



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction



NATIONAL GENERAL POPULATION SURVEY ON DRUG USE AND ATTITUDES IN KOSOVO* 2014

**according to the EMCDDA
protocols**

Final Report

Authors:

Mr. Kushtrim Shaipi, Project Manager

Ms. Hasnije Ilazi, PhD

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The “National General Population Survey on drug use and attitudes in Kosovo 2014” has been carried out by IQ consulting with the support of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)- within its European Union financed IPA project 2011/280-057, “Preparation of IPA Beneficiaries for their participation with the EMCDDA”.

This survey report has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

National General Population Survey on drug use and attitudes in Kosovo 2014

Authors:

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Ms. Hasnije Ilazi, PhD

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FOREWORD

Substance use is among the most serious challenges to overcome in fighting crime, protecting public health by preventing substance use and treating those with problems, and establishing rule of law. Key triggers have been lucrative gains from the illegal trade in psychoactive substances together with human propensity to use such substances. The Government of Kosovo has introduced numerous measures to fight organized crime and combat drug networks, however, the crime and health threats to our society coming from the presence and use of illicit substances, needs long-term planning and strategic address. The national Anti-Drug Strategy and other operational and legal documents provide guidance for all law enforcement and treatment agencies to streamline efforts in addressing the problems associated with substance use.

Collection and analysis of data on substance abuse is essential in monitoring progress and addressing its problems. The survey presented herein marks the first time that such a study has been carried out in cooperation with European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addictions – EMCDDA, which provides guidance for collecting comparative and statistically relevant data on different aspects related to drug use at EU level.

The results of the survey provide statistically representative data on the prevalence and patterns of substance use among the Kosovo population aged 16-65 at the national level. The survey was carried out by a research company in full anonymity and in line with Kosovo and European standards of personal data protection.

The survey method and instruments are in line with EMCDDA methods, used for the purpose of comparison with other European countries. In addition to the standard questions regarding illicit substance use, the survey also inquired about tobacco and alcohol consumption. The survey was also used to collect citizens' opinions and attitudes on different phenomena in society, which is key in introducing effective and acceptable public policy measures.

The survey was funded by EMCDDA through the EU funded project "Preparation of the IPA beneficiaries for their participation in the EMCDDA".

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INTRODUCTION

The General Population Survey on drug use (GPS) in Kosovo provides information about the extent and patterns of use of a broad range of substances both licit and illicit. Being the first of its kind to be carried out in Kosovo, the GPS survey, addressed in this report, will be used as baseline information for similar surveys to be carried out in the future. The added value from applying standardized methodologies is generation of comparable data both in time and with other countries. Such an approach to data on these issues is considered to be a key pre-condition for assessing the performance of policies, strategies and public policy measures. The comparability of results, with those obtained from other countries in Europe or the region, enables a deeper and more accurate understanding of drug markets.

The results of the GPS in Kosovo can be used by researchers, academics, public health professionals and other interested audiences, but most importantly, by national level policy makers. The study should be treated as a necessary step to begin routine monitoring of drug use prevalence and alcohol consumption, as well as, to identify public attitudes toward the drug and alcohol problem and toward drug and alcohol policies.

The study objectives were as follows:

- To provide policy makers with data for informed and evidence based drug policies;
- To apply European standard protocol in the context of a general population survey in Kosovo to contribute to a common understanding of psychoactive substance use and risky behavior;
- To develop a standardized comparative methodology for surveys on substance use and addictions, to initiate their monitoring in the general population in Kosovo and to provide comparable data with those at the EU level.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kosovo GPS Survey on substance use prevalence has been carried out by IQ Consulting on behalf of EMCDDA and the Kosovo Ministry of Internal Affairs in the period between May – July 2014. The final sample of completed interviews comprised of 5,148 respondents across Kosovo. The sample selection was random, using the polling stations as the most accurate and reliable administrative division unit for the Kosovo population. The research was carried out in 103 settlements, with each being represented by 50 respondents in the sample.

The survey questionnaire was developed jointly with EMCDDA based on its guidelines and standardized reporting requirements for comparable studies¹. Before the actual survey was conducted, IQ Consulting piloted the instrument with 150 respondents, aged 16 – 30 years old, in three major centers of Kosovo (Prishtina, Peja, and Gjilan).

Thirty surveyors, predominantly of social science backgrounds (psychology and sociology), carried out the survey in the field. Given that the survey was carried out through face-to-face interviews, the role of the field staff in the process was considered crucial for the success of the research. Most interviews were carried out in complete privacy with only the interviewer and the interviewee in the room, while in some isolated cases, some portions were self-completed by respondents when lacking the opportunity to carry out the interview in private.

The survey interview covers a broad range of substances and aspects of substance use. In terms of substances, the interview begins with a section on tobacco as the most culturally accepted substance, proceeding with alcohol as the second most acceptable substance and continuing to illicit substances according to the order suggested in the European Model Questionnaire (EMQ)². The order of substances covered was designed to ensure a smooth transition from one topic to another, thereby maintaining high participation levels of respondents throughout the interview.

Lifetime prevalence of tobacco in Kosovo is lower than the EU 25 average.³ Of all respondents in the GPS Survey sample, 34.1% used tobacco and 65.4% did not. Prevalence among the younger population (15-34) has been assessed at 31.1%. The data on tobacco consumption indicates that 27.6% of smokers are habitual smokers with consumption levels of 20 cigarettes per day or more.

Prevalence of alcohol consumption ever in the last year appears to be very low in Kosovo. Although culturally alcohol is a quite acceptable substance, a small percentage of respondents in the GPS Survey actually report having consumed it in the last year. In reference to beer, wine, and spirits, an average of 32% respondents declare they do not consume such alcoholic beverages, while an additional 53.8% (average of three types of alcohol) state to have never consumed them. On average, 10% of respondents report to have drunk beer, wine, and spirits during the last year. Womens' consumption during the last year is much lower than that of men.

¹ EMCDDA, Handbook for surveys on drug use among the general population, EMCDDA project CT.99.EP.08 B, Lisbon, August 2002. <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index58052EN.html>

² Pharmaceuticals (anti-depressants and sedatives), Cannabis, Ecstasy, Amphetamines, Cocaine, Heroin, and LSD.

³ Zatoński W, Przewoźniak K, Sulkowska U, West R, Wojtyła A. Tobacco smoking in countries of the European Union.

Less than 5% of total respondents in the sample report drinking 5 beers on one occasion on a weekly basis. The consumption of beer is the highest among all types of alcohol but its frequency of occurrence is quite low. Long-term problematic risky behavior, on all alcohol indicators measured, is rated below 3%. The parameters used to assess long term problematic and risky alcohol use behavior included remorse after drinking, drinking of 12 glasses/units of alcohol per single occasion, presence of memory blackouts due to drinking, failure to complete chores as well as drinking in the morning.

Prescription drugs, inquired about in the survey, most frequently included antidepressants and sedatives. Across all antidepressants available in the local markets and major international brands, the reported use in the last year was lower than 1%. An average 2% of respondents report having used antidepressants in the past, but not during the last year. Similarly to this, use of sedatives is reported to be lower than 1% per each of the drugs inquired about, but the total percentage of use during the last year is estimated to be at 3%. Most of the reported users stated to have bought the drugs with a doctor's prescription, but in few instances, the drugs were obtained through informal routes.

Cannabis is the most present illicit substance in Kosovo. Ten percent of all respondents in the sample acknowledge knowing someone that uses cannabis. Cannabis is also the most accessible illicit substance to which 12.6% respondents in the sample have reported having very easy or fairly easy access and 2% of respondents confirming to have ever used cannabis themselves. Usage during the last year totals at 1.1% of the total sample and last month usage of cannabis reaches 0.8% of the total number of respondents.

The reported prevalence of cannabis use, and other illicit substances, is quite low. This limits the potential to further breakdown or analyze according to age groups and/or other comparisons. Caution is required in interpreting figures based on these low numbers.

The presence of ecstasy in Kosovo is primarily limited to larger urban centers with the domination of the capital, Prishtina. Males of ages 21 – 30 are the most exposed age group to this substance. No women in the sample have confirmed use of ecstasy while no men, older than 40 years of age, have testified to having tried the substance.

Amphetamines (speed) are also predominantly present in the capital and is almost exclusively available to the younger male market. Only 0.1% of the total, confirmed use of amphetamines last year, as all positive responses was provided by men. No confirmations were received to the question on use last month. The most exposed age group towards this substance is 26 – 30 years old, of which 0.5% confirm to have tried amphetamines in their lifetime.

Cocaine has recently received significant national media attention following police actions that resulted with the seizure of 16 kg of cocaine in Kosovo. Being one of the most expensive drugs in the market, cocaine is only accessible to a few users that can afford it. While it appears to be present mainly in the capital, reported presence has also been noted in the rural areas. The age group mostly exposed to this substance appears to be among 26 - 30 years of age (0.6% confirmed lifetime use) and 15 - 20 years old (0.5% confirmed lifetime use).

0.1% of respondents in the GPS Survey sample have confirmed lifetime use of heroin. Only 0.1% of the total in the sample confirmed use of heroin last year, as all positive responses were provided by men. There have been no confirmations in the GPS Survey in Kosovo on the use of heroin during the last month.

It should be noted however, that heroin is perceived as more easily available than amphetamines and cocaine, but less so than ecstasy. The presence of heroin in society is also confirmed by 0.6% of respondents interviewed in the GPS survey who confirm solicitation/offering of this substance either for purchase or free of charge during the last year.

0.7% of respondents in the sample know someone that takes LSD (Acid). 1.4% of respondents from urban areas, as opposed to 0.1% from rural settlements, confirm knowing someone that takes LSD. The most exposed age group towards this substance is between 26 – 30 years old, of which 0.6% confirm having tried LSD in their lifetime. The 21 – 25 age group ranks second with 0.5% of respondents confirming to have tried LSD, followed by the 15 - 20 age group, of which 0.2% report to have tried LSD.

