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Small-scale Cannabis Growers in Denmark and Finland¹

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KEYWORDS: Domestic cannabis cultivation, small-scale cannabis growers, drug markets, Denmark, Finland, Web survey

ABSTRACT

Aims: To compare domestic cannabis cultivation in Denmark and Finland to describe national characteristics in small-scale cannabis growing. **Design:** A Web survey conducted among small-scale cannabis growers in Denmark (June–November 2008) and Finland (May–June 2009). **Participants:** Current cannabis growers (Denmark, 401; Finland, 1054). **Measurements:** Comparisons in regard to social background, growing history, practices, purposes and motives of growing, and perceptions of risks. **Findings:** Cannabis was cultivated primarily for own use, but sharing with friends and avoiding criminal circles also were significant motives for growing. Finnish growers prioritized indoor cultivation, whereas the Danes were more in favor of open-air plantations. Risks of getting caught by the police were observed to be greater in Finland. Growing for medical purposes was twice as prevalent in Finland as in Denmark. **Conclusions:** Cannabis growing is a stronger and more novel phenomenon in Finland than in Denmark, but both countries have been influenced by international trends. Finnish and Danish small-scale cannabis cultivators can be considered to be ideologically oriented lifestyle growers. Differences in the magnitude of the phenomenon may reflect differences in

¹ We express our gratitude to the Scandinavian Research Council for Criminology (NSfK) for supporting this study and to the Nordic Welfare Centre (NVC) for financing meetings among the researchers.

the availability and quality of cannabis in national drug markets. The Internet had promoted the spreading of the trend.

INTRODUCTION

For the last twenty years, world cannabis markets have changed markedly from being international toward being more regional/local and, in Europe, also more herbal [1, 2, 3]. The growth of domestic cultivation of cannabis for recreational use has important implications for policy and research. Drug markets and drug distribution usually have been discussed and studied from the point of view of importation as drugs have traditionally originated from outside the consuming country. However, the increase of domestic cannabis cultivation and the development of advanced cultivation technologies and new strains have challenged the prevailing views and policies. Furthermore, attention has been drawn to the fact that the new and more sophisticated technologies have enabled the production of cannabis with a raised THC content, leading to concerns in the EU countries over an increase in cannabis misuse and/or harms [4, 5].

The international literature on domestic cannabis cultivation represent a wide spectra of approaches and covers a wide range of topics based on studies from countries all over the world, such as aspects regarding large scale, commercial production [1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10], criminal organisation and law enforcement responses to large-scale cultivation [11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16], and small-scale growing [17, 18, 19, 20]. Despite this literature on cannabis cultivation beginning to be published already in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the phenomenon is changing, and we still do not know the phenomenon very well yet. For example, the importance of small-scale independent cannabis cultivation is clearly an under-researched area [21]. Furthermore, we know that increasing home growing of cannabis is an international trend, but we do not know if the phenomenon or mechanisms behind it are similar or not in different countries. These are questions primarily for a comparative design.

In this article, we present results from a comparative Web survey study conducted among small-scale cannabis growers in Denmark and Finland. We will show and describe similarities and differences between these two countries and analyze the findings in national contexts and in relation to the international trend of increased domestic cultivation in Europe. Hardly any previous studies have been carried out on cannabis cultivation and cultivators in the Nordic countries, and in the international literature, there are no comparative studies based on similar empirical data on the subject.

DENMARK AND FINLAND: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

As sites of comparison, Denmark and Finland are not too different for a successful comparative study. Finland covers a much bigger geographical area than Denmark, but the countries are alike in terms of population (Denmark, 5.5 million, and Finland, 5.4 million).² Although there are obvious differences between the two countries, Denmark and Finland generally follow the Nordic welfare state model and share common features of Scandinavian culture [22]. Internet penetration is at the same level in both countries (Denmark, 84.2%, and Finland, 83.5%), which makes a Web survey applicable for comparison between the two countries [23].

