

NDARC

National Drug &
Alcohol Research Centre

The Difference is Research



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AUSTRALIA

Ecstasy and Related Drugs Reporting System: 2016 Findings

EMCDDA Lisbon Sept 19th - 20th

Courtney Breen and Amanda Roxburgh on behalf of the Drug Trends Team

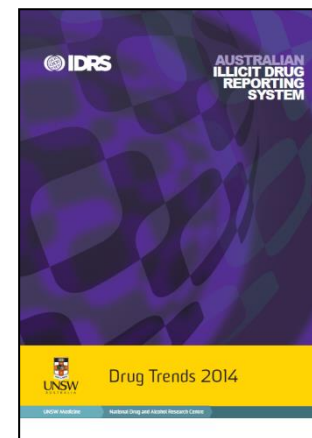
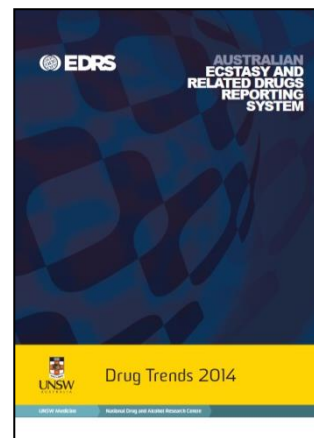
Medicine

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

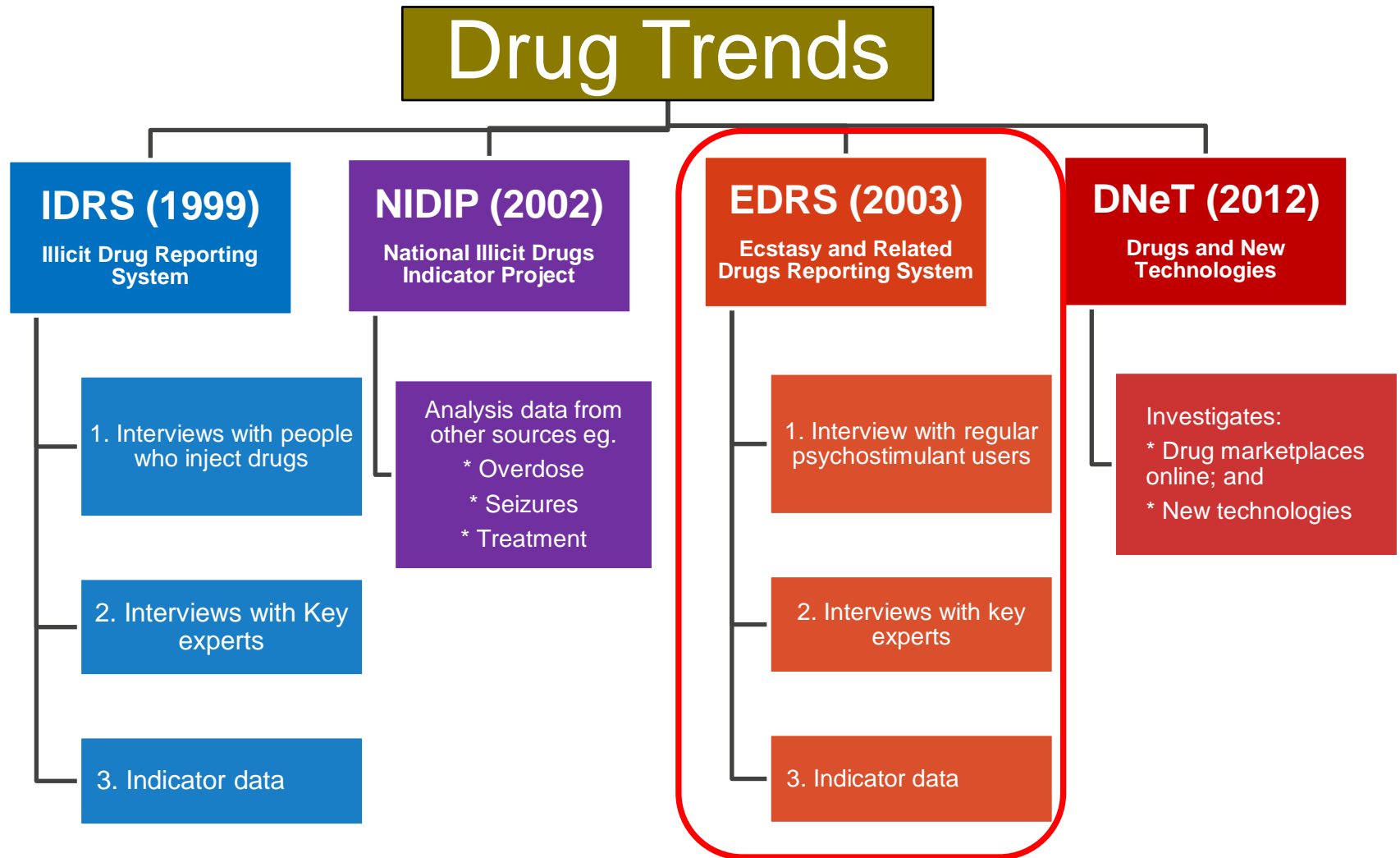
Drug Trends aims:

- Document the price, purity, and availability of illicit drugs
- To detect changing patterns of use and harm over time
- Point to specialised/detailed research
- Provide an evidence base for policy
- Outputs include: reports, bulletins, briefings, presentations

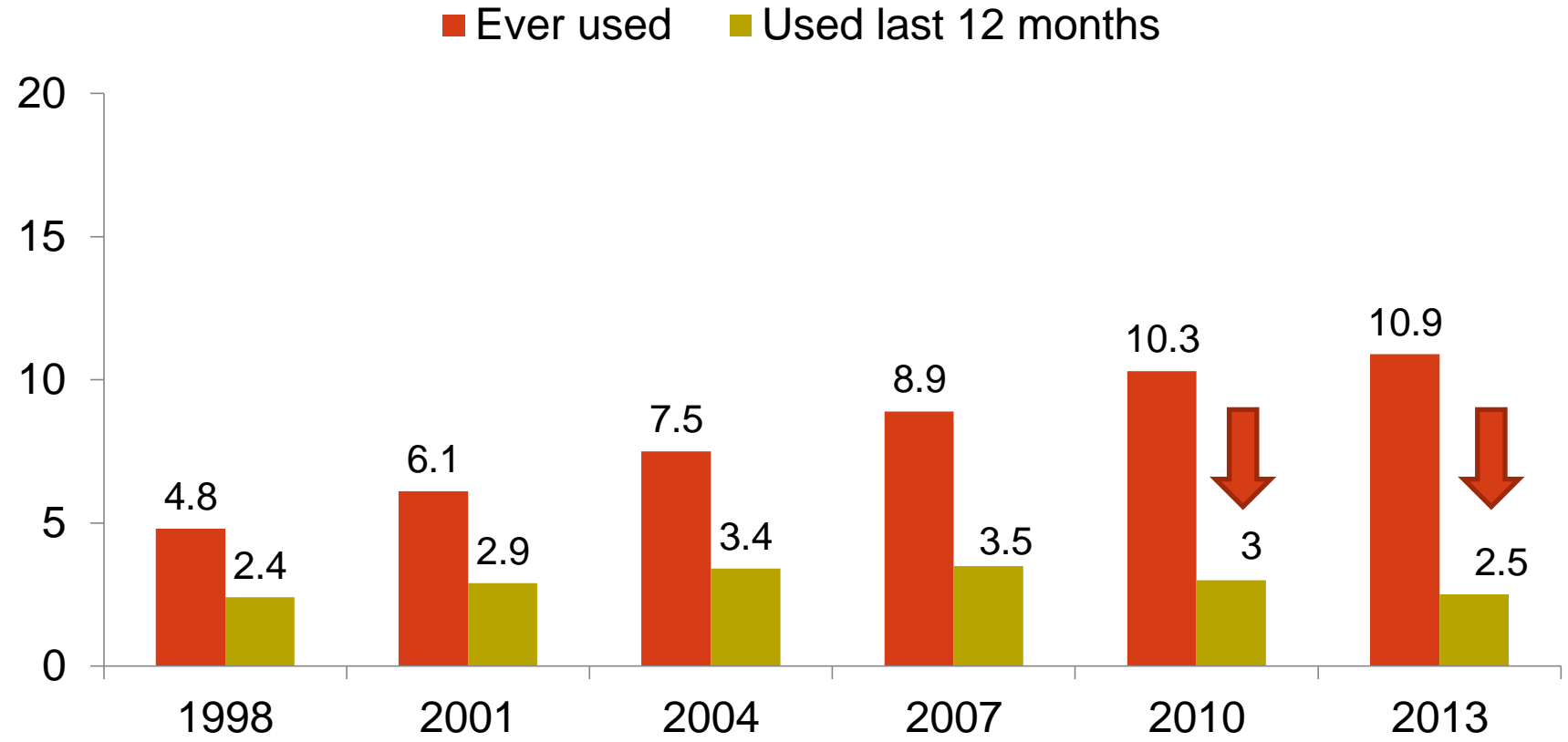
www.drugtrends.org



What is Drug Trends?



