

PULSAR\*



## Psilocybin: CBD 2.0 or Something New?

How audiences think about the compound: from recreation, to lifestyle, to medicalization.



ConcentricLife

# Psilocybin – new mental health wonderdrug or cannabis 2.0?

The past 5 years have seen developments in research around the psychedelic compound psilocybin. Audiences are growing spores and tripping deeper and deeper into the psilocybin conversation.

This report analyses over 13M data points. It focuses on psilocybin as changing landscapes around regulatory and legal frameworks and cultural acceptance move the substance into a new era. We examine the medicalization, legalization, recreational use and future of psilocybin. Pulsar partnered on this report with ConcentricLife, a healthcare agency with a focus on wellness and innovative healthcare practices.

This report unpacks:

- The difference in conversation when we look through the lens of medicalization, legalization and recreation & wellness
- Spotlights on geographical differences, bodily experiences and associated substances and much more
- Which audiences are talking about psilocybin and how they relate differently to it
- The conditions most associated with psilocybin
- How psilocybin's journey compares to that of CBD & THC
- What the medical, pharmaceutical and commercial future of psilocybin looks like
- Where chocolate comes into the equation

## **Approach**

### **Data Collection Period:**

July 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 – Feb 29<sup>th</sup> 2024

### **Channels:**

 X	 Blogs
 Reddit	 Forums
 Facebook	 Online News
 Instagram	 Amazon Reviews
 TikTok	 Tumblr
 Pinterest	 YouTube

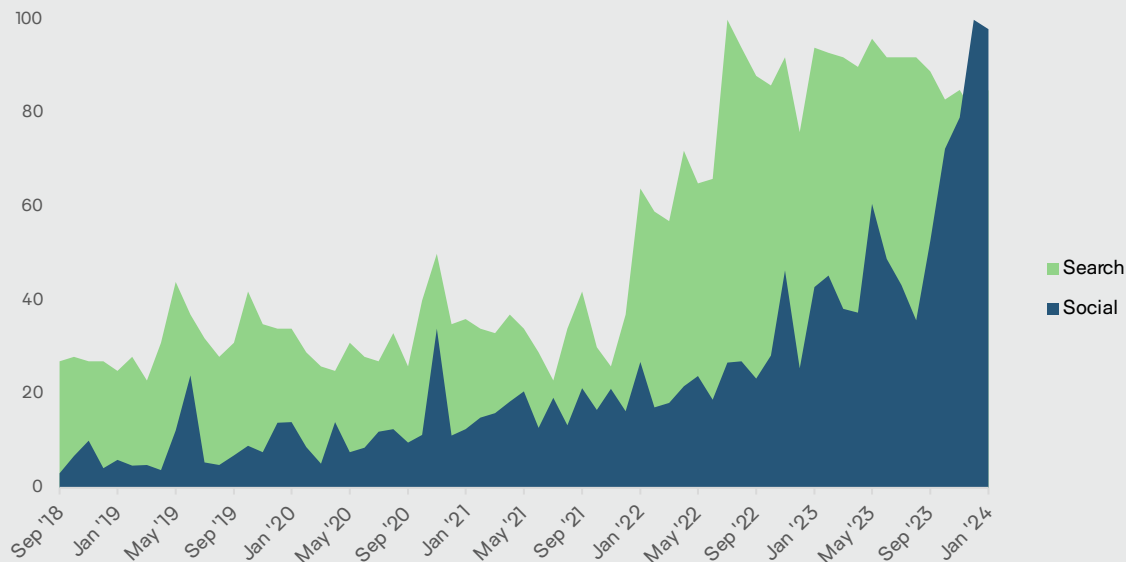
### **Markets/Languages:**

Global data collection  
Analysis in English-language

# The psilocybin conversation is growing – and evolving

Psilocybin is a naturally occurring psychedelic compound found in certain species of mushrooms, often referred to as "magic mushrooms" or "shrooms." This compound is known for its hallucinogenic properties and has been used for centuries in various cultures for spiritual, medicinal, or recreational purposes.

The use of psychedelic mushrooms predates recorded history, with many theories contributing parts of societal and human development to the use of natural psychedelics.



# What's making up the Psilocybin conversation?

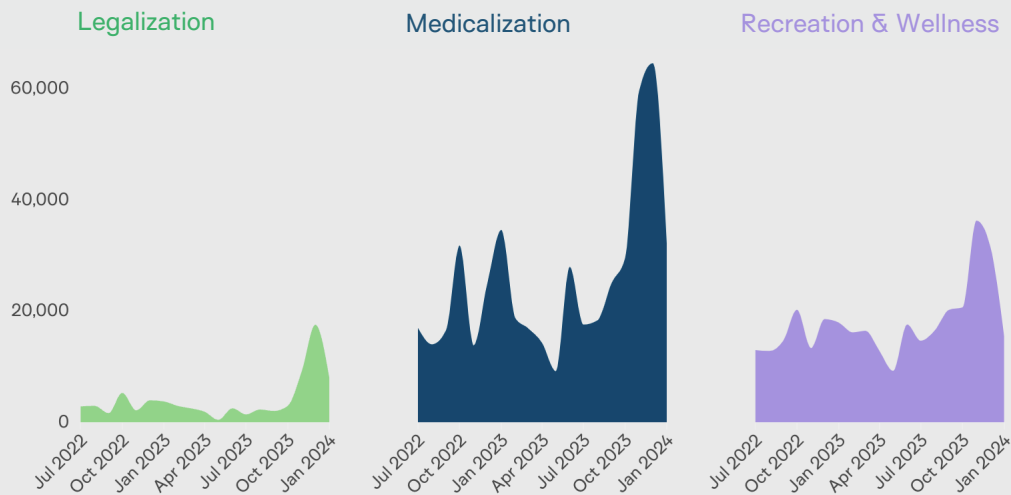
Psilocybin has been classified as a Schedule I controlled substance by the United Nations since 1971, with Australia being the first country to legalise the substance as a prescribed, licensed medicine in 2023.

In this report, we look at Psilocybin through legal, medical and recreation & wellness lenses. We used Pulsar to apply these lenses to the different types of conversations in the psilocybin conversation, separating medicine from moods and regulation from raving.

Psilocybin gains legitimization through research and development by credible companies for therapeutic potential; where they're doing well-designed clinical studies to assess efficacy and safety. If you do credible, robust and legitimate exercises to spread information about therapeutic potential, you change perceptions.



