

New Psychoactive Substances Studies from Central Asia and China

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In Central Asia and China, where new threats emerge among old struggles, we build a bridge of science and social care



Potential Conflicts

- No conflicts of interest are present in relation to the financial, professional, or personal affiliations that might affect the objectivity of this presentation

Context of the book

- **Rapid Spread of NPS:** Central Asia and China are experiencing a surge in the production, distribution, and consumption of new psychoactive substances (NPS), complicating control and mitigation efforts.
- **Regional Vulnerability:** Central Asia's strategic location as part of the "Northern Route" makes it a key corridor for trafficking drugs from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe.
- **Shift from Traditional to Synthetic Drugs:** There is a shift from opioids and cannabis to synthetic analogues, posing new challenges for treatment and prevention approaches.
- **Role of the Internet:** Easy access to NPS through online shops facilitates the spread of synthetic cathinones and cannabinoids across the population.
- **Gaps in Legal Framework:** The emergence of NPS outpaces current legal mechanisms, requiring flexible and rapid regulatory measures and international collaboration.
- **Public Health Risks:** NPS have unpredictable and severe health effects, raising major concerns and necessitating a comprehensive response.
- **Need for Cross-Border Cooperation:** Combatting NPS requires international coordination, information sharing, and an early warning system to protect public health.

Figure 8: Number of different NPS reported in Central Asia (2013-2016)

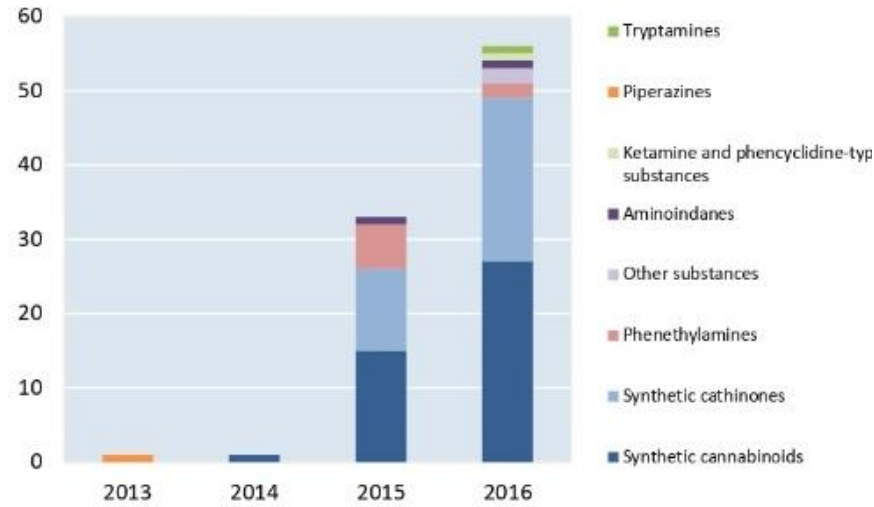
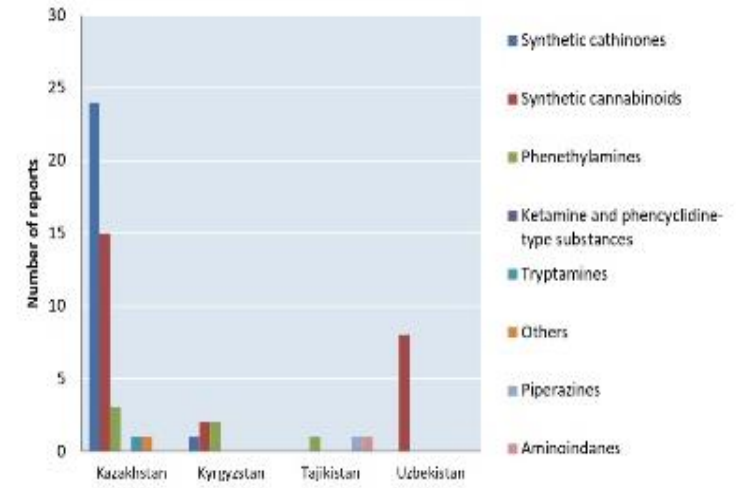
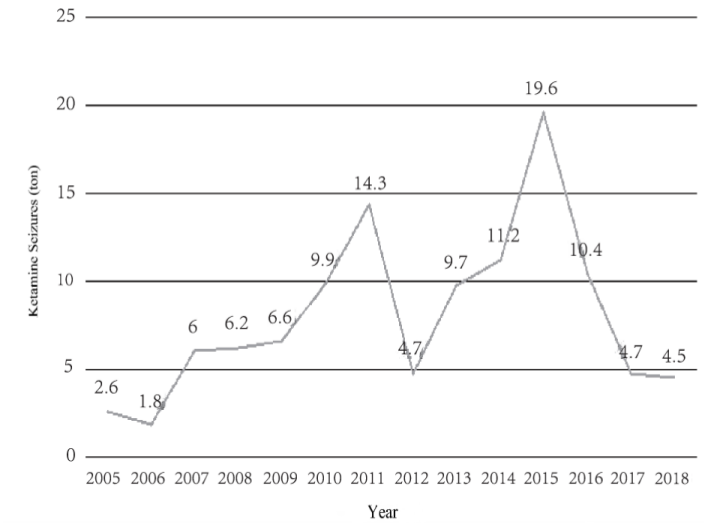
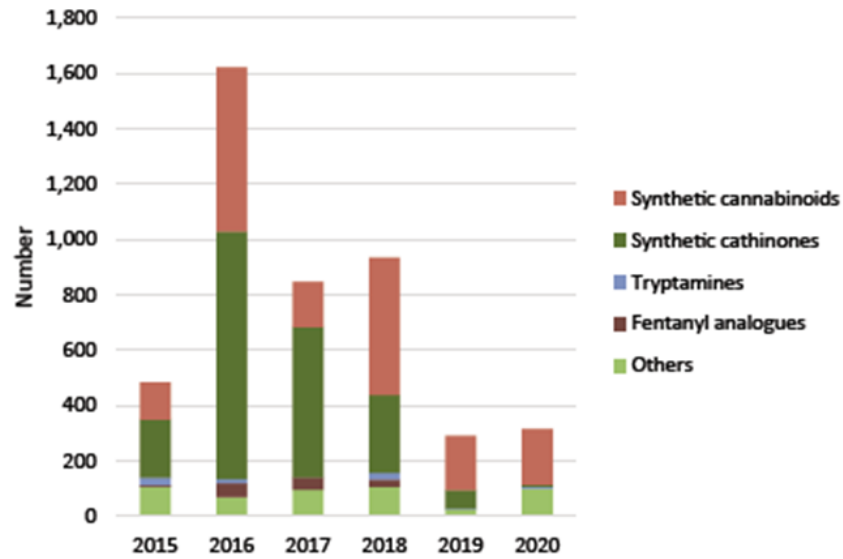


