

Hanfparade 2022: protest and participants' views on cannabis legalization in Germany

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, it investigates the characteristics of Hanfparade 2022 – the biggest prolegalization festival in Germany – and its visitors, as well as the main reason for participation in Hanfparade. Findings are compared to those from Hanfparade 2016 to explore whether the main reason for festival attendance has changed since the legalization of medical cannabis in 2017 and since the announcement of plans for cannabis legalization. Second, this paper assesses Hanfparade participants' views on cannabis legalization in Germany, in particular their opinions on and their preferences for retail supply options.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This study is a replication of a research conducted in 2016 at the same festival in Berlin, with a slightly adapted questionnaire. In this study, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used: observation at the festival, interviews before and after the festival with the organizer and a survey among festival attendees (n = 183).*

Findings – *Protest still looks relevant for the participants at Hanfparade, and the announcement of plans for legalization does not seem to downgrade this feeling. The participants have positive opinions about self-supply through home cultivation, noncommercial supply through Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs) and commercial supply through stores similar to Dutch coffee shops. However, positive opinions do not necessarily reflect a personal preference, e.g. CSCs were very low in personal preferences. The options of home cultivation and CSCs were more popular among daily users.*

Originality/value – *This study contributes to the ongoing debate in Germany, focusing on views of cannabis users.*

Keywords *Germany, Cannabis festivals, Cannabis legalization, Cannabis market, Cannabis users, Hanfparade*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

After many decades of prohibition and criminalization of cannabis users, the new federal government in Germany marked the end of this era. On November 24, 2021, the so-called “traffic light” coalition government – so named for the parties' signature colors, Social Democratic Party (red), Free Democratic Party (yellow), the Greens (green) – reached an agreement and pledged to legalize recreational cannabis. The three-party coalition government decided to put an end to cannabis prohibition in Germany, and to make Germany the second G7 country – after Canada – to do so. Since then, a public debate has emerged engaging politicians, experts and policymakers. In June 2022, questions about regulations of cannabis sales were discussed in the official “Cannabis – but safe” consultation process. Considering that experts and representatives of social interest groups have expressed their opinion on retail sales, this study focuses on those who are directly affected by this new legislation and policy, the cannabis users. This article presents the

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Received 2 December 2022
Revised 25 January 2023
1 February 2023
7 February 2023
Accepted 8 February 2023

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The author would like to thank Steffen Geyer, the contact person of Hanfparade and core member of the organization team, for the interviews before and after the Hanfparade. The author would like to thank Sara Braam for her enormous assistance in the fieldwork and data-collection. Finally, the author would like to thank Emeritus Professor Dirk J. Korf, the Editor of this Journal and the reviewers for their fruitful comments and the constructive feedback.

Conflicts of interest. I declare that I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

findings of a study in Hanfparade, the annual cannabis festival in Berlin, the largest and most traditional prolegalization event in Germany, which took place on August 13, 2022. Contributing to the ongoing debate about recreational cannabis legalization in Germany, the focus of this article is twofold. First, it focuses on Hanfparade and its visitors, nine months after the announced plans for cannabis legalization. Second, it assesses Hanfparade participants' views on cannabis legalization, in particular, opinions on and preferences for retail supply options.

Political parties and cannabis policy proposals

In 2017, Germany legislated to allow the medical use of cannabis under specified conditions (EMCDDA, 2018). Four years later, the newly elected federal government sets out plans to permit sale, purchase and possession of cannabis within a legal framework (EMCDDA, 2022). These plans reaffirm and reflect the position on cannabis policy which these political parties had formulated in their electoral programs.

The Greens, in their electoral program, supported the decriminalization of cannabis use, the introduction of a cannabis control law, which enables the legal and controlled sale of cannabis in licensed specialty stores, and the establishment of a regulated and monitored system for growing, trading and distributing cannabis (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021). The Free Democrats (FDP) proposed the idea of allowing possession and consumption by adults, and they backed up retail sales in licensed shops where the quality can be controlled and the protection of minors can be guaranteed (Freie Demokraten, 2021). The Social Democrats (SPD) proposed decriminalization of use and possession of small amounts of cannabis and also a regulated supply of cannabis to adults (SPD, 2021). Other political parties added their own pieces in the mosaic of the legalization in Germany. For example, the Left Party (Die Linke) proposed a new draft law on the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag), aiming at decriminalizing possession of cannabis (nationwide amount of 30 g) and allowing home cultivation of personal or community use (Antrag/ Drucksache 20/2577, Deutscher Bundestag). On the contrary, the Christian Democrats, the party of Angela Merkel – who led the federal government from 2005 to 2021 – persisted in their opposition against cannabis legalization, questioning the compatibility of the coalition's plans with EU and international law regulations (CDU/CSU, 2021; CDU/CSU, 2022). In addition to proposals on cannabis legalization from political parties, Deutscher Hanfverband (DHV), the largest cannabis legalization advocacy organization in Germany, proposes that cannabis should only be sold in state-licensed special cannabis shops, with an on-site consumption as an option. Moreover, DHV backs up the idea that cultivation clubs should also be an option. On the other hand, sales in pharmacies, liquor stores, supermarkets, petrol stations, kiosks, etc., are not encouraged by DHV (Deutsche Hanfverband, 2022).

