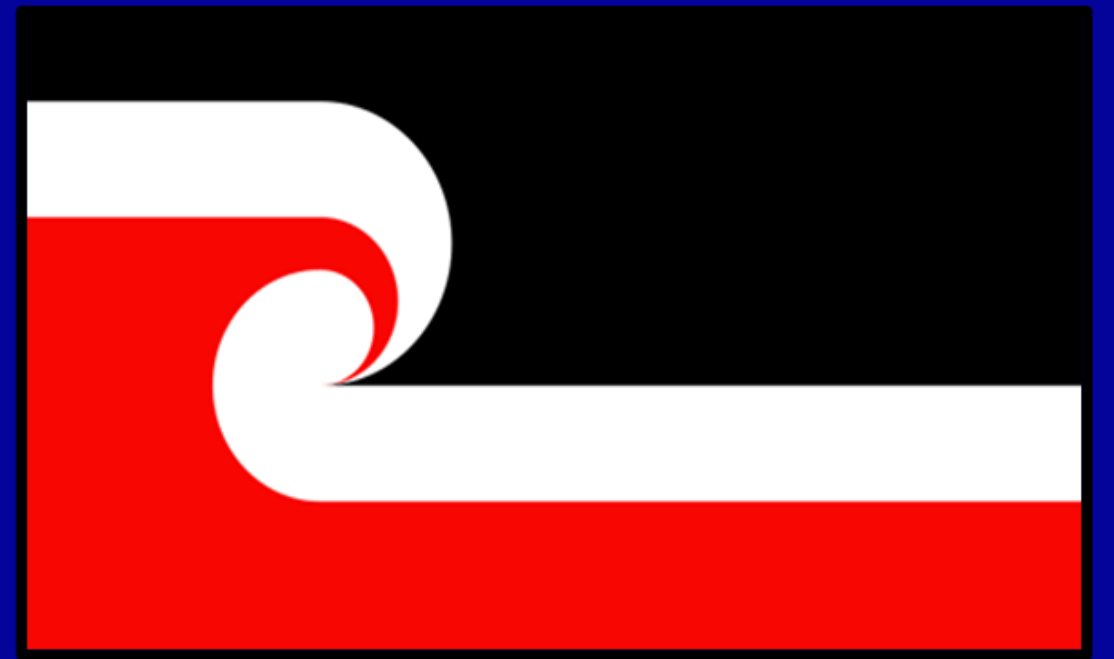
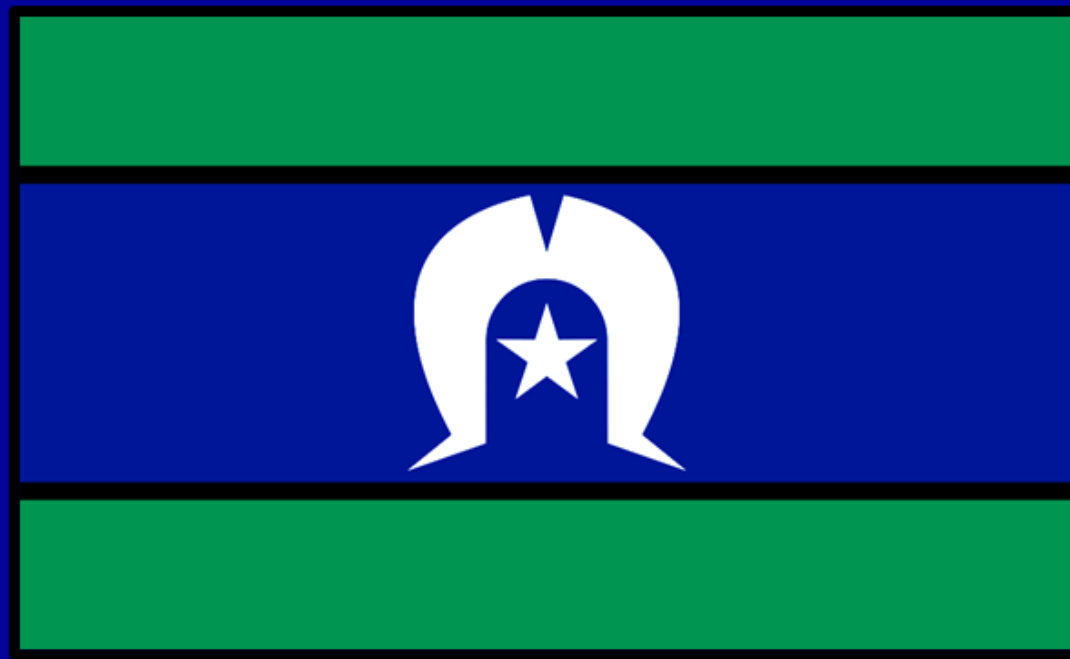


