

2026

AMLÉ & Ulster
University



STUDENT SUBSTANCE USE

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INITIAL RESULTS



In Autumn 2025 Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (formerly the Union of Students in Ireland), in partnership with Ulster University launched a survey on Gambling, Substance Use and Mental Health among students in third level education across the Island of Ireland. The study was funded by the Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland.

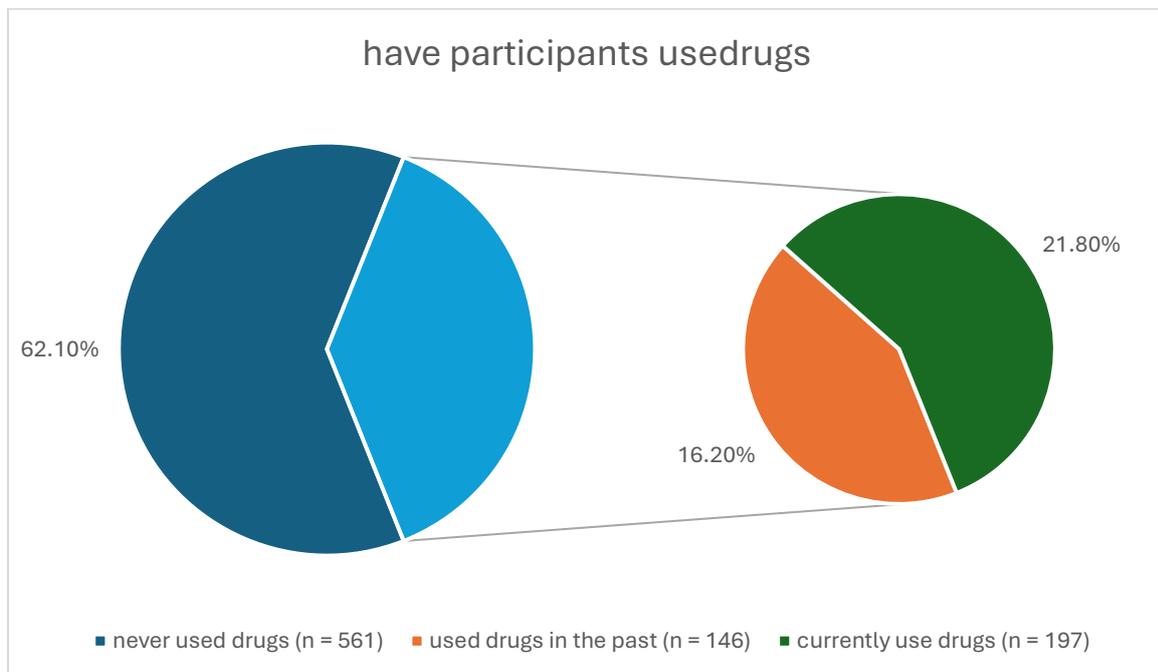
There has never previously been data available on gambling behaviours of students in Ireland. Data does exist on substance use and mental health in students, however, the most recent data was collected either before or during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it was important to gather more up-to-date data.

904 students took part; with 545 females, 311 males, 38 non-binary and 10 students who identified as another gender identity taking part. The findings presented here represent initial, high-level findings from that data on substance use. Data from the gambling and mental health sections are available in their respective reports. Further analysis will take place in due course.

The researchers would like to thank the Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland for their funding, as well as all the students who took the time to complete the survey.

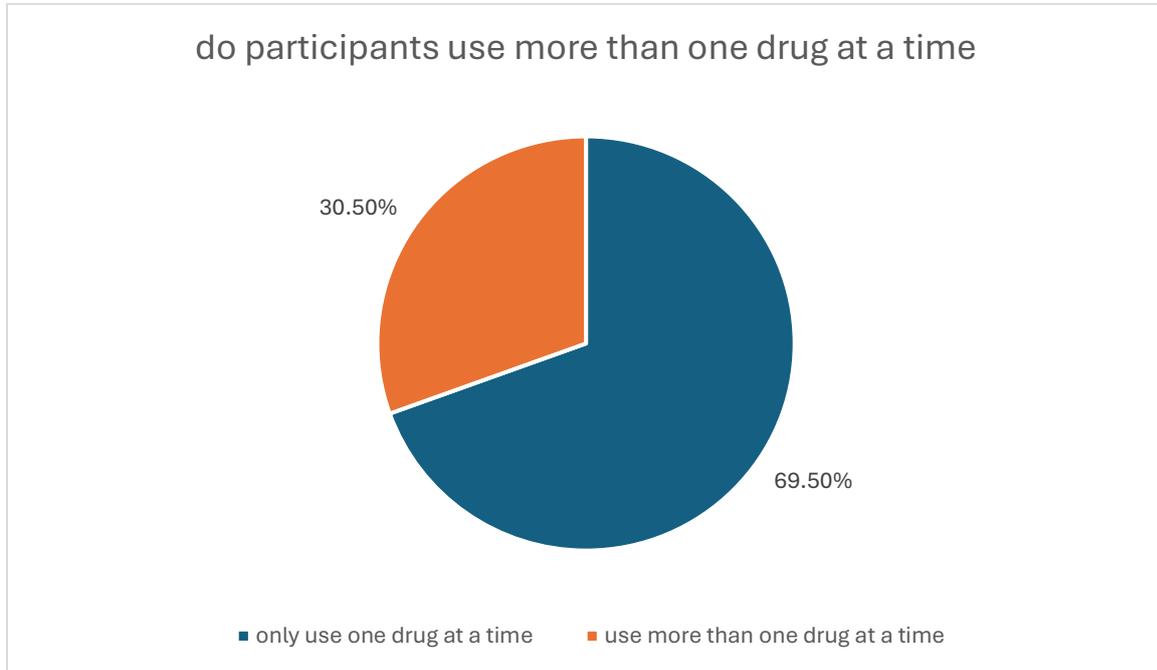
For any queries related to this study, please contact Sarah Hughes, Mental Health Programme Manager, Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn at mentalhealth@amle.ie.

Have participants ever used an illegal/ illicit drug (of class A (cocaine, ecstasy, LSD), B(cannabis, ketamine, amphetamines), or C (anabolic steroids, GHB, tranquilisers))?

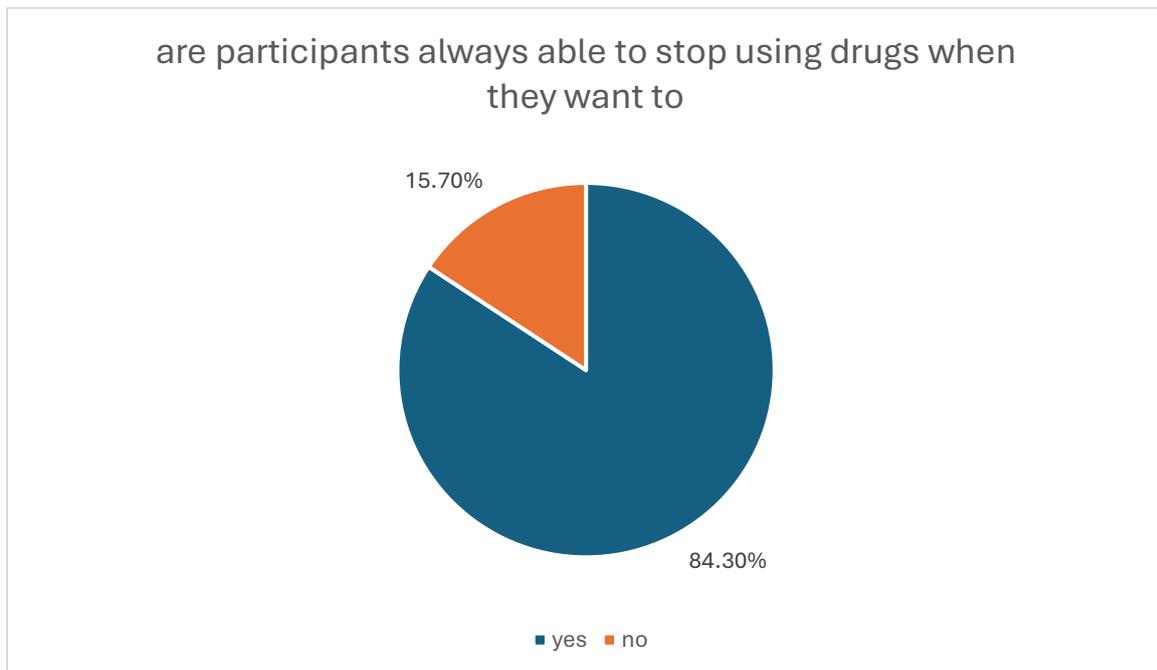


The following questions were asked only of those who indicated they had used substances in the past 12 months:

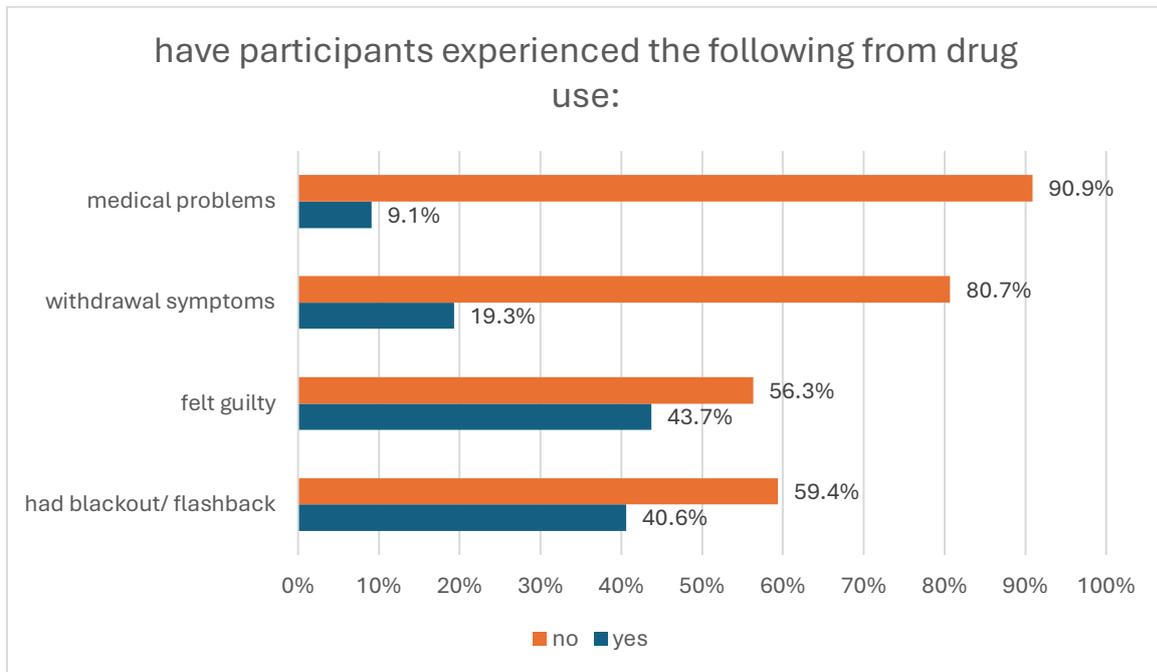
Do participants use more than one drug at a time (n = 197)



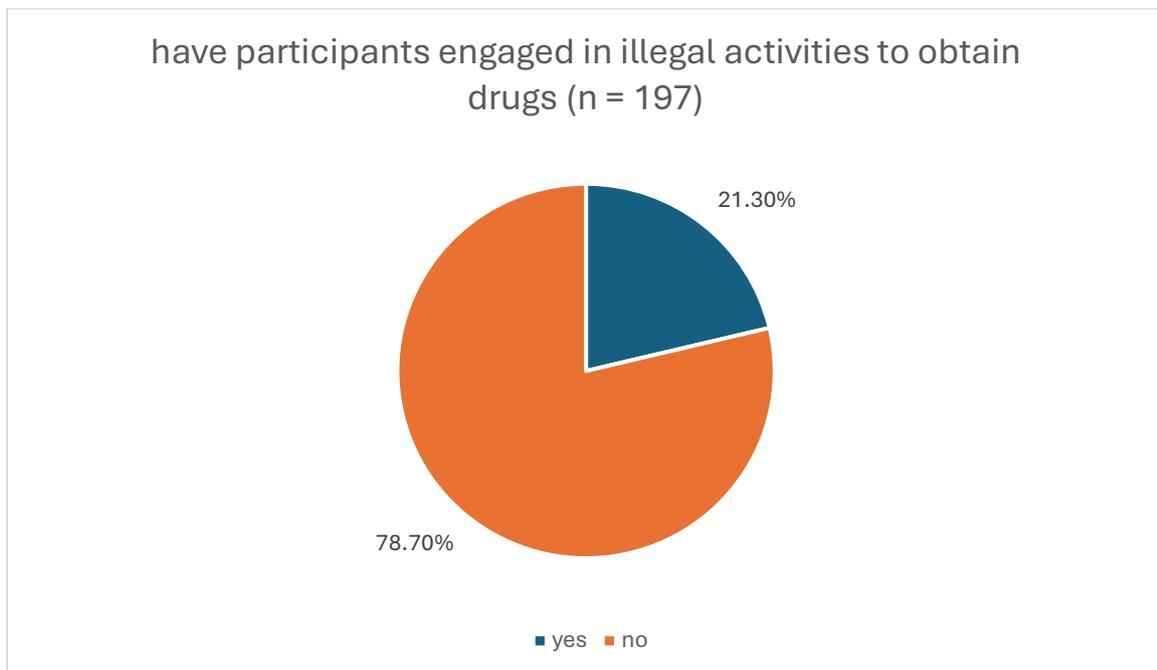
Have participants always been able to stop using drugs when they want to (n = 197)?



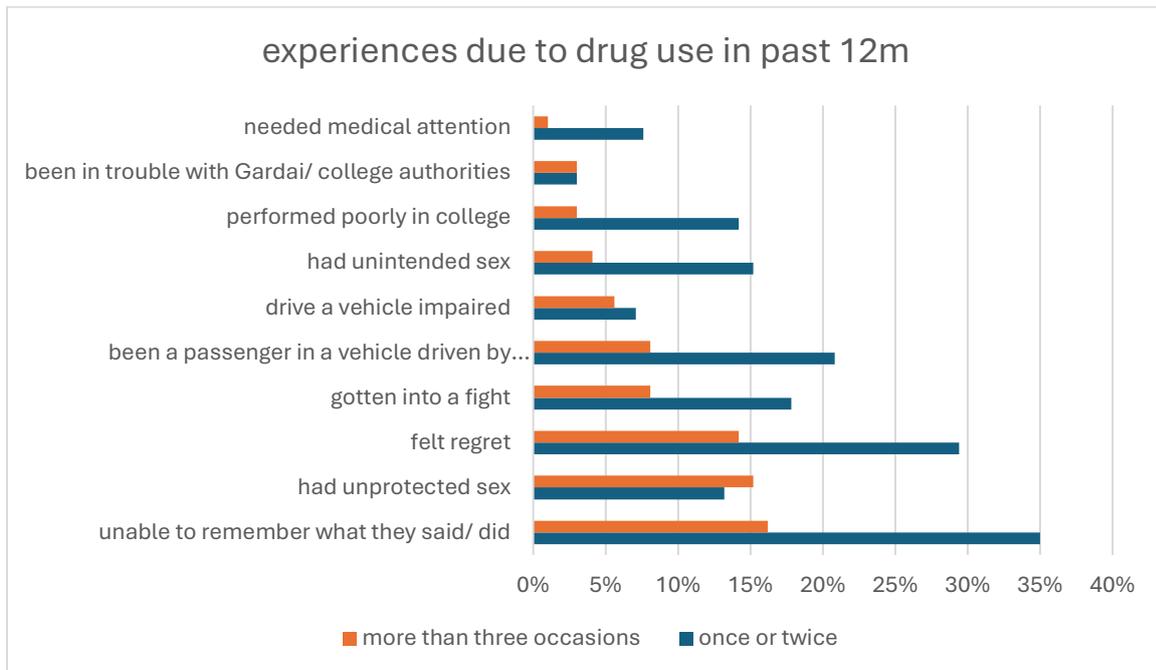
Have participants experienced the following due to substance use (n = 197)?



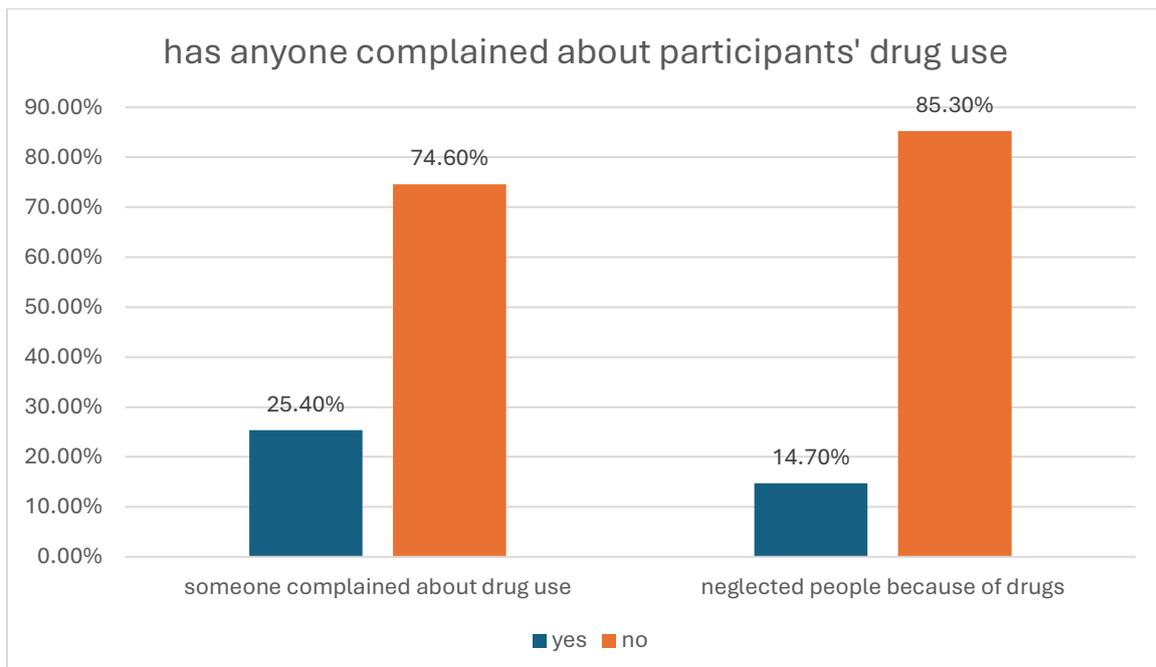
Have participants engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drugs (n = 197)?