The regulatory proposals which have been on the table constitute options which have been implemented – more or less successfully – in other jurisdictions around the world. Among others, options that have been offered not only in legal cannabis markets but also discussed in public debates in Germany, include home cultivation, Cannabis Social Clubs (CSCs), licensed retail stores and pharmacies. The initial consultation process has been led by the Federal Government's Addiction and Drugs Commissioner, and it has been carried out in coordination with the Federal Ministry of Health, while the numerous federal ministries that will be involved in the preparation of the draft law, have already been involved in the consultation process (Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Sucht- und Drogenfragen, 2022). Although each coalition partner had its own cannabis policy proposals, in October 2022, the Federal Ministry of Health announced that the government's plans include the permission of production, supply and distribution of recreational cannabis within a licensed and government-controlled framework which will allow controlled sale of cannabis for recreational purposes to adults in licensed specialist shops if applicable, pharmacies

(Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2022; Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Sucht- und Drogenfragen, 2022). Also, the plans include that the acquisition and possession of up to a maximum amount of 20 to 30 g of recreational cannabis for personal consumption in private and public spaces will be permitted without punishment; and that private self-cultivation will be permitted to a limited extent (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2022).

Models of cannabis regulation

The self-supply proposal of allowing home cultivation is definitely not something new as home cultivation is a wide-spread phenomenon globally, with at least 27 jurisdictions worldwide having adopted nonprohibitive approaches to home cannabis cultivation (Decorte *et al.*, 2020; Belackova *et al.*, 2019). Toward the end of 2021, this list became longer with the addition of Malta and Luxembourg, which announced that – under strict regulations – they will allow adult residents to cultivate up to four cannabis plants per household (EMCDDA, 2021a, 2021b).

The right to home cultivation has opened the door for the development of CSC. The CSCs constitute a user-driven, noncommercial and nonprofit model of cultivation clubs which operate as a collective and closed system for the supply of cannabis among registered, adult members (Decorte *et al.*, 2017; Pardal, 2022; Pardal and Decorte, 2018). CSC practices differ among CSCs and across countries (Decorte *et al.*, 2017). In most jurisdictions, CSCs remain a grass roots, unregulated initiative of groups of users, with Spain – the birthplace of the CSC model – being the most prominent example (Pardal, 2022). Recently, Malta became the second country worldwide – after Uruguay, and the first in Europe, to legalize and fully regulate the CSC model (EMCDDA, 2021a, 2021b; Pardal, 2022). The model of CSCs has raised cannabis policy debates and legislative proposals in other countries (Pardal, 2022).

In addition to self-supply options, there are also countries which allow retail sales. The Netherlands was the first country to introduce such a model. In 1976, the Dutch Government decriminalized cannabis and laid down the legal basis for controlled sales in coffee shops (Wouters *et al.*, 2010). In The Netherlands, sale of cannabis is tolerated under strict conditions in coffee shops, a café-like setting, which, in addition to selling cannabis under strict regulations, usually allows it to be smoked on the premises (Korf, 2020; Wouters *et al.*, 2010).

In December 2013, Uruguay became the first country to fully regulate the cannabis market, and decided to operate under state control and monopoly (Boidi *et al.*, 2016) providing to registered users the choice of one option among three available ways to legally obtain cannabis: through self-cultivation, by participating in CSCs or by directly purchasing cannabis in a pharmacy (Queirolo, 2020; Boidi *et al.*, 2016).

In the USA, 21 States and the District of Columbia have legalized cannabis for recreational purposes (NCSL, 2022), either via the legislature or via public ballots (NORML, 2023). While cannabis remains illegal under federal law, each state has introduced different regulatory requirements, which has led to diversified commercial markets in each state, including differences in allowing home-cultivation as well (NORML, 2023). In these 21 States, consumption is not allowed in the premises or in any other indoor space. Recently, only the laws of New York and New Mexico were the first to include provisions for the establishment of specific consumption areas under strict conditions (EMCDDA, 2021a, 2021b).

