

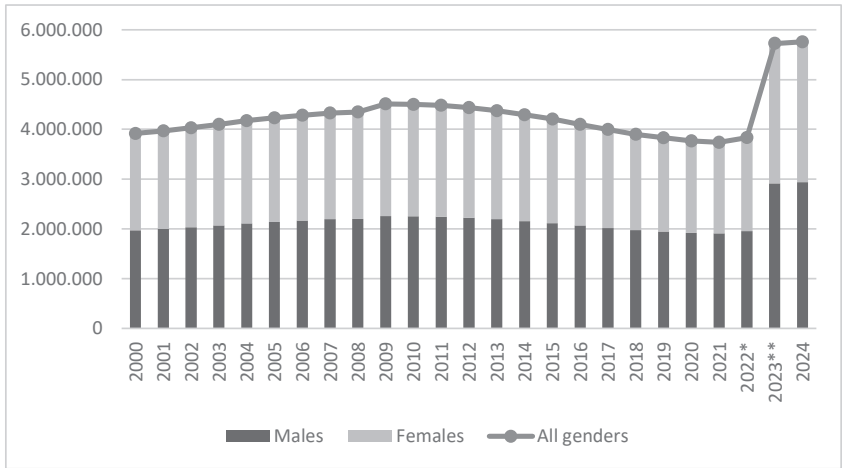
8. Synthetic Drug Issues in Kazakhstan: Emphasising Youth and Women's Involvement

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Trends in Youth and Women's Involvement in Synthetic Drug-Related Crimes

Kazakhstan, a country in Central Asia, has a population of 20,139,914. As of 1st June 2024, women made up 51.2% of this population. In October 2023, the number of young people aged 14 to 35 was 5,726,629, representing 28.7% of the total population. The gender ratio within this age group mirrors that of the general population, maintaining a balanced ratio of 1:1. The dynamics of the change in the number of young people since 2000, including by gender, are presented in Figure 1 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024).

Given the crucial role of youth in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the country's policies concerning the younger generation are governed by legislation that underscores the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles and providing social support for young individuals affected by substance use (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2015). The state's public health policy for 2020–2024 prioritises the development of evidence-based prevention programmes aimed at reducing drug use among youth (Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2022). The rapid proliferation of new drug threats in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan, has prompted a national policy focus on synthetic drugs, especially among young people (UNODC 2022). The current national strategic plan to combat drug-related crime emphasises enhancing prevention measures within educational institutions, informal youth groups, and workplace collectives. An important metric of this strategic initiative is a targeted 20% reduction in the number of minors registered with drug addiction diagnoses by 2025 (Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2023a).



* From 2000 to 2022, the term ‘youth’ referred to people aged 14–28.

**Since 2023, the term ‘youth’ has referred to people aged 14–35.

Figure 1: The dynamics of the number of young people in Kazakhstan from 2000 to 2024 (Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2024)

Additionally, the Criminal Code imposes harsher penalties for the distribution and promotion of drugs among minors. Attempts to distribute drugs in public spaces and through social networks are considered aggravating factors, resulting in stricter sentencing. A specific provision in the Criminal Code strictly criminalises drug distribution among minors, punishable by imprisonment for fifteen to twenty years or a life sentence (Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2014). Media reports indicate that sporadic cases of drug trafficking in schools have been registered over the last decade (BaigeNews.kz 2021; Tengri news 2023). Numerous reports from law enforcement agencies indicate a rising trend of young people, including minors, becoming involved in drug-related offenses. These youths are predominantly engaged at the lower tiers of drug trafficking, functioning as distributors of drug stashes (KazTag 2023; Tengri news 2023). According to the information provided by the Committee on the Legal Statistics and Special Accounts of the State Office of Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of

young people and women committing crimes related to the distribution of synthetic drugs (Table 1).

Table 1: Statistics of synthetic drug trafficking offences

Year	Total number of offences	Committed by minors (%)	Committed by youth (%) (18–34 years old)	Committed by women (%)
2021	513	7 (1.4%)	356 (69.4%)	51 (11%)
2022	583	9 (1.6%)	436 (74.8%)	26 (12%)
As of 30 November 2023	702	9 (1.3%)	518 (73.8%)	88 (14.3%)

Source: Information was provided by the Committee on the Legal Statistics and Special Accounts of the State Office of Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the request of the UNODC for the preparation of the World Drug Report 2024.