Geographically, Finland is located farther away from the main drug markets and the highways of the drug routes of Central Europe. Denmark's direct connection to the rest of Europe has traditionally provided the main connecting link to drug markets in the other Scandinavian countries. From the mid-1960s and onward, drug markets in Copenhagen have been known as central for cannabis smuggled into Finland [24, 25]. Especially, the open cannabis market at Christiania, which was closed by the police in 2004, was perceived as Northern Europe's largest open cannabis market [26, 27].

² Compared with Denmark where the population density is 128 inhabitants per square kilometer, Finland, with a population density of 17 inhabitants per square kilometer, is one of the most sparsely populated countries in Europe.

Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in both countries. The substance consumed has traditionally been resin imported primarily from Morocco and, to a less extent, from Lebanon and Afghanistan. The two countries have notable differences in the spread of drug use, the size of drug markets, and the lines of drug policy. For a long time, Denmark has been known as a country with a very high prevalence of cannabis use (LT = 45%, LY = 9%, LM = 4%), whereas Finland has been found to have a relatively low prevalence of cannabis use compared with other European countries (LT = 13%, LY = 3%, LM = 1%) [28]. Since the mid-1990s, the use of cannabis has gained a stronger footing among the younger generations in Finland [29].

Attitudes toward cannabis among the general population have been more liberal in Denmark than in Finland [30]. The Danish drug policy has been quite tolerant toward cannabis. Possession of cannabis for own use was depenalized from 1969 to 2004. In practice, Danish drug policy made a distinction between “hard” and “soft” drugs [31]. However, changes in drug policy at the beginning of the millennium have shifted Danish drug policy to a more restrictive line [32, 33]. Maximum sentences for drug offences have been raised, preventive control measures of various sorts are enhanced, and any possession of illegal drugs, including cannabis, is now penalized [34]. In Finland, drug policy has followed a restrictive line for decades, and the use of cannabis has been criminalized and punishable by sanctions [35, 36]. In the late 1990s, harm reduction was accepted as a part of the drug policy, but it did not change the policy line in regard to cannabis in any way [37, 38].

Cultivation of cannabis is illegal in both Finland and Denmark, except that with an official license, hemp with a low THC content can be cultivated for industrial purposes (textiles, animal feed, etc.). However, the two countries differ when it comes to selling and buying hemp seeds and special equipment for growing. In Denmark, it is legal to buy and sell seeds and equipment, and these products are available from stores—often called grow or head shops—in the bigger cities in Denmark as well as from Internet stores based in Denmark. In Denmark, cannabis growers buy seeds from these stores and also get seeds by exchanging with each other. In Finland, selling and buying of cannabis

seeds for use as a drug is prohibited. However, different stores in Finland's biggest cities sell equipment suitable for plant cultivation. Seeds are usually ordered from abroad via the Internet or acquired from another grower [39]. As the southernmost country of Scandinavia, Denmark has more favorable climate conditions for outdoor cultivation than Finland whose northern regions have a subarctic climate.

In Denmark, no research yet has been done on domestic cannabis cultivation. Furthermore, police statistics on cannabis seizures are of no help, as they do not make a distinction between herbal cannabis and imported hashish. However, over the last few years, the Danish media have intermittently reported about police raids on so-called cannabis factories or skunk farms and the arrests of managers. Occasionally, mainly during the late months of summer, the media report stories about local captures of outdoor-grown hemp plants. However, data on whether cannabis cultivators get fined or sentenced and for how many plants has not yet been studied systematically. Thus, it is not possible to provide any substantiated indications as to how large a proportion of the cannabis consumed in Denmark is locally produced; in relation to this, local cannabis probably accounts for only a smaller share of total consumption. In Finland, the seizure data shows that home growing has increased remarkably [39]. In the 1980s, the police confiscated only some tens of plants annually and, in the 1990s, no more than a few hundred plants per year. Since 2001, the police have confiscated several thousands of plants annually. In 2007, the number of confiscated plants rose to 7600, and in 2008, the number increased to 14000. The most common sentence for cannabis cultivation is a fine. Growers, mostly young men, fined in the court for cultivating cannabis usually have had a very modest plantation, consisting of only 1-5 plants in 40 percent of the cases [40]. In fact, bigger plantations that would produce cannabis for sale in the drug markets in large quantities have very rarely been uncovered in Finland [36]. However, even if the Finnish cannabis markets have become more herbal, it still seems that resin clearly rules the markets, at least when looking at the seizure data [41]. Thus, both Finland and Denmark are clearly at a lower level when compared with such European countries,