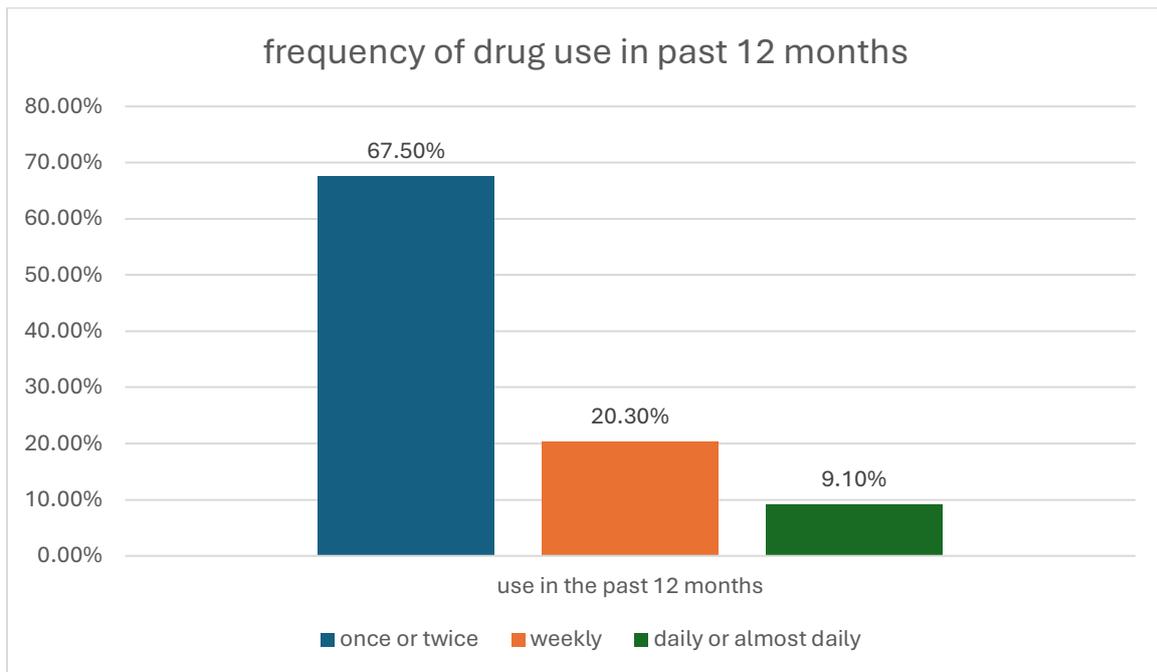
Over the past year, how often have participants experienced the following due to their drug use (n = 197)?



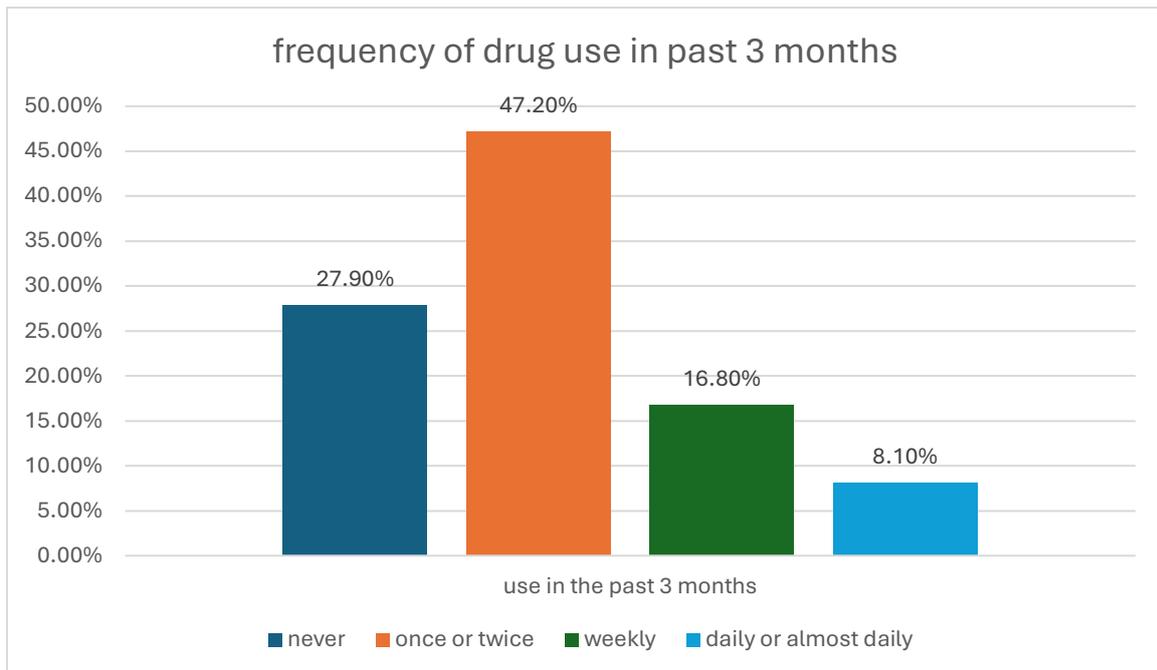
Does anyone close to participants (friends/ family/ housemates/ boyfriend/ girlfriend) ever complain about their involvement with drugs (n = 197)?



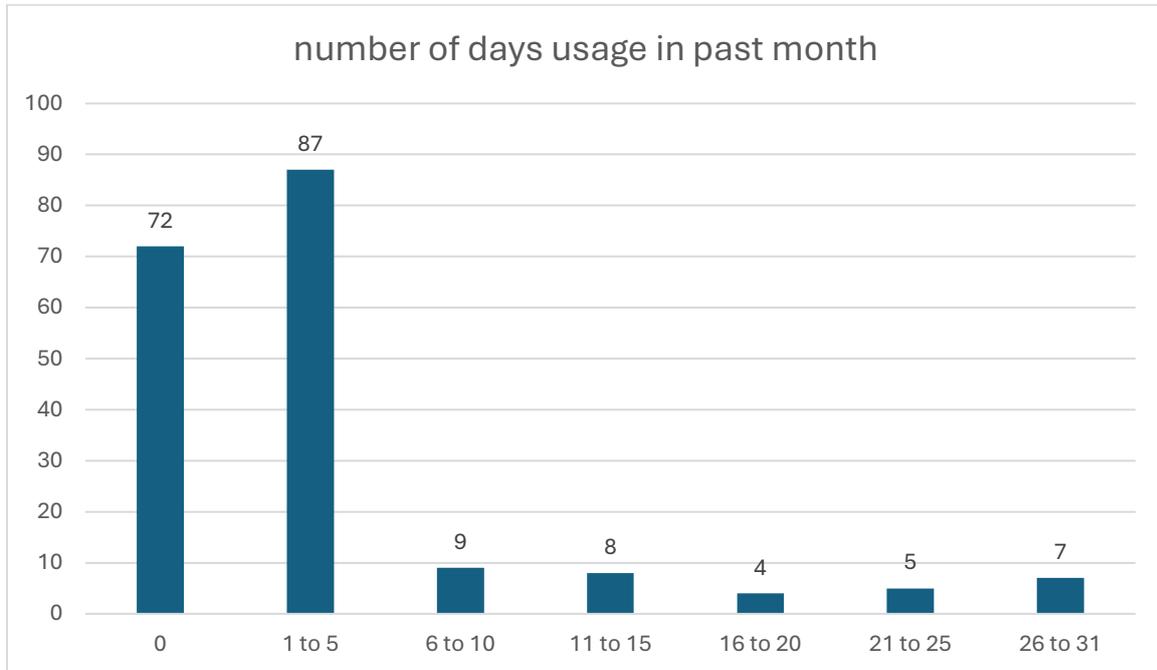
How often have participants used these drugs in the last 12 months (n = 197)?



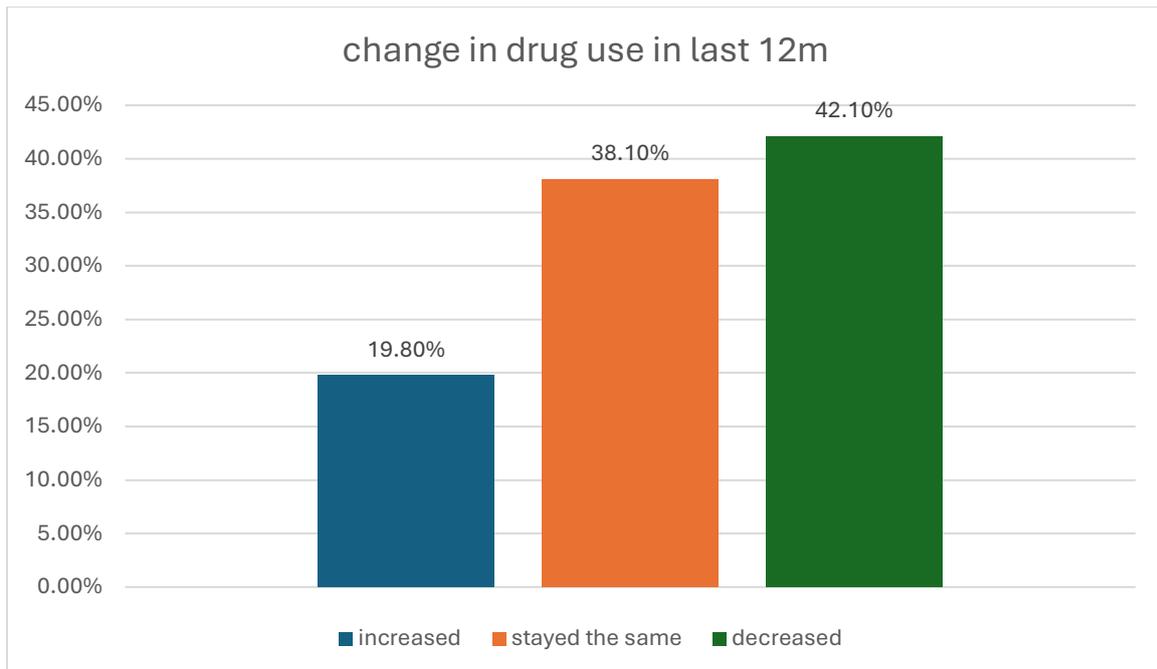
How often have participants used these drugs in the last three months (n = 197)?



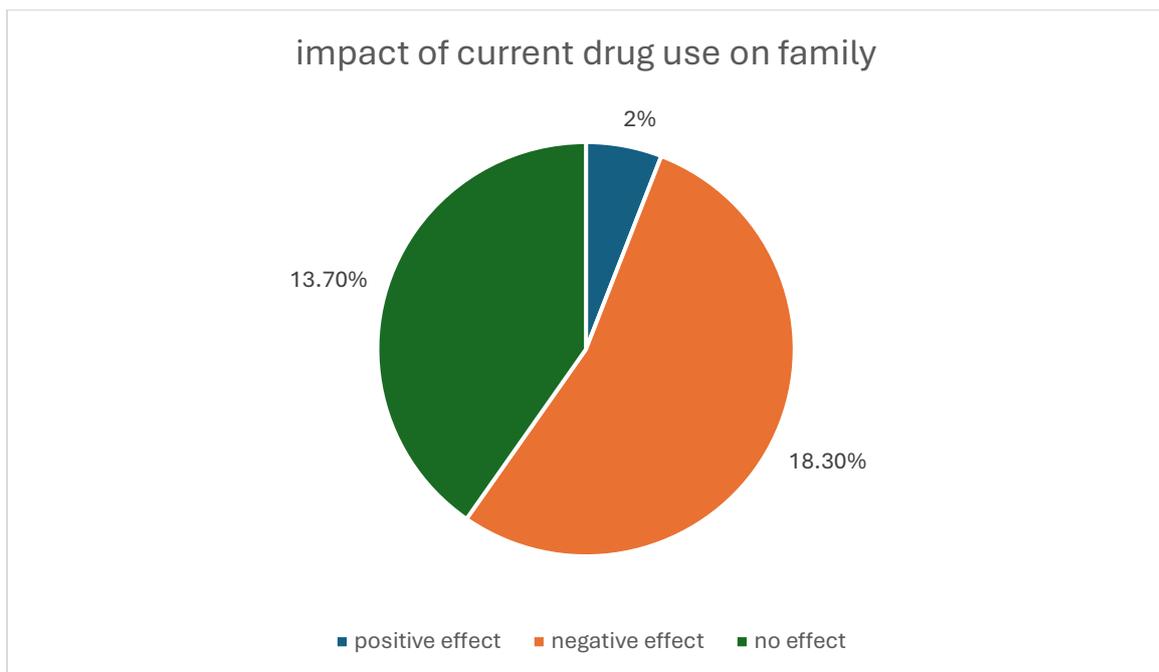
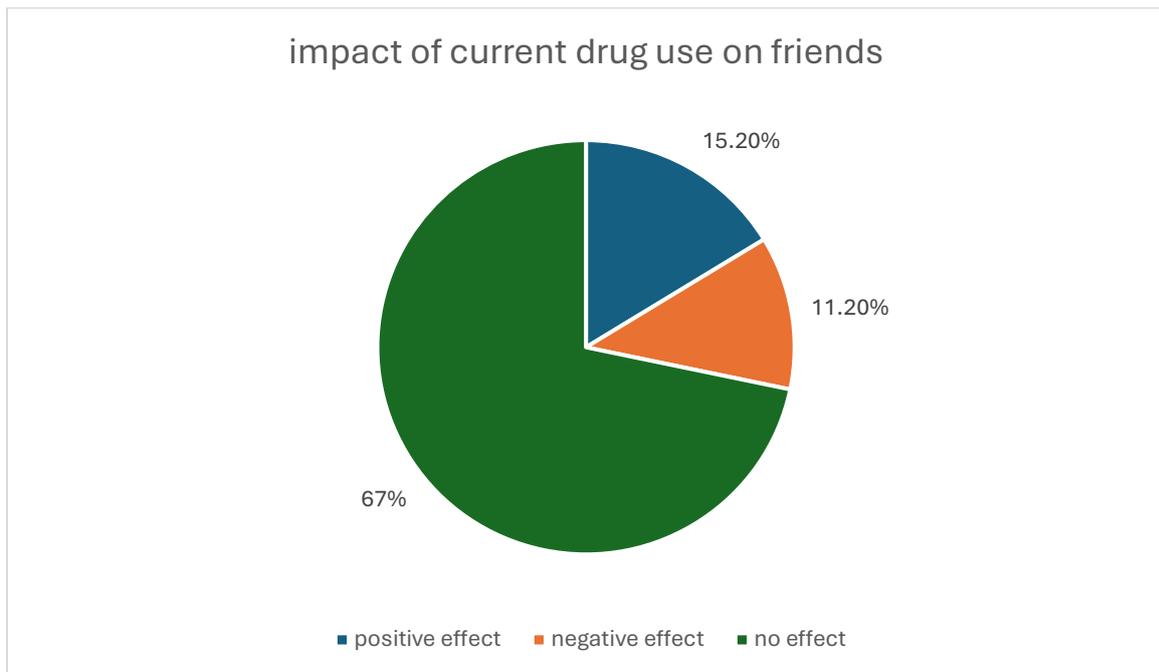
How many days (approximately) did participants use drugs in the last month (n = 197)?



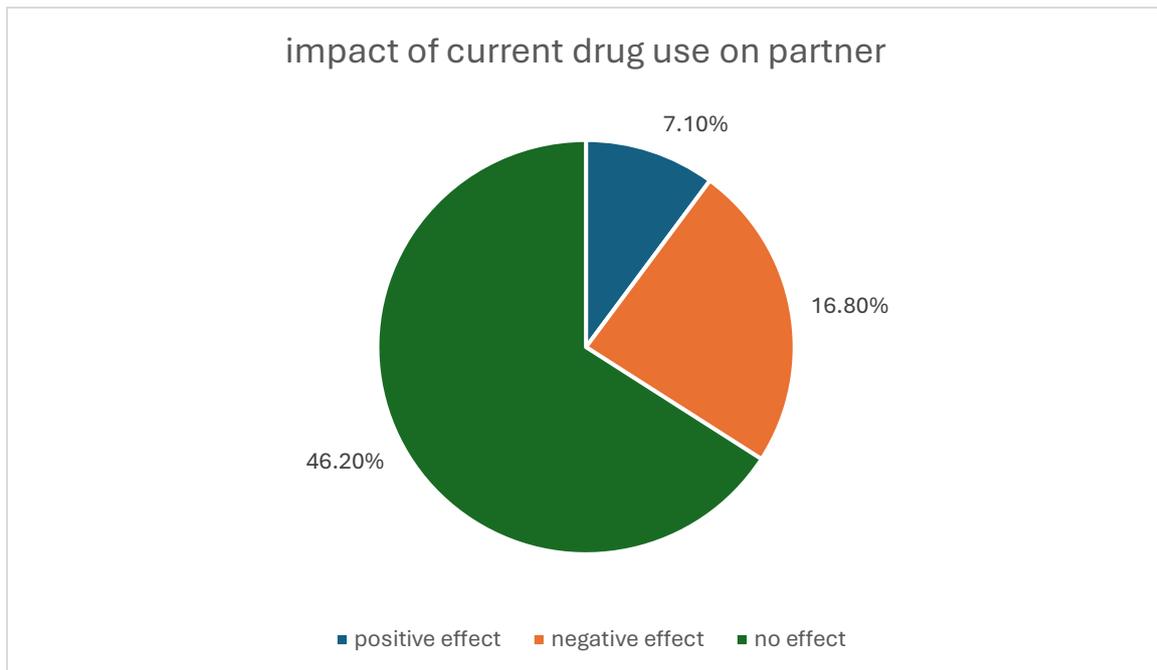
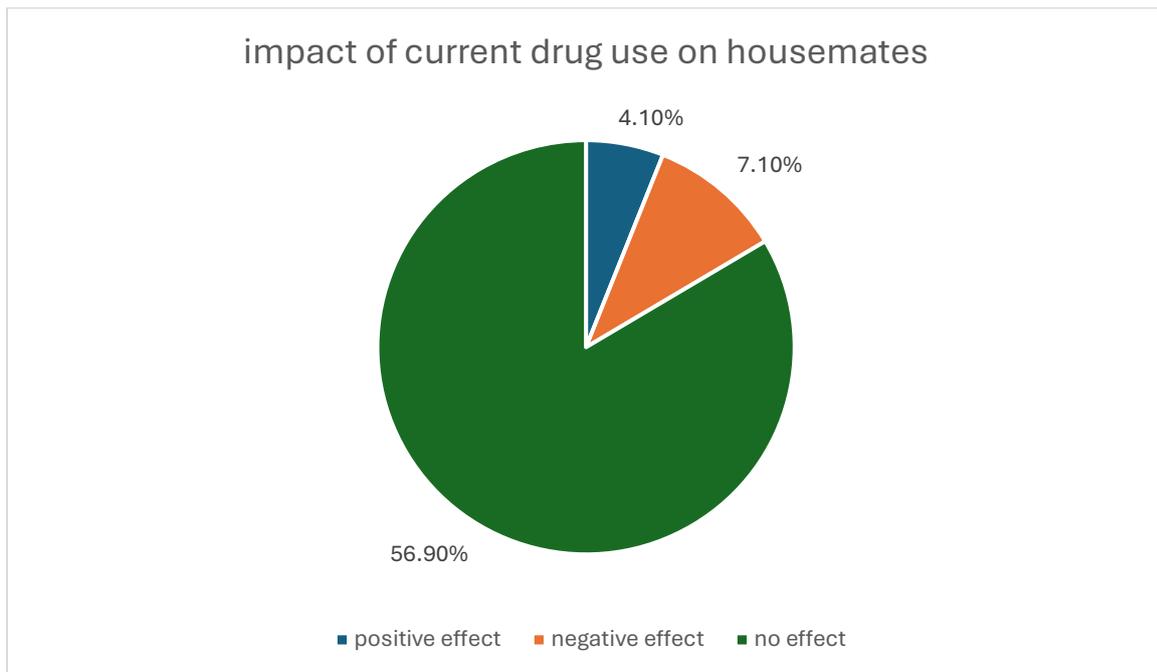
have participants' drug use changed within the last 12 months (n = 197)?



