



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

THEMATIC PAPERS

YOUTH MEDIA

Legal notice

This publication of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) is protected by copyright. The EMCDDA accepts no responsibility or liability for any consequences arising from the use of the data contained in this document. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official opinions of the EMCDDA's partners, the EU Member States or any institution or agency of the European Union or European Communities.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

Cataloguing data:

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2005
EMCDDA THEMATIC PAPERS — Youth media

Lisbon: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
2005 — 24 pp. — 21 x 29.7 cm

© European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2005
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.



European Monitoring Centre
for Drugs and Drug Addiction

Rua da Cruz de Santa Apolónia, 23–25, 1149-045 Lisboa, Portugal
Tel. (351) 218 11 30 00 • Fax (315) 218 13 17 11
info@emcdda.eu.int • <http://www.emcdda.eu.int>

Contents

Summary	4
Background	4
Key findings	5
Main conclusions	5
Introduction	6
Methods	6
Media sample	7
Content analysis	8
Reliability	9
Interviews with editors/journalists	9
Contextual frame for drug references in youth media	10
Legal and editorial constraints	10
Political, social and economic context	11
Frequency and type of drug references	14
Results	13
Type of publication	13
Information about different substances	18
Discussion and conclusions	22

Acknowledgements

The EMCDDA would like to thank the contributors and authors: Deborah Olszewski (EMCDDA), Seppala Pauliina (Finland), Anastasios Fotiou (Greece), Brigid Pike (Ireland), Sandra Leibrand (Ireland), Fernanda Feijao (Portugal); and Kajsa Mickelsson (Sweden) and Bernd Schaal (Germany) for their valuable contributions to the early development of the study.

Thanks are also due to the editors of youth magazines who agreed to be interviewed.

Summary

Background

Previous work by the EMCDDA shows that the first accounts of ecstasy use in recreational and dance music settings were initially published in the mid 1980s by journalists working for youth, music and lifestyle magazines – a decade before drug information agencies began to collect and report data on ecstasy. In response to this the EMCDDA launched an exploratory study to look at the potential of youth media as a new source of information to improve capacity to understand and respond quickly to emerging drug trends.

Youth magazines from five EU Member States – Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Finland and the UK – were included in this study. A total of 1,763 drug references were identified and explored from a sample of 26 different youth magazines published over a ten-month period.

Key findings

The number of drug references found and recorded for this study differed considerably between countries and between different types of magazine. The highest number of drug references was found in a United Kingdom dance music magazine.

Most drug references occurred in investigative reports, news reports and in interviews with celebrities from the music industry.

The claim of magazine editors that their publications reflect the interests and attitudes of the readership is generally supported by the study findings. Overall, the three drugs most frequently mentioned were cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine, with 10% of drug mentions referring to combinations with alcohol. This reflects the findings of epidemiological surveys, which generally report relatively high prevalence estimates of the use of cannabis, ecstasy, and cocaine. Drugs that are less commonly used (such as heroin, crack and some new drugs) were mentioned less often.

A contrast can be made between the portrayals of different drugs. Youth magazines were more likely than mainstream magazines to cover both the risks and benefits of cannabis and ecstasy use. In contrast, they adopted more proscriptive approaches to heroin and crack – focusing exclusively on negative aspects in a broadly similar way to mainstream newspapers and magazines.

One-third of the references collected for this study were neutral, taking neither a negative nor positive attitude to drugs and drug-taking. They were included as news items or to entertain, for example in stories about the excessive behaviour of celebrities. Among the remaining two-thirds of drug references, the positive and negative aspects of drug use were more or less equally balanced. Some drug coverage appeared to be attempting to provide objective information which was, sometimes, extremely detailed. The acute physical risks of drug use, addiction and psychological problems were mentioned more often than other risks. The positive aspects of drug use most frequently portrayed were the psychological and relaxant effects, followed by increased physical energy.

Ecstasy was the drug most often mentioned in relation to acute physical risk. Cannabis was the drug most often mentioned in relation to psychological risk, closely followed by alcohol and cocaine.

Twelve percent of drug references collected for this study included a claim to some sort of evidence-based statistic (such as a number of drug seizures or deaths), but the source was seldom cited.

Countries vary in terms of the legal and social controls that exist with regard to publishing information about drugs and the extent to which these controls influence magazine editors.

Main conclusions

The study concludes that youth magazines constitute a useful and low-cost source of information for monitoring and understanding drug trends among defined readerships by reflecting lifestyles that reveal much about young people's drug behaviour and attitudes that official statistics do not reveal.

Concerns about the scientific basis and quality of information about drugs provided in youth media has led to growing interest in exploiting these media to communicate evidence-based and effective education and prevention messages to young people.

However, a large number of the drug references found and recorded for this study do not carry any drug message; they were included in magazines only to entertain or because they reflected the readers' interests. Other drug references carried mixed messages about drug use; for example, interviews with drug-using celebrities portray lifestyles to which some young people may aspire.

Feature articles that focus specifically on drug issues often provide a mixture of positive and negative drug information although references to heroin, crack and some new synthetic drugs are generally very proscriptive.

Drug information articles appear to play an unofficial role in communicating information in a manner that is likely to be viewed as interesting and 'objective' by young readers.

More work is required to understand the potential part youth magazines may play in communicating, effectively, with young people about drugs to prevent drug use and drug-related harm. To engage, constructively, with media makers in Europe to develop new approaches to drug prevention will be a challenge.

Introduction

Because of the hidden (illegal or illicit) nature of drug use, a time lag usually exists between the appearance of a new trend in illicit drug use and the production and dissemination of data about it. An example of this time lag is the emergence of ecstasy ⁽¹⁾ as a drug used in recreational and dance music settings. The first published accounts of ecstasy use were found in articles written in 1985 by youth/style/music media journalists and these appeared long before drug information agencies began to collect and report data on ecstasy ⁽²⁾.

The aim of this project – which followed an earlier feasibility study ⁽³⁾ – was to improve capacity to understand and respond rapidly to new drug trends. The main objectives were to explore a new, low cost, data source for monitoring drug use and changes in perceptions about drug use and drug fashions, and to provide a snapshot of the type of information obtained from such a source.

Reitox national focal points were asked to participate, voluntarily, in the development and testing of a method to monitor selected youth media in Member States to answer the question – can youth media be monitored systematically to serve as a cost effective source of information about changing images of a drug, and about the emergence of new trends in drug use? The project set out to field test methods for monitoring media that reflect young lifestyle interests and to make inroads to help answer some drug strategy questions about what role the media might play in prevention of drug-related harm.