such as the UK and the Netherlands, where domestic production has been estimated to exceed 50 percent of the total consumption of cannabis [17, 20].

METHOD

Data were collected through a Web survey. In Denmark, it ran from June to November 2008, whereas in Finland, it ran from May to June 2009. In Finland, the number of respondents totalled 1298, of whom, 1054 were current growers. In Denmark, the number of respondents totalled 565, of whom, 401 were current growers. Only questionnaires with all questions answered were included in the study. Incomplete questionnaires, that is, questionnaires where all questions were not answered or questionnaires with obvious flaws (e.g., where answers to one question contradicted answers to other questions), were excluded from the final quantity.³ In the present study, only current growers are included.

The Danish questionnaire was inspired by a Belgian study on cannabis cultivation performed by Decorte [42], focusing on cannabis growers' own perspectives, motives, and experiences with cannabis cultivation; ways of growing (indoor/outdoor); manner of distributing cannabis—both for profit and nonprofit; motivations for growing cannabis, and advantages and disadvantages. Ten extra questions regarding some technical details of growing practices for national reporting were added to the Finnish version, but the main points of the questionnaire remained the same.

In Denmark, the survey was provided by SurveyXact. It was accessible through the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research's homepage (www.crf.au.dk) and was online for four months. In Finland, the survey was provided by Webropol. It was opened on the Web pages of the National Institute for Health and Welfare (www.thl.fi/kukka) and was online for one month. Because of the sensitive and deviant legal status of the subject, the IP addresses of the respondents were not collected in either Finland or

³ Obvious flaws could be, for example, that a respondent stated to be 20 years of age and had been cultivating cannabis for 14 years.

Denmark. This made it impossible to control if the same respondent had answered more than once from the same computer. However, answering 55–65 questions more than once would have taken quite a long time, which means that filling out the questionnaire several times would not have been very tempting or the obvious thing to do.

The difference in response rate in the two countries cannot (only) be explained by higher numbers of cannabis cultivators in Finland than in Denmark (see also the Discussion section below). Another methodological reason could be the differences in how the survey was received by cannabis enthusiasts, and this could be an important reason. In Finland, the questionnaire was promoted on two Internet sites focusing on cannabis or drug issues in general (www.paihdelinkki.fi, www.kannabisuutiset.wordpress.com) and on a site dedicated on cannabis cultivation above all (www.hamppu.net). In addition, a flyer presenting the study was distributed to the participants of the Million Marihuana March in three cities. The survey in Finland was announced to be online for one month. The promotion of the study went smoothly. It was the first time this kind of data was to be collected, and people encouraged each other on the Web pages to participate in the survey. Before the survey was published, the study was reviewed by the ethical committee of THL. In Denmark, the questionnaire was promoted on various Danish drug debate Web sites where cannabis use and cultivation also are discussed (www.psychedelia.dk, www.hampepartiet.dk, www.cannabismyter.dk) and by means of flyers at major education institutions and to more targeted groups, such as the clientele of grow shops. The survey was announced to be online for 4 months. However, the response to the study among cannabis enthusiasts was not uniformly positive. On one of the Web sites where the issue was debated, members were dissuaded to fill out the questionnaire. The argument was that too much attention on cannabis cultivation could further police actions toward this phenomenon, fearing the possible implications of the changing drug policy situation in Denmark on small-scale cannabis growers, as previously described. However, the recruitment of respondents increased markedly owing to the press coverage that followed a radio interview and a newspaper article in early October 2008. The study was approved by the Danish Data Protection Agency.

