

# Understanding the Popularity Surge of “Space Oil Drug”: Common Factors Behind Drug Abusers

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# Outline



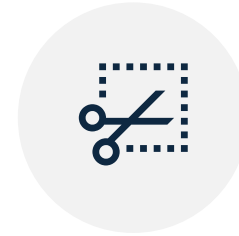
BACKGROUND



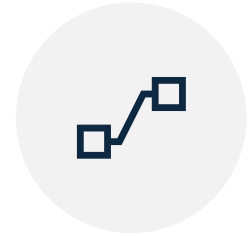
METHODOLOGY



FINDINGS AND  
ANALYSIS



LIMITATIONS



CONCLUSION  
AND FUTURE  
WORK

# Background



In 2024, the **third most** abused drug for **individuals under 21** is “Space oil drug” [1]

**x7** times more “Space oil drug” cases in 2024 than in 2023 [2]

## Project aim:

### Why is it popular?

- Analyse data on **age under 21** drug abusers
- Derive main factors behind popularity of “Space oil drug”

✓ Enhance Public Awareness

✓ Facilitate Better Prevention

# Methodology (Tools)



Excels in Data Visualization



User-Friendly Interface

# Methodology (Data)

Data source: The Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau [3]

1. Reputable and authoritative source
2. Highly relevant data focused on narcotics



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府  
保安局禁毒處

## Data description:

Number of reported drug abusers from 2021 to 2024

### Fields:

- Age Group
- Sex
- Common Type of Drug Abused
- Whether Previously Convicted
- Educational Attainment.....

# Findings and Analysis

Q1: What are the common factors shared among age under 21 drug abusers?

Q2: How do these factors relate to the rise in popularity of the “Space Oil Drug”?

Q1: What are the common factors shared among age under 21 drug abusers?

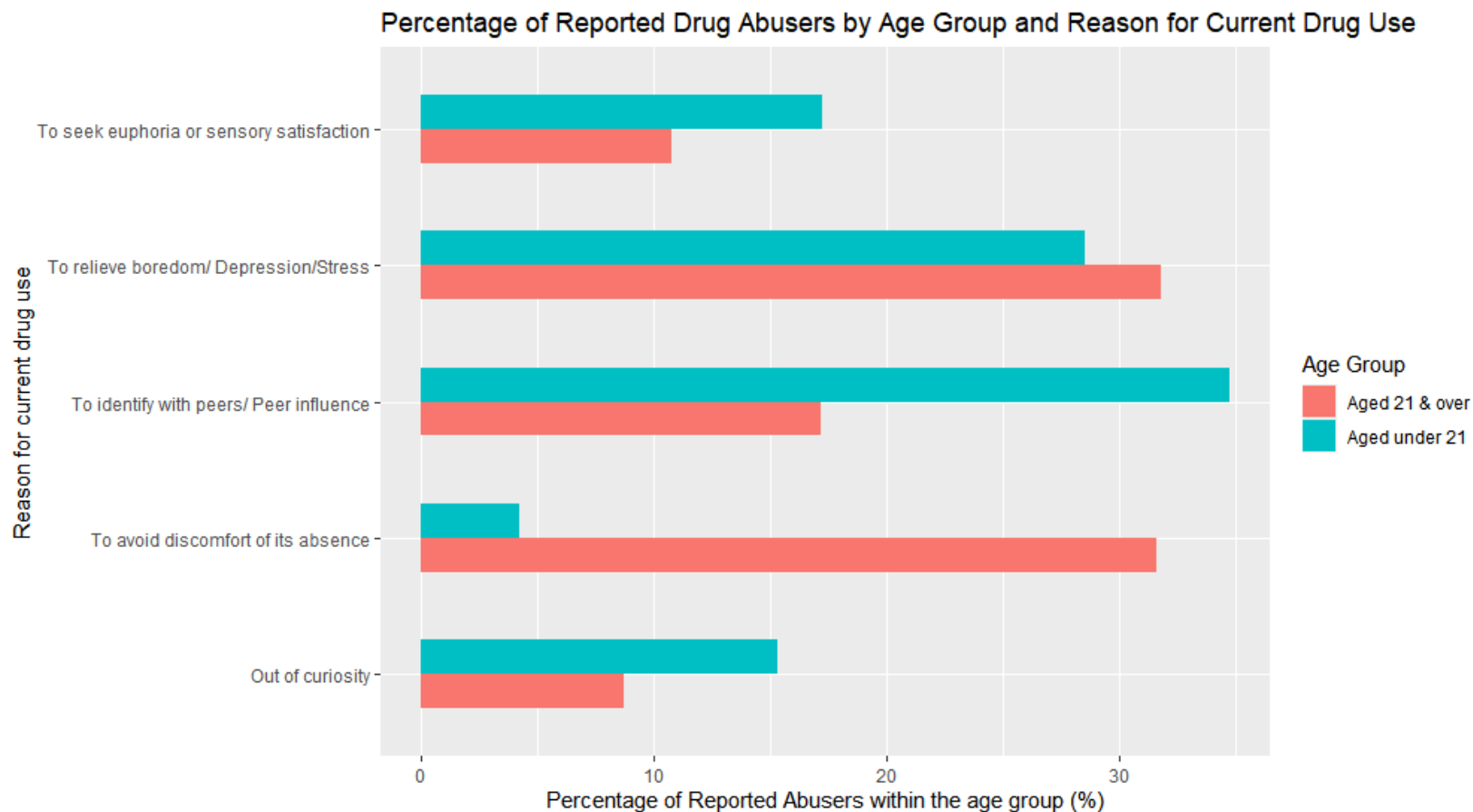
A. Personal Reasons for Current Drug Use

