Methamphetamine user groups in Germany: results of a nationwide study.

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Background: Germany faces an increase of methamphetamine abuse, predominantly perceived in areas near the Czech Republic. Preliminary to the development of specific prevention programmes, a study on potential target groups was commissioned. Objective: We sought to determine specific types of people in Germany, who abuse "crystal", and to describe their characteristics. Methods: Participants were recruited through counseling centres, prevention projects, specialized inpatient facilities, and over the internet. We employed a mixed methods approach in which we used an electronic assessment tool that could be administered both online and in face to face interviews. To explore user types, inductive content analysis was conducted. Results: A total of 187 participants who used methamphetamine were included. For 16% it was their first illicit drug, 22%, had started using it at an age of 15 or younger, and 23% reported methamphetamine injection. Identified subgroups included club drug users, specific gay subcultures, occupational users, parents, injecting and heavy users, and people with mental health issues or trauma (fig.1). Conclusion: Methamphetamine abuse in Germany had not received much attention until recently. Further research is recommended to gain a better understanding of different subgroups, and to design and evaluate tailored therapeutic and preventive programmes.

- Exclusive "recreational" users (club drug context)
- Specific gay subcultures
- Users in the context of parenthood
- Users in occupational contexts
- Users in the context of school / education
- Comorbid / "self medicating" users
- Injecting and heavy drug users

Fig. 1: Seven Methamphetamine user groups in Germany