With respect to the use of Web surveys, we acknowledge the reservations that can be held against the validity and representativeness of data obtained through anonymous net surveys and self-completed questionnaires [19, 42, 43]. That said, we like to argue that an anonymous Web survey is a good way of reaching a hidden subpopulation, such as cannabis cultivators. It might even be a better way of reaching the target group than a representative sample of the general population where only a few of the respondents would be cannabis cultivators. In that sense, a Web survey can provide good data on a special group, such as small-scale cannabis cultivators. It reveals the demographic characteristics of a larger group of Finns/Danes engaged in growing and provides insight into questions about cannabis growing in terms of procedure, cost, and rationale. Although the results do not allow us to generalize to the general population or not even to the entire subpopulation of cannabis growers, the survey substantially widens our knowledge about domestic cannabis cultivation phenomenon.

Besides the Web survey, qualitative interviews with cannabis growers were performed in Denmark (N = 42) and Finland (N = 38). In the present article, interview data that are reported elsewhere [44, 45] will only be used to give some perspective for the survey results.

RESULTS

Basic description of respondents

As shown in Table 1, the Danish and Finnish respondents had some remarkable differences in terms of the social background. Most importantly, there was a clear difference in the age distribution. The Danish respondents (mean age, 37.2 y.; range, 14-75 y.) were older than the Finnish respondents (mean age, 24.6 y.; range, 14-60 y.). This basic disparity can be seen to be reflected in other variables, such as marital status/domestic partnership, having children, education, and occupational status. A majority of the Danish respondents shared the basic conventional characteristics of adult people, whereas most of the Finns still lived like youngsters or young adults. However, one of the common

features was the overwhelming dominance of male respondents. The share of those who had completed a university degree was relatively high in both countries.

Insert Table 1 here

Growers' profiles

Most of the growers in both Denmark (92.3%) and Finland (96.5%) were current cannabis users themselves. In Finland, most of the respondents (69.1%) had started their growing activity at an age of between 18 and 25 years. Only one tenth had started growing at a later age, and starting after the age of 35 years was really rare (1.6%). The Danish respondents had started growing at a clearly older age. Approximately one third of the Danes (34.4%) reported that they had started growing in their late twenties or later, and as many as 11.0 percent had started after the age of 35 years. For Figure 1, the age of onset of growing was transformed to a new variable of "year of first plantation" by using the year of birth of the respondent. Because the age of onset of growing was categorized (younger than 18 years, 18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 46–55, and older than 55 years), we had to use mean values of the categories. However, this provides us with a rough estimate to compare the development of the trend in Denmark and Finland. In Figure 1, cumulative percentages indicate a share of respondents that started cannabis growing at a certain age. As can be seen, there is a clear increase in growing activity in the 2000s in both countries, but the phenomenon seems to be more novel in Finland than in Denmark. In fact, according to the Finnish data, virtually no cannabis was grown in Finland before the turn of the millennium.

Insert Figure 1 here

A necessary prerequisite to becoming a cannabis grower is to acquire a basic knowledge on how to cultivate successfully. As shown in Table 2, the most essential sources of knowledge for the respondents were other growers, the Internet, literature, and peers. It is interesting to note that in the Finnish data, the Internet was considered to be the most essential source. However, when we look at the data by age groups, we can notice that the meaning of the Internet clearly increases among the younger respondents. In fact, among those 24 years and younger, the meaning of the Internet was at the same level in both countries. Even if gathering data through a Web survey may overemphasize the meaning of Internet in responses, results imply, especially when considering the high Internet penetration, that among the newcomers of today, the Internet would be seen as the key source of knowledge for cannabis growers.

