

# An Online National Survey and the Crime Survey for England and Wales: Are the Data Comparable?

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## Introduction

- The objective of the online National Survey Program is to study rates of non-medical use of prescription drugs among the general population and to characterize associated behaviors and outcomes.
- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), formerly known as the British Crime Survey (BCS), was developed in 1982 and has measured crime, including illicit drug use, at a population level annually since this time<sup>1</sup>.

## Research Aims

- To compare data on the prevalence of illicit drug use collected in an online national survey of non-medical use of prescription medicine and the CSEW.

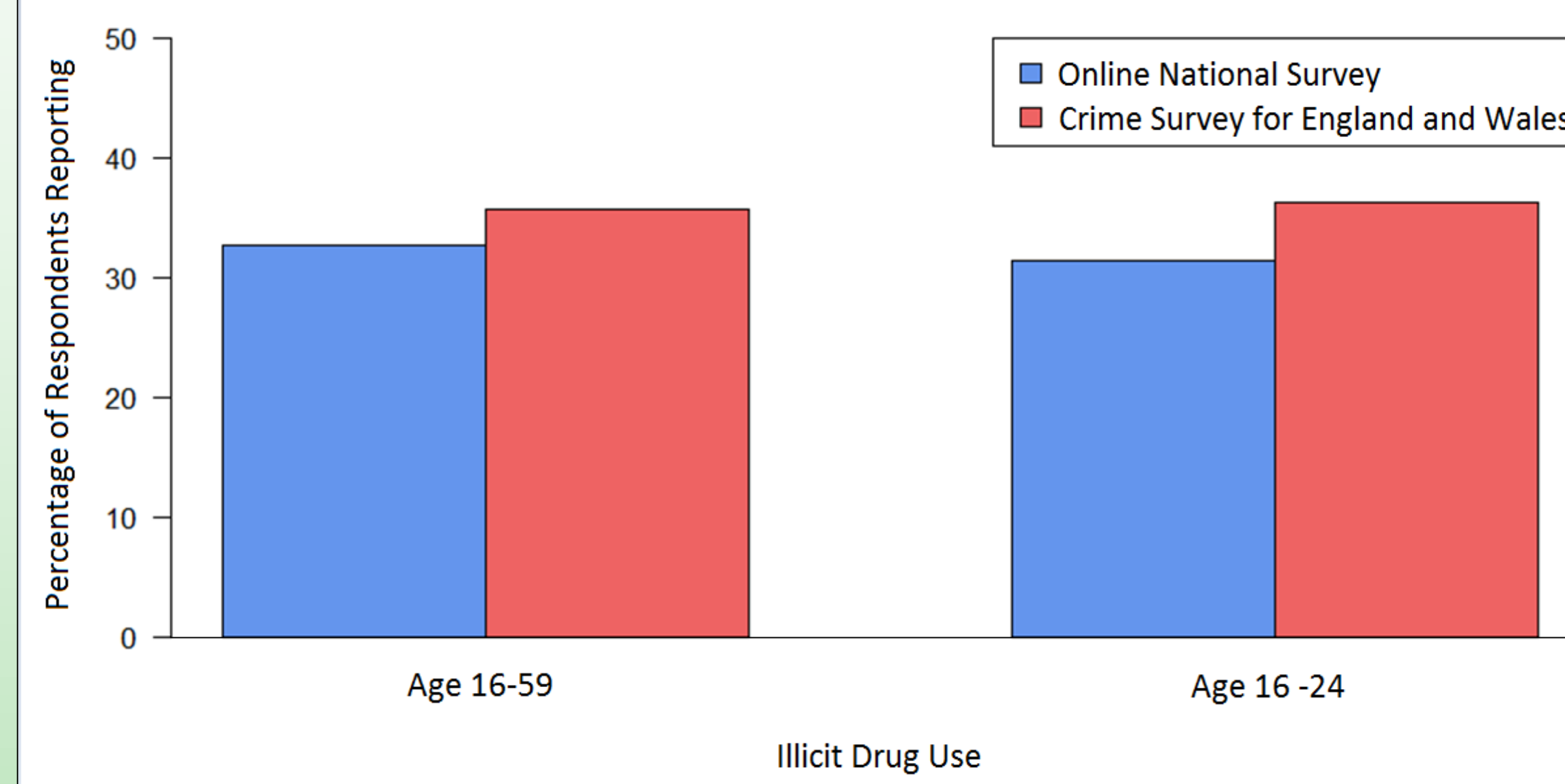
## Methods

- The national survey is deployed biannually via a survey administration company. Respondents age 16 and older living in the United Kingdom (UK) are eligible. The final sample reflects the geographical and gender distribution of the UK.
- The survey collects demographic information, data on non-medical use (use with a doctor's prescription or for any reason other than what was recommended by your doctor) of prescription drugs, illicit drug use, source of drug acquisition, route of administration, reason for use, frequency of use, and price paid for prescription drugs through illicit channels.
- 2,504 respondents completed the July 2014 survey. For this study, respondents aged 16-59 years residing in England or Wales only (n=1,594) were included.
- CSEW is an annual household survey in England and Wales; the 2013/2014 CSEW included 34,906 respondents aged 16-59 years.
- Lifetime and last year prevalence of illicit drug use was compared between all respondents (16- 59 years) and in young adults (16-24 years).
- Illicit drugs included were
  - Online national survey: cannabis, cocaine power, crack cocaine, ecstasy, GHB/GHL, non-prescription amphetamine/speed, heroin, ketamine, and mephedrone
  - CSEW: powder cocaine, crack cocaine, ecstasy, LSD, magic mushrooms, ketamine, heroin, methadone, amphetamines, methamphetamine, cannabis, tranquilizers, anabolic steroids, amyl nitrite, any other pills/powders/drugs smoked.

