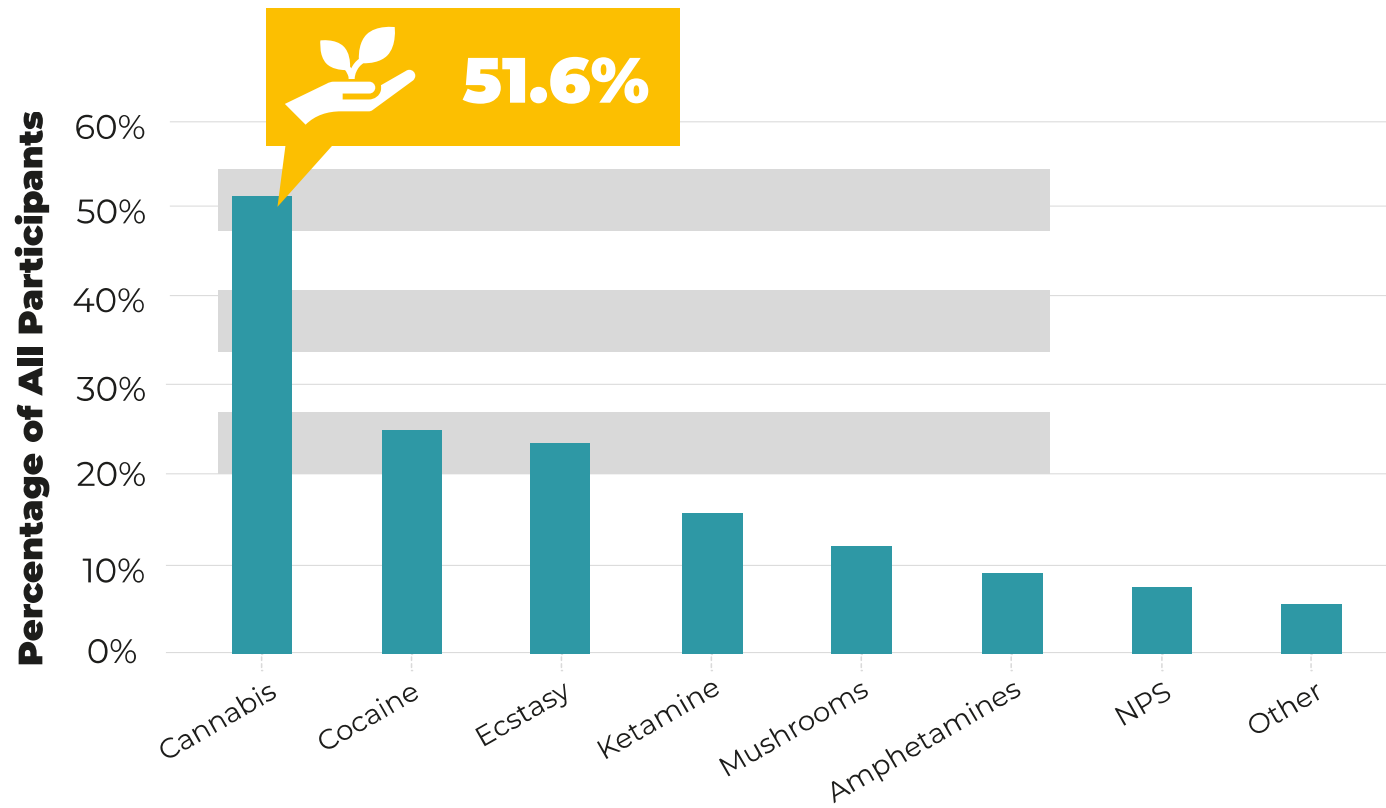
# FINDINGS - OVERALL

## Drug Use by Year of Study



# FINDINGS - OVERALL

## Drugs Used



# DUHEI DATA 2021 v CLAN DATA 2002

Table 7 - Comparison of Drug Use Prevalence:  
CLAN (2002–2003) v DUHEI (2021)

<b>Drug or Drug Type Use</b>	<b>CLAN (2002–2003)</b>	<b>DUHEI (2021)</b>
Cannabis Past 12-Month	37.3%	30.2%
Cannabis Past 30-Day	20.0%	16.3%
Cocaine Past 12-Month	5.8%	15.7%
Ecstasy Past 12-Month	8.0%	11.3%
Ketamine Past 12-Month	-	9.5%
Magic Mushrooms Past 12-Month	4.9%	5.2%
NPS Past 12-Month	-	3.1%