Insert Table 2 here

According to their growing experience, respondents consisted of both beginners and relatively experienced growers. When asked how many times they had harvested, the most typical answer was 2–5 times (Denmark, 32.2%; Finland, 38.9%)⁴. However, the share of those who had harvested more than six times (Denmark, 42.4%; Finland, 26.1%) was clearly bigger among the Danes. When considering the difference in age of the respondents, it was not surprising that the Danes were more experienced growers than the Finns.

Respondents in both countries mainly engaged in small-scale cannabis growing. The number of plants in a plantation was 1–5 for 72.8 percent and 6–20 for 24.3 percent among the Finns, and 38.2 percent

⁴ A typical season time for a cannabis harvest is 3–4 months.

and 38.7 percent, respectively, among the Danes. Thus, a clear majority of the respondents (Finland, 97.1%; Denmark, 76.9%) were growing no more than 20 plants in their plantations. In Finland, only some individual respondents exceeded the limit of 20 plants, but in Denmark, 12.2 percent of the respondents reported a plantation containing 21–50 plants. Three people in the Finnish data and two people in the Danish data reported growing more than 500 plants at a time. Even if small-scale patterns dominated in both countries, the Danish growers seemed to have somewhat bigger plantations than the Finns. However, the differences may be explained by their preferences concerning the sites of growing. Indoor cultivation was more typical in the Finnish data than in the Danish one. In fact, the Finnish respondents seemed to be real home growers. Nearly 80 percent of the Finns grew their plants at home, whereas in Denmark, growers preferred open sky sites (56.1%) over one's home (43.6%). Obviously, if one is growing cannabis at his/her home (e.g., in a cupboard, wardrobe, or toilet) it might be difficult to exceed 1–5 plants at a time. On the other hand, an open sky site enables the grower to have a bigger plantation if he or she prefers.

In Finland, the most typical pattern (86.9%) was growing sometimes alone and sometimes with others, whereas most of the Danish respondents (64.3%) preferred to grow alone only. Approximately one tenth (Denmark, 13.7%; Finland, 6.6%) did not know any other grower. This was most prevalent among the respondents older than 35 years. Most typically (Denmark, 49.9%; Finland, 41.5%), the respondents told that they knew 1–5 other growers.

Purposes and motives for growing cannabis

The purposes and motives for growing cannabis were quite similar in Denmark and Finland. In Table 3, we see that the purpose of growing cannabis was in both countries primarily for pleasure (Finland, 94.6%; Denmark, 91.5%) and to share with peers (Finland, 58%; Denmark, 52.9%). However, the share of those growing for medical purposes was smaller in Denmark (23.7%) than in Finland (58.8%).

Insert Table 3 here

Insert Table 4 here

The respondents' motives for growing cannabis are presented in Table 4. The percentages displayed include the important and very important answers. The results show that the primary purposes were for their own use (Denmark, 94.0%; Finland, 88.1%), for the pleasure of growing (Denmark, 87.8%; Finland, 88.1%), and to avoid criminals (Denmark, 76.6%; Finland, 88.6%); it also was cheaper (Denmark, 66.5%; Finland, 76.0%) and perceived to be healthier (Denmark, 57.1%; Finland, 76.7%). Importantly, selling was of low priority (Denmark, 3.9%; Finland, 7.2%).

Although selling was of low priority as a purpose of growing cannabis, 37.9 percent in Finland and 14.7 percent in Denmark had at least occasionally sold cannabis that they had grown. The number in Denmark constitutes a smaller part of the population than the number in Finland. However, in both countries, those respondents sold mainly to persons they know (Denmark, 88.5%; Finland, 85.8%) and to a limited number of persons, mainly 1-5 persons (Denmark, 77.0%; Finland, 71.6%). In Finland, the earnings from selling cannabis were less than EUR 100 for 41.1 percent of the respondents that had tried to sell cannabis (37.9%), whereas 33.5 percent of the respondents had earned between EUR 100 and 1000, and 20.3 percent did not know or did not want to answer. In Denmark, 37.7 percent of the people who had sold home-grown cannabis (14.7%) earned less than DKK 500 (EUR 67) and 37.7 percent of them earned between DKK 500 and 8000 (between EUR 67 and 1067). Also, only very few sold other kinds of drugs, 4 percent in Denmark and 3.8 percent (mostly hash) in Finland.

