

Drugs at age 17

Trends, use context and risk-ranking¹

Results from the national ESCAPAD survey (2005)

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The 2005 ESCAPAD survey (Survey on Health and Consumption on Call-up and Preparation for Defence Day) is the fifth nationwide survey of its kind to be organised. The survey completes the device introduced by OFTD in order to monitor usage throughout the adult population (the Baromètre Santé or «Health Barometer» organised under the scientific supervision of the Inpes), and the ESPAD project organised among the school-age population (the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs, in collaboration with the Inserm). It covers mainland France but also the overseas départements and local authorities, using the same methodology for each. The data from the 2005 survey was drawn from the replies of 29,393 young people in mainland France aged 17 years old at the time the survey was carried out. It makes it possible to describe trends over five years but also includes new questions concerning the context of alcohol and cannabis use, the driving of a motor vehicle under the influence and accidents related to the consumption of these products. Finally, thanks to the introduction of a new question, cannabis sourcing methods can now also be identified and recorded.

The term «**experimentation**» refers to the fact that the individual has already consumed a product at least once during his or her life. **Regular drunkenness** refers to at least 10 episodes of drunkenness during the year. The other consumption indicators cover the last 30 days, including: **recent use** (at least one consumption incident), **regular** alcohol or cannabis **use** (at least 10 consumption episodes), and **daily use** (at least once a day). These thresholds are based on a reasoned choice, but nevertheless also include an arbitrary element. For example, they do not take account of the total diversity in consumption frequencies and only poorly distinguish between what can in reality be highly contrasting situations. However, they nevertheless offer a basic description of teenage consumption practices.

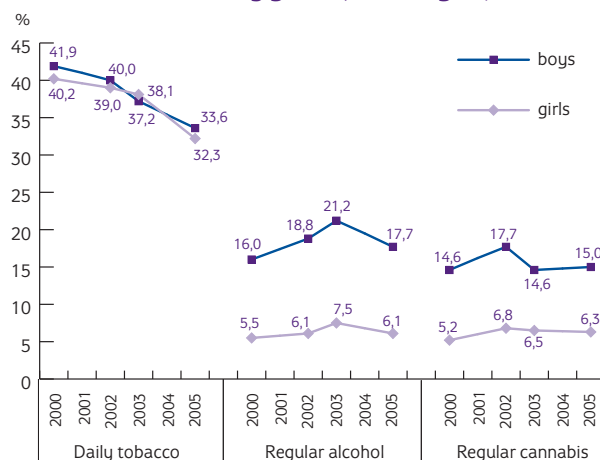
Recent trends (2000-2005)

The notion of use during the individual's lifetime (or experimentation) covers current users but also teenagers who have simply tried these substances or stopped taking them. Consequently, it describes the circulation of the product throughout the population rather than its use.

The experimentation levels for legal products appear to be declining since 2003.

The reduction is 2 percentage points for alcohol experimentation and 5 percentage points for tobacco, demonstrating the decline of this product among teenagers since 2000. For the first time ever, experimentation with psychotropic medicines appears to be falling sharply among boys

Changes between 2000 and 2005 in the levels of regular tobacco, alcohol and cannabis use by gender, at the age of 17



Source: ESCAPAD 2005, OFDT

1. In 2004, a specific survey was carried out within the city of Paris (Beck and al., 2006)

Changes between 2003-2005 in the level of use of psychoactive substances throughout an individual's lifetime by gender, at the age of 17 (% on line)

	Girls 2003	Girls 2005	Boys 2003	Boys 2005	Total 2003	Total 2005
Alcohol	94.2	91.2***	95.0	93.3***	94.6	92.3***
Tobacco	79.0	73.5***	75.0	71.0***	77.0	72.2***
Drunkness	47.6	49.6 *	62.2	63.4	55.0	56.6**
Cannabis	47.2	45.5 *	53.3	53.1	50.3	49.4
Psychotropic medicines	35.5	28.6***	14.3	11.3***	24.7	19.9***
Inhalation products	4.0	3.2 **	4.7	3.9 *	4.4	3.6***
Hallucinogenic mushrooms	2.0	2.1	4.9	5.2	3.5	3.7
Poppers	2.4	4.8***	4.1	6.3***	3.3	5.5***
Ecstasy	2.4	2.8	4.1	4.2	3.2	3.5
Amphetamines	1.1	1.8***	2.4	2.6	1.8	2.2**
Cocaine	1.1	2.0***	2.0	3.0***	1.6	2.5***
LSD	0.6	0.9	1.1	1.3	0.9	1.1
Heroin	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.7
Crack	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.7
Subutex®	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.5
Ketamine	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.4
GHB	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3