The media has increasingly focused on women’s involvement in drug-related crimes. Over the past two to three years, there have been more reports of women distributing hidden drug stashes. However, comprehensive studies on this issue are still lacking, and the available research data is outdated. Despite being obsolete, these findings indicate that women are significantly vulnerable to drug offenses. According to Penal Reform International, as of 2013, approximately one third of female prisoners were convicted of drug-related crimes (Penal Reform International 2014). Unlike the legislation regarding the younger population, gender-specific considerations are not highlighted in Kazakhstan’s drug prevention policies or anti-drug laws. The country adopted a gender policy concept in 2016, but it mainly addresses gender-based violence and women’s reproductive health (Edict of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2016). The Global Gender Gap Report ranks Kazakhstan 76th out of 146 countries, with a score of 0.710, the highest among Central Asian countries (Pal et al. 2024). The nation achieved a high score of 0.976 in the area of survival and health. However, it performed less well in the areas of political empowerment and economic participation and opportunity (Bizhanova 2024). This index, based on various economic indicators, reflects significant gender inequalities, especially for women facing social, economic, and cultural vulnerabil-

ies, such as those living with HIV or using drugs. According to the latest report of the Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA), Kazakhstan lacks gender-specific legislative approaches to address the issues faced by vulnerable female groups, particularly women who use drugs (Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS 2023).

Global studies show that, compared to men, women have less frequent contact with the justice system (UNODC 2018b; Rodriguez & Griffin 2005). There are several reasons for this, including not only a lower likelihood of becoming involved in drug trafficking but also the specific roles that women play in this process. According to the 2024 World Drug Report, women are less frequently involved in leadership positions within organised criminal groups. They are more often found in supporting roles at lower levels, such as drug couriers and advertisers. National data on Kazakhstan is unfortunately very limited. However, based on the analytical study conducted as part of the 2024 World Drug Report, which also analysed the situation in Kazakhstan, it was found that women are more likely to be involved in the synthetic drug business compared to the distribution of traditional plant-based drugs. The same publication notes the active involvement of youth in the distribution of synthetic drugs. In this case, the primary motive for committing these crimes is economic, driven by the desire for quick earnings. Another group of women and youth consists of those who already have experience with active consumption of synthetic drugs. They willingly engage in distribution to obtain free doses of the drugs. However, this latter group, when violating work discipline or attempting to appropriate goods, can become victims of contract killings, beatings, and blackmail by the administration of drug shops or the criminal organisations that control drug supply channels (UNODC 2024).

The use of youth and women as drug couriers exists to divert police attention, as these groups have not traditionally aroused suspicion during street patrols. However, the national law enforcement agenda increasingly emphasises that youth are the key group from which drug couriers are recruited. Additionally, young people have a higher likelihood of being arrested for distributing drugs through stash placements. In response, the policy on penalties for such crimes has been tightened, including lowering the age threshold and increasing prison sentences, even for minors. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the active promotion of Kazakhstan's course on harsher penalties for drug trafficking, particularly among minors, is used as a key method of preventive work within this age group. Despite the lack of evidence supporting this approach, it is actively being promoted by the

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan (Turlybek 2023; KAZAKHSTAN TODAY 2024).

However, when discussing drug-related crimes, it is important to note the greater vulnerability of women to victimisation. This becomes particularly relevant and evident in the context of the changing drug scene in Kazakhstan. Women are highly likely to become victims of violence, blackmail, and exploitation by their sexual partners when using synthetic drugs. This information is highlighted in several analytical publications. In November 2023, an assessment was conducted in Central Asia by EWNA regarding the unmet needs of people with experience of using synthetic drugs. It was found that the context and patterns of drug use varied between countries, but throughout the region, women were particularly subjected to significant violence. Many respondents refrained from seeking help after experiencing violence due to fears of exposing their identity or substance use, feelings of shame, and a lack of awareness about available resources or organisations that could assist them. In some instances, individuals perceived their substance use as the reason for the violence inflicted upon them. This assessment highlights that synthetic drug users frequently endure highly negative encounters with law enforcement, primarily due to strict drug policies. Participants reported various forms of police violence, and those subjected to abuse and mistreatment often lack access to justice or believe it is unattainable. They are frequently stigmatised as criminals, particularly if they have previous interactions with the law. These data, collected among the community of people using synthetic drugs, show that women continue to remain a social group at risk of rights violations, violence, greater stigmatisation, and a higher likelihood of being excluded from receiving help and support from the state (EWNA 2023). An analytical study conducted in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) in 2020 shows similar data. Drug-related offenses significantly contribute to the incarceration of women in EECA. The criminalisation of drug use extends beyond prison sentences. It impacts the daily lives of women who use drugs, compelling them to adopt behaviours and lifestyles that minimise police interaction and help them remain unnoticed by the system to safeguard their freedom (Matyushina-Ocheret 2020).