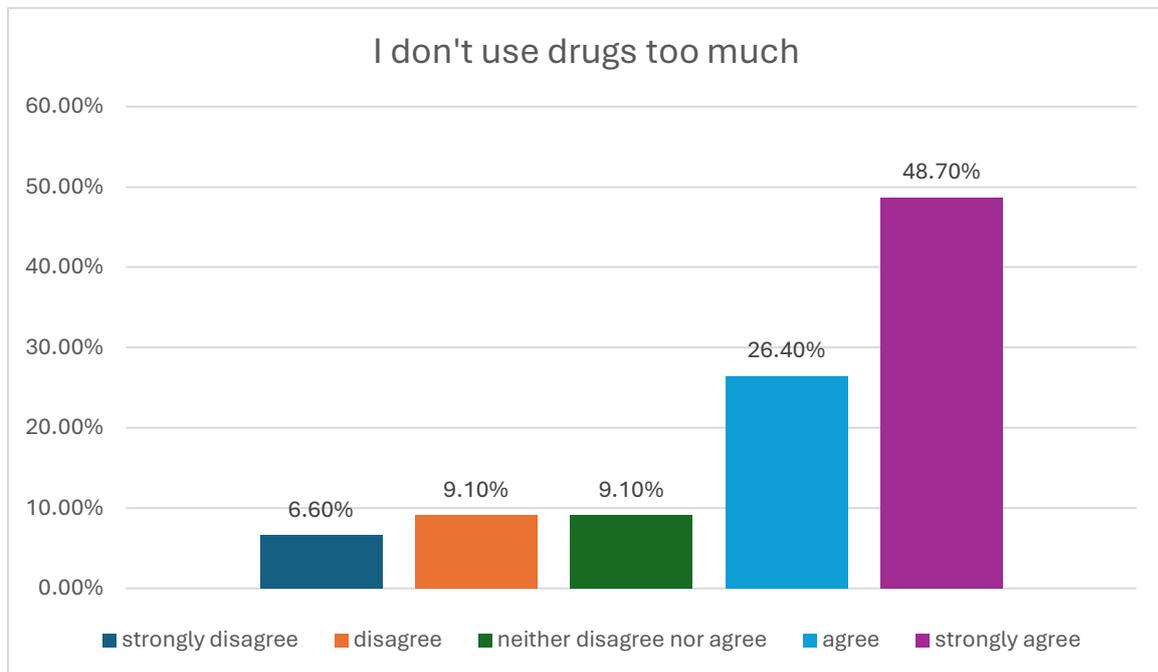
How do participants feel their drug use affects others (n = 197)?



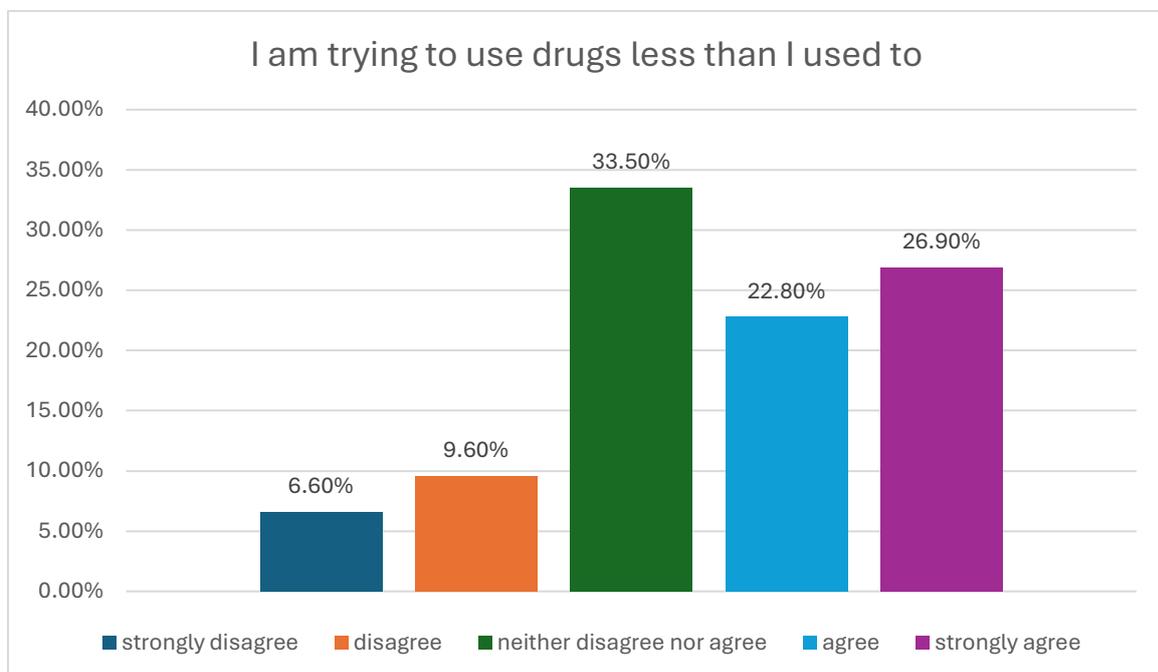
How do participants feel their drug use affects others (n = 197)?



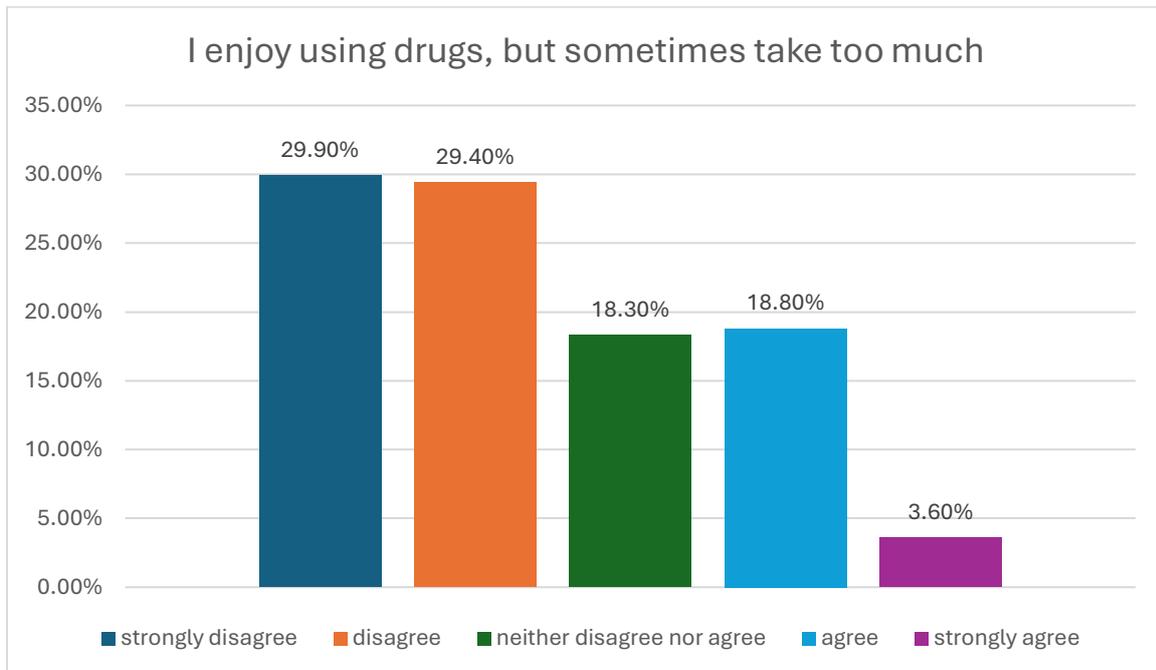
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that they don't use drugs too much (n = 197)?



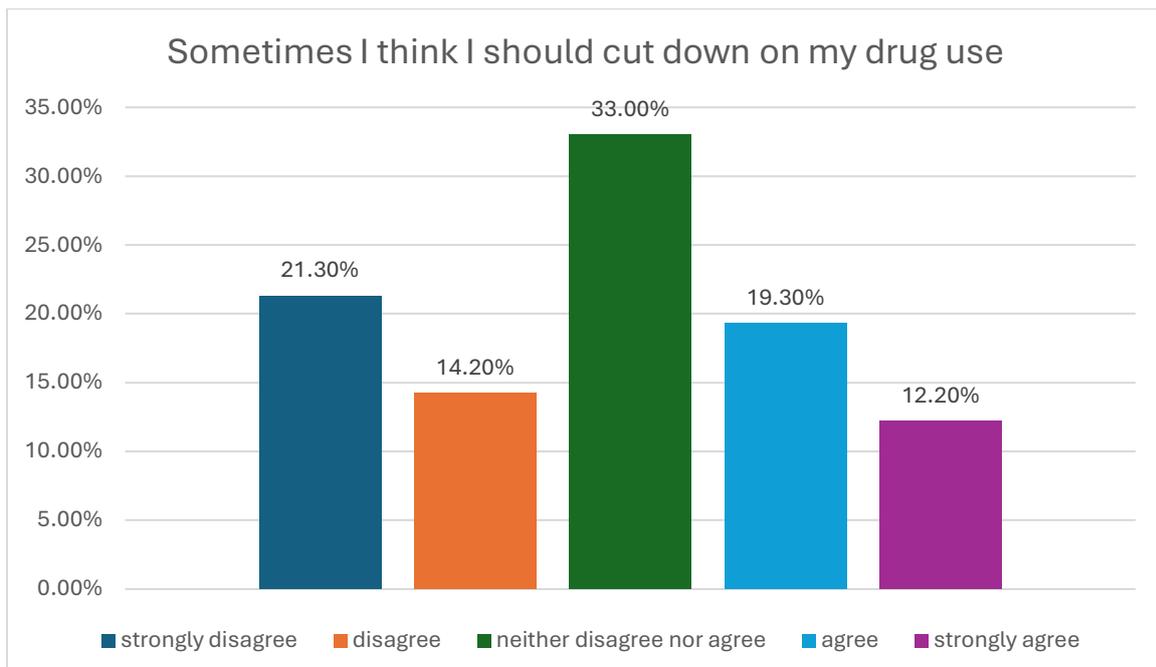
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that they are trying to use drugs less than they used to (n = 197)?



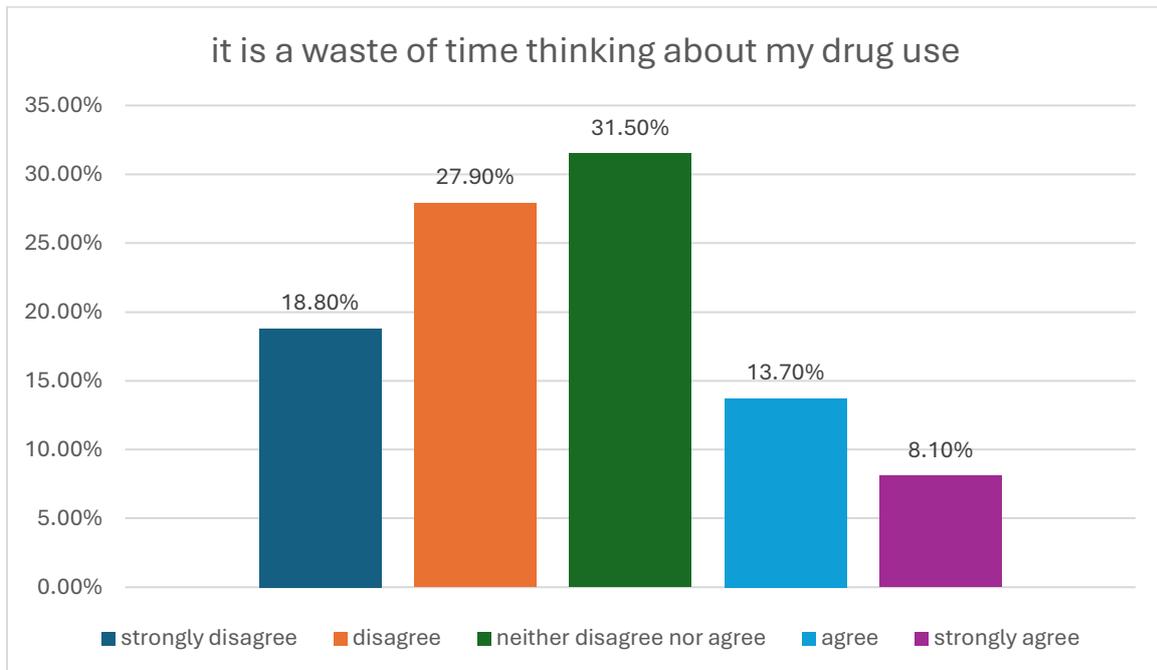
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that they enjoy using drugs, but sometimes take too much (n = 197)?



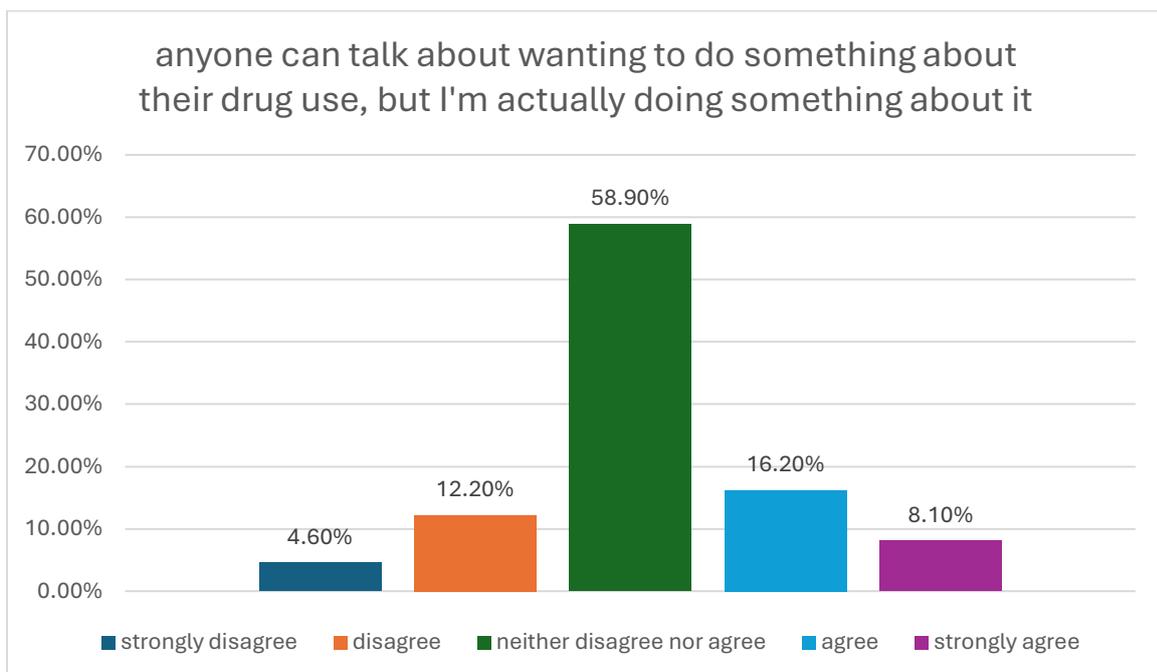
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that sometimes they think they should cut down on their drug use (n = 197)?



