



# Alcohol and Drug Prevention Policy in the US and the Netherlands

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# Differences in law

## US

- Legal age for buying and use of alcohol 21 years.
- Legal age for buying tobacco 18 years.
- Illegal to buy or use cannabis.

## NL

- Legal age for buying alcohol 16 years (wine, beer), liquor 18 years.
- Legal age for buying tobacco 16 years
- No access to the coffee shop (cannabis, hash) under the age of 18

# Theoretical foundation USA - NL

## United States

- Gateway
- All use problematic.
- Disease concept of addiction.
- Alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, all considered “drugs” .
- Supply reduction.
- National war on drugs.

## Netherlands

- Experimentation.
- Not all use is problematic.
- Personal choice to use drugs.
- Distinction between substances.
- Harm reduction.
- Local social policy.

# Hypotheses

- Cannabis use higher in the NL
- Hard drug use lower in the NL
- Alcohol and tobacco use higher in the NL



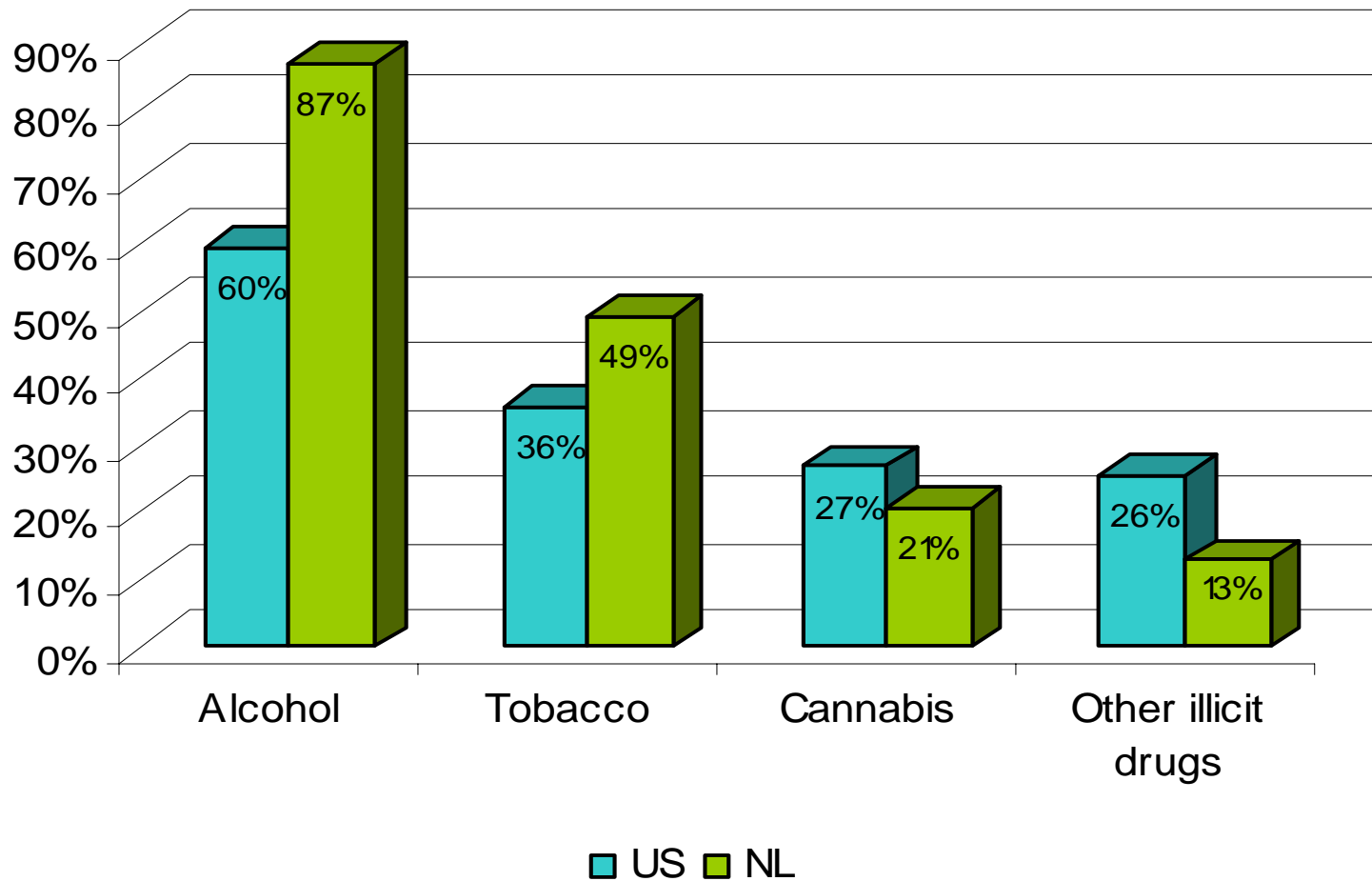
# National data

- *Monitoring the Future* in US
- *National Drug Monitor* in the Netherlands
- Student Questionnaire
  - secondary school
  - paper and pencil
  - 8th (13/14 year) and 10th (15/16) grade
- Number of students:
  - USA - 33.247
  - Netherlands - 3.448

