



# **Cultural Insights Into Contemporary Psychedelics Usage**

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**2025**

**fifth**  
quadrant

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# **Background, Methodology & Sample**





## Objectives

To explore and measure the use of psychedelics for leadership, performance, health and wellbeing, highlighting broader societal, health, policy and commercial implications.

### Key Areas of Investigation

#### 1. Attitudes

- What motivates individuals to want to use psychedelics for non-recreational purposes?
- What types of information are sought and what are preferred sources of information?
- What level of involvement should the pharmaceutical industry have in the psychedelics field?

#### 2. Usage (Previous, Current, Future Intent)

- How does the social and legal environment affect psychedelic use and access?
- What are the future directions for the nonrecreational applications of psychedelics?

#### 3. Safety/ Risk Perception & Management

- What are the perceived risks and safety requirements of psychedelic use?

#### 4. Experience, benefits and observed changes

- What are the perceived mental, physical and emotional health benefits of psychedelics?
- What changes in spirituality or philosophical perspectives do users report or hope to achieve
- How do psychedelics influence leadership qualities and decision-making?

#### 5. Access to supportive processes (preparation and integration)

- What are the barriers/enablers to accessing therapeutic and non-therapeutic use of psychedelics?
- What level of supportive processes such as preparation and integration are/were available?
- What role do Indigenous communities, leaders and traditions play in the use of psychedelics?



## Methodology



10-minute online survey



Sample sourced via a specialist online panel



Minimum n=1,500 (Australia n=750 & USA n=750)

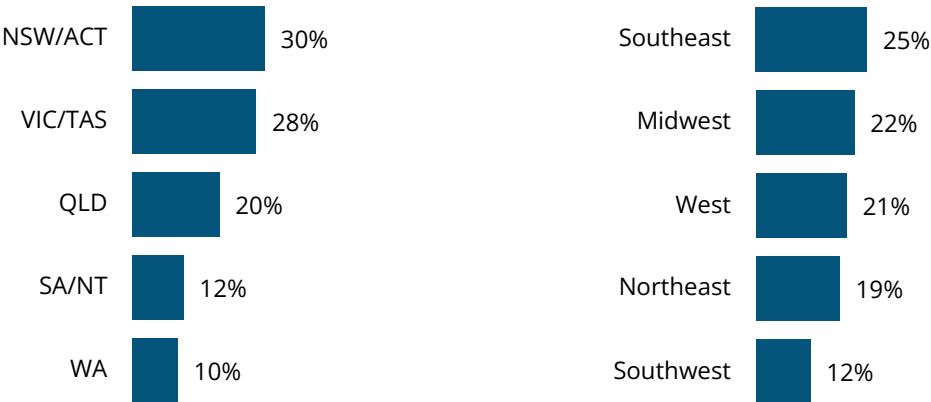


Fieldwork was conducted between 25<sup>th</sup> Nov – 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 2024

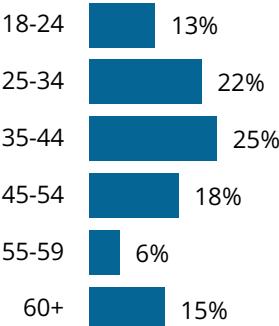
# Respondent Profile

Respondent profile skews female and toward full time white-collar workers in leadership and middle management positions.

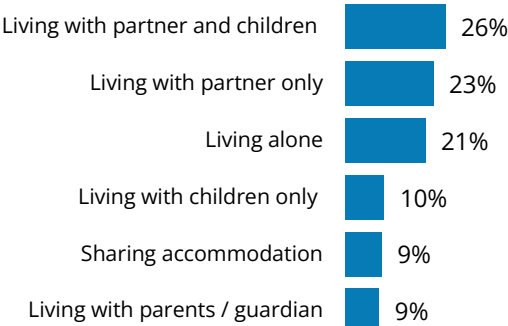
## State/Region



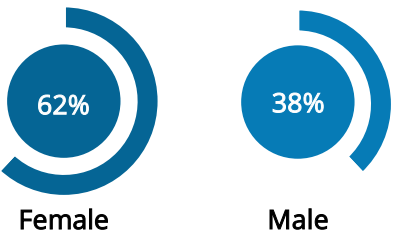
## Age



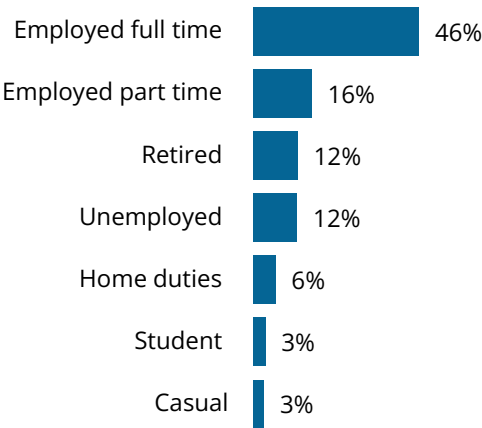
## Current household situation



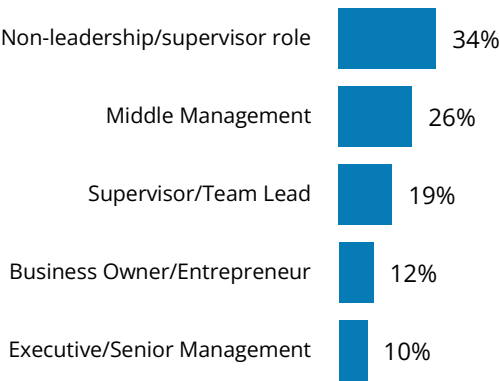
## Gender



## Employment status



## Role





## **executive summary**



## Executive Summary



Mental health benefits emerge as the strongest motivator for non-recreational use, with three-quarters of respondents citing this as their primary reason for interest or use.



MDMA, LSD and psilocybin are the predominant substances used or considered for both therapeutic and recreational purposes, with MDMA showing the highest current usage rates.



Self-awareness and connection to nature show the most substantial positive changes from use, with nearly half of these effects lasting longer than one month.



While a majority believe the pharmaceutical industry should develop and distribute psychedelic therapies, the challenge will be balancing scientific advancement with equitable access, rather than monopolisation.



Legal restrictions pose the main barrier to access, particularly in Australia where nearly half of respondents cite this as a primary obstacle compared to about one-third in the USA.



Half of survey participants view non-recreational use as safe, whilst approximately one-third express safety concerns, with current users reporting significantly higher confidence in safety than past users.

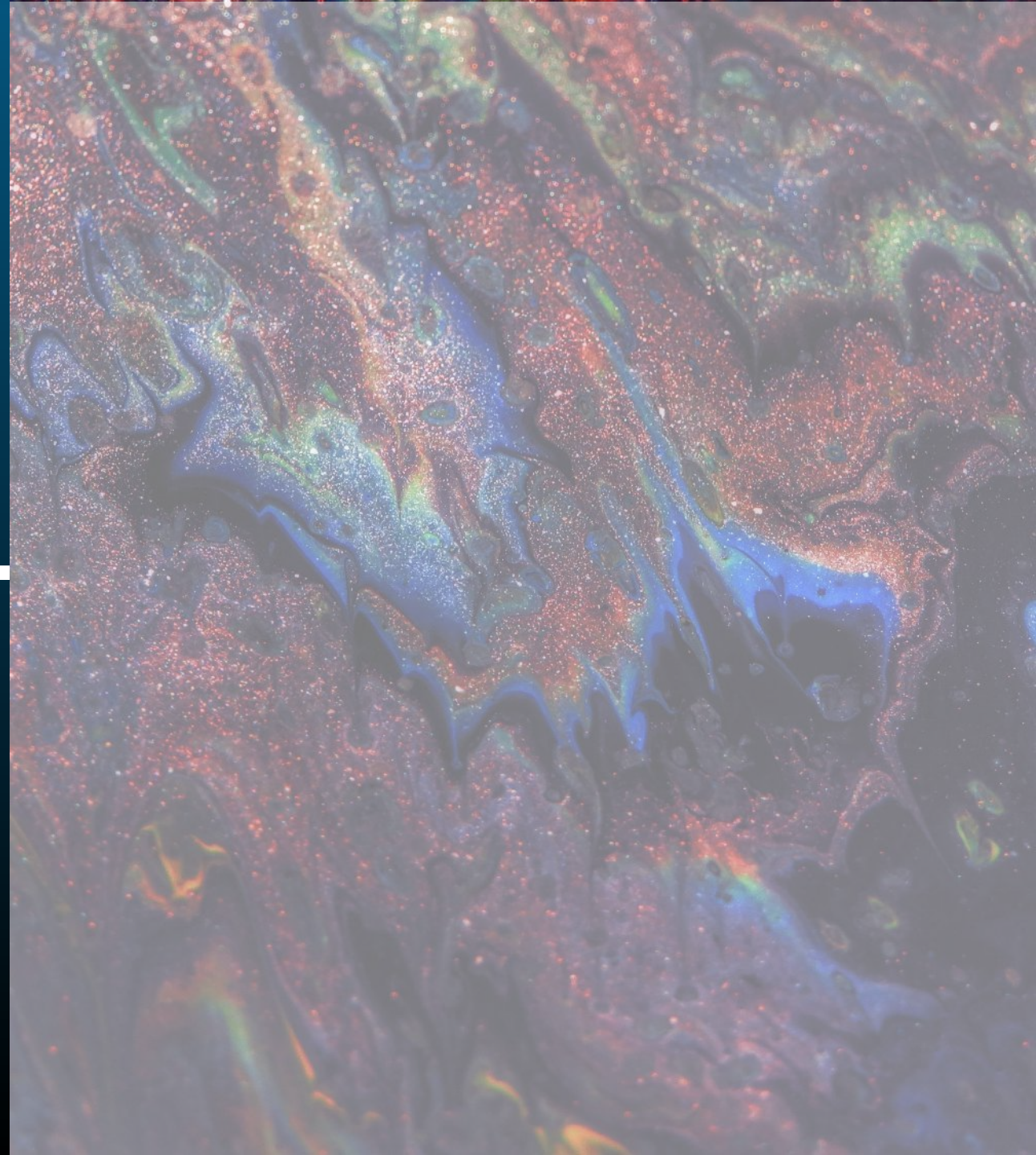


Healthcare professionals and scientific research rank as the most trusted information sources after personal networks, reflecting a desire for evidence-based guidance.



There is some concern that the commercialisation of psychedelics could undermine traditional and Indigenous practices, indicating a need to balance commercial interests with ethical obligations.

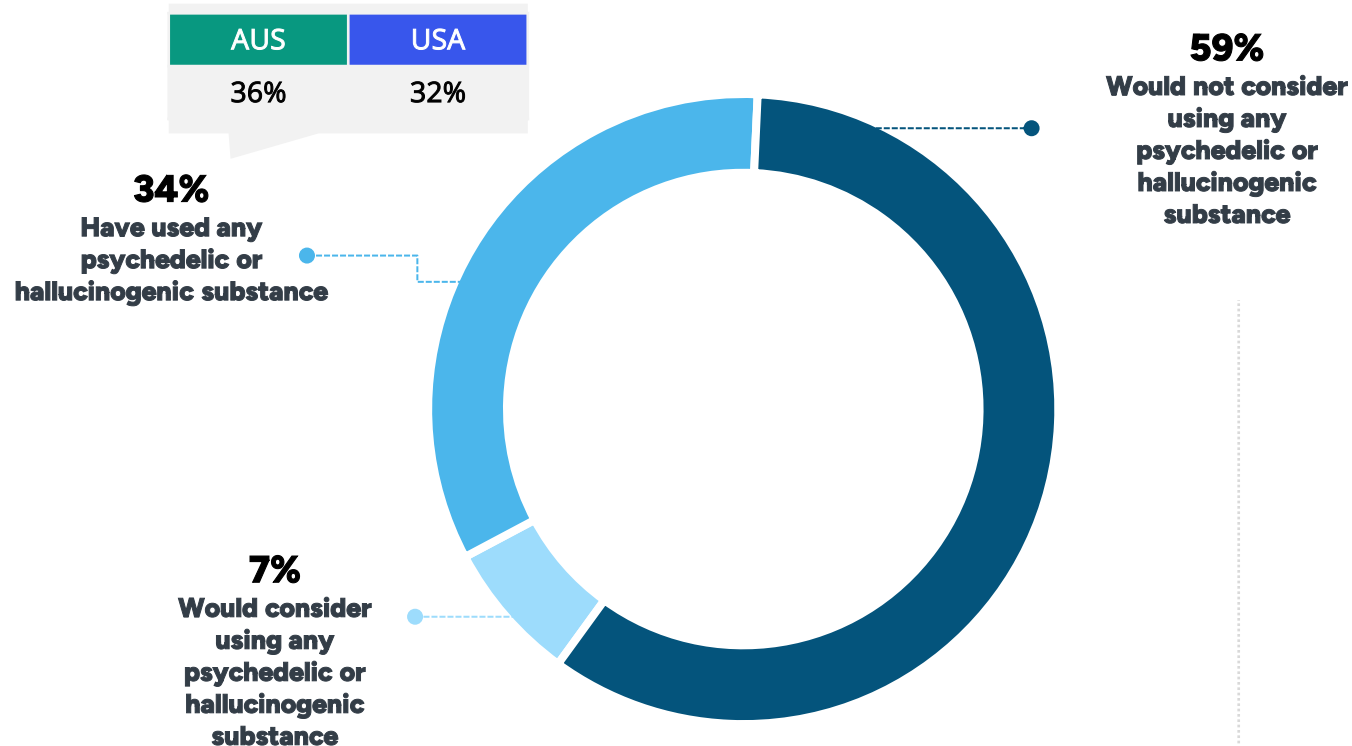
# usage & consideration



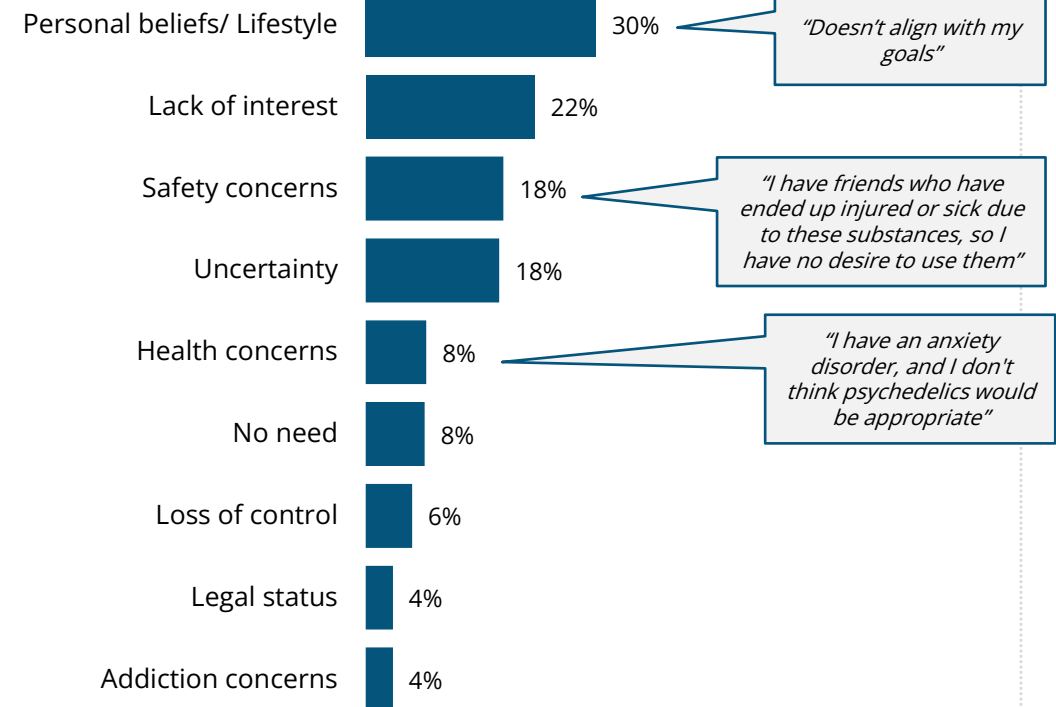
## Usage

Over 5,600 respondents answered an initial screener question about psychedelic use. One-third report psychedelic use at some point in their life, whilst a further portion would consider using. Six in ten would not consider using any psychedelics substance – the most common reasons for not consideration or use include personal beliefs, safety concerns and lack of interest.