# PARTICIPANTS

## Drug User Group Definitions

DUHEI Group	DUHEI Definition	EMCDDA Categories
Never User	Reporting never using drugs.	Never
Prior User	Reporting using drugs at least once, but > 12 months ago.	Lifetime
Recent User	Participant reporting using drugs within the last 12 months, but not within the last 30 days.	Last Year (12 months)
Current User	Participant reporting using drugs in the last 30 days.	Last Month (30 days)



**Never User**



**Prior User**




**Recent User**

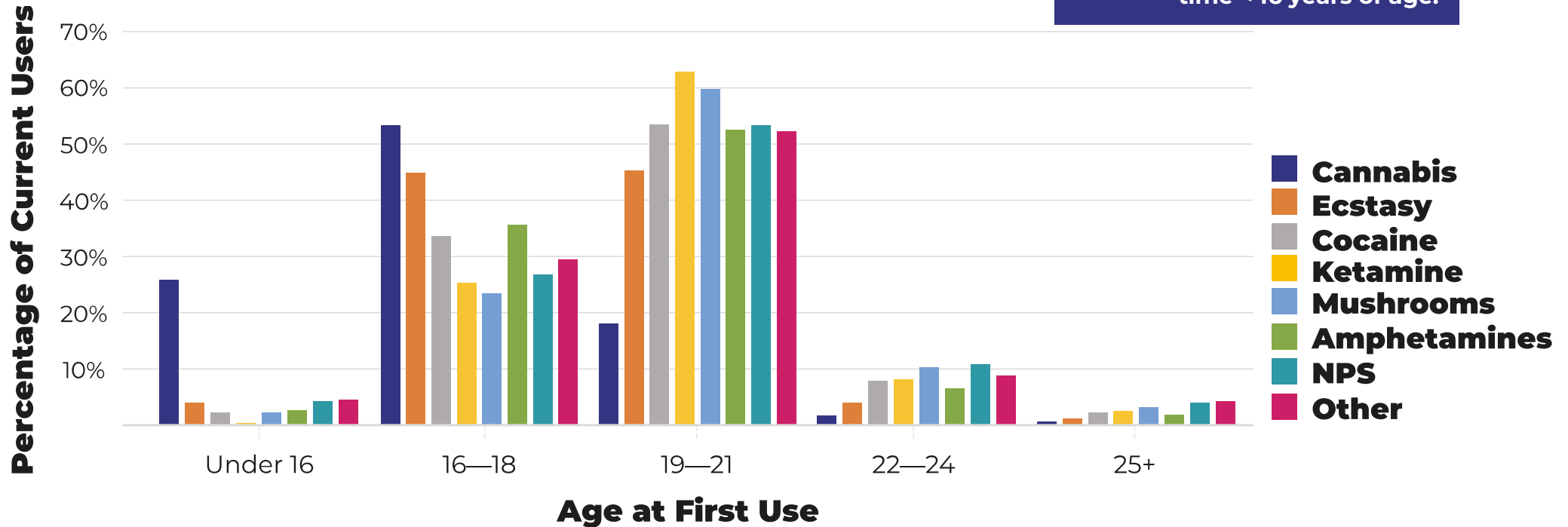


**Current User**

# FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

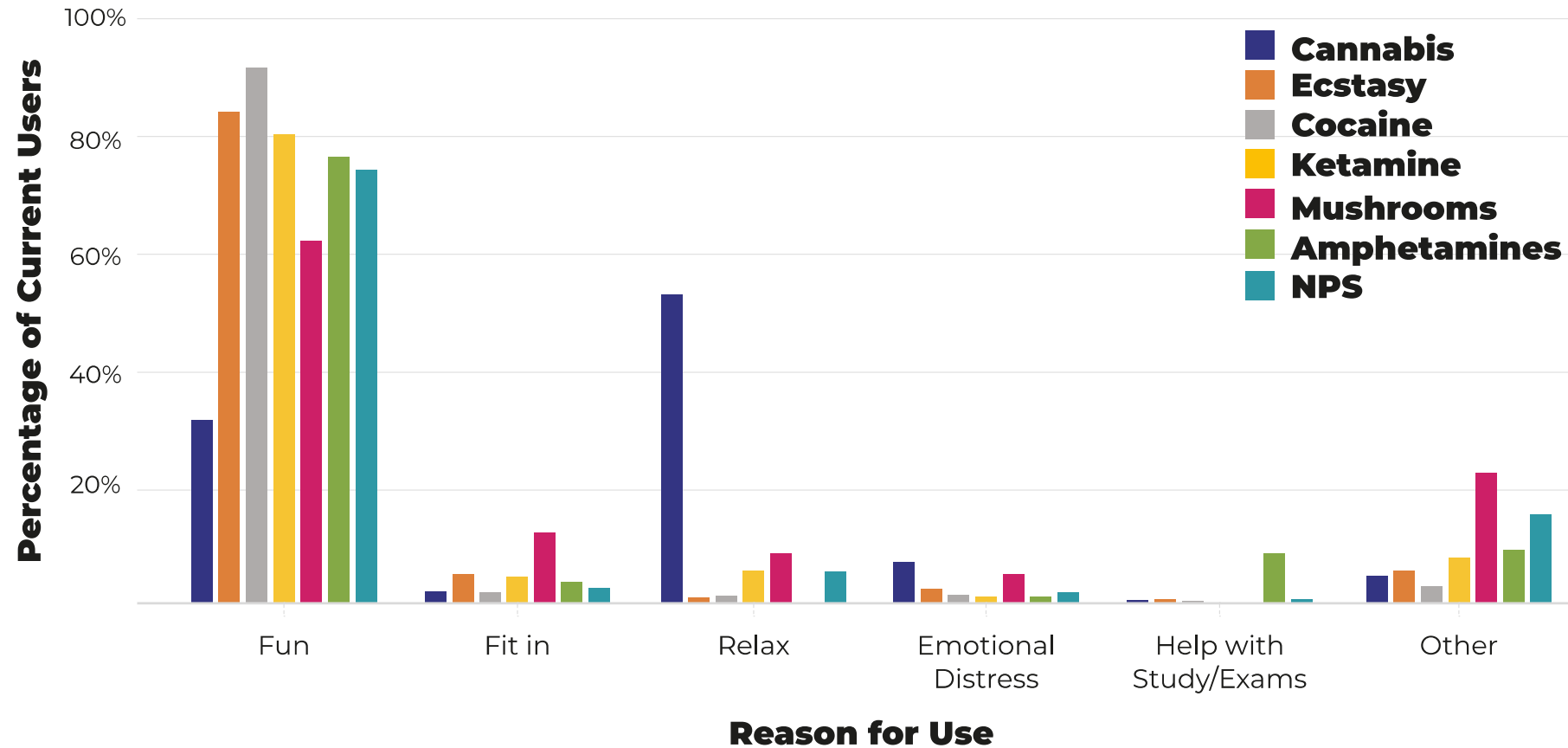
## Age at First Use

 **25.9%**  
of current users  
reported using  
cannabis for the first  
time < 16 years of age.



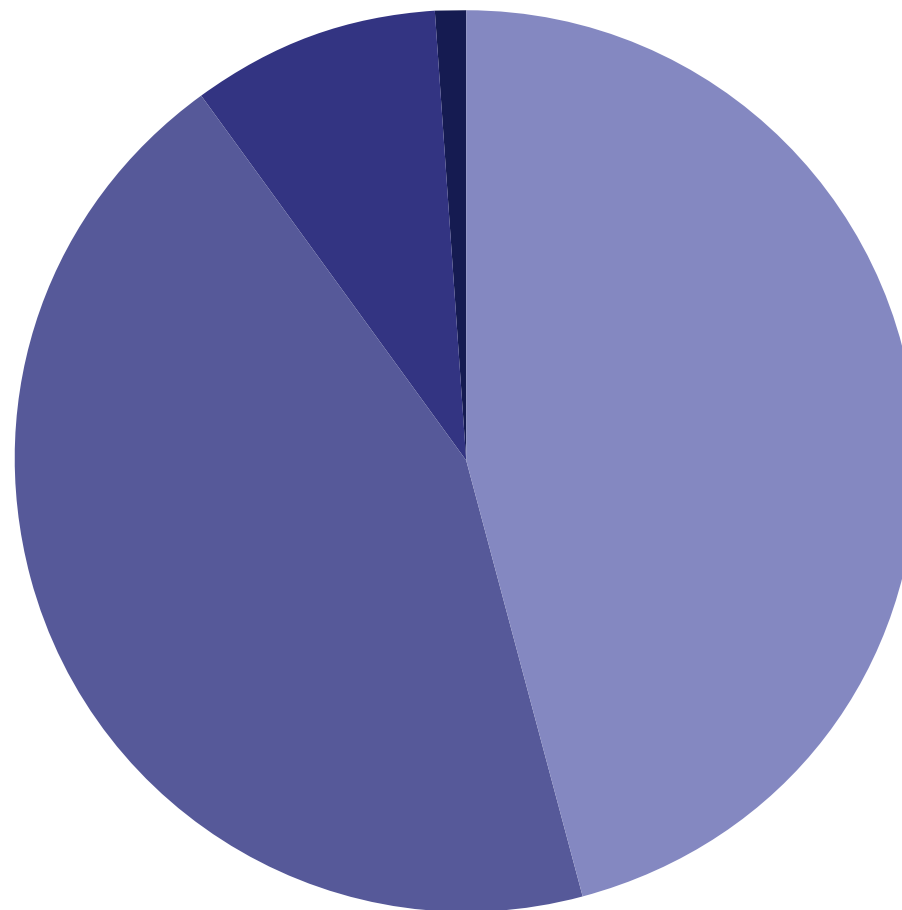
# FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