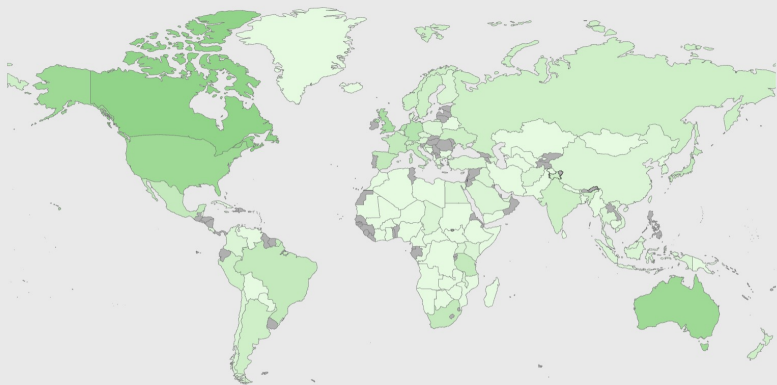
Dr Joseph Sklar, PhD  
Chief Medical Officer  
ConcentricLife



# Psilocybin's global presence

In February 2024, there are nine countries where recreational use of psilocybin is legal, with a further 18 countries where personal use has been decriminalised or is officially unenforced.

## Countries audiences are talking about

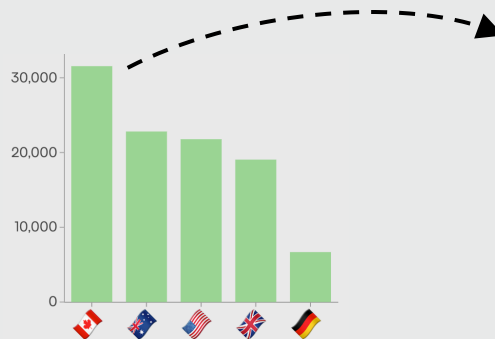


When we look at which countries are mentioned in conversation across the world, we see countries that are changing policy taking the stage – here audience conversation reflects the shifting dynamic in those countries.

The North American focus can be explained by certain states, cities and provinces decriminalising or even legalising psilocybin, such as Alberta and Colorado in 2022 and Oregon in 2020.

We also see a lot of conversation worldwide about Australia – a result of the country legalising the compound for medical use in 2023.

## Top countries



Even Australia is miles ahead of us, suddenly, by legalising MDMA and psilocybin for medical use – to be prescribed by psychiatrists as part of treatment sessions for PTSD and depression. There is groundbreaking evidence for the efficacy of these substances for mental health

# How is Psilocybin perceived as a medical solution?

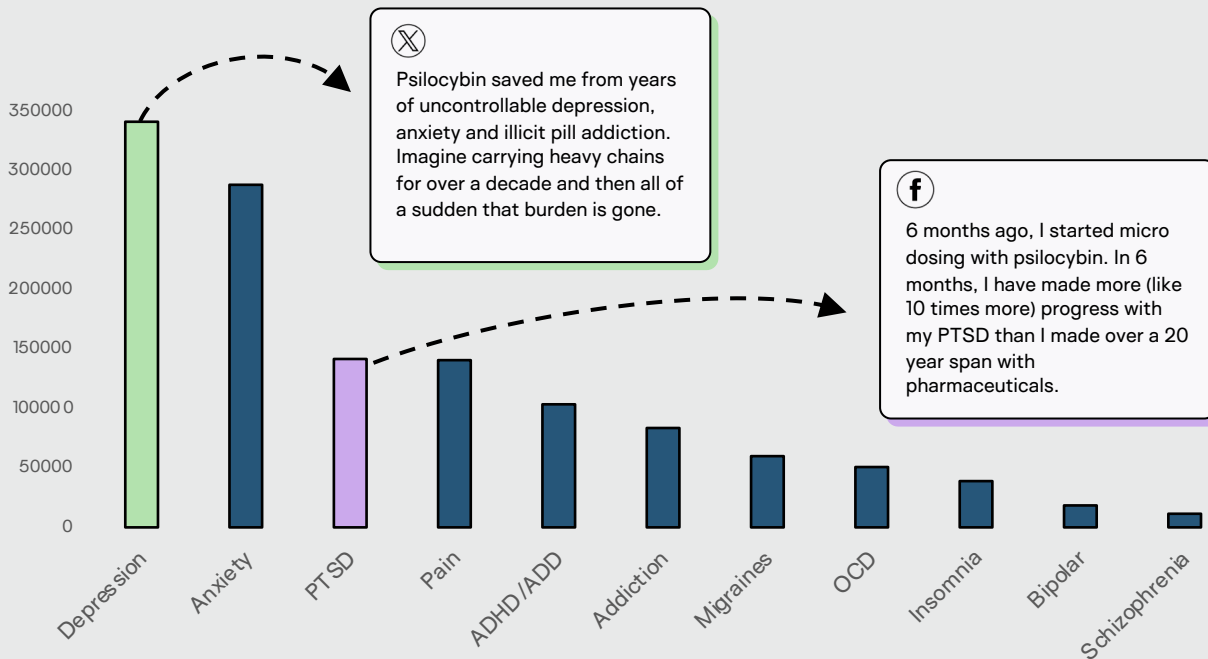
Psychedelics are a class of substances that primarily interact with the serotonin system in the brain, specifically targeting serotonin receptors. This interaction affects various cognitive processes, including mood, perception, sensory experiences, and thought patterns. Psilocybin is known to induce altered states of consciousness, producing vivid visual experiences, changes in perception of time, and alterations in sensory perception.



Dr Joseph Sklar, PhD  
Chief Medical Officer  
ConcentricLife

When we look at audience conversation into the medical use of psilocybin, we see that Depression and Anxiety dominate the conversation, with a burgeoning conversation around PTSD.

Associations with complex medical conditions such as PTSD, ADHD/ADD and Addiction show psilocybin's wide-ranging and complex appeal, indicating a heavily medicalised future for the substance.