### Have you ever, even once, used any psychedelic or hallucinogenic substances for either recreational or non-recreational purposes?



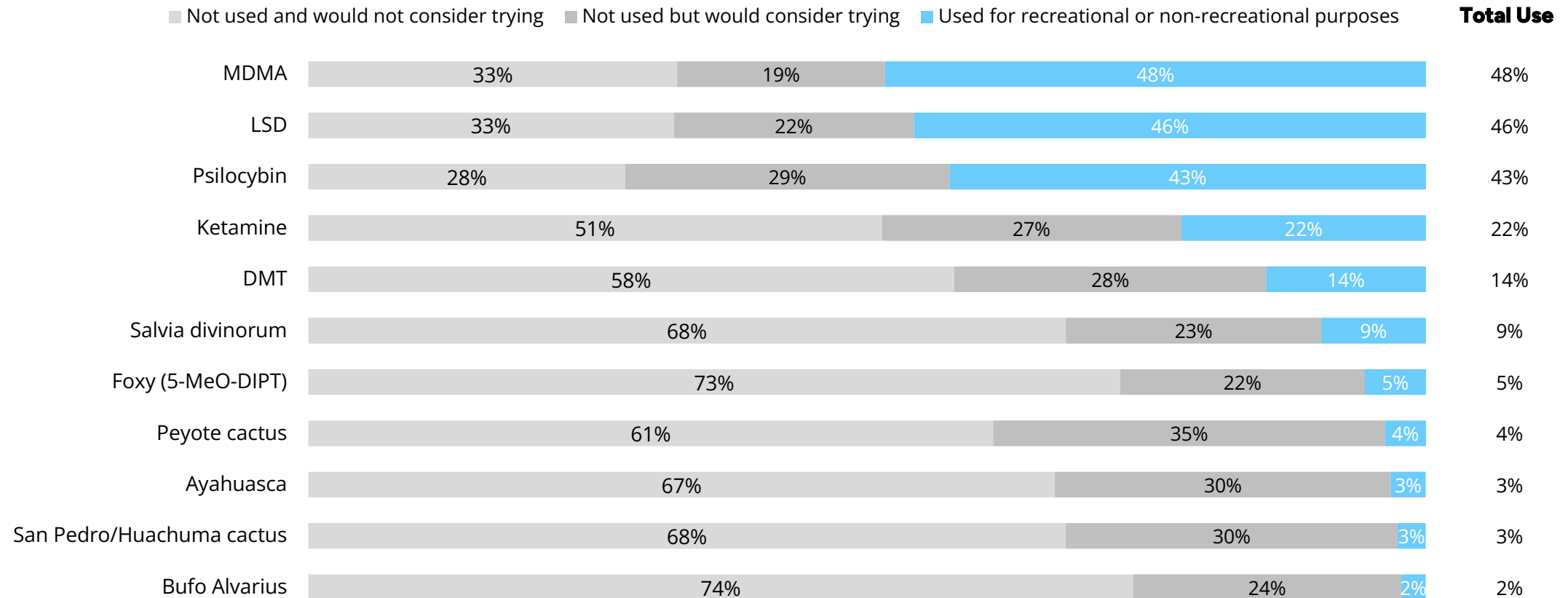
### Reasons for Non-Use



## Experience of Using Psychedelics

Among psychedelics users and considerers, MDMA, LSD and psilocybin emerge as predominant substances for both therapeutic and recreational purposes, followed by ketamine.

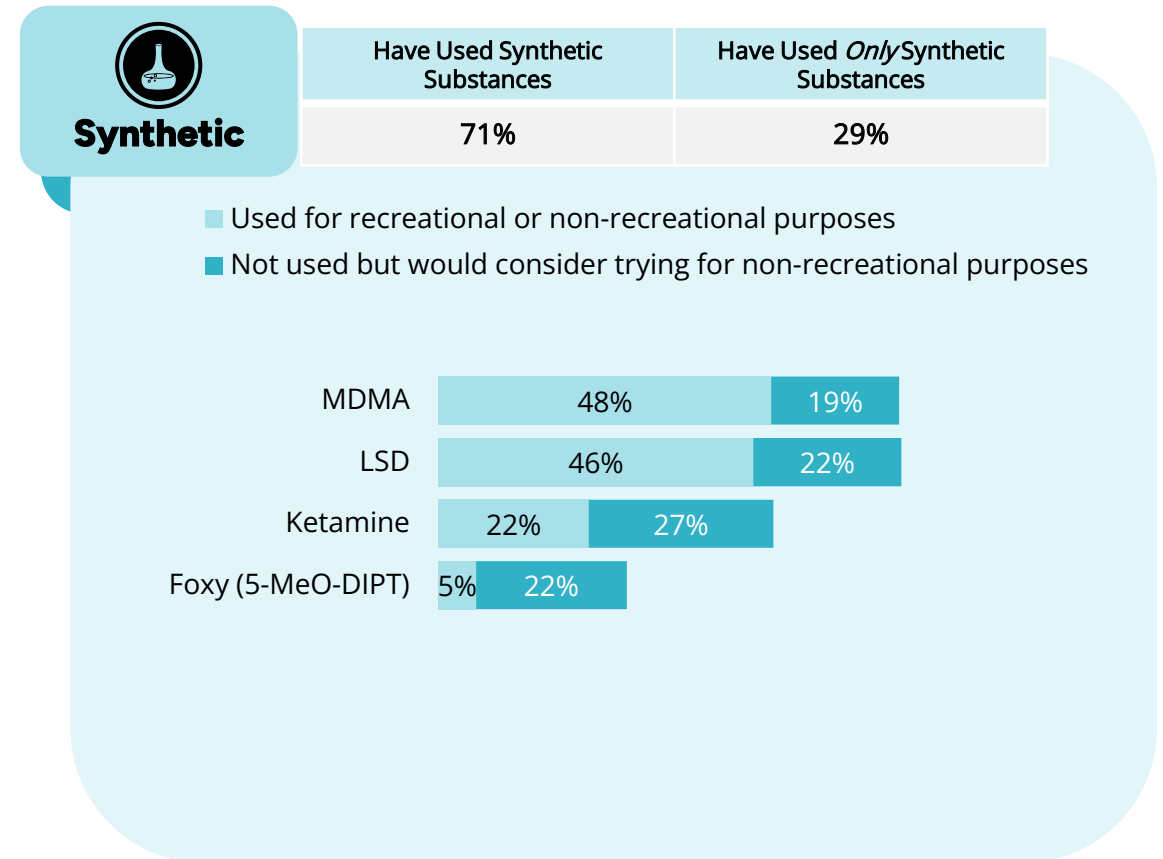
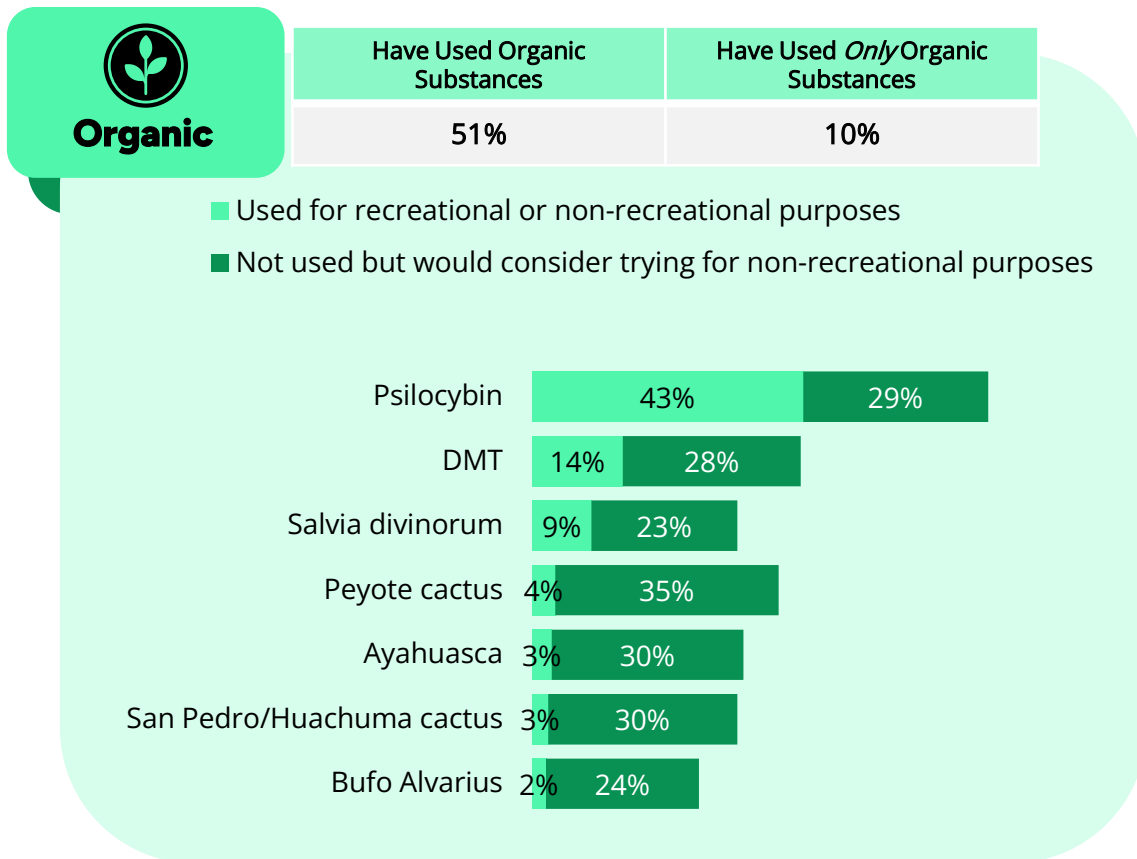
**What has been your experience with using each of the following substances for either recreational or non-recreational purposes?**



# Experience of Using Psychedelics

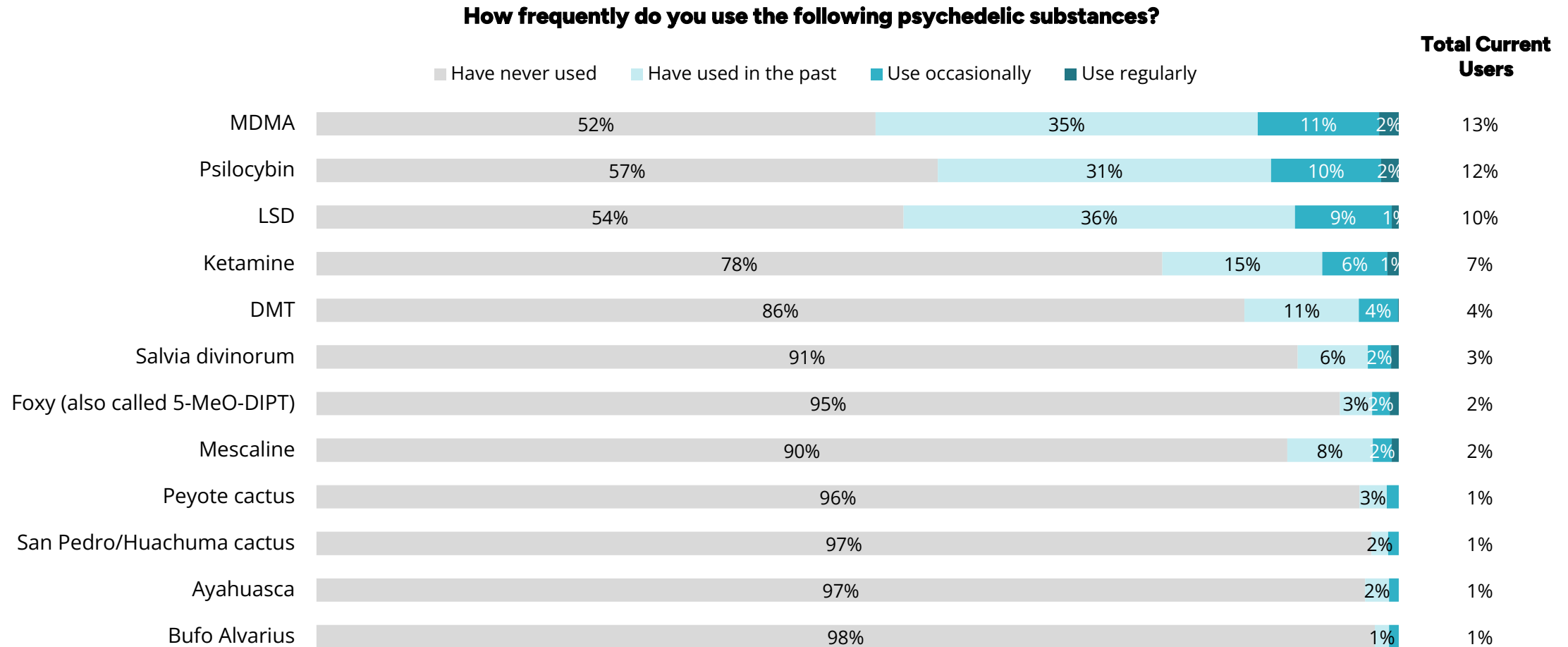
Among psychedelic users and those considering their use, MDMA, LSD and psilocybin emerge as the predominant substances for both therapeutic and recreational purposes, followed by ketamine. Generally, usage is higher for synthetic than organic substances, potentially reflecting easier access.