Methods

The study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore both the frequency of drug references in a selected sample of youth media and descriptive details about the way different drugs are portrayed and the social context of their use. The content analysis included details such as prominence given to the drug reference in the publication, image surrounding a drug, context of consumption, place of consumption, route of administration, physical descriptions and geographical locations of the product, risks/disadvantages of use, reasons for/advantages of use, and lifestyles associated with drug consumption. In addition, interviews were conducted with as many magazine editors as possible to explore editorial motivations for covering, or not covering, drug issues.

The Member States that initially participated in the pilot project were Germany, Finland, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Sweden with media from the UK included by the EMCDDA. The German and Swedish focal points withdrew from the project early on due to insufficient human resources.

This section describes the methods used and some of the practical issues that arose during the course of the pilot project.

⁽¹⁾ Defined as amphetamine-type substances with entactogenic affects, such as MDMA, MDA, MDEA.

⁽²⁾ EMCDDA (2001), 'Monitoring youth media as a new source of information for detecting, tracking, and understanding emerging drug trends'. Scientific report (<http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nnodeid=1312>).

⁽³⁾ EMCDDA (1999), 'Feasibility study on detecting, tracking and understanding emerging trends in drug use'. Scientific report (<http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nnodeid=1312>).

Media sample

For practical reasons the focus of this study was on printed magazines. Whilst TV, radio and Internet sites are recognised as important media for reflecting youth lifestyles, content analysis of these types of media was outside of the scope of this study ⁽⁴⁾.

From the perspective of making comparisons between countries and over time, the options available for sampling youth magazines are limited. For example, there are no lists of printed magazines that provide a database from which to draw a representative sample. Even if there were, the magazine industry is characterised by a relentless churn of new titles being launched as others close and this rules out any possibility of using a static sample of magazines for monitoring over time. Therefore key informants, who identified up to date and relevant youth media appropriate to the target group concerned, were used in the process of selecting the sample of magazines.

The publishing period for study was between December 2001 and September 2002. This period was chosen to include both Christmas and Summer holiday periods because drug and alcohol research has shown that young peoples' social lives, and patterns of substance use, are considerably more intense during holiday periods than at other times ⁽⁵⁾.

Drug prevalence surveys undertaken in the EU consistently indicate that young adults (16–34 years) have greater drug experience than adults in general (16–64 years) and targeted non-probability surveys – despite different methods and sampling strategies – consistently indicate that young 'clubbing' and 'trendy' outgoing populations have much higher levels of drugs experience than young adults in the general population ⁽⁶⁾. Whilst 'moral panics' sparked by drug issues still occur they are increasingly contested by journalists in media which deal specifically with youth-related lifestyle issues and by drug prevention specialists in the field of harm reduction ⁽⁷⁾. The sampling strategy of this project was to focus on those media read by large numbers of mainstream youth and most likely to contain drug references. The first criterion for media selection was that they should be aimed at readers with young 'outgoing' lifestyles, who are interested in new trends and do not condemn drug use as a matter of principle (associated mainly with the 15–30 year age range). The second criterion was to select young lifestyle publications with relatively large circulation figures in order to gain insights into the potential for widespread diffusion of emerging drug trends by exploring drug fashions and attitudes to drug use.

⁽⁴⁾ Schifano, F., Leoni, M., Martinotti, G., Rawaf, S., Rovetto, F. (2003), 'Importance of cyberspace for the assessment of the drug abuse market: preliminary results from the Psychonaut 2002 Project' *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, Vol. 6, pp. 405–410.

⁽⁵⁾ Bellis, M., Hale, G., Bennett, A., Chaudry, M., and Kilfoyle, M. (2000), 'Ibiza uncovered: changes in substance use and sexual behaviour amongst young people visiting an international nightlife resort', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, Vol.11, pp. 235–244.

⁽⁶⁾ EMCDDA (2003), *Annual report: the state of the drugs problem in the European Union and Norway*, EMCDDA, Lisbon. Deehan, A., and Saville, E., (2003), 'Calculating the risk: recreational drug use among clubbers in the South East of England, UK Home Office Report, 43.

⁽⁷⁾ 'Moral panic is about instilling fear in people and, in so doing, encouraging them to adopt a fortress mentality or "a something must be done about it" attitude. Moral panics are a way in which home affairs or social and current affairs are constructed. They are also increasingly contested by a range of pressure groups.' McRobbie, A., (1994), *Post modernism and popular culture*, Routledge, London.

Recent and rapid expansion of the magazine industry has targeted young people who constitute a large readership. Market research has shown that music magazines, in the UK, are read by 18.3% of the young adult population ⁽⁸⁾. It was evident, from earlier observations, that drug references occur more frequently in music and dance magazines than in more general lifestyle magazines.

This study did not attempt to include highly specialist publications aimed at subcultural groups with relatively hidden readerships. There are a number of specialist magazines for example, *Mainliners* in the Netherlands and UK, *Black Poppy* in the UK and *Brass Monk* in Ireland that are aimed at dependent or problem drug users and focus specifically on drug-related issues. These were excluded from the study due to their relatively small and specific readerships. Other specialist fanzines or leaflets aimed at esoteric music, art or ethnic sub-groups were also excluded. However, publications with relatively large circulations, such as those that target 'clubbers' ⁽⁹⁾, teenage girls, students and homosexual/bisexual men were included in the sample.

Key informants (drug outreach workers, journalists, regular clubbers and art students) were used as initial guides for the selection of printed media available and read by young people, particularly by young people who are most likely to use, or be interested in, drugs.

The total sample of selected media included 2 trend/cutting edge magazines, 13 mainstream lifestyle magazines for men and women, 6 dance music magazines and 5 other publications targeted specifically at teenage girls, students and homosexual/bisexual males. Circulation figures for these media range from 10,000 to 50,000 per copy with an estimated range of 3–8 readers per copy ⁽⁸⁾. All except four of the publications were produced monthly. Media titles are not provided in this report to protect the anonymity of magazines and their editors.

A total of 1,763 drug references were processed and analysed retrospectively from the 26 publications identified in five Member States. The main criterion for inclusion as a reference was a text reference to drugs, or a specified psychoactive substance, or an illustration (such as photographs, drawings and cartoons of a drug or drug paraphernalia). Alcohol and tobacco references were only included when mentioned in the same context as a drug.

Content analysis

The content analysis schedule provided information about the magazine article in which the drug reference appeared and information about the drug reference itself. Some difficulties were encountered in defining the boundaries for each article. For example, occasionally drug articles spanned several pages and referred to a number of different drugs under different headings.

⁽⁸⁾ PPA (2003), *The Magazine Publishing Industry Handbook*, The Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) (<http://www.ppa.co.uk>).

⁽⁹⁾ The Oxford English dictionary definition of a clubber is a person who frequently goes to nightclubs, especially to dance.

The results presented here focus mainly on drug references themselves rather than the articles in which drug references appeared.