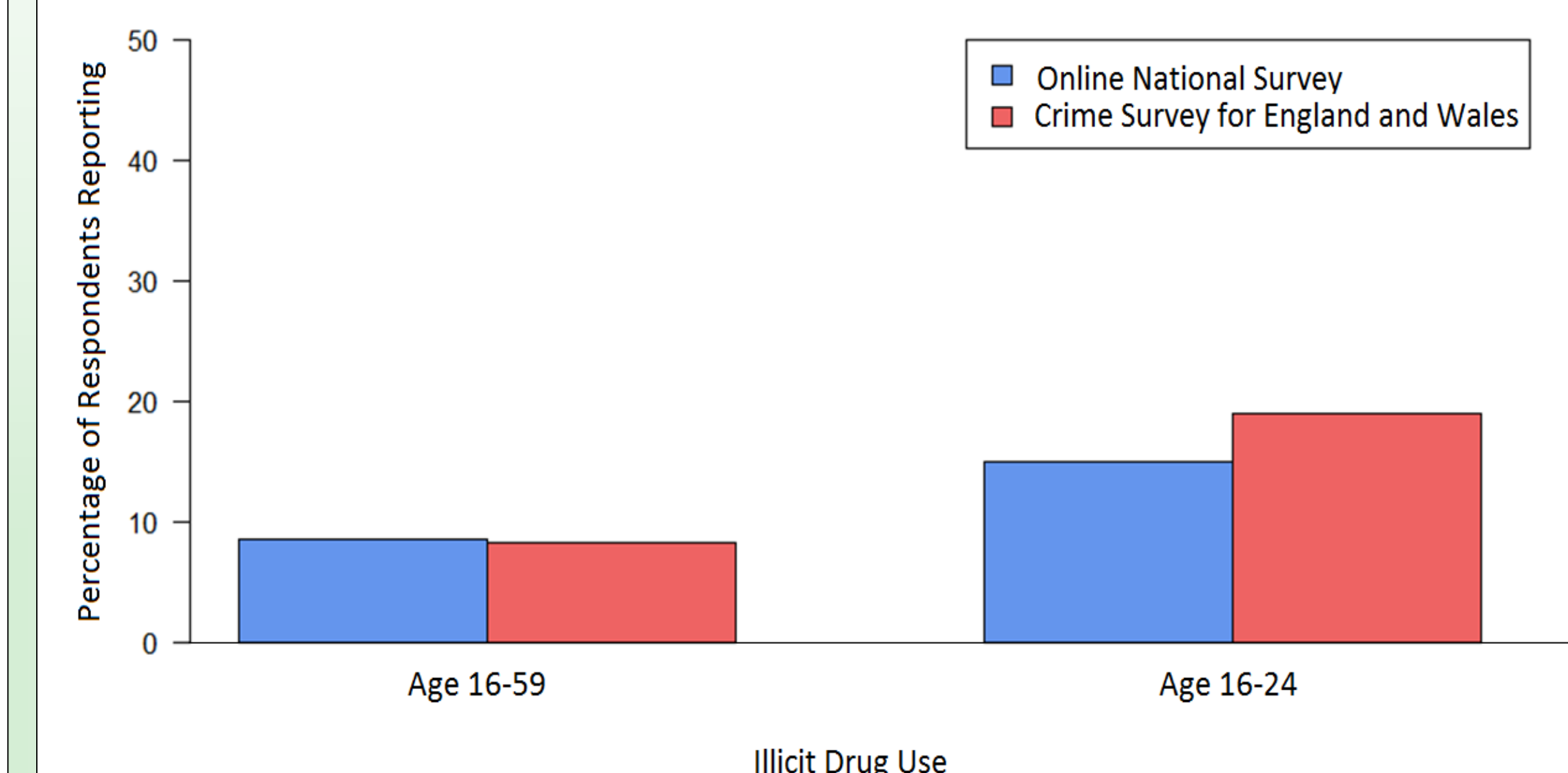
## Results

- Prevalence of illicit drug use in the online national survey and the CSEW were similar for all respondents and young adults.
  - Lifetime use: online survey 32.6%, CSEW 35.6% (Figure 1, Table 1).
  - Last year use: online survey 8.6%, CSEW 8.8% (Figure 2, Table 1).
  - Young adults lifetime use: online survey 31.4%, CSEW 36.3% (Figure 1, Table 1).
  - Young adults last year use: online survey 15.0%, CSEW 18.9% (Figure 2, Table 1).
- For lifetime use, cannabis was the most commonly used drug in each data source (23.7% and 29.9%), amphetamines were the second (9.7% and 11.1%) and any cocaine was the third (8.2% and 9.5%) (Figure 3).