## What has been your experience with using each of the following substances for either recreational or non-recreational purposes? (Organic vs. Synthetic)



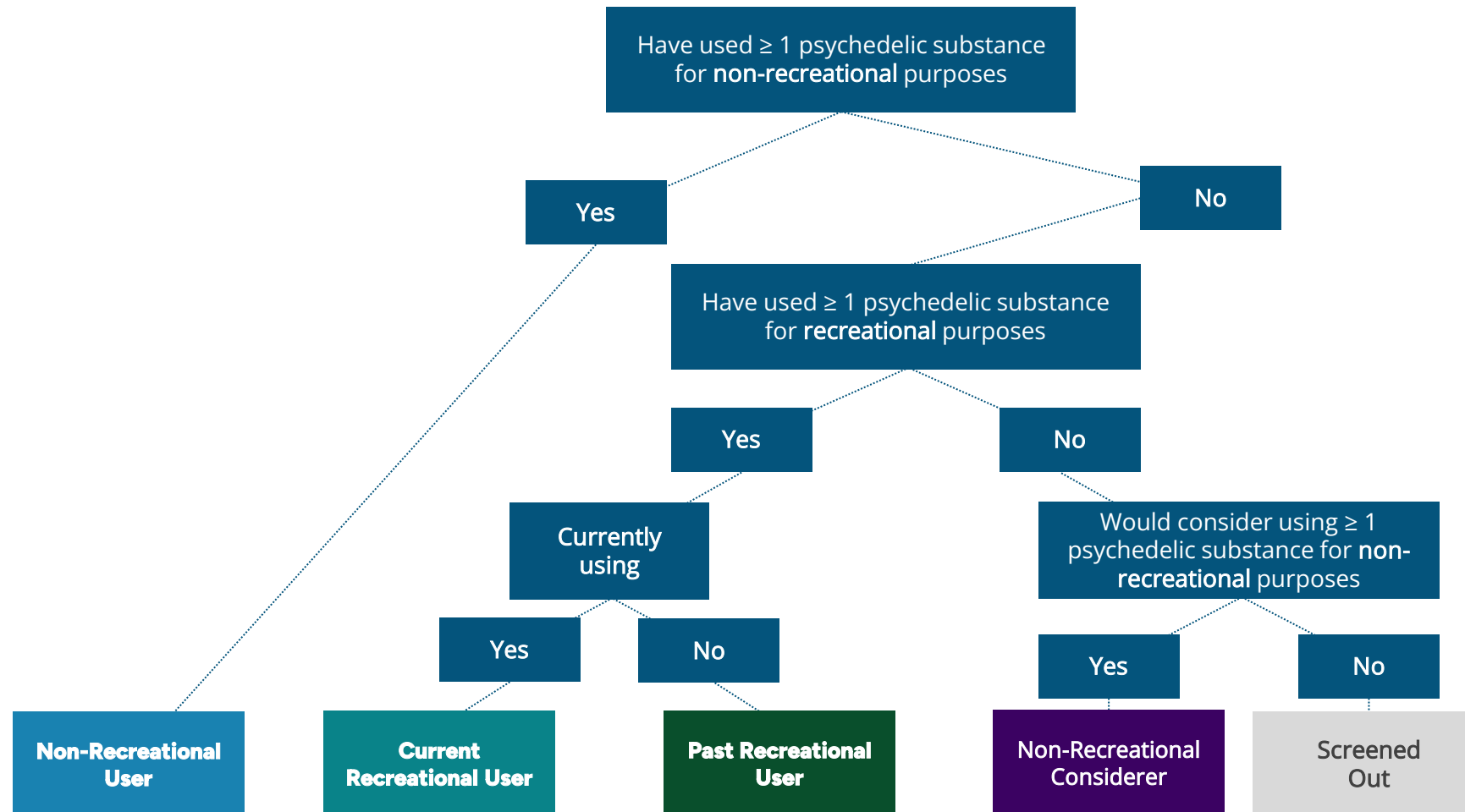
## Frequency of Use

Consumption patterns show occasional rather than regular use across most substances. MDMA leads in current usage, followed by psilocybin and LSD, with most users reporting infrequent engagement.



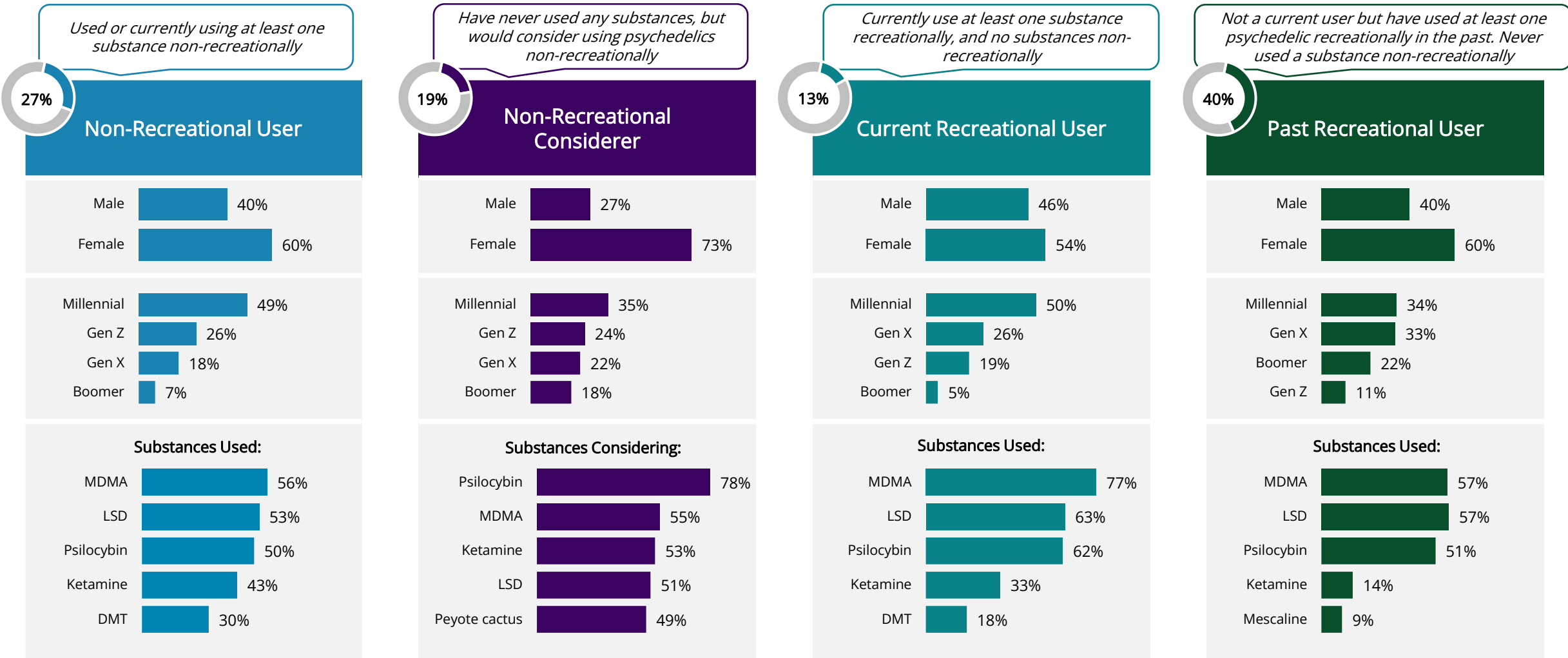
# Segmentation

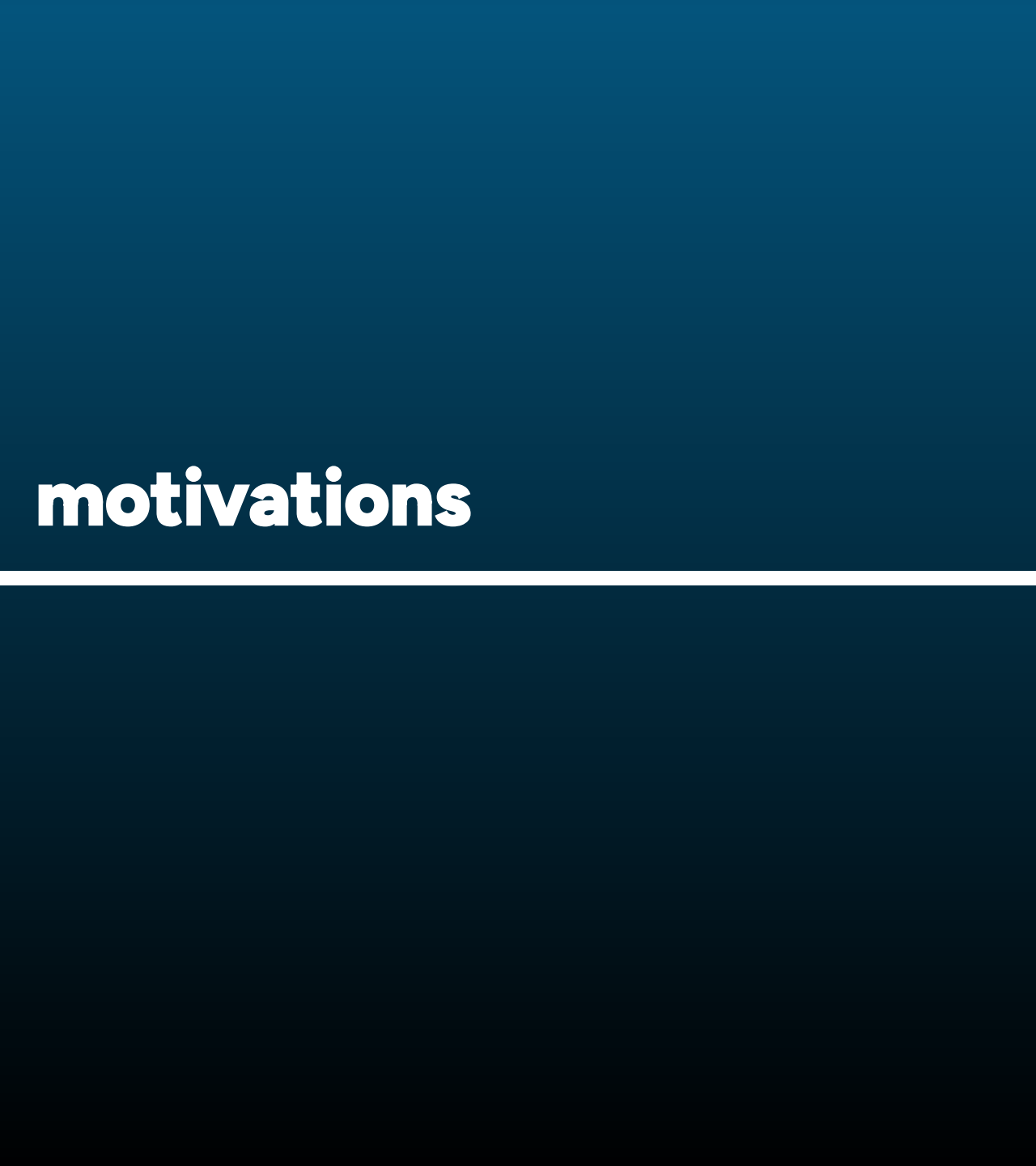
Analysis reveals four distinct segments based on usage patterns and motivations: non-recreational users, considerers, current recreational users, and past recreational users. As revealed in subsequent slides, each shows different usage patterns.



# Segmentation

Users (both recreational and non-recreational) show strong millennial representation. Considerers distinctly skew female and show higher interest in psilocybin compared to other substances.





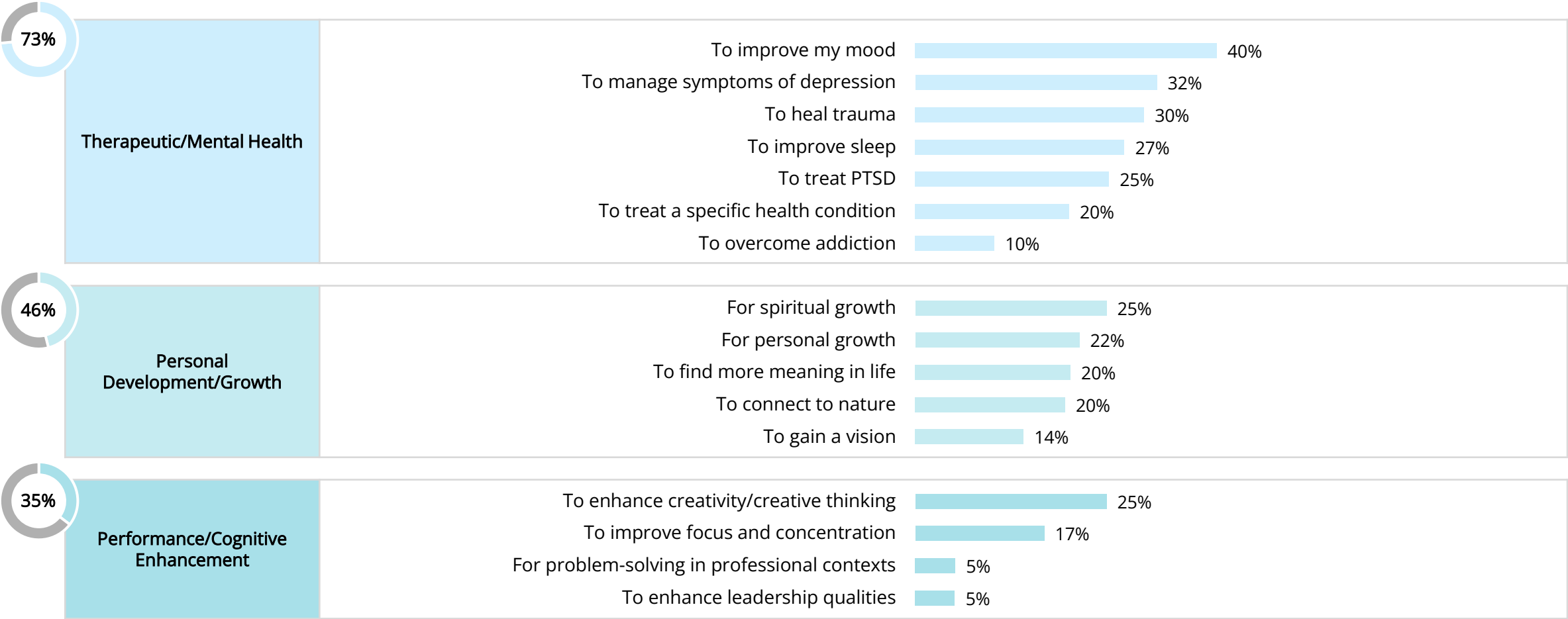
**motivations**



# Motivations for Psychedelic Use

Motivations fall into three categories: therapeutic/mental health, personal development/growth, and performance/cognitive enhancement. Mood improvement leads therapeutic reasons, whilst creativity enhancement tops performance motivations