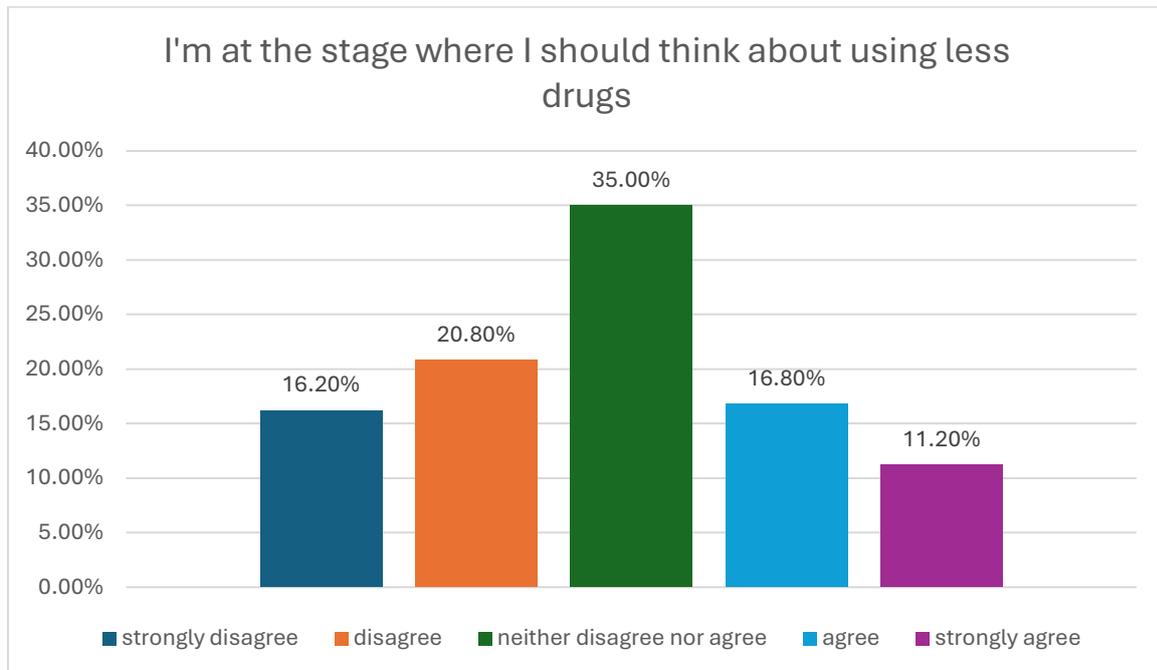
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that it is a waste of time thinking about their drug use (n = 197)?



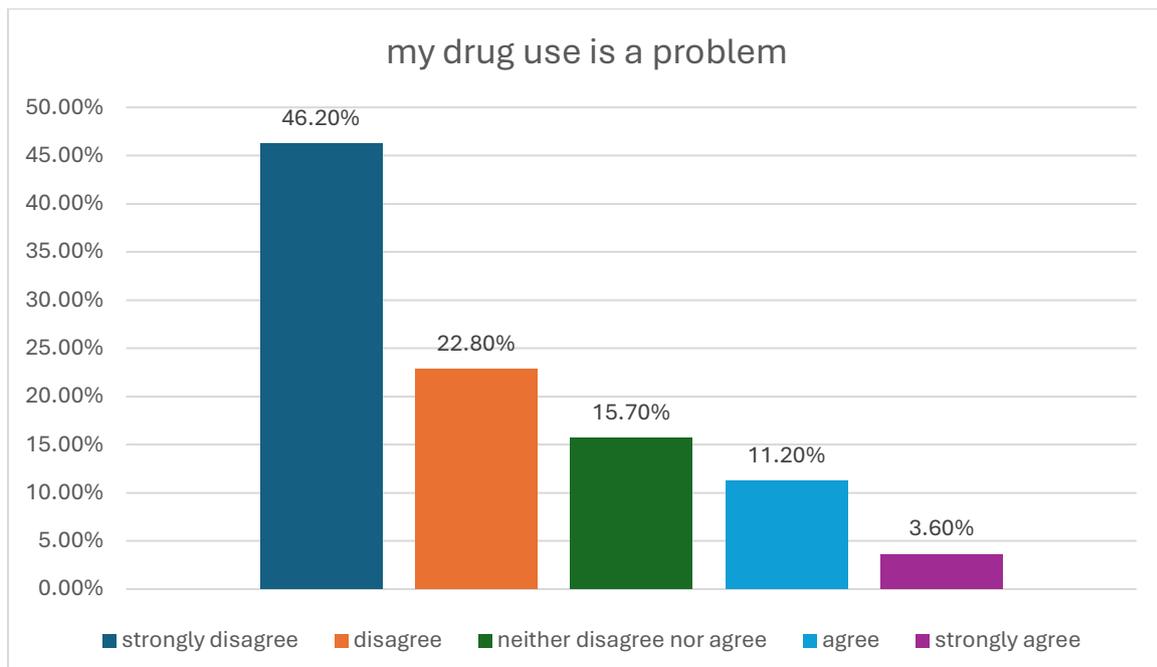
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that anyone can talk about wanting to do something about their drug use, but they are actually doing something about it (n = 197)?



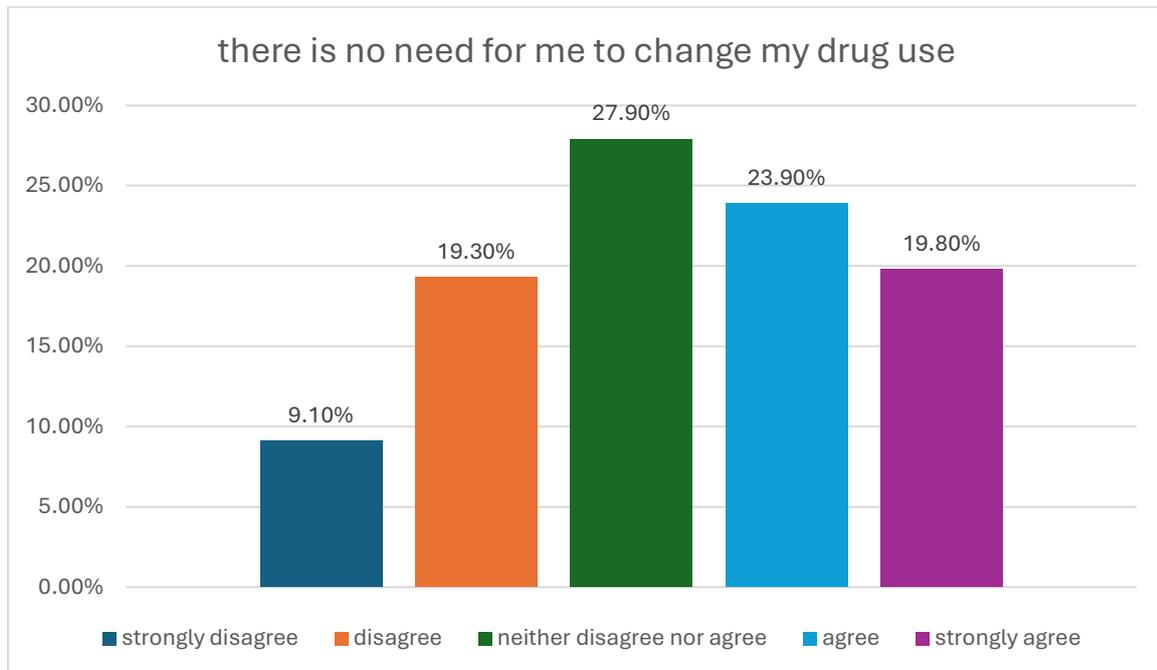
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that they are at the stage where they should think about using less drugs (n = 197)?



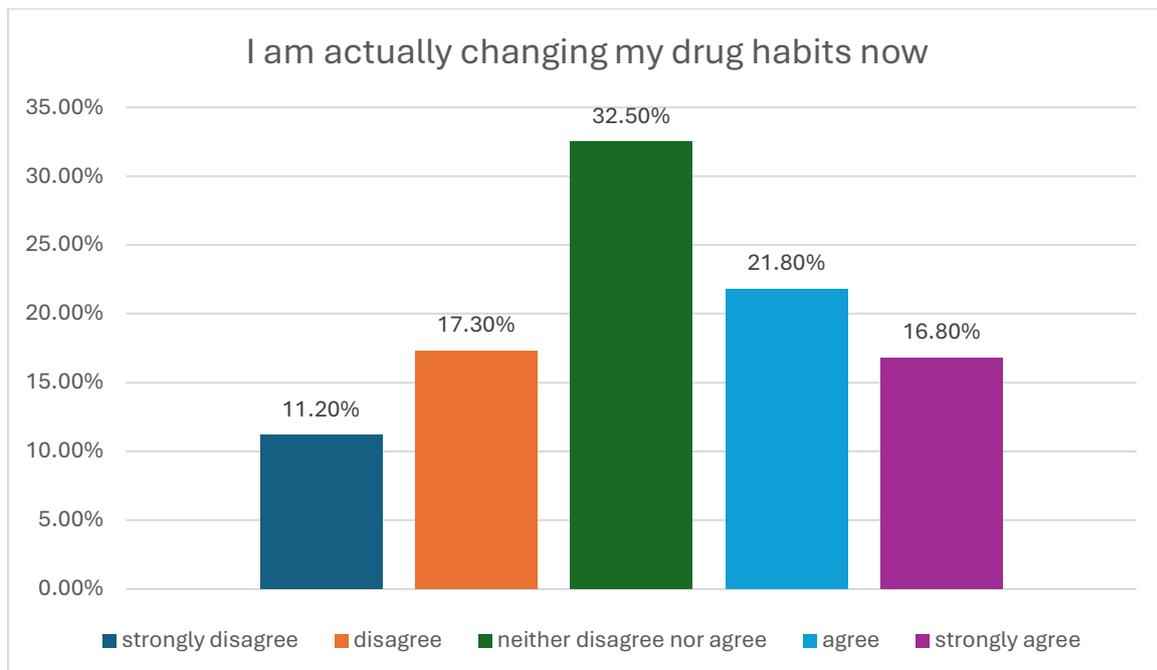
To what extent do participants agree or disagree that their drug use is a problem (n = 197)?



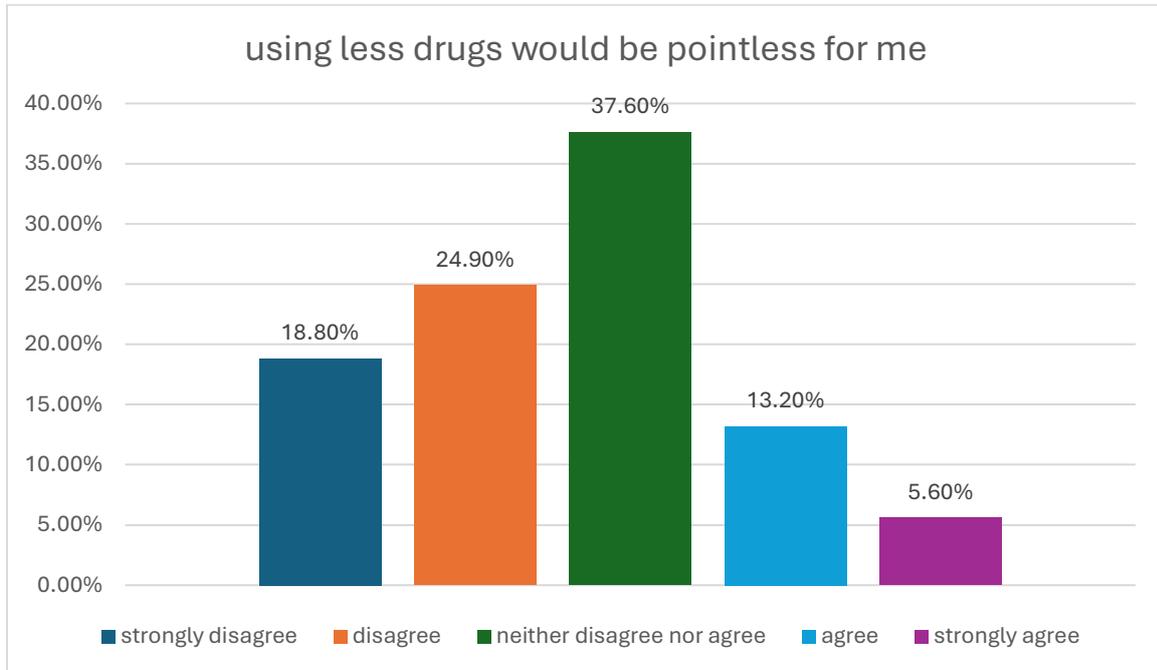
To what extent do participants agree or disagree there is no need for them to change their drug use (n = 197)?



To what extent do participants agree or disagree that they are actually changing their drug habits now (n = 197)?

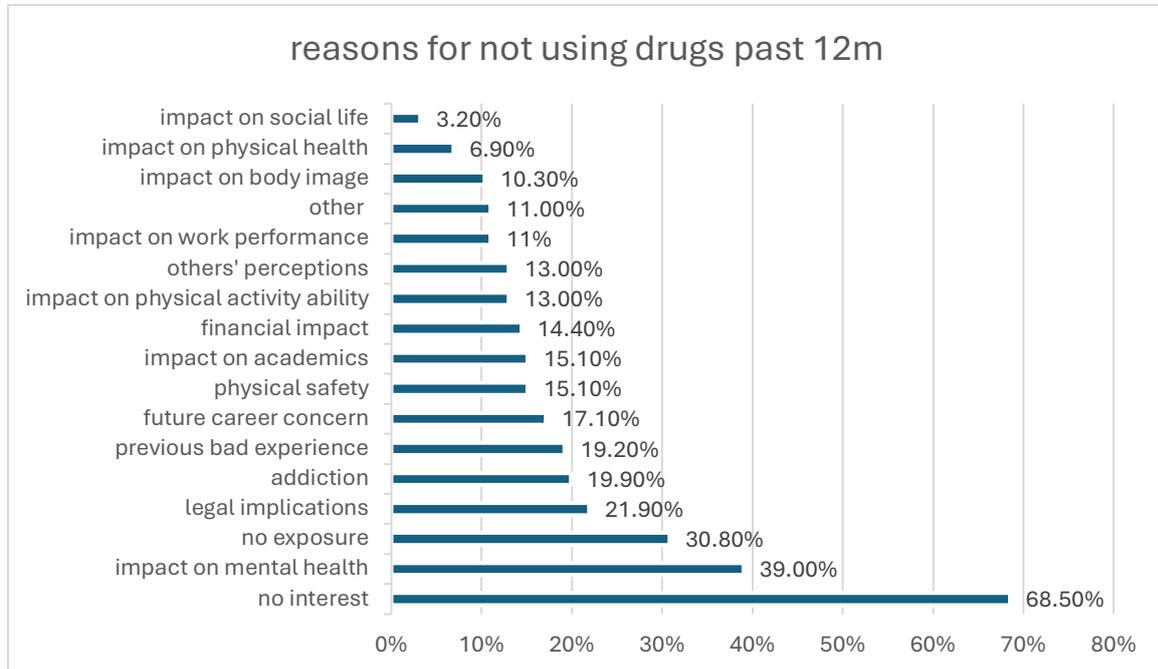


To what extent do participants agree or disagree that using less drugs would be pointless for them (n = 197)?



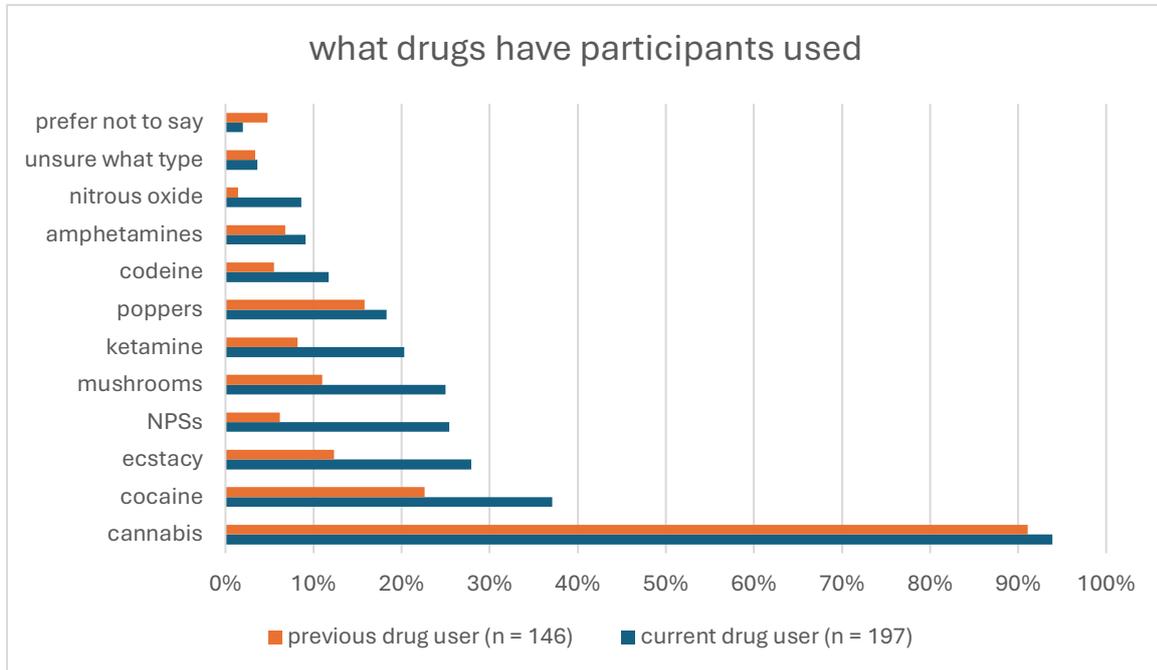
This question was asked only of those who have used substances but not in the past 12 months:

What are the main reasons participants haven't used drugs in the past 12 months (n = 146)?