Just like women, youth demonstrate significant vulnerability to the consequences of the rising availability of synthetic drugs in Central Asia. According to the World Drug report 2024, compared to adults, young people are perceived as having less interaction with the criminal justice system for drug-related offenses, except for offenses related to possession.

Globally, Kazakhstan, like other Central Asian countries, stands out for the greater vulnerability of its adolescent generation to drug threats, such as criminal behaviour related to drug distribution. A current surge in the number of minors involved in drug trafficking in Kazakhstan highlights a concerning social issue that necessitates a re-evaluation of policies with regards to both prevention and the provision of social assistance at the levels of education and family. To the best of our knowledge, there is a significant gap in the research on the social profile of minors and youth involved in drug-related crimes. Consequently, there is also a lack of accurate and balanced assessments of the needs of this demographic. It can be assumed that punitive policies towards minors may impinge upon a cascade of subsequent social and economic difficulties in the reintegration of these individuals upon their release from prison and transition to communities.

The rising involvement of youth and women in drug-related crimes in Kazakhstan underscores a critical social challenge that demands comprehensive and targeted policy responses. Despite existing prevention programmes and stringent penalties, the persistent increase in synthetic drug trafficking among these groups highlights the need for more effective and inclusive strategies. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach that includes gender-specific preventive measures, enhanced social support systems, and comprehensive research to better understand and meet the needs of vulnerable populations. By focusing on both punitive and rehabilitative measures, Kazakhstan can work towards reducing the prevalence of drug-related offenses and supporting the reintegration of affected individuals into society.

Treatment Demand Among Youth and Women: Addressing the Growing Need

Synthetic drug use among youth and women in Kazakhstan presents a growing and alarming trend that calls for urgent attention and action. This section delves into the dynamics of synthetic drug consumption and its proliferation within these vulnerable demographics. We will explore the socio-economic factors driving the increase in synthetic drug use, the appeal of these substances to young people and women, and the severe consequences they face, including health risks, social stigma, and legal repercussions. By examining current policies, prevention programmes, and statistical data, this section aims to provide a general overview of the com-

plexities surrounding synthetic drug use and the critical need for targeted interventions to mitigate its impact on Kazakhstan's youth and women.

Currently, the issue of youth addiction is predominantly examined through the use of NPS, commonly known as 'synthetics'. Media reports first highlighted the emergence of synthetic drugs in Kazakhstan in the late 2000s (Kosenov 2009), a timeline supported by researchers who gather data from individuals within the NPS community and NGOs offering related services (Kurcevič/Lines 2020). Another growing concern is the misuse of pharmaceutical drugs among young people, including substances like tropicamide, somnol, pregabalin (Lyrica), and tramadol (Sputnik Kazakhstan 2018). To address this, tramadol was subjected to strict control and monitoring from March 2023, significantly restricting its sale in pharmacies (Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2023b). Unauthorised sales of tramadol are now treated as narcotic drug distribution and penalised accordingly. However, other pharmaceuticals like tropicamide, Lyrica (pregabalin) is only classified as potent substances, with violations resulting in fines or license revocations rather than criminal penalties. This regulatory gap allows these drugs to remain widely accessible through pharmacies, including to youth.

Estimating the extent of NPS use among Kazakhstan's youth and understanding their gender profiles is challenging due to limited research. Initial surveys in 2012 found no NPS use among youth, with cannabis being the most common drug, with 11.2% of young people using it (Baykenov 2014). More recent data indicates that 3.1% to 11.6% of young people aged 13–18 have used drugs other than alcohol and tobacco, with 1.7% to 6.4% reporting drug use in the past year. A 2018 survey identified 0.6% of adolescents using synthetic cannabinoids and 0.3% using amphetamine-type stimulants (Me at al. 2019). Among young adults aged 18–34, the lifetime prevalence of NPS use was 6.3%, peaking at 8.0% in the 25–29 age group, with synthetic cannabinoids and stimulant use reported at 4.1% and 3.5%, respectively. Regional disparities were noted, with North Kazakhstan and Almaty showing high synthetic cannabinoid use, while Astana and East Kazakhstan reported higher stimulant use (Negay et al. 2019). In 2022, a survey revealed that 2.2% of youth aged 14–35 had used synthetic drugs, with peaks in the 14–18 and 24–28 age groups (Akhantaeva et al. 2023). Among youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET youth) aged 15–28, 5.9% frequently used synthetic drugs while 68.8% had never used them, a lower rate compared to traditional drugs (Scientific Research Centre 'Youth' 2022).