Figure 10: Number of different NPS reported in Central Asia, by country (2013-2016)



Source: UNODC, Early Warning Advisory on NPS (EWA)

Limited Data on NPS in the Region



Main Argument of the Book

- **Unique Regional Focus:** This book uniquely examines Central Asia and China, regions at the crossroads of traditional drug trafficking routes and emerging NPS markets, providing insights that are not covered in existing global research.
- **Integration of Social and Scientific Perspectives:** Combines social work, public health, and scientific research to offer a holistic understanding of the NPS crisis, addressing both the human and systemic impacts.
- **Highlighting Emerging Social Challenges:** Discusses how NPS contribute to new social issues, such as mental health crises and economic strains, affecting communities in ways distinct from traditional drugs.
- **Call for a New Generation of Interventions:** Advocates for innovative intervention models that respond to the evolving nature of NPS, including technology-driven solutions and community-based support systems.
- **Emphasis on Prevention and Education:** Argues that prevention and public education are as essential as enforcement, with a focus on equipping communities and vulnerable populations with knowledge and resources to combat NPS threats.

Relevance – Why This Book is Important

- **Addresses a Growing Regional Crisis:** The book is a timely resource for understanding the rapidly escalating NPS crisis in Central Asia and China, where traditional approaches to drug control are proving inadequate.
- **Fills a Knowledge Gap:** Provides critical insights into a region where data on NPS is limited, filling a gap in both research and practical guidance for policymakers, law enforcement, and healthcare professionals.
- **Guides Policy and Practice:** Offers actionable recommendations for shaping policy, law enforcement strategies, and healthcare responses that are both informed by local contexts and internationally aligned.
- **Informs Public Health Initiatives:** The book's findings support the development of more effective public health interventions aimed at reducing NPS-related harm, especially in vulnerable and underserved populations.
- **Promotes Awareness and Prevention:** Aims to increase awareness of the dangers of NPS within the general public and to enhance prevention efforts through educational outreach and community engagement.