## Main Reason for Use



# FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

Level of Risk of Drug Use Harm (DAST-10)



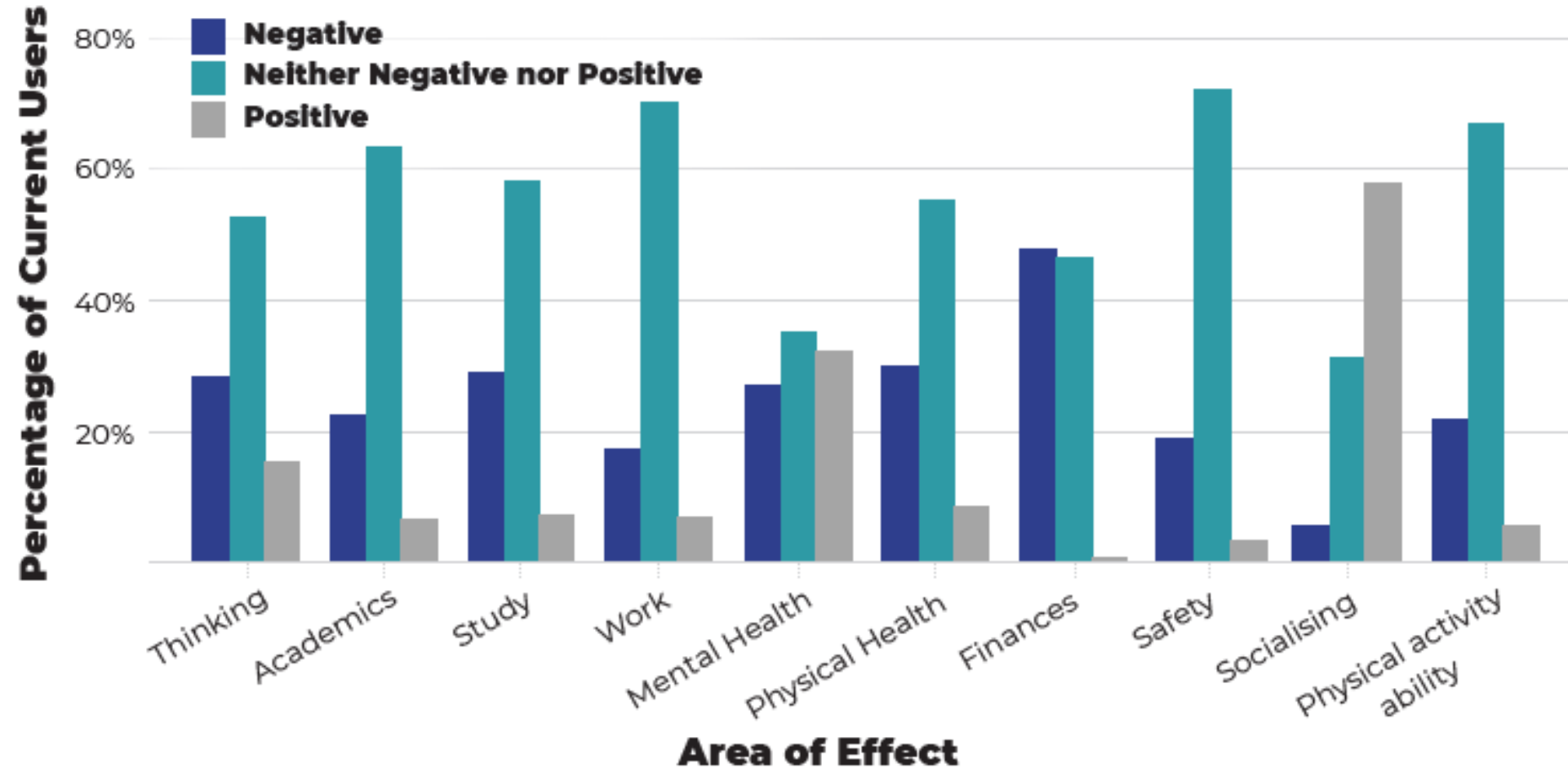
**46%** Low  
**44%** Moderate  
**9%** Substantial  
**1%** Severe