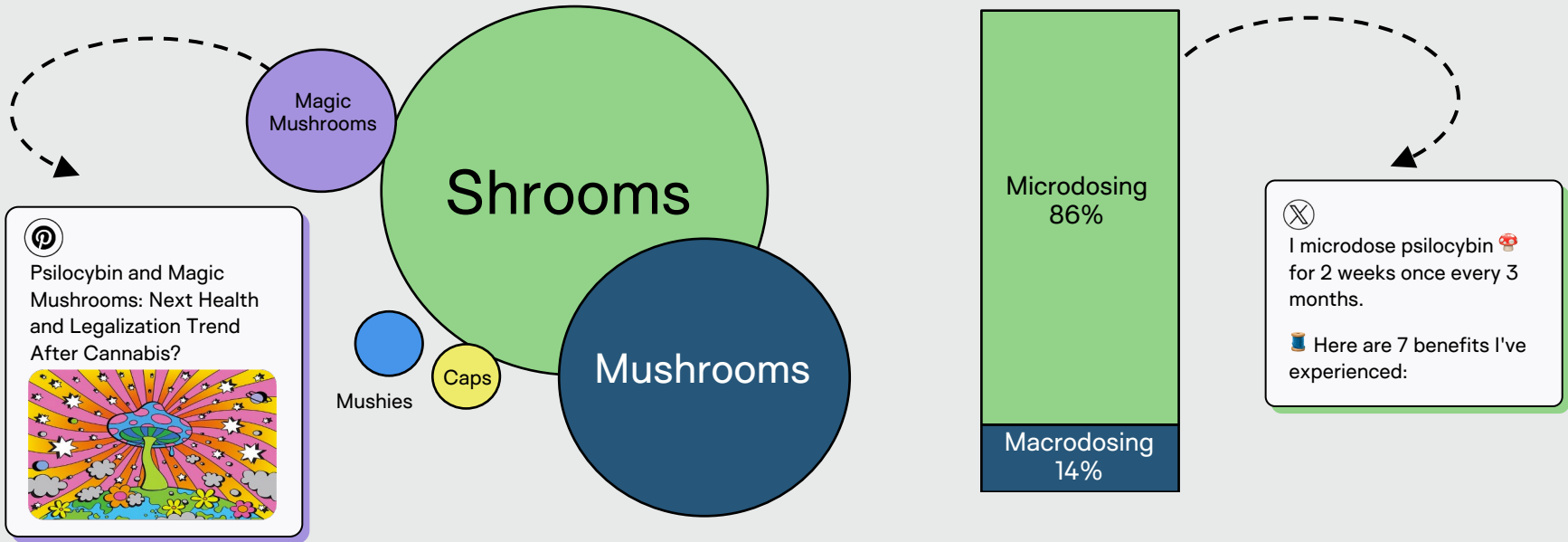


# Caps & Recreation

Of course, medicalisation isn't the only use case for psilocybin. Commonly, psilocybin delivery methods are widely known as 'shrooms' or 'magic mushrooms' and are also taken as a recreational substance.

When we dive into the data, we see a skew away from macrodosing (getting 'high') towards microdosing (taking a small enough dose to not hallucinate) with audiences talking about benefits such as increased focus and creativity and a stable mindset.

This reflects the psilocybin conversation's focus on the nuanced effects of psilocybin and exemplifies a shift in the way audiences are thinking about this Class A/Schedule I drug.



# The most discussed bodily effects of Psilocybin

When ingested, psilocybin is converted by the body into psilocin, a chemical that interacts with serotonin receptors in the brain.

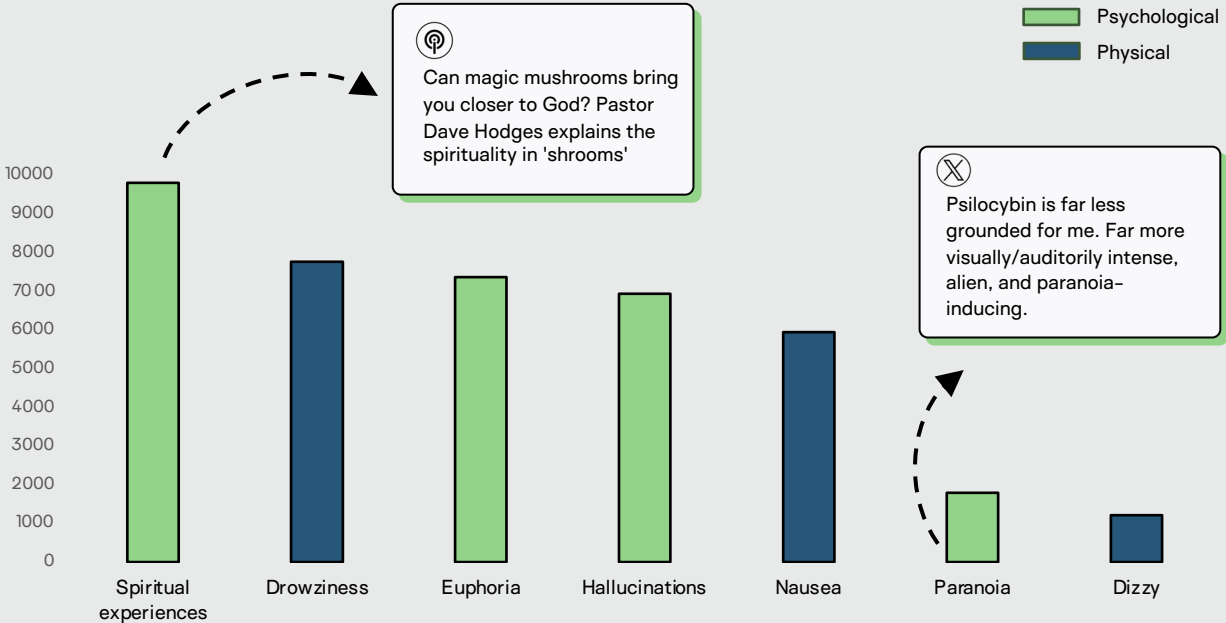
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Psilocybin's appeal as a recreational drug comes from psilocybin's ability to affect all the senses. It alters a person's thinking, sense of time and emotions.

We see an emphasis on spirituality, indicating an impassioned audience where psilocybin interacts with identity. This emphasis on psychological effects results in a mixed emotional response.