Guide: *, **, ***: chi-2 test respectively significant at the thresholds 0.05, 0.01, 0.001 for changes between 2003-2005

Source : ESCAPAD 2005, OFDT

and among girls², as is the case for inhaled products (legal but misused products).

For cannabis, between 2003 and 2005 we have seen a slight downward trend among girls although the figures remain virtually unchanged for boys, which appears to confirm the results already observed between 2002 and 2003 following the sustained rise witnessed since the early 1990s. Consequently, the overall level of experimentation remains virtually identical over the period 2003-2005, with half of those aged 17 being concerned by this.

The circulation of poppers, cocaine and to a lesser extent, amphetamines has risen since 2003. The other products underwent no significant change over this period. In particular, the circulation level of ecstasy has remained unchanged since 2002, whereas it rose between 2000 and 2002. The circulation levels of Ketamine, Subutex®³ and GHB have undergone no significant change and remain very low among the teenage population.

The regular use of alcohol has declined since 2003, particularly among boys, whereas regular drunkenness (at least 10 times during the year) appears to be rising, increasing from 6.7% to 9.7% over the same period. After rising since the early 1990s, the regular use of cannabis fell back to its 2000 level from 2003 onwards (the changes witnessed over these period chiefly concern boys). Since 2000, the regular use of cannabis is at a level very close to that for the regular use of alcohol for both sexes, with the greatest variation occurring in 2003 for the boys, when the regular use of alcohol appeared to be far higher. It should also be noted that the regular use of psychotropic medicines is falling among girls (3.3% in 2005 compared to 4.5% in 2003).

The recent use of psychoactive substances at the age of 17

Over the last 30 days, among the various substances examined, it is alcohol which appears to be the most intensively consumed (by approximately eight youths in ten) ahead of tobacco (approximately four youths in ten). For its part, the recent use of cannabis concerns fewer than three 17 year olds out of ten and that of psychotropic medicines fewer than one youth in ten. The levels of recent use for all illegal drugs other than cannabis are very low.

The use of psychoactive substances over the last 30 days at age 17 (% on line)

	Over the last 30 days			
	Girls	Boys	Total	
Alcohol	75.4	82.0	78.8	***
Tobacco	40.9	41.3	41.1	
Cannabis	22.3	33.3	27.9	***
Medicines	11.8	3.7	7.7	***
Ecstasy	1.0	1.7	1.4	***
Poppers	1.1	1.6	1.4	***
Hallucinogenic mushrooms	0.4	1.3	0.9	***
Cocaine	0.7	1.2	0.9	***
Amphetamines	0.6	1.0	0.8	***
Inhalation products	0.6	0.7	0.6	
LSD	0.3	0.4	0.4	*
Heroin	0.2	0.3	0.2	**
Crack	0.1	0.2	0.2	*

Source : ESCAPAD 2005, OFDT

Guide: *, **, ***: chi-2 test, respectively significant at the thresholds 0.05, 0.01, 0.001 for the comparison between the sexes

Tobacco consumption since the latest price increases

Between 2003 and 2004, the public authorities substantially increased taxes on tobacco products. The price of a packet of the best-selling cigarettes rose from €3.60 to €3.90 in January 2003, and subsequently to €4.6 in October of the same year before reaching €5 in January 2004, with prices then being frozen. The 2005 survey has made it possible to assess the impact of these increases on consumption patterns among teenagers.

To do so, the analysis was restricted to only those individuals who have smoked on a daily basis for at least two years (n=6,252). Almost a third stated that they have reduced their daily consumption, while almost a fifth had simply attempted to do so and finally, a third failed in their attempts to give up smoking.