Ecstasy use in the general population 1998-2013



Ecstasy and related Drugs Reporting System: EDRS

- Annual face-to-face survey in every capital city
- People who regularly use psychostimulants
- **Not representative of illicit drug use in the general population**

EDRS Participant eligibility

Use ecstasy or other stimulants in the last 6 months

In the “market” for the past year

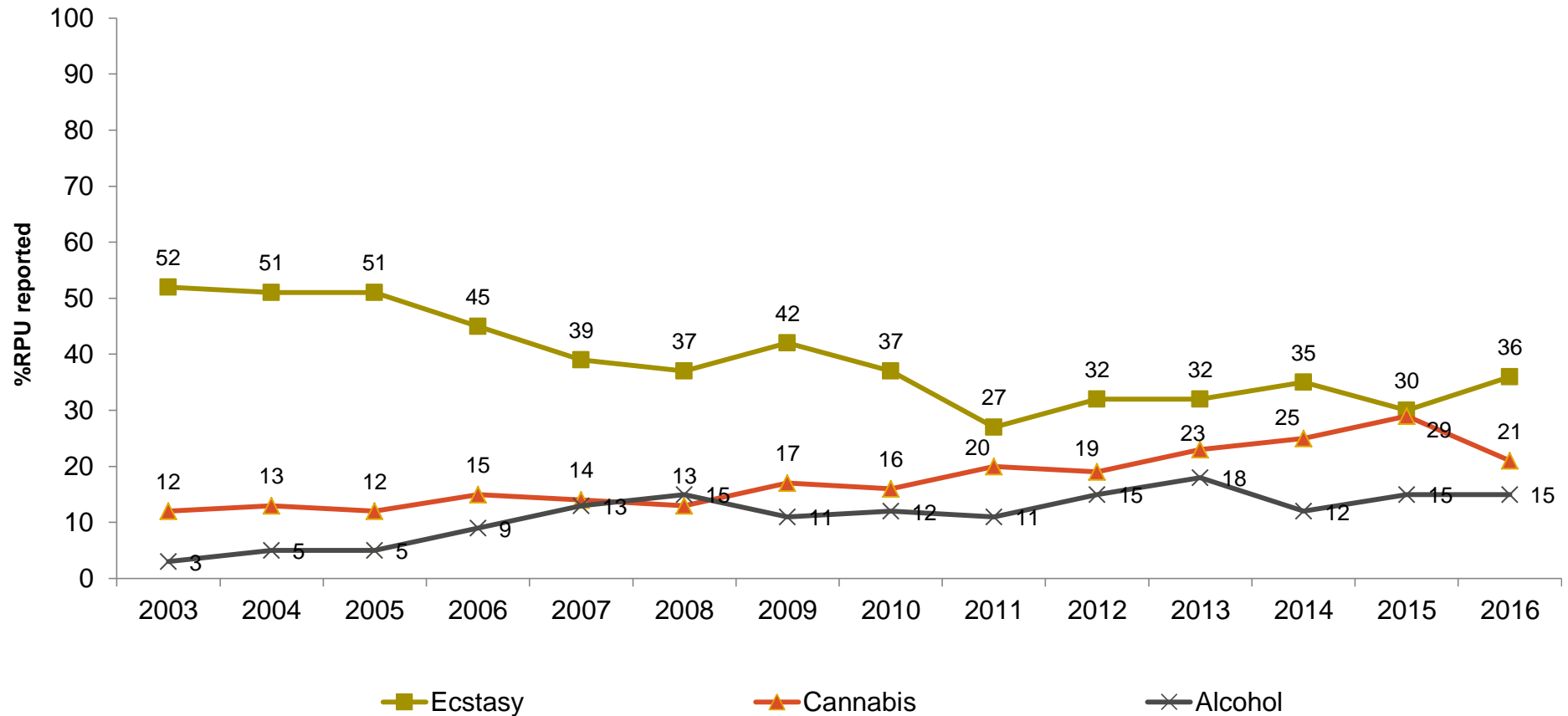
Recruited from street press advertisements, word of mouth, social media (predominantly Facebook)

Around 100 participants from each state and territory

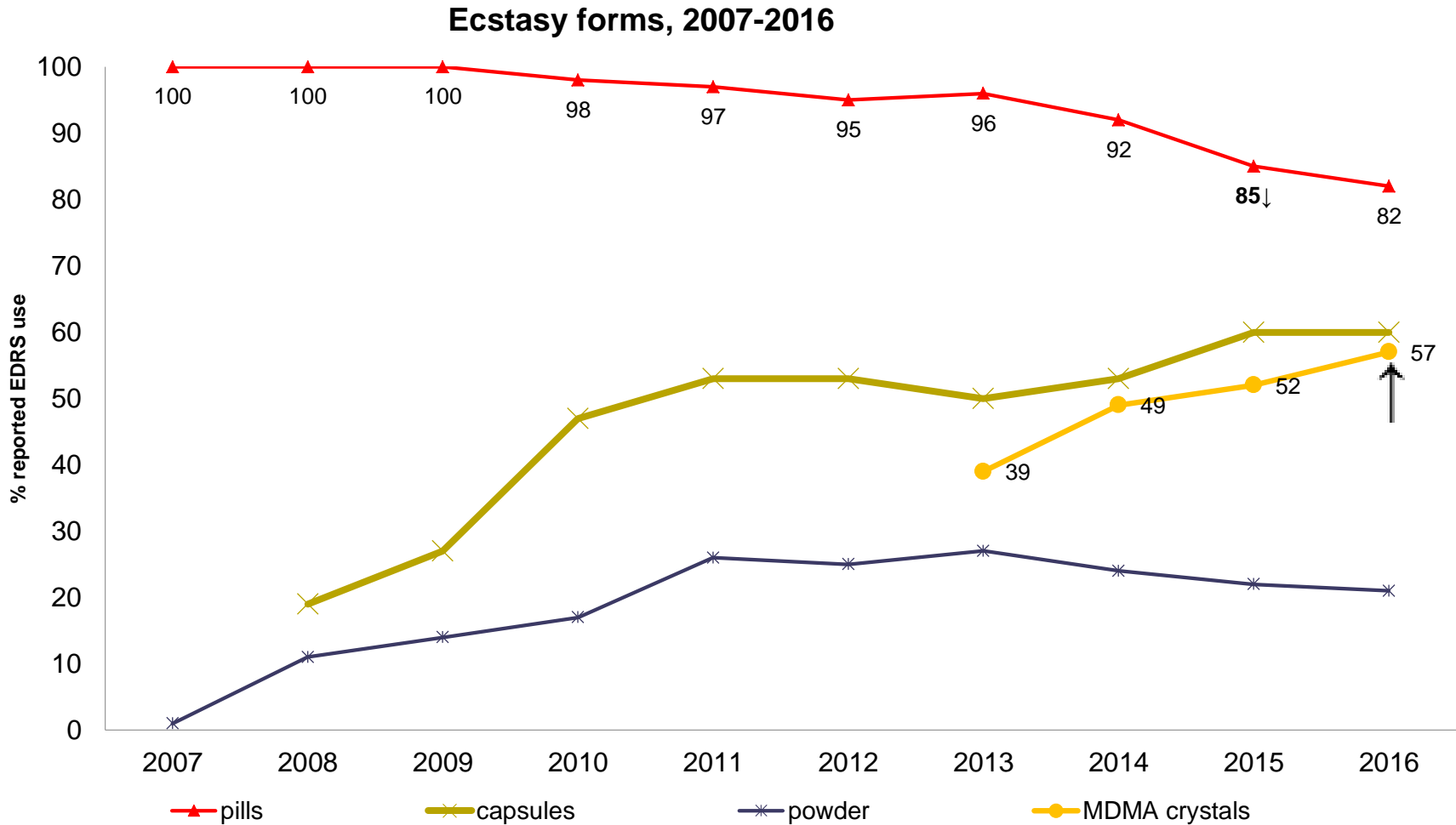
Demographics of EDRS participants

- Participant demographics have been consistent over time
 - Mean age – 23 years (75% aged 24 years and under)
 - 61% male
 - 44% Tertiary educated
 - 11% Unemployed
 - \$588 average weekly income
 - 2% Currently in drug treatment

Drug of choice



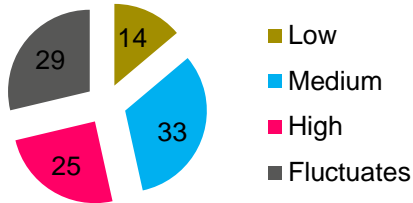
Ecstasy forms used



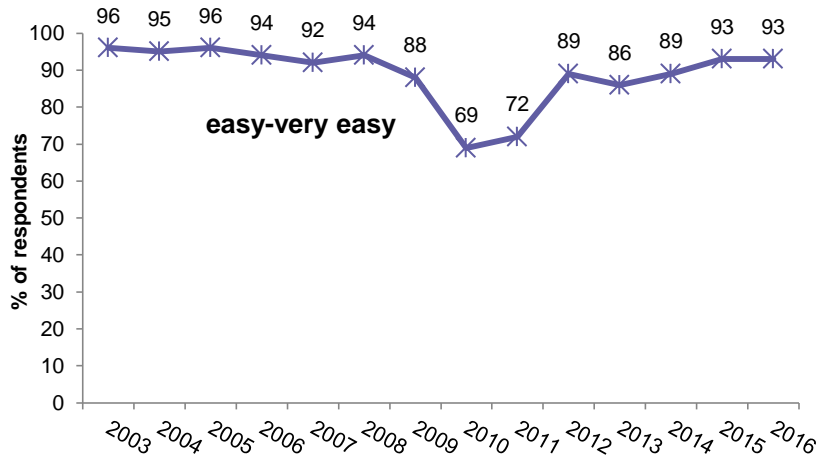
Ecstasy pills, powder, capsules

Price: \$25 per pill

Purity:



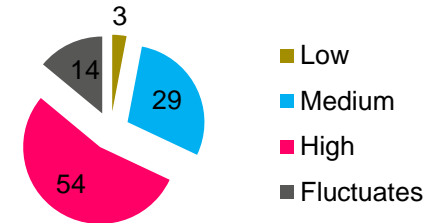
Availability:



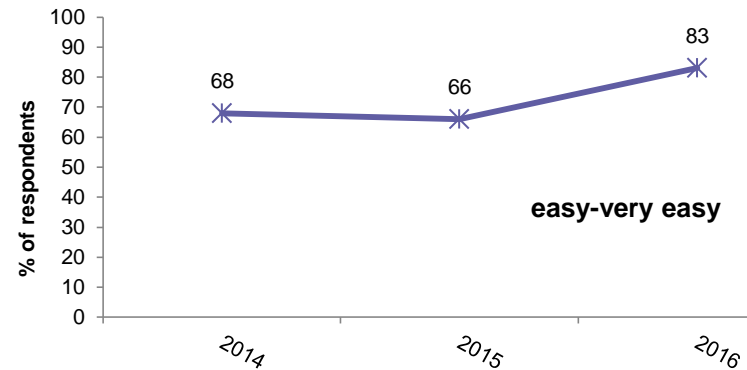
MDMA crystal/rock

Price: \$30 per point, \$200 per gram

Purity:

