



New drugs: the European context

What are new drugs?

New drugs usually mimic the effects of controlled drugs.
Some are sold as having novel psychoactive effects

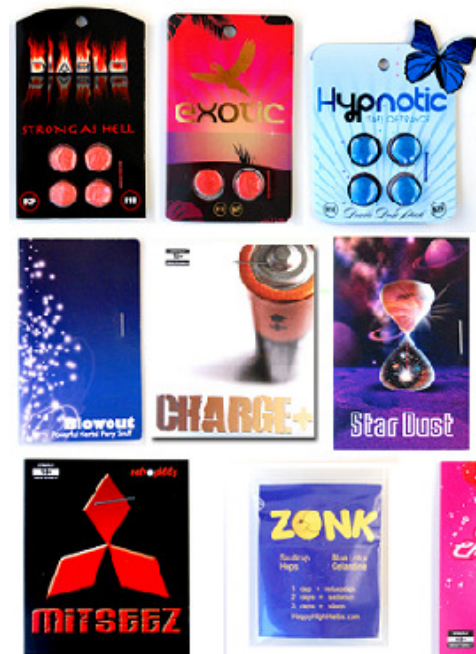
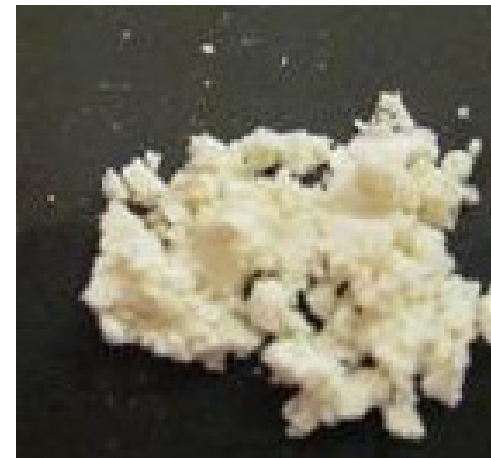
They are sufficiently different in chemical structure so they
fall outside the scope of international / national drug laws

Often referred to as 'new' as in new to the drug market or newly misused

Under Council Decision 2005/387/JHA they are defined as
new psychoactive substances

More than 280 monitored by EU Early warning system

Often little or no information on effects, harms, patterns of
use and prevalence



Drugs in Europe

broad and overlapping markets

Some are sold on illicit market as 'ecstasy' (mCPP, DMAA) or 'speed' (4-methylamphetamine) or heroin (pentanyls). Users mostly unaware that they are taking them. Some may also be sold as drugs in their own right (m-CB). *Often called 'designer drugs'*

From around 2003 onwards new drugs have been sold openly often as branded products in sophisticated packaging. Sold on the Internet, in head shops and street-level drug dealers. *These are known as 'legal highs'* (research chemicals, herbal highs, party pills, bath salts, plant food, incense, smoking mixtures).