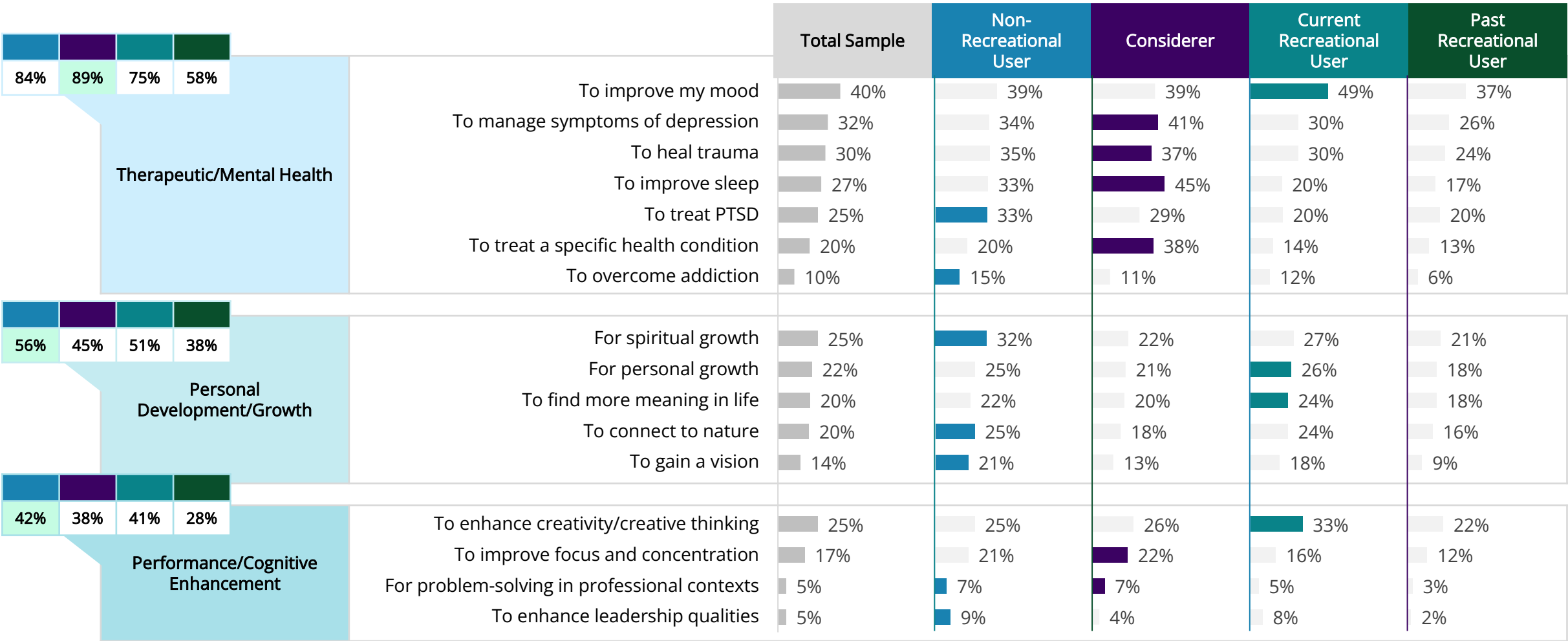
For which of the following purposes do you take/ have you taken/ would you consider taking psychedelic substances



# Motivations for Psychedelic Use

Different user groups show distinct motivational patterns. Non-recreational users emphasise mental health and personal growth, while current recreational users focus more on creativity and connection.

**For which of the following purposes do you take/ have you taken/ would you consider taking psychedelic substances?**



## Importance of Motivations

Mental and physical health benefits rank as primary motivators across all groups, whilst considerers show notably higher interest in health outcomes. Current recreational users place greater emphasis on consciousness expansion and creativity.

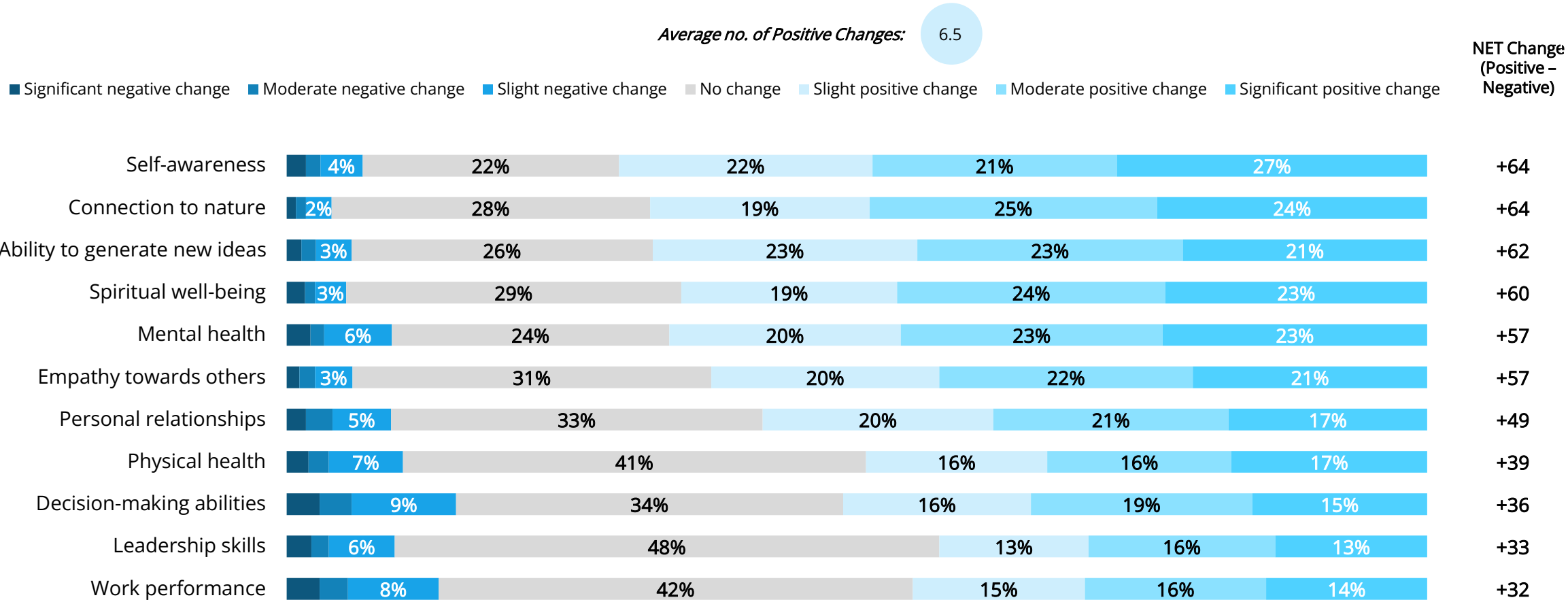
### How important are the following factors in motivating your use or potential use of psychedelics?

Highest in row highlighted: <span></span>		Non-Recreational User	Considerer	Current Recreational User	Past Recreational User
Potential mental health benefits	75%	81%	84%	82%	64%
Potential physical health benefits	70%	78%	84%	74%	56%
Expanding consciousness	66%	73%	61%	83%	59%
Enhancing creativity	63%	67%	64%	78%	56%
Personal development	63%	73%	65%	75%	52%
Spiritual or philosophical growth	61%	70%	60%	74%	50%
Connecting with others	60%	64%	57%	77%	54%
Improving work performance	47%	60%	53%	57%	32%
Improved leadership	40%	55%	42%	52%	25%

# Changes Experienced Due to Psychedelic Use

The data reveals a consistently positive impact on personal development areas, with self-awareness and connection to nature showing the strongest benefits. These findings suggest psychedelics could support higher levels of emotional intelligence and empathy.

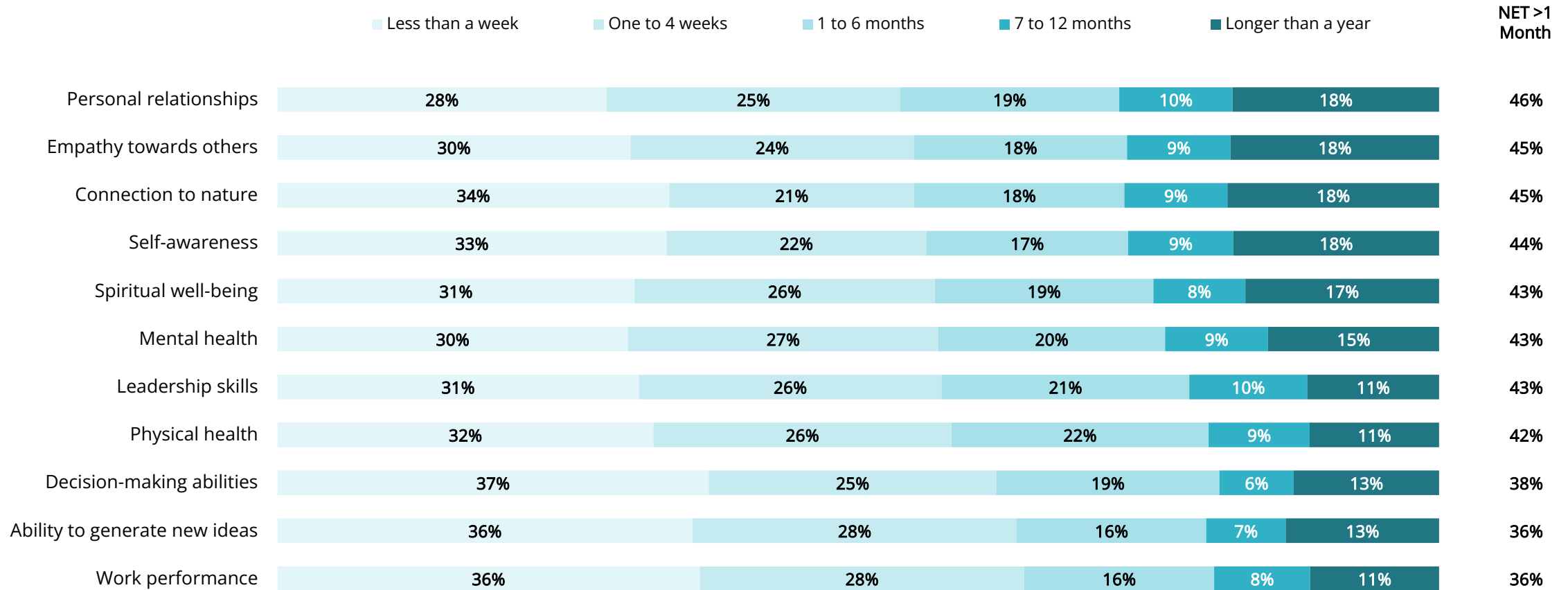
In your experience of using psychedelics, what changes have you observed in the following areas?



## Length of Changes

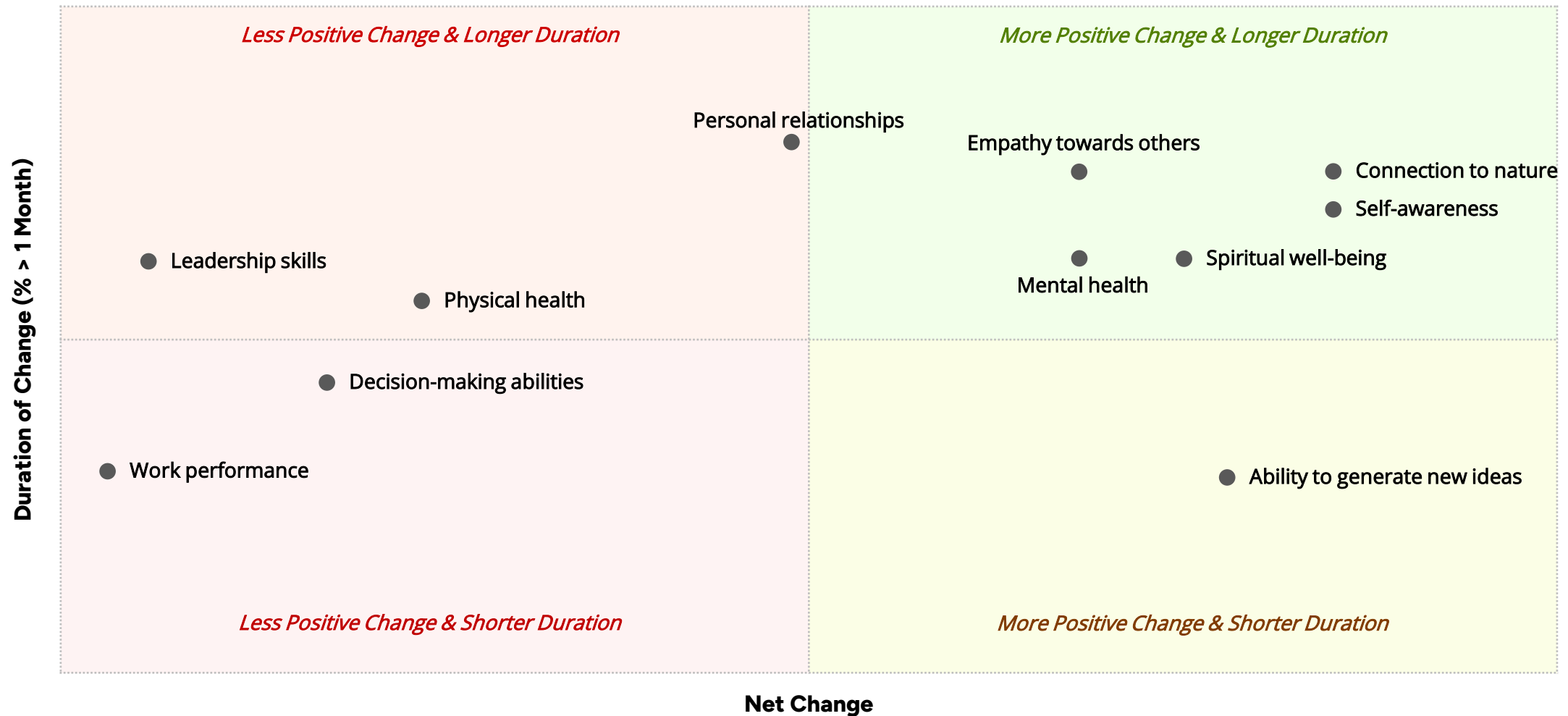
The longevity of positive effects varies significantly, with interpersonal and empathy-related changes showing the most durability. This suggests sustained benefits for leadership qualities and relationship management.

### How long did these changes last for?



## Net Change & Duration Matrix

Analysis reveals that self-awareness and nature connection yield both substantial and lasting benefits. These enduring positive changes could support sustained improvements in emotional intelligence and empathy.



Base: Total Users (n=1,246)

Q5 - In your experience of using psychedelics, what changes have you observed in the following areas?

Q6 - How long did these changes last for?

## Length of Changes

Non-recreational users report notably longer-lasting positive effects compared to recreational users, particularly in areas related to personal growth and interpersonal capabilities.