However, these findings should be considered in light of the fact that slightly fewer than two daily smokers in ten declare that they have changed nothing in their smoking habits while a large majority have adapted them in ways unlikely to result in health improvements.

Indeed, these increases have also resulted in changes in the types of products smoked as well as in the supply channels. Just over a quarter of the smokers claimed that they switched over to cheaper cigarettes and a fifth to hand-rolled cigarettes, while almost half stated that they tried to obtain supplies from abroad. Finally, three out of ten stated that they no longer offer cigarettes, or that they do so more reluctantly.

As in 2003, almost 5% of teenagers aged 17 stated that they were former smokers (this figure is slightly higher among girls: 6% compared to 4%, p<0.001). Nevertheless, less than half of them (40%) state that they have given up smoking as a result of the increase in cigarette prices (this is more often the case for girls: 42% vs. 36%, p<0.001). Calculated as a percentage of all experimenters, the number of people concerned represents approximately 3%.

The fall in the proportion of daily smokers (from 37.6% in 2003 to 32.9% in 2005) therefore seems to be due more to a reduction in the number of people taking up smoking in the first place rather than those stopping.

2. This fairly pronounced downward trend needs to be confirmed by further surveys, particularly as an additional question concerning the nature of the medicine consumed ("If you have already taken a medical product for your nerves or to help you sleep, which did you last take") may have led to some respondents being deterred, through concerns that they could not answer "yes" without revealing the name.

3. Subutex® is a medicine prescribed for opioid substitution treatment. It comprises high-dosage buprenorphine, sometimes consumed outside the scope of medical treatment, which is probably the case during the teenage years.

Changes noted since the price rises for tobacco among those who have smoked daily for at least two years, by gender (% on line)

	Tried to stop	Cut back	Tried to cut back	Cheaper cigs	Buy abroad	Stopped giving	Hand-rolled	No change
Boys	25.9	31.5	12.6	24.2	47.2	22.6	20.9	23.7
Girls	35.3	32.2	25.0	28.8	47.9	38.0	19.8	13.5
Total	30.6***	31.9	18.8***	26.5***	47.6	30.3***	20.3***	18.6***

N.B. Several scenarios possible for a single individual

Guide: *, ** ***. chi-2 test, respectively significant at the thresholds 0.05, 0.01, 0.001 for the comparison between the sexes

Source : ESCAPAD 2005, OFDT

Drunkness, binge drinking and the beverages consumed

In 2005, more than half of young people aged 17 (56.6%) declared that they had already been drunk at least once in their life, almost half (49.2%) over the last 12 months and one in ten (9.6%) at least 10 times over the same period. Just like alcohol consumption in general, drunkenness appears to be sensibly a masculine phenomenon, with the sex ratio being 1.3 for drunkenness during the individual's lifetime, 1.4 for drunkenness during the year and 2.9 for regular drunkenness (at least 10 times during the year).

Fewer than half of the youths (45.8%) claimed that they had drunk more than five glasses on at least one occasion over the last 30 days, with 2.2% stating that they had done so at least 10 times. This alcoholic behaviour, which corresponds to the Anglo-Saxon phenomenon of binge drinking (sessions of intensive alcohol consumption well above the WHO recommendations) is very much a male trend (55.7% of boys compared to 35.5% of girls had done so at least once, while 3.6% vs. 0.7% had done so at least 10 times).

The «ranking» of the drinks according to the number of people having consumed them during the month shows that beers and premixes⁴ are the most popular drinks accounting for 57.1% and 48.1% of consumers, ahead of strong alcohol (42.6%), followed by champagne and sparkling wine, cocktails and wine which ranks at the sixth place (28.4%). The lists of preferred drinks for boys and girls are similar, although differences nevertheless occur for the first three choices, both in terms of the products and their ranking, with beer followed by strong alcohol and premixes for the boys, and premixes followed by champagne and beer for the girls. The high prevalence of premixes in these lists would suggest that careful consideration should be given to the use of these products and the marketing and promotional strategies used for them. Indeed, they disappeared in 1997 following the imposition of a specific tax and reappeared in 2002 owing to the regulations being circumvented.