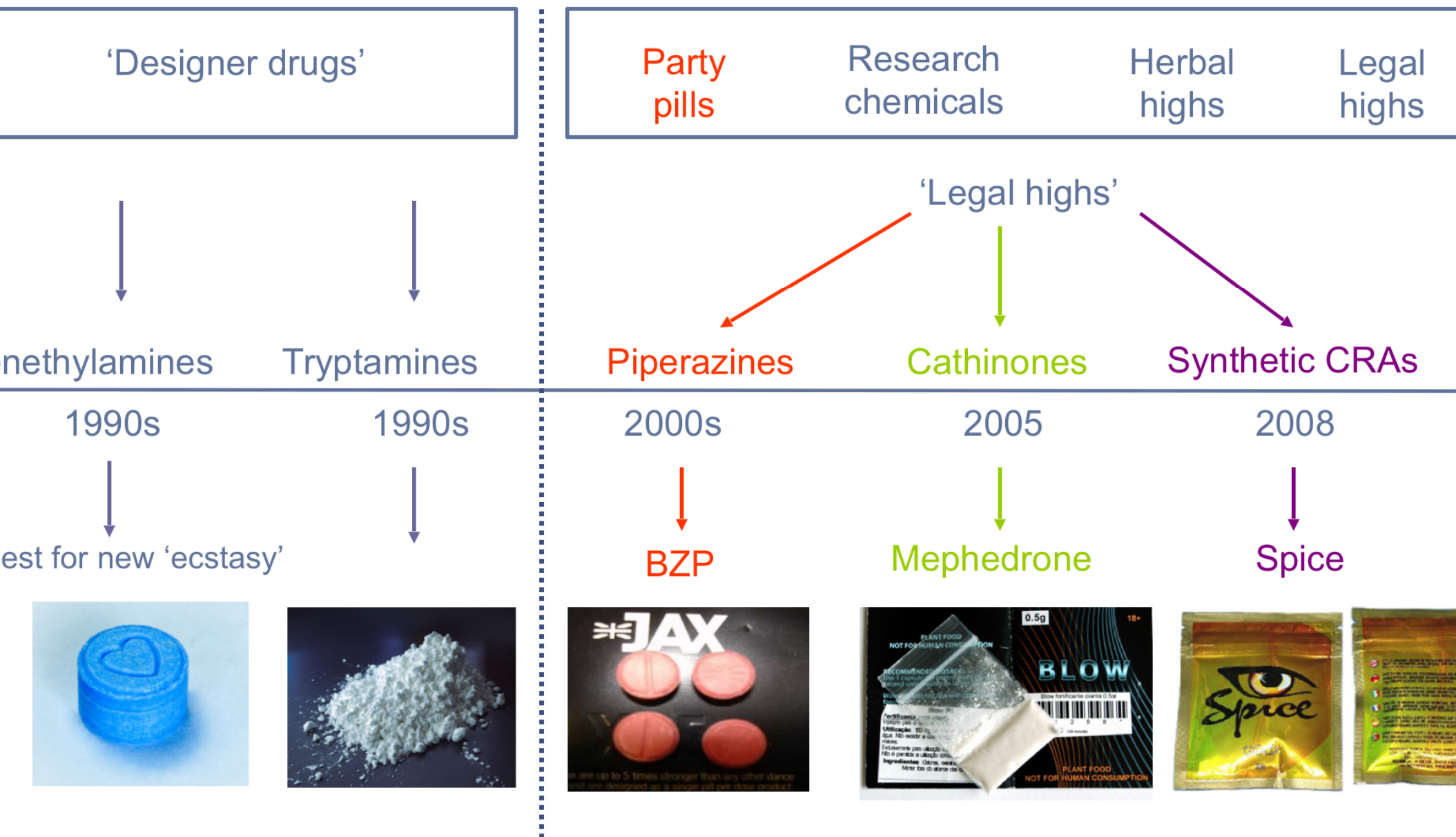
Also *non-controlled medicines* diverted within EU (pregabalin) or imported (phenazepam)

as well as *'dietary supplements'* (phenibut and DMAA)



How did we get here?

