

# Perceptions, motives and trajectories associated with drug use in adolescents



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The ARAMIS study (Attitudes, perceptions, aspirations and motives surrounding the introduction to psychoactive substances) aims to explore the perceptions and motives for drug use among minors, and their trajectories for alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and/or other illicit drug use. Why do adolescents get to use psychoactive substances? Why do some develop substance use habits while others manage to limit their use? In order to explore these fundamental questions, a vast interview campaign was carried out between 2014 and 2017 among 200 minors with diverse social profiles, enhanced by direct observations. The sample includes the generation born between 1996 and 2002 (aged 13 to barely 18 years at the time of the survey), who grew up in the context of an economic crisis and endemic unemployment. This issue of *Tendances* offers an initial summary of the results of this undertaking, which opens up numerous lines of reflection, helpful for prevention strategies.

The deterioration in the social image of tobacco among younger generations, revealed by the latest statistical surveys, appears to go hand in hand with the certain trivialisation of cannabis (particularly herbal cannabis), which is emerging as one of the most striking phenomena of this survey. At the

same time, alcohol appears to benefit from a special status: possibly harmful at this age (especially when consumed in large quantities), it is widely perceived as a commonplace, recreational and social substance.

The study confirms the easy access among minors to substances which are nonetheless prohibited (tobacco, alcohol and cannabis), partly related to their omnipresence in the public space, which appears to make substance use more acceptable.

Lastly, the survey highlights the questions raised by young users with regard to self-control. Both curious and distrustful with regard to drugs, many of them explain the way in which they "select" the effects of the substances they use, taking care to neutralise unwanted effects. The minors interviewed thus appear to seek reference points and techniques for self-regulation, particularly with regard to alcohol. These findings lead us to encourage support-based professional practices (including non-therapeutic measures) and harm reduction measures.

*Author : Ivana Obradovic*

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