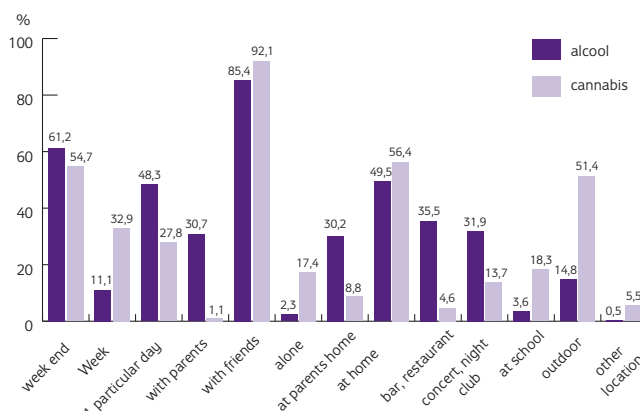
The consumption contexts for alcohol and cannabis

Young people aged 17 tend to consume alcohol above all at weekends, and usually for

a particular event (parties, birthdays or special occasions). Most of this consumption takes place among friends, although a non-negligible proportion also occurs with parents. Solitary consumption appears to be quite rare. When consumption occurs with parents, this is usually for a special occasion (in 59% of cases) and when it occurs in the parental home, the parents were present in 82% of cases. Consumption in bars or clubs is obviously far from rare, but is less frequent at this age than consumption at home. Finally, a little over 15% stated that their most recent consumption took place in an open public area (in the street or in a park, etc) and a minority of youths stated that their last time was at school.

In comparison with alcohol, cannabis is consumed far more often during the week, on an ordinary day and often in the presence of friends. Paradoxically however, the stated incidence of solitary consumption is far more common for cannabis than for alcohol. The consumption locations also differ greatly, with consumption in the parental home being much rarer, with the same applying for consumption in paying public areas such as bars, restaurants or discos. On the other hand, the most recent consumption most frequently took place at school and above all,

Most recent usage context for alcohol and cannabis*



*Percentages calculated respectively among those who drank during the month and smoked during the month.

NB: for each product, the percentages may exceed 100 as several answers were possible.

Source : ESCAPAD 2005, OFDT

outside the buildings. Among the other locations mentioned, we should note that cars top the list. Consequently, by consuming cannabis more often outdoors than at home, a large number of cannabis smokers are therefore visible to others.

Driving and accidents

The inclusion of four new questions made it possible to record the frequency with which vehicles were driven and with which accidents occurred following the consumption of alcohol or cannabis. They make no distinction between the types of accidents, their seriousness or the relative contributions of alcohol or cannabis to their occurrence. With this in mind, the analyses which may be carried out as a result of them should be seen as complementary to the results of the «SAM» survey (Stupéfiants et accidents mortels de la circulation routière - drugs and fatal road traffic accidents) carried out between 1998 and 2001, and which focused only on fatal accidents (Laumon et al, 2005) which are by definition excluded from self-administered surveys such as ESCAPAD. The questions were as follows: «During the last 12 months, have you driven a car⁵ or two-wheeled vehicle (motorbike, moped or scooter) after having consumed more than one glass of alcohol (or smoked cannabis)?» with the possible answers being either: no, once or twice, from time to time, or often. Another question was: «Have you had a car accident or an accident with a two-wheeled vehicle while under the influence of alcohol (or after having smoked cannabis)?» with the possible answers being yes or no.

The analysis reveals that although 83.8% of young people have never driven after having drunk or having smoked cannabis during the year, 6.2% have done so after having drunk but not after having smoked, 4.3% after having smoked but not drunk, while 5.8% state that they have done so after having drunk and smoked. However, fewer than 1% stated that they have often done either of these. Such behaviour patterns are highly masculine in nature with 25.3% of boys concerned compared to 6.8% of girls. Similarly, although 98.2% stated that they have never

4. Just like alcopops, these are sweetened drinks to which alcohol has been added, recently launched and aimed at young people.

5. Theoretically, driving a car at the age of 17 is impossible unless accompanied. These cases are therefore, undoubtedly, extremely rare

had an accident after having drunk alcohol or smoked cannabis, 1.2% declared an accident after having drunk but not smoked, 0.4% after having smoked but not drunk, and 0.2% in both circumstances (with no possibility of stating whether in both cases it was the same accident). The declared accidents also appear to be far more frequent among boys (2.8% vs. 0.7%).