An internet survey conducted among 5,000 young people aged 14 to 35 in Almaty revealed that 8.7% had experimented with at least one drug, predominantly synthetic drugs like speed or spice. Approximately one third of the participants reported that drugs were easily accessible in their city, with 43.8% viewing drug use as a fashionable trend. 10% of respondents expressed interest in trying drugs as a new experience. Nearly 40% believed that non-injected drugs were non-addictive. While many youth appeared nonchalant about drug risks, they acknowledged the severity of the issue, with a quarter recognising drug addiction as a significant problem in their neighbourhoods and one in ten worried about the presence of drug dealers. Additionally, 44% highlighted a lack of recreational centres in their communities (Public Foundation 'Information and Resource Centre' 2022).

To date, there are no comprehensive studies specifically investigating the motives and determinants of NPS use among youth in Kazakhstan. However, sporadic sociological surveys and reports provide some insights into possible motivations. These motivations can be categorised into three groups: personal, economic, and those related to new marketing features of NPS distribution and acquisition, such as easy access, non-contact delivery, and pseudo-legality (Kurcevič/Lines 2020). According to a report by the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Mental Health (2022), half of the young people with NPS experience cited not only the need for euphoria but also self-medication attempts as reasons for their use. Additionally, one third of these respondents highlighted the affordable price of NPS as a significant factor. Regardless of their experience with NPS, most surveyed youth emphasised the easy availability of these substances as a key factor in their popularity. As of 2019, a single dose of various NPS available to young people cost up to 2,000 tenge (USD 30). Respondents reported acquiring these substances through several channels: dealer acquaintances (30.5%), social networks like Telegram (29.5%), shop websites (12.6%), drop boxes (11.6%), and internet forums (6.3%) (Negay et al. 2019).

Gender disparity in NPS use is less pronounced compared to traditional drugs. The 'EPI-NPS-KZ' study among young respondents (18–34 years old) found that women were three times less likely to report using traditional drugs, but for NPS, the ratio was one woman for every two men. The difference between male and female respondents was particularly narrow for synthetic stimulant use. Lifetime use of synthetic cannabinoids was reported by 1.5% of young women, while synthetic stimulant use was as high as 2.7% (Negay et al. 2019). By 2022, this gender disparity in NPS prevalence had further decreased; for synthetic cannabinoids, the ratio was 1:3.6,

and for stimulants, it was 1:1.6. A study conducted among young people in 2022 showed that women were less likely to be aware of the psychoactive substances prevalent in Kazakhstan. The age of first use of synthetic drugs did not differ between men and women. The ways of synthetic drugs administration also did not differ by gender. The methods of acquiring drugs did not differ statistically; however, it was found that women more often used contactless methods of obtaining goods, such as through drop points. The monetary expenditure for purchasing a single dose of drugs also did not differ by gender. Interesting gender differences were found in the clinical symptoms of intoxication with synthetic drugs. Women, when intoxicated, more often experienced dizziness, less frequently felt a surge of energy or euphoria, and were less likely to feel calm and serene. Women experienced an increase in sexual desire to the same extent as men, which should be considered when assessing the degree of sexualised use of psychoactive substances in Kazakhstan and determining the associated risks. Within 24 hours after intoxication, women were more likely to continue experiencing symptoms such as nausea and vomiting. This suggests a need for gender-specific medical care and support strategies in managing the effects of synthetic drug use. No differences were found between genders regarding the motives for using synthetic drugs. There were also no differences in how men and women assessed the availability of synthetic drugs and the ease of acquiring them in their cities of residence (Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Mental Health 2022).