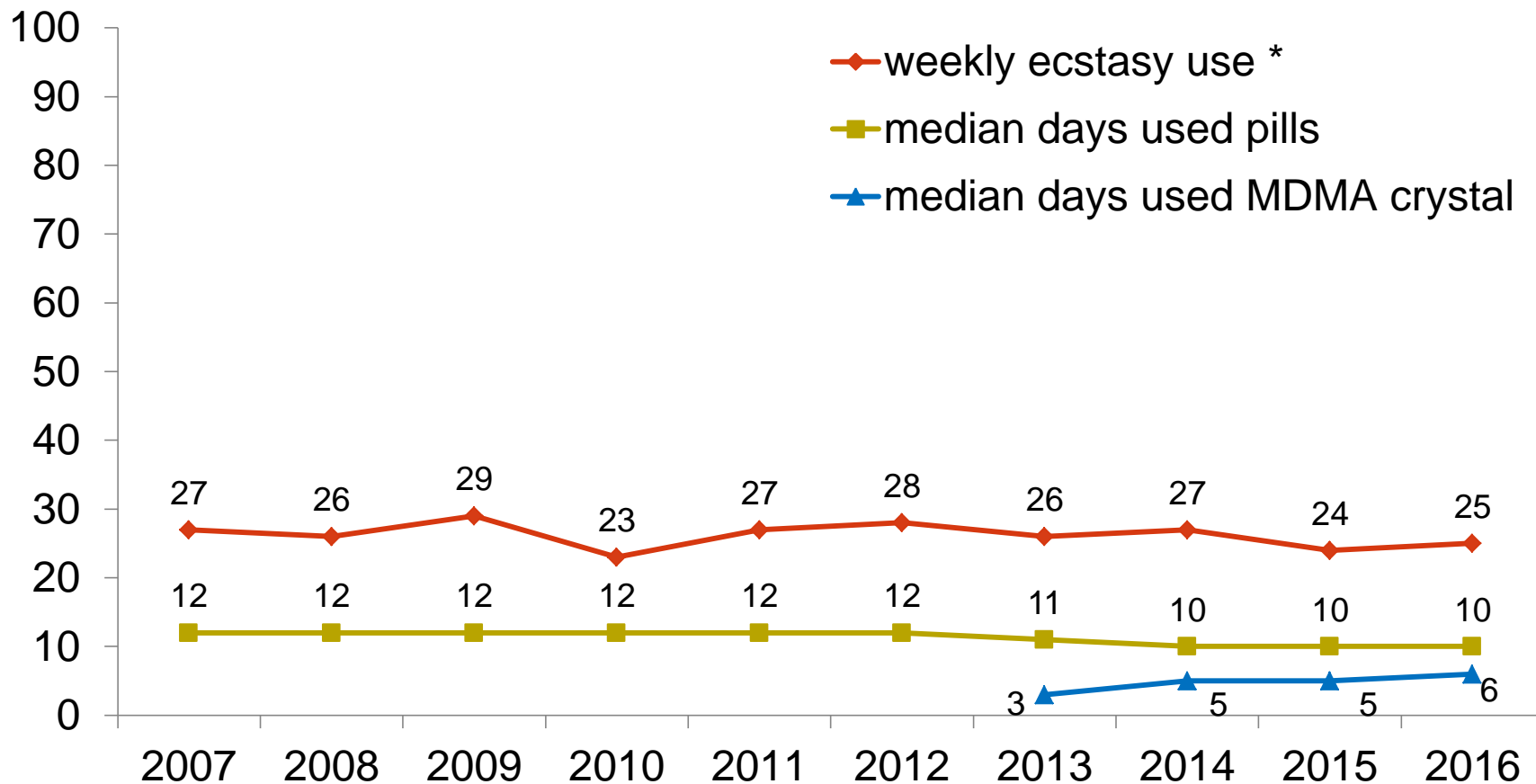


Availability:



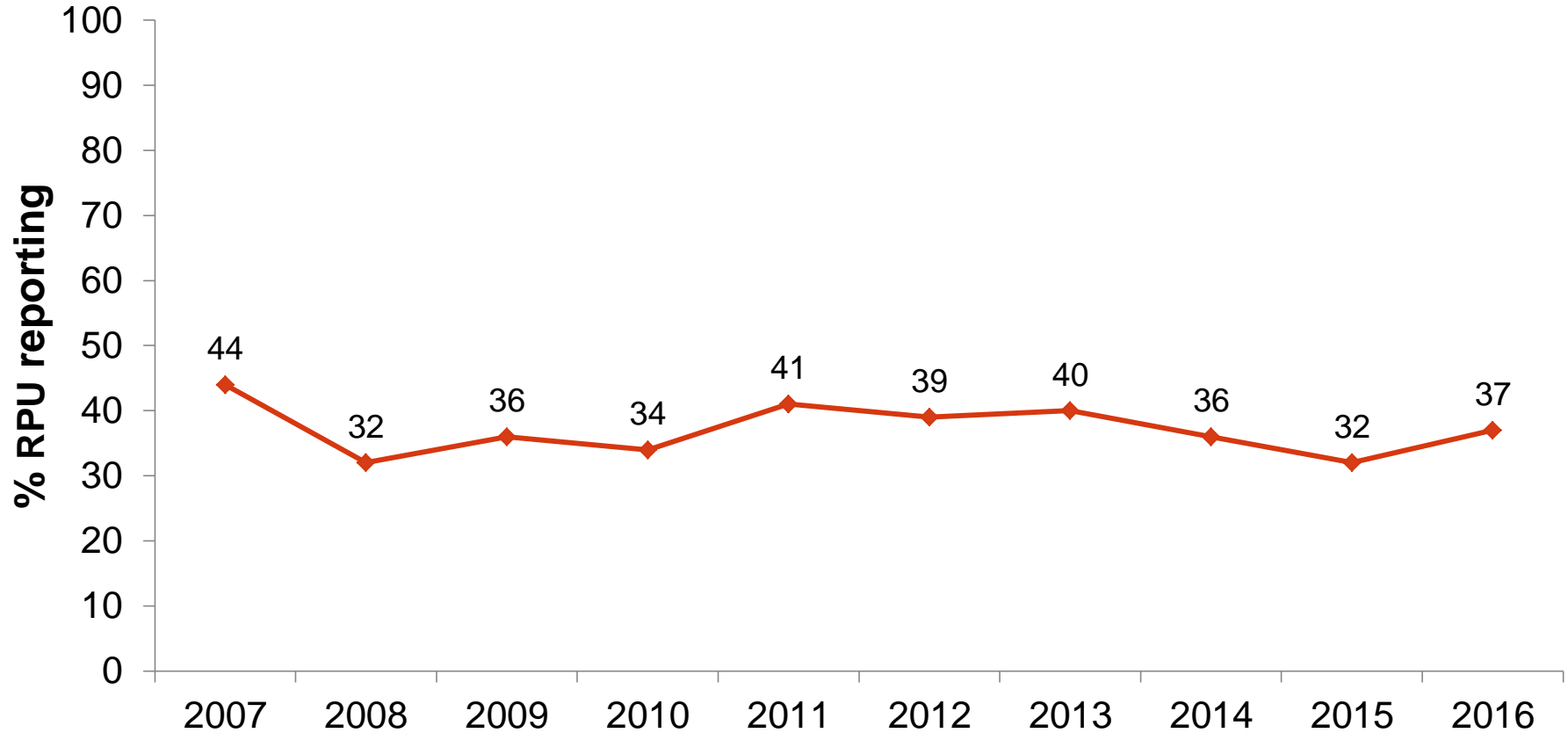
- Darknet marketplace analysis shows that listings for MDMA in crystal/rock form is prevalent.

Ecstasy patterns of use – last six months



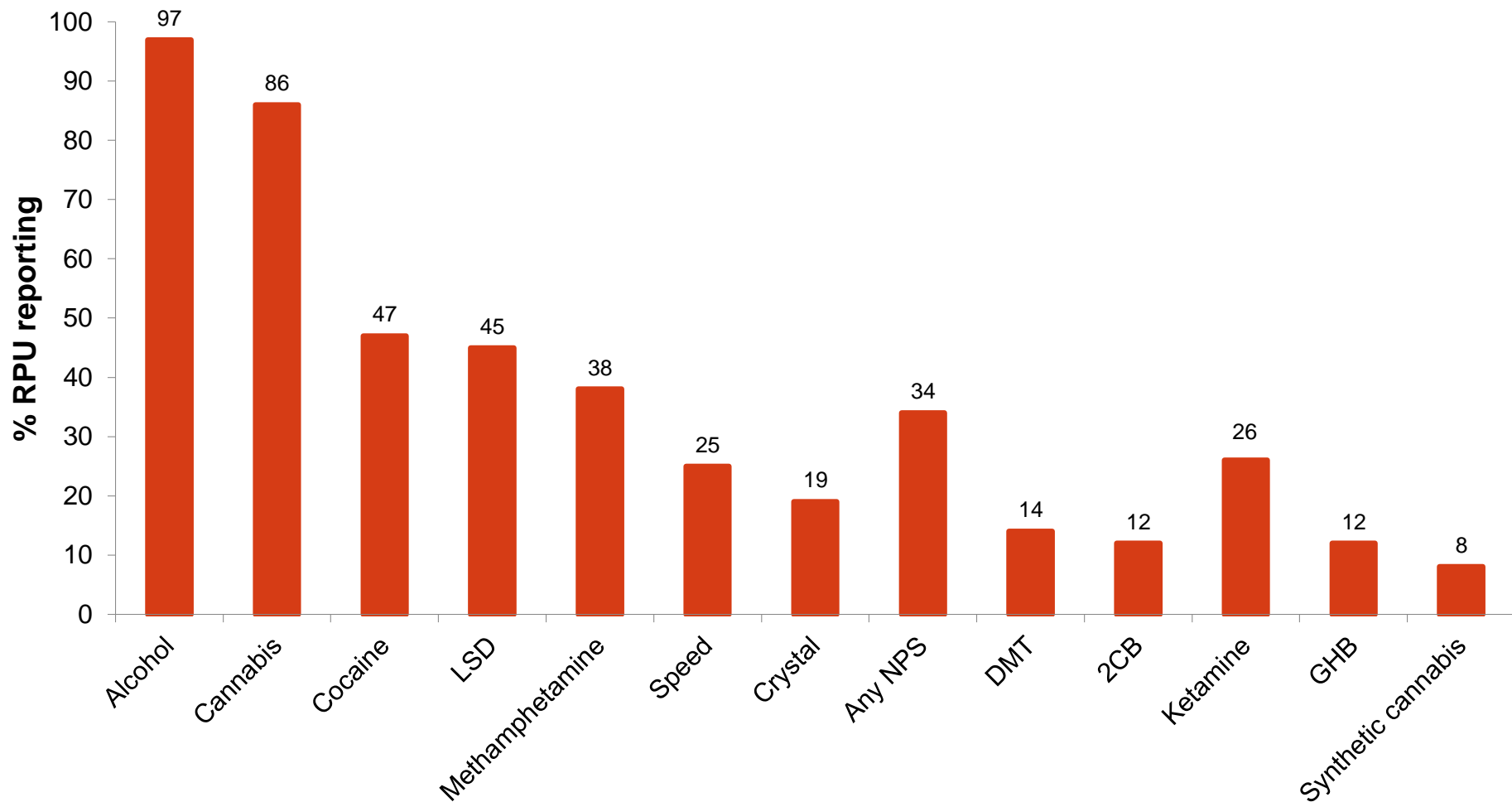
* Includes pills, powder, capsules and MDMA crystals