Perceptions of risks

The respondents in both surveys were aware of the illegal nature of their activity and saw the risk of getting caught by the police as a major disadvantage. This was even more so the case in Finland (88.1%) than in Denmark (60.1%), which most probably reflects differences in tolerance of cannabis use in those countries. When asked whether growing cannabis is an advantage, that is, less risky, in contrast with buying cannabis, 41.3 percent in Finland and 35.4 percent in Denmark agreed. 58.8 percent in Finland and 64.6 percent in Denmark either found it unimportant or neither important nor unimportant. The respondents' perception of the risk of getting caught is displayed in Table 5. Although there was a difference between Finnish and Danish respondents in whether they found the risk small or very small, the most significant difference was that in Finland, 15.4 percent perceived the risk as high, compared with 7.7 percent of the Danish respondents.

Insert Table 5 here

In Finland, 19.5 percent had been in contact with the police, and 14.4 percent had been charged for growing cannabis. In Denmark, 5.7 percent (total = 30) had been in contact with the police, and of these, 43.3 percent (total = 13) had been charged for growing cannabis. The numbers in Denmark thus constituted a smaller part of the population than those in Finland. There was no difference between age groups, that is, the older growers were not more represented, although they might have been in the market longest and therefore in a more exposed position. The lower figures for Denmark compared with Finland might be due to differences in drug policy and police strategies toward cannabis growers in the two countries.

DISCUSSION

There were many similarities between the Danish and the Finnish respondents. Most importantly, respondents in both countries mostly consisted of small-scale growers who cultivated cannabis

primarily for their own use. Use for pleasure was prioritized, but sharing with friends also was a significant motive for growing. Avoiding criminal circles operating in drug markets was named as an important reason for growing in both Denmark and Finland. Furthermore, respondents reported that growing your own cannabis is cheaper than buying it from illicit markets. They also thought that home-grown cannabis is healthier than the stuff sold in illicit markets. The pleasure of growing was praised. Only a very few told that they were growing cannabis to sell it. When some of them did sell some of their harvest, it was restricted to a limited number of people who they personally knew. Earnings from selling were insignificant. In all these features, the Danish and the Finnish cannabis growers were very similar to those found in the Belgian study [42].

The central dividing line in domestic cannabis cultivation goes between ideological (for own use only) and commercial motivations [2, 10, 17, 21]. Even if it is quite usual that those ideological growers also may incidentally sell some of their surplus harvest, this dividing line really matters in that it separates two different types of domestic cannabis production and markets, that is, small scale versus industrial, large-scale cannabis cultivation. Our respondents in Denmark and Finland represent the ideological side of domestic cannabis cultivation. Instead of growing to make money and profits in the market, they were growing for pleasure and sharing with friends. In a way, they may be seen as lifestyle growers whose only aim is personal fulfillment and enjoyment in their social networks. Actually, it was quite clear from the start that commercial growers and bigger producers may not be interested in responding to a Web survey such as this, and commercial growers working in these countries are not represented or are only very few in our data. Our respondents represent the international trend of increasing ideological small-scale domestic cannabis cultivation [17, 19, 21, 46]. The study describes some of the common features of this phenomenon.

