

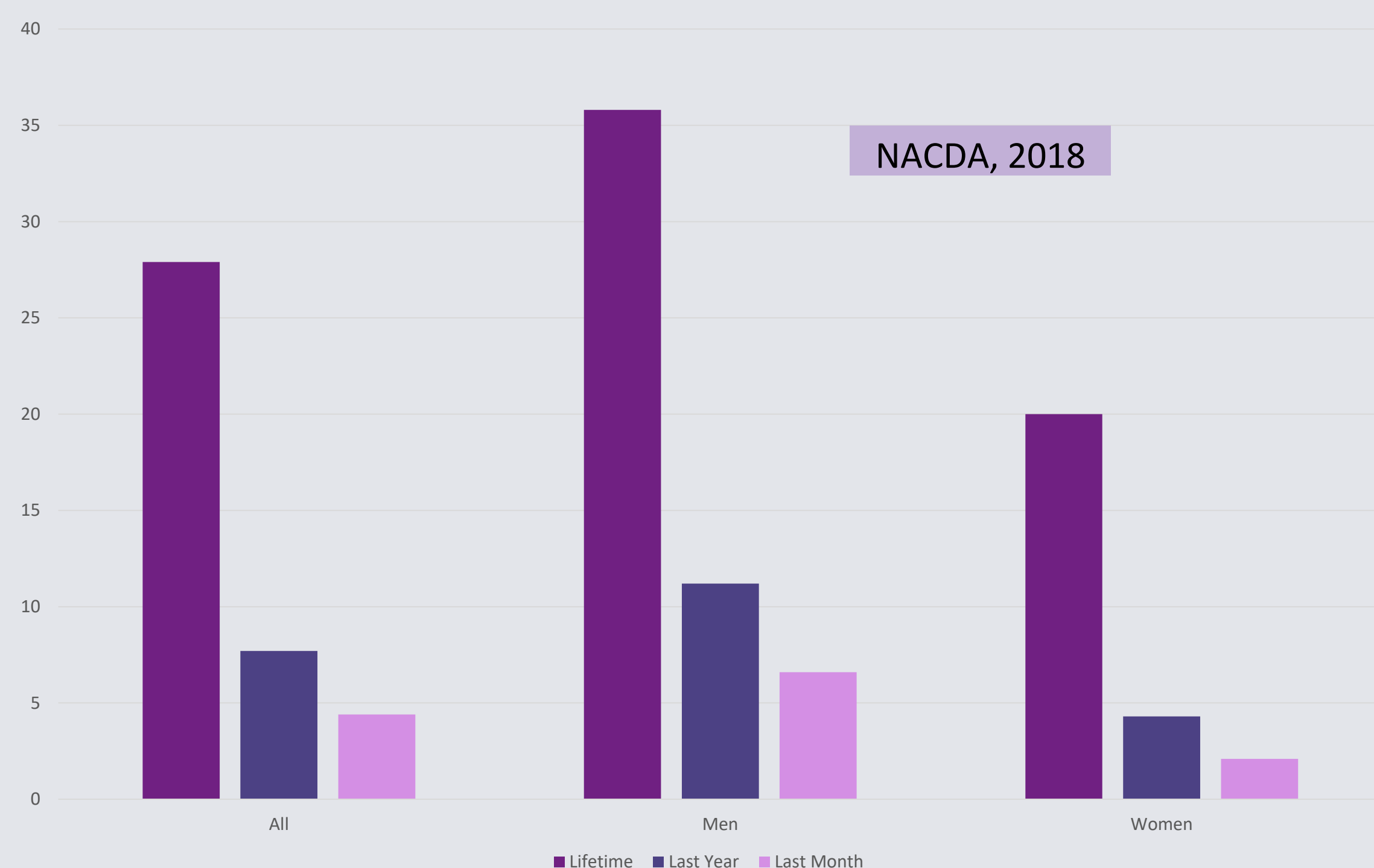
The experiences and wellbeing of adults who use cannabis

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Introduction

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug in Ireland with 13.8% of those aged 15-64 consuming it in the past year.¹ Males and younger adults tend to use cannabis more frequently. While not all require treatment, cannabis can have significant health effects.²



Methods

- This study aimed to explore the experiences and wellbeing of adults who currently or previously used cannabis.
- An online survey was distributed on social media and gathered information on demographics, attitudes towards cannabis and other drugs.
- Additionally, two validated questionnaires were included; the Severity of Dependence Scale (SDS) which measures substance dependency and the World Health Organisation Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) which measures wellbeing.
- The study received ethical approval from the Faculty of Medicine in Trinity College Dublin.