Book layout

- **Section 1: Country Overviews**
 - Detailed analysis of NPS trends, challenges, and responses in key countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China.
- **Section 2: Harms and Social Risks of NPS Use in Vulnerable Populations**
 - Focus on high-risk groups including youth, LGBTQ+ communities, women, and incarcerated individuals, with insights on the social and health impacts.
- **Section 3: Demand Reduction and Harm Reduction Strategies**
 - Exploration of prevention, treatment, and harm reduction methods, emphasizing the need for innovative, adaptive approaches to NPS issues.

Country Overviews: NPS trends

Kazakhstan

- Kazakhstan has seen a tenfold increase in synthetic drug confiscations since 2019
- Clandestine labs now produce NPS domestically, using precursors from Russia and China
- Accelerated bans and harsher penalties target NPS trafficking and production, treating it as a serious crime

China

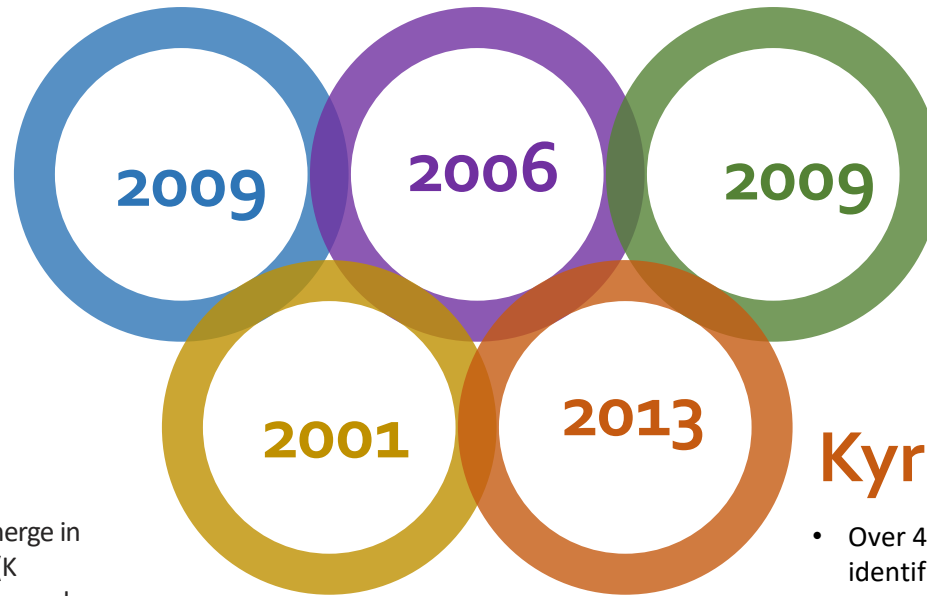
- NPS problems began to emerge in China, mainly in ketamine (K powder) and methcathinone and other substances.
- The illegal production of ketamine began around 2004 and gradually expanded, peaking in 2011 and 2015.
- Since 2016, the annual identification of synthetic cathinones in China has shown a downward trend.

Tajikistan

- The NPS use is rising in Tajikistan, particularly among youth and marginalized groups, often linked to socio-economic challenges such as poverty and unemployment.
- Patterns of use indicate a shift from traditional substances to synthetic drugs and pharmaceutical drugs, with increasing availability and lower prices contributing to higher consumption rates among vulnerable populations

Uzbekistan

- NPS, mainly synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones, have surged, with most offenses in Tashkent (capital).
- The rise of online NPS distribution and local clandestine labs poses a growing regulatory challenge.



Kyrgyzstan

- Over 400 NPS variants were identified by 2014, surpassing 800 by 2020.
- NPS mainly entered Kyrgyzstan from Russia, China, and Western Europe; local synthesis began in 2019.
- Major NPS seizures between 2020 and 2023 included α -PVP, THC, and various synthetic cathinones, which became widely known as "salts" or "bath salts."