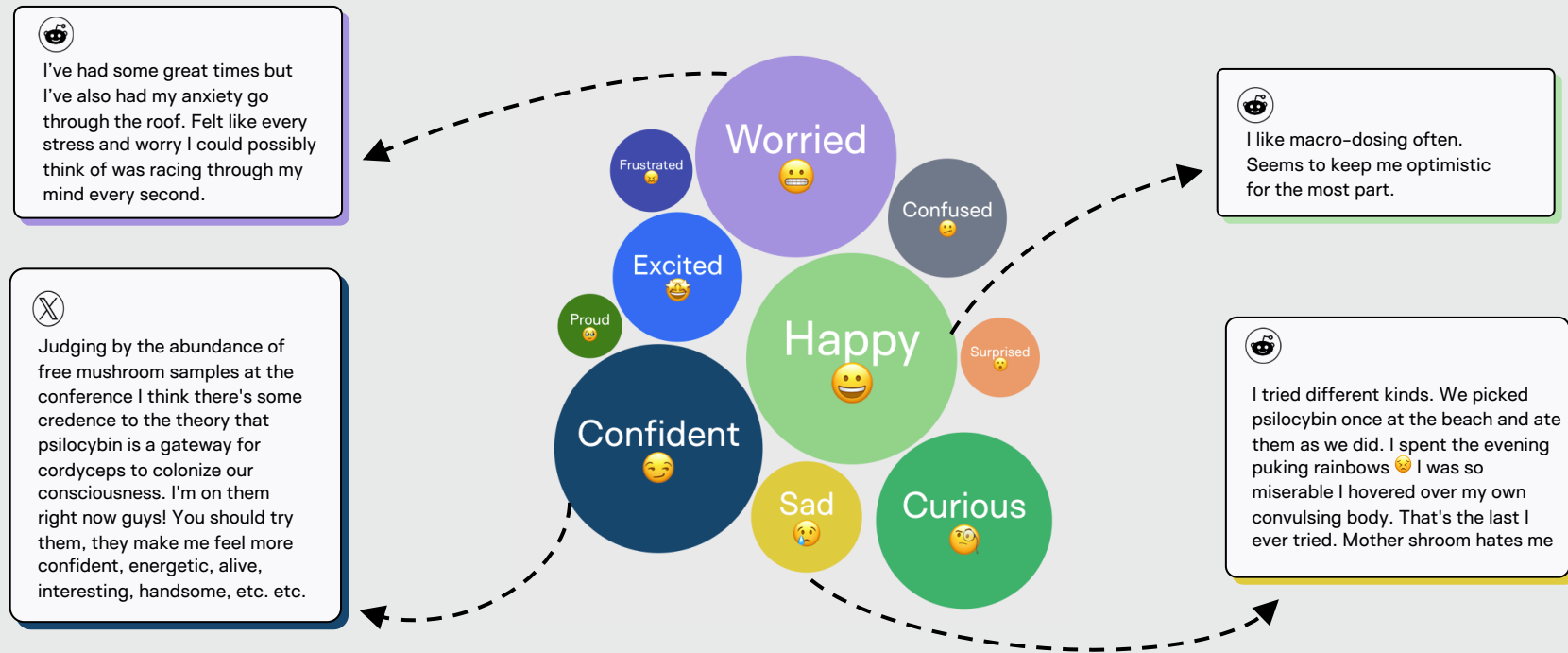




# Psilocybin: How It Affects Moods

Across the psilocybin conversations, we see no single 'mood' emerge as a dominant theme, all of which suggests a lack of consensus that adds to the substance's mystique.

Reddit in particular hosts often heated discussions on the effect of psilocybin on mood, with the anonymity of the platform offering a safe space for audiences to discuss the nuance of their psilocybin experiences.

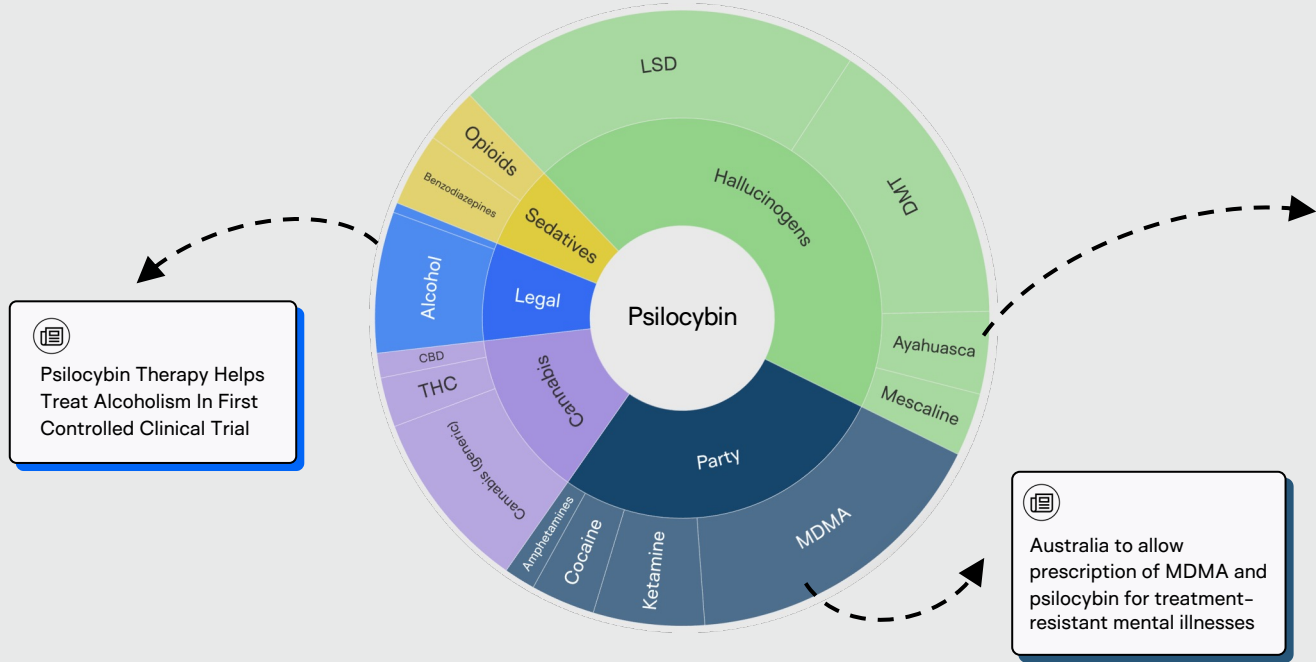


# What other substances is psilocybin associated with?

Due to its prevalence as a controlled substance for recreational use, psilocybin is often spoken about in relation to other psychologically-altering substances.

When we look at other drugs spoken about in association with psilocybin, we can see a large emphasis on other hallucinogenics such as LSD and Ayahuasca, where conversation is often comparative.

We also see conversation around party drugs like MDMA, which has also been approved for medical use in Australia in 2023. Medical associations are behind conversation in other substances too, including alcohol, where psilocybin is used as treatment for alcoholism.