The content analysis schedule allowed for the collection of frequency data, such as, how many references during the study period were about cannabis, ecstasy, and other drugs. Coded Excel sheets were entered into SPSS for analysis and descriptive texts were referred to throughout the analysis to provide validation of the coding and deeper understanding. Data from Portugal did not include any qualitative information.

Reliability

A pre-pilot exercise to check the inter-rater reliability was conducted on the first five drug references in each country. Ideally this exercise would have been conducted with face-to-face meetings between all the coders involved but geographical distance made this impossible. Also, the multilingual nature of media that formed the basis of the study (Greek, Finnish, Portuguese and English language magazines) was a barrier to testing reliability between participating countries. Coding reliability checks had to be carried out between fellow nationals within the participating focal points or between English-speaking colleagues at the EMCDDA.

The pre-pilot exercise revealed a number of linguistic and methodological problems in the contents schedule and it became clear that options for multiple coding were necessary. For example, risks portrayed as associated with heroin are often multiple and include risks that are physical and psychological, acute and chronic, etc.

In youth magazines, drugs are often referred to by relatively allusive or conjectural 'street' names or in picture formats. Therefore, the inclusion of some references depended on individual coders' knowledge of drug terminology and the physical characteristics of different drugs. Countries were asked to ensure that data coders were familiar with 'street' level drug terms and culture. The more esoteric, or new, the drug reference was the greater the chance of it being missed. For example, cannabis-coded references might include, an illustration of a cannabis leaf on a T-shirt, an advertisement for extra long or coloured tobacco-rolling papers, or a street term such as 'spliff'. An ecstasy-coded reference might include the term 'pills' in the context of a dance music setting or an illustration of a tablet with a smiley face logo. Some of the drug references hidden behind even more esoteric 'street' names, such as 'Columbian marching powder' for cocaine may have been missed. In the final sample less than 7% of all the 1,763 drug references were recorded as allusive or conjectural.

As a result of the pre-pilot exercise changes were made to the contents schedule. A meeting took place in Lisbon with all participants after all the data had been coded where reliability issues were discussed and data was recoded accordingly.

Interviews with editors/journalists

An important element in this pilot study was the semi-structured interviews conducted with editors or key journalists from the magazines either face to face or by telephone. One objective of these interviews was to provide background information concerning the target readership for selected publications. The interviews also provided information about editorial motives

for including drug references and explored legal, financial and social constraints. Circulation figures were collected during these interviews as well as from other sources where available.

Editors or journalists from 11 publications in total were interviewed, four in Finland, two in Greece, three in Ireland, and two in the UK. Of those editors approached some refused to be interviewed on the grounds that they were reluctant to draw attention to drug coverage in their magazine and others were simply always too busy or constantly unavailable for interview. The persistence of researchers in efforts made to contact and interview editors may have varied between countries.

A methodological principle reinforced by this study was the importance of using a wide range for key informants to assist in the selection of chosen media; and the selection should be made according to specific monitoring objectives, with specific populations (sets and settings) defined. Also, in order to limit the amount of time spent coding and recording, content schemes for quantitative analysis may be limited to a minimum set of variables such as the main drugs and the risks, benefits and lifestyles associated with their use.

Contextual frame for drug references in youth media

There are substantial differences in the number of drug references recorded between different countries and between different types of magazines. Reasons for the differences are complex and varied and this project was only able to touch on some of them.

International marketing figures show large differences between countries in the number of consumer magazines on the market. For example in 1998, Finland had 293 consumer magazine titles, Portugal 280 and the UK 2,794, although caution is needed comparing markets since definitions and periods may differ from country to country ⁽¹⁰⁾. The UK magazine market is disproportionately large compared to most other EU countries. Some magazines from the UK are regularly purchased and read by young people across Europe and some of the editors interviewed for the study reported that there is a tendency to copy leading UK magazines.

Legal and editorial constraints

Differences between countries exist in the legal control exerted over the way in which drugs can be covered within the magazine industry. The earlier EMCDDA feasibility study on youth media highlighted the fact that, in France, an article in the Code of Public Health (Article L 3421-4 and formerly L.630) stipulates that presenting drugs in a way that is perceived as 'encouraging' drug use is an offence. French magazine editors interviewed for that study interpreted this as meaning that the media cannot speak freely about drugs; hence the relatively low number of drug references collected from French youth magazines.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Source: FIPP/Zenith Optimedia World Magazine Trends 1999 quoted in PPA (2003) The Magazine Publishing Industry Handbook, The Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) (<http://www.ppa.co.uk>).

This pilot study did not attempt a comprehensive review of the legal situation with regard to publishing information about illegal drugs but some information about laws controlling published media was obtained during interviews with editors and from participating national focal points. Magazine editors interviewed in Finland, Greece, Ireland, and the UK reported that they were, in general, more constrained by public opinion and the need to satisfy the interests of their readers and advertisers than by any legislation. In Finland, three out of four editors reported that public opinion and drug legislation do not prevent inclusion of drug references. However, presenting a clearly positive image of any drug was reportedly considered unacceptable in view of moral responsibility for the well being of young readers. In Greece, magazine editors reported enjoying relatively more press freedom than other editors working in radio and television who come under the control of a broadcasting authority. Greek editors expressed the opinion that although parents make occasional complaints about magazine content, their concerns focus more frequently on other issues. An example was given of a drugs case in 1996 when the Greek public prosecutor started proceedings against a daily newspaper for promoting drugs through a feature entitled 'What should young people, the parents and the teachers know about drugs?' This case triggered a public debate that revolved more around the principle of free speech than around the drug message and the case was dropped ⁽¹¹⁾.

In Ireland, the Misuse of Drugs Act 1984, Section 5, forbids any publication that: 'advocates or encourages.....the use of any controlled drug...', or advertises 'any use of a pipe, utensil or other thing for use by persons, for or in connection with the use of a controlled drug'. The police in Ireland (Garda Siochana) reported that as of November 2003, no prosecutions under this section of the Misuse of Drugs Act had been recorded in their electronic database. However, one Irish magazine editor chose not to be interviewed on the grounds that it may draw attention to the magazine because the climate for publishing drug-related material in Ireland had become 'more repressive' than it had been previously ⁽¹¹⁾.

In Finland, all except one editor reported that public opinion and drug legislation were not viewed as reasons to prevent inclusion of drug references. However, presenting a very positive image of any drug was considered to be incorrect in view of the moral responsibility for the well being of young readers. For one magazine, the potential loss of advertisers if they portrayed cannabis in a favourable light was seen as a problem by the publishing house ⁽¹¹⁾.

The UK Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 makes no specific reference to press restrictions but section 19 states that 'it is an offence for a person to attempt to commit an offence under any other provision of this Act or to incite or attempt to incite another to commit such an offence'. Both of the UK editors interviewed reported that they had never experienced any constraints in the inclusion of drug references.

