



Drug Use in Higher Education in Ireland Survey Results, Recommendations & Reflections

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INTRODUCTION

MEET THE DUHEI TEAM



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*Leading expertise in
Applied Psychology,
Public Health,
Information Systems,
Student Health and
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INTRODUCTION

In response to concerns about drug and substance use among higher education students...

2019

The Minister of State
for Higher Education:

Rapid Response Group



2020

Rapid Response
Group:

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



2021

4 Core
recommendations:

**4. Drug Use in Higher
Education Ireland
(DUHEI STUDY)**



INTRODUCTION

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.

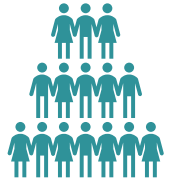
7.

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



INTRODUCTION

Sampling Strategy



The DUHEI study used a **probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling strategy**

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**

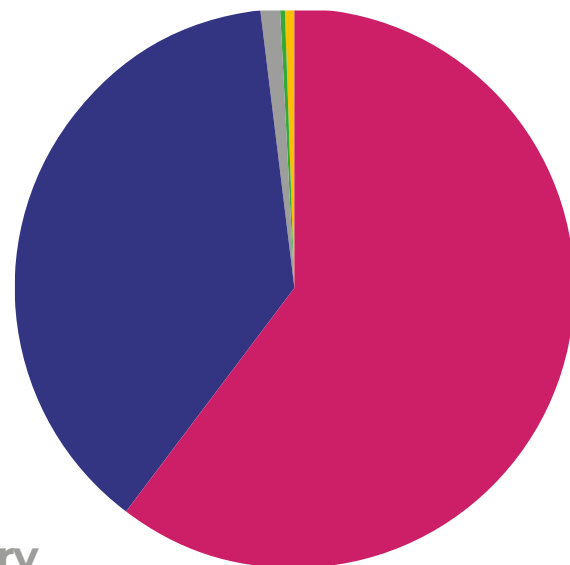
9% were registered with a Disability Support Service

90% were EU students

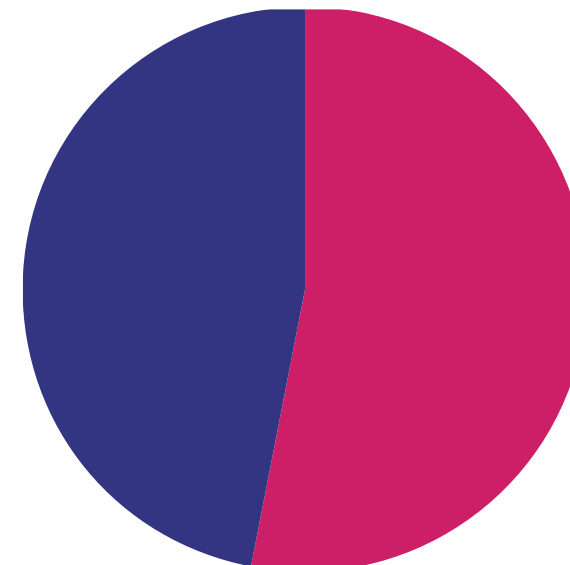
The response rate to the survey was **29%**