In 2018, Canada legalized cannabis for recreational use and introduced a policy framework to regulate the production, supply and sale of cannabis (Government of Canada, 2022). In all provinces, except Manitoba and Quebec, home cultivation is allowed. The Cannabis Act established several national requirements for the operation of cannabis stores, but each province and territory in Canada are allowed to set their own retail regulations, and there are many marked differences between jurisdictions, for example, between those with private/

hybrid retail models and those with government-only retail models (Myran *et al.*, 2022, 2019). Cannabis consumption is not allowed in these premises, but recently, the Province of British Columbia launched an online public engagement about cannabis consumption spaces to help inform decisions about whether to permit these spaces and how they could be regulated to align with provincial public health and safety objectives (BC News Gov, 2022).

Aim

The aim of this article is twofold. First, it focuses on Hanfparade 2022, and it investigates the characteristics of the festival and its visitors, as well as the main reason for participation in the festival. Findings are compared to these from previous research which we conducted in Hanfparade 2016 (Skliamis and Korf, 2019) to explore whether festival characteristics, visitors' profile and their main reason for festival attendance have changed since the legalization of medical cannabis in 2017 and the announcement of plans for cannabis legalization. Second, this article assesses Hanfparade participants' views on cannabis legalization in Germany, in particular, their opinions on and their preferences for retail supply options. Considering that politicians, experts and representatives of social groups have expressed their opinion on retail sales, this research intends to express the voice of those who are most directly affected by changes in cannabis policy, the cannabis users.

Methods

This study is a replication of a research conducted in 2016 in the same festival in Berlin, with a slightly adapted questionnaire. In this study, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used: participant observation in the festival, interviews before and after the festival with the organizer and a survey among festival attendees. Observations were structured around the following themes: characteristics of the festival; general atmosphere; participants' demographic profile; behavior and substance use. The local organizer was contacted and interviewed before and after the festival to collect more details about the background, organizational structure and characteristics of the festival. In addition to these qualitative methods, a quantitative survey among a convenience sample of participants ($n = 183$) was conducted from 2–9 p.m. at the day of the festival, using a two-page custom-designed questionnaire in German and English. To approximate representativeness, taking into account gender and age distribution as much as possible, respondents were approached at various places (i.e. music stage, market area, square and park). The purpose of the survey was explained, the respondents' anonymity was ensured, and they verbally consented to participation. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was a replication of the Hanfparade 2016 survey and included three items about demographic characteristics: gender (categories for gender were male, female or nonbinary/other), age and residence (Berlin; Germany but not Berlin; abroad); four items about cannabis use (lifetime use, last month use, days in the last month and cannabis use in Hanfparade); and one question concerning the main reason for attending the festival (protest/activism; entertainment/leisure; to meet people/socialize; to use cannabis; and curiosity).

The second part of the questionnaire was new, and focused on exploring participants' opinions about six statements representing possible regulatory supply options for cannabis legalization in Germany, and one question investigating their personal preference for one of these six options. An overarching introductory sentence was placed above the six options: "The German Government plans to legalize cannabis. In your opinion, how should that look like?" The participants were asked to specify their level of agreement using a five-point scale: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) agree; and (5) strongly agree. This method allowed respondents to indicate their positive-to-negative strength of agreement regarding the following six statements. Participants were asked to

give their opinion about: home cultivation, a system of self-supply – “It should be legal to grow your own cannabis plants for personal consumption”; nonprofit cannabis associations, known as CSCs – “Cannabis Social Clubs, whose members jointly grow cannabis for their own consumption, should be legal”; coffee shops – “Cannabis sales and consumption in coffee shops (like in The Netherlands) should be legal”; special cannabis stores – “Cannabis sales in special cannabis stores, but where consumption is not allowed (like in Canada) should be legal”; pharmacies – “Cannabis sales in pharmacies (for example, like in Uruguay), should be legal”; tobacco stores – “Cannabis sales in tobacco stores should be legal.” Although the latter option has not been implemented anywhere so far, it was added for two reasons. First, it implies that cannabis policy will have similarities with the tobacco policy, different than the strict regulations that can be found in special retail stores such as Dutch coffee shops or Canadian cannabis stores. Second, in Europe, the vast majority of cannabis users smoke joints with tobacco (EMCDDA, 2017; Hindocha *et al.*, 2016). Also, tobacco stores already sell cannabis use paraphernalia, such as rolling papers, rolling tips, pipes and bongs. In the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to express their personal preference by choosing which one of these options would be the most important to them. All survey data were processed with SPSS 27.0. A significance level of 0.05 was used. Only statistically significant results are presented in the text and in the tables.