1. SURVEY BACKGROUND

The Kosovo GPS Survey on substance prevalence and availability has been carried out by IQ Consulting on behalf of EMCDDA and Kosovo Ministry of Interior in the period between May – July 2014. The final sample of completed interviews comprised of 5,148 respondents across Kosovo. The surveyors have attempted a total of 5,635 interviews, nonetheless ensured a response rate of 91.4% or refusal rate of 8.6%. The sample selection was randomized, using the polling stations as the most accurate and reliable administrative division unit for the Kosovo population.

	Sample	%	%	Tot. Resp	15-24 yrs			25-34 yrs			35-44 yrs			45-54 yrs			55-64 yrs		
					Total	M	F	Total	M	F									
	Total	100	%	5000	1250	629	621	1000	503	497	1000	503	497	1000	503	497	750	378	372
Urban	Total	38%	100	1907	466	235	232	373	188	185	373	188	185	373	188	185	572	288	284
	K-Albanian		90	1716	392	197	194	336	169	167	336	169	167	336	169	167	1030	518	511
	K-Serbian		5	95	23	12	12	19	9	9	19	9	9	19	9	9	57	29	28
	Other Non-Albanian		5	95	23	12	12	19	9	9	19	9	9	19	9	9	57	29	28
Rural	Total	62%	100	3094	773	389	384	619	311	307	619	311	307	619	311	307	928	234	230
	K-Albanian		90	2784	696	350	346	557	280	277	557	280	277	557	280	277	1670	210	207
	K-Serbian		5	155	39	19	19	31	16	15	31	16	15	31	16	15	93	47	46
	Other Non-Albanian		5	155	39	19	19	31	16	15	31	16	15	31	16	15	93	47	46

Table 1. GPS Population sample breakdown

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

In line with the ToR, Technical Offer by IQ Consulting and the subsequent contract signed between the two parties on the delivery of research services stipulated above, IQ Consulting team has proceeded with detailing the operational aspects of the implementation of the survey including a detailed overview of staffing and resource requirements as well as an updated timetable of activities.

The survey questionnaire was developed jointly with EMCDDA based on The European Model Questionnaire (EMQ) and guidelines for standardized reporting requirements used in similar studies⁴. During the preparation phase, the survey questionnaire was piloted with 150 youth in three major centers in Kosovo (Prishtina, Peja, and Gjilan) and the lessons learnt from the pilot were used to optimize the questionnaire further.

⁴ EMCDDA, Handbook for surveys on drug use among the general population, EMCDDA project CT.99.EP.08 B, Lisbon, August 2002. <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/html.cfm/index58052EN.html>

The research was carried out in 103 settlements, each being represented by 50 respondents in the sample. The survey was carried out by 30 interviewers, predominantly of social science backgrounds (psychology and sociology), who were trained beforehand on the field work methodology, sample selection procedures and the contents of the questionnaire. Their work was supervised by 5 field controllers, enabling on average around 10% of all interviews monitored for quality assurance in real time.

Given that the survey was carried out through face-to-face interviews, the role of the interviewers was considered crucial for the success of the research. Most interviews were carried out in complete privacy with only the interviewer and the interviewee in the room, while in some isolated cases, some portions were self-completed by respondents when lacking the opportunity to carry out the interview in private.

The survey covers a broad range of substances and aspects of substance use. In terms of substances, the survey begins with a section on tobacco as the most culturally accepted substance, proceeding to alcohol as the second most acceptable substance and continuing to cover illicit substances according to the order suggested in the European Model Questionnaire (EMQ).

3. GPS SURVEY FINDINGS

The GPS Survey in Kosovo covered a broad range of substances listed in the questionnaire, in the following order: tobacco, alcohol, antidepressants and tranquilizers/sedatives, cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines, heroin and LSD. The survey also included questions on the perceived availability of drugs, opinions, attitudes and risks perception. The following table shows the lifetime prevalence of substance use among 15 - 65 year-old population.

Substances	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Tobacco	44.7	27.0	38%
Alcohols			
Beer	27.1%	9.2%	20.3%
Wine	14.8%	9.0%	12.6%
Spirits	12.5%	4.8%	9.6%
Medicines			
Antidepressants	0.2%	0%	0.1%
Sedatives	0.2%	0.1%	0.15%
Other substances			
Cannabis	2.8	0.9	2.1
Ecstasy	0.2	0	0.1
Amphetamines	0.2	0	0.1
Cocaine	0.4	0.1	0.3
Heroin	0.2	0	0.1
LSD	0.3	0.2	0.2

Table 2. Lifetime prevalence of substance use (%)

More detailed findings on each of the substances included in the questionnaire can be found in the next sections. However, for most of the illicit drugs, the prevalence rates are quite low. This limits the possibilities for breakdown and detailed analysis according to age groups and/or other comparisons. In other words, caution is required in interpreting figures based on these low numbers.

3.1. Tobacco

Tobacco smoking has often been labeled as one of the biggest public health challenges in Europe. Smoking has been identified as a major cause of premature death claiming an estimated 650,000 lives every year.⁵ With 34% of respondents in the survey confirming lifetime experience with tobacco consumption, Kosovo is placed below the EU 25 average of 37%⁶. As compared to other non-EU countries, Kosovo has more smokers as compared to Turkey⁷, but significantly lower percentage than Serbia⁸. Out of all respondents in the sample, 34.1% responded positively to this question, while 65.4% provided negative answers.

The prevalence of habitual smoking among younger population (15-34) should be seen as particularly problematic, accounting for a significant portion of the population that has been assessed at 31.1%. On the other hand, while looking at the whole sample (15-64 years), data on tobacco consumption indicate that 27.6% of smokers are habitual smokers with consumption levels of 20 cigarettes per day or more. Figure 1, provides a complete illustration of results to the queries regarding respondents' smoking status and frequency of smoking.

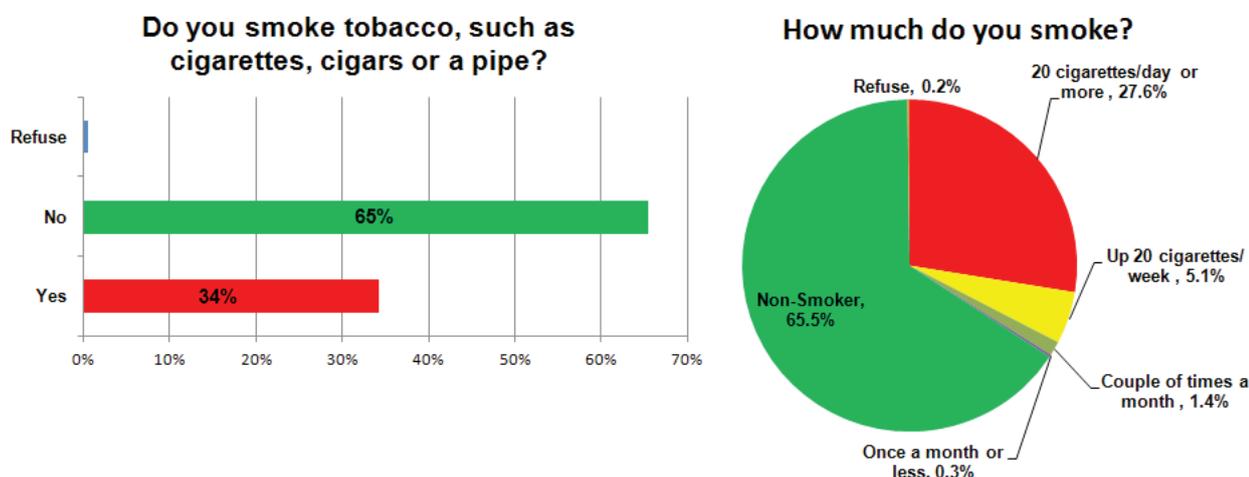


Figure 1. Tobacco prevalence

The lifetime smoking prevalence among women is much lower than that among men., with women comprising 24.6% to 39.9% of men. In terms of age distribution, there seems to be a linear distribution of respondents that is not affected by the age variable.

⁵ Zatoński W, Przewoźniak K, Sulkowska U, West R, Wojtyła A. Tobacco smoking in countries of the European Union.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Turkey's lifetime prevalence was 26.7% (Ilhan, Mustafa, Turkish Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs School Population Survey, 2012);

⁸ Serbia's Lifetime prevalence is 64.5% (Kilibarda, Biljana. Drug use in Serbia, results of the first general population survey in 2014 according to the EMCDDA methodology)

On another note, Kosovo tobacco imports have represented an average of 3% of all imports' value. The low prevalence observed in the GPS study confirms the assumption that the imported amounts are being re-exported out of Kosovo. This statement is also supported by the Central Bank of Kosovo in its Annual Report for 2013, which ascribes the net export growth partly due to the increase of tobacco exports⁹. The relatively low duties and import taxes on tobacco products in Kosovo are believed to be the primary reason for Kosovo being an import destination. The very limited production of tobacco in Kosovo, facilitated primarily in small-scale subsistence farms and traded informally, is another reason why the link between the imported and exported tobacco be solidly made.

3.2. Alcohol

The respondents were asked to provide information on their drinking habits towards three types/groups of alcohols that were broadly categorized as beer, wine and spirits. Show-cards with illustrations were used to present respondents with a visual overview of measurements used for each category. For all three types/groups of alcohol, different aspects of practices have been inquired through the survey. Lifetime abstinence from alcohol has been included as one of the answering options in the survey, ensuring a clear following of cases of abstinence. A separate option was provided for abstinence from one type of alcohol. The alcohol section of the survey included queries about frequency of consumption, consumption habits, practices, and attitudes aimed at identifying problematic and risky behavior while under alcohol influence.

3.2.1. Last year prevalence

Prevalence of alcohol use during the last year in Kosovo is reported to be low. Although culturally alcohol is a quite acceptable substance, only a small percentage of respondents in the GPS Survey report having consumed it during the last year. When asked whether they had consumed beer, wine and spirits an average of 32% respondents have provided negative answers under the justification that they do not consume that type of alcohol, while an additional 53.8% (average of three types of alcohols) state never to have consumed the type of referenced beverages. If responses are viewed from a gender standpoint, women's' abstinence from alcohol is much higher than that of men, with 92.4% abstinence compared to 73.5% declared by men.