Political, social and economic context

This study does not attempt a comprehensive analysis of the political, social and economic factors that play a part in the amount and type of drug references found in youth media but individual country reports included some information about these aspects.

⁽¹¹⁾ Voluntary Reitox report to the EMCDDA on Youth Media.

In the UK, the magazine industry has experienced a decade of rapid growth, with publishers catering for an increasing range of new and more specialised markets. The total number of magazines has increased by almost 25 per cent and an average 5% of consumer magazines in the UK are exported⁽¹²⁾. The editor of one of the UK lifestyle magazines included in this study reported that they export over a quarter of each issue abroad. Figures show that magazine readership – in the UK – is heaviest among young adults (15–34 years) and that music magazines reach an average penetration of 18% adults (compared with 12% for football and 6% for golf)⁽¹³⁾.

Drugs inevitably feature in interviews with musicians and pop stars because they are, and always have been, ubiquitous in pop and dance music scenes⁽¹⁴⁾. A recent review of drug-related messages reaching young people in the UK found 50% of representations focused on celebrity drug and alcohol use⁽¹⁵⁾. In recent years there has been a reported decline in some sectors of the clubbing scene in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands. Some large-scale enterprises in the UK have closed down and the final editorial of a dance music magazine in Ireland that ended publication in March 2003 states that: 'the dance music scene as a commercial force is losing ground'. One UK editor of a trend-setting lifestyle magazine reported a decline in the dance music industry and an accompanying declining interest in drug stories among the target readership. However, another editor of a dance music magazine that targets 17–26 year old males claimed that the dance music industry, and associated interest in drugs, was as strong as ever but had moved away from large-scale venues and was flourishing in a less visible way. The same editor stressed the need to entertain and provoke laughter to explain the way in which so many issues, including drugs, are presented in youth media.

In Finland, editors perceived drugs as a topic of interest to their target readers and reported that a mention of drugs on the cover would attract more readers. One magazine editor there reported a tendency to focus on drug problems in recognition of drug legislation and the strongly negative public opinions about drug use. However, some gay and clubbing media deliberately distanced themselves from drugs to avoid negative stereotyping and potential loss of advertisers⁽¹⁶⁾.

A number of magazine editors perceive their magazines as playing a role in reducing harm by providing information about drugs. However, the main criterion for inclusion for all of the editors interviewed is popular interest. This means a focus on issues that are new and surprising and humorous. Editors claimed that a serious, investigative, article on drugs should follow the same journalistic standards as an article on any other topic – using multiple sources. In general, they expressed the belief that magazines reflect the interests of readers rather than deliberately attempt to shape them. And support for any politically driven pro-or anti-drug messages was denied by editors.

⁽¹²⁾ Wessenden, *Marketing ABC 1998* Note: this excludes UK based international titles quoted in PPA (2003), *The Magazine Publishing Industry Handbook*, The Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) (<http://www.ppa.co.uk>).

⁽¹³⁾ IPSOS- RSL/IPC, *Specialist Magazine Values*, 1996. Base: all GB adults 15+ years old quoted in PPA (2003) *The Magazine Publishing Industry Handbook*, The Periodical Publishers Association (PPA) (<http://www.ppa.co.uk>).

⁽¹⁴⁾ Shapiro, H., (1999), *Waiting for the man: the story of drugs and popular music*, Helter Skelter Publishing, London.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Media Messages: DEPIIS, (March 2005), *A review of drug-related messages reaching young people*, DrugScope and DH, UK.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Voluntary Reitox reports to the EMCDDA on Youth Media.

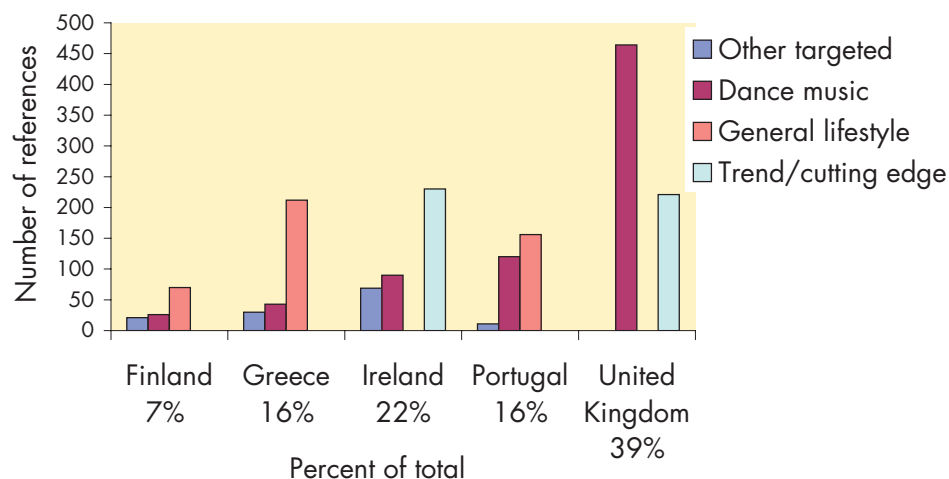
Results

This section presents results based on analyses of the selected magazines. It focuses on individual drug references rather than on articles. A brief description of the selected media sample is followed by some general findings about the total numbers of drug references. Further results are broken down and presented by country and by specific drug.

Type of publication

The selected media were divided into 4 main categories: trend/cutting edge magazines, general lifestyle magazines, dance music magazines and other targeted publications ⁽¹⁷⁾. The sampling difficulties described above mean that the samples for each country are not strictly comparable. Only two magazines were included in the UK sample, one dance music and the other a trend/cutting edge magazine. Figure 1 shows the make-up of the sample; in particular that the one dance magazine in the UK accounts for many more drug references than any other publication. It should be noted here that males tend to report higher prevalence and more frequent patterns of use than females ⁽¹⁸⁾ and, according to the editor interview, the target readers of this dance music magazine are primarily young males.

Figure 1: Number of drug references by country and publication type



⁽¹⁷⁾ Teenage girls, students and homosexual/bisexual males.

⁽¹⁸⁾ EMCDDA (2005). Differences in patterns of drug use between women and men. European drug situation: Technical data sheet (<http://www.emcdda.eu.int/?nnodeid=7291>).

Table 1 shows the total distribution of references among the different types of publication.

Most of the drug references appeared in investigative style reports, news reports and in interviews with celebrities in the music industry. Reviews of CDs and films were another frequent context for drug references. The prominence of drug references within the magazines fell into categories of high, medium and low prominence in more or less equal proportions.

Drug references were very evenly spaced throughout the year except for a marked increase in July.