Results

General characteristics of Hanfparade 2022

The first Hanfparade took place 25 years ago, and since then, it takes place every year in August. In 2022, it took place on Saturday 13 August and attracted approximately 4,000 participants. The stage was located in the south side of the Alexanderplatz, the most popular square in the city center of Berlin, Germany. Hanfparade 2022 combined a stage with live music and speeches, music trucks, a market area and also a rally in the center of the city.

The use of cannabis was extensive, and many participants combined drinking beer with smoking cannabis. At all sites of the festival, and also during the rally, there was an intensive police presence. The crowd was mainly divided into three groups which were often overlapped. The first group included dozens of participants of all ages who were sitting on the grass at the small green areas around Alexanderplatz. Many others were enjoying the music, and they were dancing in front of the sound system truck, and the third group was located in front of the stage, either standing or sitting on the street, enjoying the live music and the speeches. The diverse styles of music enhanced the celebratory atmosphere.

Traditionally, Hanfparade is not only about festivities and celebrations but also emphasizes in engaging in public debates and German politics with issues related to medical and recreational cannabis, often expressed through protest. Elements of politicization were evident in Hanfparade 2022, with several key speakers. The political character was fostered by the presence and speech from the Federal Government Commissioner for Drugs and Addiction, for the first time in the history of Hanfparade. As the organizer stressed, even the route of the march was a symbolically political action, designed to march in front of three political key locations in the city of Berlin. The route included the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) and the Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt), the Ministry of Health (head office of the drug commissioner), and it ended in front of the Rotes Rathaus (Red City Hall), the Town Hall of Berlin which is located near Alexanderplatz and the seat of the Governing Mayor and the Berlin Senate. The route was a symbolically political statement by itself, a rally of activism. According to the organizer, the protest this year targeted different directions. First, it was a protest against the contrast of the cannabis policy in action:

Although the government said that they will legalize cannabis, the police still arrest users. There are more than 500 arrests every day. There is anger in the movement because the politicians say other things than the police are really doing. We do not trust the politicians, until we really see developments and changes.

In addition to that, the organizer pointed out that there are complaints about the ambiguity of the future legalization. No clear and definite plans had been announced at the time of the Hanfparade, and, according to the organizer, that raised concerns and worries:

No one knows what legalization means for the government right now. Are we allowed to grow our own plants? Nobody knows exactly what kind of shops will sell cannabis. Will they be alcohol or tobacco stores, or special shops for cannabis? Nobody knows about the licenses, the rules, etc. No one knows details about the legalization plans.

The problems in the growing medical cannabis sector constituted another important reason for protest, e.g. issues of health insurance reimbursements (Cremer-Schaeffer, 2021; Fortin *et al.*, 2022), as the organizer also explained:

We want the health insurance to pay for it, like any other medicine in Germany. We want patients to have coverage from health insurance, and their needs to be covered by the health system of the country.

This notion of protest was also evident and striking in Hanfparade. Participants were carrying flags, placards and banners with slogans and signs against prohibition and in favor of legalization.

Hanfparade 2022 vs Hanfparade 2016

The most striking difference between the two versions of Hanfparade was the difference in the total number of participants. While the estimation in 2016 was more than 10,000, in Hanfparade 2022, no more than 4,000 people participated in the event. A possible explanation may be that after the announced plans of legalization, users were not so interested any more to participate in a prolegalization event. In comparison to Hanfparade 2016, where we conducted similar research, most of the characteristics remained the same. In both festivals, the level of politicization was high, then and now, including speakers and kiosks from political parties. However, this year was the first time ever in the history of Hanfparade that the Federal Government Commissioner for Addiction and Drug Issues gave a speech on the stage about cannabis legalization. Also, many of the entertainment characteristics remained similar, with the crowd being spread in different areas, either in front of sound-system truck or in front of the music stage or hanging around at the green area. Cannabis and alcohol use characteristics remained quite the same, with both versions to be characterized by extensive use of cannabis and beers.

Visitors' profile and main reason for attendance

Table 1 depicts the demographic and cannabis use characteristics of the participants and the main reason for attendance. In Hanfparade 2022, the age of participants ranged from 15 to 56 (mean age: 25.3), with more than half of participants aged 18–24. Less than half of the respondents were residents of Berlin, while the other half were residents of other German cities. Only a small minority were living abroad. Almost all of respondents had used cannabis at least once in their lifetime, and more than nine out of ten had used cannabis in the past month. Over half of respondents were daily cannabis users (≥ 20 days in the past months). The analysis also revealed that in the total sample, more than eight out of ten respondents used cannabis at the festival. The main reason for participation in Hanfparade 2022 was “protest/activism,” followed by “entertainment/leisure.”