The Figure 2 below provides a visual overview of responses broken down by gender and age groups. It should be noted that very similar results were also obtained regarding wine and spirits, with a slight increase in the number of women reporting to have drunk wine in the last year, yet a decline in the percentage of women reporting to have consumed spirits. In terms of age groups, 21 – 25 year olds represent the leading group in all categories, but most concerning is the 3.7% of respondents within this age group who reported drinking 3-5 times/week as well as 2.2% reporting daily consumption of alcohol.

⁹ Central Bank of Kosovo. Annual Report 2013. Available at: <http://www.bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/2014/BQK-RV-Shqip-2013.pdf>

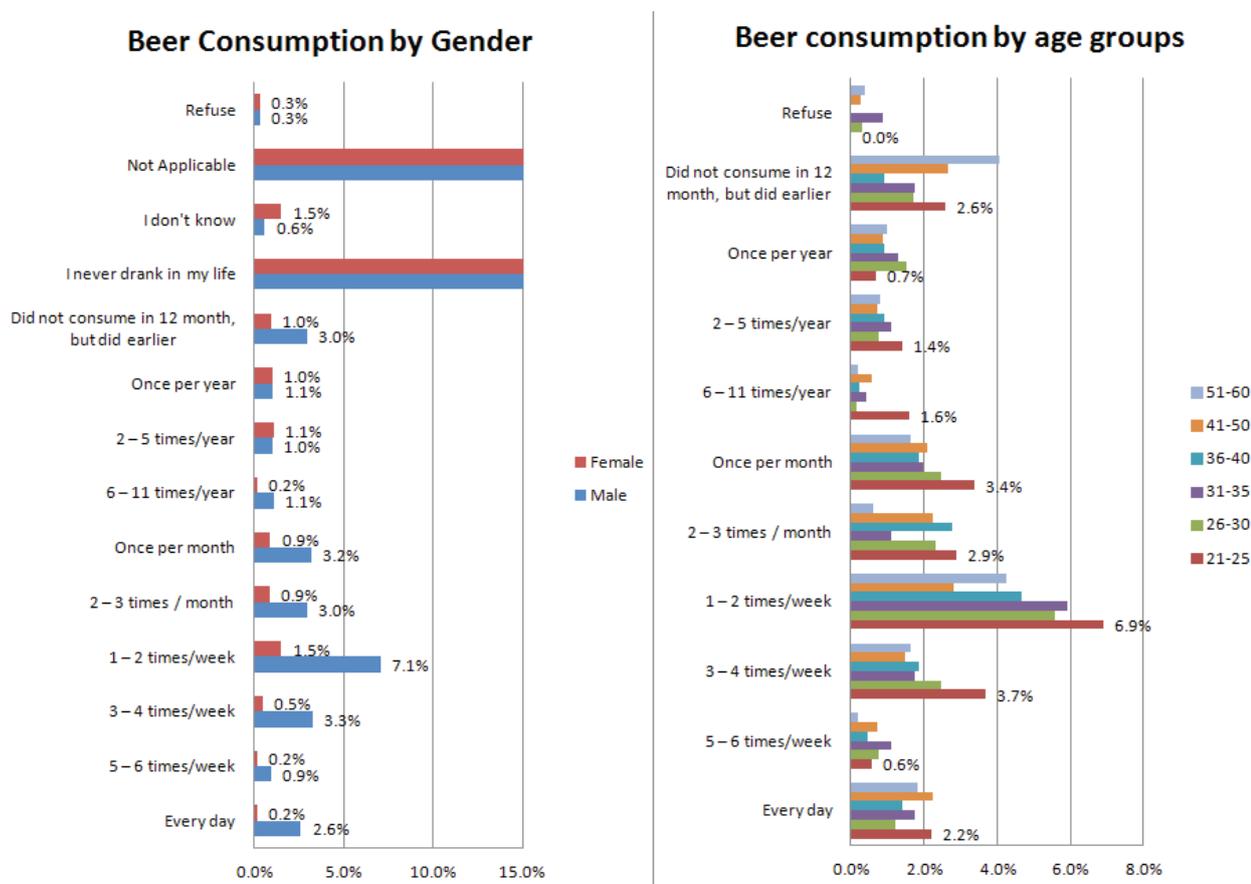


Figure 2. Last year consumption of beer by gender and age group

Prevalence of any alcohol consumption during the last year is at 7.5% from the total respondents surveyed. Women’s alcohol consumption during last year is much lower than that of men, totaling at 27% as compared to 44.7% prevalence with men. In terms of age distribution, the sharpest difference in terms of gender becomes evident regarding spirits, in which case women report significantly lower percentages of consumption across all frequencies of use (97% abstinence from spirits as opposed to 88% of men). 10.6% of Kosovars in the GPS survey report to have drunk beer on an occasion other than with a meal, while 5.8% of respondents have confirmed to have consumed beer with food. Bars, pubs and clubs are the places where beer is most frequently consumed (7.7% of total), with restaurants (4%) and home (3%) following as the second and third most reported drinking locations. Open air drinking is the reported location for 1.7% of respondents and this is believed to reference those that drink during the summer in the beach and those attending concerts and other open air events. Other open air (informal street-drinking) is rarely encountered or reported.

3.2.2 Single risky occasion drinking

The single risky occasion drinking variable was measured both in terms of frequency as well as length of events. When the respondents were requested to provide their answers about beer, less than 5% of total respondents in the sample, report consumption of five beers on a weekly basis. Other frequencies of use provided as options (even more rarely) are each also 2% or below.

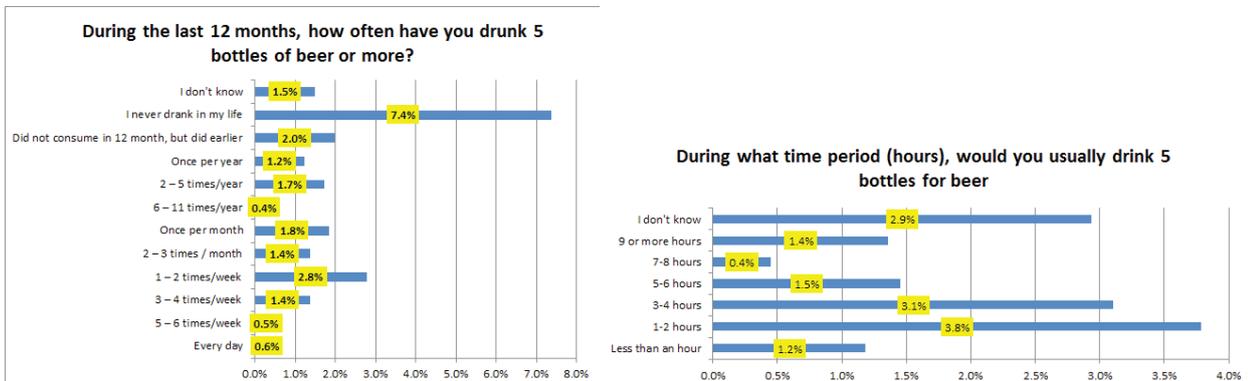


Figure 3. Frequency of drinking 5 beers on a single occasion and length of event

Occasions when respondents have drunk twelve wine glasses or twelve shots of spirits are reported in even lower percentages than those of five consumed beers.

3.2.4. Long-term problematic risky behavior

To assess the long-term risky problematic behavior, several variables were applied. The first aspect covers the frequency of events when they consumed twelve glasses/units of alcohol during the last year, where below 2%. Similarly, only 2.7% of men and 0.9% of women report to have had cases in the last year when they felt remorse after drinking alcohol. The figure 4 below provides a combined overview of events when respondents drank 10 bottles of beer or more and the events in which respondents felt remorse after alcohol consumption.

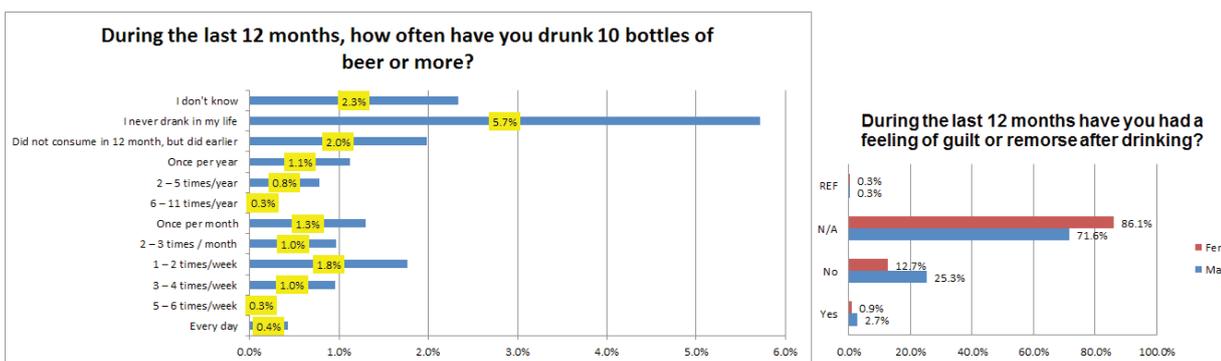


Figure 4. Frequency of drinking 10 beers on a single occasion and alcohol related remorse

A total of 2.1% of all respondents report to have had instances during the last year in which they have drunk in the morning. Of this total, 3% of men and only 0.7% of women report to have had this practice during the last year. In addition, respondents were asked to recollect whether there was an instance when they have failed to complete normal chores/obligations because of drinking. While 2.1% of respondents report to have drunk in the morning, 1.2% of them report to have failed to complete what was normally expected from them because of drinking. Figure 5 presents these two aspects visually.