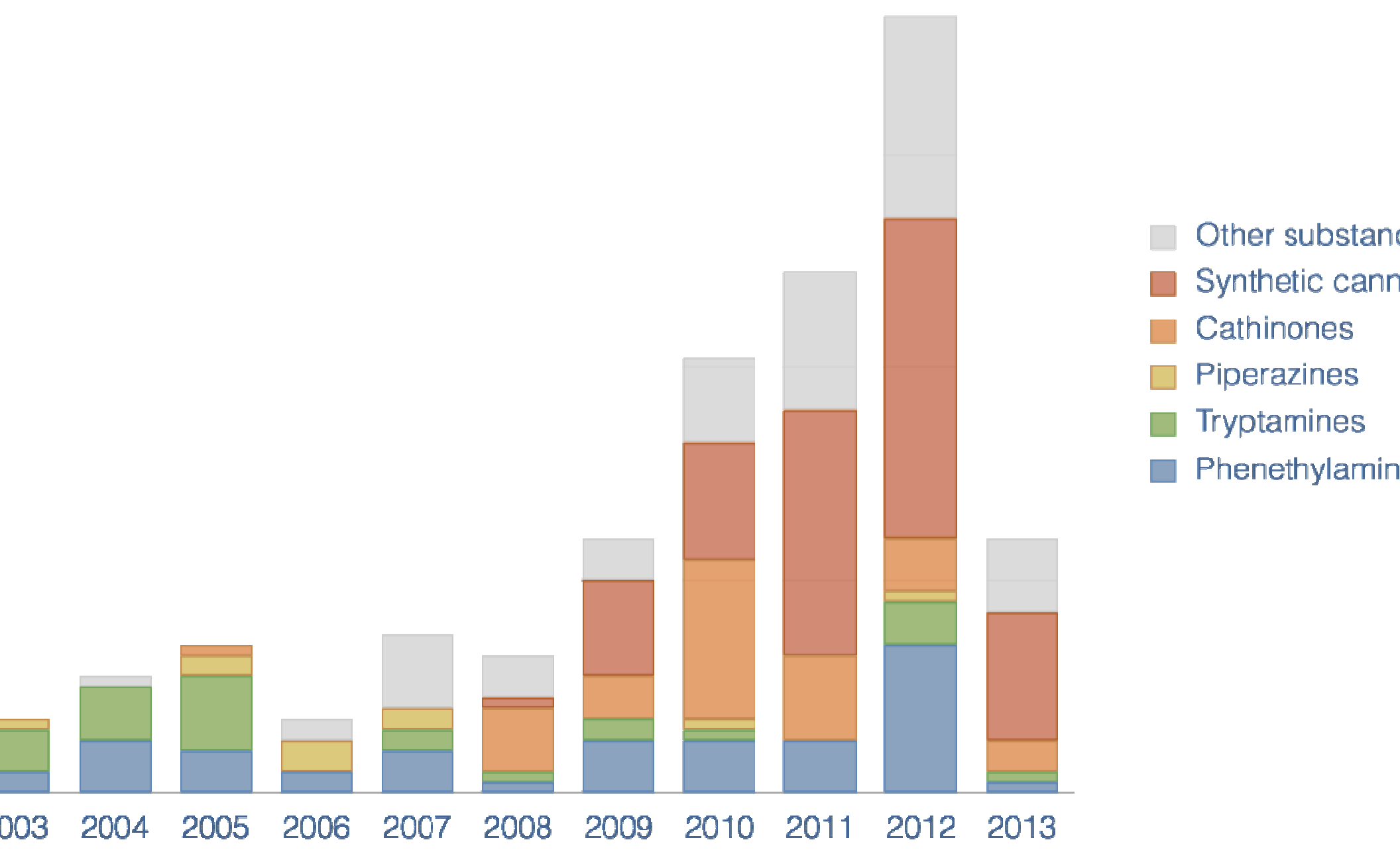
How did we get here?



From imitation to innovation

How drug offences have changed since 2003

identified in 2013 so far...



What is driving this?

Complex web...

Globalisation and advances in information technology.

Internet as:

- communication tool
- access to information (medicinal chemistry, patents, etc.)
- global market place

Available and cheaper organic synthesis capacity

- 'legally' sourced often outside Europe
- limited regulation / enforcement: availability on the open market
- differences in national laws

What is driving this?

Complex web...

Innovative marketing of products within a 'grey' regulatory zone

Changes in illicit drug market and interaction between markets

- gaps in availability such as poor quality of illicit stimulants or heroin drought (e.g. mephedrone and MDPV substituting for MDMA and cocaine)
- interaction between the markets in illicit drugs, 'legal highs' and medicines
- creation of new drug markets

Users willing to experiment... and substitute

- social acceptance: positive ratings within social networks, less stigma
- attractiveness: 'a drug of choice' in that it delivers both acceptable effects and side effects
- availability: largely an open market
- 'brand switching': inducement to switch, dissatisfaction with a 'brand', curiosity, availability of 'new or substitute brand', move to multiple 'brands'

Uncertainty in the context of GP...

many new drugs do not spread beyond small groups of experienced users

relatively easy to add specific new drugs of interest to GPS? however...

limited **products** on the mainstream 'legal highs' market poses significant problems in identifying which particular drugs are being used