The analysis that compared the two festivals revealed that both festivals were gender-mixed, but Hanfparade 2022 was more male-dominated. Although the age range was wide

Table 1 Hanfparade 2022 vs Hanfparade 2016: demographic and cannabis use characteristics, main reason

	Hanfparade 2022 (n = 183)	Hanfparade 2016* (n = 341)	Test	p
<i>Gender</i>	%	%	$\chi^2 = 10.819$ (df1)	<0.001
Male	72.1	58.4		
Female	26.8	41.6		
Other	1.1	0.0		
<i>Age</i>			$t(522) = 4.049$	<0.001
Range	15–56	14–57		
M (SD)	25.3 (8.1)	22.8 (6.2)		
<i>Age categories</i>			$\chi^2 = 14.913$ (df4)	0.005
14–17	6.6	15.0		
18–24	53.6	53.7		
25–34	28.4	26.1		
35–44	7.7	4.4		
44+	3.8	0.9		
<i>Residency</i>			$\chi^2 = 12.353$ (df1)	<0.001
Berliners	45.9	61.9		
<i>Cannabis use</i>				
Lifetime	98.9	97.4	$\chi^2 = 1.389$ (df1)	0.239
Last month	92.8	91.2	$\chi^2 = 4.148$ (df1)	0.126
Days last month**	18.4	17.2	$t(522) = 1.162$	0.246
Daily users**	56.3	51.3	$\chi^2 = 1.178$ (df1)	0.278
Festival use	84.7	82.4	$\chi^2 = 0.449$ (df1)	0.503
<i>Main reason</i>			$\chi^2 = 1.749$ (df4)	0.782
Protest/Activism	44.3	42.4		
Entertainment/Leisure	27.3	31.3		
To meet people/socialize	9.8	8.7		
To use cannabis	7.7	5.7		
Curiosity	10.9	11.9		

Note: *Table by Skliamis and Korf (2018) and Skliamis and Korf (2019), **In total sample

and similar in both festivals, on average, respondents in Hanfparade 2022 were 2.5 years older than those in Hanfparade 2016. In both festivals, 18- to 24-year-old respondents constituted the largest age category, followed by 25- to 34-year-olds. However, minors (<18 years of age) were less present in Hanfparade 2016. Also, the proportion of Berliners in Hanfparade 2022 was significantly lower than in Hanfparade 2016. No differences were found in lifetime use, last month use, daily use and cannabis use at the festival. Finally, no statistical differences were found in main reason for participation. At both festivals, the most prevalent reason for participating in cannabis festivals was “protest/activism.” In both festivals, about three out of ten respondents attended Hanfparade for “entertainment/leisure”; “curiosity” ranked third, chosen by one-tenth of respondents, closely followed by the option “to meet people/socialize.” The option “to use cannabis” was less often reported in both surveys.

Views on retail supply options

Regarding the retail sale points and the regulatory options, Table 2 depicts that more than nine out of ten respondents had a positive opinion about legalizing home cultivation, followed in the close distance by “coffee shops” (similar to The Netherlands, where consumption is allowed). Also, more than eight out of ten respondents had a positive opinion about legalizing CSCs as well (Figure 1).

In less popular options, less than six out of ten participants had a positive opinion about allowing sales in tobacco stores, while less than half of the respondents had a positive opinion about legalizing special cannabis stores (similar to Canada, where consumption is not allowed), and the idea of allowing cannabis sales for recreational purposes in

Table 2 Opinions about supply options and personal preference, by total and by daily users

Opinions & preference	Total (%)	M (S.E), 95% CI [LL, UL]	Daily use (%)	
			Yes	No
<i>Home cultivation</i>		1.13 (0.03), [1.06, 1.19]	$\chi^2 = 8.467$ (df2) ($p = 0.015$)	
Agree(1)	91.8		96.1	86.2
Neither(2)	3.8		2.9	3.1
Disagree(3)	4.4		1.0	10.8
<i>CSC</i>		1.20 (0.04), [1.12, 1.28]	$\chi^2 = 10.355$ (df2) ($p = 0.006$)	
Agree	85.8		92.2	76.9
Neither	8.2		5.8	9.2
Disagree	6.0		2.0	13.8
<i>Coffee shops</i>		1.19 (0.04), [1.11, 1.26]	$\chi^2 = 1.224$ (df2) ($p = 0.542$)	
Agree	88.0		90.3	84.6
Neither	5.4		3.9	6.2
Disagree	6.6		5.8	9.2
<i>Cannabis stores</i>		1.89 (0.06), [1.76, 2.01]	$\chi^2 = 1.171$ (df2) ($p = 0.557$)	
Agree	42.6		42.7	41.5
Neither	25.7		22.3	29.2
Disagree	31.7		35.0	29.2
<i>Pharmacies</i>		1.79 (0.07), [1.66, 1.93]	$\chi^2 = 0.060$ (df2) ($p = 0.971$)	
Agree	54.1		52.4	52.3
Neither	12.6		12.6	13.8
Disagree	33.3		35.0	33.8
<i>Tobacco stores</i>		1.66 (0.06), [1.54, 1.79]	$\chi^2 = 0.178$ (df2) ($p = 0.915$)	
Agree	59.6		60.2	56.9
Neither	14.2		12.6	13.8
Disagree	26.2		27.2	29.2
<i>Preference</i>			$\chi^2 = 7.906$ (df5) ($p = 0.161$)	
Home cultivation (1)	47.0		52.4	40.0
CSC (2)	5.5		32.0	35.0
Coffee shops (3)	33.3		11.3	3.9
Cannabis stores (4)	4.9		6.8	3.9
Pharmacies (5)	2.2		3.9	6.3
Tobacco stores (6)	7.1		1.0	3.8