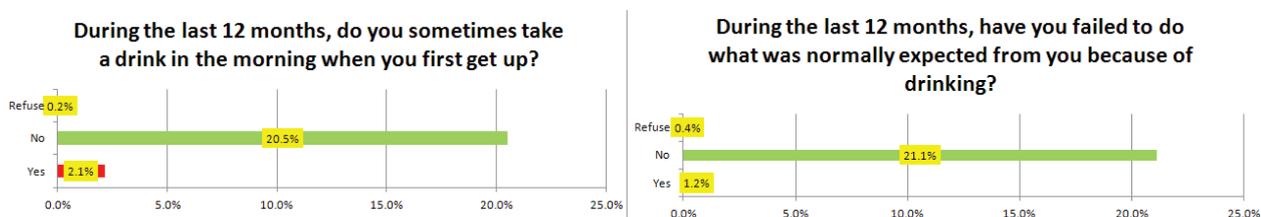


Figure 5. Morning Drinking and failure to complete expected responsibilities

If viewed through the age stratification of the sample, the two highest age groups reporting to have failed to complete something that was expected of them are 21 – 25 years (2.1%) and 15 – 20 years (1.6%). All other age groups report to have lower than 1% confirmation of failure to perform normal duties and responsibilities.

In addition to the two aspects of long-term problematic drinking, memory blackouts from drinking have also been inquired about to measure the extent of alcohol related problems within the sample. A total of 2.7% of respondents report to have had alcohol related memory blackouts when others have had to explain the events in which they have participated under the influence of alcohol.

3.3. Pharmaceuticals

The questions about pharmaceutical products have been grouped into two main categories, namely, anti-depressants, and sedatives. For each group, the most present types (including visual brand images) were visually shown to respondents for each of the names inquired about. It should be noted that during the pilot study and the visits to the local pharmacies, in many locations sedatives and anti-depressants could be purchased without prescription. Given the fact that some of the pharmacies admitted to offering sedatives and anti-depressants are also not officially licensed in Kosovo, the control of sales of these products is rather difficult. Customs and police controls have often resulted in the seizure of general pharmaceuticals (not only sedatives and anti-depressants) primarily originating from Serbia¹⁰ that were entering Kosovo illegally.

3.3.1. Anti-Depressants

The list of antidepressant pharmaceuticals that were inquired about included: Paroxetine, Olanzapine, Escitalopram, Risperidon, Citalopram, Biperidene, and Fluphenazine. Across all antidepressant pills available in the local markets and major international brands, the reported consumption of antidepressants was lower than 1%. An average 2% of respondents included in the GPS Survey report not having consumed it in the last year, indicating familiarity and prior use of a given anti-depressant. The Figure 6 below provides an overview of responses for Olanzapine which is very representative of the distribution of responses among other substances. It should be noted that the gender distribution is rather uniform regarding the use of anti-depressants. Similarly, the sample of respondents confirming use of particular substance is so small that no gender differences could be observed.

¹⁰ See news reports available at: BIRN: <http://gazetajnk.com/?cid=1,979,888>; Kosovo360 live portal: <http://www.kosovalive360.com/barnat-nga-serbia-rezultojne-te-jene-me-regjistrome-falso.html>; KOHA.net: <http://koha.net/arkiva/?page=1,3,70155>

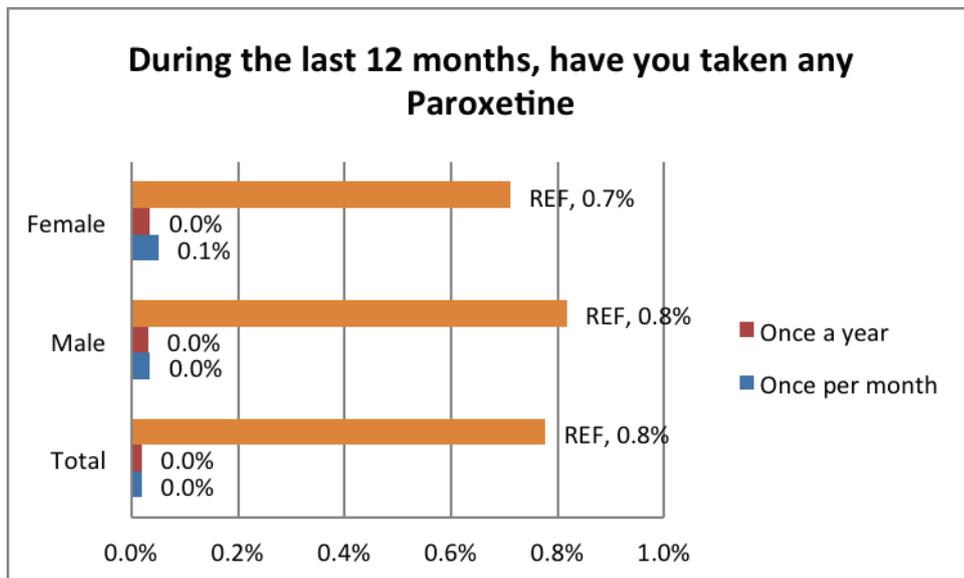


Figure 6. Frequency of use of Paroxetine

Furthermore, when asked how they accessed anti-depressants 0.2% of respondents reported to have bought them and an additional 0.2% reported to have acquired them in a manner not listed in the answering options. Figure 7 below provides an overview of access to anti-depressants as reported by respondents in the GPS survey.

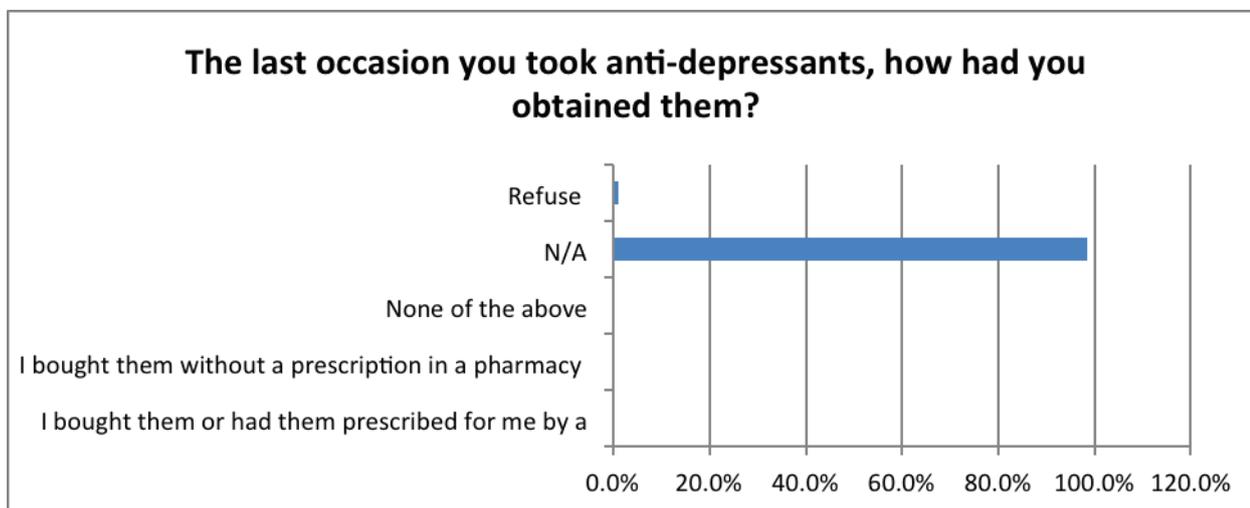


Figure 7. Access to anti-depressants

3.3.2. Sedatives

Sedatives appear to be more widely used than antidepressants, however their reported use continues to be under 1% for each type of sedative inquired about. The list of antidepressant pharmaceuticals that were inquired about included: Valium Diazepam, Temazepam, Trodon, Alprazolam, Bromazepam, Sulpiride, Xanax, Bensedin, and Loram. While most sedative types were reported at

around 1% of usage by respondents, a total of 3% of the surveyed population have taken sedatives in the last year.

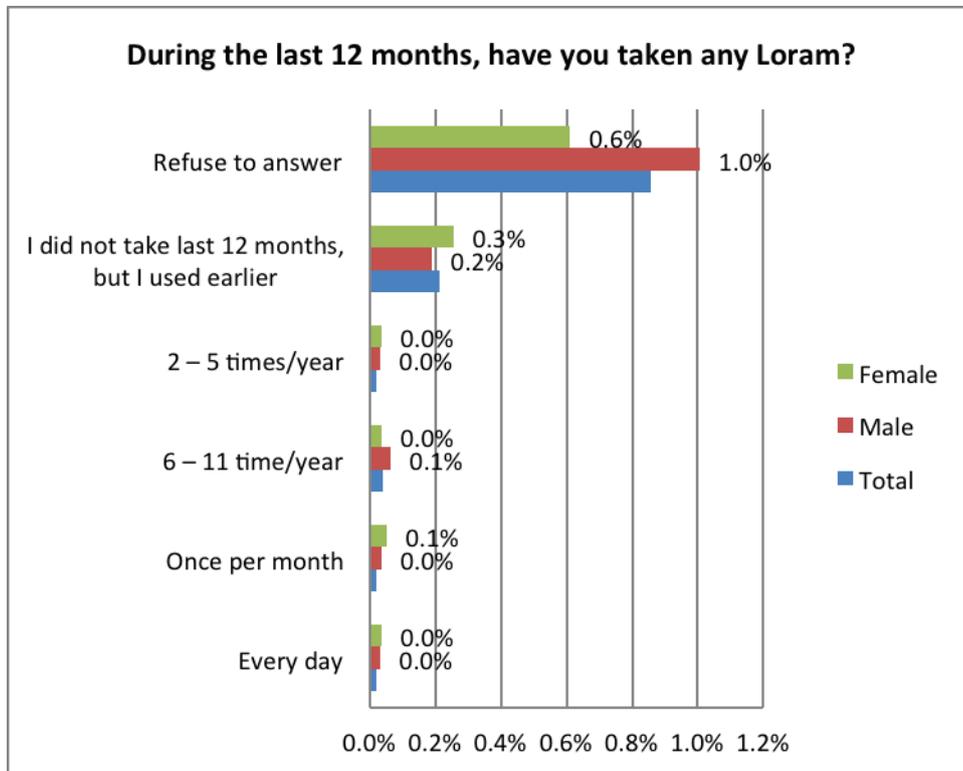


Figure 8. Frequency of use of Loram in the last year

Similar to the use of antidepressants, around half of the respondents admitted to have used sedatives after having bought them in the pharmacies (2%), bought them without a prescription (0.5%), or by some other mean not provided as an option in the survey (0.3%). The only difference in results as compared to the access to antidepressants is evident in the report of several respondents who acquired them from someone informally. There are no significant observable differences in responses in terms of age group and gender distribution, and due to the small number of reported users, no major observations can be made with regards to users of sedatives in Kosovo. The Figure 9 provides an overview of access to sedatives, as reported by respondents.

