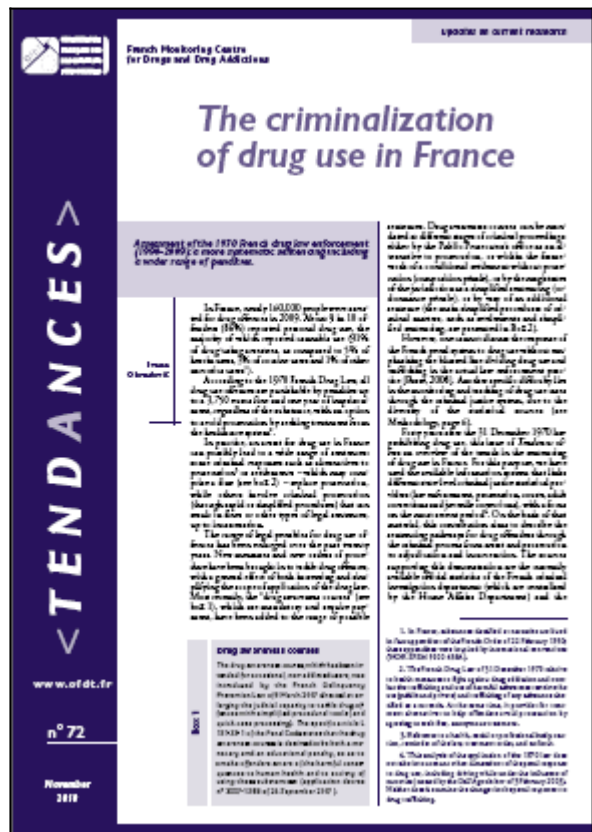




The criminalization of drug use in France



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Forty years after the passing of the original 31 December 1970 law prohibiting drug use, this edition of *Tendances* analyses the trends in arrests for narcotics use and the subsequent sentences handed down by the French legal system. For this purpose, we have used the available criminal data and emphasised the most recent period.

Using police statistics on arrests for narcotics use, *Tendances* aims to describe what happens after the police charge someone with narcotics use and throughout the ensuing criminal proceedings, from the Public Prosecutor referral phase to the sentencing phase. The main sources used for this analysis are the official statistics of the French criminal investigation department (which are centralised by the French Ministry of the Interior) and the French Ministry of Justice. However, there are problems of comparability between these sources.

The analysis of the changes in the way the French penal system handles narcotics use showed a dual trend of increased numbers of arrests for drug use and more diversification in the sentences handed down to drug users. The analysis also helps refute the widespread notion that increasingly fewer sentences are handed out for narcotics use in France.

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