Source: Table by author

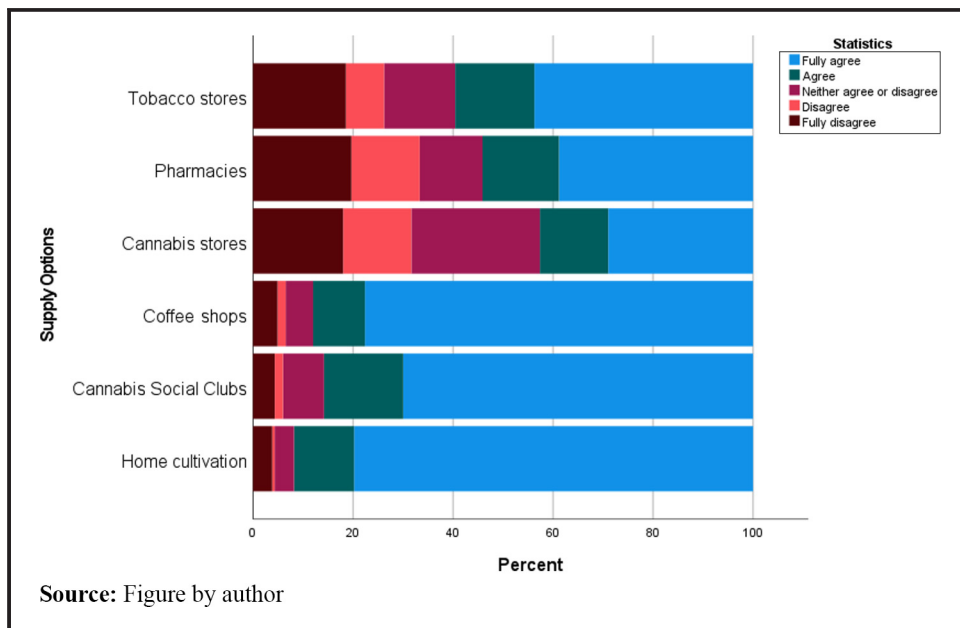
pharmacies (like Uruguay). Daily users more often reported a positive opinion about home cultivation and CSCs, compared to nondaily users.

When respondents were asked about their own personal preference among these options – the most important to them – less than half of total sample chose “home cultivation,” and about one-third of total sample chose “coffee shops.” All the other options were chosen by a small minority, showing a low level of popularity, with “pharmacies” being the least popular option. Surprisingly, although the option of CSCs was evaluated positively by most of the participants in this study, it was rarely chosen as the main personal preference.

Discussion

This study compared two versions of Hanfparade (2016 and 2022) and found many common features in demographic profile, cannabis use characteristics and also in the main reason for attendance. In both festivals, the participants were mainly young adults, almost all had used cannabis in the last month. Both versions of Hanfparade served as important research fields for recruiting and surveying large numbers of cannabis users and, in particular, daily users. In Hanfparade 2022, the number of Berliners and participants who live in Germany but in other cities was quite similar. Hanfparade was promoted in many German cities, using posters, flyers and also on social media, especially on Twitter. The large participation of

Figure 1 Opinions about retail supply



users from other cities shows that Hanfparade is perceived indeed as a national event, reflecting a large national range of opinions on and preferences for cannabis legalization.