Country Overviews: services (1)

Services	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	China
Legal Regulation	Yes, established laws for rapid NPS control	Yes, regulated but evolving	Yes, legislative strategies in place	Yes, with a focus on drug control	Yes, extensive regulation for over 170 NPS
Epidemiological Monitoring	Fragmental, part of national drug strategy	Yes, in cooperation with NGOs	Developing, with challenges	Limited, with international assistance	Yes, through National Drug Testing Laboratory
Early Warning System	Partly, in collaboration with UNODC	Developing, coordinated with international bodies	No formal system, but some reporting	No formal system	Yes, early detection and reporting systems
Preventive Programs	Yes, includes education and awareness	Limited, some NGO efforts	Emerging, with youth focus	Limited but present through NGOs	Yes, preventive efforts through public health

Country Overviews: services (2)

Services	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	China
Addiction Treatment	Available with specialized services	Limited, mostly general addiction services	Limited, growing need	Limited, with demand increasing	Yes, addiction treatment for NPS users
Education on NPS for Physicians	Limited, emphasis on awareness	Limited, NGO-led initiatives	Emerging in medical curricula	Minimal, need for enhanced training	Yes, NPS awareness included in medical training
Information for Civil Sector	Yes, public awareness campaigns	Limited, some NGO initiatives	Limited, mostly through government announcements	Limited, often NGO-driven	Yes, public health campaigns and education
Clinical Guidelines for NPS Addiction	Clinical Protocols	Clinical Protocols For minors	Limited, some guidelines for addiction in general	No specific guidelines	Some guidelines available, mostly for synthetic drugs
Harm Reduction Programs	No specific programmes for NPS	Limited, NGO-led initiatives	Limited, few harm reduction programs	Limited, need for expanded services	Yes, includes multiple harm reduction strategies

Prospects and Recommendations

Kazakhstan

- **Expand Prevention Programs:** Develop a unified national strategy for prevention, focusing on youth and high-risk groups.
- **Broaden Harm Reduction Initiatives:** Include non-injection paraphernalia in harm reduction services and promote online outreach.
- **Improve Data Collection:** Establish systematic data collection on NPS use for informed policy decisions.

Uzbekistan

- **Strengthen Legislation and Enforcement:** Improve legal frameworks and law enforcement coordination to curb NPS trafficking, particularly on internet platforms like Telegram.
- **Expand Harm Reduction Services:** Increase access to needle exchanges, trust points, and other health services tailored to NPS users.
- **Boost Education and Prevention:** Develop educational programs to raise awareness of NPS risks, targeting youth and at-risk groups through schools and media.
- **Enhance Data Collection:** Address technical challenges in tracking NPS use with systematic data collection and monitoring initiatives.

China

- **Strengthened Prevention systems:** Use modern information technologies, such as big data models, to establish efficient NPS monitoring, early warning, and evaluation systems.
- **Public Awareness Initiatives:** Launch awareness campaigns and integrate NPS education into school curricula to raise awareness of NPS risks.
- **Global Cooperation:** Engage in international partnerships for knowledge-sharing and unified standards in NPS control

Kyrgyzstan

- **Strengthen Community Involvement:** Engage community-based services to support NPS users effectively.
- **Enhance Research Efforts:** Conduct targeted studies on NPS-related risks and impacts.
- **Update Clinical Protocols:** Regularly review and adapt protocols to meet evolving drug challenges.

Tajikistan

- **Strengthen Legal and Enforcement Efforts:** Enhance frameworks and law enforcement to combat the NPS crisis.
- **Expand Harm Reduction Services:** Increase access to needle exchanges and treatment facilities.
- **Boost Public Awareness:** Promote education on NPS risks and prevention within communities.
- **Foster Collaboration:** Unite government, NGOs, and international partners for an effective NPS strategy.