Table 1: Distribution of drug references in different magazine categories

Magazine category	Sample	Total drug references	Estimated number of readers per issue (range) ⁽¹⁹⁾
Trend/cutting edge	2	451 (26%)	20,000–100,000
General lifestyle	13	438 (25%)	130,000–650,000
Dance music	6	743 (42%)	60,000–300,000
Other targeted	5	131 (7%)	50,000–250,000
Total	26	1763 (100%)	(NB: most of these publications were monthly)

Frequency and type of drug references

A total of 1,763 drug references, collected from 26 different media publications from the participating Member States (Finland, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the UK) were processed and analysed for the period December 2001 to September 2002.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of drug references by country. Despite the fact that only 2 magazines from the UK were included in the study these provided nearly 40% of all the references and two thirds of these were found in one dance music magazine. Therefore drug references recorded in this study are weighted towards reflecting the lifestyle interests of dance music readerships in the UK.

⁽¹⁹⁾ The scope of magazine influence is far greater than the size of the circulation figures. According to The Magazine Publishing Industry Handbook, The Periodical Publishers Association (PPA), there is a range of 3–8 readers per copy (<http://www.ppa.co.uk>).

Figure 2: Total drug references by country (n = 1763)

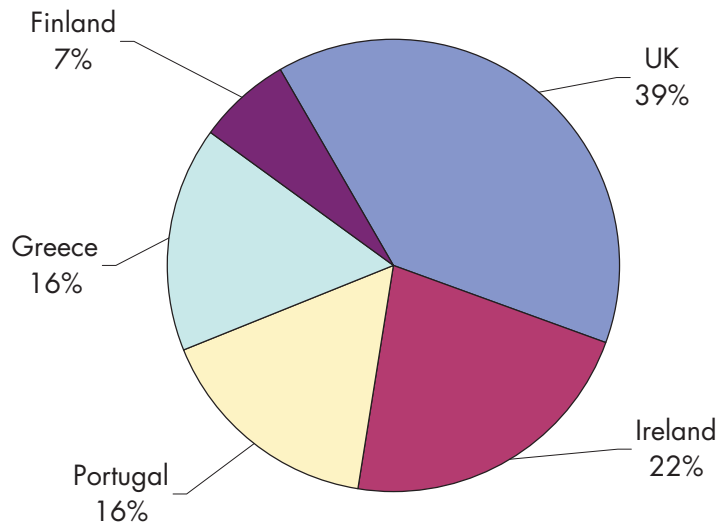
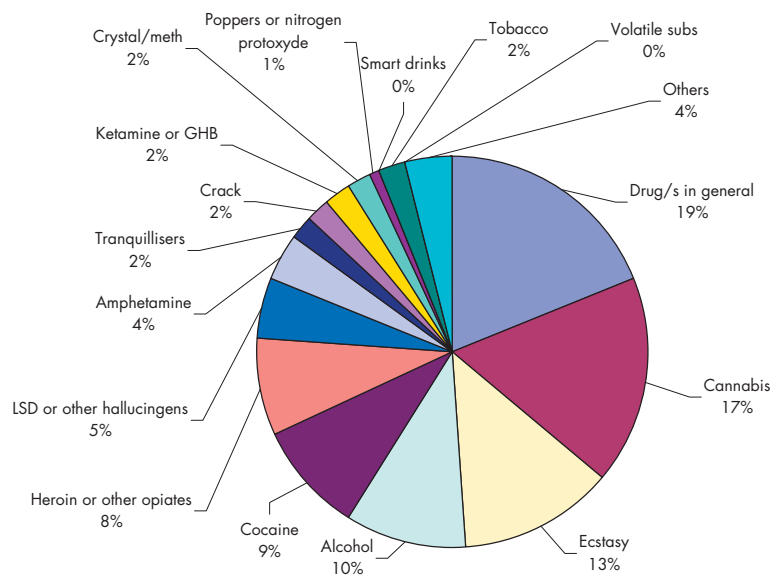


Figure 3 shows the distribution of drug references by substances. Unspecified drugs or drugs in general were the subject of 19% of all the references.

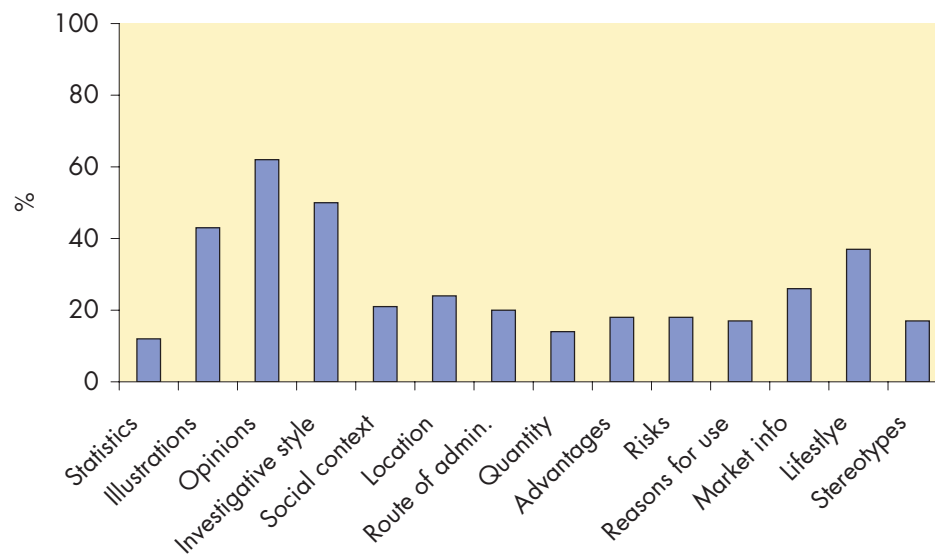
Figure 3: Total substances referred to (n = 1763)



The two drugs that were most frequently specified were cannabis (17%) and ecstasy (13%). Cocaine followed with nearly 9% of all references. 8% of the references were to heroin or other opioids and 5% to hallucinogens. The category of 'other drugs' formed 4% of all drug references and included a wide range of substances such as new 'designer drugs' and plants, viagra, caffeine, hormones, helium and cough medicines.