In festival studies, one of the major focus of researchers is on the reasons which lead people to participate in festivals (Mackellar, 2013), and in particular, in cannabis festivals (Kang and Lee, 2021; Skliamis, 2021; Skliamis and Korf, 2019). In this study, similar to the study of Hanfparade 2016, “protest” was the main reason for attendance, followed by “celebration.” Although during those intervening years between these festivals, many radical changes took place, the main reasons for attending the Hanfparade hardly changed at all. One could expect that the notion of “celebration” would be the most dominant after the legalization of medical cannabis in 2017 and the announced plans for legalization of recreational cannabis. This article suggests that findings that indicate no increase in “celebration” in Hanfparade 2022 compared to Hanfparade 2016 may be related to the small participation of minors in Hanfparade 2022. The legalization plans have cleared up that the access in legal retail market will be limited to adults; therefore, it can be argued that the minors did not have any benefit in participating in Hanfparade and celebrate legalization. Another reason could be particular organizational features, i.e. absence of music bands that could arouse and excite the crowd creating a sense of celebration. Moreover, one more reason that led the participants to attend for protest could be that use of recreational cannabis is still illegal in Germany and users are still arrested and prosecuted. The absence of an actual change in policy approach (*de jure* or *de facto*) is maybe a reason for limited celebration and enhanced protest. The problems related to medical cannabis and health insurance coverage of patients, may enhance the notion of “protest.” Protest still looks relevant in Hanfparade and may be interpreted as a social and collective demand for the anticipated reform in cannabis policy. Furthermore, we must not neglect that cannabis festivals in Europe are intended to serve as a platform for protest (Skliamis and Korf, 2019). Cannabis festivals in Europe are considered as a relatively new type of protest event (Skliamis, 2021), similar to other protest events that are focused on demands for changes in a specific policy decision (Della Porta and Andretta, 2002). The absence of differences in the main reason for attendance between the two versions of

Hanfparade might be explained by the nature of Hanfparade, i.e. in the eyes of German cannabis users, Hanfparade may be considered *per definitionem* a protest event.

In investigating views on retail supply options by participants in Hanfparade, the option of self-supply through home-cultivation was the one with the most positive opinions, and was most often chosen as the main personal preference by almost half of the participants. This study revealed that notwithstanding cannabis users have positive opinions for other commercial or noncommercial retail supply options, the option of home cultivation is very important to them, but still it is more important to daily users compared to nondaily users, confirming previous findings showing that frequent users are more likely to grow their own (Aguar and Musto, 2022; Cristiano *et al.*, 2022). The latter shows that allowing only home cultivation may not be a satisfactory decision for all German cannabis users, e.g. for experimental users, occasional users or nondaily users. Although home cultivation is a popular supply option, and is allowed in different jurisdictions, there are also major differences between the type of laws (ranging from absence of prohibition to prescriptive regulations) as well as between the different aspects of these regulations, such as a limitation on the number of plants per person or per household and circumstances of cultivation (Belackova *et al.*, 2019; Pardo, 2014).

The option of coffee shops (similar to Dutch coffee shops, where consumption is allowed) had the second most positive opinions and it was the second most popular personal preference. The main difference in retail sales level between other cannabis stores (for example, in Canada) is that Dutch coffee shops are designed to be safe places not only to buy but also to consume cannabis (van Ooyen-Houben and Kleemans, 2015). Previous research has shown that the vast majority of tourists in coffee shops consist of “sitters” (who visit a coffeeshop exclusively to consume cannabis) and those who want to buy and also consume it in the premise (Korf *et al.*, 2016). In addition to tourists, most of the local visitors visit a coffeeshop not only to buy cannabis but also to consume it (Korf *et al.*, 2016). This option of an onsite consumption space has benefits for the users, which is not just limited to the safety that this place offers to consumers, but also it serves as a meeting point, benefiting a socialization process, where users enjoy meeting, talking and connecting with each other. Also, previous research has shown that, in addition to the quality of cannabis, Amsterdam coffeeshop visitors evaluate a coffee shop also based on whether is a cozy place to sit having a good atmosphere (Korf *et al.*, 2011b). In addition to these benefits, German users are familiar with this concept which is used for almost half a century in their neighbor country. The proximity of this concept to the German users, and the benefits that this model offers, might be the reasons that made the participants to be positive toward the retail supply option of coffee shops and placing it high in their personal preferences.

Although respondents showed a sympathy toward the option of CSCs with a large majority of respondents having a positive opinion about that option, the findings revealed a very low personal preference for CSCs. This option was more popular among daily users. This is perhaps not surprising, as it is reasonable to question why an occasional user would prefer to register in a cultivation club to get cannabis only once or a few times a year, over the option of being allowed to simply walk into a legal retail store and buy the product. In contrast with coffee shops and cannabis stores, CSCs are not commercial entities, but they represent a proposal of self-production and self-distribution of cannabis for the personal use of adults, which are organized in nonprofit systems of shared responsibility (Arana and Sánchez, 2016).