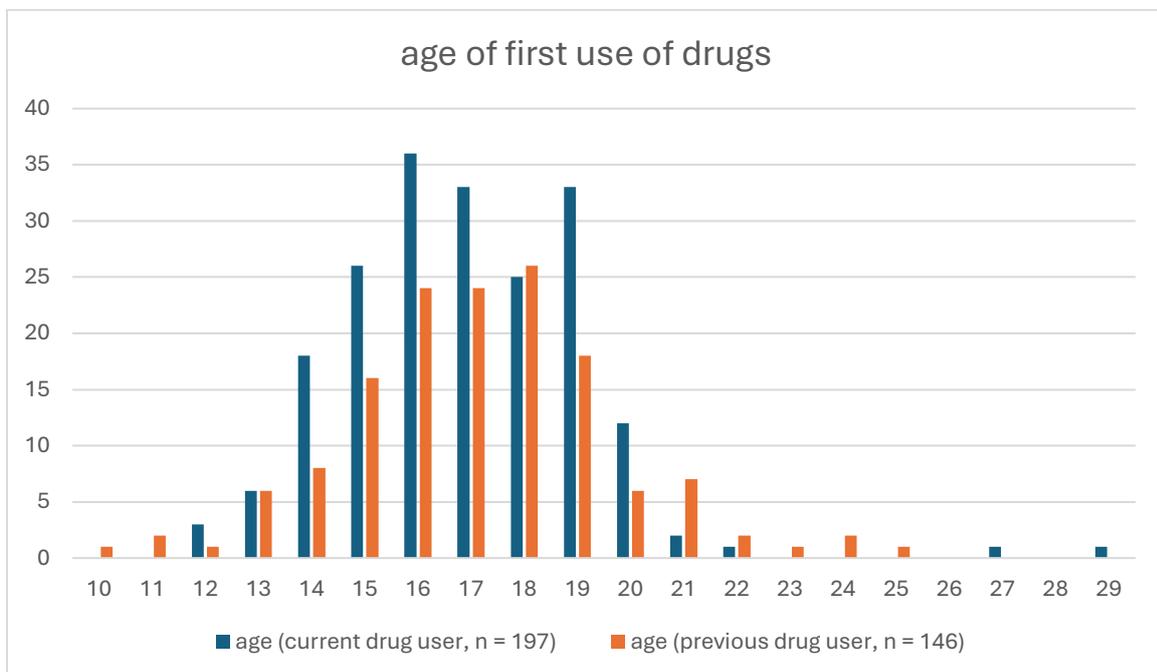


These questions were asked of participants who had indicated they used substances at any timepoint. The data is divided into those who have used substances within the past 12 months (current), and those who used substances, but over 12 months ago (previous).

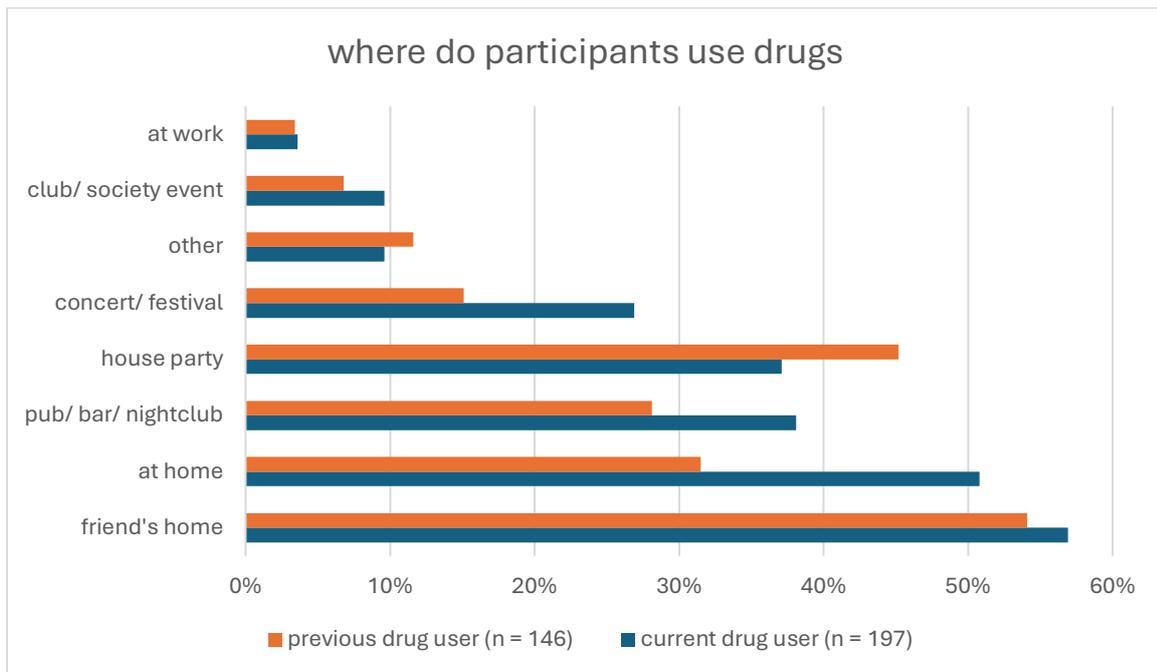
What drugs have participants used?



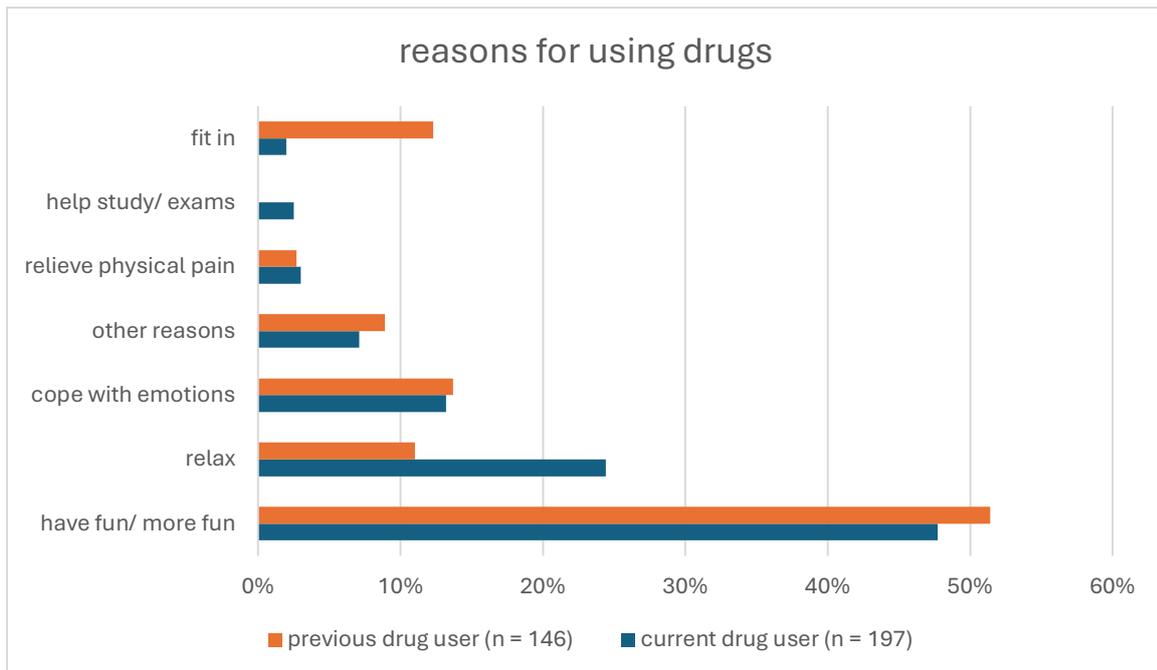
How old were participants when they first used these drugs?



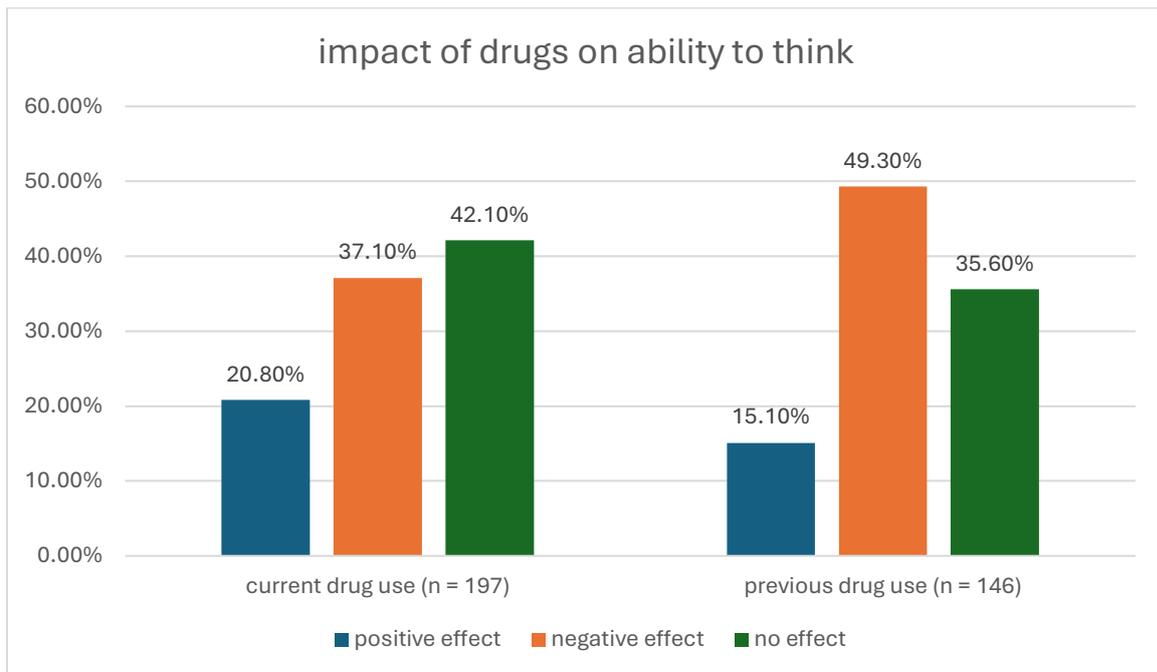
Where do participants usually use these drugs?



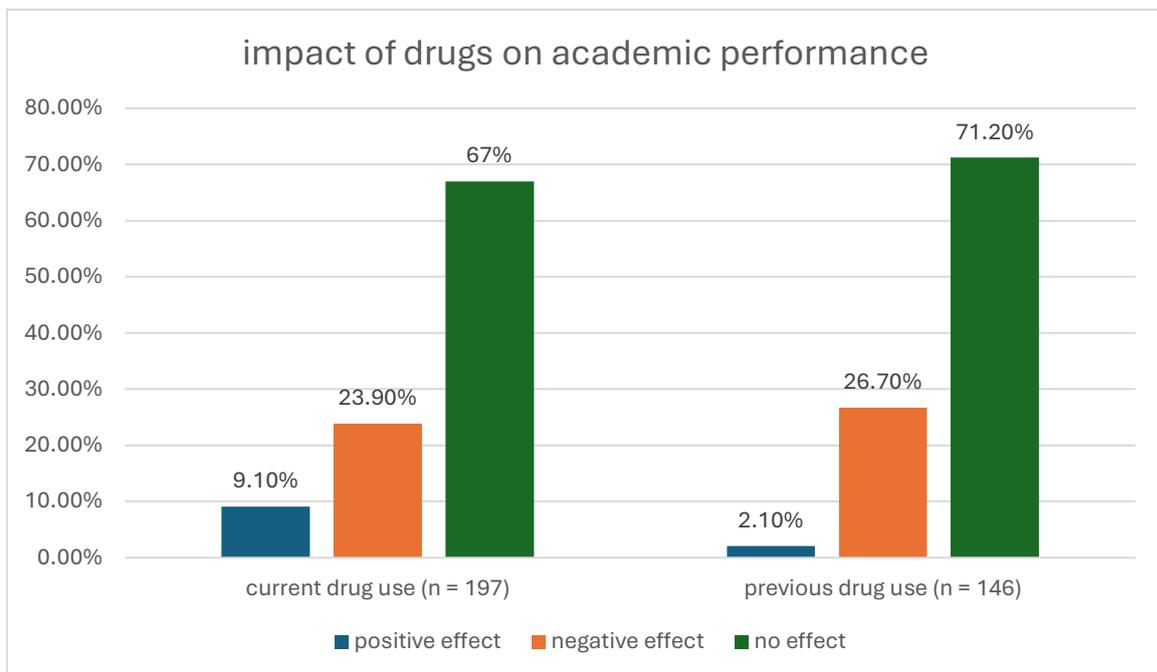
Which of the following describes the main reason participants take these drugs?



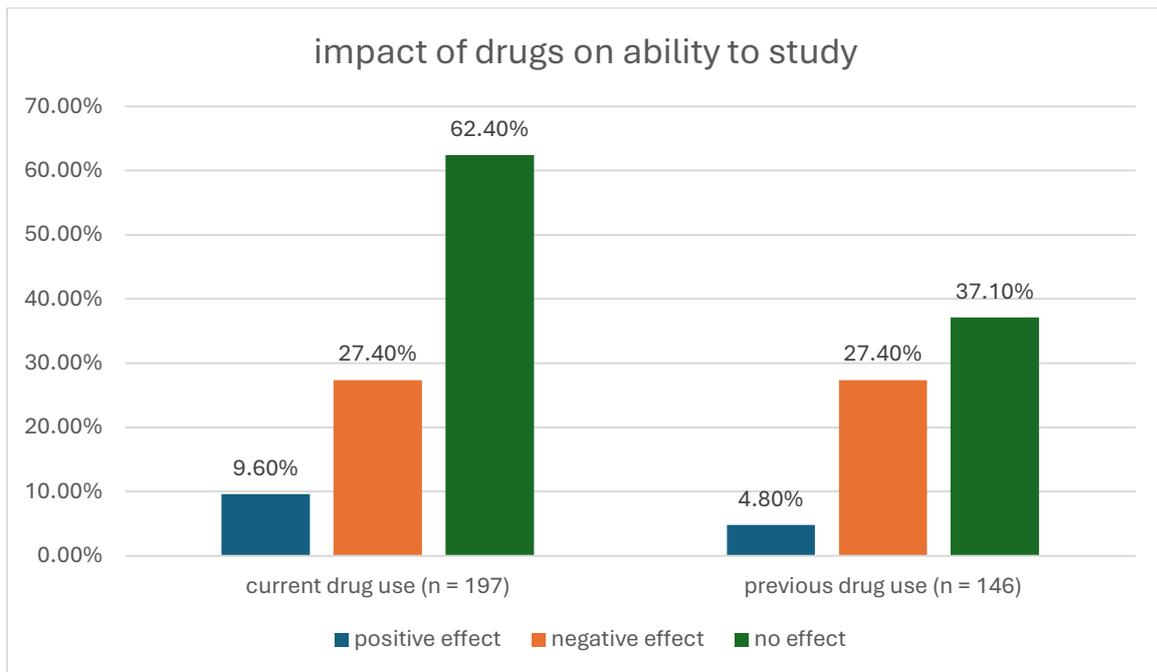
What effect does participants' drug use have on their ability to think?



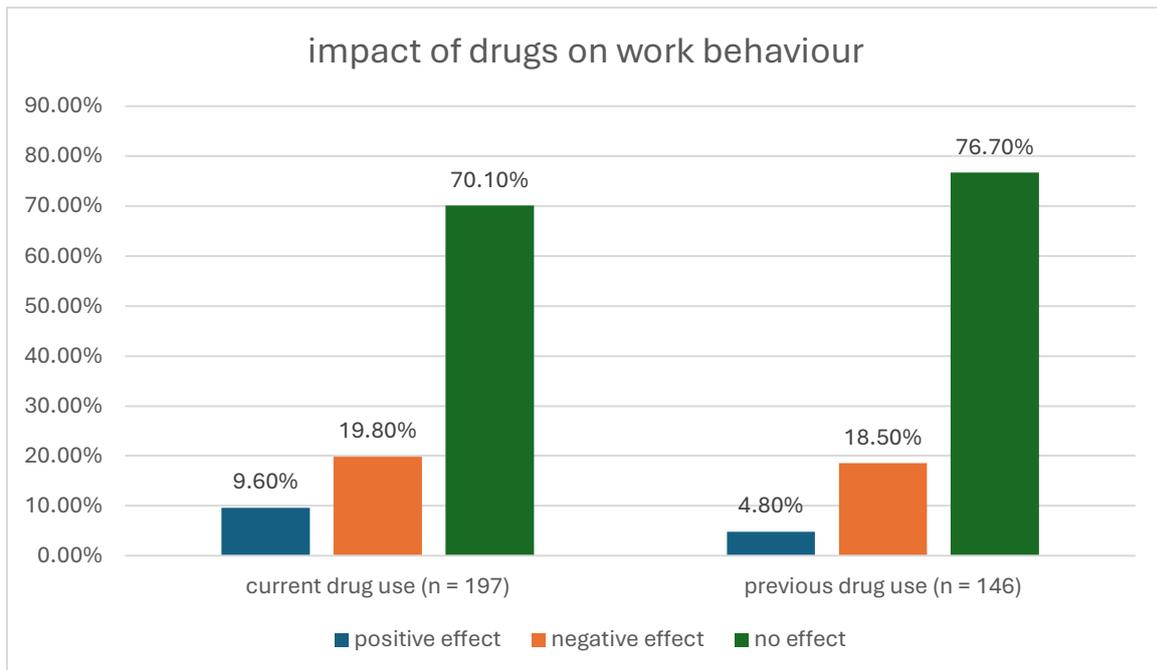
What effect does participants' drug use have on their academic performance?



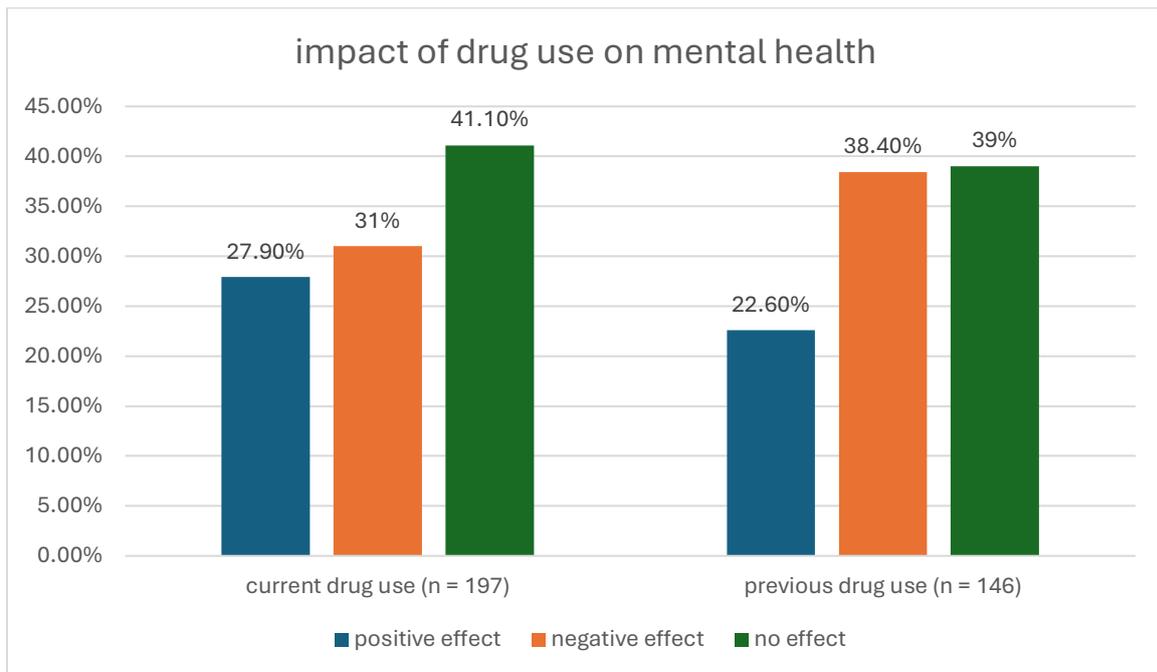
What effect does participants' drug use have on their ability to study?