# Exploring Motivations, Experiences, & Consequences of Psychedelic use in Aotearoa New Zealand

**Authors:** Ethan Mills (MSc) , Jai Whelan (PhD), Sarah McGruddy (BSc (Hons)), & Ryan D. Ward (PhD)



Ko tēnei te mihi ki ngā tāngata o Te Whenua Moemoeā. Tēnā koutou.  
Here is the acknowledgement to the peoples of Australia. Thank you.

Nei āku mihi nunui ki ngā mana whenua o kōnei, tāngata Ngunnawal. Tēnā koutou.  
I greatly acknowledge the custodians of this land, the Ngunnawal people. Thank you.

Kā mihi ki Kāi Tahu whānau whānui, ki ngā kaitiaki o te whenua i tū ai tēnei rangahau. Tēnā  
koutou.

Many acknowledgements to the people of Kāi Tahu, the guardians of the land on which this  
research was conducted. Thank you.

# Research Objectives



## Aim 01

The current research sought to explore motivations, features of subjective experience, and impact of psychedelic use.

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## Aim 02

Aimed to explore and compare positive, typical and worst psychedelic experiences.

# Method

## Participants

**Recruitment :** Public ads in university libraries, cafes, and online communities (e.g., Plant Medicine Aotearoa, Kiwidelic).

**Inclusion criteria :**

- 18+ years old.
- Fluent in English.
- Residing in Aotearoa for at least 1 year.
- Used psychedelics at least once in Aotearoa.

Conducted through an online survey using REDCap©.

**Survey sections :**

- The survey collected comprehensive data on demographics, drug history, and experience patterns, with specific focus on motivations and experiences
- Dosage classifications across major psychedelics (LSD, psilocybin, mescaline, and DMT), ranging from microdose to high dose based on established research parameters.

# Method

## Data Analysis

- Data analyzed with SPSS Statistics (IBM Version 27).
- Descriptive analyses for demographics and drug behaviors.
- Chi-square tests for:
  - Motivations pre- and post-usage.
  - Emotional/cognitive/relational aspects of typical, best, and worst experiences.
- Logistic regression for predictors of positive psychological health impact.



# Results

## Demographics

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**Total participants** : 997 (age range: 18-78, median = 29)

**Gender distribution** :

- Male: 56.3%
- Female: 36.9%
- Gender diverse: 6.6%

**Ethnicity** :

- Pākehā/New Zealand European: 86%
- Māori: 16%
- Pasifika: 1.5%
- Asian: 4.1%
- Other ethnicities: 4.1%

**Regions** : Auckland (19.6%), Wellington (23.7%), Otago (16.6%).

**Spiritual practices** : Meditation (39%), Visualization (21.9%), Yoga (18.7%).

# Results

## Psychedelic use

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### Most common substances :