### How long did these changes last for? (NET >1 Month)

	Total Sample	Non-Recreational User	Recreational User (Current & Past)
Personal relationships	46%	53%	42%
Empathy towards others	45%	52%	41%
Connection to nature	45%	52%	41%
Self-awareness	44%	52%	39%
Spiritual well-being	43%	48%	40%
Mental health	43%	49%	39%
Leadership skills	43%	52%	35%
Physical health	42%	50%	36%
Decision-making abilities	38%	46%	33%
Ability to generate new ideas	36%	46%	30%
Work performance	36%	41%	31%

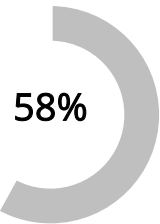
Base: Total Users Who Experienced Positive or Negative Changes (Ranges from n=572 to n=863), Recreational User (Current & Past) (Ranges from n=306 to n=526), Non-Recreational User (Ranges from n=266 to n=337)  
Q6 - How long did these changes last for?

# Attitudes towards Psychedelics: Healthcare and Mental Health

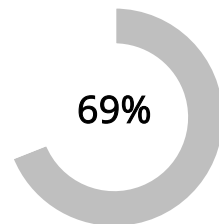
Strong support exists for integrating psychedelics into healthcare frameworks, with particularly robust backing from those with direct experience. This reflects growing acceptance of alternative approaches to wellbeing.

## Attitudes towards Psychedelics (% NET Agree)

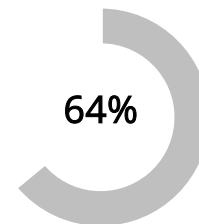
The pharmaceutical industry should play a leading role in developing and distributing psychedelic therapies



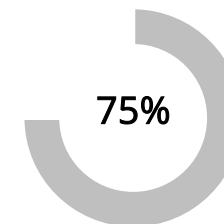
Psychedelics have substantial potential as non-recreational tools for mental health treatment



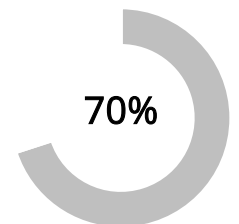
Psychedelic use should be part of mainstream healthcare under professional supervision



Psychedelics should be offered during end-of-life care to help patients find peace



Psychedelic therapy should be recognised as a human right for those seeking alternative mental health treatments

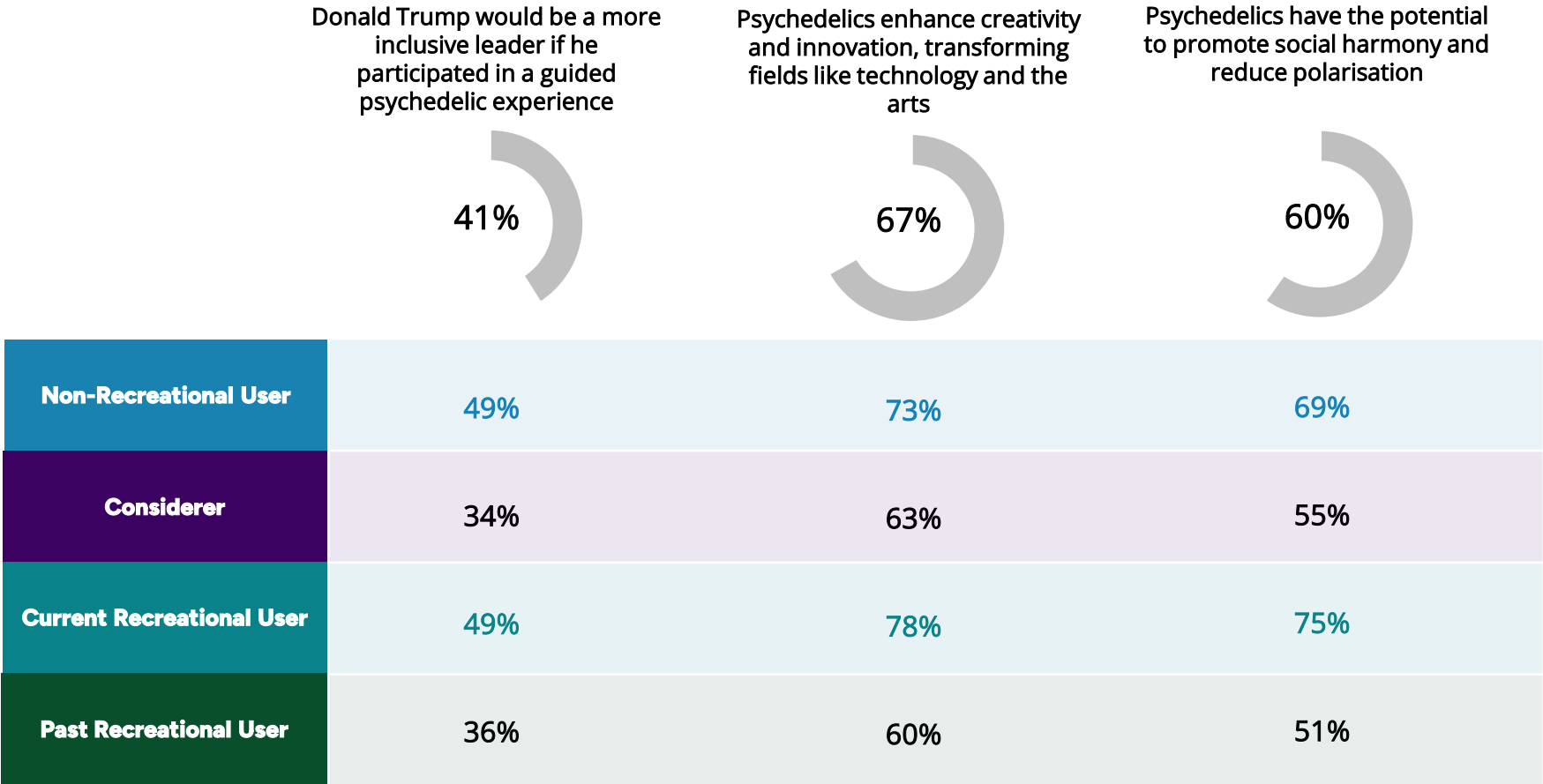


	The pharmaceutical industry should play a leading role in developing and distributing psychedelic therapies	Psychedelics have substantial potential as non-recreational tools for mental health treatment	Psychedelic use should be part of mainstream healthcare under professional supervision	Psychedelics should be offered during end-of-life care to help patients find peace	Psychedelic therapy should be recognised as a human right for those seeking alternative mental health treatments
Non-Recreational User	61%	71%	67%	76%	73%
Considerer	60%	73%	69%	80%	69%
Current Recreational User	67%	78%	72%	74%	76%
Past Recreational User	51%	64%	58%	72%	65%

# Societal and Social Impact

Respondents see significant potential for psychedelics to enhance creativity and innovation, particularly in technology and arts sectors. Non-recreational users express stronger beliefs about creative potential. Opinions about whether psychedelic experiences could influence inclusive leadership.

## Attitudes towards Psychedelics (% NET Agree)



**barriers to access**



# Access to Non-Recreational Psychedelics

Current access challenges vary by user type, with considerers facing the most barriers. Understanding these obstacles is important when exploring psychedelics for leadership development.

How easy or difficult is it to access psychedelics for non-recreational use in your state?



# Barriers to Access of Non-Recreational Psychedelics

Legal restrictions and cost emerge as primary barriers, particularly in Australia. These practical constraints affect both access and decision-making around non-recreational use.

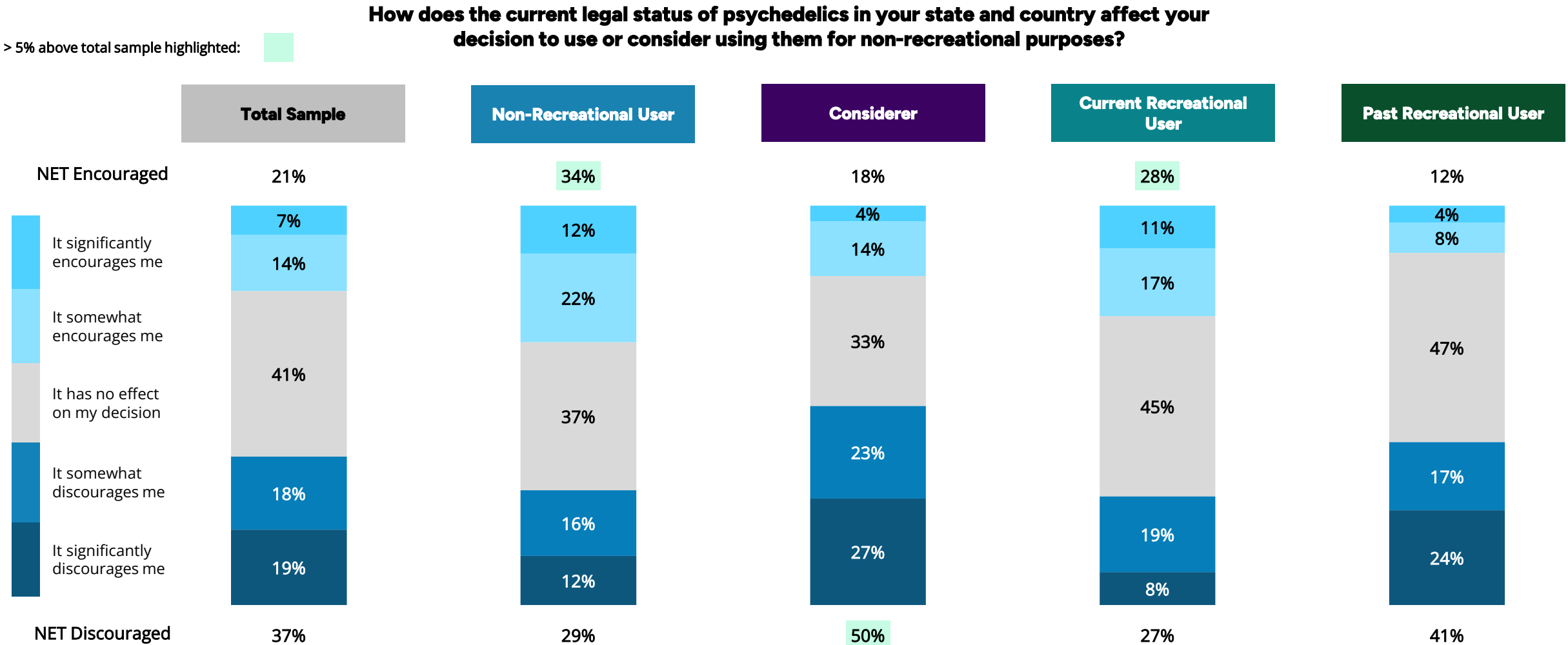
What do you consider to be the main barriers to accessing psychedelics for non-recreational purposes?

> 5% above total sample highlighted:

	Total		Non-Recreational User	Considerer	Current Recreational User	Past Recreational User
Legal restrictions	53%		45%	61%	50%	56%
High cost	40%	Australia: 46% USA: 35%	42%	48%	32%	38%
Difficulty finding a qualified guide or practitioner	33%		28%	41%	26%	35%
Personal safety concerns	31%		29%	40%	22%	31%
Lack of reliable information	30%		27%	43%	23%	29%
Limited availability of substances	28%		30%	22%	28%	30%
Social stigma	24%		26%	23%	27%	22%
No major barriers	6%		5%	5%	8%	6%
Other	1%		1%	1%	0%	2%

# Legal Status of Non-Recreational Psychedelics

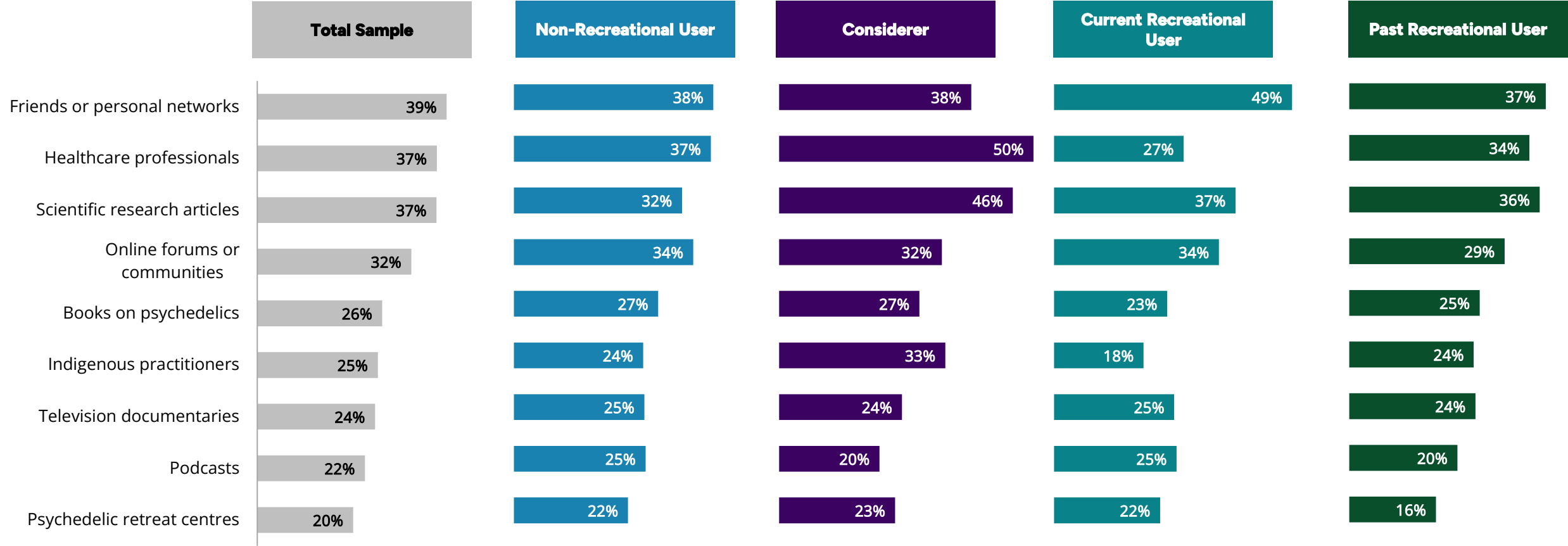
Legal restrictions and cost emerge as primary barriers, particularly in Australia. These practical constraints affect both access and decision-making around non-recreational use.



# Information Sources for Non-Recreational Psychedelics

Professional and academic sources are highly valued, alongside personal networks. This balanced approach to information-gathering reflects thoughtful consideration of psychedelics for personal development.