Proportions reporting 'binge'* stimulant use

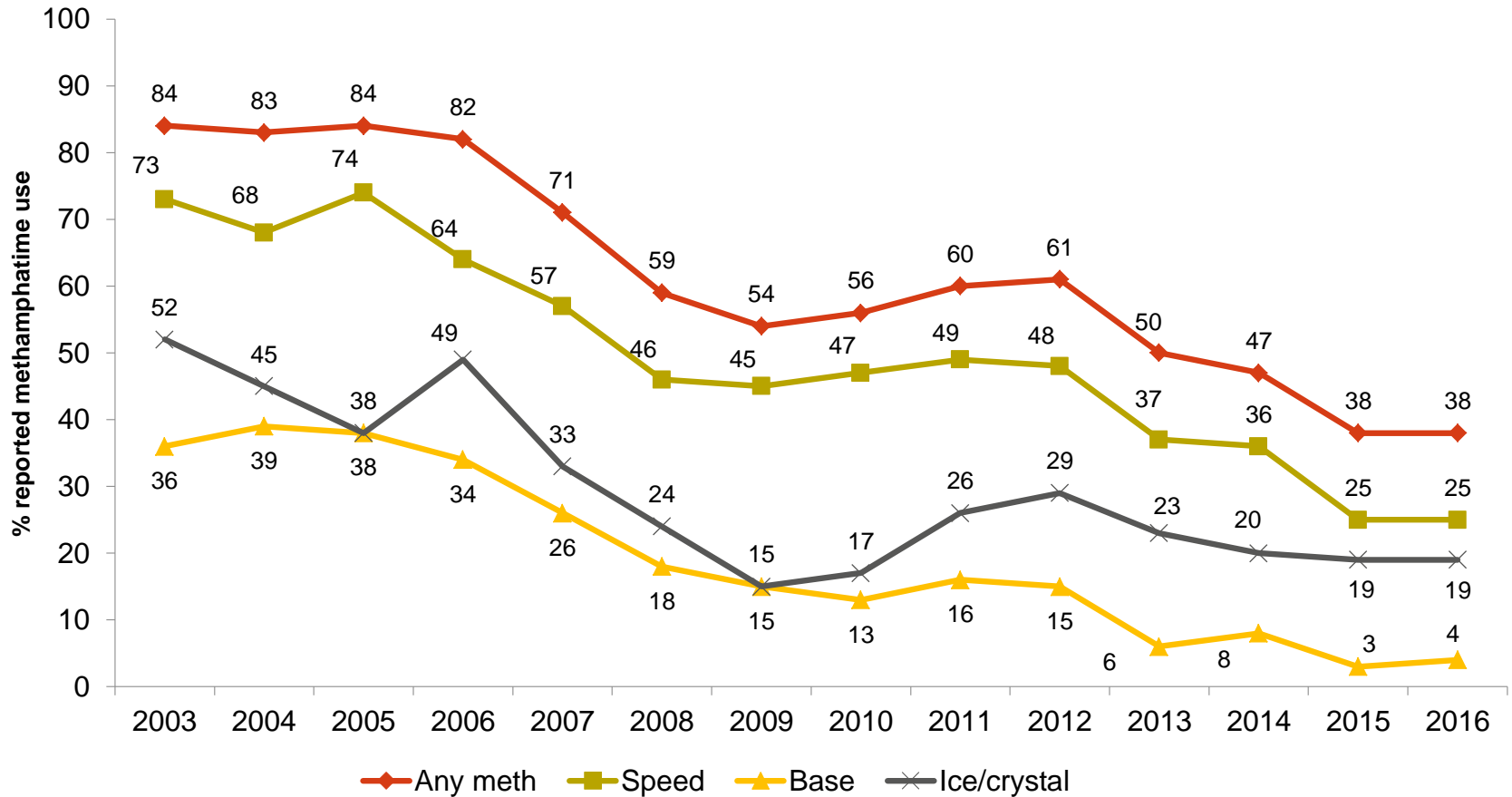


*Binge use is defined as using for more than 48 hours without sleep

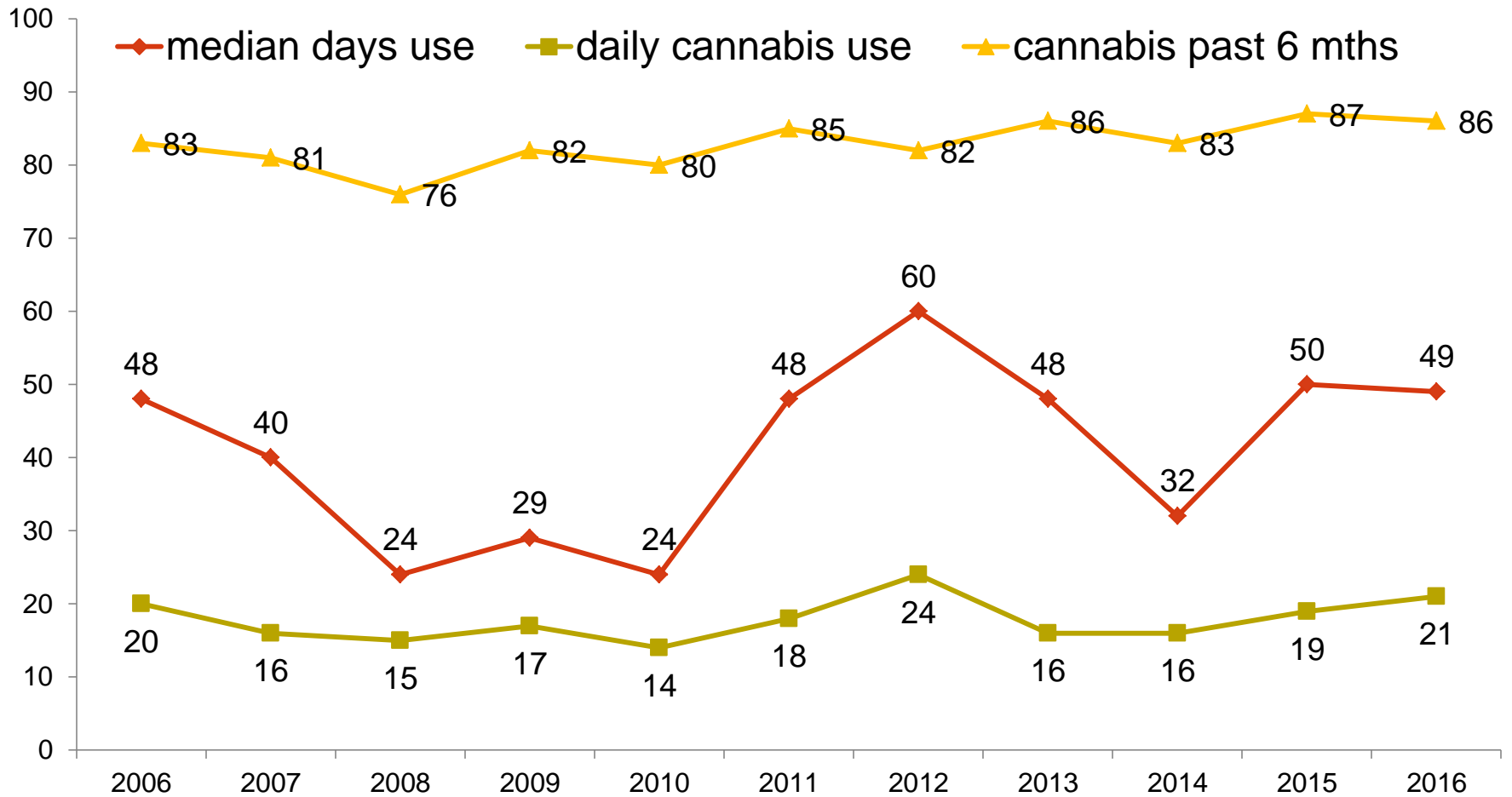
Other recent drug use 2016



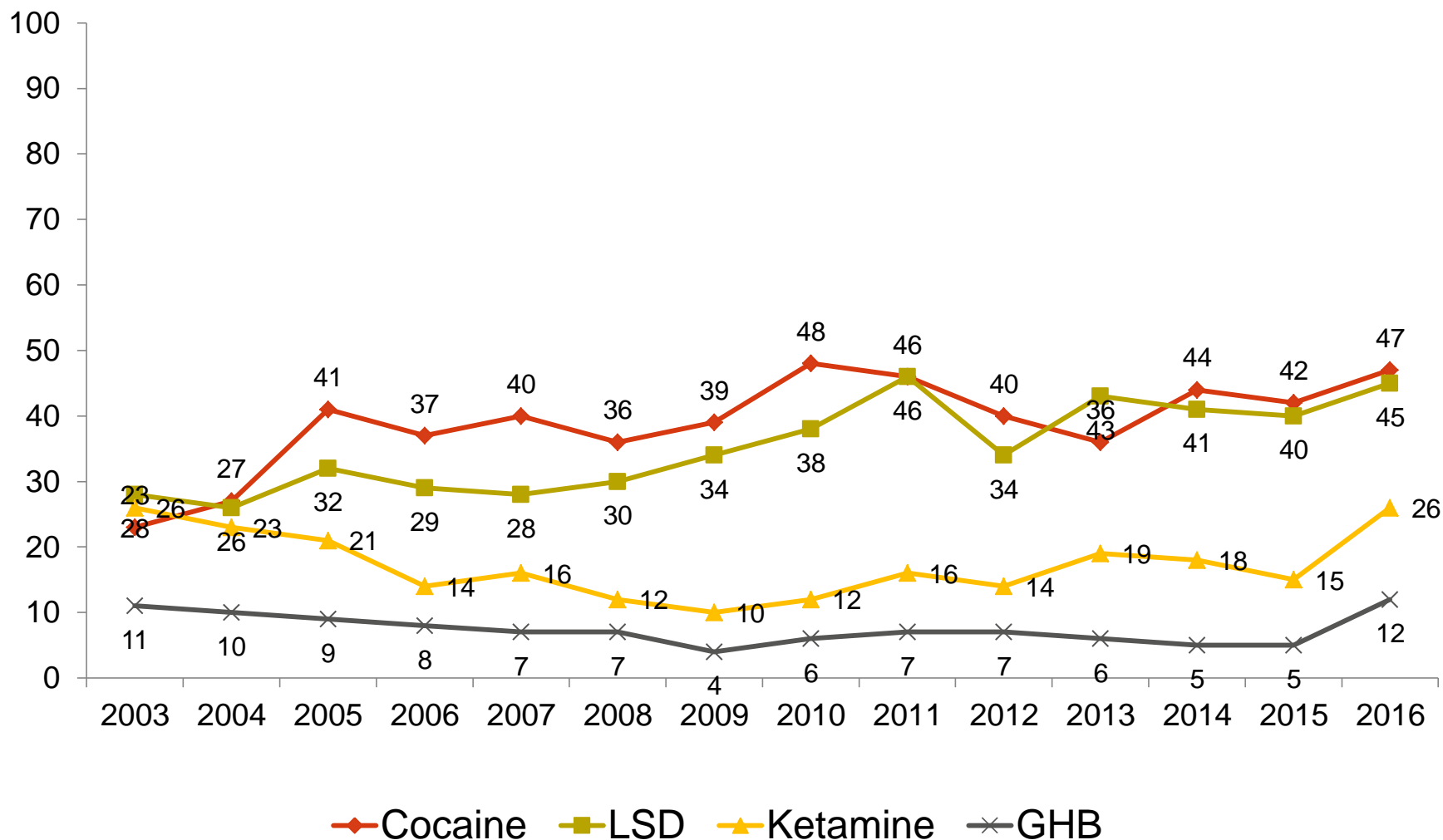
Methamphetamine market 2003 - 2016



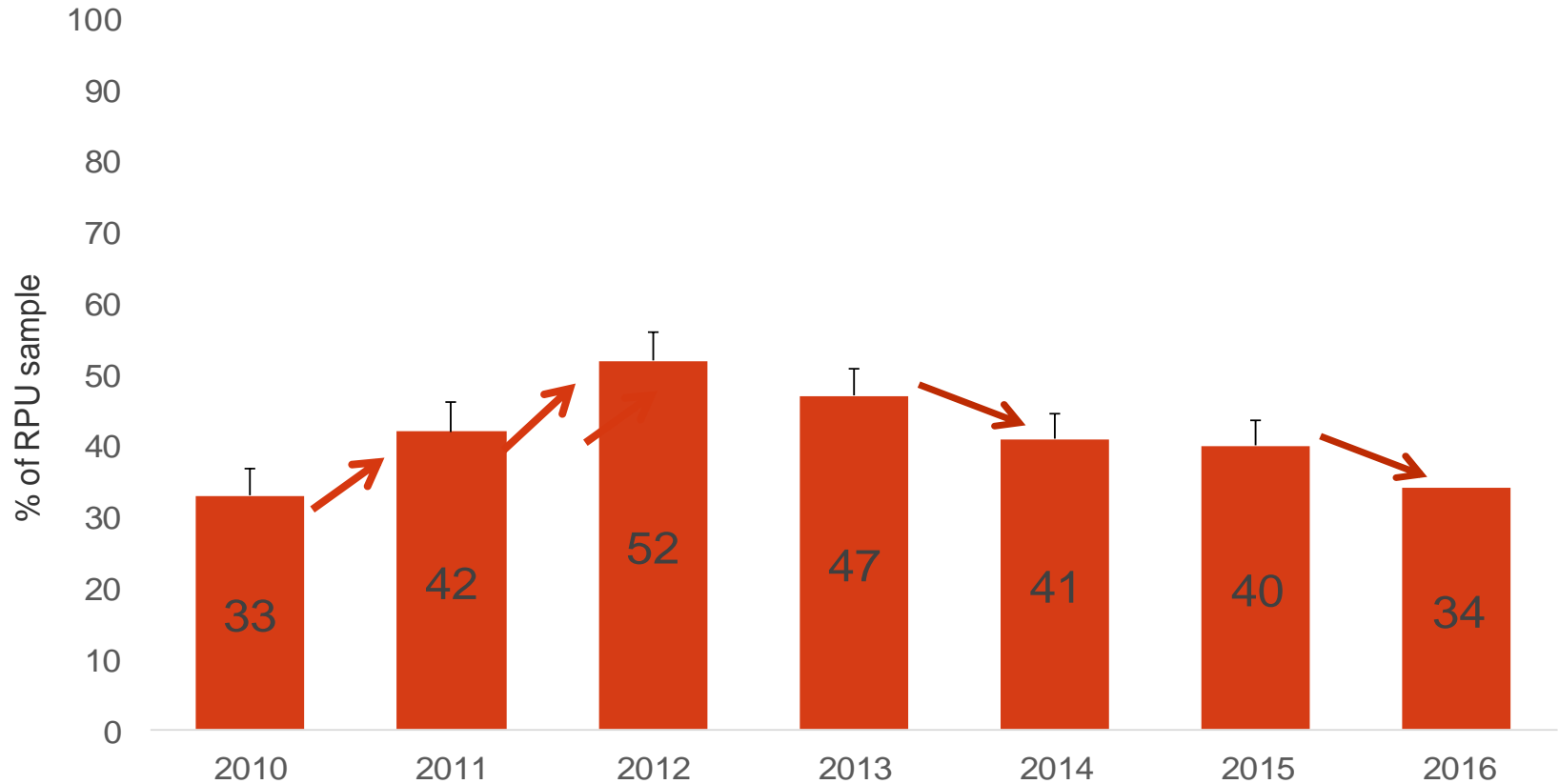
Cannabis use



Other recent drug use

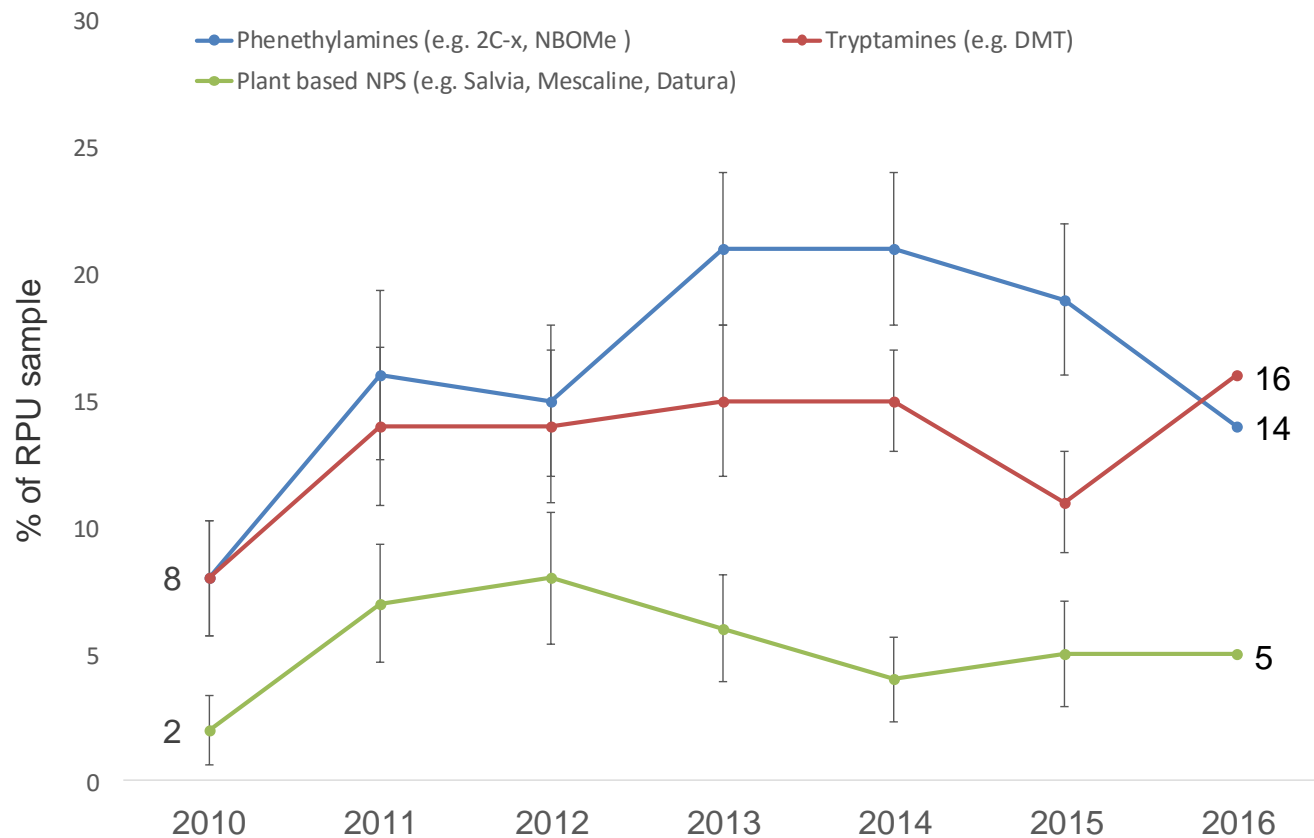


Recent use of 'any' NPS, 2010-2016



