Scoping review on what is known about novel psychoactive substance use, related harms and responses.

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Methods

Searches

– Electronic databases
– Google searches for grey literature
– Hand searches of websites
– Online drug forum searches
– Contacting experts (policy experts and researchers)

Inclusion criteria

– Use, problems and harms, and responses
– Any primary or secondary studies
Search and selection results

Figure 1: Flow of articles for the evidence mapping

Records identified through database searching (n = 13772)

Additional records identified through other sources (n= 3260)
- Google search = 3130
- Hand search of relevant websites = 87
- Online drug forums = 4
- Policy experts = 4
- Contact authors = 35

Records after duplicates removed (n = 10625)

Records screened (n = 10625)

Records excluded (n = 9088)

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 1537)

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 542)

Articles included in evidence mapping (n = 995)
• 385 articles
• 29 UK surveys:
  – 3 adult national surveys
  – 2 national school surveys
  – 1 national survey in young people
  – 23 surveys of sub-populations

• Lifetime use prevalence:
  – Adults: 2-10%
  – School and university students: 1-31%
  – Young people (11-15 years): ~2.5%
Problems/ harms

• 773 articles
  – A large number of case reports/case series
  – 14 systematic reviews
  – Very limited epidemiological data
  – Some qualitative studies in NPS using populations.

• Mostly reported side effects:
  – psychiatric and other neurologic,
  – cardiovascular,
  – renal, and
  – gastrointestinal.
Conclusions

Overall, current evidence is not sufficiently well advanced to be able to meaningfully inform public health approaches to NPS use.

Specific gaps:

- Acute health harms in a population context
- Long-term chronic health or social harms
- More rigorous study designs capable of assessing major policy changes
- The utility of routinely collected NPS data
Thank you