- LSD: 90.3%
- Psilocybin: 79.9%
- Mescaline: 22.2%
- DMT: 19.3%

### Lifetime use:

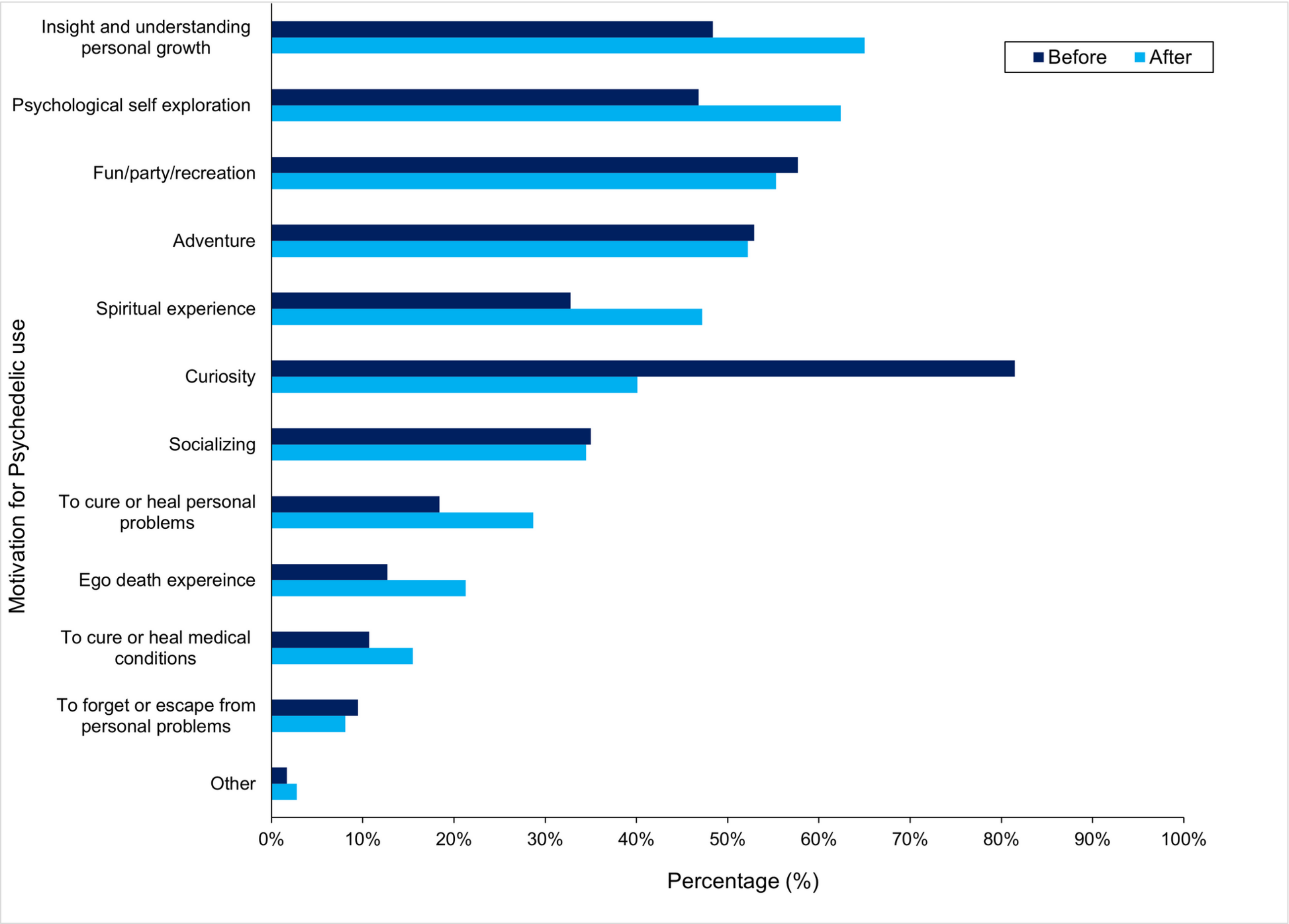
- 2-20 times: 56.3%
- 20-50 times: 21.5%
- 50+ times: 17.6%