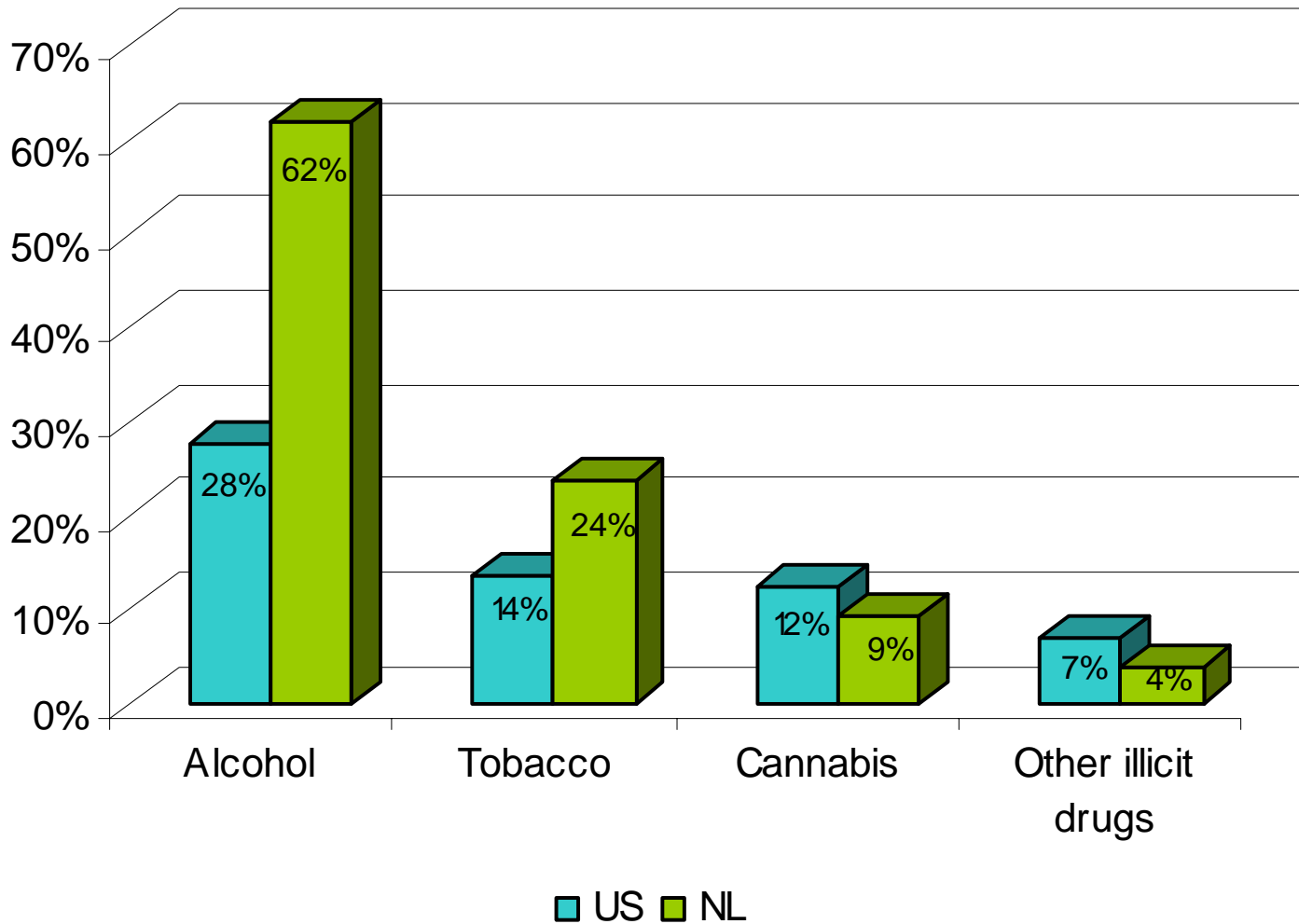
## Add citations

Johnston, Bachman, O'Malley, *Monitoring the Future*, 2003

# Life Time Use



# Recent use (past month)



# Conclusions

In USA:

- More use of marijuana and hard drugs.

In Netherlands:

- More alcohol use
- More tobacco use
- Less use of soft and hard drugs



# Conclusions

## USA: The zero tolerance policy

- It works: low rates of use of alcohol and tobacco.
- It doesn't work: higher rates of soft and hard drugs.

## NL: Harm reduction and distinction between substances.

- It works: low rates of use of soft drugs and hard drugs.
- Doesn't work: More kids that use alcohol and tobacco.

# Binational research

We have need to know more about

- mechanisms through which policies in both countries affect use?
- whether the levels of risk and protection are the same or different in the two countries?
- whether the strength of risk and protective factors are the same or different in the two countries?