Additional epidemiological data from treatment utilisation indicators shows that 91% of registered patients with substance use disorders (SUDs) were male. However, in the 14–28 age group, this difference was less pronounced; here, 87% of registered patients with SUDs were male and 13% were female. Among youth with stimulant use disorder, the gender disparity was even smaller, at 69% male and 31% female. Routine state reports lack gender-specific data on inpatient care and bed capacity, limiting the analysis of treatment capacities for women with drug addictions, including NPS addictions (Altynbekov et al. 2023). According to the EPI-NPS-KZ data from 2018, males made up 75% of the treatment cases. However, women under 25 were twice as likely as men under 25 to be hospitalised for NPS addictions. Women were also more likely to enter treatment programmes for stimulant use disorders, with 74.6% of female patients compared to 51.6% of male patients. Additionally, women reported experiencing psychotic episodes during NPS use more frequently than men, with rates of 30.5% for women versus 17% for men (Negay et al. 2019).

According to official national statistics obtained from the country's healthcare organisations, there has been an increase in the rate of primary detection of mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of psychoactive substances among women (19.8 per 100,000 female population in 2021, and 20.6 in 2022). A similar situation is observed among adolescents aged 15 to 17: the rate of primary detection of drug addiction was 6.6 per 100,000 in this age group in 2021, and in 2022, the rate increased to 7.4 per 100,000. It is worth noting that this indicator varies greatly, and not all regions experience the acute problem of adolescent psychoactive substance use. The detection rate among adolescents is higher than the national level in three regions, namely Pavlodar (27.9), Kostanay (35.8), and East Kazakhstan (97.1) regions (Altynbekov et al. 2023). These regions are located in the north of the country and lie along the drug trafficking route known as the Northern Route (UNODC 2018a), which might be one of the factors contributing to the surge of the problem among minors (drug availability). Another reason could be the rapid increase in access to synthetic drugs, which has been observed over the past ten years and confirmed in studies with adult samples (Prilutskaya et al. 2020).

Valuable data on the specific issues and needs of women using synthetic drugs can be obtained from research conducted by non-governmental organisations among communities of people with lived experience of psychoactive substance use. One of the most recent studies with the freshest data is the analysis of the unmet needs of people who use synthetic and new psychoactive substances in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, conducted by EWNA in 2023 (EWNA 2023a). This assessment revealed a significant number of unmet needs among people with experience of using synthetic drugs. The identified problems included both universal issues, characteristic of individuals with any type of chemical addictions (high stigma, barriers to accessing medical services, criminalisation of drug use), and specific problems experienced only by those with NPS use (low level of services for treating mental complications and NPS overdoses, harm reduction services, and informational support). It was noted that women, compared to other groups, were more vulnerable to insufficient social and medical support services. All female respondents reported a lack of specialised treatment programmes for women or crisis centres. Additionally, it was found that women were at greater risk of experiencing physical, psychological, and economic violence. The stigma against women who use synthetic drugs was higher compared to men. This stigma is a key barrier to women receiving timely assistance.

Similar data were highlighted in the World Drug Report 2024, which emphasised the global trend of increased stigmatisation of women, extremely low rates of their seeking social and medical support, and a high percentage of comorbidities, including mental disorders (UNODC 2024). Data from the analysis of the situation in seven countries worldwide showed that the motives for using new psychoactive substances differ among women and men, especially in older age groups. For example, women are more likely to use synthetic drugs to overcome depression and to increase their productivity at work and in managing household duties. Among younger women, these differences in motives compared to men may diminish and are more often associated with recreational desires for pleasure, including sexual gratification (UNODC 2024).

We will now focus on analysing the data set provided by the Republican Scientific and Practical Center for Mental Health, obtained through the clinical-epidemiological study on the prevalence of new psychoactive substances in Kazakhstan (Prilutskaya et al. 2024). The database contains cases of inpatient treatment for NPS addiction across all regions of the country during the years 2018–2021. During the analysed period, the proportion of women receiving treatment was 14%. The average age of women seeking inpatient treatment was lower than that of men: 30.4 ± 8.3 years compared to 32.4 ± 7.5 years. Accordingly, women sought help earlier, with an average of eight years passing from the time of first drug use to the first hospitalisation, compared to ten years for men. However, this period was extremely long for both men and women. This indirectly indicates insufficient coverage of treatment services for people with problematic NPS use. Among the groups of synthetic drugs, women more frequently than men had problems with synthetic stimulants, which were accompanied by higher risks of overdoses, psychotic complications, and risky sexual behaviour. In nearly 40% of cases, women administered synthetic stimulants via injection, compared to 33% among men. Every fifth woman who sought medical help showed signs of psychotic disorders, indicating significant somatic and mental health issues that prompted them to seek medical assistance. Among men, this figure was slightly lower at 18%. Notably, women showed a higher seroprevalence rate for HIV and hepatitis C. Among women, a positive HIV status was recorded almost twice as often than among men: 15.8% compared to 8.9%. Every fourth woman was seropositive for hepatitis C (Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Mental Health 2022).