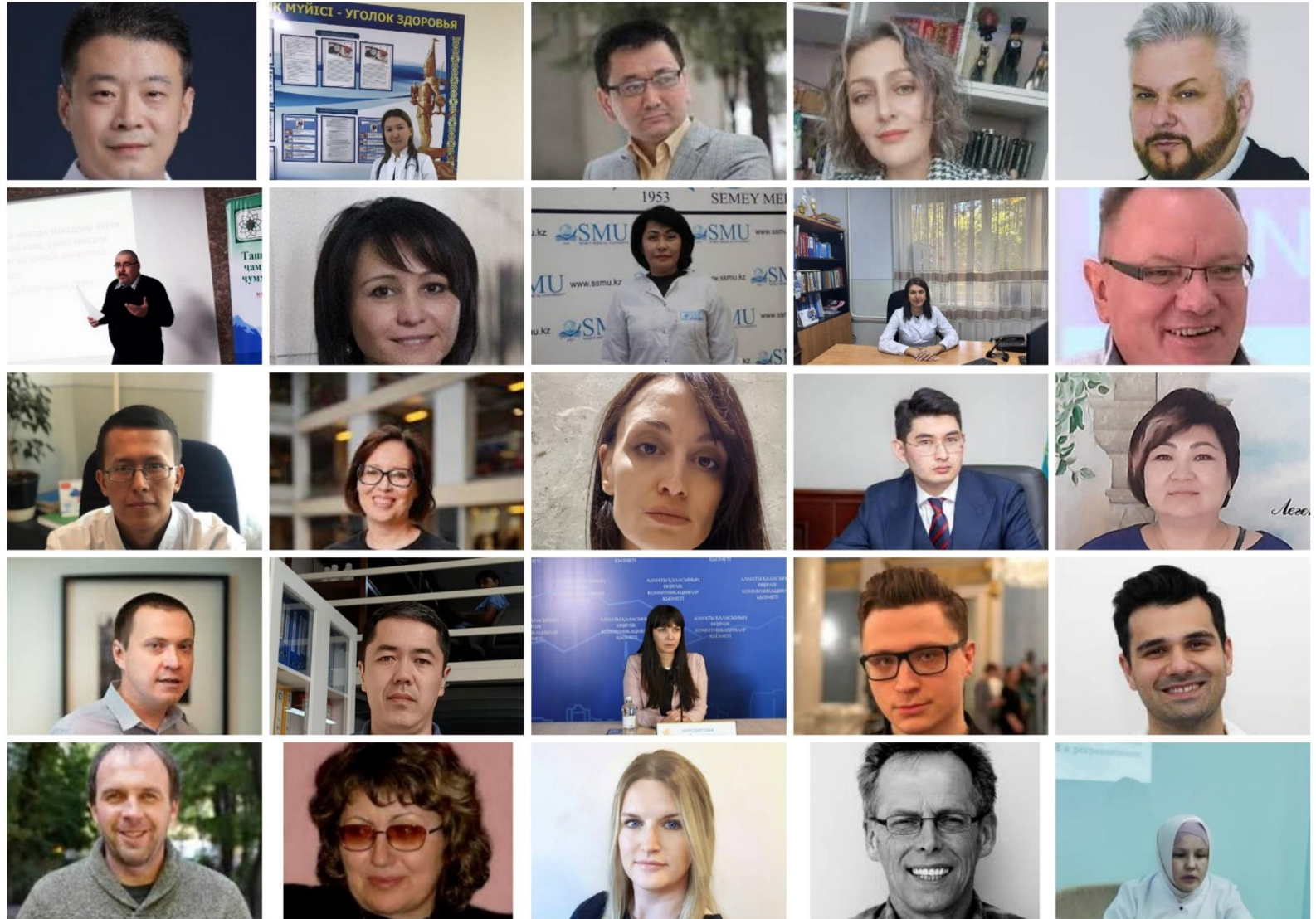
Link to SOLID Project

- **Research Foundation:** The book leverages data and insights from the SOLID project, providing an in-depth look at NPS trends and challenges in Central Asia.
- **Shared Goals of Harm Reduction and Prevention:** Both the book and the SOLID project advocate for evidence-based harm reduction, emphasizing prevention strategies tailored to the unique regional needs.
- **Guidance for Policymakers:** The SOLID project's frameworks inform the book's recommendations, guiding policymakers in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to create effective responses to NPS issues.
- **Focus on Cross-Border Collaboration:** The book echoes SOLID's emphasis on international partnerships, recognizing the need for a coordinated approach across Central Asia to combat NPS proliferation.
- **Resource for Healthcare and Social Services:** By building on SOLID's initiatives, the book serves as a comprehensive resource for professionals aiming to improve treatment and support services for NPS users.

Future steps: social work in focus

- **Expand Research on NPS and Social Work Integration:** Study the role of social work in addressing NPS impact to develop evidence-based, community-focused policies.
- **Strengthen International and Community Collaboration:** Promote partnerships among Central Asian countries and local communities to create cohesive NPS support networks.
- **Enhance Community-Based Social Services:** Invest in social work and harm reduction programs to meet the unique needs of NPS users effectively.
- **Develop Social Work-Oriented Treatment Protocols:** Create clinical guidelines that incorporate social work principles for supporting NPS recovery.
- **Increase Public Awareness through Social Work:** Launch community-centered campaigns led by social workers to educate the public on NPS risks and prevention.

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Thank you for
your attention



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