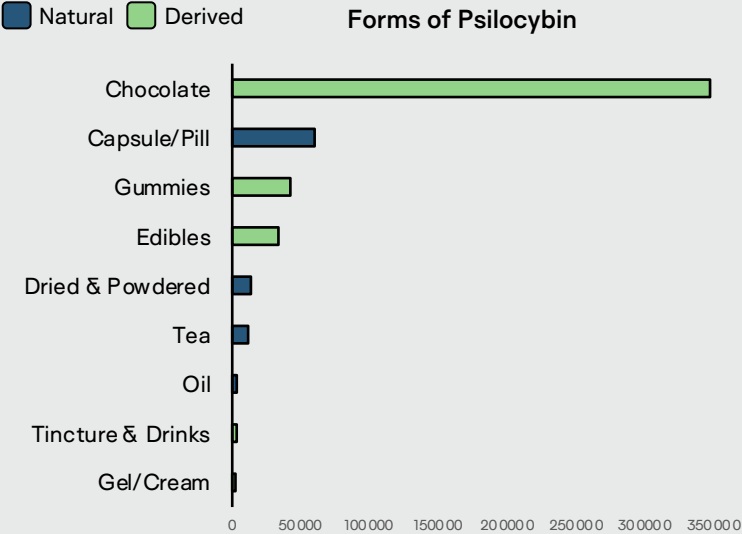
“ If we’re not going to have an apocalypse, it will be because we created a new level of intelligence that even our most visionary our ancestors did not have access to; which is what the Mayans predicted. #ayahuasca #entheogens #Psilocybin #psychedelics #yage

# The power of chocolate: how psilocybin is consumed

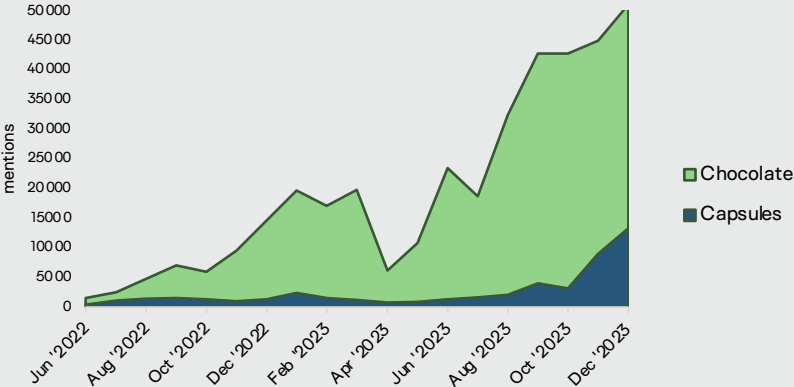
As psilocybin gains popularity and more territories relax laws around controlling the substance, we see an emerging market for psilocybin-derived products. Though many traditional recreational delivery methods focus on pure psilocybin mushrooms

in their natural form dried and either brewed into beverages or powdered into capsules, conversation has seen a huge boom in derived and infused products such as chocolate and gummies.

This shows psilocybin is following audience demand for derived THC and CBD processed products, where strong flavours mask the less appealing taste of the substance.



### Chocolate shows huge virality



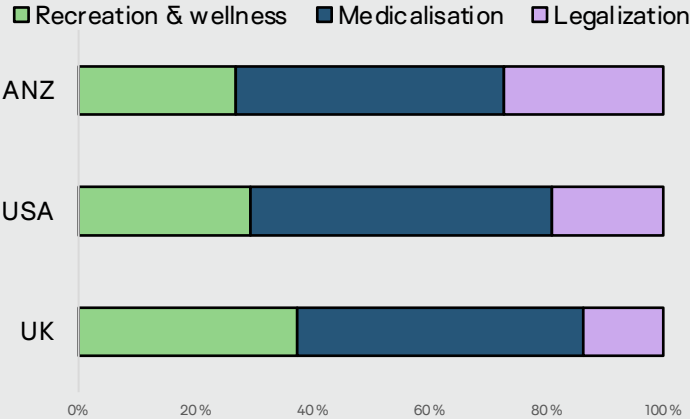
# Australia an outlier in global conversation

As well as seeing behavior difference in the way audiences relate to psilocybin delivery, we're also seeing geographic differences around the world, affected by countries' current legalization status.

In Australia, recreational psilocybin use is still prohibited by law. A focus on legalization there compared to the UK and US could be caused by changing attitudes in the country around the drug from a medicinal perspective.

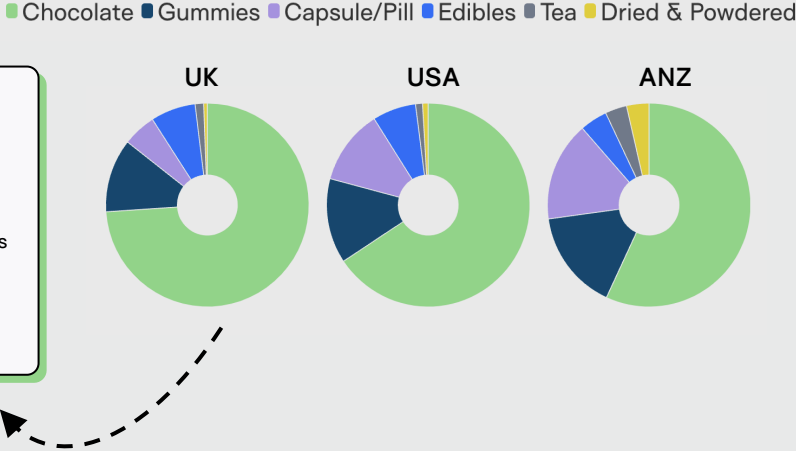
Australia's legalization of psilocybin for medical use means easy to dose capsules & pills make a dent in chocolate domination, especially when compared to the UK, a country further behind in its medicalization journey.

Australia & New Zealand skew medical & legal



Medicalization makes capsules suppress chocolate supremacy in ANZ

ⓧ  
Making naughty medicine 🤔 I really shouldn't use the chocolate but it covers the taste so well and it's so convenient to use 🤗  
#waveycaps  
#bluemeanies  
#Psilocybin 🌱



## Top voices in the psilocybin conversation

When we look at a selection of the top voices in the psilocybin conversation globally, we see a mixture of specialist journalists and prominent personal users that employ anonymity in the face of posting about an illegal substance online.

These accounts are frequently posting about their love of psilocybin, as well as tips and advice. It's likely that these audience members – often-Redditors – aren't even aware of their prominence in the psilocybin conversation.

Another type of influencer account is that of the hobbyist news account. These are often informal associations or publications that retweet and comment on recent psilocybin news worldwide.



DEA Suggests Doctor Seeking Psilocybin For Terminally Ill Patients Has Financial Interest, So It Won't Waive Records Fee

Kyle Jaeger

333 articles on Psilocybin

This Senior Editor at Marijuana Moment has also written for Vice, Attn and The Hollywood Reporter.



If you could only keep three possessions, what would they be? My Bible, my rifle and my psilocybin.

u/Telrom\_1

1.1B impressions on Reddit

Highly active personal and anonymised account posting about psilocybin on non-psilocybin Subreddits.