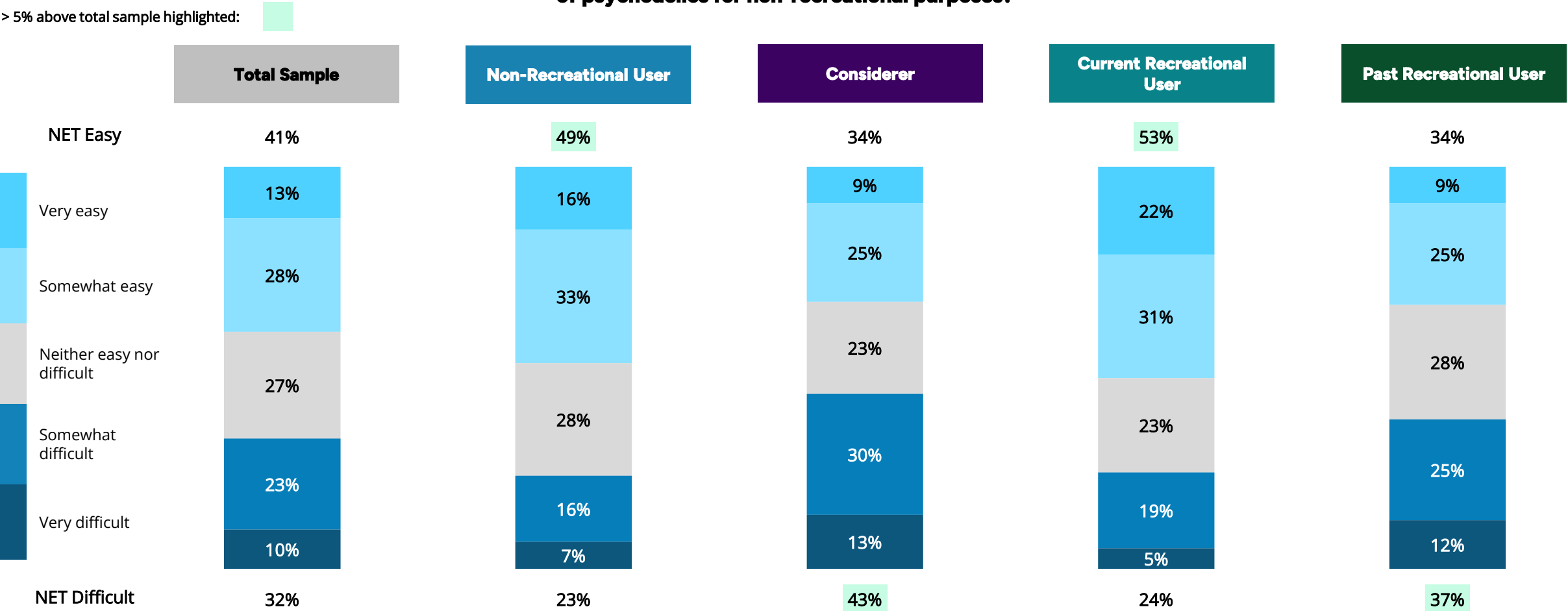
What information sources do you use/ would you use to find out more about using psychedelics for non-recreational purposes?



# Access to Information about Non-Recreational Psychedelics

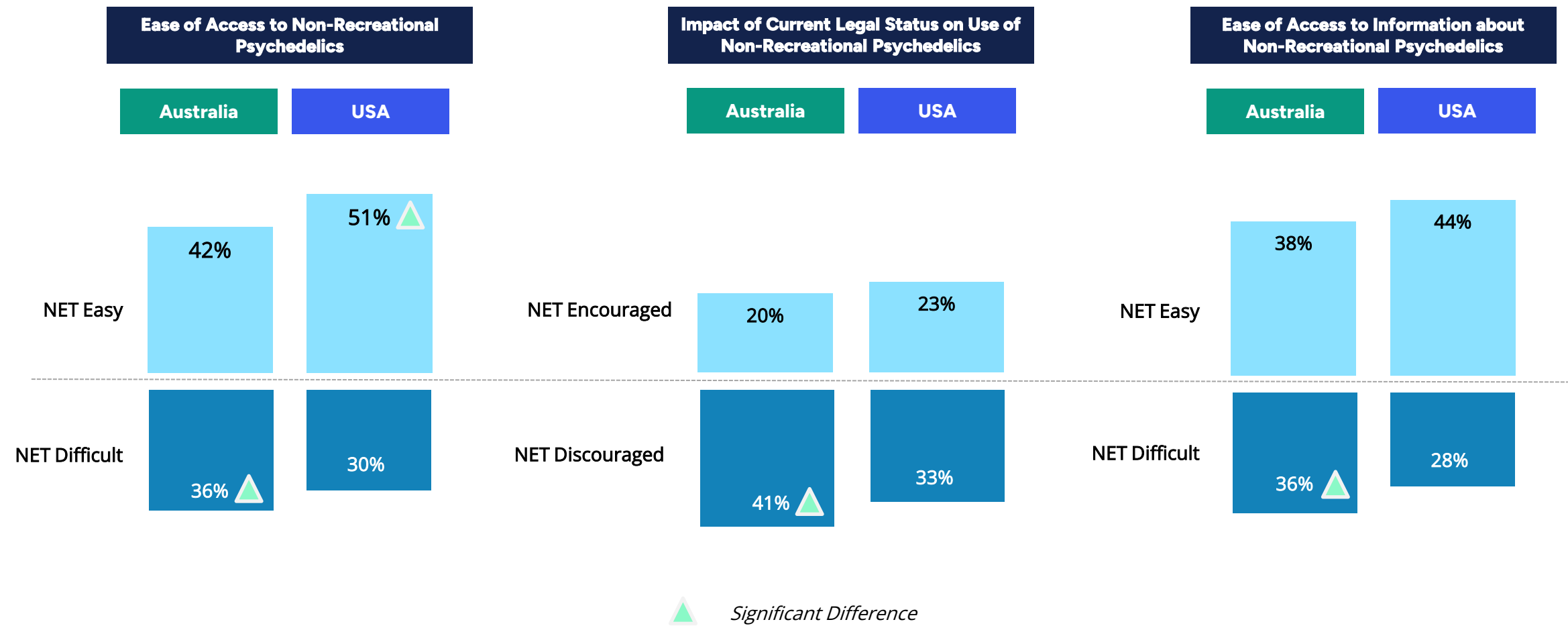
Finding reliable, unbiased information presents varying degrees of difficulty across user groups. Current users report greater ease, suggesting experience builds information-seeking capability.

How easy or difficult is it to find and access impartial, unbiased information about the use of psychedelics for non-recreational purposes?



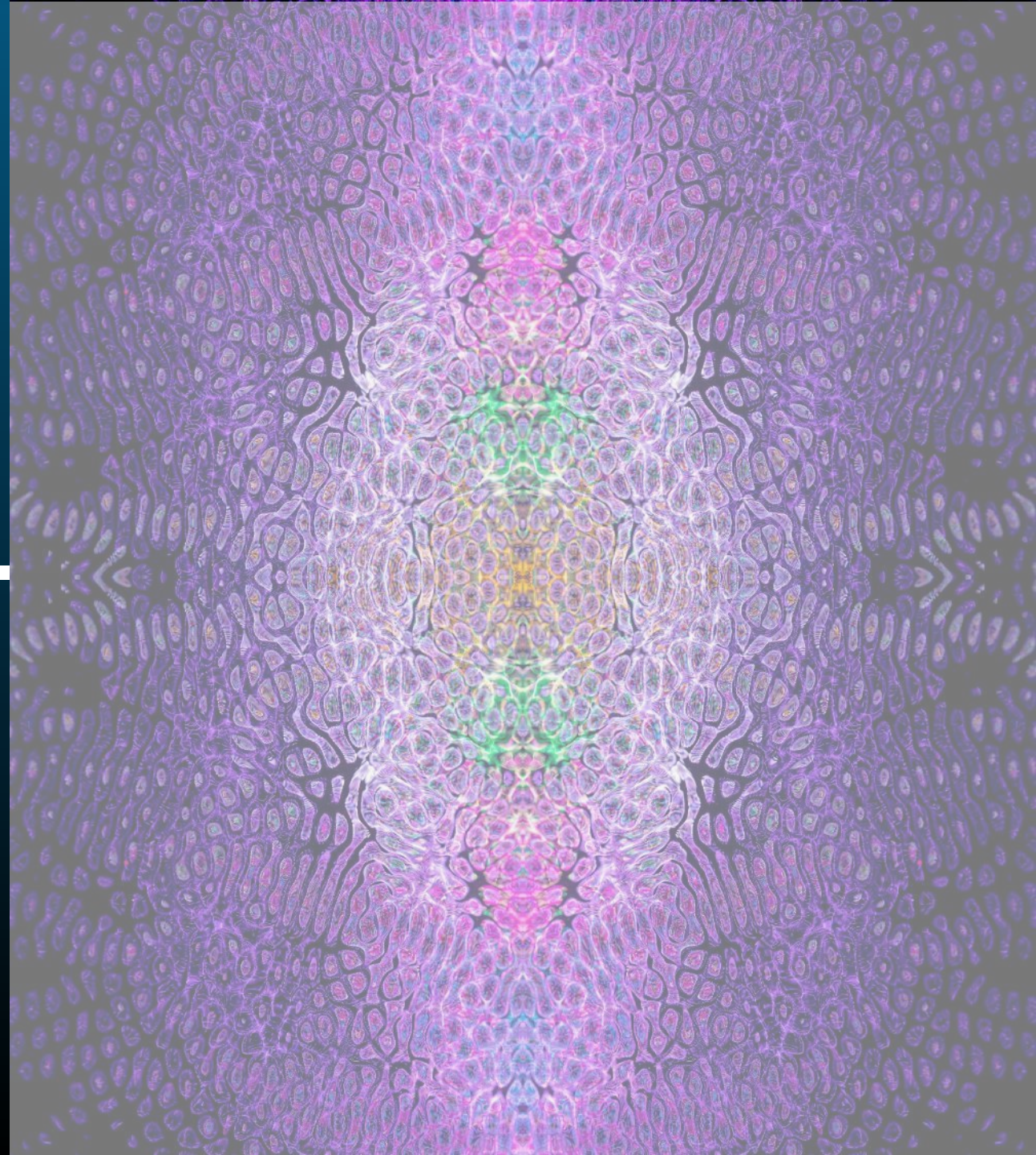
# Access to Non-Recreational Psychedelics: Country Summary

Differences emerge between Australian and American experiences regarding ease of access and legal impact, reflecting distinct regulatory and cultural environments in each market.



Q11. How easy or difficult is it to access psychedelics for non-recreational use in your state? Base: n = 1,223 (excludes 'Not sure')  
Q13 - How does the current legal status of psychedelics in your state and country affect your decision to use or consider using them for non-recreational purposes? Base: n=1,373 (Excludes 'Not sure')  
Q21 - How easy or difficult is it to find and access impartial, unbiased information about the use of psychedelics for non-recreational purposes? Base: n=1,344 (Excludes 'Not sure')

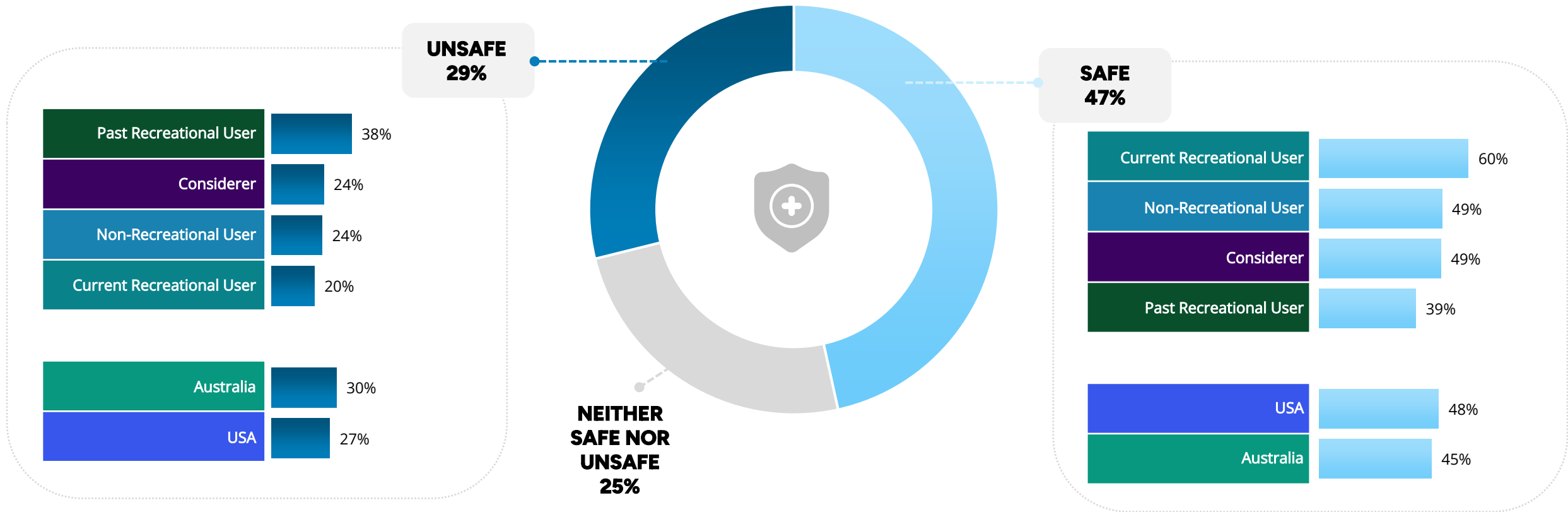
# **safety and risks**



# Safety of Non-Recreational Psychedelics

Views on safety vary significantly by user type, with experienced users reporting higher confidence. This suggests familiarity may influence risk assessment approaches.

How would you assess the overall safety of using psychedelics for non-recreational purposes?



# Safety of Non-Recreational Psychedelics

Detailed feedback reveals a spectrum of experiences, with controlled environments and professional supervision emerging as key safety factors for optimal outcomes.