**Past year use:** 82.4%, with 27% using 2-3 times in the past year.

### Source of psychedelics :

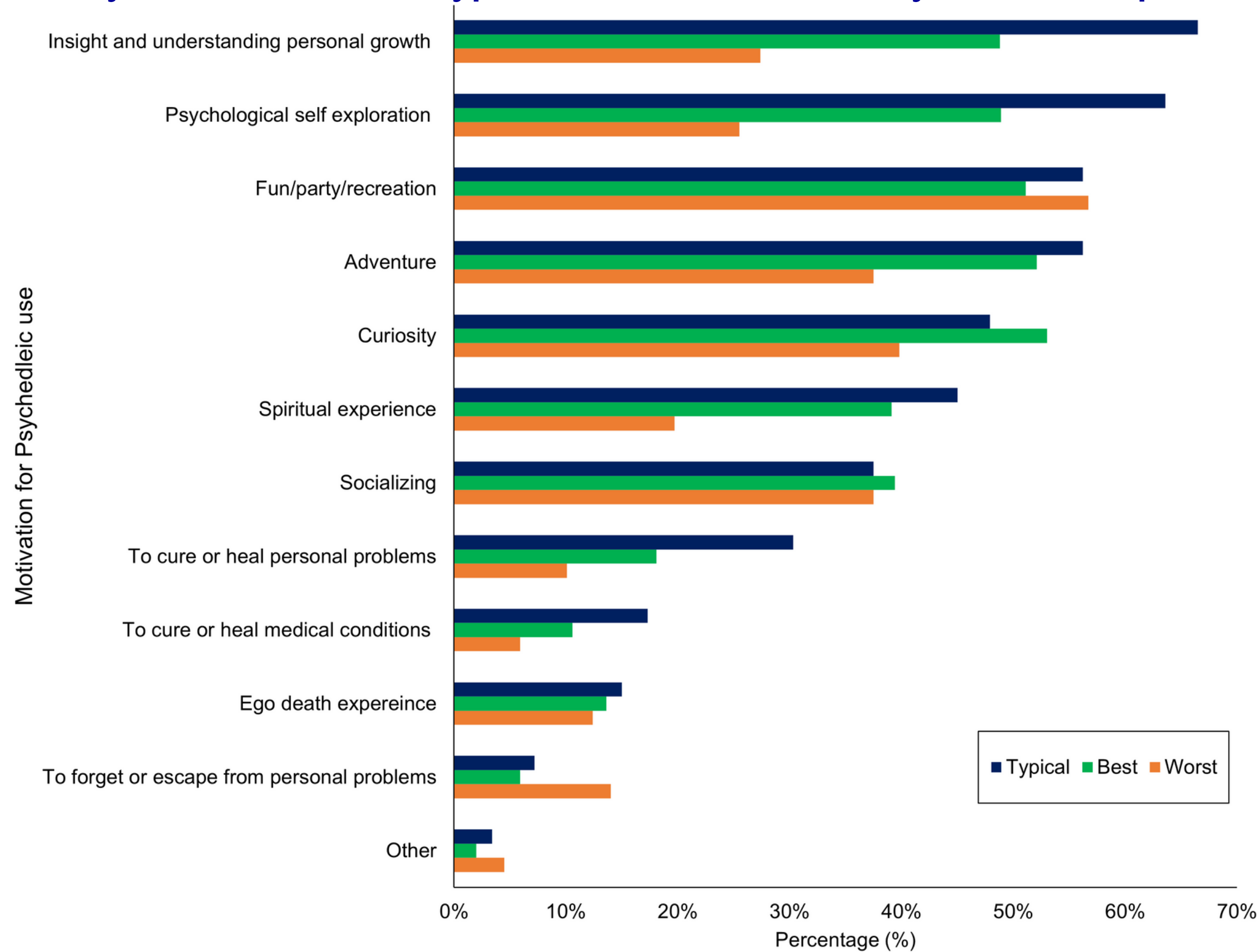