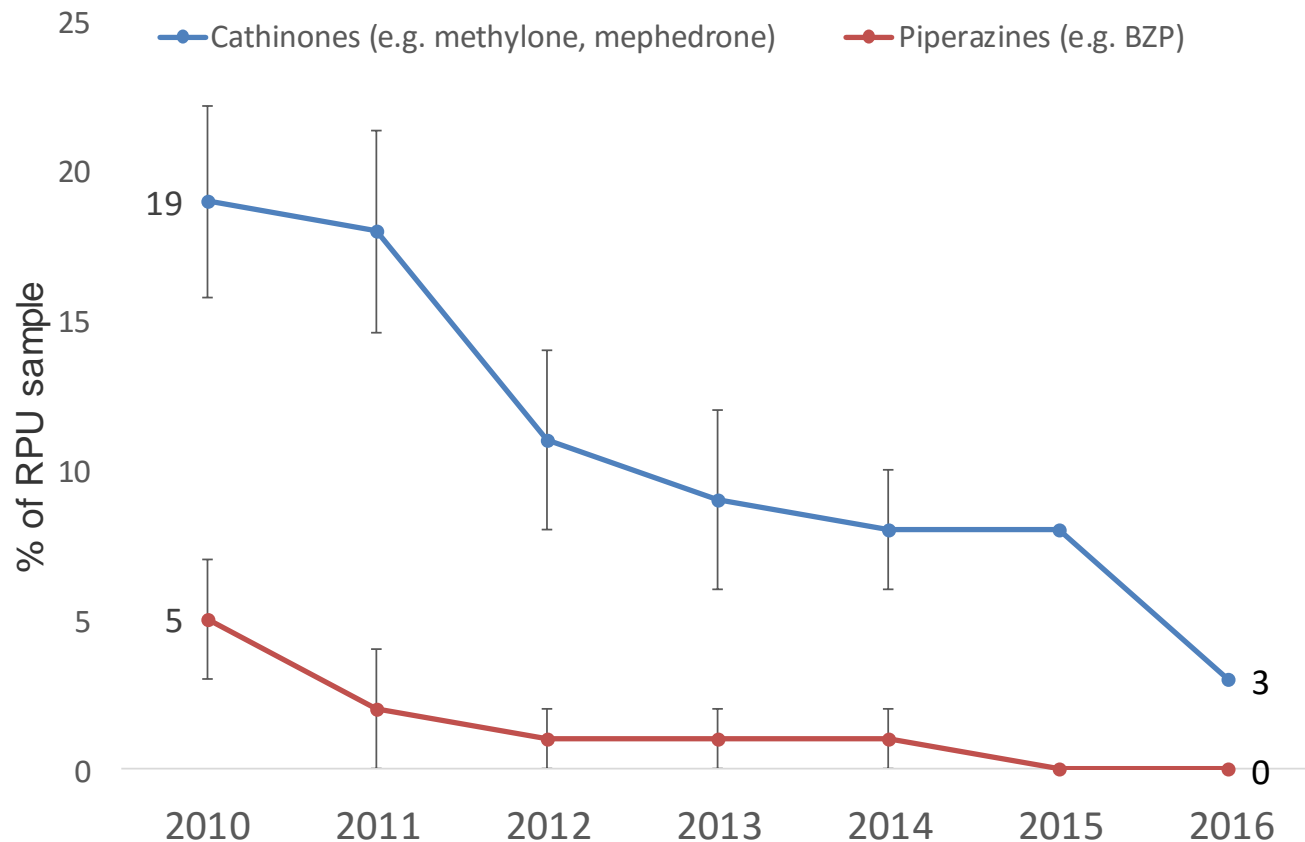
Sutherland, R., Peacock, A., Whittaker, E., Roxburgh, A., Lenton, S., Matthews, A., Butler, K., Nelson, M., Burns, L. & Bruno, R. 2016. New psychoactive substance use among regular psychostimulant users in Australia, 2010-2015. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 16(1), 110-118, [doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.024).

NPS Classes: What's increased?



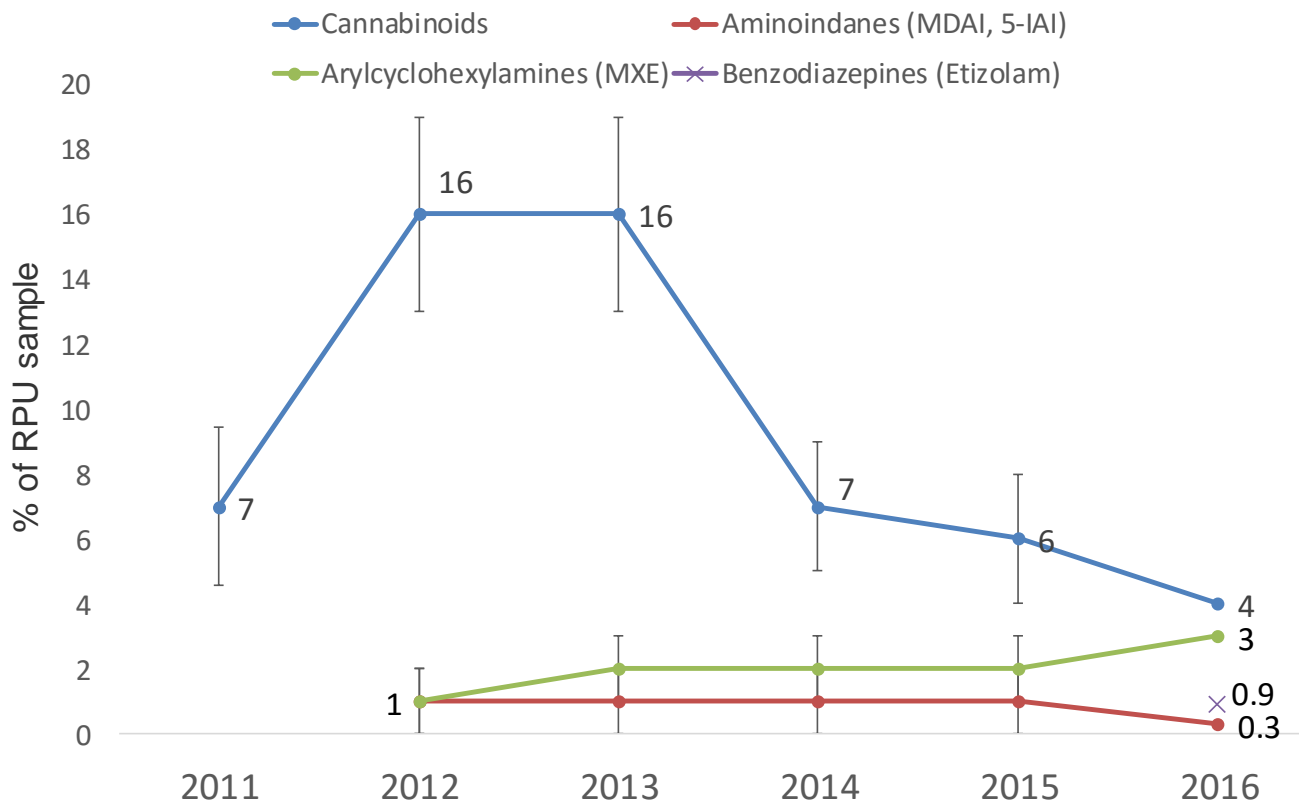
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NPS Classes: What's decreasing?



Sutherland, R., Peacock, A., Whittaker, E., Roxburgh, A., Lenton, S., Matthews, A., Butler, K., Nelson, M., Burns, L. & Bruno, R. 2016. New psychoactive substance use among regular psychostimulant users in Australia, 2010-2015. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 16(1), 110-118, [doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.024).