## UNSAFE 29%

Common themes include: Uncertainty and unpredictability, mind-altering effects, lack of regulation and quality control, negative personal experiences, medical and psychological risks

"They can **alter your brain** and your behaviour in ways that are **unexpected and unknowable**"

"It can lead to **schizophrenia**, I've watched it happen to a friend"

"Because everyone's bodies are different and **react differently**"

"The **stigma** around drugs as a whole and potential for **negative side effects** or outcomes"

"Anything that **alters your mind** and makes you **hallucinate** is **somewhat unsafe**"

"Can lead to **psychosis**"

"It can lead to **various side effects** that may affect everyday activities"

"I have only ever used these drugs for recreational purposes and would **NEVER** use them for non-recreational purposes. They are not only **illegal** but also **increasingly dangerous**"

## SAFE 47%

Common themes include: Moderation and dosage control, scientific research and medical supervision, potential mental health benefits, natural vs. synthetic concerns, controlled environments enhancing safety, historical and cultural use, regulation and legality, personal experiences and anecdotal evidence

"**Medically approved** for this purpose already, no really dangerous/risky effects or side effects in particular"

"When taken at the **correct dose** in a **controlled environment** there is very little risk or danger involved"

"It would be in a **controlled environment** with a **controlled dose**, which would be pure, and a **medical professional** would be there with you"

"it would be **under supervision** of a physician, psychiatrist or someone that has the qualifications to do so"

"Most substances used to treat disorders are **administered under medical supervision**. Most of these substances **do not cause lasting addiction or chemical dependency**"

"Use in a non recreational or medical setting automatically denotes to me that you are being **observed by professionals** that are trained to **take care in any scenario**"

"My belief is that they should not be used for medicinal purposes unless they have been **tested and approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration**. IF they have been approved then it is up to the **medical team** to determine the **appropriate dosage**"

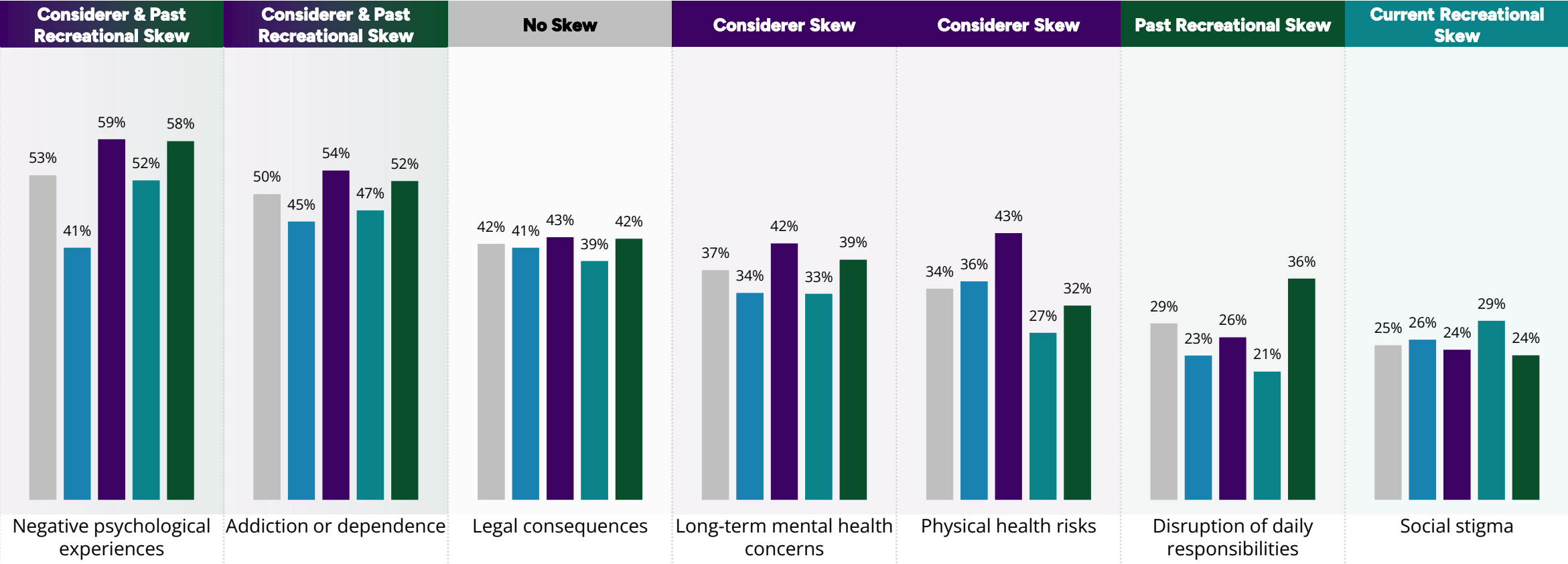
"As far as you **follow doctors instructions** and get monitored, it will be safe"

# Risks of Non-Recreational Psychedelics

User segments identify different risks, with psychological considerations ranking highest across all segments. Current users express less concern about legal consequences, while past users and considerers are more wary of negative psychological experiences.

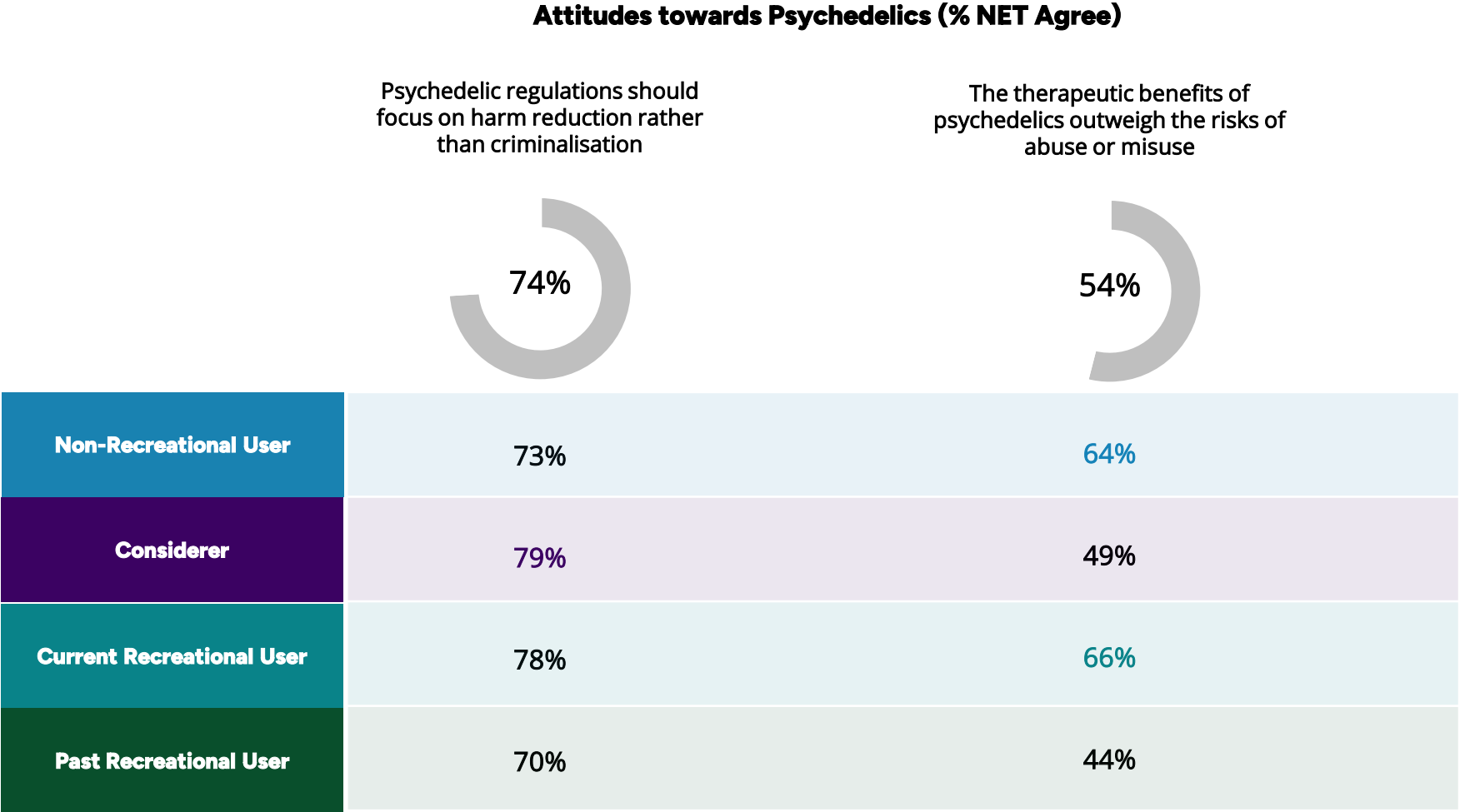
What do you consider to be the primary risks associated with using psychedelics for non-recreational purposes?

■ Total sample ■ Non-Recreational User ■ Considerer ■ Current Recreational User ■ Past Recreational User



# Attitudes towards Psychedelics: Risk and Regulation

Strong support exists for harm reduction approaches over criminalisation, particularly among those with direct experience. This indicates preference for safety-focused frameworks.

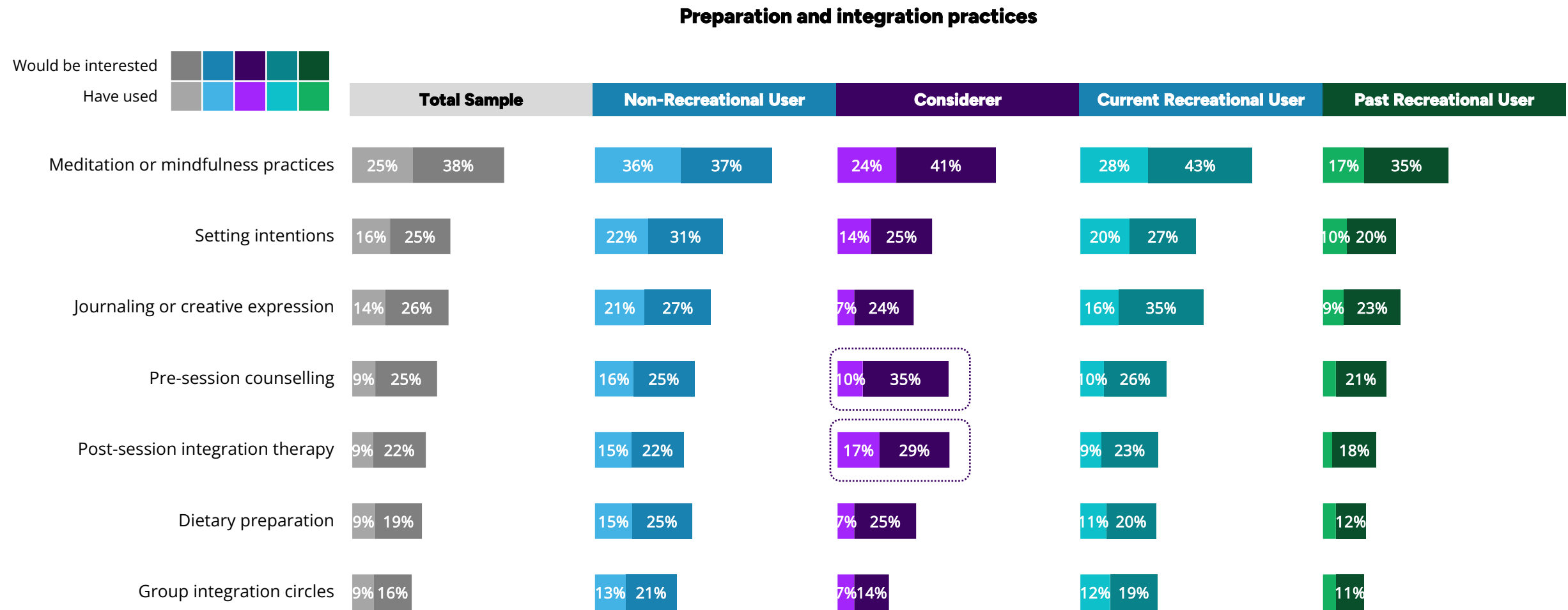


# **preparations and practices**



# Engagement and Interest in Preparation and Integration Practices

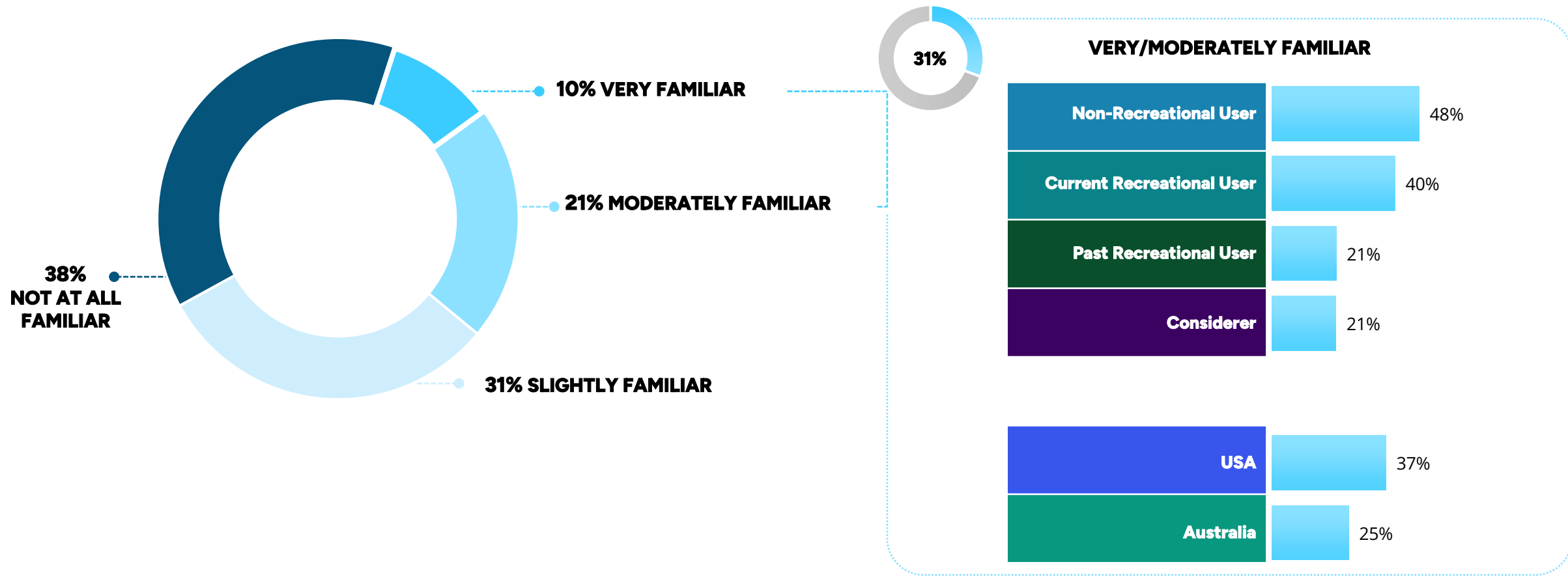
Meditation and mindfulness emerge as preferred preparation methods, suggesting strong interest in holistic approaches to personal development and leadership growth.



# Familiarity with Indigenous Ceremonies and Traditions

Familiarity with traditional practices varies significantly, with non-recreational users showing the highest awareness. This reflects growing interest in established wisdom.