However, there also were some striking differences between the Danes and the Finns that responded to the questionnaire. One of these was that the Finnish growers clearly prioritized indoor cultivation, whereas the Danes were more in favor of outdoor cultivation. This might be connected to the different

climate conditions for growing in these countries. In this respect, the Danish growers in the study were very close to Belgian growers [42]. On the other hand, drug policy also may have had an effect. As the results of the survey show, the Finnish growers were more concerned about the risk of getting caught by the police, and an indoor plantation hidden at home may be seen as a safer practice than an outdoor plantation. This difference in the indoor/outdoor pattern evidently also explains some other disparities. For example, Finnish growers cultivated a smaller number of plants than the Danes.

Another striking discrepancy can be found in growing for medical purposes. This figure was twice as high in the Finnish data than in the Danish one. Compared with Decorte's Web survey in Belgium where 2 percent stated medical use as a purpose of growing cannabis⁵, the numbers from both Denmark and Finland represent a larger part of the total population. One explanation for this difference—not only between Denmark and Finland but also between Belgium and the two Nordic countries—could be that the term medical cannabis has entered public and political discourses and media debates within the past 10 years in Europe. Medicinal cannabis has recently become legal in a few EU countries, and medicinal use is the subject of lively debate on different Internet sites [44]. Decorte's survey was run in 2006, the Danish survey in 2008, and the Finnish survey in 2009. Thus, Finnish respondents have got the greatest exposure to the debates and discussions about medicinal use of cannabis. In addition, it can be hypothesized that people in countries with a harder cannabis control or more negative public attitudes toward cannabis may tend to justify their activity with medical purposes more than people in countries with a more lenient control and public attitudes. Because of the change of discourse, growing for medical purposes is not that easy to prejudge as growing for pleasure and recreation. Furthermore, in Finland, there also is a long cultural tradition to justify even recreational alcohol use with medical purposes. Perhaps Finnish cannabis growers just apply this explanation model derived from alcohol tradition into the cannabis field. However, this pondering cannot stand as the only explanation to the differences in numbers in the three countries,

⁵ The percentage is given personally by Tom Decorte.

and further research into the use and production of cannabis for medical use could be welcome in general, not only in the three countries compared here.

Another interesting issue to discuss is the difference in the number of respondents in Denmark and Finland. Does it also imply a real difference in the prevalence of growing in these countries? Here, we really face the limits of a Web survey methodology and, thus, are not able to give any definite answer. We can only speculate. If we take into account that the availability of cannabis is much better in Denmark than in Finland, because of Denmark's closeness to the European cannabis market as previously discussed, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Finns may have more grounds to turn to home growing in greater numbers than the Danes. According to the European ESPAD Study about 60 percent of Danish schoolchildren aged 15–16 years found availability of cannabis as fairly or very easy whilst in Finland the share was only around 10 percent [47]. In the interview data, the poor availability of cannabis in the drug markets in Finland together with low quality often was mentioned as an important motivation to start growing [45]. Furthermore, if we assume that the age distribution of respondents reflected real differences between countries, we can get some additional support for that line of thinking. Because young people usually are responsive to new trends, in the market situation as previously described, they would have acquired the new ideas offered by the international trend in greater numbers than the Danes. Simply said, in Finland, growing one's own cannabis may have been seen as a solution to problems of scanty availability and poor quality of cannabis in drug markets. As indicated in the interview data, in a country of relatively strict drug control such as Finland, people may even consider growing a less risky strategy to obtain cannabis than buy it from illicit drug markets [45]. It also seems to be evident that cannabis growing is a more novel phenomenon in Finland than in Denmark, where some growers already started their own plantations in the 1970s and 1980s. In Finland, home growing of cannabis is a new fashion, and Finnish cannabis growers seem almost entirely to be the children of this new wave of small-scale cannabis growing [17, 21].

A prerequisite for that is free access to the flow of international ideas. The Internet provides this access. As the results of the survey show, the Finns considered the Internet to be the most important source of knowledge and know-how. Actually, it also has provided access to contacts, seeds, and other stuff, regardless of whether one is living close to a drug cultural center or by the side of the main drug routes [45]. In fact, the meaning of the Internet as a source of growing knowledge also was remarkably strong among the Danish and Belgian growers [42], showing that an international online community has formed around small-scale cannabis cultivation. It seems evident that this has strongly promoted the spreading of the international trend of domestic cannabis cultivation.

