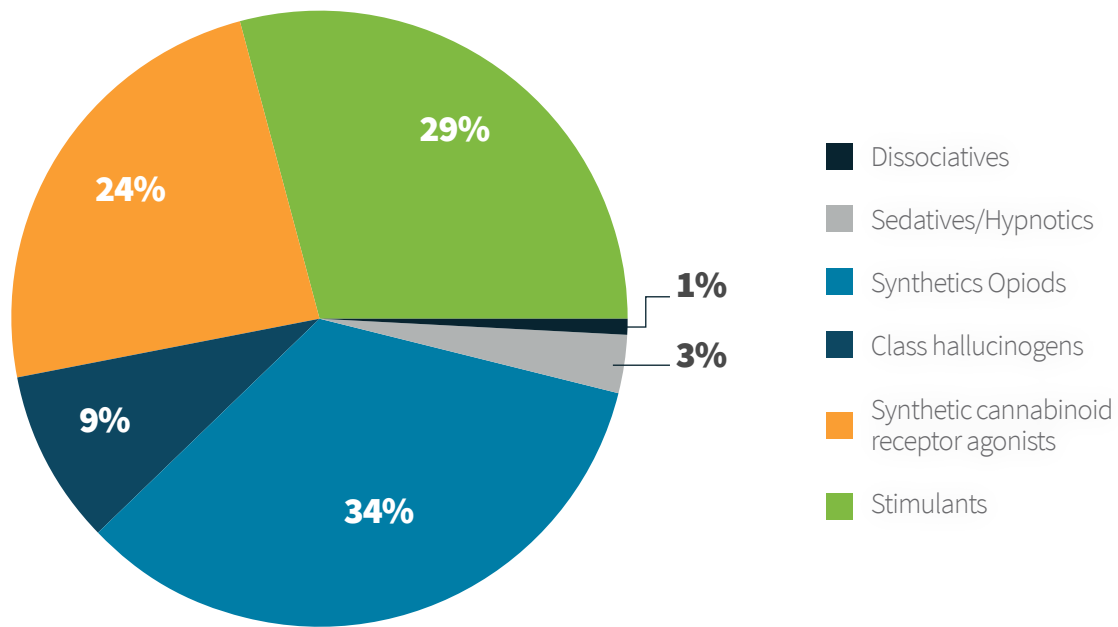


# The growing problem of NPS

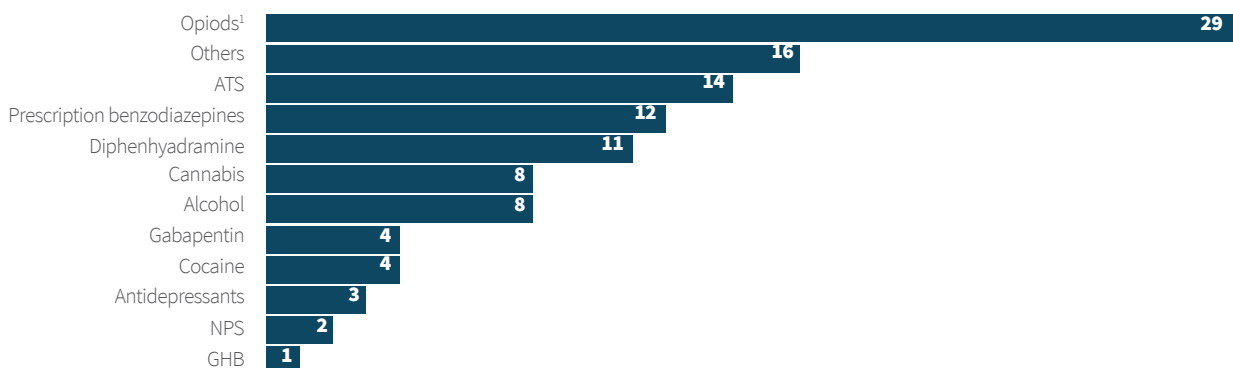
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Early Warning Advisory (EWA) monitors, analyzes and reports on NPS trends to help provide effective evidence-based policy responses and improve the understanding of NPS distribution patterns and use worldwide.

As of January 2020, 120 countries and territories reported the cumulative emergence of 950 individual NPS.<sup>1</sup> The distribution of new cases reported to the UNODC EWA since the beginning of 2018 is shown below:



Between 2016 and 2018, just over half of all NPS toxicology cases reported to the Tox-Portal involved opioids or synthetic cannabinoids. However, the most recent information from 2019 indicates that benzodiazepine-type NPS now account for most cases, demonstrating the dynamic nature of NPS trends.<sup>1,2</sup>

Additionally, poly-drug use is very common; in 2019, a high proportion of reported NPS fatalities involved kratom and in all these cases, additional substances were detected. This presents a significant challenge when trying to assess the significance and contribution of a particular drug in a person's death.<sup>1,2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>*Kratom is the colloquial name of the plant Mitragyna speciosa which has some opioid and stimulant properties, containing pharmacologically active alkaloids especially mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine.*

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2019. Current NPS Threats Volume II. [online] Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/Current\\_NPS\\_Threats\\_Volume\\_II\\_Web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/Current_NPS_Threats_Volume_II_Web.pdf) [Accessed 3 February 2020].

2. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2019. Current NPS Threats Volume I. [online] Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/opioids-crisis/Current\\_NPS\\_Threats\\_-\\_Volume\\_I.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/opioids-crisis/Current_NPS_Threats_-_Volume_I.pdf)

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