PARTICIPANTS

Participants - Gender



60.2% Female
37.9% Male
0.9% Non-binary
0.5% No Selection
0.3% Other



53% Female
47% Male

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



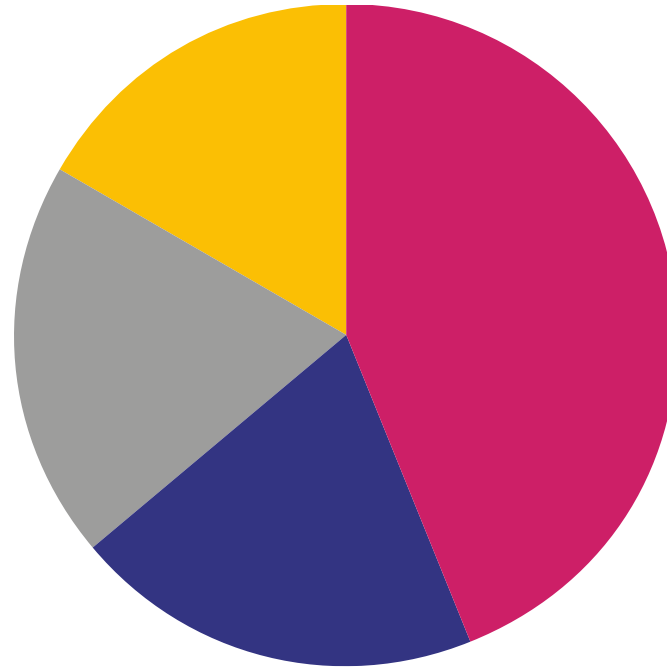
Current User

FINDINGS - OVERALL

Categories – Drug User Overall

DUHEI Survey

43.2% Never
19.4% Prior
19.1% Current
16.2% Recent



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

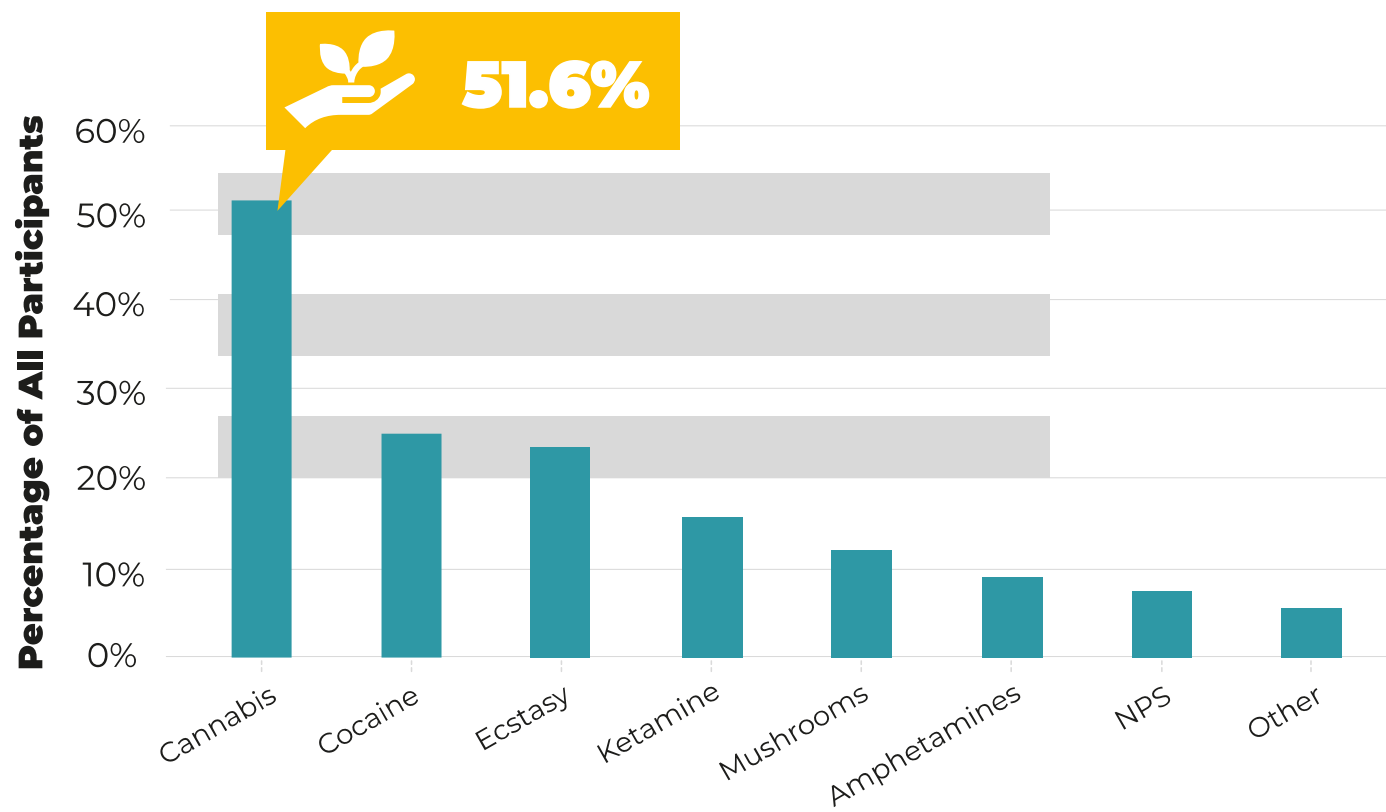
Participants – Drug User Group by Year of Study

	Current	Recent	Prior	Never
First Year	16.1	13.8	15.6	51.9
Second Year	20.6	16.4	17.6	43.1
Third Year	23.7	19.0	17.7	37.9
Fourth Year	23.7	20.3	21.3	33.1
Fifth Year +	22.7	20.0	18.2	36.4
Postgraduate	14.6	14.6	27.8	41.2

Current drug use rises year on year to peak in last the **two years in college**; from **one in six first years**, one in five **second years**, and one in four in **third and fourth years**.