From the daily user's point of view, the choice of registering in an association may offer advantages that do not concern occasional users, e.g. a lower price and socialization with other committed users or growers.

The option of pharmacies as a sale point had the second least positive opinions and was the least popular personal preference. This option of cannabis regulation, it was already

suggested about 25 years ago as an option of an alternative nonrepressive drug control model, intended to separate soft from hard drug markets (Raschke and Kalke, 1997). Uruguay is the only country which has introduced sales in pharmacies. The pharmacy retail in Uruguay experienced problems ranging from the opposition of pharmacies to participate in the project and opposition of the banking system to work with retailers, to issues regarding cannabis supply, such as shortages and delays in sales (Queirolo, 2020). Furthermore, the issue of a government registry raises concerns over protecting their privacy (Boidi *et al.*, 2016; Pardo, 2014). In Uruguay, there were persistent complaints from cannabis users and privacy advocates questioning the provision for creating a registry of individuals (Walsh and Ramsey, 2018; Boidi *et al.*, 2016). Concerning a registry, this issue had appeared also in The Netherlands, where the enforcement of the private club criterion as a pilot in 2012, had raised concerns from local customers who did not want to register as members and turned to the black market (Korf, 2020).

It was evident that participants in this survey had positive opinions about self-supply through home cultivation, noncommercial supply through CSCs, but also commercial supply through stores if consumption is allowed in premises, similar to Dutch coffee shops. The options of home cultivation and CSCs were more popular among daily users, and that should raise the attention of policymakers. The option of home cultivation might satisfy daily users who are more committed on cannabis use and consume larger quantities, as they can save money (Hough *et al.*, 2003). The dissatisfaction of the daily users or any obstacles to access in the legal market, such as mandatory registration – in any type of retail market – could push the users back in the black market, and that could affect the success of the legal model. There is evidence from prior studies showing that a policy which does not satisfy the users or set obstacles may lead users to grow their own cannabis or push them to other supply sources such as buying directly from a cannabis grower, drugs delivery services, home-based dealers or street dealers (Korf *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; van Ooyen-Houben *et al.*, 2013; Pardo, 2014; Queirolo, 2020).

A striking finding which constitutes an issue that needs to be addressed is that of simultaneously combined consumption of cannabis and beer, a behavior that appeared rather common at both versions of Hanfparade. At this moment, there is no legal cannabis model that allows alcohol consumption in cannabis premises. In The Netherlands, where coffee shops often provide onsite consumption spaces, these are required to be alcohol-free premises (Korf, 2020; Staatscourant, 1996). The German Government should take this distinct local and cultural characteristic into account when regulating premises for cannabis sales and cannabis consumption.

Limitations

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. The primary limitation to the generalization of these results is the sampling. This is a convenience sample, and it is not representative of the population of cannabis users, e.g. there is an over-representation of daily cannabis users, as the proportion of daily users is much larger compared to the proportion of daily users in general population (EMCDDA, 2022). Nonetheless, given that festival attendees do not make up a well-defined population, the applied method enabled surveying a large number of participants in a limited time period. Furthermore, the results reported herein should be considered in the light of some limitations. Due to the limited time that we had, we could not investigate the retail supply options in more detail. For example, regarding home cultivation, we could have assessed issues of registry, number of plants per individual or per household, option of artificial lights, option of indoor or outdoor cultivation, etc. In another example, a larger questionnaire could allow us to investigate further the opinions of attendees about coffee shops and cannabis stores, e.g. preferences about THC limits, packaging, house-rules, etc.

Conclusion

This study gains new insights into German cannabis users' views on recreational cannabis legalization in Germany, and in particular on retail supply options. With the focus on the future implementation of the new cannabis policy, this study suggests that the German federal government should take into account the opinions and preferences of users, including the daily users who will have a major part of the German native market. Examples from other countries have shown us that dissatisfaction of users might create new problems that will require adjustments, new actions, and eventually, new policy. The concept of the Dutch coffee shops as a retail supply option seems to be a familiar concept to German users, and perhaps a concept that could thrive in the German context, allowing access to experimental, occasional, regular and frequent users. In addition to legal stores similar to Dutch coffee shops, the options that will allow home cultivation and cannabis associations should be taken into consideration, especially in satisfaction of daily or more committed users. Finally, this article suggests that the notion of "protest" is still prevalent among the participants in this survey, which can be explained by the fact that notwithstanding the announcement of cannabis legalization, use of recreational cannabis is still illegal in Germany and users are still arrested and prosecuted. The problems related to medical cannabis and health insurance coverage of patients, may enhance the feeling of "protest." Protest still looks relevant in Hanfparade and may be interpreted as a social demand for the anticipated reform in cannabis policy.

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