**53%**  
of current users at  
moderate or substantial  
risk of drug use harm



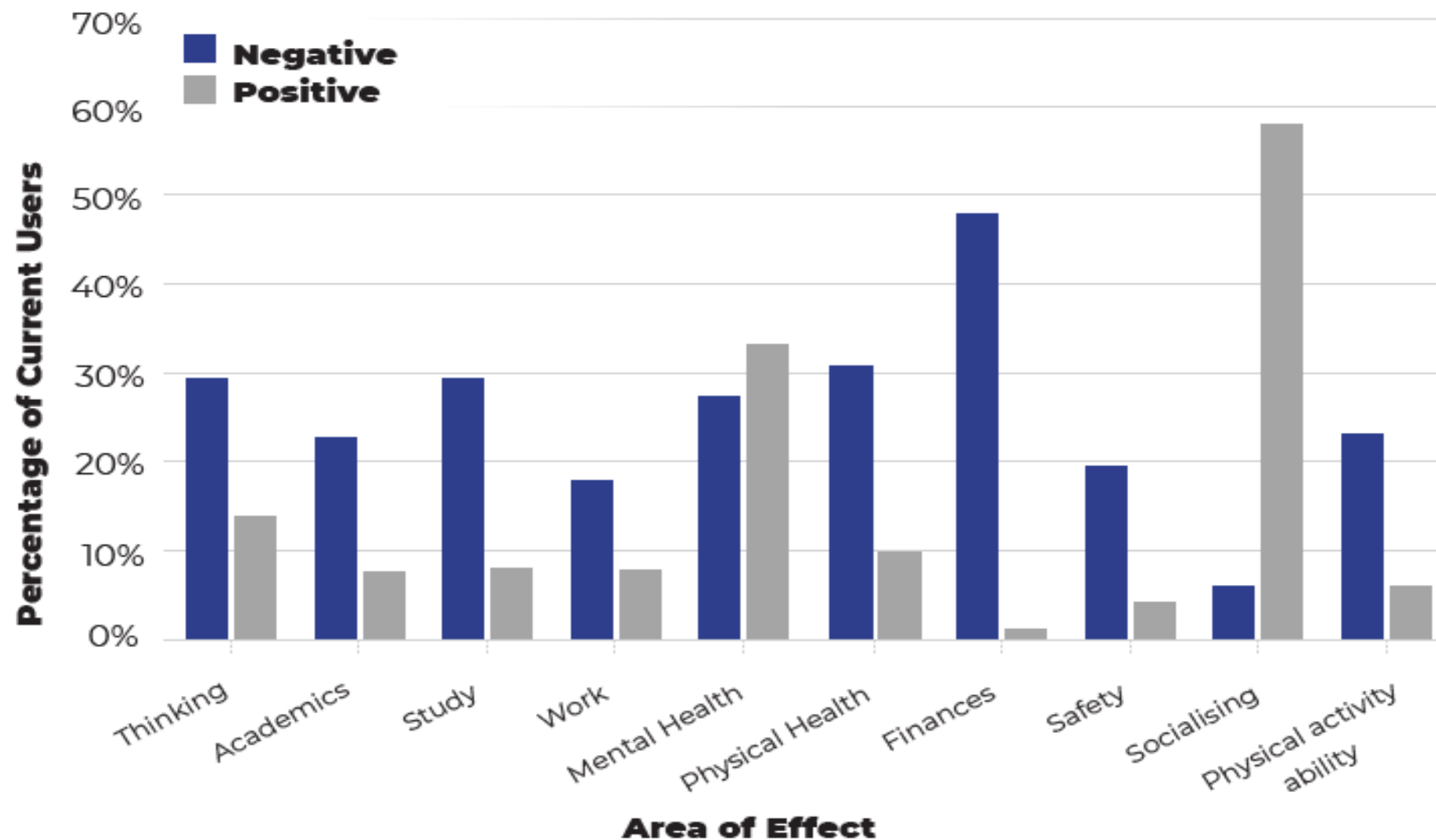
# FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