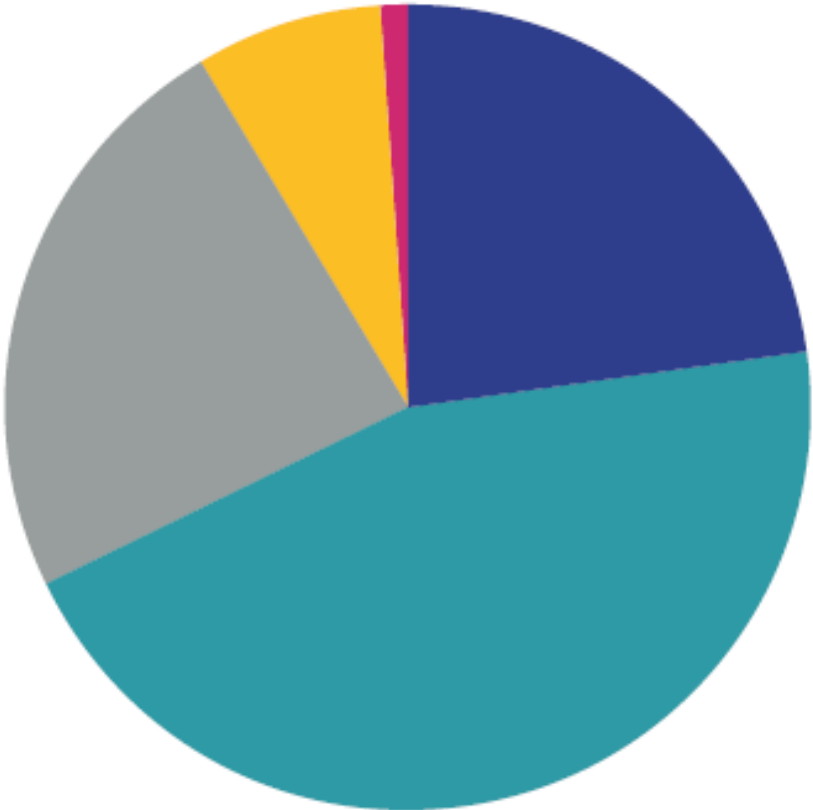
FINDINGS - OVERALL

Drugs Used



FINDINGS - OVERALL

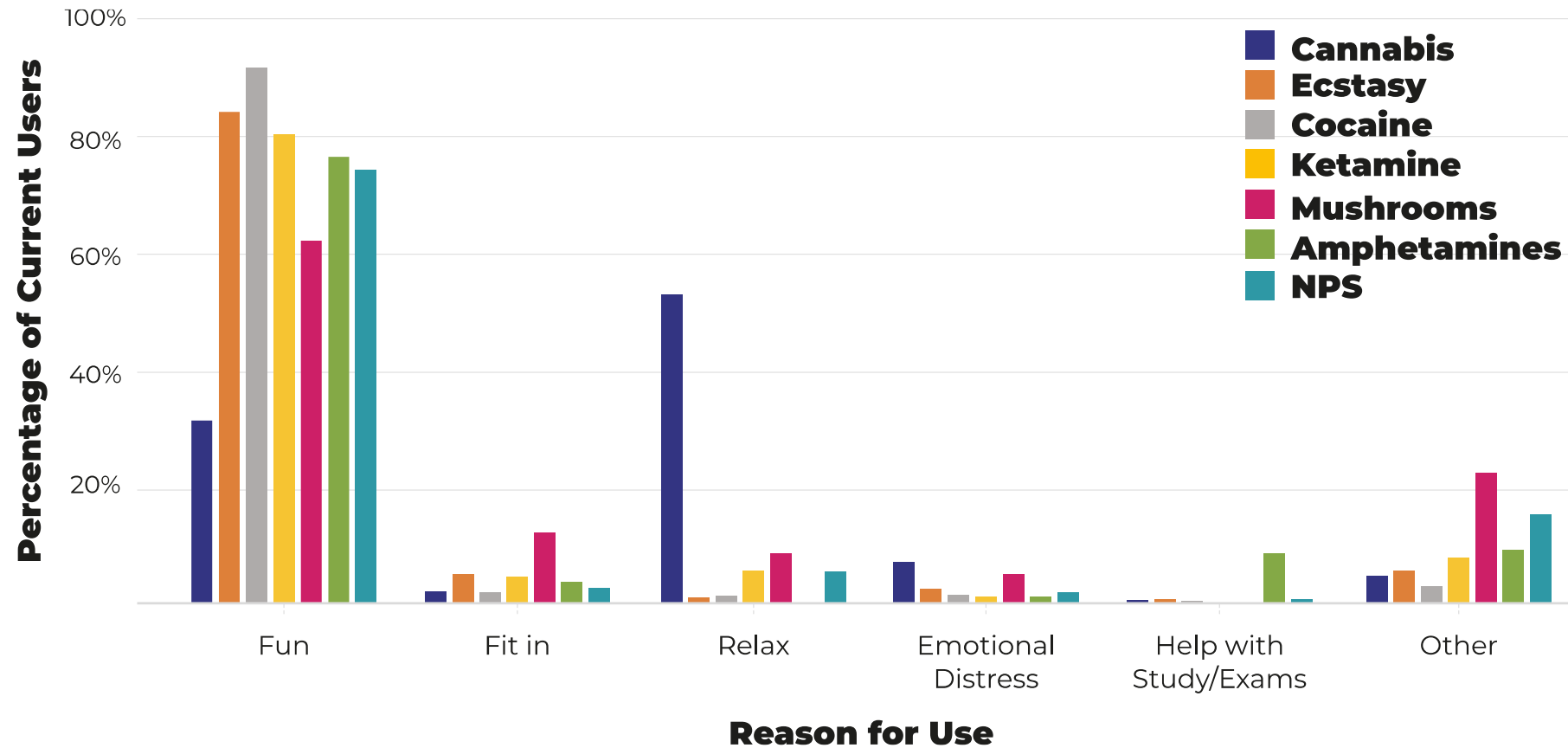
Effects on Student Life



37.3% Somewhat Negative
19.1% Extremely Negative
19.7% Neither
6.2% Somewhat Positive
0.9% Extremely Positive

FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

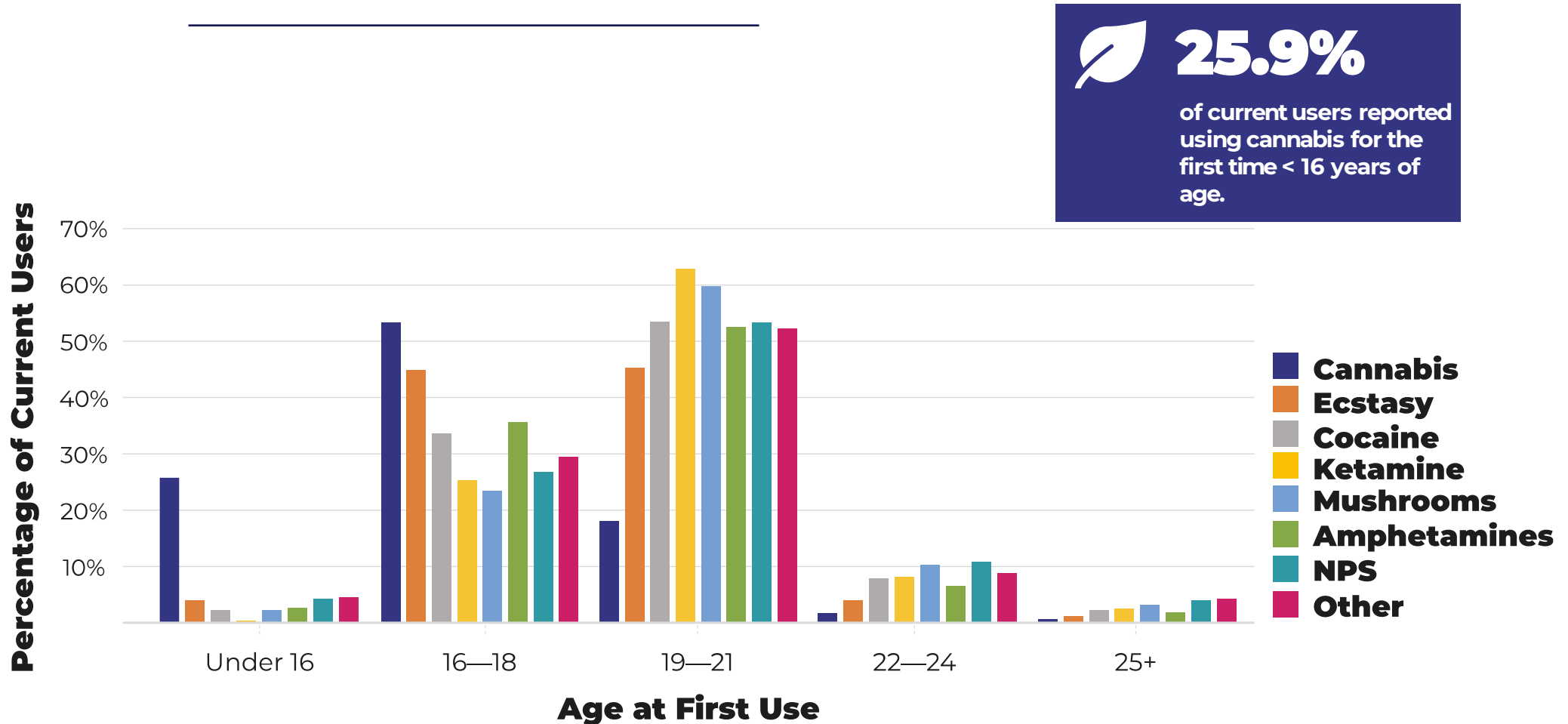
Main Reason for Use



FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

DUHEI Survey

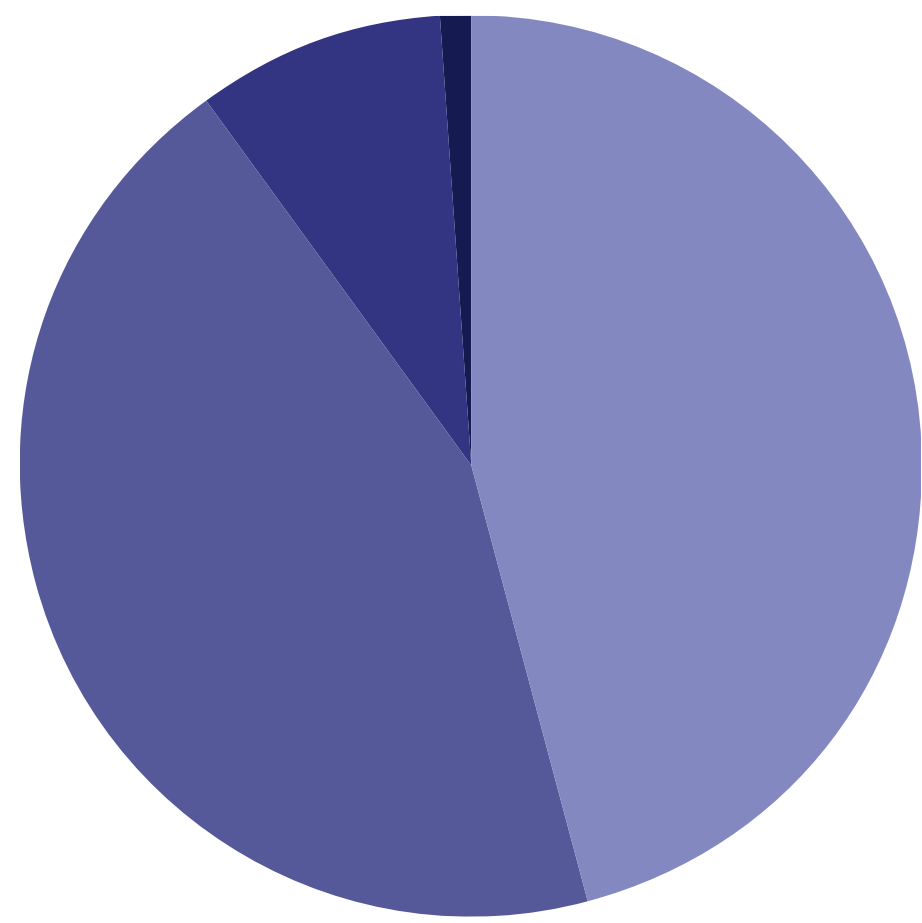
Age at First Use



FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

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

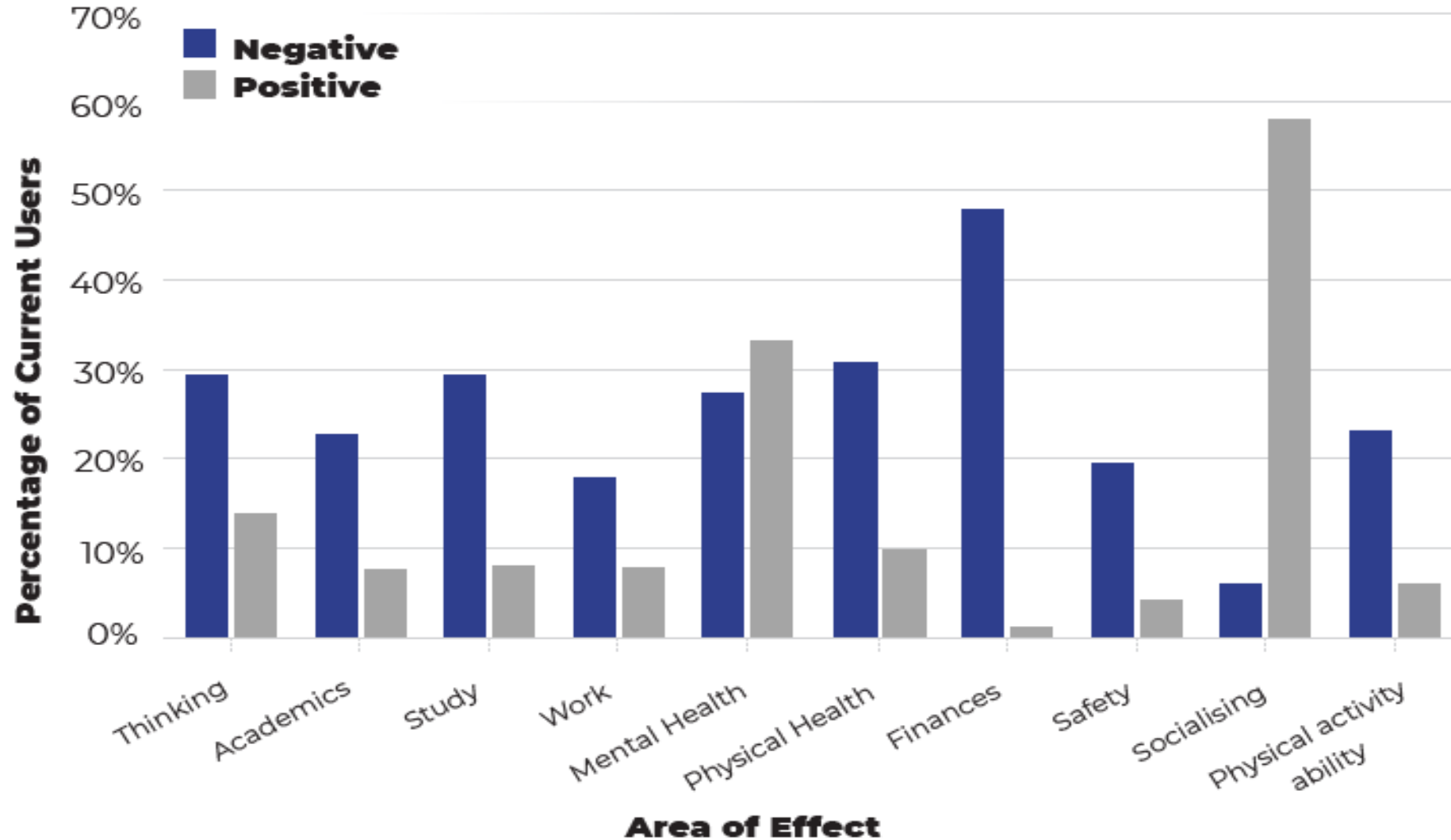
46% Low
44% Moderate
9% Substantial
1% Severe



52.9%
of current users at moderate
or substantial risk of drug use
harm

FINDINGS – CURRENT USERS

Effects on Various Domains of Life – Relative Negative v Positive



RECOMMENDATIONS

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 as part of the Healthy Campus initiatives.

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

<http://www.duhei.ie/>

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Dr Eamon Keenan, Assistant National Director Primary Care, HSE National, Clinical Lead-Addiction Services.

Dr Seán R. Millar, School of Public Health, UCC.

University College Cork Students' Unions.



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Union of Students in Ireland.

Presidents and Provosts of the participating institutions

President John O'Halloran of University College Cork

11,592 students in higher education in the Republic of Ireland.