- From friends: 78.6%
- Nature: 49.6%

# Motivation for Psychedelic Use Before and After First Psychedelic Experience (n = 997)

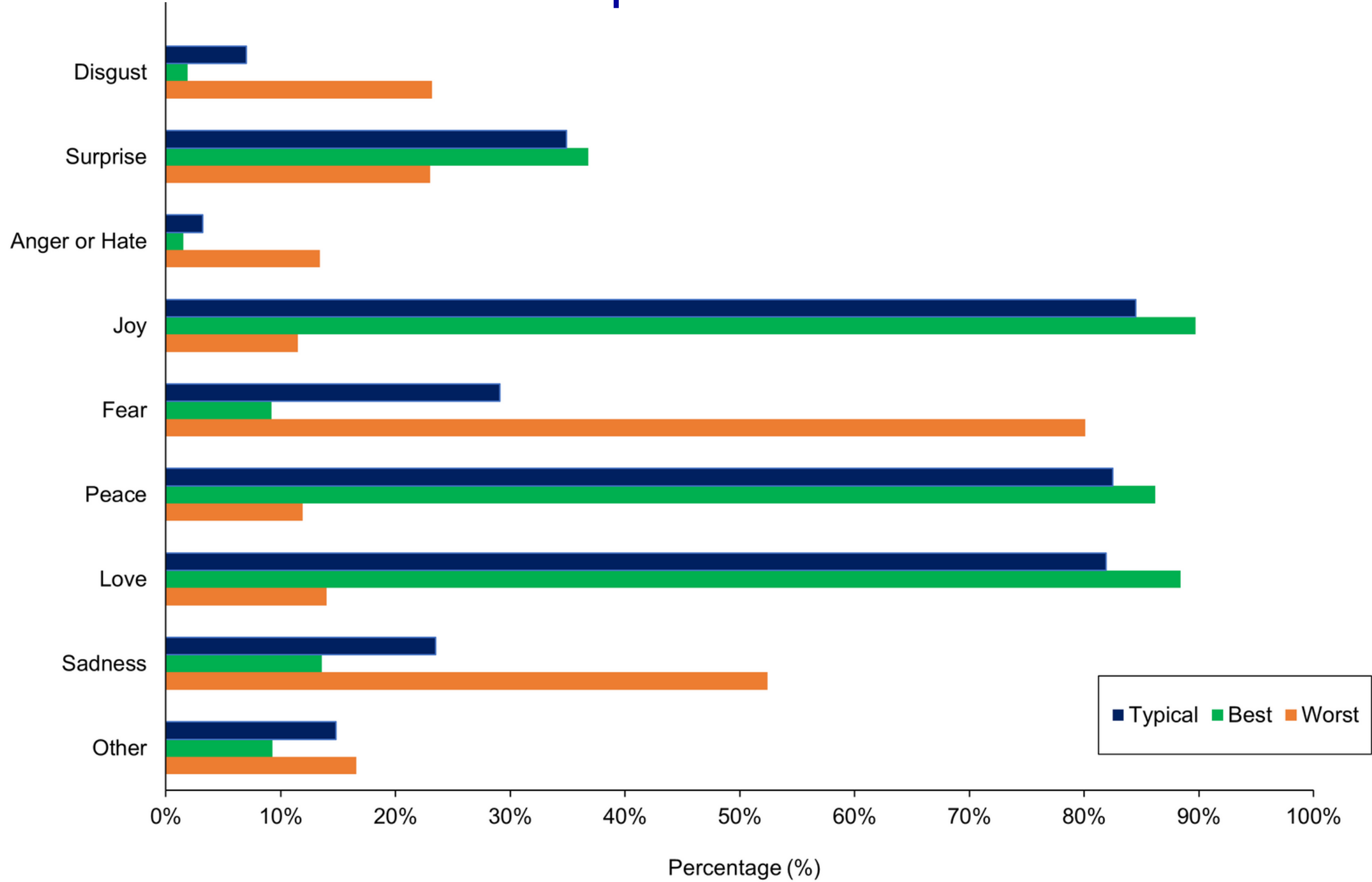