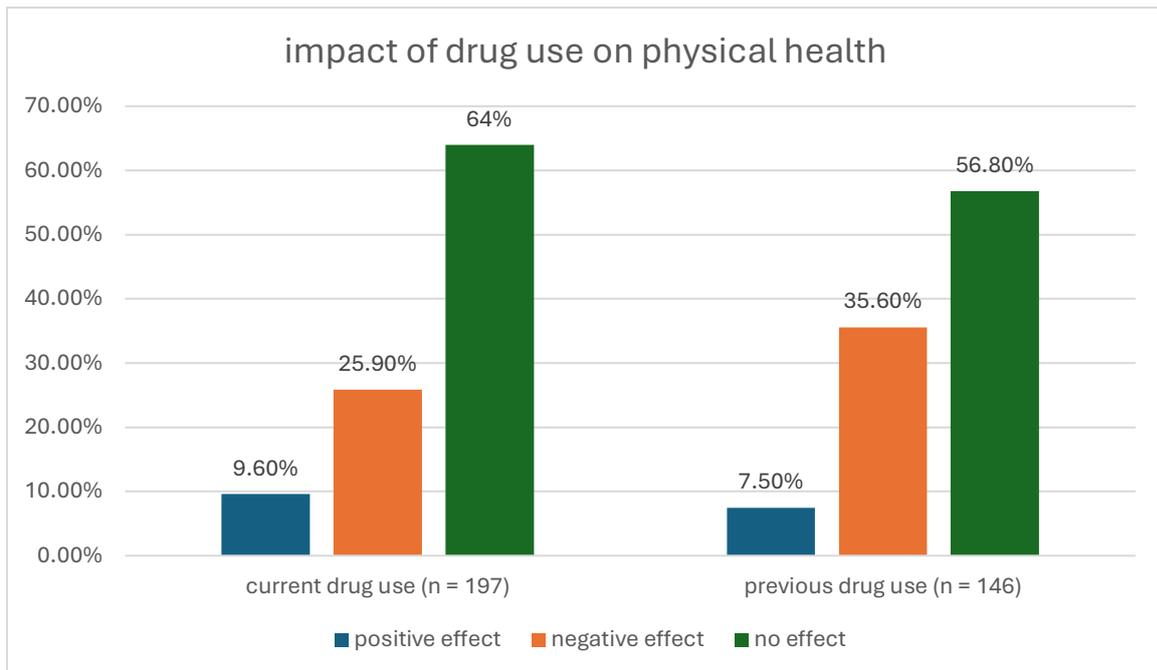
What effect does participants' drug use have on their work behaviour?



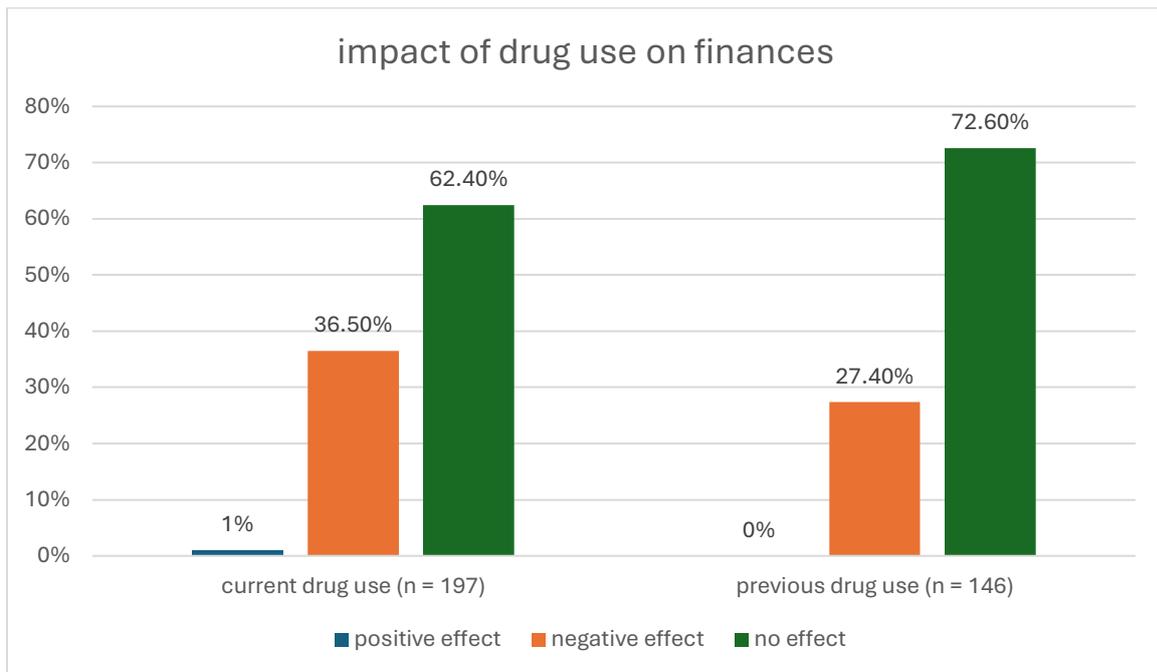
What effect does participants' drug use have on their mental health?



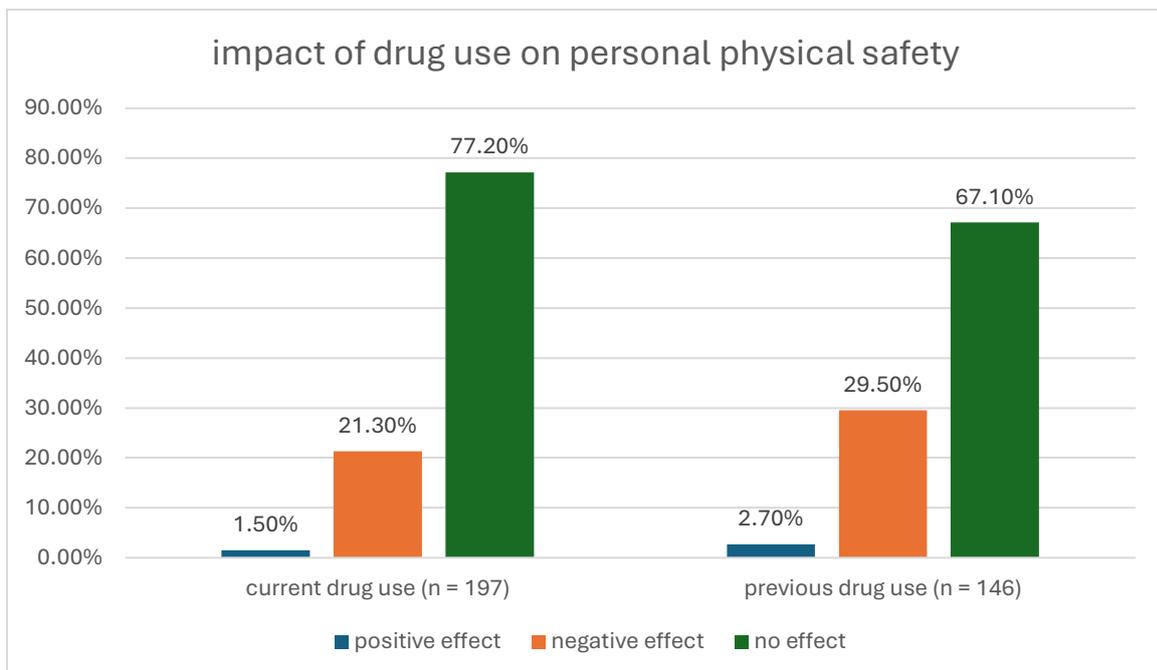
What effect does participants' drug use have on their physical health?



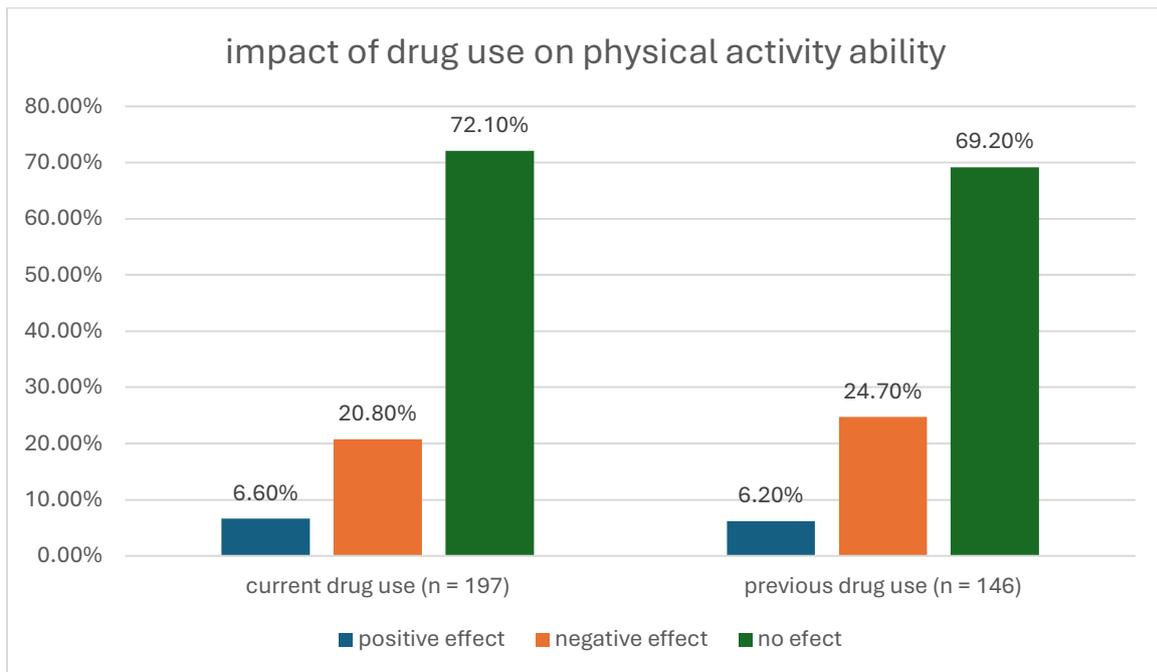
What effect does participants' drug use have on their finances?



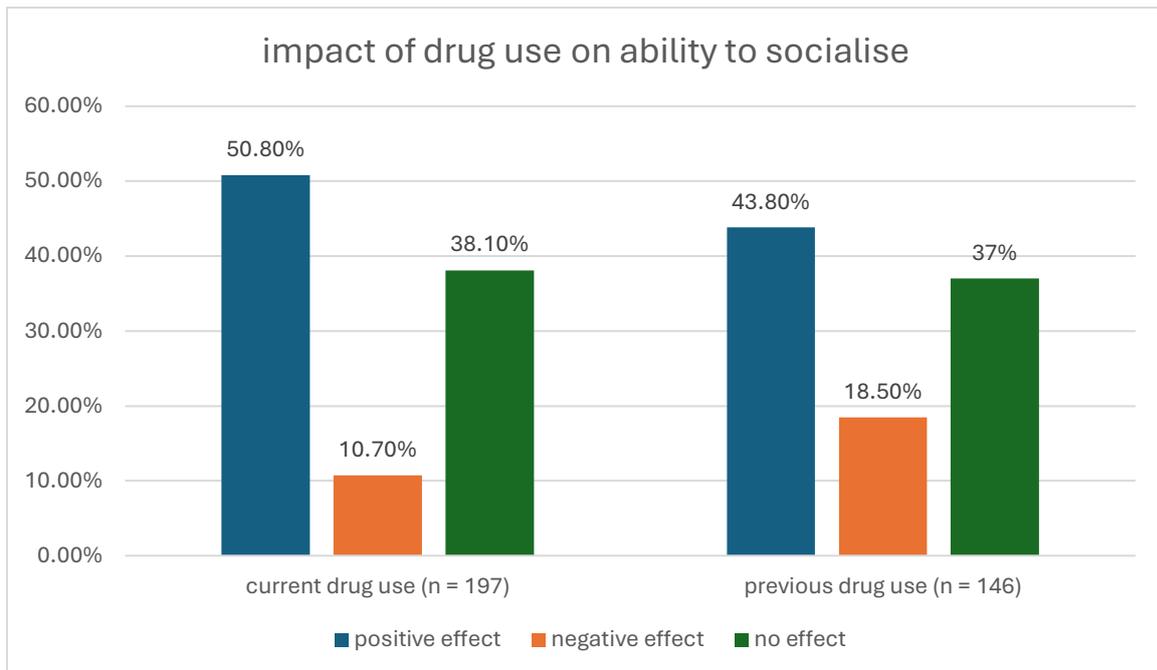
What effect does participants' drug use have on their personal physical safety?



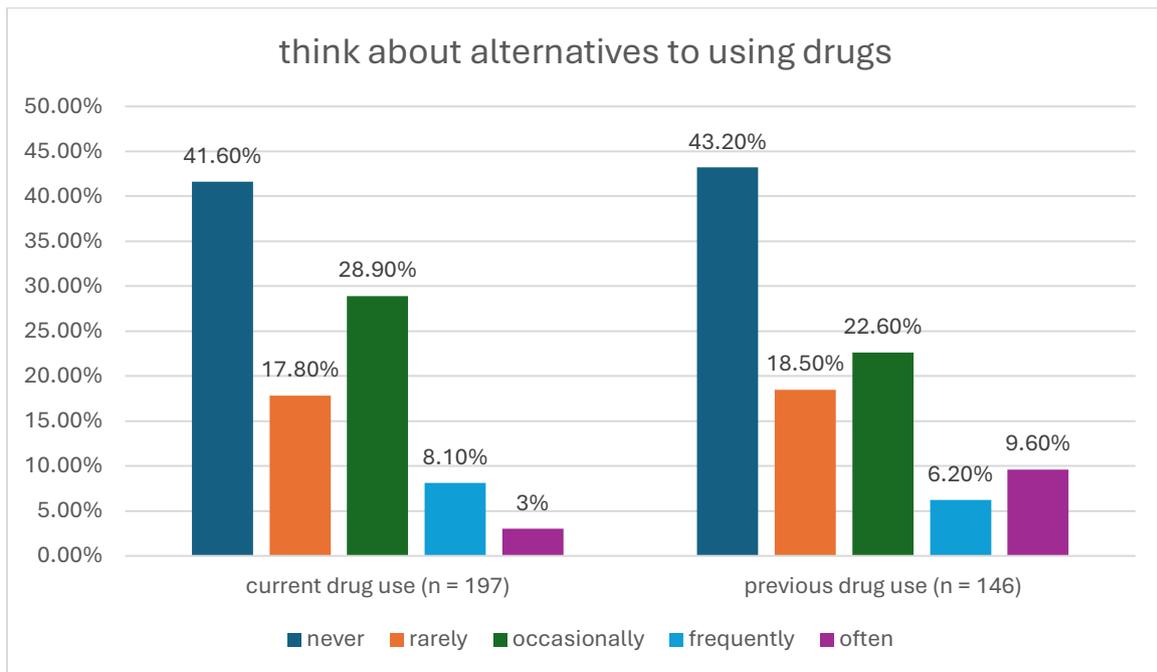
What effect does participants' drug use have on their physical activity ability?



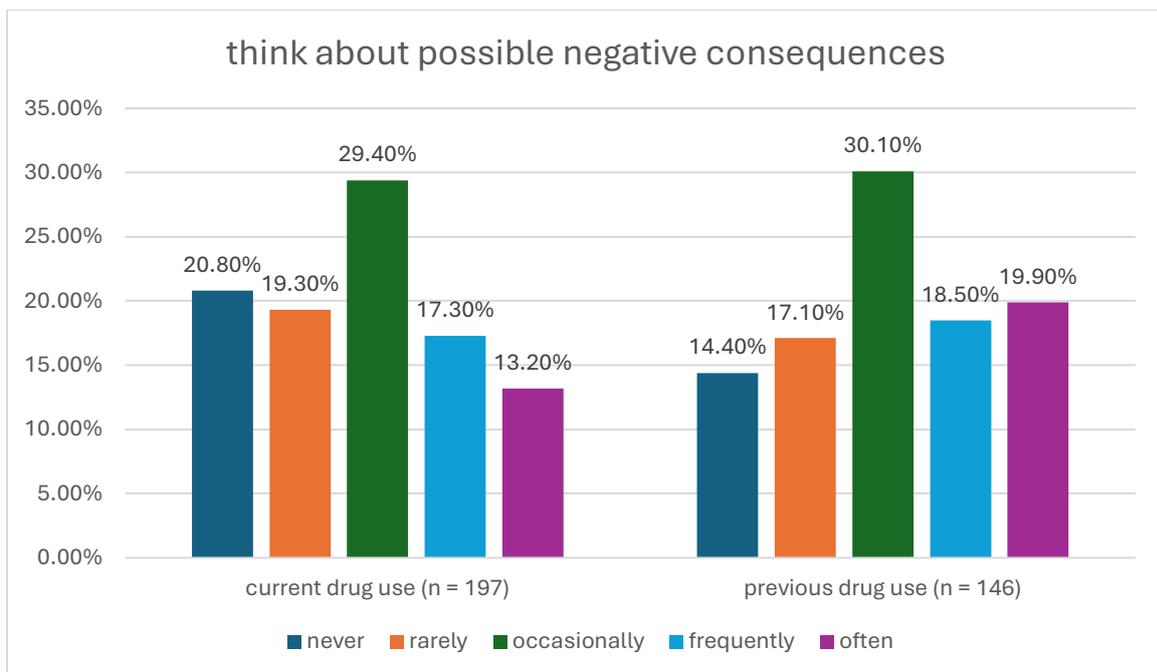
What effect does participants' drug use have on their ability to socialise?