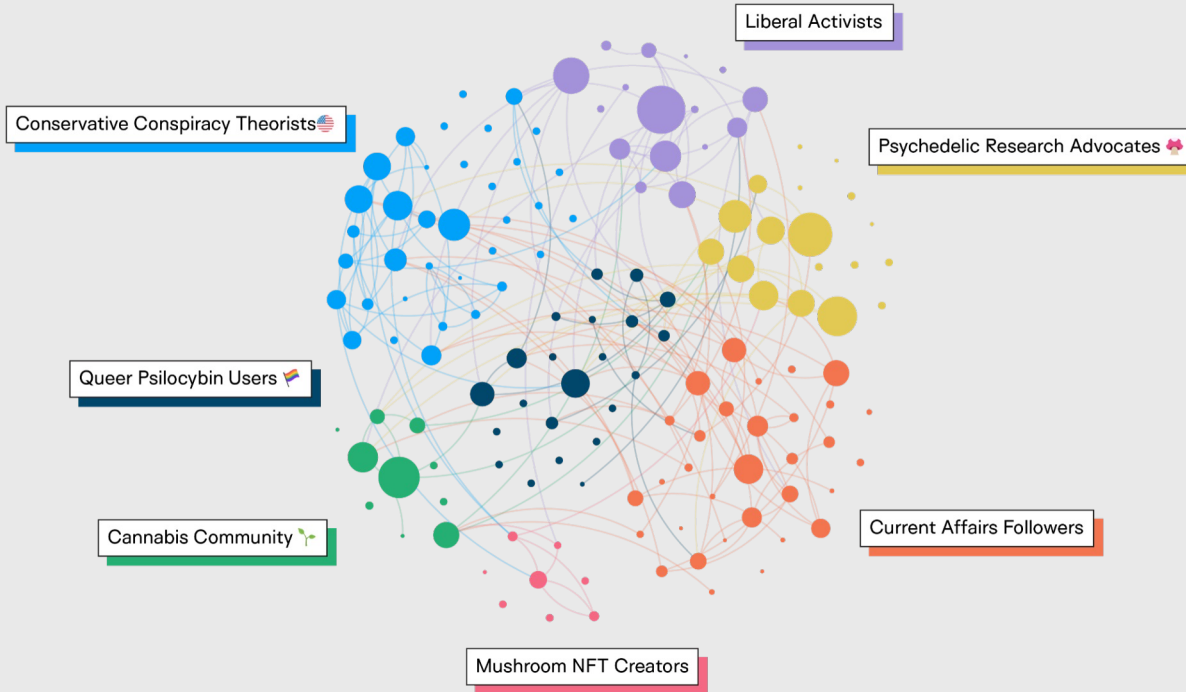
Psychedelic therapy with Psilocybin & MDMA is officially legal in Australia 🇦🇺 🍄 📰

The Daily Shroom

54k followers on X

This Psilocybin news-based account offers commentary on related issues along with international developments.

# Psilocybin's vast-reaching and distinctive audience



Let's zoom out and look who the conversation leaders were in the psilocybin conversation in 2023 – here we can see the conversation draws in many types of communities. We see sub-audiences across the political spectrum, from various backgrounds and approaches to psilocybin.

This chart shows distinct groups and how they behave online with each other around a certain topic. The lines represent interconnections between the different members of the segments. The bigger the node is, the more connected it is to the rest of members in the audience analysed.

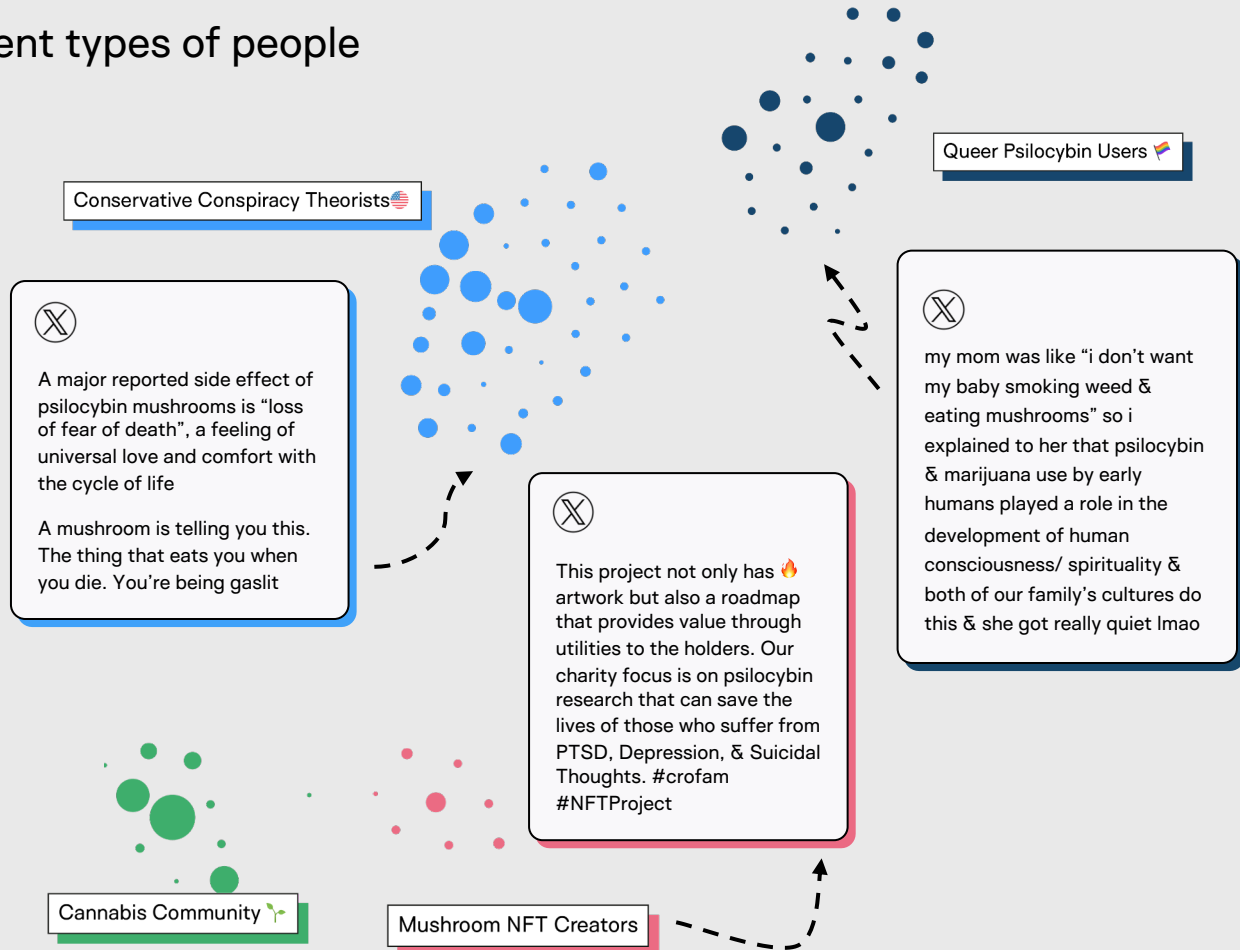
The interconnectedness of this audience shows that the sub-audiences are interacting with each other a lot, with little 'echo chamber' activity. The exception to that rule is Mushroom NFT Creators, whose niche interests are quite isolated.