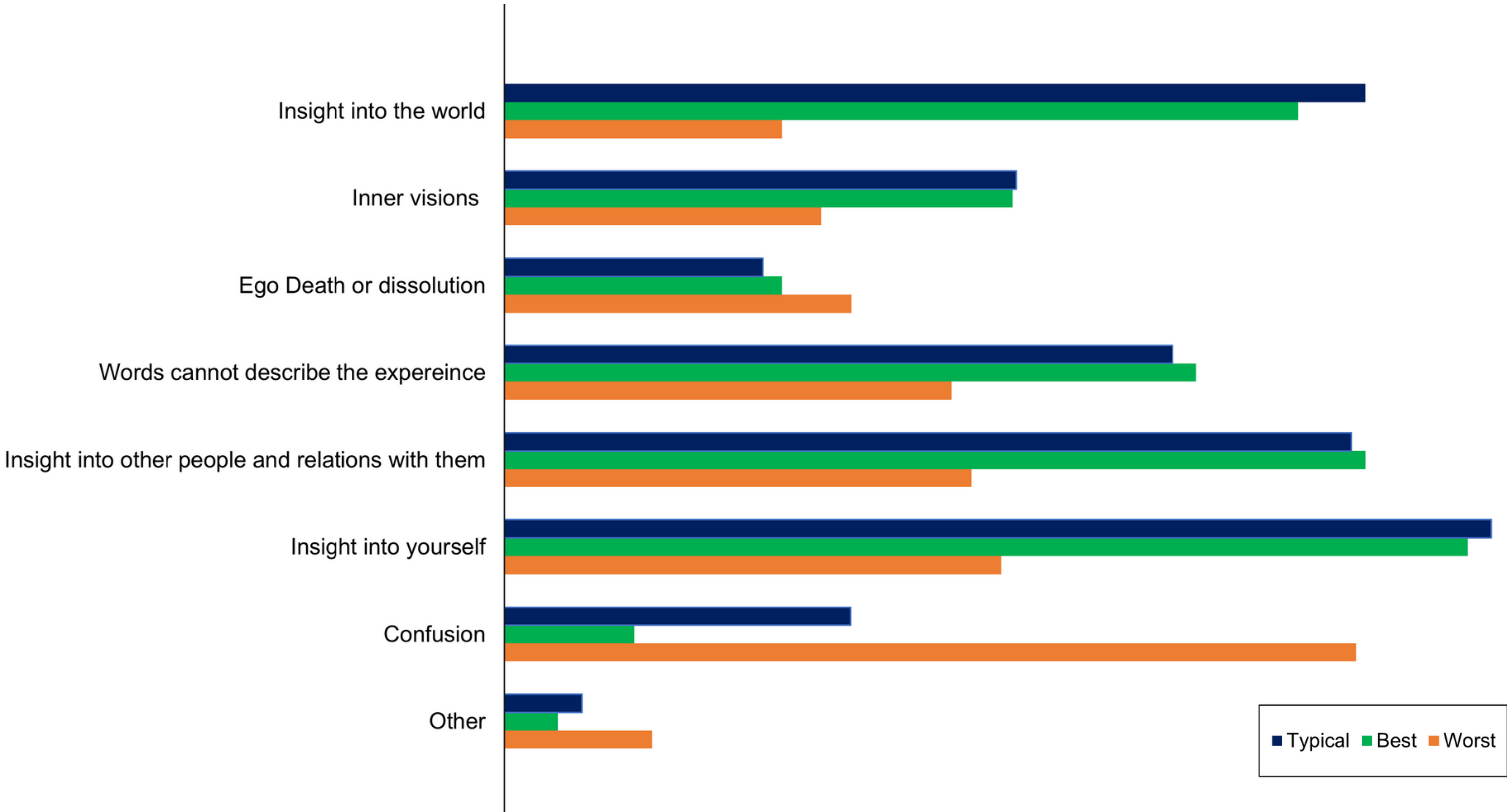
# Motivations for Psychedelic Use for Typical, Best and Worst Psychedelic Experiences