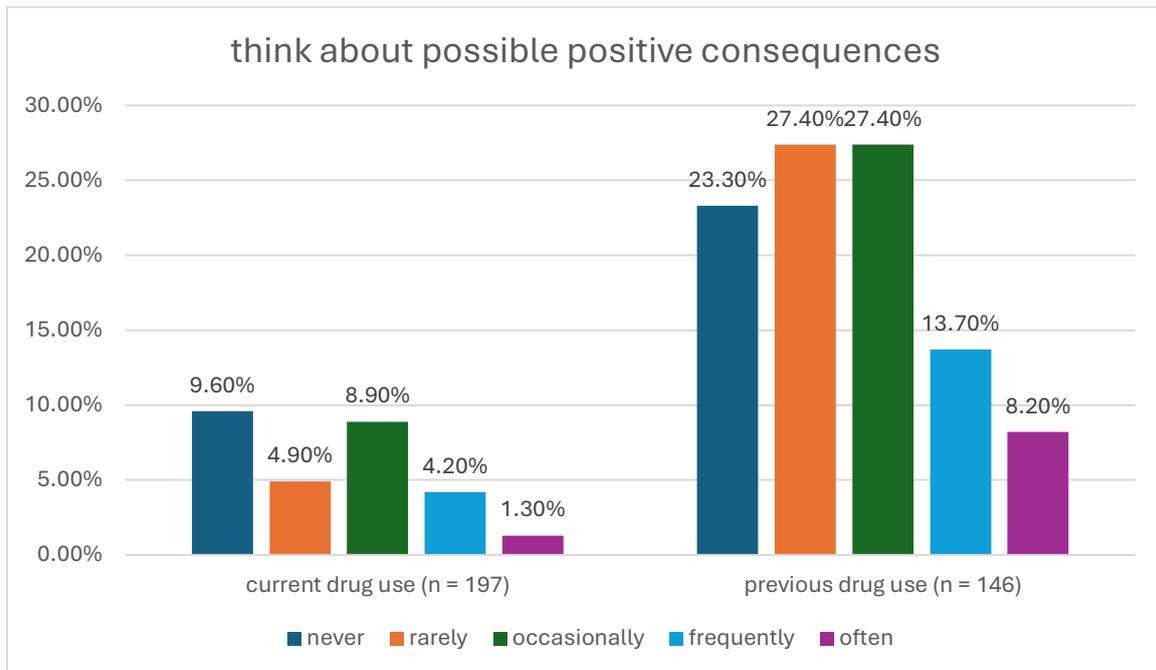
When using drugs, do participants ever think about alternatives to using drugs?



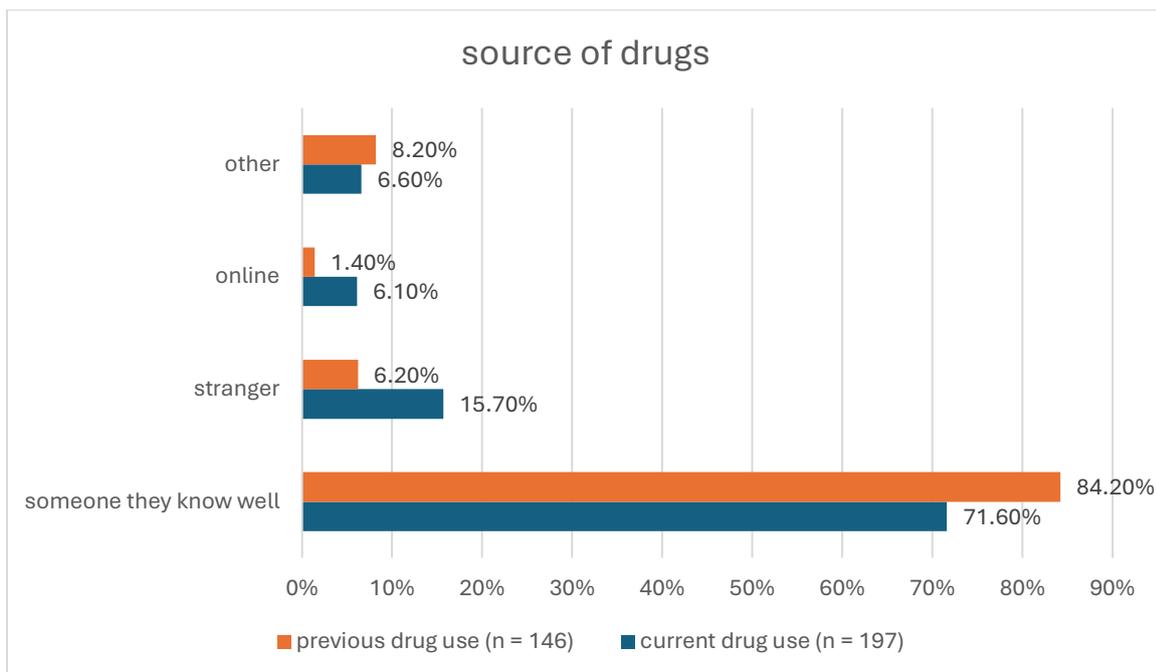
When using drugs, do participants ever think about possible negative consequences of using drugs?



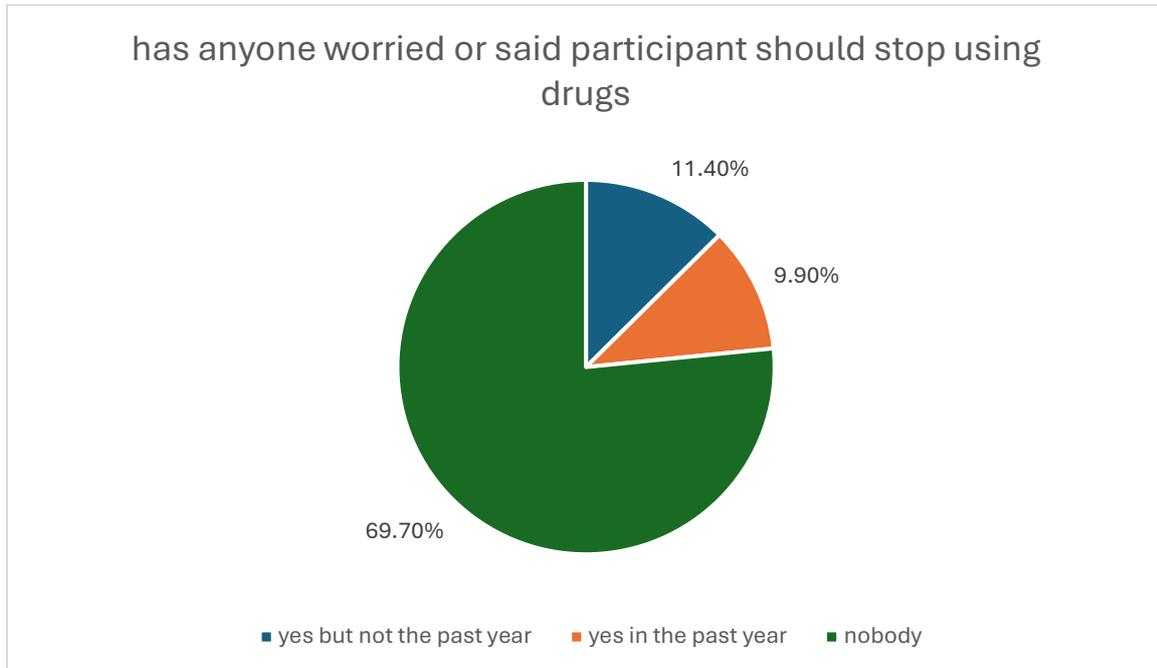
When using drugs, do participants ever think about possible positive consequences to using drugs?



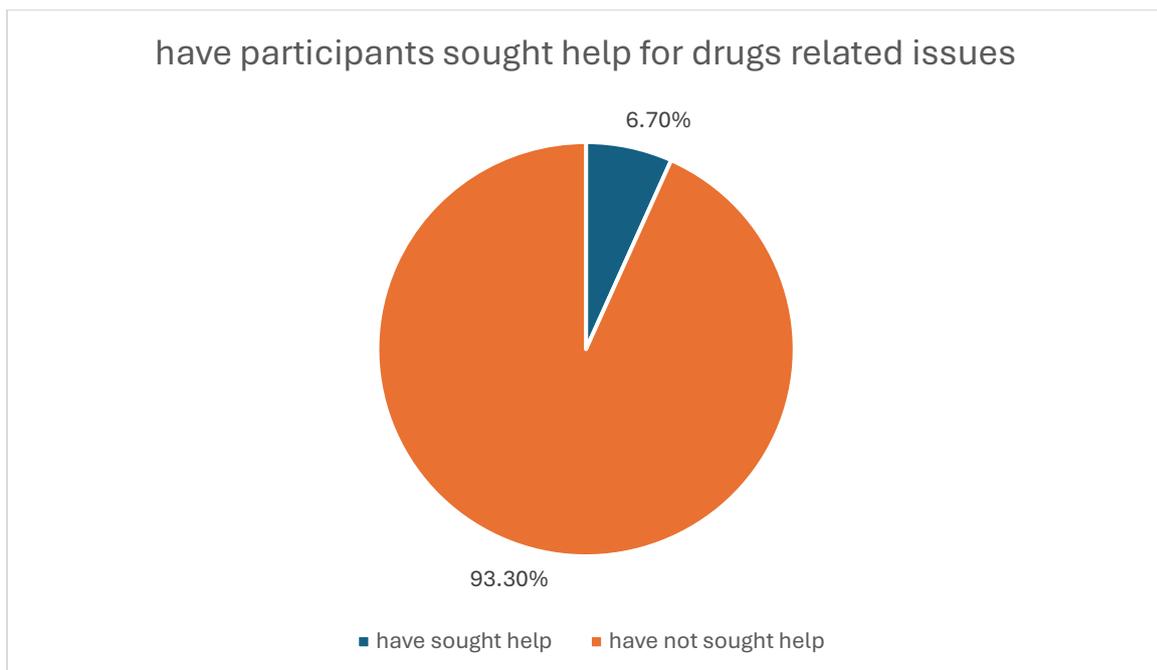
Where do participants normally source their drugs?



Has a relative or friend, a doctor or nurse, or anyone else, been worried about their drug use, or said that they should stop using drugs (n = 343)?

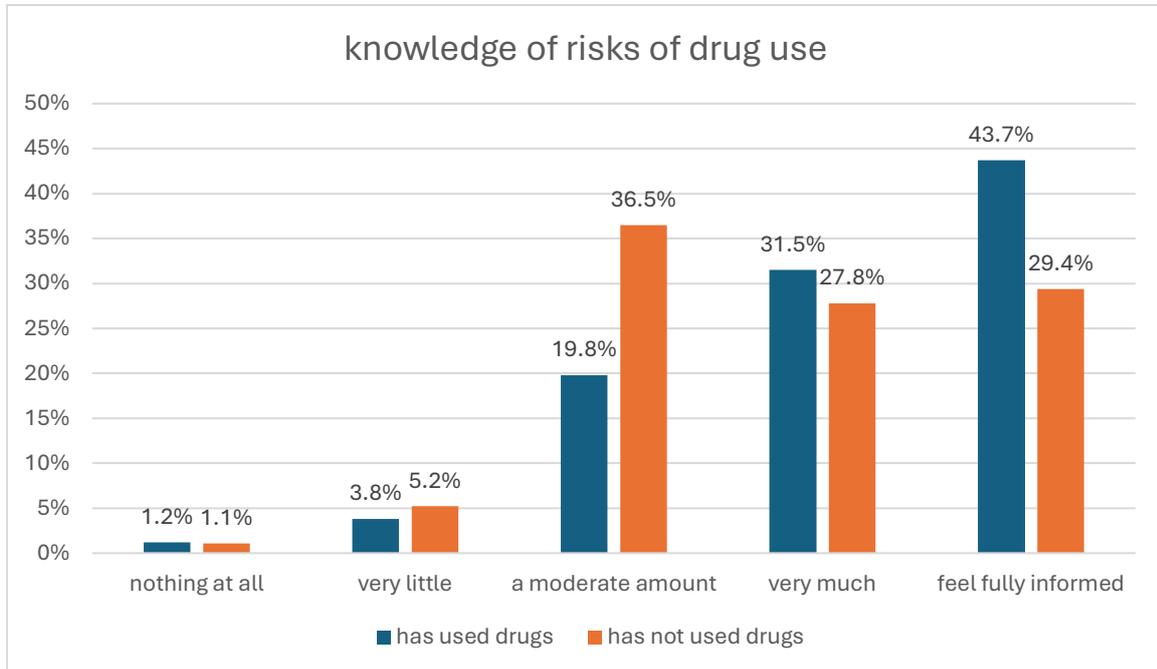


Have participants ever sought help for drugs or issues related to drugs (n = 343)?

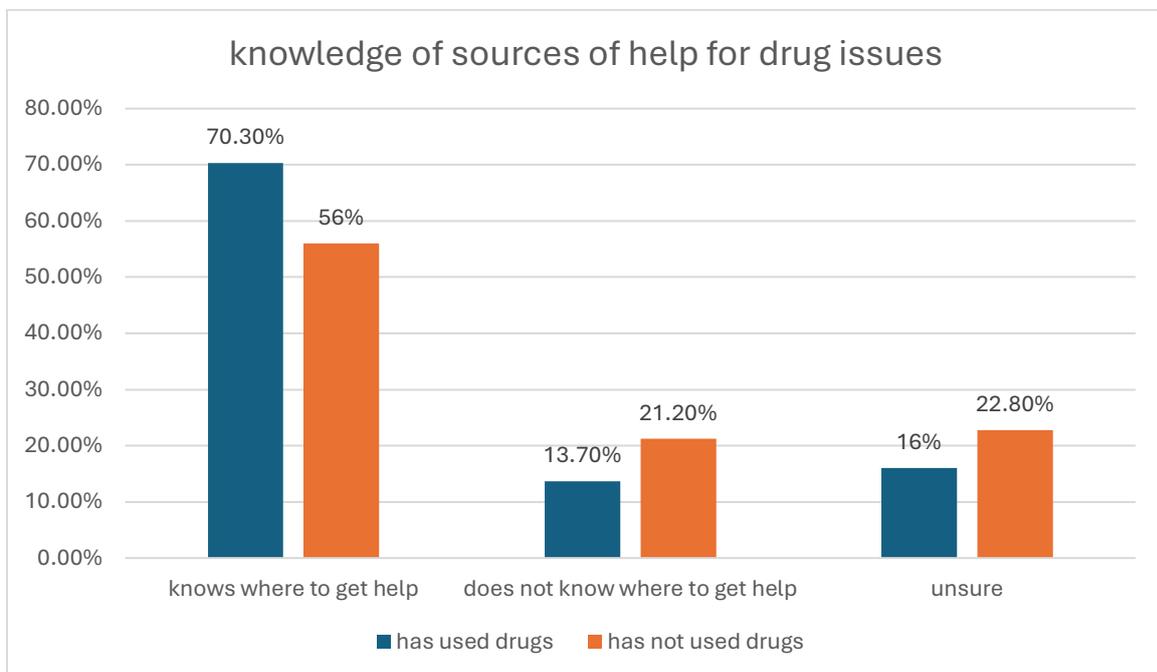


These questions were asked of all survey participants, regardless of whether they had ever used substances or not.

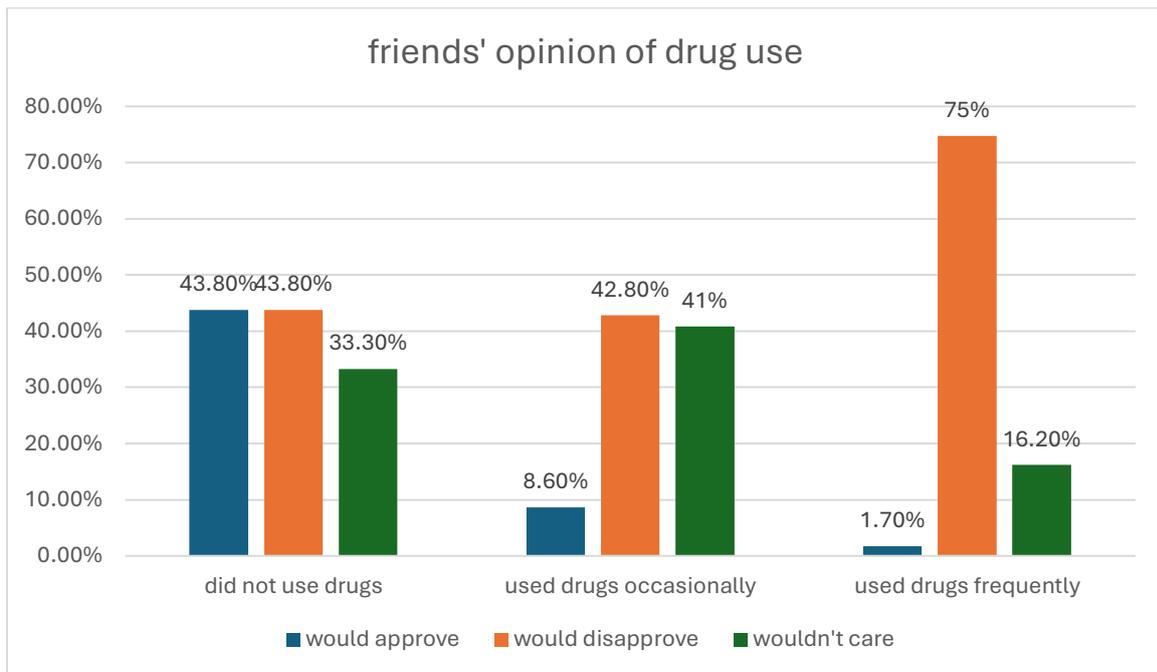
How much do participants know about the risks of doing drugs (n = 904)?