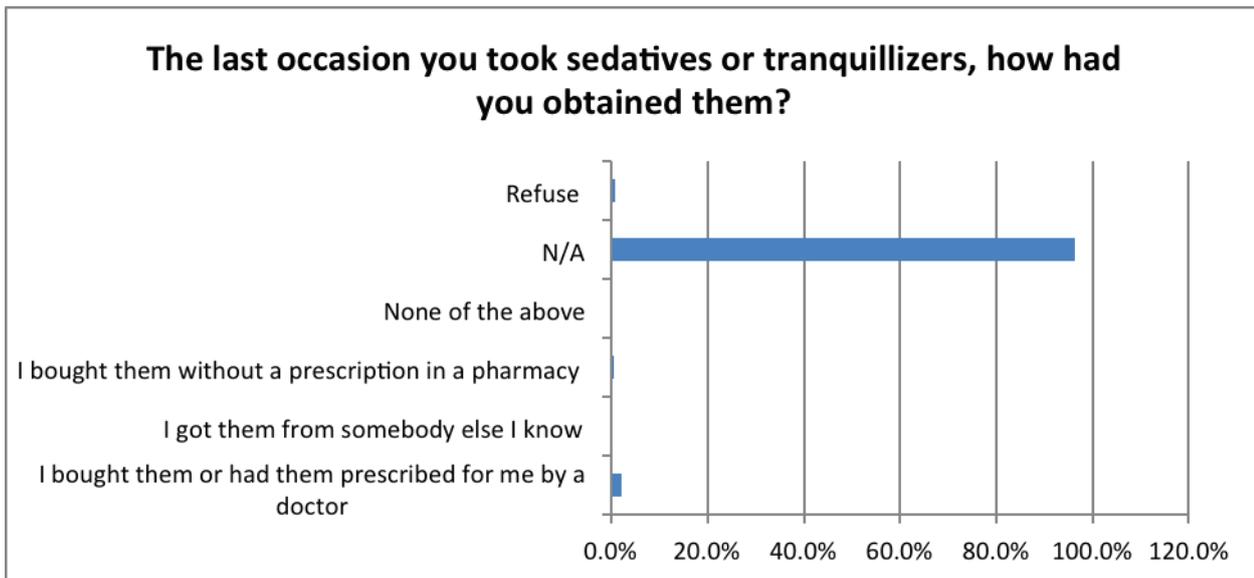


Figure 9. Access to sedatives

3.4. Cannabis

All activities related to cannabis cultivation, possession and distribution/marketing in Kosovo are criminal offences. The Criminal Code of Kosovo does not provide differentiation in terms of penalties for various types of drugs and is equally harsh towards all of them. The police and other rule of law institutions have confronted cannabis with the same approach as other illicit substances. However, the approach that anti-drug agencies have adopted so far has not been very effective to curb the cannabis presence in Kosovo. One of the approaches selected by the police, namely, raids in night clubs for checking possession among individuals, has resulted with youngsters being apprehended for personal use of quantities of cannabis, which also implies that they will be registered in criminal records. Prevention campaigns against drugs have largely been inefficient in preventing the use of drugs particularly among youth. The youngsters, who participated in the focus group discussion of the pilot phase, reported that they do not consider awareness raising campaigns as very adequate for them.

As part of the pilot survey, the project team also attempted to apply an alternative measurement of cannabis consumption in Kosovo through the assessment of the rolling paper market. Given that the number of tobacco smokers who use rolling paper for non-cannabis smoking is insignificant, the estimation of the papers' market would represent an accurate estimation of cannabis consumption. The interesting finding to this end is that due to the fact that cannabis possession is illegal, all rolling papers, that are otherwise considered perfectly legal products to be marketed in Kosovo, are also imported and traded illegally.

The survey results indicate that cannabis is the most consumed illicit drug in Kosovo. The discussion in the focus group during the pilot survey indicates that the price of cannabis in the local market ranges from € 10/g – € 15/g. The cannabis section was the longest in the questionnaire and, aside from covering the aspects addressed for other substances, it also inquired about age during first time consumption, prevalence among social circles, availability and markets. The first question regarding

cannabis asked in the survey inquired whether respondents knew someone that takes cannabis. 10% of respondents in the sample confirmed knowing someone personally who uses cannabis.

The second question tested the perceived availability of cannabis and the respondents were asked how difficult it would be for them to access cannabis in 24 hours if they wanted. 43.3% of the respondents claimed not knowing how difficult it would be for them to find cannabis in one day, 28.3% in the sample stated it would be impossible for them to find the referenced drug, with an additional 8.3% of them stating that it would be very difficult. A total of 5.2% of respondents in the sample declared it would be fairly difficult for them to find cannabis within 24 hours, while 3.2% stated it would be a fairly easy task for them. 9.4% of respondents assessed the task of finding cannabis within 24 hours as very easy to achieve, while an additional 1.9% of respondents refused to answer the question. The respondents were then asked to reveal whether they have ever taken cannabis themselves and 98% of respondents responded negatively to the question. A full illustration of responses, regarding access to cannabis and personal experience with it, is presented in the Figure 10 below.

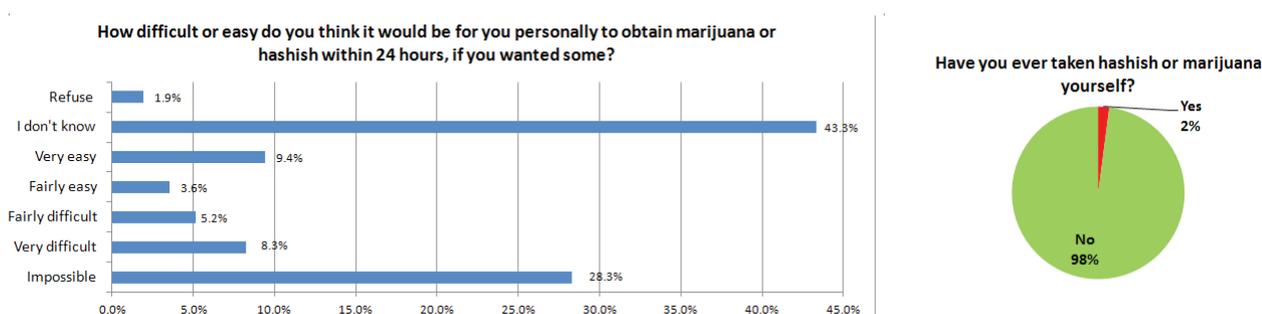


Figure 10. Difficulty in accessing cannabis and personal experience with it

The results obtained in these two questions are both gender and age sensitive. A total of 2.8% of men in the sample as compared to 0.9% of women admit to have taken cannabis. Similarly, cannabis is more accessible to men than women. 51.7% of women as compared to 31.4% of men state not to know how difficult it would be for them to find cannabis within 24 hours if they wanted. In addition, 8.6% of women as compared to 9.9% of men consider it would be very easy to find cannabis within 24 hours. In terms of age distribution among respondents, the highest reported percentages of personal encounter with cannabis come from the 15 -20 age group with 4.5% confirmation rate and the 21 – 25 age group with 3.6% confirming they have taken cannabis. Similarly, 13.5% and 13.4% of respondents in age groups 15-20 and 21 -25 respectively have reported very easy access to cannabis within 24 hours if they wanted. 9.6% of respondents within the age group 26 – 30 believe that they can access cannabis very easily within 24 hours. 55 – 60 year olds appear to have the lowest access with only 4.5% of respondents confirming access to cannabis within 24 hours.

Unlike other questions regarding tobacco, alcohol, and pharmaceuticals, the responses also appear to be quite different in terms of rural/urban distribution. A total of 13.6% of respondents in urban settlements have reported very easy access to cannabis within 24 hours, as compared to 5.9% of respondents in rural areas who confirm the same. Similarly 4% of urban respondents confirm to have taken cannabis as opposed to 0.4% of respondents from rural settlements who confirm the same.

The respondents in the survey were also asked about their encounter with cannabis during the last year and in the last month. Only 1.1% of respondents in the sample confirm to have taken cannabis in the last year, while even a smaller percentage of respondents report to have consumed it in the last month. In each of the questions, 0.2% of respondents have refused to answer, while 7.8% of them responded negatively. Figure 11 provides an overview of reported consumption of cannabis during the last year and in the last month.