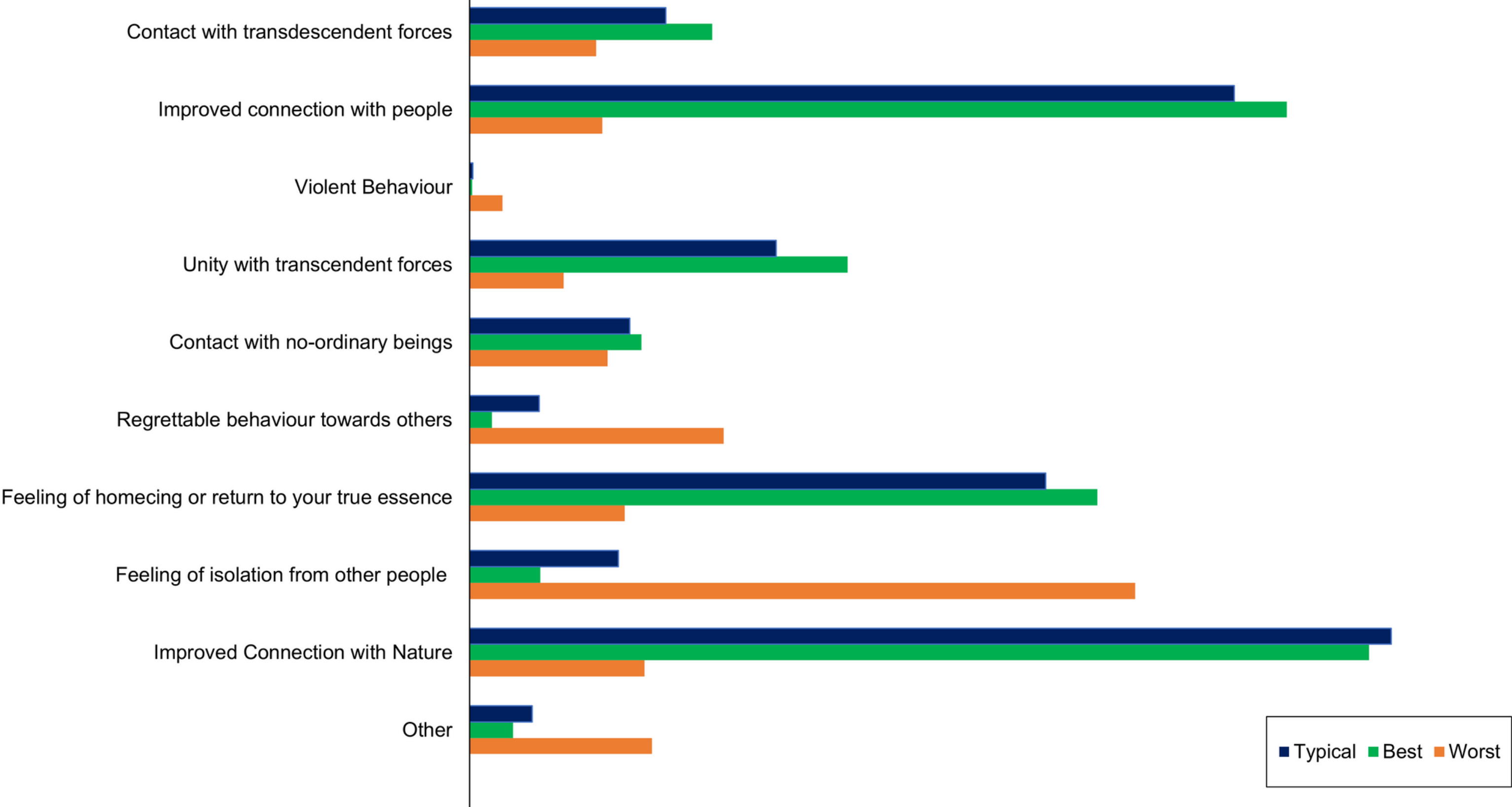
# Emotional Characteristics Reported During Typical, Best, and Worst Psychedelic Experiences