# Psilocybin attracts many different types of people

**Conservative Conspiracy Theorists** are generally split on their positive or negative stance towards psilocybin but share inflammatory news and statements regardless.

**Queer Psilocybin Users** generally abjectly support the use of psilocybin, while Liberal Activists are focused on the legalisation of the substance.

Distinct audiences such as the **Cannabis Community** and **Mushroom NFT Creators** offer different stance. The Cannabis Community talk about psilocybin in relation to cannabis and the Mushroom NFT Creators sell digital artworks done either under the influence of psilocybin, inspired by mushrooms or to raise money for charities based on psilocybin research.



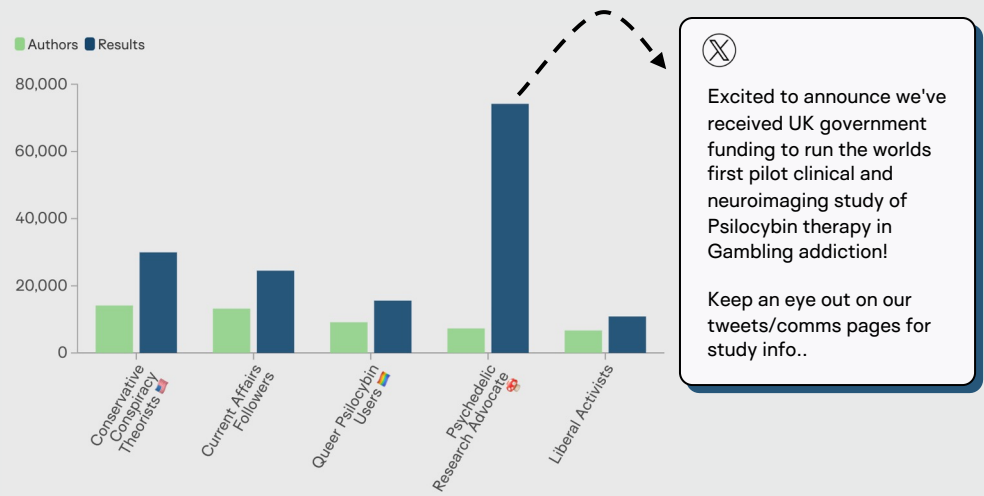
# Small advocate community speaks the loudest

When we dive deeper and examine the sub-audiences, we see that the most populous audiences aren't necessarily the loudest.

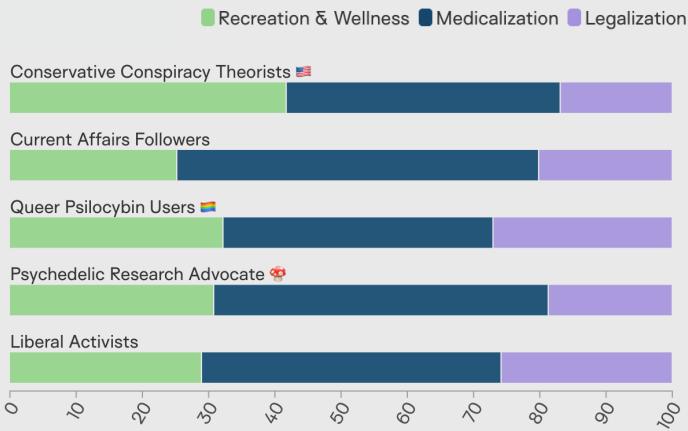
Psychedelic Research Advocates make twice as much noise as Conservative Conspiracy Theorists despite being a group of around half the size.

These prolific posters share clinical trial results and upcoming studies far and wide, leading to the group making a lot of noise around a very specific sub-topic.

Small audience segment makes a lot of noise



Communities vary little in topic interest



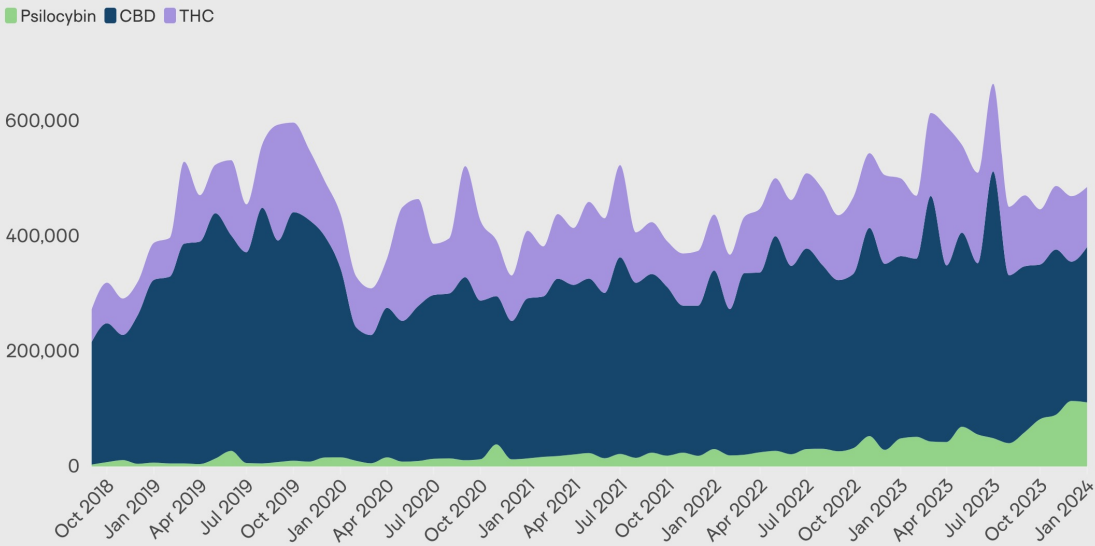
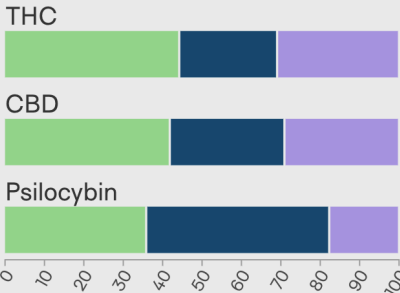


# CBD & THC enter the chat

CBD and THC are two substances that have gone on a legalization and popularity journey of their own. When we track the past and present of CBD and THC, we can make interesting links to the present and future of psilocybin.

However, it's clear that these three compounds have varying use cases that indicate psilocybin won't be following in cannabis's footsteps.