B. Type of drug abused

C. Gender

D. Whether Previously Convicted





Observations for drug abusers under 21,

- Peer influence is much more impactful
- Second major reason: Coping mechanism

Total Number of reported abusers aged 21 and over >>>  
Total Number of reported abusers aged under 21

Q2: How do these factors relate to the rise in popularity of the “Space Oil Drug”?

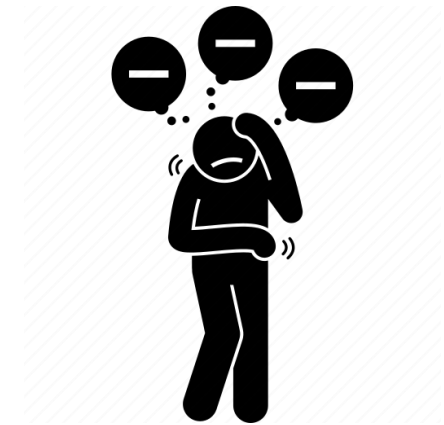
### Peer Influence

- A “Rite of Passage” [4] for social acceptance



### “Space oil drug” as Coping Mechanism

- Main ingredient: Etomidate (anesthetic) [5]
- Effect: transient euphoria



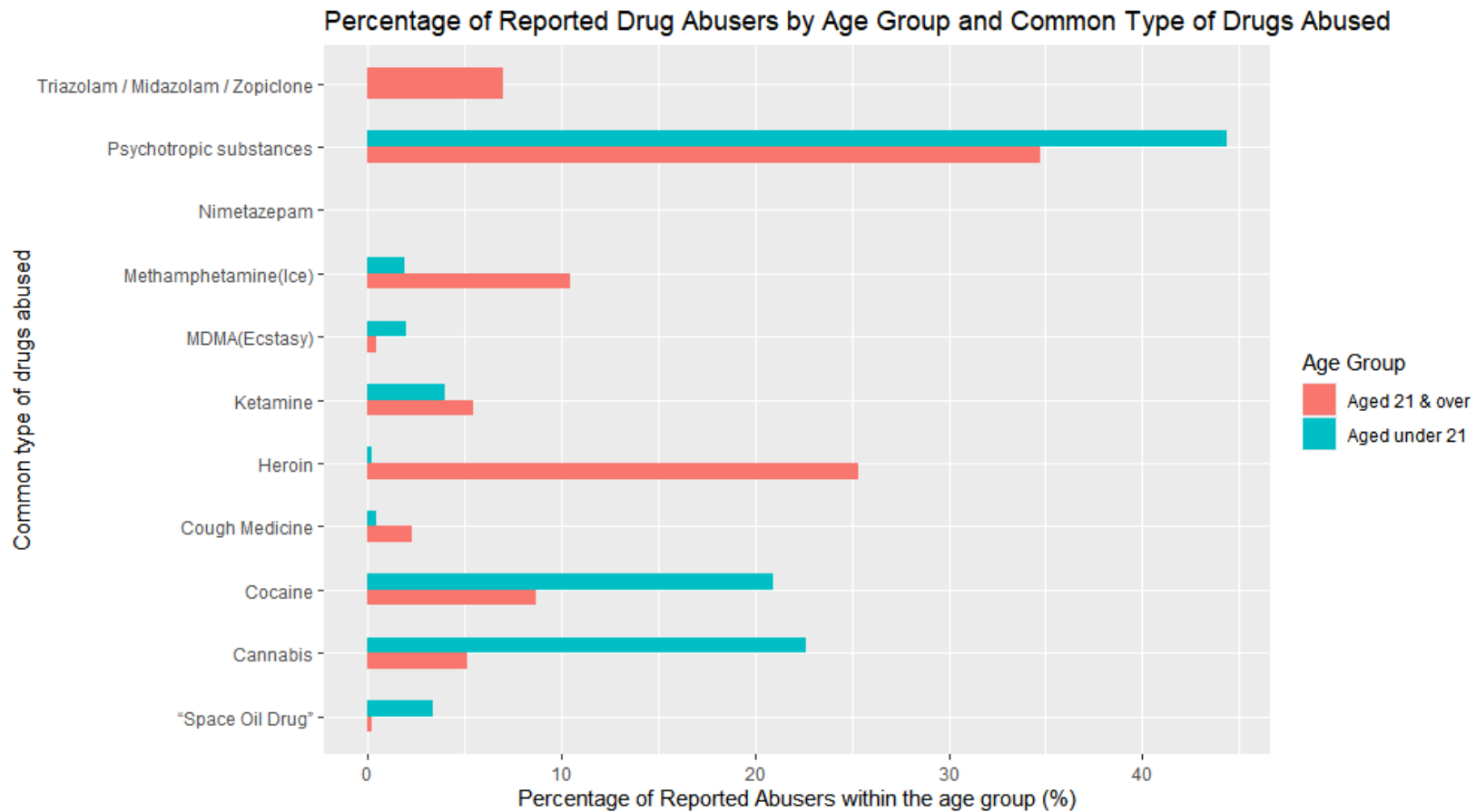
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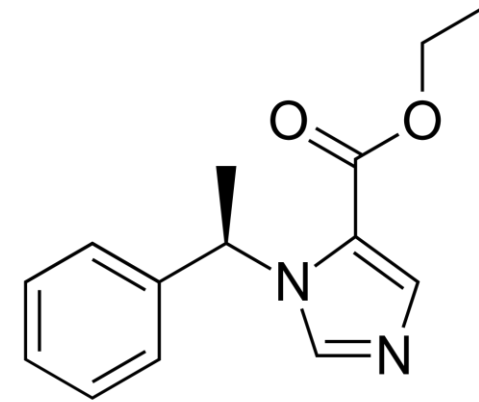


Observations for drug abusers under 21,

- Psychotropic substances (cause mood/behaviour changes) are the most popular
- Cannabis and Cocaine are much more sought after

Q2: How do these factors relate to the rise in popularity of the “Space Oil Drug”?

Etomidate  $\subseteq$  **Psychotropic substances**



**“Socially acceptable” drug**

- Cannabis and “Space oil drug” often regarded as “less harmful” [6]