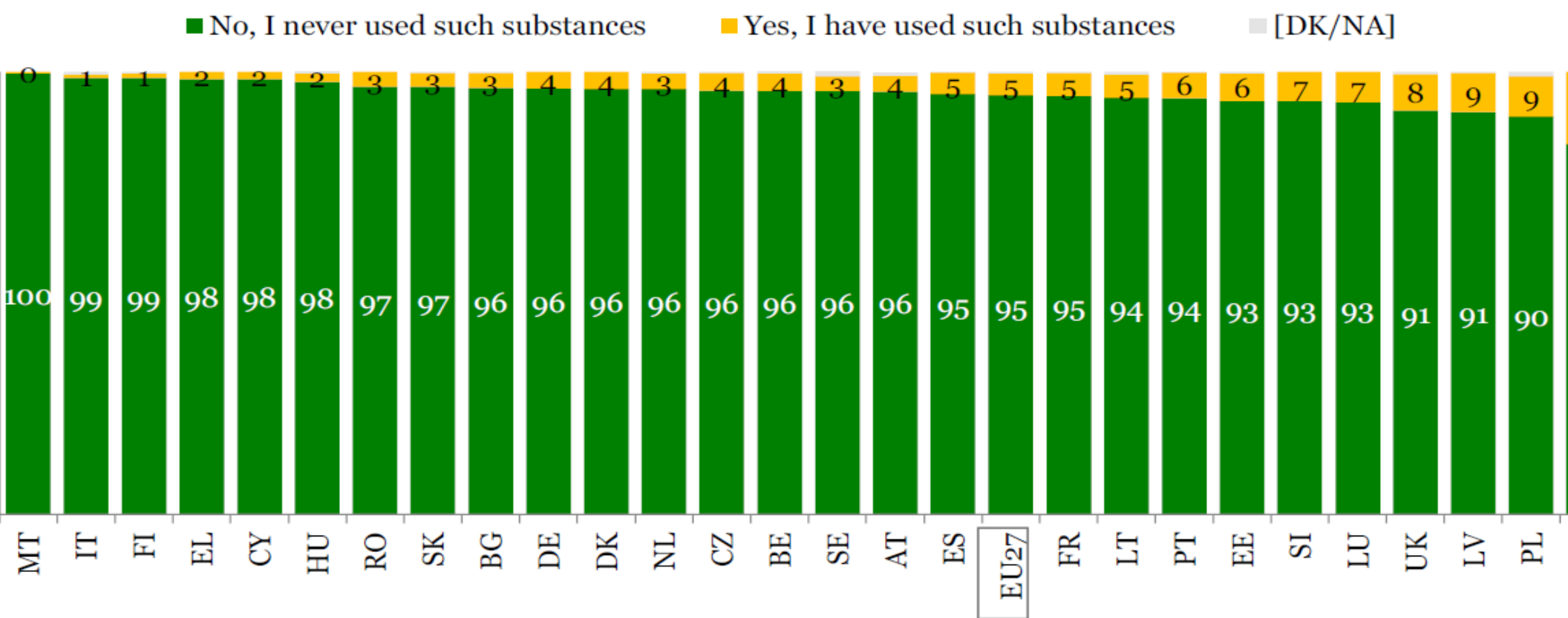
drugs used in products change over time and place

herbal smoking mixtures containing synthetic cannabinoids are an excellent example of this

'problem' in the UK: any unidentified white powders which are synthetic stimulants

Use of legal highs in the EU member states

Substance use in 15–24 year olds (n > 12000) ('catch all' question)



Q5. In certain countries some new substances that imitate the effects of illicit drugs are being sold as legal substances in the form of - for example - powders, tablets/pills or herbs. Have you ever used such substances?

Base: all respondents, % by country

prevalence: here to stay :

year use in the UK (specific substance question)

/11 data:

16-24: 4.4% ~ cocaine, the second most used

16-59: 1.4% ~ ecstasy, the third most used drug

/12 data:

16-24: 3.3% ~ ecstasy, the third most used drug

16-59: 1.1%



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

emcdda.europa.eu