## Effects on Various Domains of Life



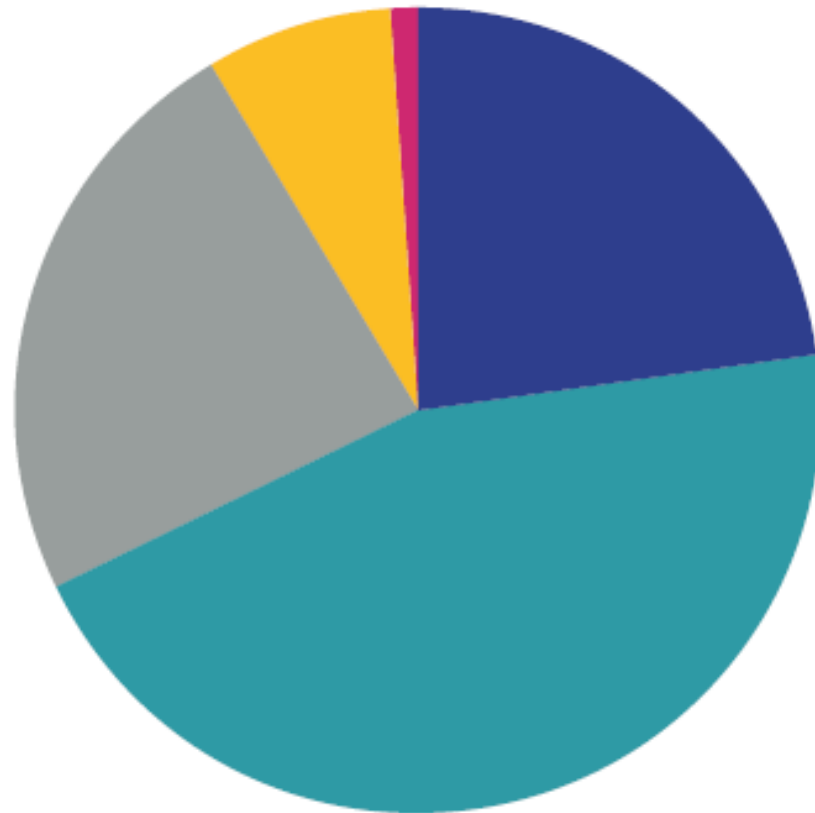
# FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

Effects on Various Domains of Life – Relative Negative v Positive



## FINDINGS - OVERALL

### Effects on Student Life



**37.3%** Somewhat Negative

**19.1%** Extremely Negative

**19.7%** Neither

**6.2%** Somewhat Positive

**0.9%** Extremely Positive

# BEHAVIOUR CHANGE OVERALL



33% would like to reduce their use.  
Reasons:

- Mental wellbeing (68%).
- Physical health (66%).
- Finance (55%).
- Legal implication (54%).
- Future career prospects (52%).
- Academic progress (52%).

68% would not like to reduce their use

- Don't consider use a problem.
- Consider use infrequent enough already.
- Don't consider cannabis a drug.
- Use is fun.