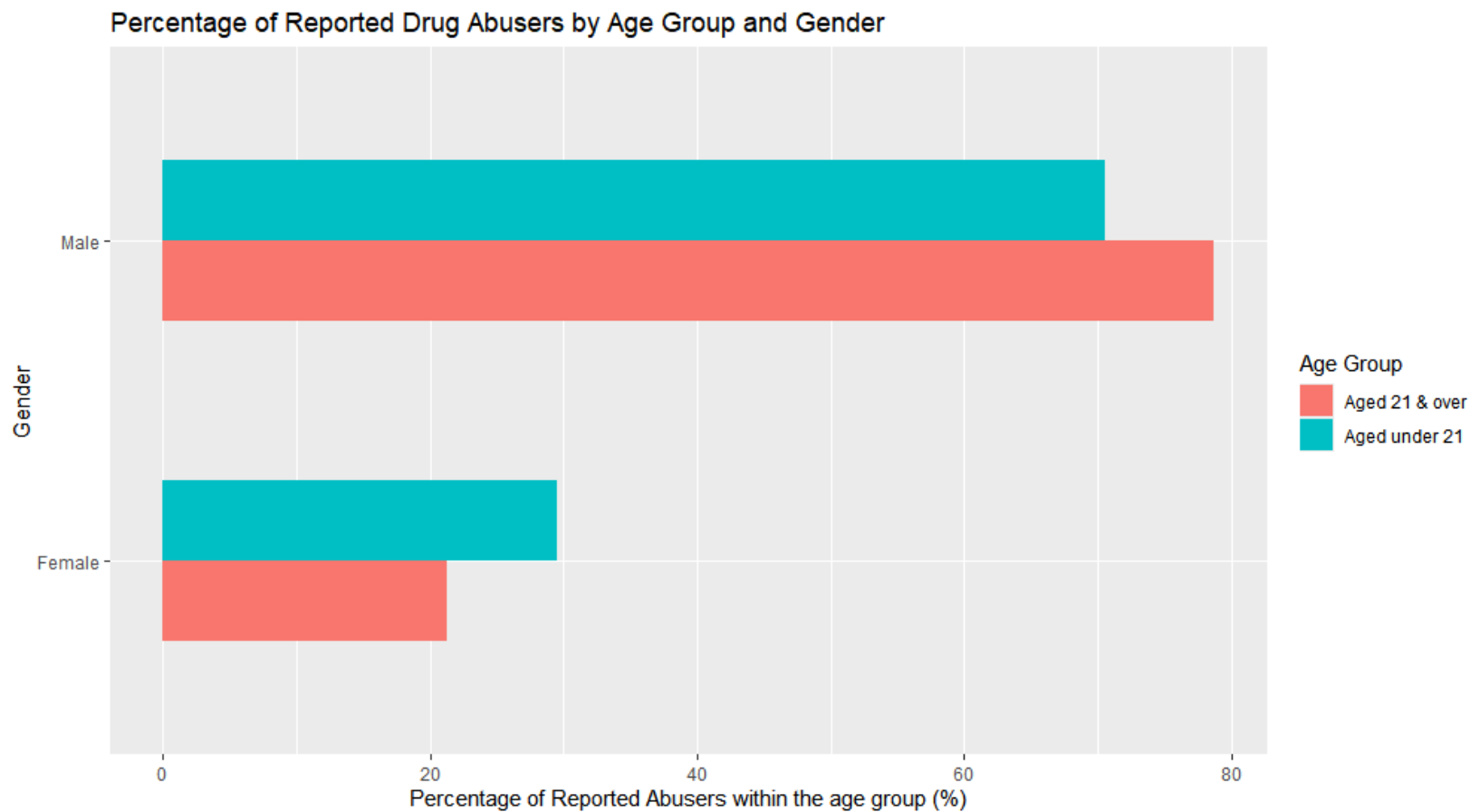
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