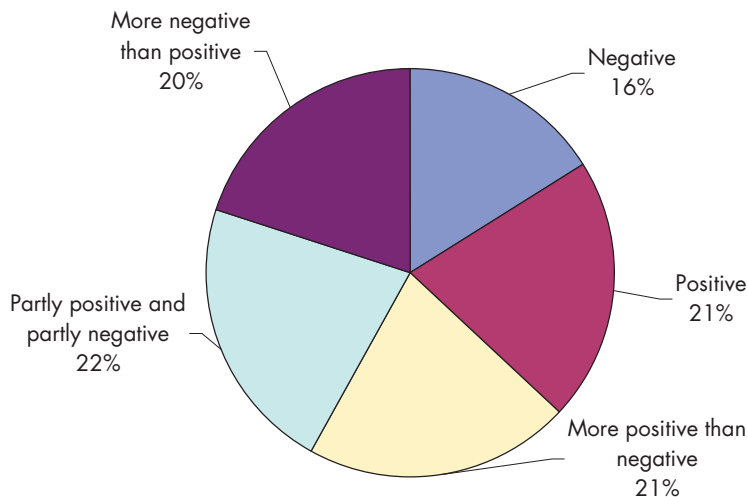
Half of the drug references were portrayed in an investigative style with an informative component. In nearly a quarter of the references the approach was exaggerated or made humorous for entertainment value. A large proportion of the drug references simply mentioned, or depicted, a drug without any detail, for example a fleeting reference to having taken ecstasy in an interview with a musician with no further information and the drug or the experience. Figure 4 shows references that provided details about the drug or drug use ranged from 12% which included some sort of claim to an evidence-based statistic to 40% that included a description of a lifestyle associated with the mentioned drug/s. The source of quoted statistics was rarely mentioned. Illustrations or photographs were frequently used in the drug references with 43% of the references carrying a picture image of some sort. Very detailed information about drugs appeared in a sub-sample of the total references. These were often feature articles in which a wide range of different information was provided about specific drugs. For example, references that gave a doctor's opinions about the health risks of a particular drug often gave other information about the drug - its physical appearance, legal situation, psychological risks, etc.

Figure 4: Types of information provided ($n = 1763$)



In two-thirds of the references some sort of opinion about drugs was expressed or made explicit. Figure 5 shows that, in general, positive and negative evaluations of a drug were more or less evenly balanced.

Figure 5: Assessment of evaluation given to drugs ($n = 1097$)



Theories about the diffusion of drug trends refer to the role of influential 'opinion leaders' ⁽²⁰⁾ and concern has been raised about the potential influence over young people of musicians and other celebrities who express positive opinions about drugs. A recent internet survey of more than 25,000 young people aged between 16 and 24 showed the 10 individuals most admired were all Hollywood stars and pop musicians – with the exception of one footballer ⁽²¹⁾. However, this study found that celebrity musicians and DJs expressed opinions in only 10% of all the drug references. A greater proportion – over half – of all the opinions expressed in relation to different drugs were proffered by the journalists or editors writing the article. Drug experts such as doctors and scientists expressed opinions in 9% of the reference. The opinions of young people themselves were expressed in 6% of all the drug references.

Particular lifestyles were associated with drug taking in 40% of all the drug references and nearly half of these referred to the music or dance club scene reflecting the ubiquitous link between music and drug cultures ⁽²²⁾. Drug user stereotypes (junkies, prostitutes, etc) were relatively infrequent. Having fun was the reason most frequently linked to drug taking. 18% of drug references referred specifically to advantages of drug use. The advantages most frequently portrayed were psychological and relaxation aspects. In some drug references having fun included elements of extreme competition and pushing the boundaries – more commonly

⁽²⁰⁾ Golub, A., and Johnson, B. D., (1996), 'The crack epidemic: Empirical findings support an hypothesized diffusion of innovation process', *Psychopharmacology*, Vol. 53, pp. 97–102.

Rogers, E., (1995), *Diffusion of innovation*, Forth edition (New York Free Press).

Ferrence, R. (2001), 'Diffusion theory and drug use', *Addiction*, Vol. 96, pp. 165–173.

⁽²¹⁾ University of Leicester Psychologists, Study the cult of celebrity (<http://www.le.ac.uk/press/press/universityofleicesterpsychologists.html>).

⁽²²⁾ Shapiro, H., (1999), *Waiting for the man: the story of drugs and popular music*, Helter Skelter Publishing, London.

portrayed among young men than among women. The second most frequently referred to advantage of drug use was the physical energy effect that serves utilitarian functions such as staying awake to dance or work. Drug use was also, but less frequently, portrayed as an aid to communication, sexuality and social identity. Other reasons linked to drug use were to experiment, to balance the effects of other drugs and to self-medicate medical conditions.

Information about the risks or disadvantages of drug taking was provided in the same number as for the advantages (18%). The majority of these referred to multiple rather than single risks. Acute physical risks, addiction and psychological risks were those most frequently mentioned. Legal risks associated with drugs were also frequently mentioned. Despite health care professionals' concern about long-term risks of ecstasy and cannabis use, these risks were alluded to much less frequently than acute risks.

Only 21% of drug references mentioned the context of drug consumption. Of these, recreational consumption in a social group is the most frequent. Only 2% of all the drug references imply the solitary drug consumption that is generally associated with addictions. 24% of drug references mentioned the setting or geographical location where drugs are consumed. Half of the settings were disco, clubs or parties and the other half were in a broad category of 'other', which included a range of foreign locations, particularly holiday destinations popular with young clubbers, at work, at school, in prison, in cars, in baths, and in countryside locations.

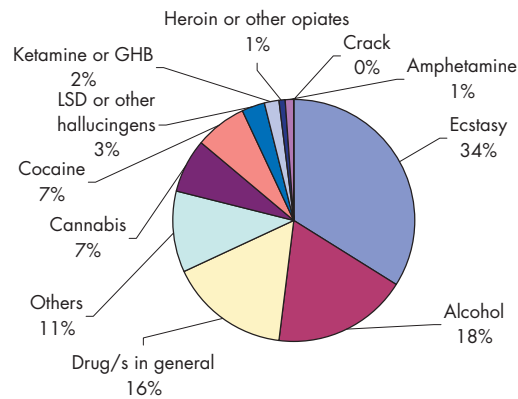
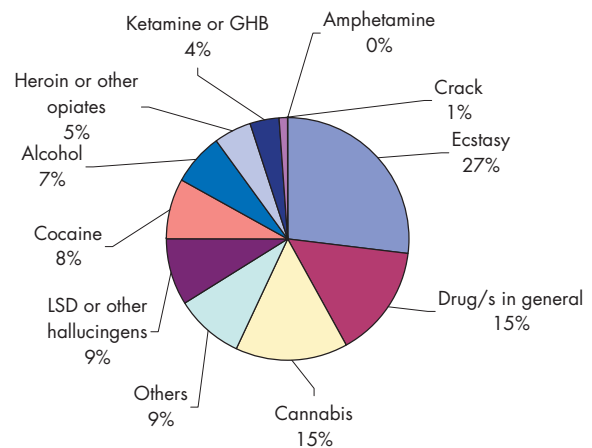
20% of drug references in total mentioned the route of drug administration and these mainly referred to swallowing pills and smoking or inhaling other substances. Very few references were made to other routes such as injecting and sniffing. Only 14% of all the references made reference to the quantity of drugs consumed and even less (8%) to frequency of use.