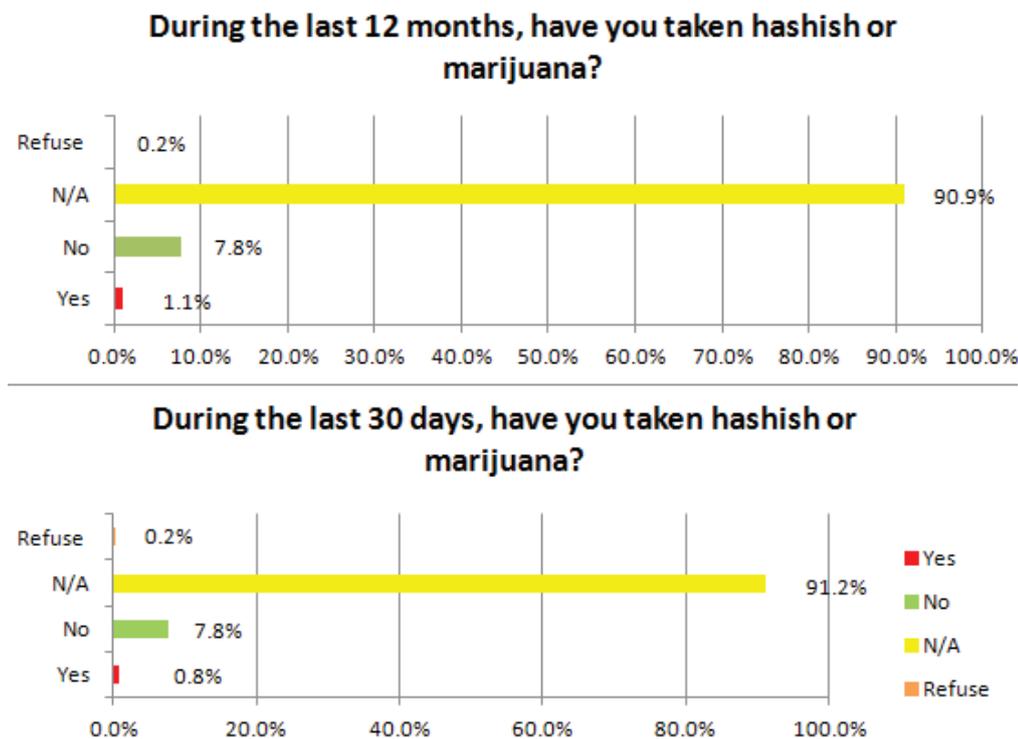


Figure 11. Last year and last month use of cannabis

When the results are analyzed through a gender lens, it could be observed that the use of cannabis among men is higher both during the last year (1.6% of men and 0.3% women confirm use of cannabis within last year) and last month (1.2% men and 0.2% women confirm use of cannabis in the last month). Similarly, there are significant age differences when use of cannabis is concerned. The highest percentage of cannabis use during the last year is reported by 15 – 20 year olds with 2.8% confirming use.

Age groups of 21 – 25 and 26 – 30 year olds who used it, are rated second and third according to cannabis use in the last year with 1.5% and 1.1% of them respectively who confirm to have smoked. In other age groups, the reported use of cannabis is below 0.5%. Similarly, use in the last month is also most frequently reported by the three youngest age groups in the sample from youngest to the oldest with 2.0%, 1.1% and 0.9% respectively. Urban/rural differences are also apparent with use last year being reported by 2% of respondents from urban settlements and only 0.3% of rural respondents. Use last month also testifies to the pattern as 1.3% of respondents in urban settlements confirm use of cannabis within the last month compared to 0.3% of respondents in rural areas.

Questions on the frequency of use of cannabis during the last month were also included in the survey. 20% of those reporting to have smoked cannabis in the last month report to have done so during 20 days or more, hence indicating habits in this population. Those reporting 1 - 3 days within the last month, during which they have used cannabis, account for the second largest group in the sample with 19% of the last month users. 10 -19 days of use within the last month and 4 -9 days of use are represented with 10% and 11% respectively. As afore mentioned in the report, caution is required when interpreting figures based on low numbers.

An interesting viewpoint that should be noted is that of perceived cannabis use among peers. 94.8% of respondents in the sample state that none of their friends use cannabis. 4.1% of respondents in the sample, state that only a few of their friends use cannabis followed by 0.5% of those reporting half of their friends as cannabis users. The least selected options are “most of my friends” and “all of my friends” with 0.4% and 0.2% respectively. Figure 12 provides an overview of responses on the frequency of use last month and the use of cannabis among peers.

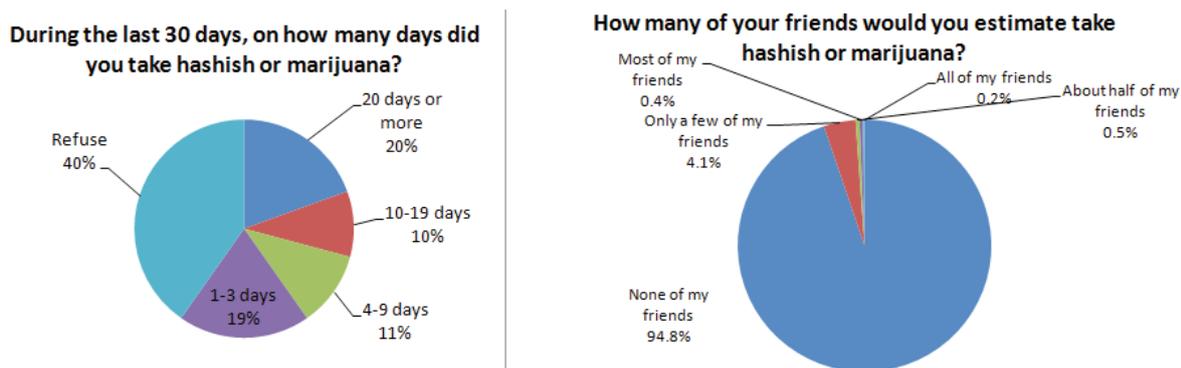


Figure 12. Number of days used cannabis during the last month and estimated number of friends that use cannabis

Additional questions aimed at learning how cannabis was obtained during the last episode of use, as well as whether respondents have been offered cannabis (either free of charge or to purchase). Pertaining to the first aspect, 35.3% of respondents confirming use of cannabis in the last year, state that they have bought it. 22.7% of them report to have been given or shared with the cannabis they have taken, while 39.8% of respondents confirming use of cannabis during the last year, refuse to disclose how they obtained it. 2.3% of all confirmed users in the last year report to grow their own cannabis. On the other hand, almost 97% of respondents in the sample indicate that they have not been solicited for cannabis during the last year neither free of charge nor to purchase. 1.6% of respondents state to have been offered cannabis once or twice during the last year, while 0.5% of respondents in the sample have been offered cannabis 3-5 times. Figure 13 below, presents a visual overview of both aspects.

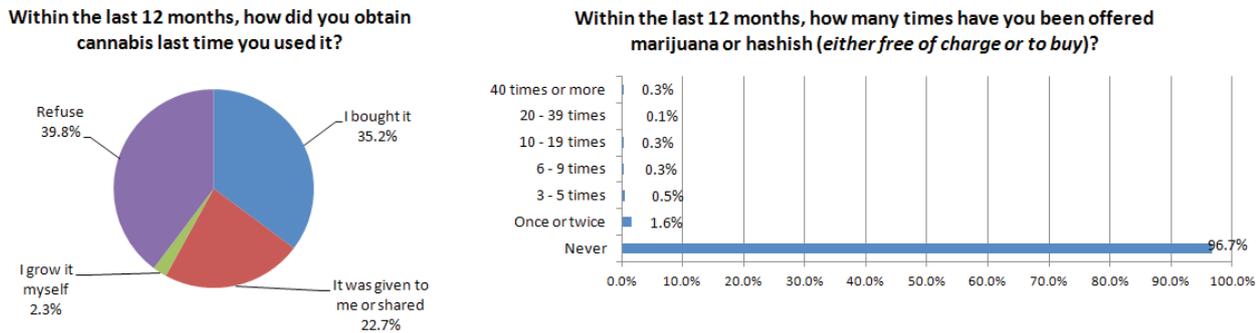


Figure 13. Way of obtaining cannabis in the last year and the number of times offered

3.5. Ecstasy

Ecstasy is the second illicit substance inquired about in the GPS Survey in Kosovo. The prevalence of ecstasy appears to be limited to a small percentage of respondents in urban centers, with primary focus in the capital Prishtina. The discussion in the focus group during the pilot survey indicates that the price of one unit of ecstasy in the local market ranges from € 7 - € 10. The first question regarding the presence of ecstasy in Kosovo aimed toward identifying the general presence of the substance in the market, thus it inquired whether respondents knew someone that takes ecstasy. 98.5% of all respondents in the sample denied knowing someone that takes ecstasy with only 1.5% of respondents confirming to do so. If viewed across gender lines, 1.7% of men as compared to 1.1% of women reported knowing someone that takes ecstasy. Urban/rural distribution is also uneven, with 2.5% of urban-based respondents and 0.6% of rural-based respondents who confirm knowing someone that takes ecstasy. In terms of age distribution, knowing someone that takes ecstasy is much more present with younger persons than with the older generation. Given the nature of the drug and that it is usually attached to night-life environments, it is not surprising that the highest percentage of those confirming acquaintances with ecstasy users is among age groups between 15 -20 and 21 -25 years old, where 2.5%, of each reports to know users of this substance. Among older members in the sample, the reported knowledge of users of ecstasy is below 1%.

Another aspect that respondents were asked about is their personal experience with the substance. To this question, 0.1% of respondents have admitted to have used ecstasy, with the remaining 99.9% who report never to have tried the substance. The use of ecstasy is prevalent among men from 15 – 40 years old. Women, across all age groups, and men older than 40 have not reported any cases of using ecstasy.

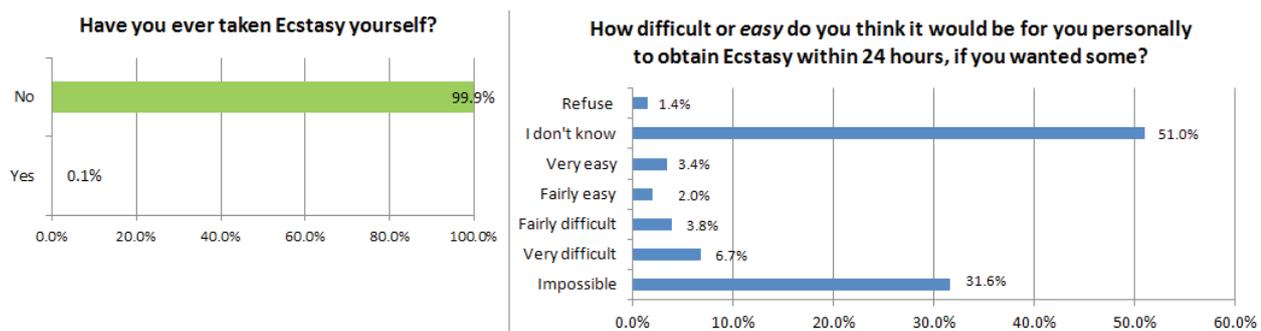


Figure 14. Ecstasy use and perceived accessibility

When asked whether they would be able to find ecstasy within 24 hours if they wished to do so, 3.4% of respondents rated this task as very easy. An additional 2% of the sample declared it would be fairly easy, while 3.8% of respondents interviewed rated this challenge with fairly difficult. The largest portion of the sample do not know whether they would be able to find ecstasy if they wanted, followed by those stating that it would be impossible with 31.6% of answer composition. 6.7% of respondents believe that it would be very difficult to find this substance within 24 hours if they wanted to.