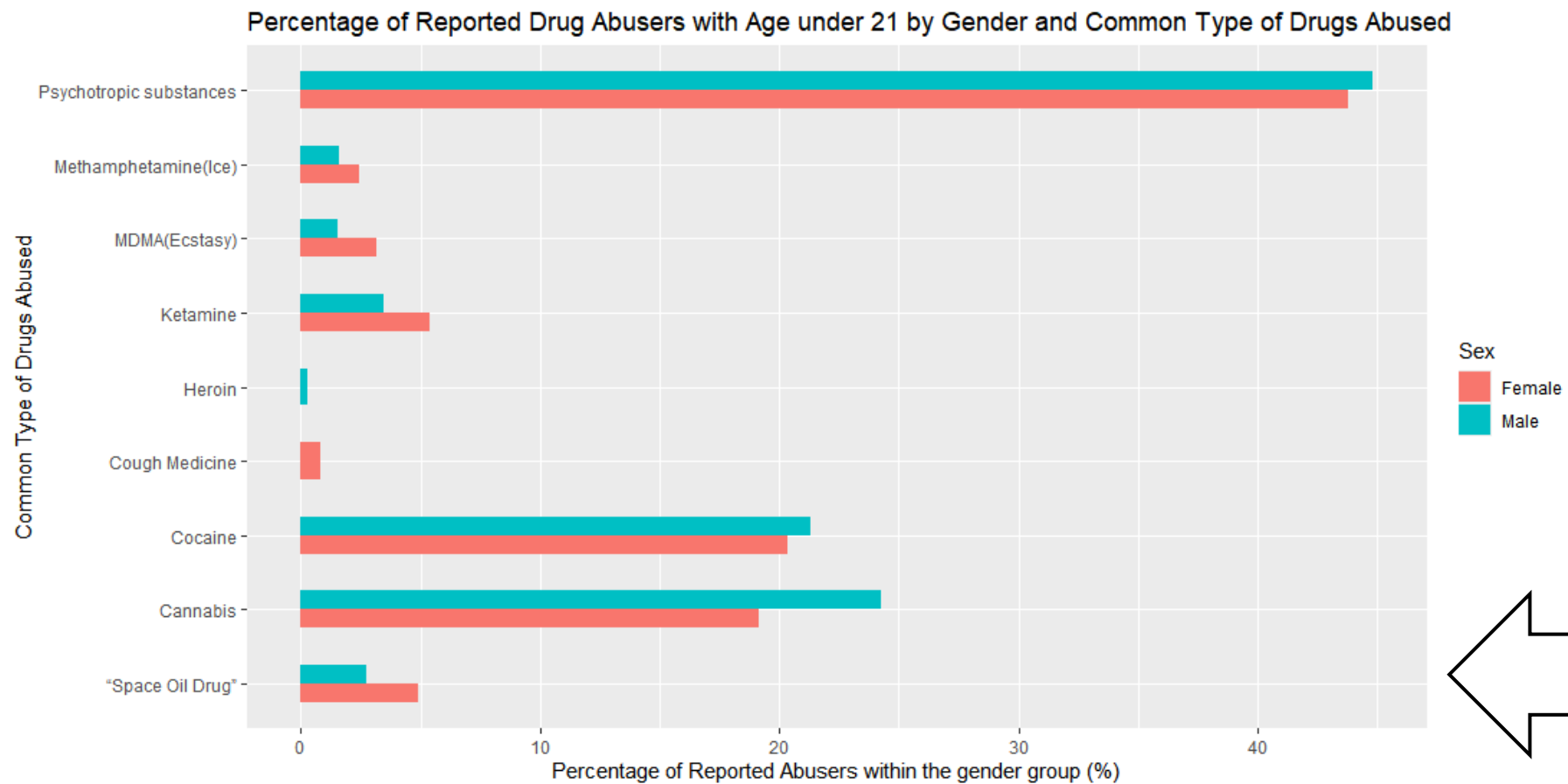
Observations for drug abusers in general,