The data suggest several critical implications. Women, on average, seek inpatient treatment for synthetic drug dependence at a younger age than

men, indicating that women might experience more severe or rapidly progressing health complications, making them more vulnerable. The prolonged delay between initial drug use and seeking treatment for both men and women highlights a significant gap in early intervention and support services, emphasising the need to enhance the reach and effectiveness of these services for individuals with problematic NPS use.

Women were more prone to using synthetic stimulants, facing higher risks of overdoses, psychotic complications, and risky sexual behaviour. This finding underscores the necessity for targeted harm reduction strategies and mental health support specifically designed for women. The high incidence of psychotic disorders among women seeking medical help (20%) underscores the severe mental health impact of synthetic drug use on women, necessitating specialised psychiatric care and support services. The higher rates of HIV and hepatitis C among women point to a critical public health concern, necessitating targeted prevention, testing, and treatment programmes for women who use synthetic drugs. In summary, even the routine treatment data highlight the necessity for gender-specific interventions, improved early intervention and treatment services, enhanced harm reduction strategies, and comprehensive healthcare support to address the unique needs and higher risks faced by women using synthetic drugs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The increasing involvement of youth and women in synthetic drug use and related crimes in Kazakhstan is a critical issue that requires immediate and multifaceted intervention. The current trends indicate a significant rise in synthetic drug consumption among these vulnerable groups, driven by socio-economic factors, easy accessibility, and a lack of awareness about the associated risks. Addressing this issue effectively requires a comprehensive approach that combines education, treatment, policy reform, and community support.

First and foremost, enhancing awareness and education is essential. Targeted educational programmes must be developed to inform youth and women about the dangers of synthetic drugs. These programmes should be integrated into school curriculums and community outreach efforts, utilising platforms popular among young people to maximise their impact. Additionally, addressing the stigma associated with drug use is crucial.

Reducing stigma can encourage individuals to seek help without fear of judgment, thus improving access to treatment and support services.

Improving the availability and quality of treatment services is another critical area of focus. The current treatment infrastructure must be expanded to meet the growing demand, with particular attention paid to the needs of young people and women. Gender-sensitive treatment programmes are necessary to address the distinct physiological and psychological impacts of synthetic drugs on women. Furthermore, increasing the availability of harm reduction services, such as needle exchange programmes and safe consumption spaces, can mitigate some immediate health risks and provide a pathway to more comprehensive treatment.

Policy reform plays a vital role in addressing synthetic drug use. While strict regulations and penalties for drug distribution are necessary, it is equally important to focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment for personal drug use. Decriminalising personal drug use can reduce the stigma and barriers to seeking treatment, making it more likely that individuals will access the help they need. Policies should also address the specific vulnerabilities of women, who often face higher risks of violence, exploitation, and health complications.

Collaboration between various stakeholders is essential to develop and implement effective strategies. Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and international bodies must work together to share resources, knowledge, and best practices. Community organisations, particularly those that interact directly with affected populations, play a crucial role in ensuring that interventions are culturally sensitive and tailored to the needs of different communities within Kazakhstan.

Ongoing research and data collection are critical to understanding the evolving landscape of synthetic drug use. Regular surveys and studies can provide valuable insights into trends and emerging issues, enabling policy-makers and healthcare providers to proactively adapt their approaches. This evidence-based approach ensures that interventions remain relevant and effective, ultimately reducing the prevalence and impact of synthetic drug use among Kazakhstan's youth and women.

In summary, addressing the synthetic drug crisis in Kazakhstan requires a coordinated and comprehensive effort. By enhancing education and awareness, improving treatment accessibility, enacting supportive policies, fostering collaboration, and maintaining robust research efforts, it is possible to mitigate the impact of synthetic drug use on vulnerable populations. This multifaceted approach will promote healthier, safer communities

and support the reintegration of affected individuals into society, ultimately reducing the prevalence of drug-related offenses and improving public health outcomes.

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