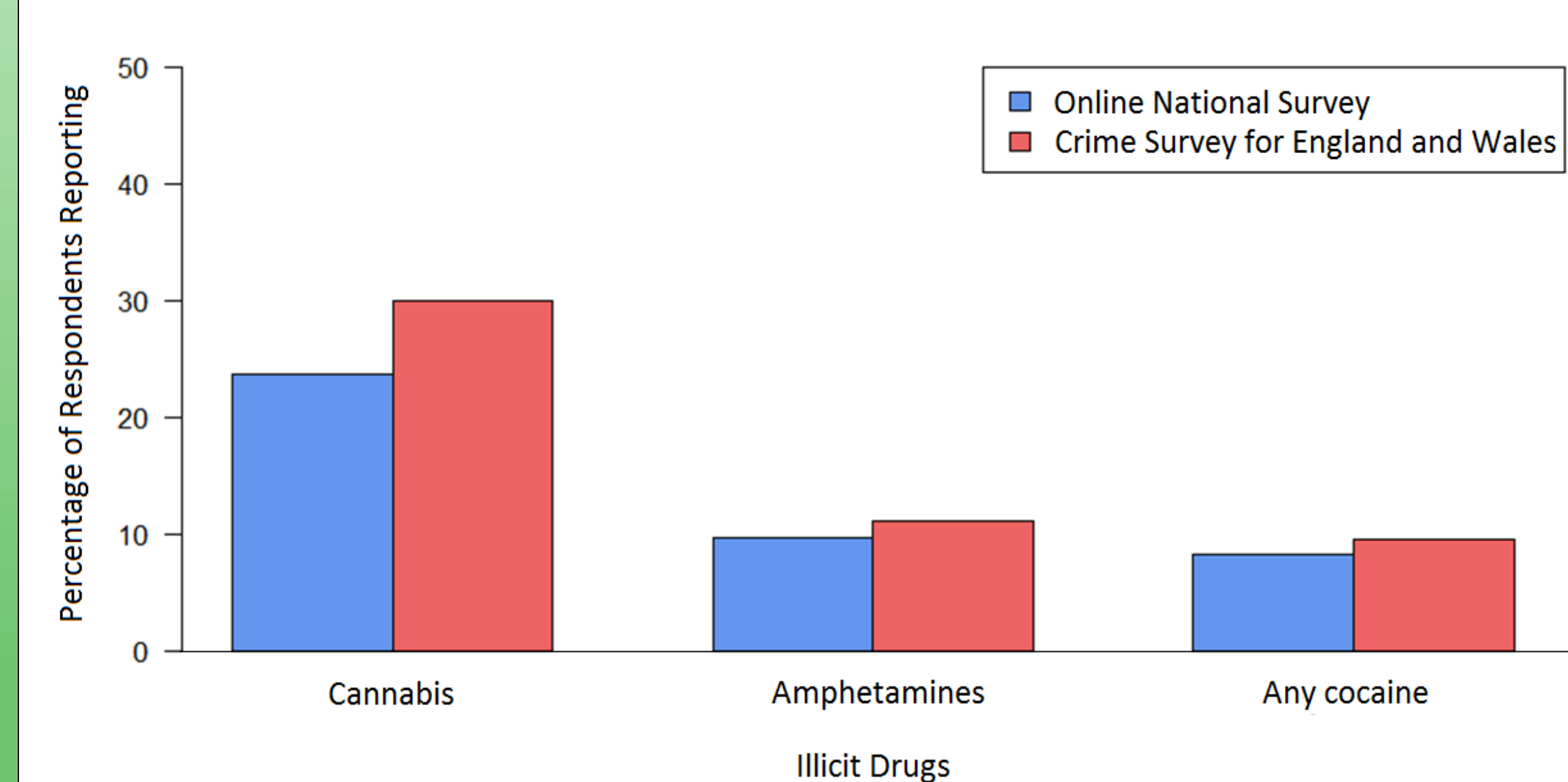
### Figure 1. Lifetime Illicit Drug Use



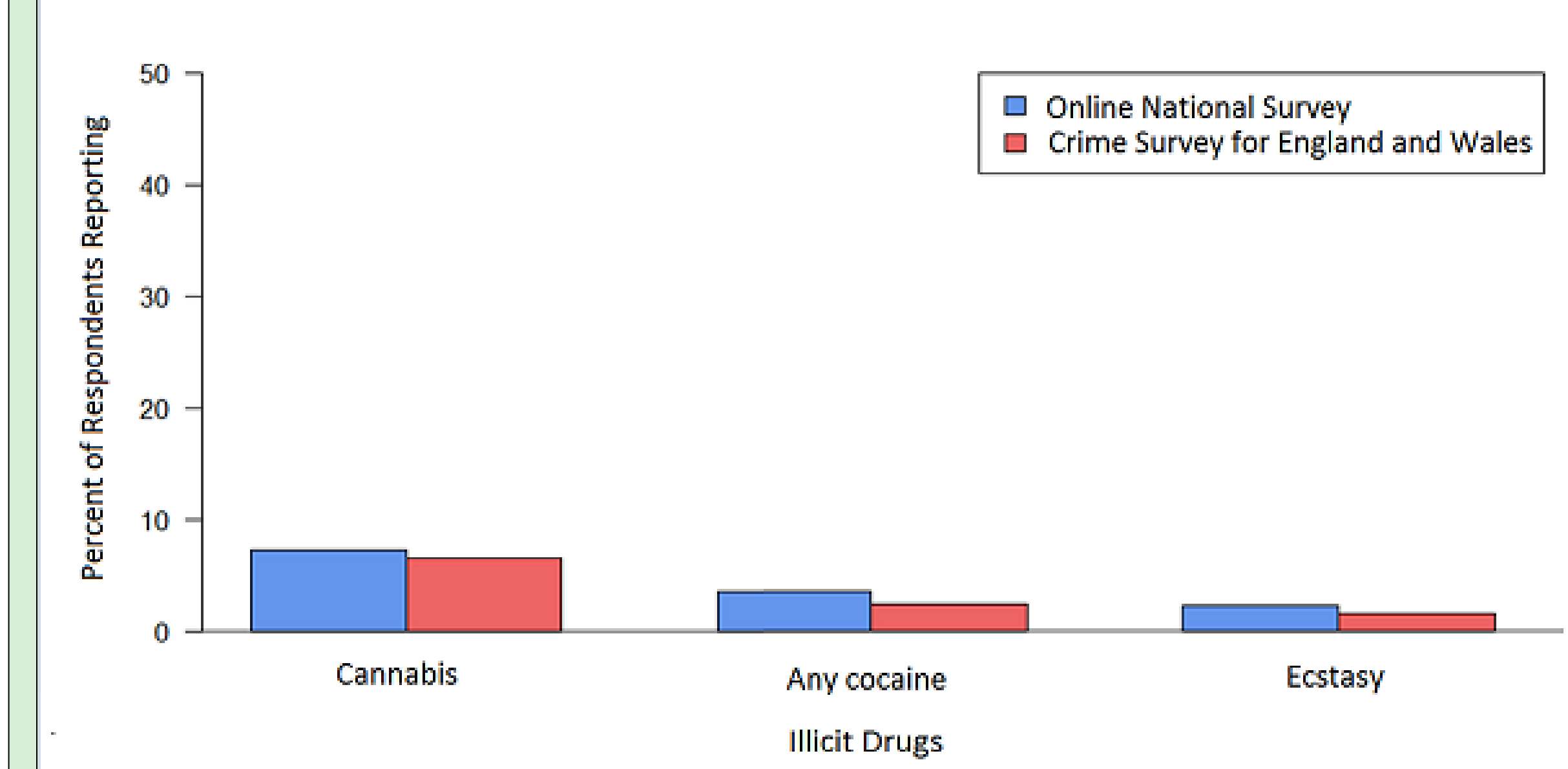
### Figure 2. Last Year Illicit Drug Use



### Figure 3. Lifetime Most Commonly Used Illicit Drug



### Figure 4. Last Year Most Commonly Used Illicit Drug



### Table 1. Illicit Drug Use

	Lifetime Illicit Drug Use		Last Year Illicit Drug Use	
	16-59 years (%)	16-24 years (%)	16-59 years (%)	16-24 years (%)
<b>Online National Survey</b>	32.6	31.4	8.6	15.0
<b>Crime Survey for England and Wales</b>	35.6	36.3	8.8	18.9

### Table 2. Most Commonly Used

	Lifetime Use		Last Year Use	
	Drug	%	Drug	%
<b>Online National Survey</b>	Cannabis	23.7	Cannabis	7.2
	Amphetamines	9.7	Any cocaine	3.6
	Any cocaine	8.2	Ecstasy	2.3
<b>Crime Survey for England and Wales</b>	Cannabis	29.9	Cannabis	6.6
	Amphetamines	11.1	Any cocaine	2.4
	Any cocaine	9.5	Ecstasy	1.6

## Conclusions

- The prevalence of use of illicit drugs was similar in the online national survey and the CSEW.
- The comparability of these findings demonstrates the feasibility of using an online survey administered with a survey administration company to obtain data comparable to the well-established household CSEW with a considerably smaller sample.
- This methodology could be used to further explore aspects of illicit drug use and non-medical use of prescription medicines.

Financial Support: The RADARS® System is part of Denver Health and Hospital Authority, a division of the State of Colorado. It is supported by subscriptions from pharmaceutical manufacturers.

1. Drug Misuse: Findings from the 2013/14 Crime Survey for England and Wales, Statistics – national statistics, 15 August 2014, accessed 19 December 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drug-misuse-findings-from-the-2013-to-2014-csew/drug-misuse-findings-from-the-2013-to-2014-csew>