- Male drug abusers make up the larger population

Hong Kong 2023 sex ratio [7]:

908 males per 1000 females

(Excluded foreign domestic helpers)



Drug preferences may not be related to gender

- Observations for under 21 drug abusers of different genders,
- Similar patterns for choice of drugs



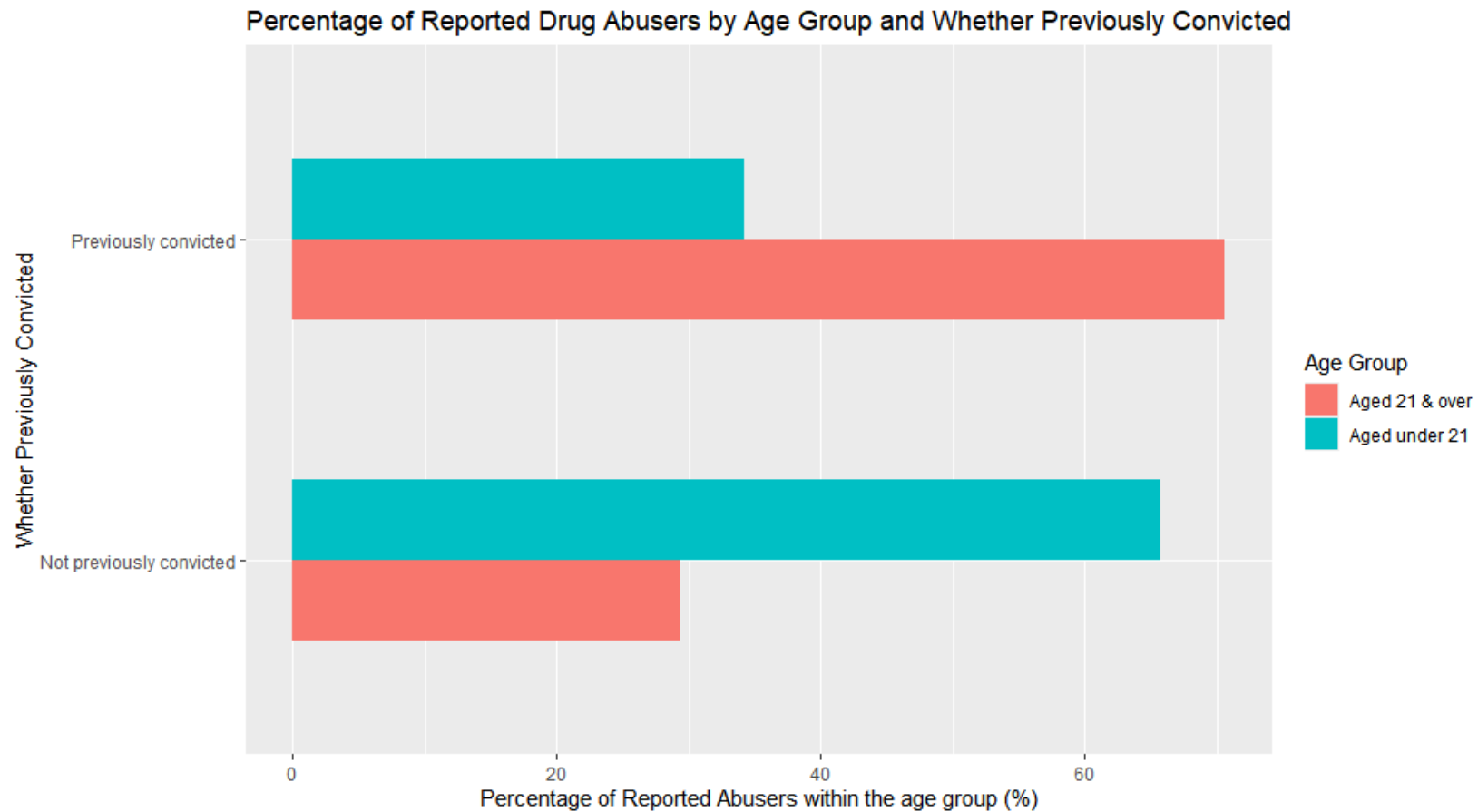
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A. Personal Reasons for Current Drug Use

B. Type of drug abused

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D. Whether Previously Convicted



Observations for drug abusers under 21,

- Profiles differ greatly from those aged 21 and over
- Most have no prior convictions.

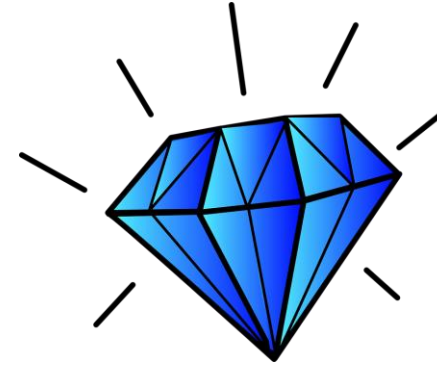
**Traditional belief:**

- Only “**youth gangsters**” (古惑仔) use drugs

## Q2: How do these factors relate to the rise in popularity of the “Space Oil Drug”?

### **Appeal to novelty**

- New and unknown



### **Easy to access [8]**

- Only require e-cigarette
- Relatively affordable price (~200 HKD per 1 pod)



# Limitations

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## Confounding Variables

- Missing data on:
    - Personal Relationships
    - Mental Health Status.....
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## Selection Bias

- All data are sourced from arrested persons

# References

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8. Hong Kong Free Press, "An escape from the world: As Hong Kong bans 'space oil' drug, social workers urge care for teen mental health," hongkongfp.com, Feb. 23, 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://hongkongfp.com/2025/02/23/an-escape-from-the-world-as-hong-kong-bans-space-oil-drug-social-workers-urge-care-for-teen-mental-health/>. [Accessed: May 5, 2025].

# Conclusion and Future work

- Identified common attributes of young drug abusers
  - Better prevention to target these individuals
- Analyzed the “draw” of “Space oil drug”
  - To enforce policies to combat future similar substances

## **Future research:**

- Conduct anonymous surveys
  - Expand data to include individuals outside of reported cases



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