Information about different substances

Reflecting interests of the readership, the most detailed and specific information in the sampled drug references was about cannabis and ecstasy.

Figure 6 shows that ecstasy and alcohol are the substances most commonly linked with club dance settings, while cannabis and hallucinogens are linked more frequently with private party settings than with dance clubs. However, these figures should be treated with caution as only 30% of all references addressed the setting so that the total numbers are relatively small.

Figure 6

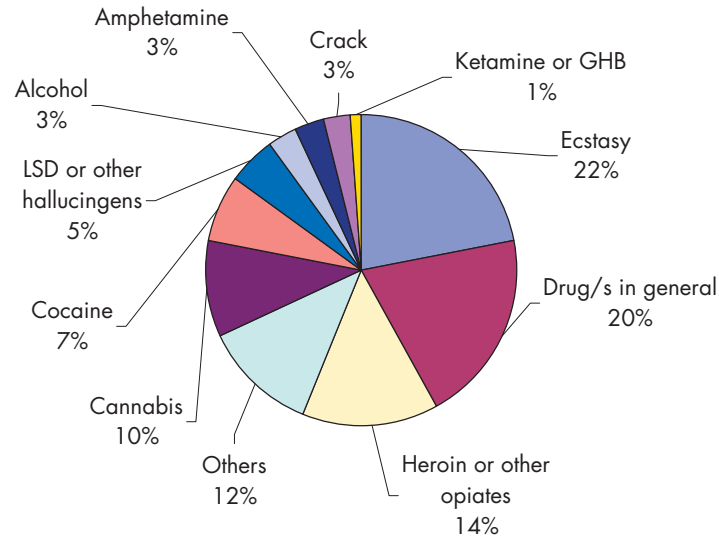
a) Drugs linked with club disco settings ($n = 122$)b) Drugs linked with private party settings ($n = 92$)

With regard to references that address issues about the drug market, cannabis was mentioned more frequently than any other drug. Drug market references were very varied and included news items about the changing legal status of cannabis as well as stories about cannabis cafes, cultivation, new varieties of cannabis, new or unusual sources of supply and seizures.

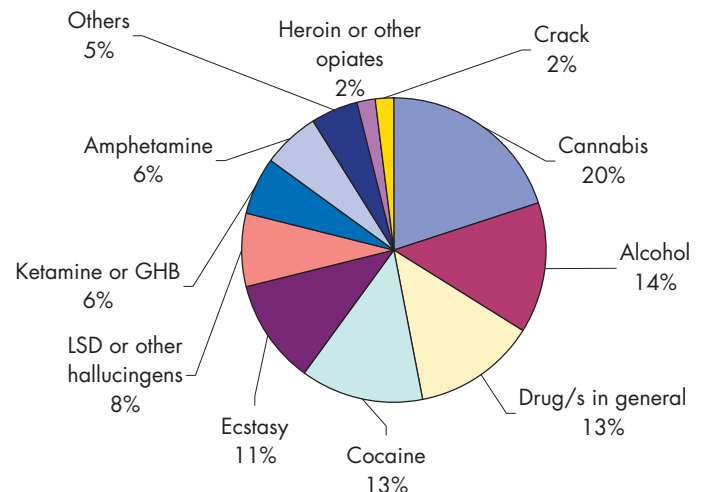
Among the references that addressed the risks of drug use, there were more references to multiple risks than to any single specific risk. However, acute physical risks were mentioned more than any other risk. Figure 7 shows that ecstasy was the drug most often mentioned in relation to acute physical risk. Cannabis was the drug most associated with psychological risk followed closely by alcohol and cocaine. The greater number of ecstasy and cannabis mentions in relation to risks compared with heroin use – which carries greater risks – reveals that the interests and concerns of the readership lay more in ecstasy and cannabis than in heroin. Again, caution is required due to the numbers being relatively small because only 18% all references addressed specific risks.

Figure 7

a) Physical acute risks linked to drugs (n = 147)



b) Psychological risk linked to drugs (n = 63)

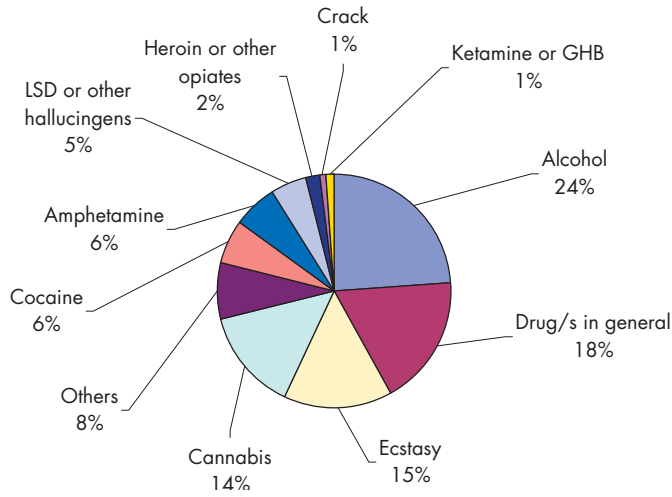


As previously stated, less than 20% of all references specifically mentioned the advantages, or benefits, of drug use. Cannabis, ecstasy and alcohol were those substances most often mentioned in relation to psychological and relaxation benefits. Amphetamine and cocaine were mentioned much less often in relation to advantages or benefits. It should be noted that youth magazines portray some forms of drug use (such as injecting heroin and smoking crack) using the same 'moral panic' ⁽²³⁾ constructions as those found in wider mass media.

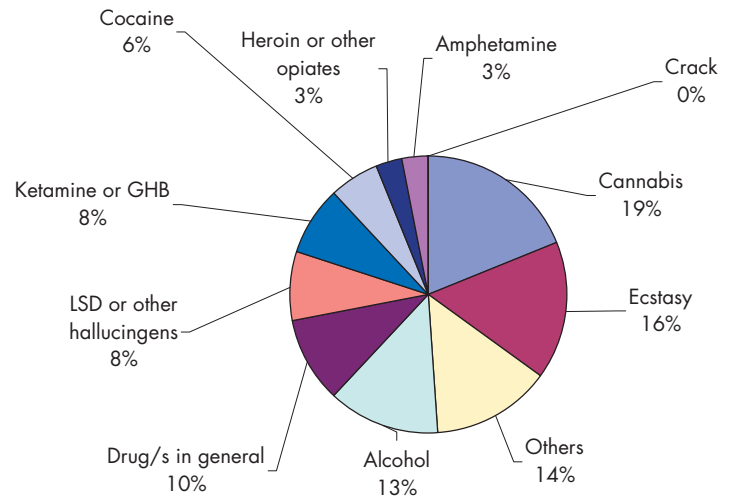
⁽²³⁾ Moral panic is about instilling fear in people and, in so doing, encouraging them to adopt a fortress mentality or 'a something must be done about it' attitude. Moral panics are a way in which home affairs or social and current affairs are constructed. They are also increasingly contested by a range of pressure groups." McRobbie, A., (1994) *Post Modernism and popular culture*. Routledge, London.