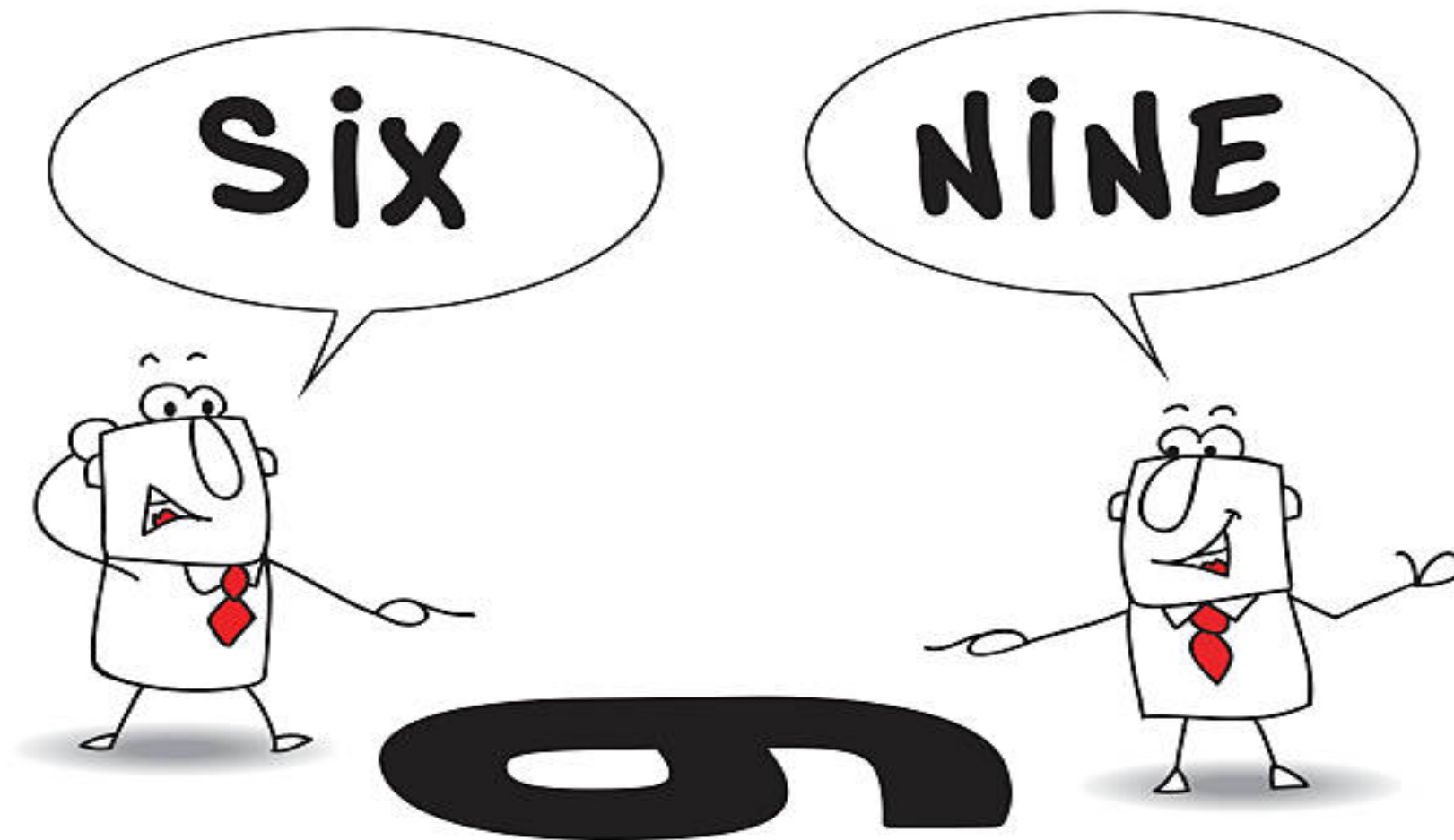
# Drug Use in Higher Education in Ireland

- **Over one in two** reporting ever using a drug
- **One in three** reporting recent drugs use in the past year
- **One in five** reporting current drugs use in the past month
- **Over one in two** feel drug use is a normal part of student life
- **Over one in two** feel drug use has a negative impact on student life
- **Less than one in ten** felt drug use has a positive impact on student life
- **Two out of three** do not wish to change their drug use
- **One in two current** drug users at moderate or substantial risk of harm

Dr. Michael Byrne  
Head of Student Health  
University College Cork



# WHAT YOU SEE MAY DEPEND ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE



# RECOMMENDATIONS FROM DUHEI

**HEIs should begin to implement the suite of actions contained in the “Framework for Response to the Use of Illicit Substances within Higher Education”, in partnership with students and their representatives.**

**HEIs should embed actions on drugs and alcohol within the new Healthy Campus Framework, as part of the Healthy Campus initiative.**

**HEIs should benefit from the expertise and support of the Health Service Executive in implementing actions on drugs and alcohol.**

**This DUHEI survey should be repeated at 5-yearly intervals to monitor trends in drug use prevalence, attitudes, and behaviours amongst students in Ireland.**

# THANK YOU

## THE DUHEI TEAM



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Student Health



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