NPS Classes: Other patterns

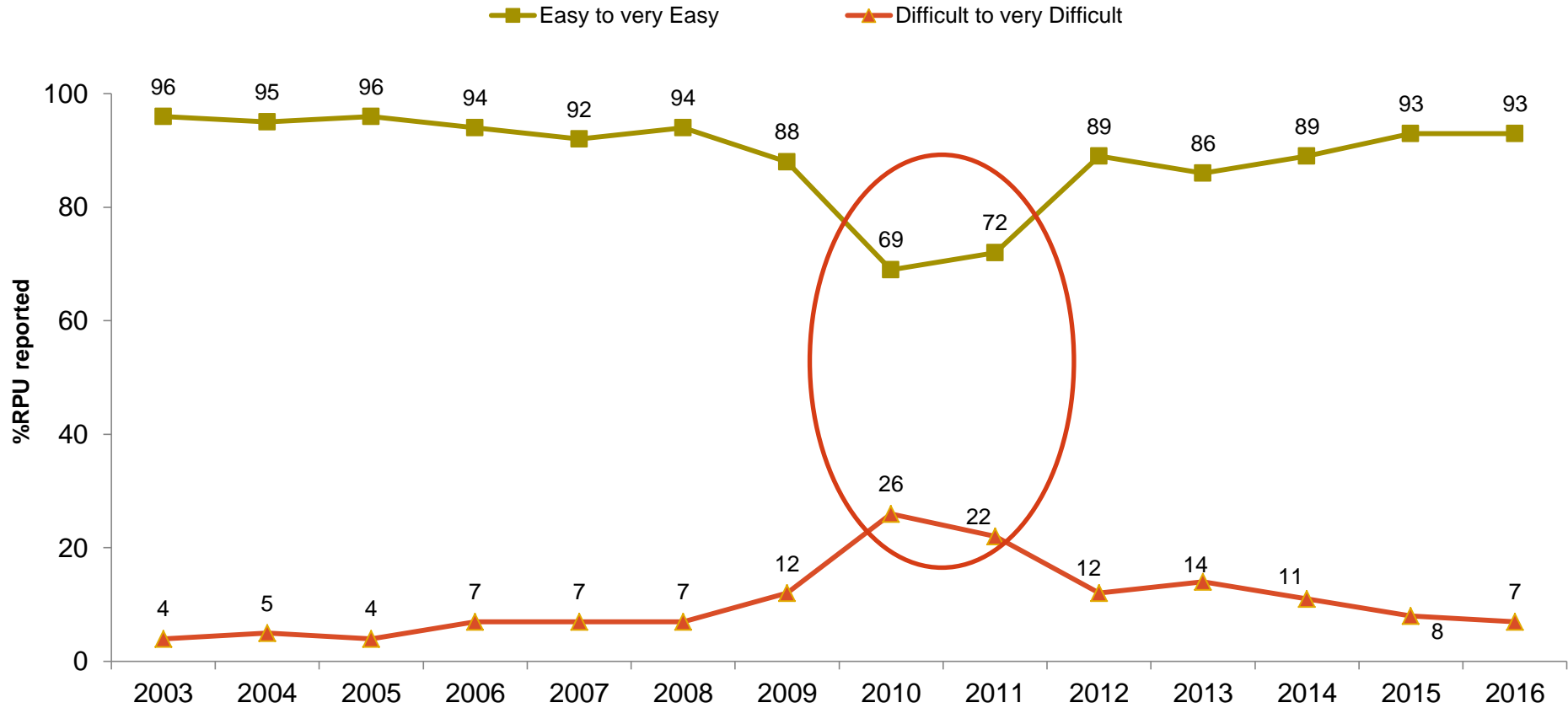


Sutherland, R., Peacock, A., Whittaker, E., Roxburgh, A., Lenton, S., Matthews, A., Butler, K., Nelson, M., Burns, L. & Bruno, R. 2016. New psychoactive substance use among regular psychostimulant users in Australia, 2010-2015. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 16(1), 110-118, [doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2016.01.024).

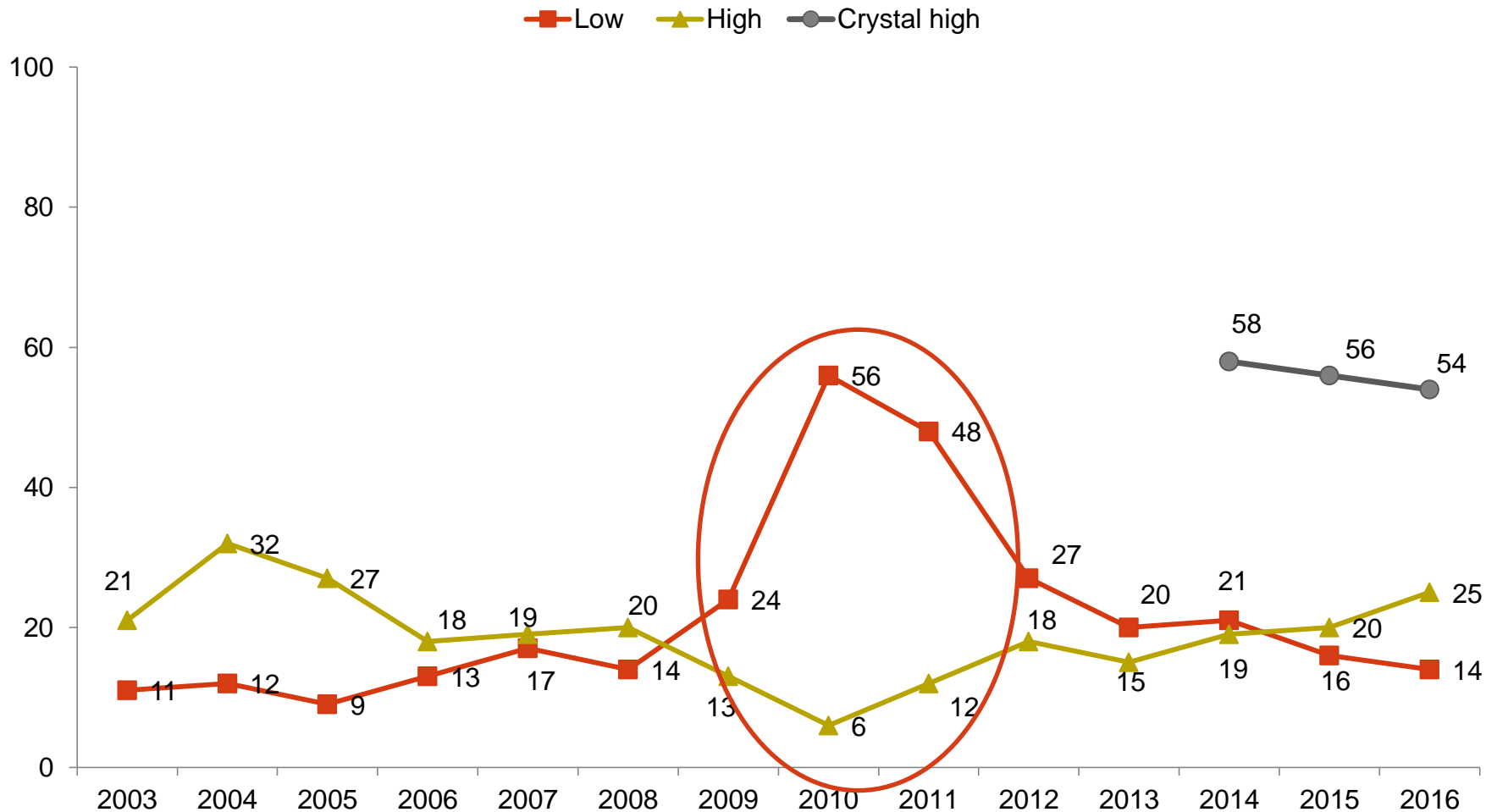


Has there been a resurgence in the ecstasy market?

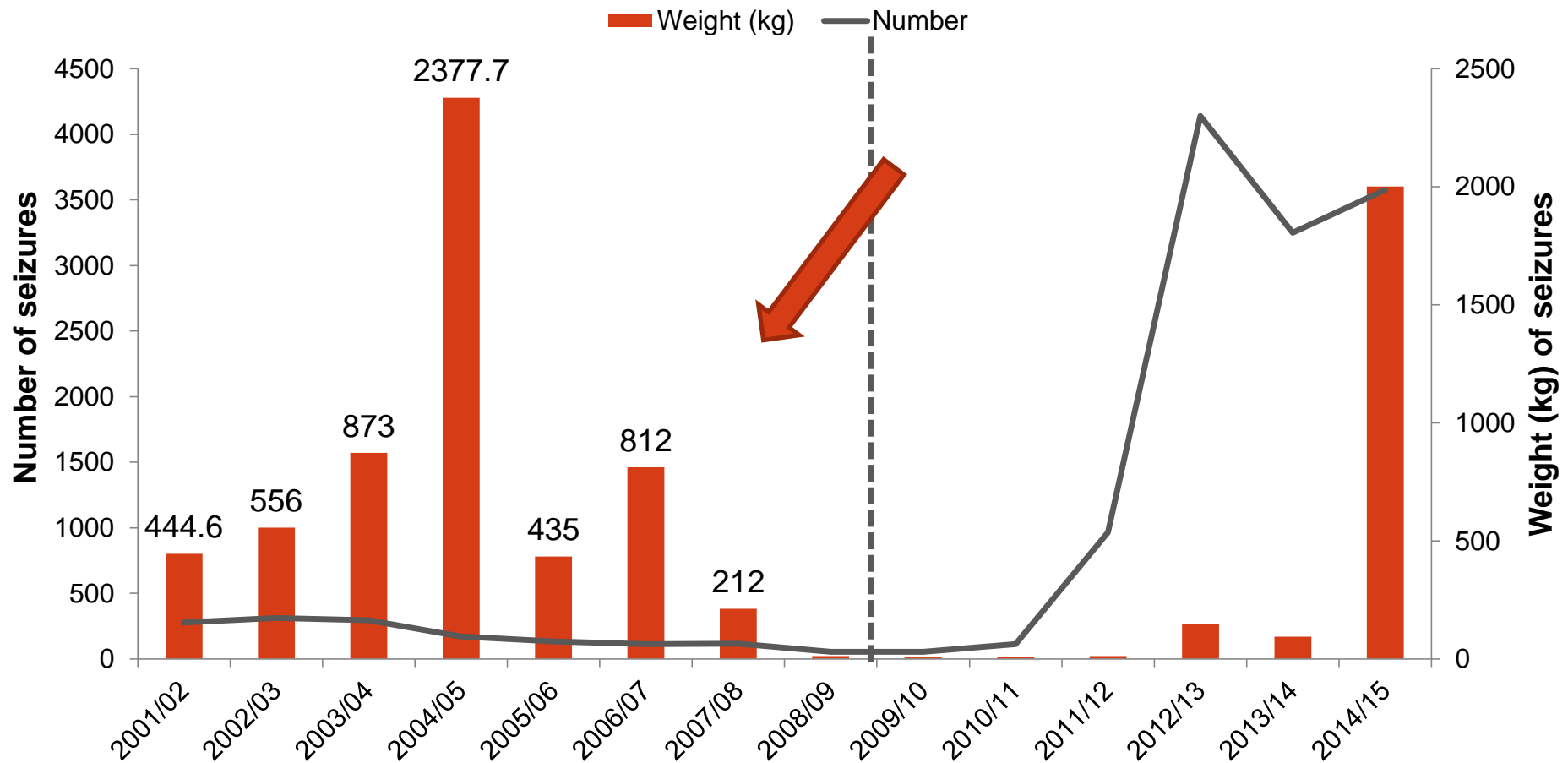
Indicators – ecstasy availability 2003-2016