# Cognitive Characteristics Reported During Typical, Best, and Worst Psychedelic Experiences



# Relational Characteristics Reported During Typical, Best, and Worst Psychedelic Experiences



# Results

## Consequences

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### Positive Outcomes :

- Increased Happiness: 74.1% of respondents reported feeling happier or much happier post-experience.
- Interpersonal Impact: 64.4% reported enhanced ability to get along with others.
- Spiritual Growth: 47.3% experienced increased intensity in their spiritual practices after use.
- Psychological Health: 63.1% reported improvements (36.6% moderate, 26.5% serious).
- Safety Profile: Less than 5% reported significant negative psychological consequences.

# Results

## Consequences

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### Negative Outcomes :

- Challenges in Experience:
  - 30.5% rated their worst experiences as extremely difficult.
  - 4.6% indicated a moderate impact on their psychological well-being, while 0.3% reported a serious effect.

### Impact of Experience Type:

- Best Experiences:
  - Most respondents (e.g., 87.6%) who had best experiences reported positive long-term effects.
- Worst Experiences:
  - 7.7% of worst experiences led to lasting negative general health impacts, with 53.2% reporting no consequences or mixed effects and 39% seeing an improvement in their general health.

# Results

## Predictors of Positive Psychological Health Impact

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### Frequency of Use:

- Using psychedelics 11-20 times: 2.31 times greater odds of positive impact (aOR = 2.31)
- Using 21-50 times: 2.30 times greater odds of positive impact (aOR = 2.30)
- Using 50-100 times: 2.50 times greater odds of positive impact (aOR = 2.50)

### Stopping Use:

- Reduced odds of positive impact (aOR = 0.28)

### Mental Health History :

- Presence of a lifetime mental disorder decreases the likelihood of a positive impact (aOR = 0.67)

### Motivations for Use:

- **Positive Predictors :**
  - Seeking insight/personal growth (aOR = 1.97)
  - Engaging in psychological self-exploration (aOR = 1.77)
- **Negative Predictors :**
  - Using for fun/party/recreation (aOR = 0.64)

# Comparison to Global Data (Lake & Lucas, 2024)

## Motivations

- **NZ, Europe & Australia** : Personal growth & spiritual focus
- **North America** : Leads in therapeutic use

## Usage Style

- **All** : 2-3 times yearly typical
- **NZ**: Rare microdosing
- **North America** : Common microdosing
- **Europe/Australia** : Similar to NZ patterns



# Limitations

- **Unregulated substances** : A large portion of participants could not report on their typical dose consumed
- **Sample bias** : Participants likely had positive attitudes toward psychedelics, although considerable portion reporting a challenging experience
- **Self-reporting** : Risk of recall and expectancy bias, especially in assessing psychological outcomes.
- **Retrospective design** : Recollection of experiences may not fully capture complexities.

# Recommendations

- **Target challenging experiences** : Recruit participants who had difficult or negative psychedelic experiences for a more balanced view.
- **Investigate integration** : Explore how users process and integrate challenging experiences to foster long-term personal growth.
- **Public education and harm reduction** : Increase public awareness on safe usage, harm reduction strategies, and support services to manage difficult trips.

# Final Thoughts

Feel free to reach out :)

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**Motivations Shift Over Time:** Users in New Zealand often start using psychedelics for curiosity or fun, but later focus on personal growth and self-exploration.

**Challenging Experiences Affect Use :** Many users stop after difficult experiences, showing a need for support integration and harm reduction education.

**Positive Psychological Benefits:** Most users report lasting mental health benefits, especially when motivated by personal growth or healing.

**New Zealand - Specific Trends:** Psychedelic use is increasing and aligns with global patterns, though therapeutic use and microdosing is less common than in North America.

