

**A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research**

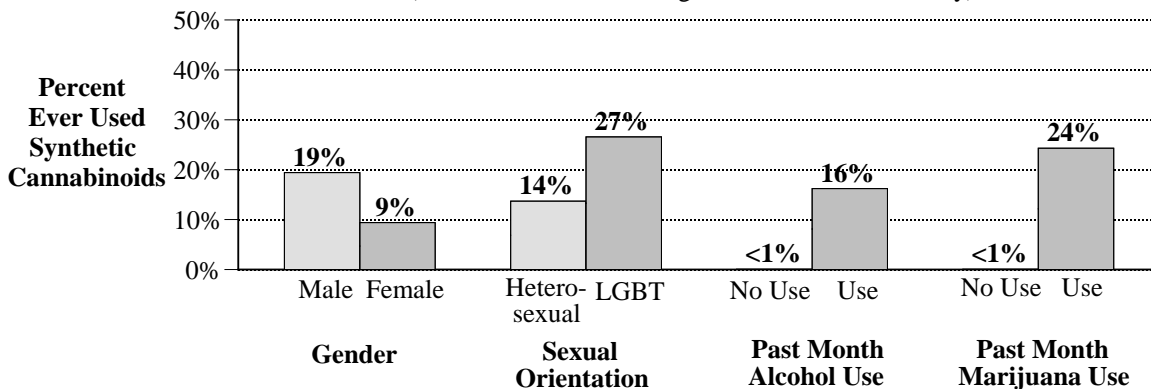
**University of Maryland, College Park**

***Study Finds That 14% of Undergraduate Students at a Southeastern University Report Synthetic Cannabinoid Use; Users More Likely to Be Male and Identify as LGBT***

Synthetic cannabinoid use among college students at a Southeastern university is concentrated in males and in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) community, according to the first known study to obtain a detailed profile of users of any type of synthetic cannabinoid.\* Overall, 14% of undergraduate students reported lifetime use of synthetic cannabinoids, with an average initiation age of 18. Males were twice as likely as females (19% vs. 9%) to report synthetic cannabinoid use. Sexual orientation was also found to be related to synthetic cannabinoid use. Students who self-identified themselves as LGBT were nearly twice as likely as heterosexual students (27% vs. 14%) to report lifetime use (see figure below), and reported use was equally high among both male and female LGBT students (data not shown). The study also found that lifetime use of synthetic cannabinoids was virtually non-existent among those who did not report past month alcohol (0.3%) or marijuana (0.4%) use, compared to 16% and 24%, respectively, of past month users of these substances. According to the authors, “future research should investigate the higher use among [LGBT individuals], and prevention efforts may be most effective when reaching out to the LGBT community” (p. 6).

*Editor’s Note: It is impossible to determine the types of synthetic cannabinoids contained in synthetic marijuana products without specific testing—studies have shown that the types and amounts of synthetic cannabinoids can vary greatly between products, lots, and even within the same package<sup>1</sup>. In reality, youth who report using synthetic marijuana likely have no idea what specific synthetic cannabinoid they are using or what the effects will be.*

**Percentage of Undergraduate College Students Reporting Lifetime Synthetic Cannabinoid Use, by Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Past Month Alcohol or Marijuana Use, 2011-2012**  
(n=2,349 students at a large Southeastern University)



\*According to the authors, their study “provides the first detailed profile of synthetic cannabinoid users from a random sample of young adults” that was “not limited to one of a few forms of synthetic cannabinoids, but instead asked about any of the compounds in that category” (p. 4). Respondents were asked if they had “used any synthetic marijuana (K2, Spice, Mr. Miyagi, Pot-Pourri, etc.) ever or in the last year” (p. 2). The survey “utilized the term ‘synthetic marijuana’ rather than the more scientific ‘synthetic cannabinoid’ since that language would be better understood by respondents” (p. 6).

<sup>1</sup>e.g., Hillebrand, J, et al., “Legal Highs on the Internet,” *Substance Use and Misuse*, 45(3): 330-340, 2010.

NOTES: Data were collected from a self-report survey administered to 2,349 undergraduate students in 40 classes at a large public university in the State of Georgia between November 2011 and March 2012.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Stogner, J.M. and Miller, B.L., “A Spicy Kind of High: A Profile of Synthetic Cannabinoid Users,” *Journal of Substance Use*, Advance online publication (doi:10.3109/14659891.2013.770571), 2013. For more information, contact Dr. Stogner at stogner@email.unc.edu.