Recreation & Wellness Medicalization Legalization

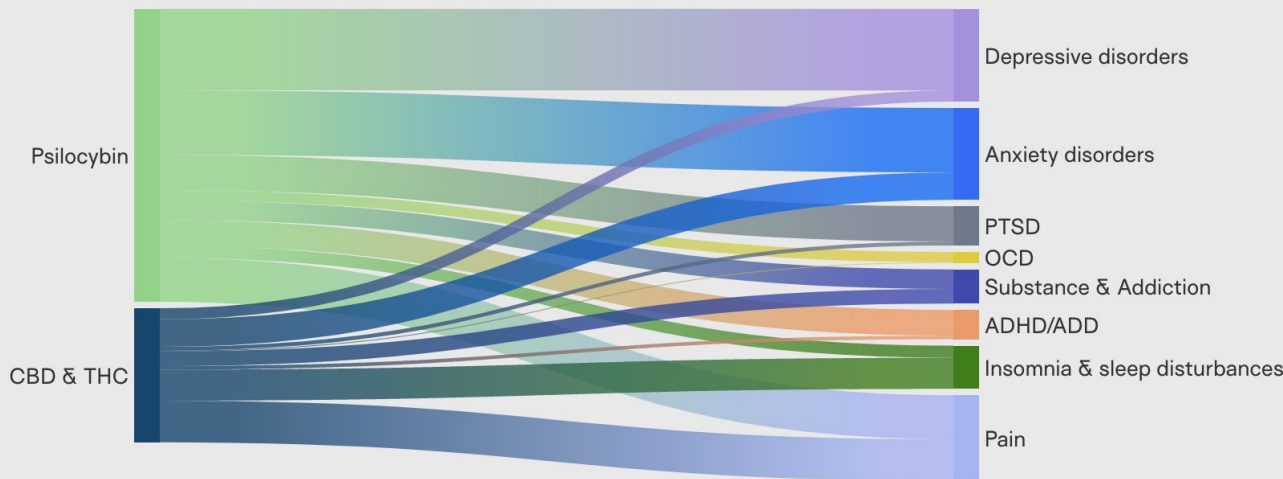


## How does psilocybin compare when it comes to medical associations?

The use cases of psilocybin and CBD & THC vary vastly. Its current overt medicalisation use means a much more therapeutic use case for psilocybin products. Despite CBD & THC having nearly 10M more results in our search, Psilocybin dominates medical conversation.

While CBD & THC are talked about in conjunction with physical symptoms such as pain and insomnia, psilocybin conversation correlates to complex psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and addiction.

From this, we can expect to not see psilocybin follow a more medical market trajectory than CBD & THC as the illnesses associated with psilocybin indicate the need for more oversight from a medical professional than a dispensary can provide.



## How Psilocybin fits into the pharma landscape: the expert view

It's clear that high-street recreational consumer stores aren't on the cards for psilocybin any time soon. But with organizations such as Imperial College London and the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)

entering Phase 3 clinical trials and many companies Phase 1 and 2 clinical trials, it's clear that actionable business and medical routes for psilocybin are growing in popularity.

Mainstream social and industry media are driving mainstream recognition through regular reporting, creating a feedback loop of positivity and driving awareness amongst audiences – directing attention towards decision makers.

There's some really interesting success happening with psilocybin in relation to addiction for gambling and addiction to alcohol. It's a reset. You see this in clinical use. I think honestly it is starting to take market share in U.S. away from ketamine for those who can do it. Psilocybin will be more of a tested, more of a proven FDA-centric medicine at that point, whereas ketamine companies are using loopholes similar to CBD and hemp.



**Elliot Lane**  
Head of Benzinga  
Cannabis



### Psychedelic therapy may help break the chains of gambling addiction



### Australia legalises psychedelics for mental health



# The Future of Psilocybin

Though it's impossible to predict what's in store for psilocybin, it's clear that medical routes for individuals wanting to obtain the substance are gaining a lot of traction. We can see medical psilocybin obtaining methods surging in conversation during 2023, when many breakthroughs were made.

While psilocybin may not follow the exact route of CBD & THC's commercial arrival, its presence will undoubtedly lead to new ways of providing therapeutic and medical help to those who we see the benefits of this unique substance.

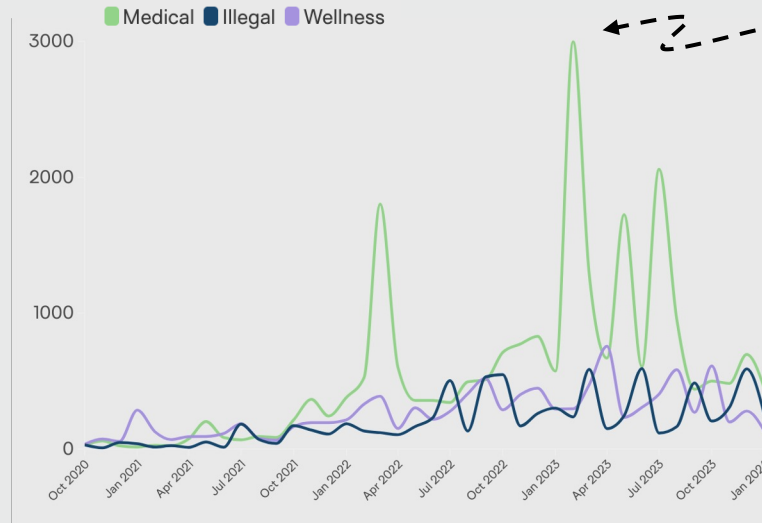
This is evidenced in the conversations around obtaining psilocybin, which have swung definitively toward dispensaries and prescriptions, despite dealer still being a large presence..

## Medical leads in discussed psilocybin obtaining methods

■ Medical ■ Illegal ■ Wellness



## Medical psilocybin obtaining has many surges in popularity



These Psilocybin "Healing centers" in Colorado sound like a descent start, but it's also bringing a sense of guruism to the equation with the facilitators. I Still say Recreational dispensaries are more important.

Type of obtaining method mentioned overtime on X, Jul 2022 - Dec 2023. Source: Pulsar TRENDS

Obtaining methods of psilocybin mentioned, Jul 2022 - Feb 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

## About Pulsar

Pulsar is the world's leading audience intelligence platform—harnessing rich data sets, AI and human minds – so our clients can access nuanced and actionable insights that get straight to what matters most to their customers, their businesses and to society.

## Learn more

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## About ConcentricLife

ConcentricLife is an agency built to answer the rising customer demand on the health marketer. ConcentricLife spans three distinct specialist practices that bring over 20 years of deep subject matter expertise in rare disease, healthcare, and wellness; with sophisticated marketing capabilities spanning the organization.

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