The substance appears to be most accessible to persons in age groups 21 – 25, of which 4.7% report to be able to find ecstasy if they wanted to, followed by the 26 – 30 age group, 3.4% of them confirming very easy access. The gender overview of responses provides a slightly lower access of women than of men.

Prevalence of use during the last year is 0.06% providing for a very small pool of users of which meaningful statistical comparisons could be made. Last month usage rate is even lower at a mere 0.02% of the total respondents in the sample.

It should be noted however, that ecstasy availability is confirmed by the reported solicitation with this substance. Among the respondents, 0.9% confirmed to have been offered ecstasy in the last year.

3.6. Amphetamines (Speed)

Speed is used as the street name for amphetamines and it was used as such in the survey. Similar to ecstasy, the prevalence of amphetamines use appears to be limited to a small percentage of respondents in the capital Prishtina. The focus group discussion during the pilot survey indicates that the price of amphetamines in the local market is in the range of € 10/g – € 15/g. When asked whether they knew someone that take amphetamines, 99.4% of all respondents in the sample answered negatively. Only 0.8% of men in the sample and 0.2% of women have confirmed to know users of amphetamines. As with other illicit substances covered thus far, urban/rural distribution is uneven, with 1.1% of urban-based respondents and 0.2% of those interviewed in rural areas confirming to know users of amphetamines.

As far as age distribution is concerned, the most exposed age group towards this substance is that of 26 – 30 years olds, of which 0.5% confirmed to have tried amphetamines in their lifetime. All other groups up to 40 years of age, average at 2% of respondents confirming to have tried the substance. In terms of gender, the confirmations of use come exclusively from men. The use of amphetamines is prevalent among men between 15 – 40 years old. Women across all age groups and men older than 40 have not reported any cases of using amphetamines. The Figure 15 below provides an overview of perceived accessibility and personal experience/use.

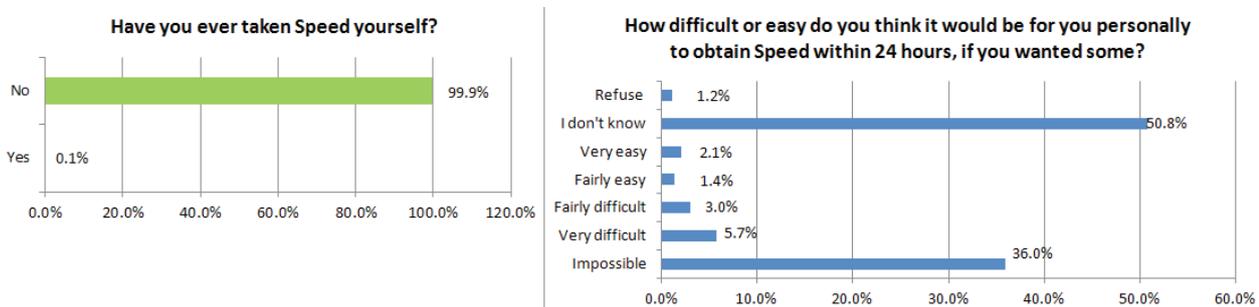


Figure 15. Use of amphetamines and perceived accessibility

When asked whether they would be able to find amphetamines within 24 hours if they wanted to do so, 2.1% of respondents rated this task as very easy, which is a 1.3% drop from the percentage of those giving ecstasy access the same rating. An additional 1.4% of the sample believes that it would be fairly easy, while 3% of respondents interviewed have rated this task to be very difficult. The majority of the respondents in the sample (50.8%) don't know if they would be able to find amphetamines if they wanted, while 36% of them assess that it is impossible for them to find amphetamines within 24 hours. 5.7% of respondents state that they would have it rather difficult to access amphetamines within 24 hours.

Prevalence of amphetamines' use during the last year is confirmed by 0.1% of total or 0.2% of the total men in the sample as all positive responses were provided by men. The small percentage of use reported limits the potential for further breakdown or analysis according to age groups and/or other comparisons. There have been no reports in this survey of amphetamines use last month.

It should be noted however, that amphetamines seem twice less present than ecstasy. Out of the respondents, only 0.4% reported to being offered amphetamines during the last year, compared to 0.9% for ecstasy.

3.7. Cocaine

Cocaine has lately received significant media attention in Kosovo. After police raids resulted with the seizure of 16 kg of pure cocaine substance and additional 30 kg of adulterants near Peja/ Pec, cocaine was at the spotlight of local media. Being one of the most expensive drugs available, cocaine is restricted to users with financial potential to support this expensive vice. The discussion in the focus group during the pilot survey indicates that the price of cocaine in the local market moves between € 70/g – € 150/g depending on the quality of the substance. Over 97% of the respondents in the sample responded negatively on whether they knew someone that takes cocaine. 3.3% of men in the sample, compared to 1.9% of women, have confirmed they know cocaine users. Urban/rural distribution of responses is also pertinent to this question, for 4.9% of urban-based respondents and 0.9% of those interviewed in rural areas confirm knowing users of cocaine.

The age group mostly exposed to this substance appears to be among the 26 - 30 year old age group (0.6% confirmed lifetime use) and 15 - 20 years old (0.5% confirmed lifetime use). It should be noted that lifetime use of cocaine is also confirmed by 0.3% of respondents in the age group 41 –

50 year old. Confirmations of cocaine use make up 0.4% among men respondents and 0.1% among women, and as for other drugs, evidencing once more greater exposure of men in the sample. The Figure 16 below provides an overview of perceived accessibility and personal experience/use of cocaine.

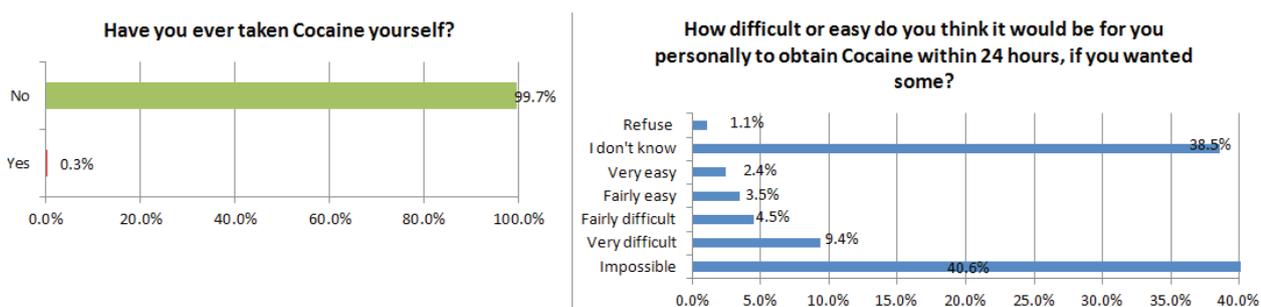


Figure 16. Cocaine use and perceived accessibility

Regarding the ability to find cocaine within 24 hours if they wanted to do so, 2.4% saw it as very easy and 3.5% of respondents as fairly easy. This value sets accessibility of cocaine between the accessibility rating for amphetamines and ecstasy.

Prevalence of cocaine use during the last year is confirmed by 0.2% of total respondents or 0.3% of the total men in the sample as only male respondents have confirmed use of cocaine last year. The low figures hinder further elaboration and differentiation in terms of age groups and other demographic criteria. Only 0.09% of total respondents in the sample or 0.2% of men in the sample has confirmed use of cocaine during the last month.

3.8. Heroin

Heroin is also one of illicit drugs included in the survey. It should be noted that the GPS survey is probably not the most appropriate method of identifying heroin users as they represent the most problematic part of the drug user population. 98.5% of all respondents reported that they do not know anyone that uses heroin. When considering gender distribution, 1.9% of men and 0.8% of women reported knowing heroin users. In addition, 2.6% of respondents from urban settlements, as opposed to 0.5% of respondents in rural areas, confirmed to know heroin users.

Pertaining to personal use experience with heroin, 0.1% of respondents in the sample have confirmed having tried this substance in their lifetime. Respondents in urban settlements have exclusively reported the use of heroin, however the age span reaches up to 60 years of age. Women across all age groups have not reported any cases of use of heroin. The Figure 17 below provides an overview of perceived accessibility and personal experience/use with heroin.

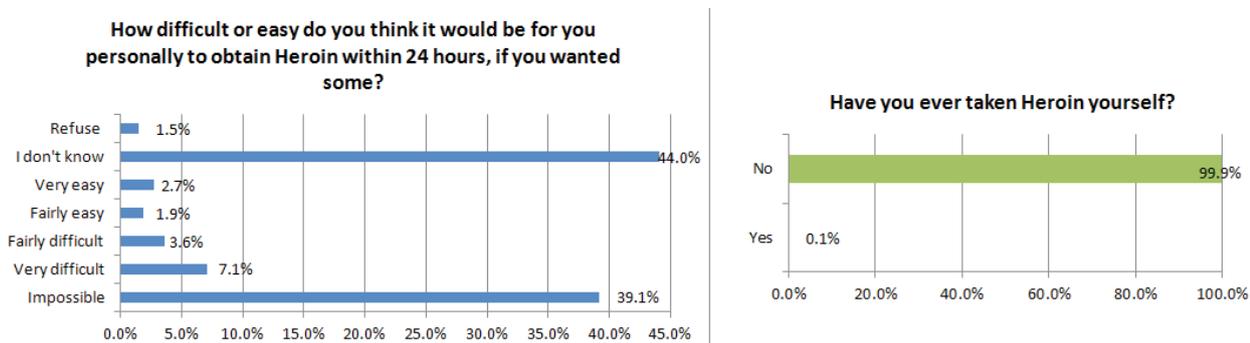


Figure 17. Heroin use and perceived accessibility

Unlike other substances covered in the sections above, heroin accessibility appears to be greater than for other substances. Even 1% of persons above the age of 60 report to have it very easy to find heroin within 24 hours if they wanted to do so. Nevertheless, the age with the greater access to this substance is that between 41 - 50 years of age, 4% of whom report to have very easy access to heroin within 24 hours. 44% of respondents in the sample do not know whether they would be able to find heroin within 24 hours, while 39.1% of them state this would be an impossible task for them.