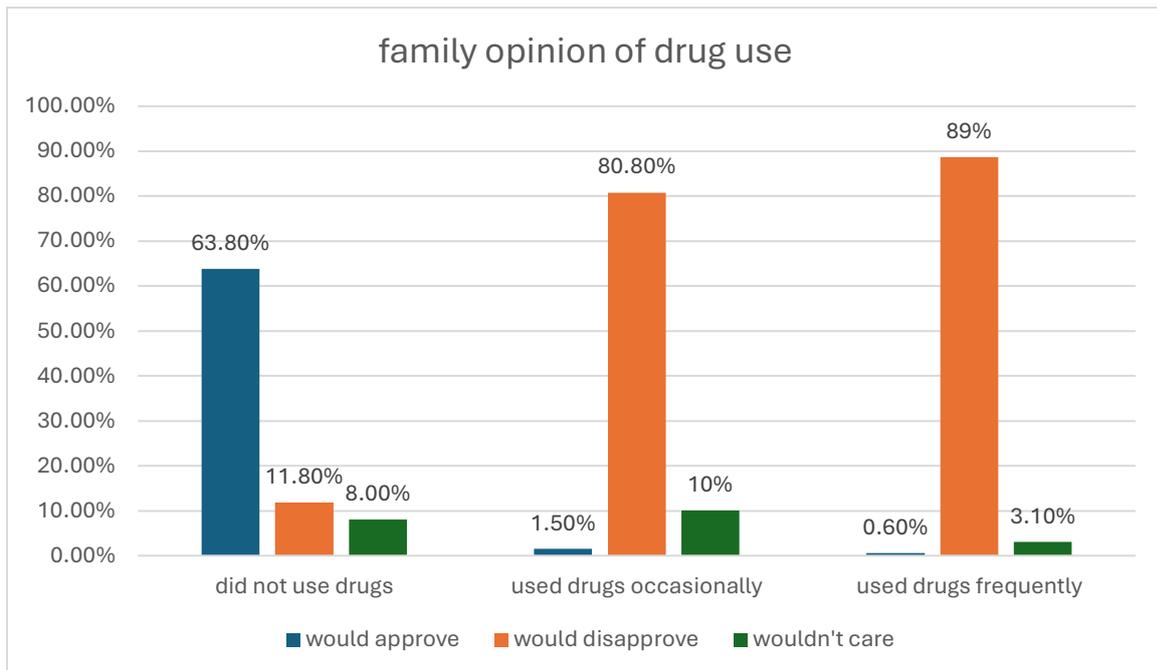
Does participant know where they could get help about drugs if they or someone they knew needed it (n = 904)?



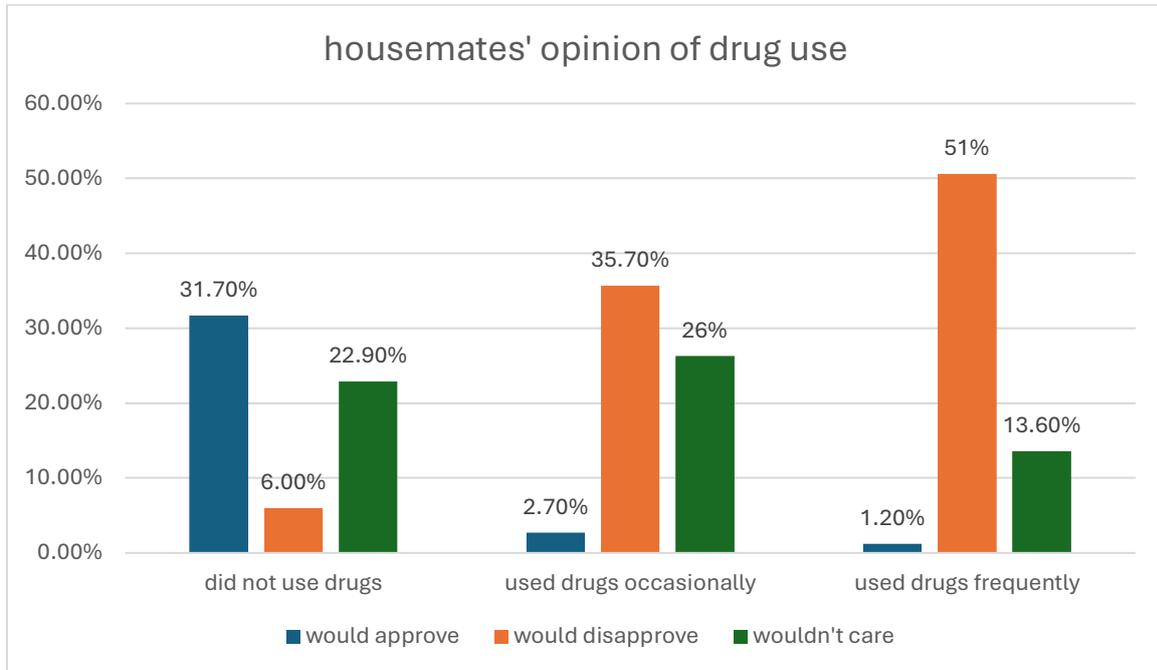
How do participants think their friends would feel about their drug use (n = 904)?



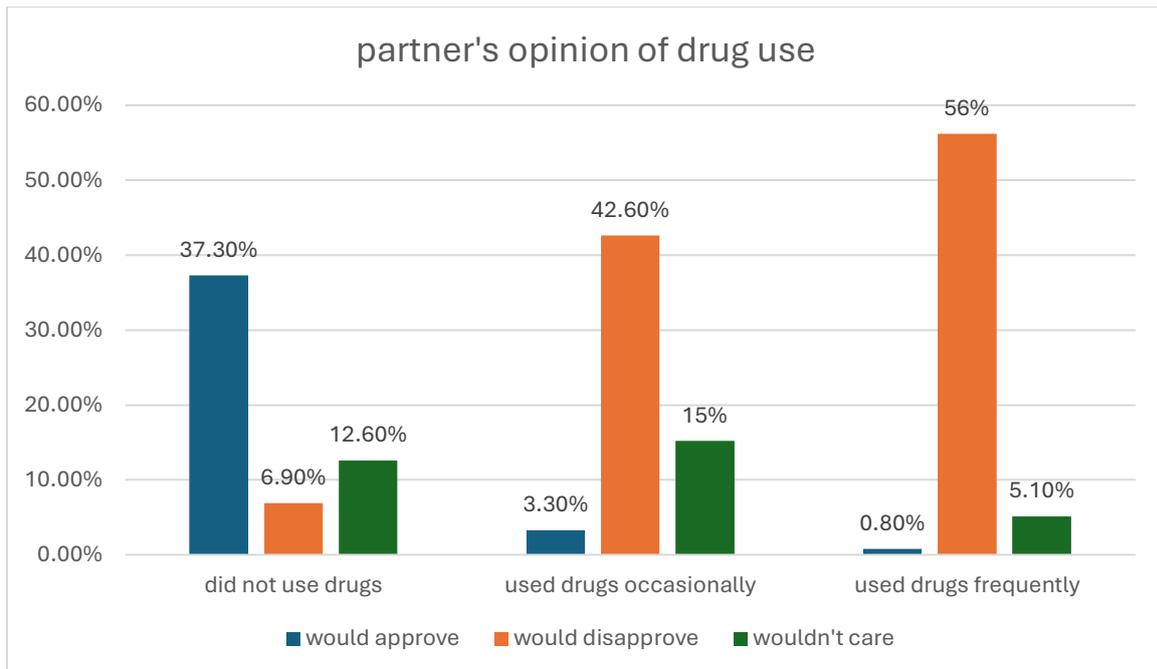
How do participants think their family would feel about their drug use (n = 904)?



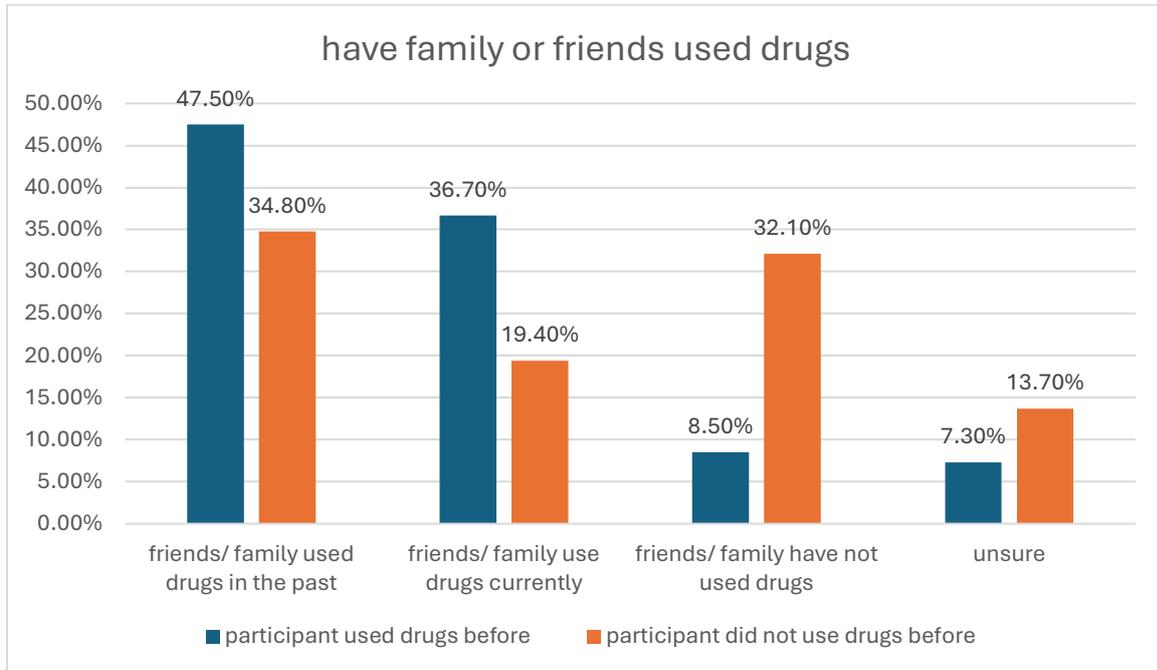
How do participants think their housemates would feel about their drug use (n = 904)?



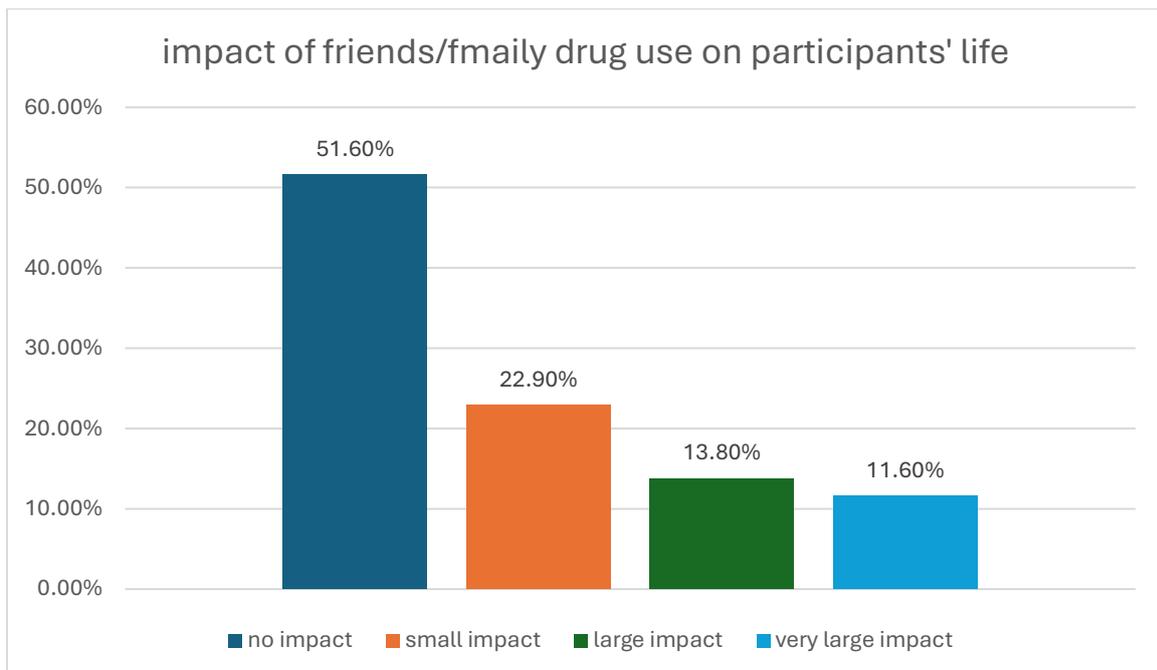
How do participants think their partner would feel about their drug use (n = 904)?



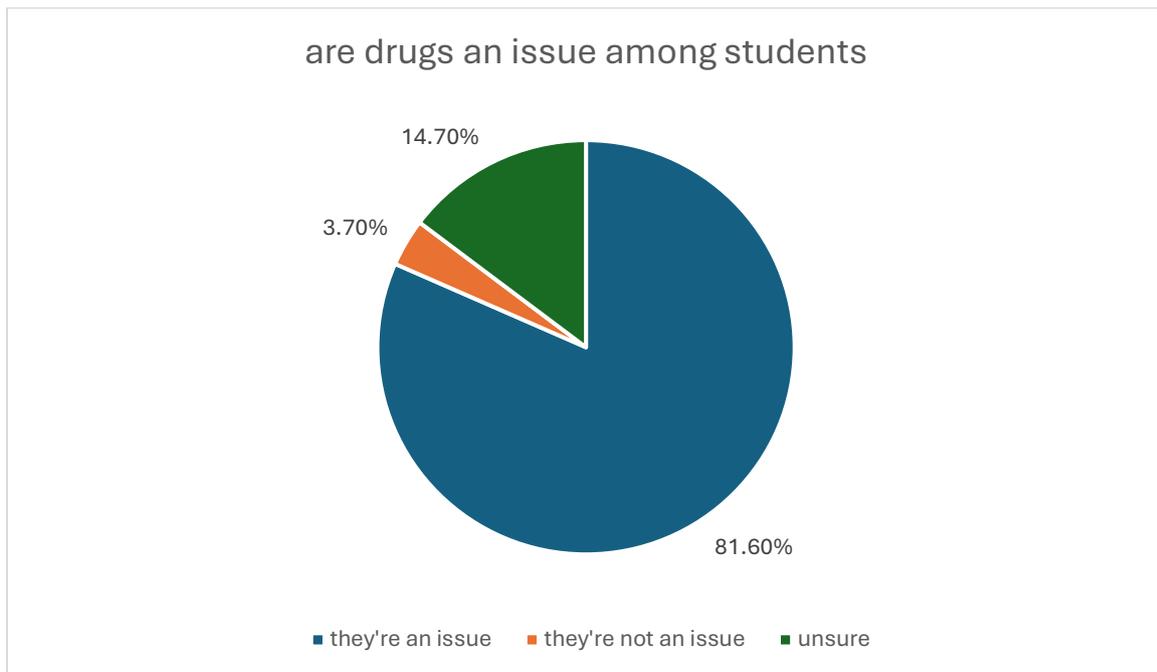
Has any of participants' friends or family used drugs (n = 904)?



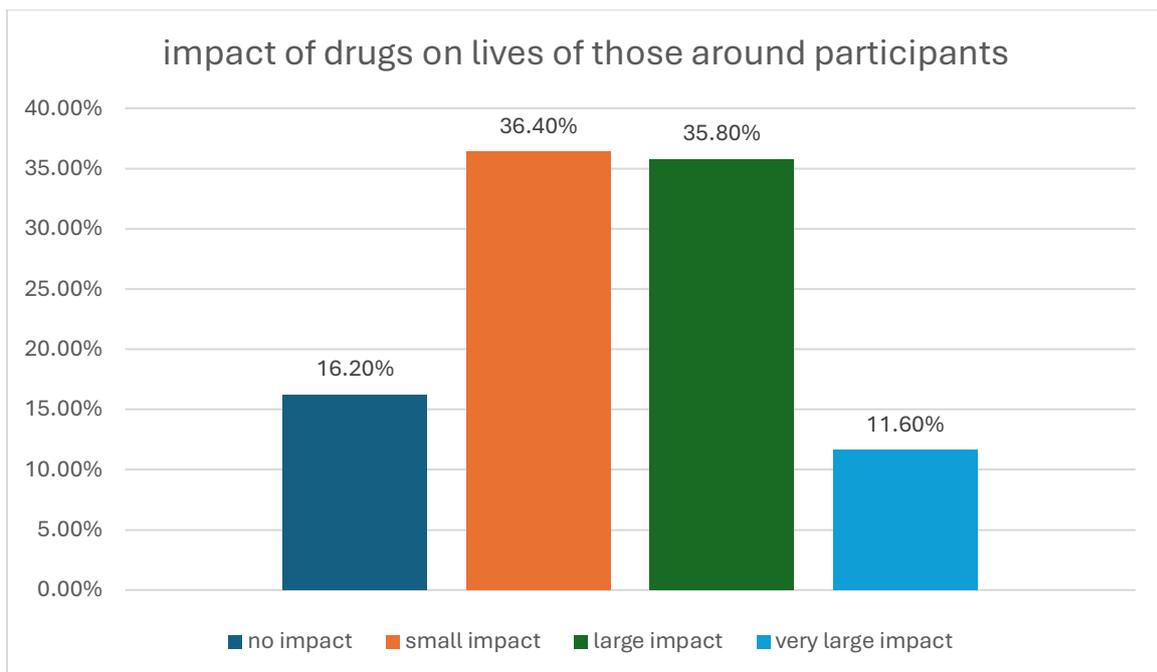
How much of an impact has participants' friends'/ family members' drug use had on participants' life (n = 904)?



Do participants think that drugs are an issue among students (n = 904)?



How much of an impact do participants think drugs have on the lives of those around them (n = 904)?



This question was asked of participants who indicated that they had never used substances.

If participants have never used drugs, what are the reasons for not using them (n = 561)