Cannabis is the most widely used illicit drug everywhere in Europe. Therefore, studying changes and trends in the field is of a high social and political relevance. Until now, almost everything we know about domestic cannabis cultivation is based on speculation by individual experts or the representatives of the police in the media. Our studies shed some light on the situation in Denmark and Finland, but we clearly need much more research on the topic.

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Table 1. Comparing social background of the Danish and Finnish respondents

		Denmark (N = 401)		Finland (N = 1054)	
		n	%	n	%
Gender					
	Men	365	91.0	975	92.5
	Women	36	9.0	79	7.5
Age					
	≤24	91	22.7	609	57.9
	25–34	105	26.2	369	35.1
	≥35	205	51.1	73	7.1
Marital status/domestic partnership					
	Partner	241	60.1	365	34.6
	Single	147	36.7	645	61.2
Status of children					
	Yes	191	47.6	113	10.7
	No	201	50.1	909	86.2
Housing status					
	Living with others	264	65.8	603	57.2
	Living alone	122	30.4	415	39.4
Education					
	University degree	110	27.4	131	12.4
Occupational status					
	Employed	203	59.2	387	36.7
	Entrepreneurs	45	13.1	63	6.1
	Unemployed	23	6.7	166	15.8
	Students	72	21.0	320	30.4

Table 2. Most important sources of knowledge by age group, % of the respondents evaluated the meaning of a source as essential

	Denmark (N = 401)				Finland (N = 1054)			
	≤24	25–34	≥35	Together	≤24	25–34	≥35	Together
Other growers	72.6	72.4	58.1	65.4	82.1	83.2	64.4	81.2
Internet	90.1	80.0	41.4	62.5	93.9	92.1	87.7	92.8
Literature	56.1	57.1	60.5	58.6	36.8	45.3	56.2	41.1
Friends	56.1	56.1	48.3	52.9	63.6	62.3	58.9	62.8

Table 3: Respondents' motives for growing cannabis

	Finland		Denmark	
	n	%	n	%
Pleasure	997	94.6	367	91.5
As medicine	620	58.8	95	23.7
Sharing with friends	612	58.0	212	52.9
Selling to friends	149	14.1	23	5.7
Sharing with others	79	7.5	14	3.5
Selling to others	52	4.9	6	1.5
Giving as a medicine	144	13.7	48	12.0
Selling as a medicine	31	2.9	4	1.0
Growing for others	16	1.5	1	0.2
Other reasons	64	6.0	49	7.3

More than one answer.

Table 4: Purpose of growing cannabis: percentages show important/very important

	Finland	Denmark
	% (number)	% (number)
Cheaper	76.0 (801)	66.5 (267)
Own use	88.1 (929)	94.0 (377)
Pleasure of growing	88.1 (929)	87.8 (352)
Curiosity	51.8 (546)	52.1 (209)
Healthier	76.7 (808)	57.1 (229)
Avoid criminals	88.6 (934)	76.6 (253)
Plant is beautiful	65.8 (694)	58.6 (235)
Easy plant	38.4 (405)	37.2 (149)
Minor risk	49.1 (518)	31.9 (128)
Sharing with friends	31.3 (330)	44.6 (179)
Milder	2.3 (24)	11.5 (46)
Stronger	42.2 (445)	24.0 (96)
Selling	7.2 (76)	3.9 (16)

More than one answer.

Table 5. Perception of the risk of getting caught by the police

	Denmark (N = 401)	Finland (N = 1054)
	%	%
Very big	2.2	2.1
Big	7.7	15.4
Small	34.2	51.4
Very small	40.9	16.1
Don't know	14.0	14.3
No answer	1.0	0.7

List of Figures

Figure 1. Onset of cannabis growing in Denmark and Finland