Prevalence of heroin use during in the last year is reported by 0.1% of total or 0.2% of the total men in the sample as all positive responses were provided by men. The small percentage of use reported, limits the potential for further breakdown or analysis according to age groups and/or other comparisons. Prevalence of heroin use within the last month was not confirmed in the survey.

It should be noted however, that heroin is perceived as more available than amphetamines and cocaine, but less so than ecstasy. The presence of heroin in society is also confirmed by 0.6% of respondents interviewed in the GPS survey who confirm that they have been offered this substance during the last year either for purchase or for free.

3.9. LSD / Acid

LSD is the last illicit substance included in the Kosovo GPS Survey. It is also recognized by the street name of "acid", which is how it has been used in the survey. The incidence of use appears to be limited to Prishtina as was also the case with other substances. 0.7% of respondents in the sample know someone that takes acid/LSD. 1.4% of respondents from urban areas, as opposed to 0.1% of those coming from rural settlements, confirm knowing someone that takes LSD.

As far as age distribution is concerned, the most exposed age group towards this substance is that of 26 – 30 year olds of whom 0.6% confirm to have tried LSD in their lifetime. The age group between 21 – 25 years old, ranks second with 0.5% of respondents within the group confirming use of LSD, followed by the 15 -20 year olds of whom 0.2% report to have tried LSD. None of the respondents over 35 years of age have reported having tried LSD. Figure 18 visually illustrates the results obtained on questions of personal lifetime use and perceived access within 24 hours.

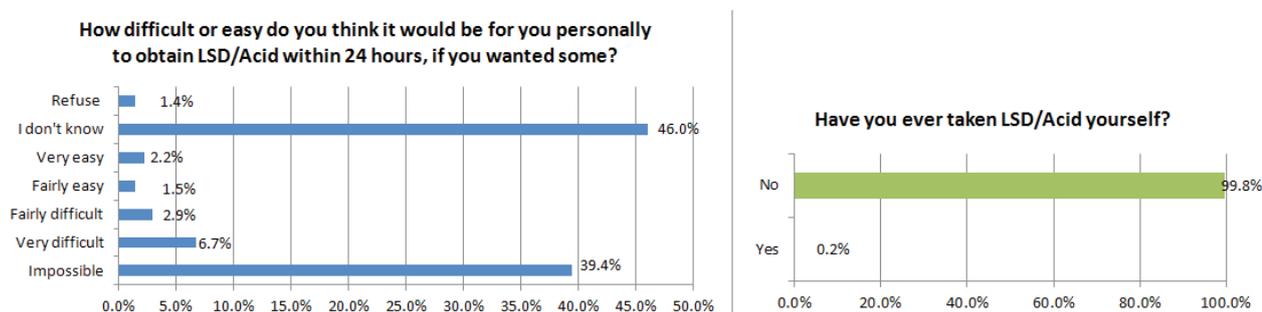


Figure 18. LSD/Acid use and perceived accessibility

When asked whether they would be able to find LSD within 24 hours if they wanted to do so, 2.2% of respondents answered with “very easy”. An additional 1.5% of respondents in the sample assess that it would be fairly easy to find LSD within 24 hours, while 2.9% of respondents interviewed, claimed this task to be very difficult. Similarly to other substances, the largest part of respondents (46%) do not know whether they would be able to find acid if they want to, with an additional 39.4% of them rating this challenge as impossible.

Only 0.1% of the total in the sample reports prevalence of LSD use within the last year as men provided all positive responses. The small percentage of use reported limits the potential for further breakdown or analysis according to age groups and/or other comparisons. 0.06% of men in the sample confirm use of acid last month. It should be noted however, that LSD is much less available than most of the substances covered in the GPS with only 0.6% of respondents reporting to have been offered acid.

3.10. Attitudes and Opinions

The section on attitudes and opinions covered a broad range of topics and issues related to substance abuse practices and other aspects related to lifestyle and belief systems. Some of the highlights of these answers are provided in this section.

- 87% of respondents support the recently applied ban on smoking in public places, more precisely 63.3% strongly approve and 17.8% approve the recent enforcement. 3.6% neither approve nor disapprove the ban. Women tend to have a more positive opinion on the ban than do men (70.6% women strongly approve it opposed to 68.5% of men; 18.8% of women approve opposed to 17.1% of men).
- Drug addicts are more commonly perceived as patients by 35.4 % of respondents while 17.7% perceive them as criminals. 25.7% of respondents consider drug addicts as both criminals and patients simultaneously and finally 8.2% perceive them as neither criminals nor patients.
- The statement “People should be permitted to take hashish or cannabis” was completely unacceptable for 79.5% of respondents interviewed. It was largely unacceptable to an additional 11.1% of respondents in the GPS and only 4.6% of respondents stated that they ‘completely agree’, or ‘agree to large extent’ with this statement. 4.8% of respondents reported neutrality to this question.

- The statement “People should be permitted to take heroin”, was found completely acceptable and somewhat acceptable to 1.6% of respondents. While 3% of respondents stated to be neutral to this statement, over 95% of them expressed a disagreement with it.
- 1.8% of respondents consider it acceptable to try ecstasy once or twice, while 86% of respondents oppose it. While 2.2% of respondents state they have no opinion on the matter, 8.7% of them state not to know whether it is OK to try ecstasy once or twice.
- 23.2% of respondents consider it as acceptable for people to smoke up to 10 cigarettes per day. Almost 60% of respondents in the sample do not agree with this statement. 11.5% of respondents expressed neutral to this question.
- 20.8% of respondents consider it acceptable to have a drink or two several times a week. 10.9% of respondents are neutral to this question and 60.5% of respondents disagree.
- 2.1% of the sample consider occasional use of cannabis acceptable, 2.2% are neutral to this question while 90.2% of them state opposition to it.
- 84% of respondents consider it risky to smoke more than one pack of cigarettes per day while 16% of them consider it as not risky.
- 98.3% of respondents consider it risky smoking cannabis regularly; 1.7% considers that there is no risk or a slight one in doing so.
- Experimentation with ecstasy or cocaine is seen as risky by respectively 97.4% and 97.8% of the respondents.

The following table shows the variation of risk perception of potential harms in relation to the substance use.

Attitude / Opinion	Smoking one or more packs of cigarettes a day	Have five or more drinks each week-end	Smoke marijuana or hashish regularly	Try ecstasy once or twice	Try Cocaine once or twice
No risk	6.1	10.8	0.5	0.6	0.6
Slight risk	9.9	13.5	1.2	1.9	1.6
Moderate risk	18.6	18.6	5.2	6.0	5.4
Great risk	65.3	57.1	93.1	91.4	92.4

Table 3: Risks perception of harms related to substance use (%)

Conclusions

In general, the respondents disapprove of the use of illicit drugs and show a higher risk perception towards the use of illicit drugs than of cigarettes and alcohol. Findings of this survey show that prevalence rates of illicit substance use are much lower than for legal substances, risks perception are then probably related to both health and criminal consequences.

This first general population survey is an important first step to help understand the situation regarding drug use in the country. While it only represents the first attempt to measure consumption levels and attitudes towards substance use, the GPS survey is the first survey to capture a snapshot of the situation pertaining to substance use. It should however be noted that the GPS survey is not the most adequate type of research for capturing long-term marginalized users of heroin or other psychotropic substances, but overall, it represents the most reliable methodology for investigating drug markets and behaviors in the general population.

The biggest value of the GPS Survey comes in terms of its potential to develop periodic trends' measurement that enables observing the effectiveness of policy measures of anti-drug agencies and institutions in addition to the observation of population behavior. The results of the GPS survey are useful for researchers, academics, public health professionals and other interested audiences, but most importantly, for policy makers at the national level. The GPS survey should be treated as the first necessary step to begin routine monitoring of drug use and alcohol consumption trends, as well as, to collect public opinions and attitudes toward drugs and alcohol as well as policies regulating these two types of substances.

The evidence collected through the GPS survey and the data contained in this report should provide policy makers with insights on the current situation in order to make informed decisions. In addition, the survey brings, for the first time, reliable statistical data on drug use in Kosovo that are comparable with results of similar studies carried out in other European countries, by applying European standard protocols in the context of a general population survey in Kosovo. The contribution that the report makes in generating a common understanding of psychoactive substance use and risky behavior is one of the most important aspects of the study, as it enables proper policy planning and benchmarking with other countries in terms of effectiveness of measures and factors contributing to increase/decrease of usage trends.

Though the prevalence of drug use recorded through this survey provides for a fairly low percentage of the population who admit having used substances, the perceived availability of substances appears to be quite high. This holds true particularly for cannabis availability for which only 28.3% of respondents declared it is "impossible for them" to find the substance if they so desired, with an additional 8.3% and 5.2% considering such a task as very difficult and fairly difficult respectively. 13% of the surveyed population state easiness in access to cannabis, while over 43% of respondents state not to know the difficulty of finding this substance if they wished to do so.

The access to ecstasy, amphetamines, heroin and LSD is reported to be more limited, while cocaine seems slightly more available. The prescription drugs/pharmaceuticals market is limited to few users either on regular or occasional basis.

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