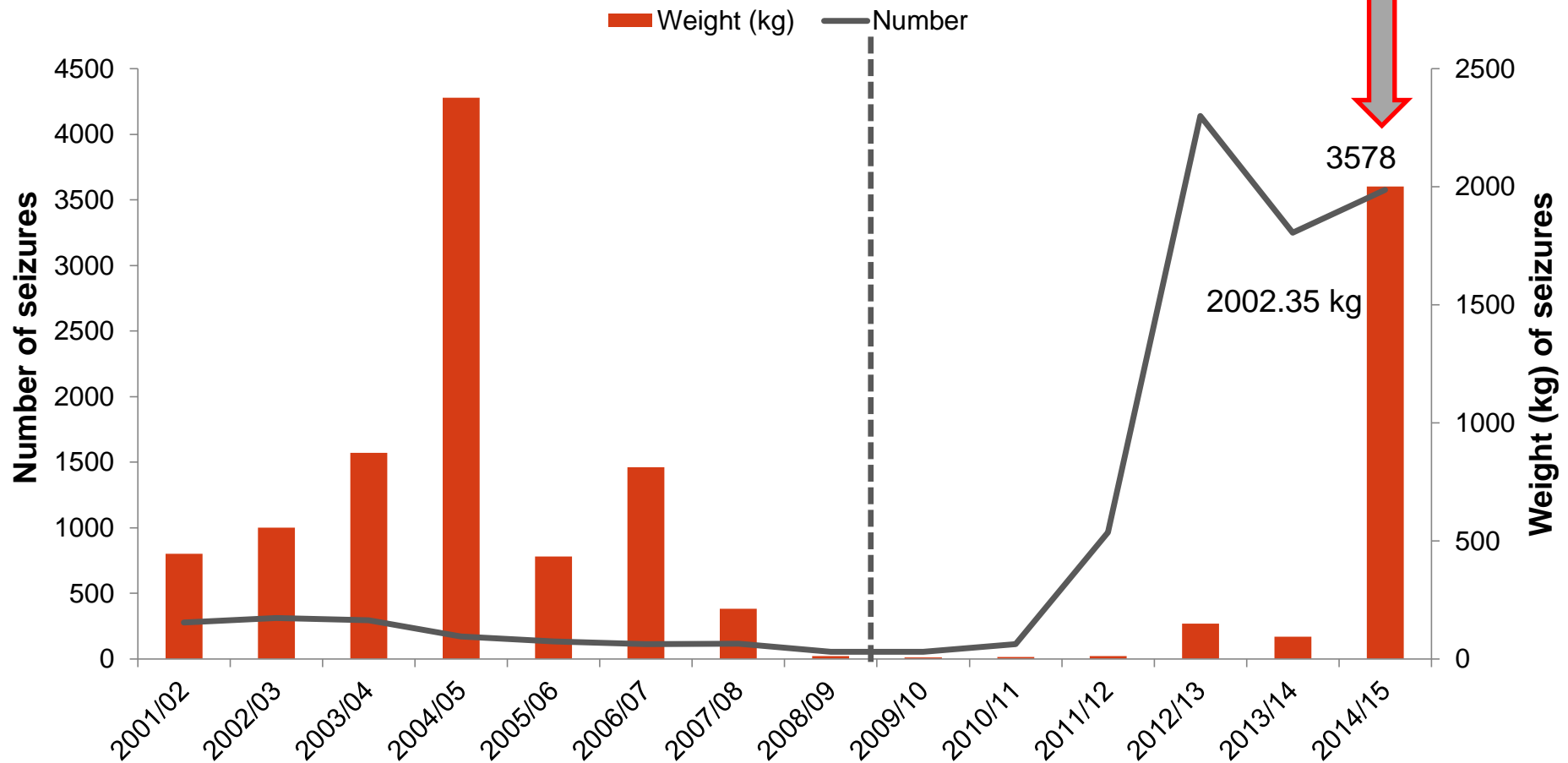
Indicators – ecstasy purity 2003-2016



Indicators – ecstasy border seizures 2002-2015

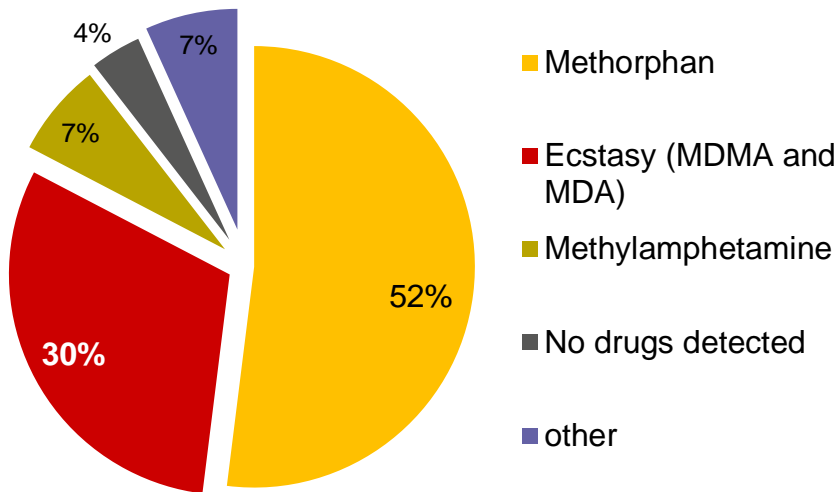


Indicators – ecstasy border seizures 2002-2015

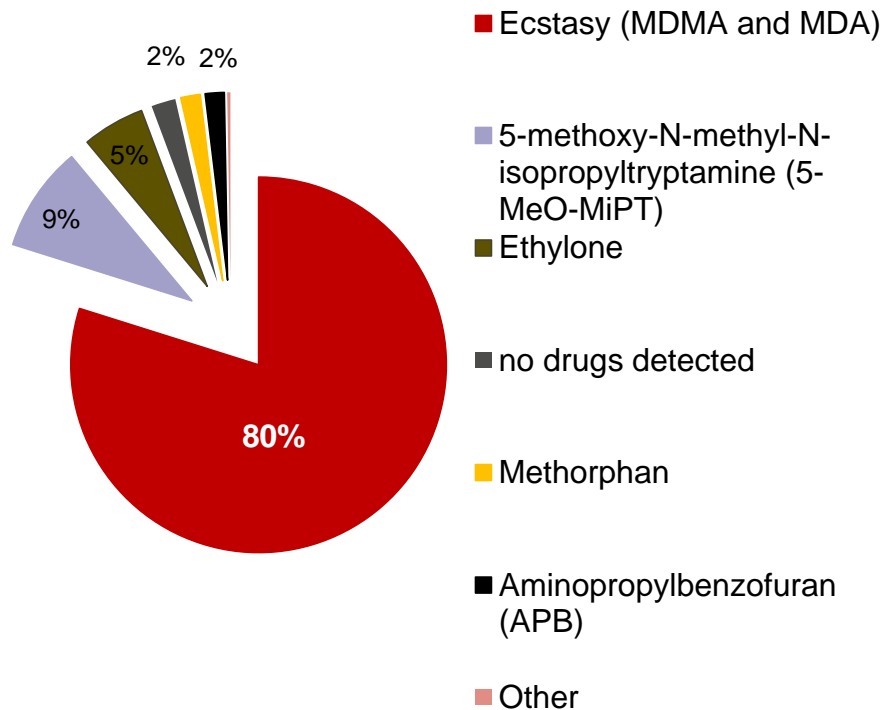


Illicit tablets seized by major drug type

July 2012- June 2013



July 2015 – June 2016





Source: Victorian Police Forensic Services

Summary (1)

- **Major findings EDRS 2016**
 - **Ecstasy**
 - Ecstasy is predominant drug of choice among this group
 - Continued increase in % using crystal MDMA – higher in **purity** and readily available
 - 1 in 4 reporting weekly or more ecstasy use
 - Binge patterns of stimulant use predominant
 - **Other drugs**
 - High prevalence of risky alcohol and cannabis
 - Frequency of other drug use (with exception of alcohol and cannabis) is sporadic
 - Continued decline in methamphetamine (crystal and speed) use

Summary (2)

- **Has there been a resurgence in the ecstasy market?**
 -  reports of easy availability (self-report, Customs seizure data – small %?)
 -  reports of purity (self-report, seizure data)
 - MDMA in top 3 substances for sale on darknet – crystal MDMA listing prevalent
 - Similar reports in Europe and UK

Discussion

- **Potential risks for this group:**
 - 1. Acute harms – toxicity/adverse events:**
 - Particularly concerning in context of high purity ecstasy (and crystal form) available
 - Mixing drugs
 - 2. Other drug markets operating off the back of the ecstasy market:**
 - Methamphetamine
 - New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) – content unknown/variable
- **Strategies**
 - Messages around risks of:
 - mixing drugs
 - taking high purity ecstasy
 - variable content of tablets (e.g. NPS/adulterants)
- **Continued monitoring of market indicators and other drug use**

2016 Drug Trends Team:

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales (National, NSW, ACT, SA and the NT)

Dr Courtney Breen, Ms Jennifer Stafford, Ms Amanda Roxburgh, Ms Kerry Butler, Mr Gavin Entwistle, Ms Antonia Karlsson, Ms Rachel Sutherland, Ms Elizabeth Whittaker, Mr Joe Van Buskirk, Mr Sundresan Naicker and A/Professor Lucinda Burns

Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health (VIC)

Ms Amy Kirwan, Mr Arthur Truong, Dr Campbell Aitken and Professor Paul Dietze

School of Medicine, University of Tasmania (TAS)

Ms Bethany Lusk, Dr Amy Peacock, Dr Allison Matthews and A/Professor Raimondo Bruno

National Drug Research Institute (WA)

Mr James Fetherston, Ms Marina Nelson and Professor Simon Lenton

School of Public Health, The University of Queensland (QLD)

Dr Caroline Salom and Professor Rosa Alati

Northern Territory Department of Health (NT)

Mr Chris Moon and Ms Tania Davidson

‘Drug Trends’ website
www.drugtrends.org.au



Thank you!