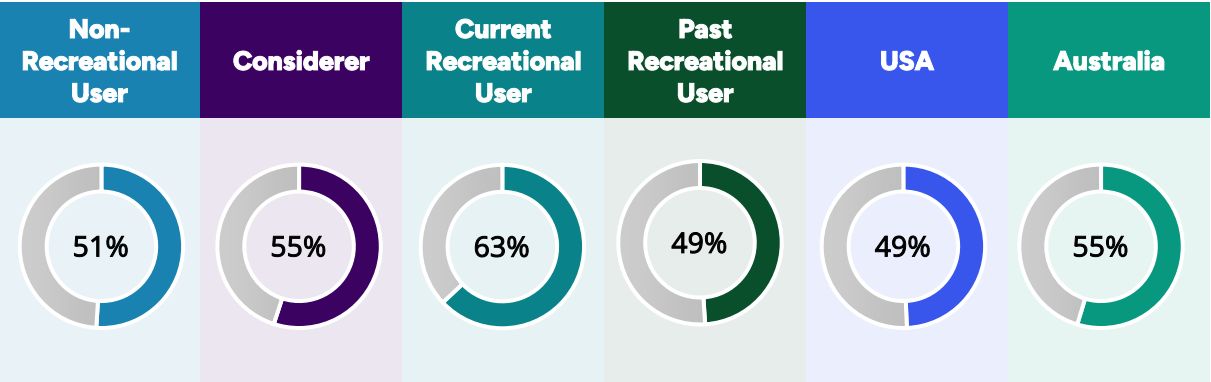
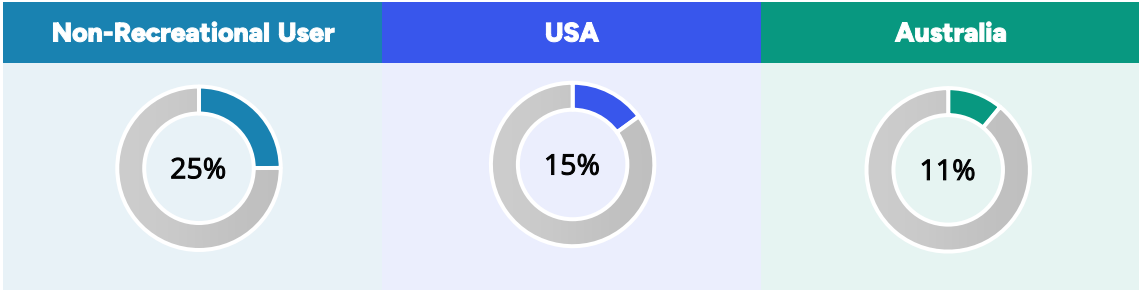
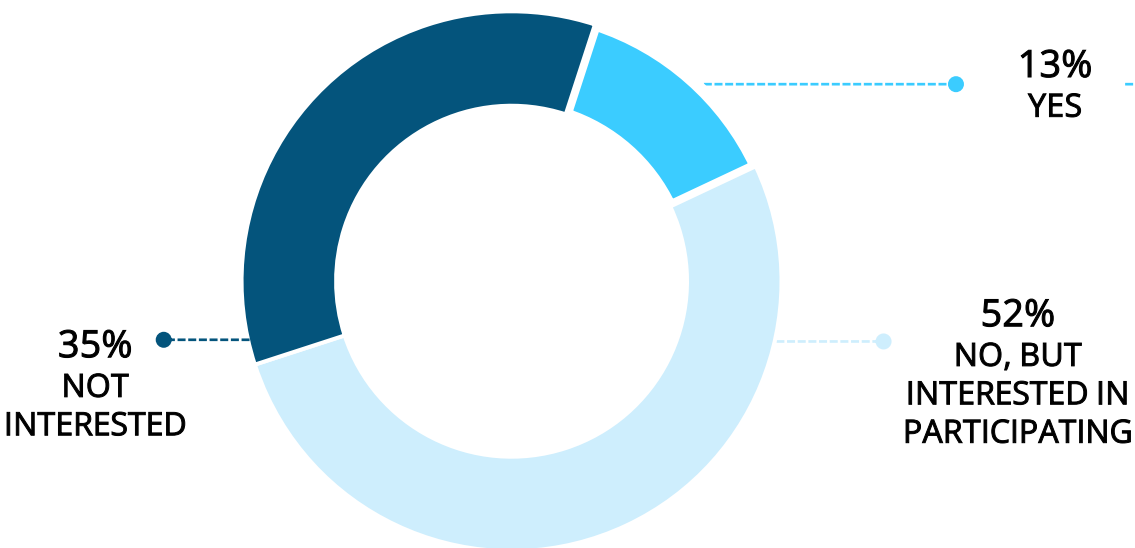
How familiar are you with indigenous traditions that involve the use of psychedelics?



# Participation in Indigenous Psychedelic Ceremonies

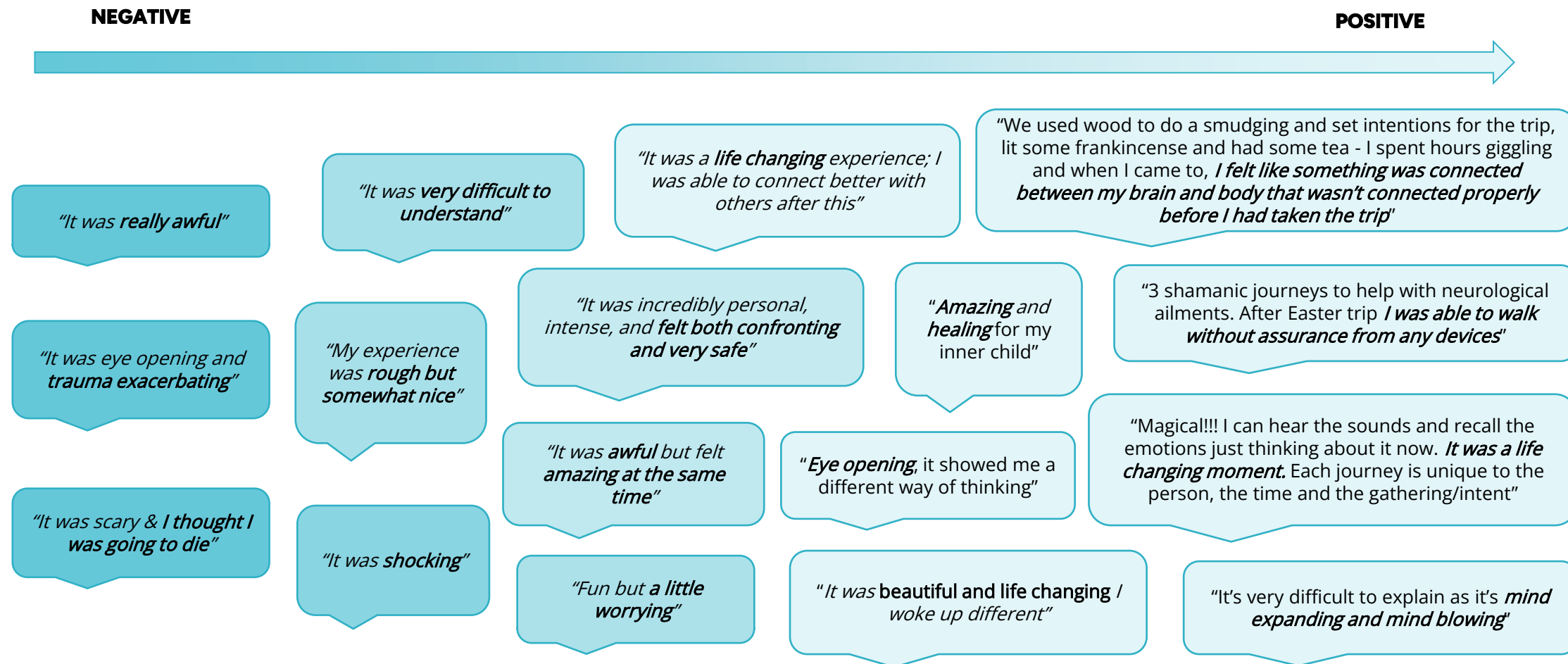
A notable portion have engaged with traditional ceremonies, with varying experiences reported. This indicates growing interest in established approaches to personal development.

Have you participated in a psychedelic ceremony led by an indigenous practitioner?



# Experience with Indigenous Psychedelic Ceremonies

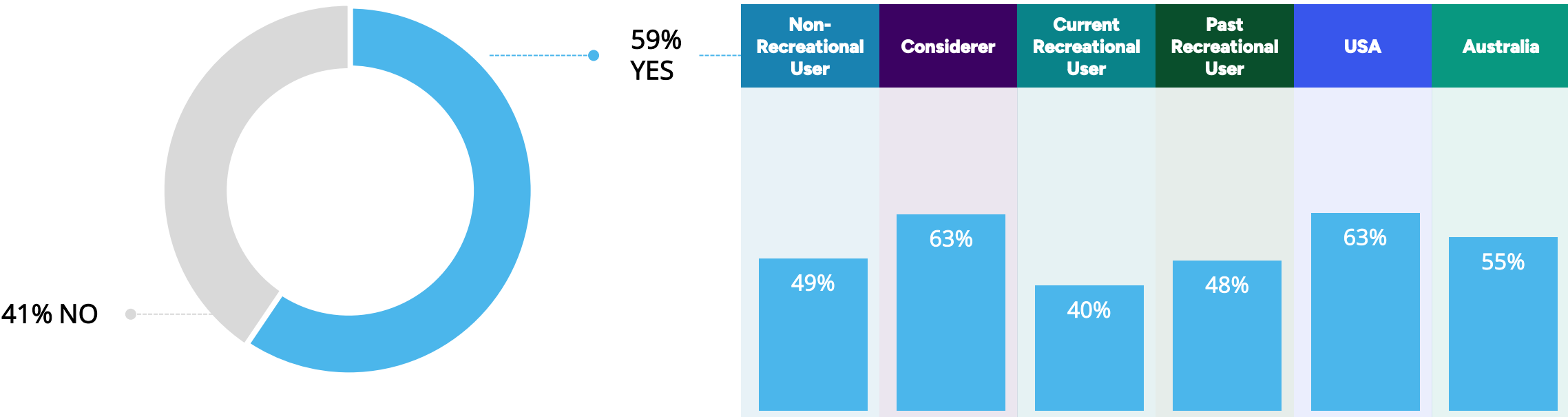
Participant feedback reveals transformative experiences alongside challenges, highlighting the importance of proper preparation and support structures.



# Ceremonial substances and indigenous traditions

Strong interest in indigenous-led ceremonies exists across all groups, suggesting appreciation for traditional knowledge in personal development contexts.

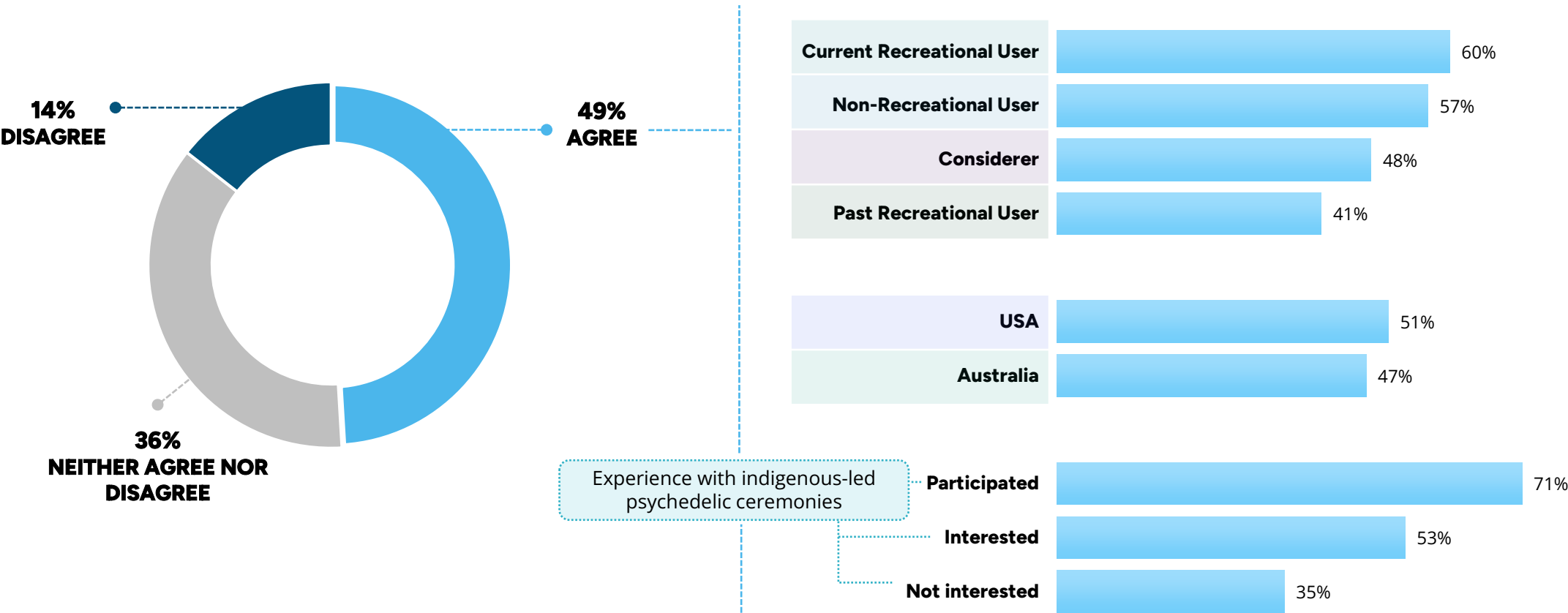
Would you be interested in participating in a psychedelic ceremony led by an indigenous practitioner?



# Attitudes Towards Indigenous Psychedelic Practices

Concerns about commercialisation impacting traditional practices are widespread, particularly among those with direct ceremonial experience. This reflects respect for cultural heritage.

**“The commercialisation of psychedelics could undermine traditional and Indigenous practices”**



### Non-Recreational Users:

- 49% view psychedelics as safe for therapeutic purposes, with significant positive outcomes reported
- 49% report experiencing positive mental health changes that lasted longer than one month
- 52% report lasting positive effects (>1 month) in leadership skills compared to recreational users (35%)
- 25% have participated in ceremonies led by indigenous practitioners

### Non-Recreational Considerers:

- 49% perceive psychedelics as safe for non-recreational use, showing strong openness to therapeutic applications
- 41% cite managing symptoms of depression and 37% cite healing trauma as key motivations
- 63% express interest in participating in indigenous-led ceremonies, indicating desire for traditional knowledge
- 79% support regulatory approaches focused on harm reduction rather than criminalisation

1. **Leadership Quality Enhancement:** The data showing significant positive changes in empathy (63% net positive) and decision-making abilities (51% net positive) suggests potential pathways for enhancing key leadership capabilities
2. **Personal Development Insights:** The 52% of non-recreational users reporting lasting positive effects in self-awareness suggests opportunities to better understand how these qualities contribute to individual effectiveness and growth
3. **Creative Thinking:** With 76% of non-recreational users perceiving an ability to generate new ideas, there are implications for how innovative thinking might be fostered through various means
4. **Interpersonal Effectiveness:** With personal relationships showing the most durable benefits (46% lasting >1 month), the implications for improved collaboration and communication are significant
5. **Ethical Frameworks:** As 57% of non-recreational users express concern about commercialisation undermining traditional practices, ethical considerations will be critical as this field evolves
6. **Evidence-Based Approaches:** The high trust in healthcare professionals (37%) and scientific research (37%) indicates the importance of rigorous research and evidence in guiding future developments



# Thank You

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