Thus, during the teenage years, risk-taking and accidents with two-wheeled vehicles following the consumption of alcohol are more frequent than following the consumption of cannabis.

Cannabis supply sources

Among those who had smoked cannabis during the year, more boys than girls stated that they «generally» purchase it (49.9% vs. 33.3%) or grow it (12.4% vs. 4.5%). On the other hand, the latter are far more likely to get it from others (77.2% vs. 60.4%). These answers are not exclusive: a consumer may vary his or her supply methods according to the opportunities presenting themselves. Nevertheless, the percentages accounted for by home growing and purchasing increase along with usage frequency, while gifts practices tend to decline. Thus, 85.9% of daily smokers stated that they usually purchase their cannabis, regardless of gender, while 31.4% grow it themselves, and 34.1% stated that they get it free of charge, with the latter supply method almost always chiefly concerning young girls (45% vs. 29.9%). The rankings of these supply methods and their respective levels are similar to those observed among the adult population (Beck et al. 2006).

Conclusion

Although smoking continues to decline, the consumption of alcohol and the consumption of cannabis both rose up until 2002-2003, followed by a relative decline until 2005, with the latter variation chiefly concerning boys. For their part, psychotropic medicines are tending to decline and this trend should be confirmed by the next batch of surveys carried out among teenagers (ESPAD, ESCAPAD, etc). For three of the other main illegal drugs, experimentation appears to be rising (poppers, cocaine and to a lesser extent, amphetamines). On the other hand, although the use of inhalation products during the individual's lifetime appears to have dropped back slightly, the levels recorded for other illegal substances have remained unchanged compared to 2003. These trends match those observed among the 15-64 year-old age group between 2000 and 2005 in the Baromètre Santé (Beck & Cytrynowicz, 2006).

The 2005 ESCAPAD survey also provided an opportunity to assess the declared changes in the behaviour of tobacco smokers following the latest round of price increases (which were part of a wider package of dissuasive measures). It illustrates the scope, but also the limitations, of such measures since, above all, they appear to dissuade non-smokers from starting and occasional smokers from continuing their habits, while the more dependent smokers seem more inclined to modify their purchasing patterns than their consumption.

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Thanks to cooperation with the National Service Department (DSN – Direction du Service National), the ESCAPAD survey is carried out during the Days of defense preparation (the JAPDs – Journée d'appel de préparation à la défense). Once a year, all across France, the young people participating in this event complete a self-administered anonymous questionnaire concerning their consumption of psychoactive substances. These teenagers, most of whom are aged 17, are of French nationality and are usually secondary school children although a number of them are in employment, apprenticeships or pursuing further education.

The level of participation at the JAPDs is around 90%, bearing in mind that the ratio (the number of people actually present compared to the number invited) tends to underestimate the true situation. Those called up are invited on several dates and therefore have several opportunities to meet their obligations if they did not attend following the initial invitation. The JAPDs are virtually compulsory as the participants are given a certificate which they need in order to enrol for exams or tests administered by the public authorities (driving licences, the baccalauréat, university exams, etc).

In 2005, the sessions were held between March and June in order to guarantee a sufficiently large sample for analysis in each of the regions. The data collection process involved obtaining replies from all of the youths present on a given day in the centres not carrying out first aid training (more than half of the total numbers each day; the designated centres could vary from day to day). This adaptation was made necessary due to an excessive workload. In all, 37,512 people were interviewed, including 32,057 in mainland France, aged from 16 to 23 years old, but with the majority aged 17. After of the quality checking of the data and filtering based on age, a total of 29,393 usable questionnaires were identified from mainland France, 50.8% of which were completed by boys and 49.2% by girls aged exactly 17 at the time of the session (the month of birth was given in 98.0% of cases). The sample was modified in order to give each of the départements its true demographic weight within the survey. The ESCAPAD survey was approved by the French National Council for Statistical Information (CNIS) and awarded the «public statistics general interest label» by the Label Committee and was furthermore approved by the French Data Protection Authority (the CNIL).

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