Results

Sample

- 732 responses were received
- 61.6% were male
- 33% were <20 and 76.4% were <30
- Proportional representation from each province
- 54% were living with their parent(s)

Cannabis use

- Mean age of 1st use was 15.6 years old and the median was 15
- 78% had used cannabis during the previous month
- Most of the **heaviest cannabis use takes place between ages 16-21**
- Only 3.2% regret using cannabis

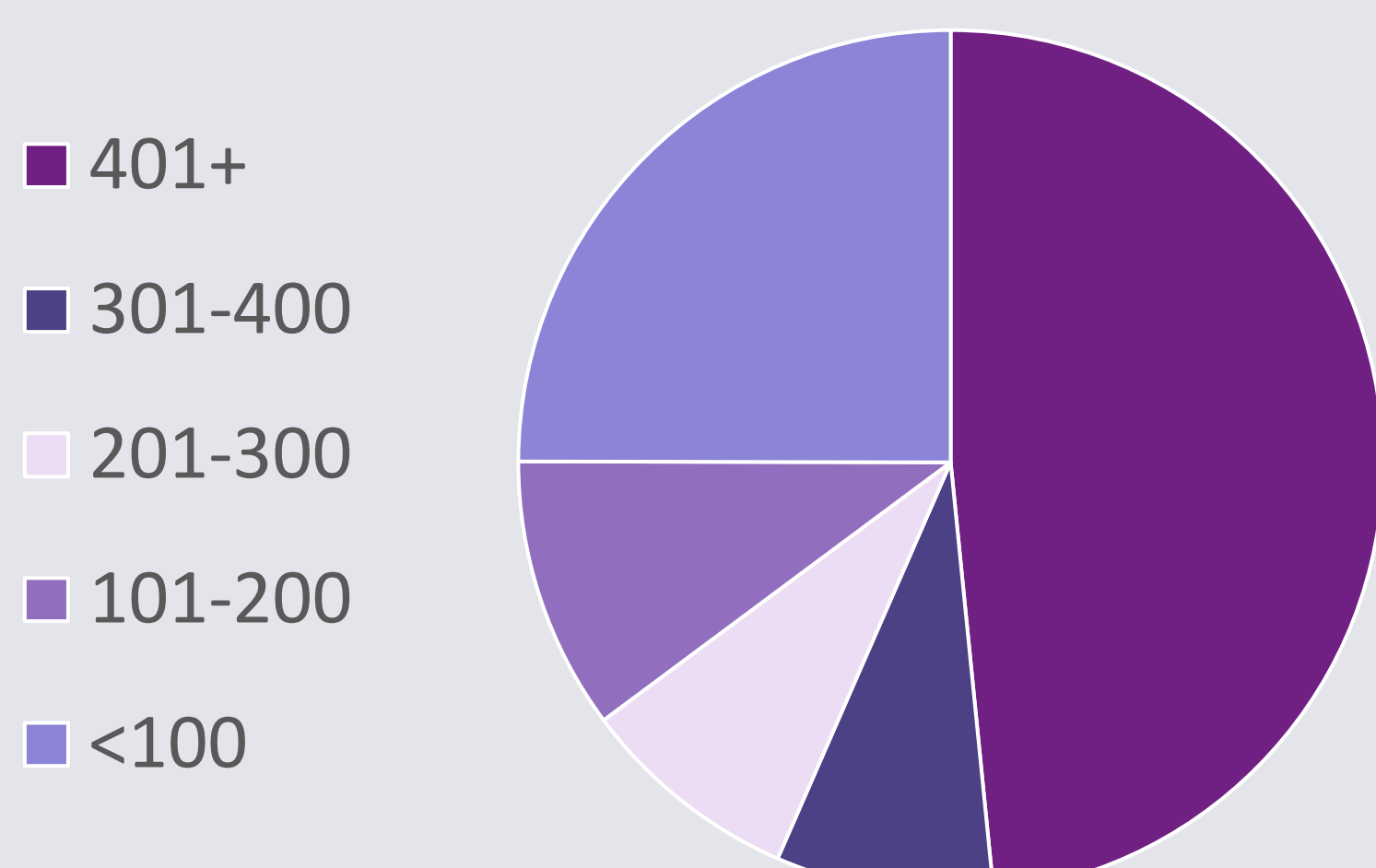


Figure 1.
Number of days cannabis used



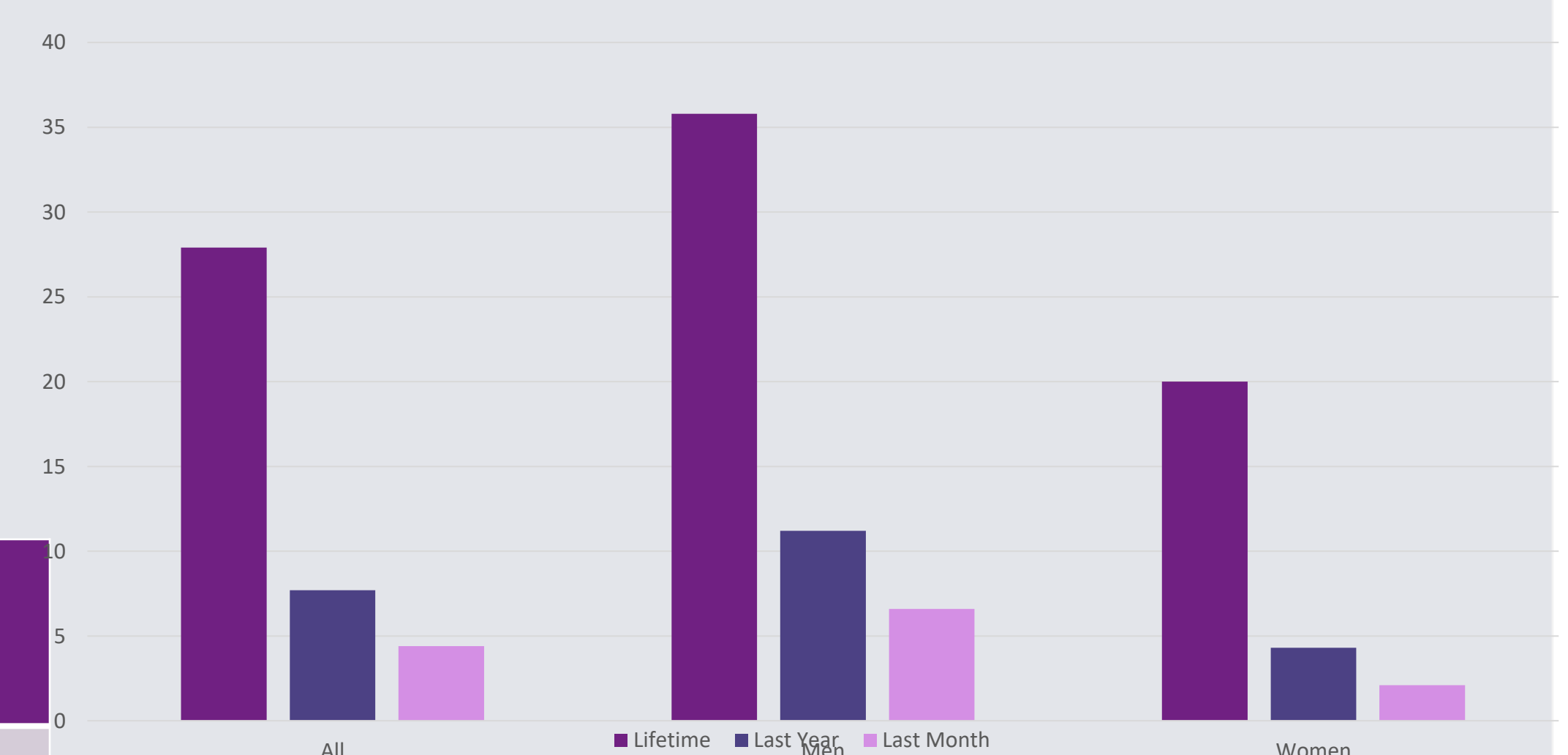
- Use of substances other than cannabis was common – see table 1

Table 1.
Use of various substances

Substance	Never	Last month	Last year	> than a year
Cannabis	-	572 (78.1)	52 (7.1)	97 (13.3)
Alcohol	7 (1)	617 (84.3)	68 (9.3)	35 (4.8)
Tobacco	46 (6.3)	553 (75.5)	42 (5.7)	84 (11.5)
Cocaine	278 (38)	204 (27.9)	127 (17.3)	117 (16)
MDMA	277 (37.8)	127 (17.3)	143 (19.5)	178 (24.3)
Sedatives	539 (73.6)	53 (7.2)	52 (7.1)	78 (10.7)
Heroin	699 (95.5)	3 (0.4)	1 (0.1)	21 (2.9)
Amphetamine	489 (66.8)	31 (4.2)	41 (5.6)	164 (22.4)

Health and Wellbeing

- Approximately **1 in 5 of current users are cannabis dependent**
- Wellbeing scores in general are comparable to the general population
- BUT women were more likely to have poor wellbeing scores with 12.9% of women having scores indicative of depression compared to 3.8% of men**



Other findings

- Three-quarters are current tobacco users**
- Only small numbers perceived a negative impact on their physical (8.2%) or mental health (13.3%), or relationships (12.9%)
- Use of other substances was common with **27.9% reporting use of cocaine in the previous month.**

Discussion

- Many people use cannabis, and most do not require treatment and don't want to stop. However, we can help them reduce the risk of developing subsequent problems.³
- Tobacco use is four times the general population level and concurrent tobacco use is associated with greater risk of cannabis dependence.⁴⁻⁶
- While most cannabis users are not experiencing mental health issues it does increase risk of suicidality, psychosis, school leaving and poorer psychosocial functioning. Females appear to be particularly vulnerable.⁷
- Cannabis impairs driving⁸ & increases crash risk 2-3 fold²
- Cannabis is a main reason for seeking drug treatment⁹

Harm Reduction & Cannabis

- Ask people about their cannabis use non-judgmentally – avoid lecturing and remember most may not want to quit
- Avoid using tobacco with cannabis and inhaling deeply³
- Screen mental health and wellbeing (WHO-5 is free!)
- Do not drive while intoxicated
- Help is available www.drugs.ie or 1800 409 409 (HSE Helpline)

Scan for References and contact