Figure 8

a) Drugs linked to having 'fun' (n = 84)

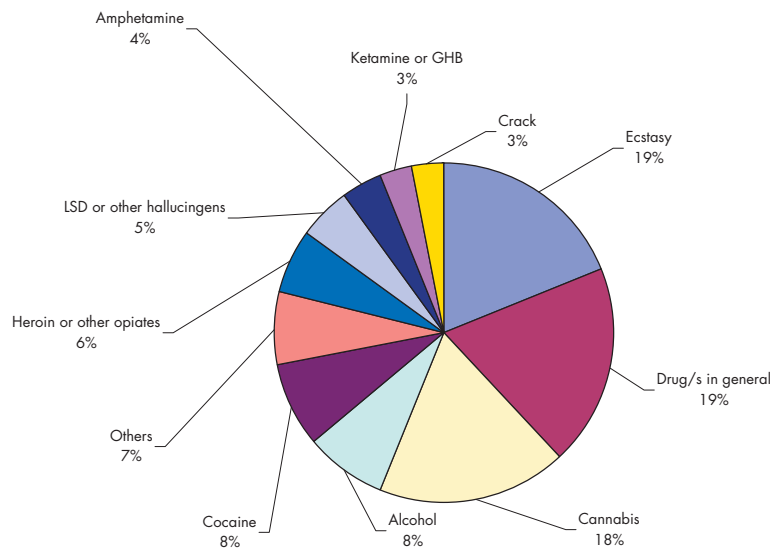


b) Drugs linked to psychological benefit (n = 79)



The drug references recorded generally by this study are largely similar to those shown in Figure 9. The figure shows that drugs in general, ecstasy and cannabis are most often directly linked with the music or dance club scene followed by alcohol and cocaine.

Figure 9: Drugs linked with music and clubbing lifestyles (n = 301)



Discussion and conclusions

Fashions and lifestyles are as relevant for understanding patterns of illicit drug use as they are for consumer research in general, and youth magazines that contain references to drug or alcohol, arguably, reveal much about young people's drinking and drug habits that official statistics cannot. Young people read magazines and other media for information that reflects the interests and concerns of their lifestyles and to learn about what is in and out of fashion. The magazine and advertising industries invest in research so that they can come to know their market intimately, and if drugs and alcohol are an integral part of the lives of 16- to 24-year-olds' then products are marketed accordingly (24).

Drugs researchers and policy-makers are interested in youth media based largely on two separate hypotheses. One is that youth media are a useful source for monitoring drug trends. If young people's drinking and drug habits, fashions and attitudes are reflected in the magazines

(24) Media Messages: DEPIIS. (March 2005), 'A review of drug-related messages reaching young people', DrugScope and DH, UK.

Ferrence, R., (2001), 'Diffusion theory and drug use', *Addiction*, Vol. 96, pp. 165-173.

they read, then emerging trends in drug use, among defined readership groups, will be revealed and the findings could serve to inform drug response strategies. The second hypothesis is that youth media influences young people's behaviour and serve, or could serve, a useful purpose in preventing drug use and problems associated with it.

With regard to the first hypothesis, media studies in general indicate that the interests of young people are reflected in the magazines they read. This study found that the number of drug references was highest in magazines that target clubbers, reflecting findings from epidemiological studies that report relatively high prevalence estimates of drug use in clubbing populations. The consistency between these two sources suggests that youth magazines could be an indicator of drugs and emerging drug trends associated with particular lifestyles as well as explaining how and why the associations exist. Exceptions to this may arise when legal or other sanctions influence magazine content. Countries appear to differ in this respect.

Despite the fact that youth media monitoring is fraught with sampling problems and cannot provide the sort of comparable prevalence estimates generated by general population surveys, youth lifestyle magazines are sources for monitoring and triangulating evidence about drug trends. And the deeper understanding gained from youth media serves to inform the development of effective responses. Furthermore, compared with many other methods, youth media monitoring is an extremely low-cost source of information, and the content analyses workload can be flexible so that it can be carried out when researcher time allows.

With regard to the second hypothesis, the extent to which youth media influence young people's behaviour, in particular health-related or risk-taking behaviour, is controversial and academics remain divided on the issue. While many claim that there is no link at all between young people's exposure to images in the media and their behaviours, there is evidence that readers' own self-images are reinforced in the process of screening magazines for items that interest, intrigue, catch the eye, entertain and inform ⁽²⁵⁾. Theories about diffusion of drug trends state that the more positive the image of a specific drug, the more potential there is for diffusion – provided there is relatively easy access to the drug. Recent research shows that 'regardless of their willingness or conscious intentions, young people were more likely to do a particular thing when they thought the image was positive and something they could identify with. This was true whether the activity was healthy or risky' ⁽²⁶⁾.

A large number of the drug references found and recorded in magazines for this study do not carry any drug message and, according to the magazine editors, are included only to reflect the readers' interests and to entertain. Other drug references carry mixed messages about drug use, for example stories about drug-using celebrities, who lead lifestyles to which some young people may aspire. Feature articles that focus specifically on drug issues often provide a mixture of both positive and negative drug information in a manner that is likely to be viewed as 'objective' by readers. The relatively even balance of coverage of the risks and benefits of

⁽²⁵⁾ Media Values Study conducted by RSL comprised 2,018 face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of adults and children between the ages of 10 and 64 found that 62% of readers believed what they read.

⁽²⁶⁾ Sheeran, P., (2004), 'How images of smokers, drinkers and drug-takers affect young people's own lifestyles', ESRC, Sheffield University, UK.

drugs such as cannabis and ecstasy in many of the drug references found in this study arguably provides more evidence-based information about drug effects than the approach utilised for the spread of 'moral panic', which focuses exclusively on negative aspects. Nevertheless, youth magazines do adopt strongly proscriptive approaches to some of the more problematic or less common forms of drug use. For example, references to heroin, crack cocaine and some new synthetic drugs focus exclusively on negative consequences. This focus may function to promote fear and prevent readers from using these drugs.

Drug references such as those described in this study, together with concerns about the scientific basis and quality of information provided about drugs in youth media, have led to growing interest in making use of media to communicate evidence-based and effective education and prevention messages to young people. However, more work is required to understand better the potential role of youth media in preventing drug use. To engage, constructively, in this enterprise with media makers in Europe will be a challenge.